

## Building Jewish Culture in Krakow: Promise and Potential

RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

*This article first appeared in the June 26, 2008 issue of the newspaper Forward under the title: "The Dynamic Duo Behind Poland's Jewish Revival: The Impresarios." It is reprinted here with the permission of the author, the newspaper, and its arts and culture editor.*

Wojtek and Malgosia Ornat are pioneers in the promotion of Jewish culture and Jewish-themed tourism in Kazimierz, the old Jewish quarter of Krakow, Poland. Today, the Ornats, who in 1992 opened the first Jewish-style café in Krakow, run the popular Klezmer Hois café-hotel-restaurant, a Jewish publishing house called Austeria, and Jewish bookstores in Krakow and Budapest. They recently rented the High Synagogue in Krakow to use as an exhibition space.

Both Ornats have Jewish roots, but neither was raised Jewish. Wojtek had a Jewish grandfather, and Malgosia was 19 when she discovered that her mother's mother had been Jewish. They recently spoke—generally in unison, as Malgosia is more versed than Wojtek in the English language—with regular *Forward* contributor Ruth Ellen Gruber, whose own book, *Letters From Europe (and Elsewhere)*, was recently printed by their publishing house.

**Ruth Ellen Gruber:** How did you get interested in Jewish culture?

**Wojtek and Malgosia Ornat:** Undoubtedly our Jewish origins were the triggers. We have considered ourselves Jewish since the time we found out about our roots. Moreover, Wojtek has always been interested in the history of Polish Jews. We actively participated in Jewish festivals in Krakow and thought that Jewish culture should be present in Kazimierz not only during a short period in summer.

**REG:** But can Jewish culture exist in places where no Jews live?

**Wojtek and Malgosia Ornat:** Yes, it can, and Krakow is a very good example of it. But even in Krakow there are Jews—though there are very few of them, and maybe they are not very religious, and maybe they don't celebrate Jewish holidays. The problem of Jewish culture without the Jews is a rather complicated one, and we will have to sit and discuss it over a good bottle of wine.

**REG:** You now run Jewish bookstores, have a Jewish publishing house and have rented the High Synagogue for exhibition space. Why did you expand your operations?

**Wojtek and Malgosia Ornat:** We wanted to get more involved in reviving Jewish life in Poland, and we wanted to leave something for the next generation—that is why we started a publishing house. But it wouldn't have been possible without a restaurant and a small hotel that are profitable and let us invest in books. The High Synagogue, which opened this past spring with an exhibition of drawings by the director Andrzej Wajda to illustrate

"Dybbuk," will give us an extra space for lectures, exhibitions and film showings. We are slowly becoming a Jewish cultural center—and that is what we are aiming for.

**REG:** Has the Jewish tourist scene in Kazimierz developed the way you thought it would? What do you think about the "Jewish" dolls and other "Jewish" souvenirs on sale?

**Wojtek and Malgosia Ornat:** Yes, in a way it has. Kazimierz became one of the most important [tourist] sights in Krakow. People from all over the world come here to see the synagogues, Jewish cemeteries.... In addition to Austeria and Klezmer Hois, there are several institutions that cultivate Jewish culture—for example, the Galicia Jewish Museum and the Festival of Jewish Culture. They organize exhibitions, lectures, book promotions, film showings, concerts. Unfortunately there have also appeared ventures whose main interest is business. Many of these do not have the vaguest idea about Jewish culture or history, and they don't even care about it. They serve food they call Jewish even though it has nothing to do with traditional Jewish recipes, aside from the name "Jewish."

We do not like the "Jewish" dolls [for sale], but unfortunately they are also available in the Sukiennice [covered craft hall in the main market square] and not only in Kazimierz. There is a deeper problem of stereotypes in Polish culture. The fact that these dolls are also sold in Kazimierz shows that the people who run those businesses are doing so by complete accident and have no respect for Jewish heritage.

**REG:** Many other Jewish-style cafés have opened, in Krakow and in other cities. Some of these places openly have used Klezmer Hois and your earlier cafés as models. What do you think of this? What are the differences between the types of Jewish style cafés? Are some more "authentic" than others?

**Wojtek and Malgosia Ornat:** It is a compliment that many of the Jewish-style places all over Poland have adapted our model. We think it suits Kazimierz, since it brings back the sentiments and creates a special ambiance of past years, when Jewish life

*Continued on page 28*

### Inside this issue ...

Have You Heard?.....	3
Chapter Chatter.....	5
Reviews of Titles for Adults.....	7
Keeping Current.....	28
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens.....	29
Chicago Convention News.....	37

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## President's Message

SUSAN DUBIN

I hope that Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur were a time of productive reflection and that Sukkot was truly a time for rejoicing. Here in California, we have had our usual round of hot weather, wind, and wildfires. The fires that began on Sukkot were about a mile from my house in the hills. Luckily, we were not in danger, but several friends were evacuated. A natural disaster like this makes me realize how fragile our well-being is, and helps me appreciate the blessings that we have. My wish for us all in this New Year is one of good health, well-being, and peace.

In the last Newsletter, I reported that our outstanding Proceedings Chair, Joan Biella, has asked to step down as of January. Leah Moskovits, a highly-respected high school librarian, has accepted the position and will work with Joan to post the proceedings from the Cleveland Convention. If you were a presenter at the Convention in 2008, please send a copy of your presentation to Joan and Leah. The proceedings are password protected for this year. Archives of past proceedings are available on the web site.

The Chicago Convention Committee has been hard at work gathering proposals for sessions and negotiating the best prices for catering and AV support. I know it will be a spectacular convention. National AJL is planning to offer stipends for those who need them to attend. Please check the AJL website in January to find the registration form, hotel information, and applications for assistance.

In 2010, our national convention will be in the Northwest for the first time. We are going to Seattle! The convention is once again planned for July 4-7. Much of the work for this convention will be done nationally, since there is only a small local group. We are looking for people who would like to help organize this event. Planning a convention is one of the best ways to get involved in the organization. If you would like to help, please contact Fred Isaac or Shoshanah Seidman, national convention chairs.

The Accreditation Committee has announced that it is accepting applications. Librarians who have gone through the process stress that their administrators see the library as more valuable when it receives international professional recognition. Library accreditation can be used by institutions as a marketing tool. In this age of shrinking budgets, we can use all the help we can get!

The session on valuing libraries, which was the CEU presentation at the convention, is available as a powerpoint presentation at [home.earthlink.net/~stephaniegerding/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/ValuingYourServices.ppt](http://home.earthlink.net/~stephaniegerding/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/ValuingYourServices.ppt). AJL wants to lend its support to those librarians who are struggling to explain the importance of a strong library program to their administrators. If regional areas or AJL chapters wish to have Joanne Roukens give her presentation in person, please contact me to make arrangements.

Please share your thoughts, triumphs, and concerns. Board and council contact information is on the AJL web site. Do join a committee, get involved, and let us know what we can do to make AJL serve you better. Remember to read the AJL blog, People of the Books, at [www.jewishlibraries.org/blog](http://www.jewishlibraries.org/blog).

## Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund

YELENA LUCKERT

The Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund helps our members attend their first AJL convention. Please think of this fund as you remember loved ones, commend others' achievements, or simply want to do a mitzvah.

Since our last issue, there was one donation to the Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund. It came from Libby White, in honor of the birth of Liza Stabler's grandson. I thank Libby for her continued generosity and commitment to this fund.

Donating to Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund is a wonderful way to remember your colleagues and friends at times of sorrow or times of celebration. These donations will be very much appreciated by first-time attendees to future AJL annual conventions.

Please consider giving to this good cause. Send a check to: Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund, c/o Yelena Luckert, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. If you have any questions, please call 301-879-7035 or send e-mail to [yluckert@umd.edu](mailto:yluckert@umd.edu).

### AJL Online

To subscribe to Hasafran, AJL's electronic discussion list, send the message: "sub hasafran [your first and last name]" to: [listproc@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu](mailto:listproc@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu).

Visit the AJL Web site at [www.jewishlibraries.org](http://www.jewishlibraries.org).

# Dead Sea Scrolls Are Headed for the Internet

YA'AKOV ARONSON

Technologies developed for the space program have provided many side benefits for the general public. The ear thermometer, for example, resulted from a technique developed to detect infrared emission from newly born stars. Now a photography technique developed in conjunction with NASA's space program will be used to photograph the Dead Sea Scrolls. To quote a NASA publication: "NASA technology, developed to study other worlds, provided a key to reading these ancient manuscripts by offering a better tool to see beyond what is visible to the eye ... Using techniques developed for studying images from space, invisible writing on the Dead Sea Scrolls became legible." In many cases, unclear images on the fragments are made clear. Although the coupling of NASA technology with the scrolls began in 1993, the public announcement of the project and its aims were only made in the last week of August, 2008.

The scrolls, dating from the third century BCE to the first century CE, are really 10-15,000 fragments of about 900 documents, including portions of all the biblical books (*Tanach*) except Esther. They were photographed in the 1950s using the most advanced infrared technology then available. Many texts in these photographs are not completely readable because of deterioration that took place during the period of about 2000 years since the scrolls were written, and also because of damage caused by scotch tape used by the scholars studying the scrolls to unite fragments. The new photographs, which are being shot in color as well as infrared, will be made using high-powered cameras with resolution and clarity many times greater than those of conventional models, and with lights that emit neither heat nor ultraviolet rays, both of which could cause damage the scrolls.

In addition to providing information that will shed more light on the era of the scrolls, the project, which began as a conservation measure, will allow the conservators to chart the natural deterioration of the two organic materials on which they are written—parchment and papyrus—and of the ink used. This knowledge will facilitate conservation projects for other texts using similar materials.

Through the years many complaints have been registered by scholars about the limited access granted to the scrolls. According to the master plan of the project, the new scroll images should be freely available to all on the Internet in about five years, when the multimillion dollar project is completed.

## Correction

The citation to the review of Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger's *On Three Continents*, published in the September/October issue of the *AJL Newsletter*, neglected to note that the title is distributed by Schoen Books. The corrected text is on the web at [www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/temp/On Three Continents.pdf](http://www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/temp/On Three Continents.pdf).

# Have You Heard?

LIBBY K. WHITE



Rachel Kamin is now serving as the director of the Joseph and Mae Gray Cultural Learning Center at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El in Highland Park, Illinois. Rachel writes that it is an honor and privilege to follow in the footsteps of her predecessor, Cheryl Banks, who served as the director for more than 20 years. Rachel's new e-mail address is [rkamin@nssbethel.or](mailto:rkamin@nssbethel.or).

Merrily Hart has retired from her position at Siegal College in Cleveland, Ohio. In December, she and her husband are moving to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where they lived in the 1960s and 1970s. Merrily will be missed by her friends at the Cleveland AJL Chapter. Happily, she will continue as an editor for the *AJL Newsletter*. Merrily can be reached at [merrilyhart@gmail.com](mailto:merrilyhart@gmail.com)

Houston, Texas Chapter coordinator Lisa Klein writes that Hurricane Ike has been the big story in her area. She reports, "Fortunately, our synagogue and school libraries did well, despite some being without power for two weeks. The Jewish community of Galveston was severely impacted. Bnai Israel, the Reform synagogue, had water damage, but is repairable. Beth Jacob, the Conservative synagogue, had five feet of water and catastrophic damage. Its future is uncertain. All of the Torah scrolls are safe. The island itself will need a long time to recover, but will certainly do so. The worst stories are those told by residents of Bolivar and locations east of Galveston, where there was severe loss of property and some loss of life. Donations to Hurricane Ike relief efforts may be made by visiting the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston's website ([www.houstonjewish.org](http://www.houstonjewish.org)) and clicking on the link to Hurricane Relief Fund."

Archaeologist Avraham Biran died not long before his ninety-ninth birthday in September. Biran studied under Dr. William F. Albright of Johns Hopkins University. During his long career, Biran dug in Iraq, Mandate Palestine, and Israel. For many years he directed excavations at Dan, where the "House of David" inscription was uncovered.

Yukiko Sugihara died at age 94 in Japan on October 8. Mrs. Sugihara was the widow of Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Kaunas, Lithuania, at the beginning of World War II. Defying official Japanese policy, Sugihara, assisted by his wife, distributed visas to thousands of Jews fleeing the Nazis. Consul Sugihara died in 2001. The couple's oldest son established a foundation in San Francisco, honoring the memory and legacy of his father; Yukiko Sugihara served as the foundation's honorary chairperson.

Best-selling author Studs Terkel died in Chicago in late October. A law school graduate, actor, music guru, and radio host, Terkel perfected the art of collecting and writing oral history. His work *The Good War: A History of World War II* was awarded the 1985 Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction. Named Louis at birth, the author adopted the name "Studs," a character in a popular Chicago-based fiction series by James T. Farrell.

# Chapter Chatter

TOBY ROSSNER

## News from the Chapter Relations Committee

Roz Reisner

We are pleased to report that our convention workshop, *How to Run an Effective Chapter*, was very well received. We congratulate and extend a *yasher koach* to our panelists: Yelena Yuckert (Capital Area Chapter), Jean Loeb Lettofsky (Greater Cleveland Chapter) and Marcie Eskin (Judaica Library Network of Metropolitan Chicago). Thank you to Toby Rossner (New England Chapter), who served as our moderator and time keeper.

We thank all of our chapter presidents and committees who are busy planning programs, communicating about events in their areas, and providing valuable leadership to their members. AJL Chapter Relations has now established regional contacts in areas not served by chapters: Atlanta, Bloomfield, Minneapolis, Westchester County, Charlotte, Central Jersey, Denver, Seattle, and San Antonio. If you live near any of these centers and want to network with librarians working in Jewish collections, please log on to the AJL website ([www.jewishlibraries.org/about/chapters](http://www.jewishlibraries.org/about/chapters)) for more specific contact information.

Congratulations to Marlene Reynolds, who organized our newest AJL networking group at the Beldon Library, San Antonio Jewish Federation on November 6. If you live in the San Antonio or Austin area and want to be part of this new organization, please contact Marlene (210 302-6805).

## Montreal Chapter

Janice Rosen

The November 18 Montreal Chapter meeting featured Naomi Caruso, author of *Reuven Brainin: The Fall of an Icon*. Naomi presented an inside look at her journey to locate and access archival materials for her research. Reuven Brainin was a charismatic Jewish intellectual and community activist of the early 20th century. A contemporary of Herzl and Bialik, he was one of the founders of Montreal's Jewish Public Library and of the Canadian Jewish Congress. His progressively unorthodox Zionist vision fomented strife throughout the Jewish communities in Europe and North America and culminated in a tumultuous rift among the ideologues of his day.

## Judaica Library Network of Metropolitan Chicago (JLNMC)

Debbie Feder

We in Chicago are busy planning the 2009 AJL Annual Convention, to be held July 5-8, 2009 at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers. The theme of the Convention is Empowering Librarians for the 21st Century.

## Greater Cleveland Chapter (AJL-GCC)

Marcia Klein

The Greater Cleveland Chapter was treated to a special evening at our September opening meeting with author and NPR book commentator Nancy Pearl (*Book Lust*, *Now Read This*, *Book Crush*, etc.). Nancy described her upbringing in Detroit, and the transformative experience of knowing a wonderful librarian who became her role model and mentor. After moving to Seattle

and working in the public library, the diminutive Pearl became a commentator on the local public radio station. At a dinner party, she met a creator of novelty items, and eventually was talked into becoming the model for the "Librarian Action Figure." Unfortunately, her Eileen Fisher outfit did not translate well into plastic, and she insists the resemblance to her is minimal! Nancy now travels the country facilitating reader's advisory workshops and promoting reading for all ages. Nancy Pearl's program was made possible through the generosity of Cuyahoga County Public Library.

Coming up next: our annual tea in honor of Jewish Book Month and our annual lists of notable books for adults and for children and teens. These lists will be posted on the AJL website, [www.jewishlibraries.org](http://www.jewishlibraries.org), for AJL members' use.

## South Florida Chapter (SFAJL)

From *The Sunshine State Safranim*, the SFAJL Blogspot

The South Florida Chapter webpage has evolved into the *Sunshine State Safranim Blogspot*. ([www.sfajl.blogspot.com](http://www.sfajl.blogspot.com)) that includes meeting schedules, minutes, author visits throughout the region, book reviews, and booklists for all ages. Have a look!

## Southern California Chapter (AJLSC)

From the AJLSC Web site, maintained by Barbara Leff

The AJLSC programming for 2008-2009 includes:

- November 16: a workshop on book repair at Valley Beth Shalom Library.
- December 9: author Carol Matas in celebration of Jewish Book Month.
- February 11, 2009: focus on archives
- May 13, 2009 the Dorothy Schroeder Award Gala and Installation of New Officers.

## Capital Area Chapter (AJL-CAC)

Yelena Luckert

On December 7, AJL-CAC members enjoyed a talk by Monique Daoud about Iraqi food and Jewish life in Baghdad and shared their favorite cookbooks and recipes. We thank our hostess, Gail Shirazi, for inviting us to her home for this special meeting.

The Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Studies, The Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute Center for Persian Studies, The University of Maryland, College Park, and The Hebraic Section and Near East Section, African and Middle Eastern Division Library of Congress sponsored an international conference on Iranian Jewry: From Past to Present on November 1-3.

A conference on Books, Libraries, and Modern War, which included talks on the Holocaust and Jewish books was held on December 5 at Mckeldin Library at the University of Maryland.

## Florida West Coast Chapter (FWC-AJL)

Sylvia Firschein

Our treasurer Miriam Miller will be moving to be near to her children. We will miss her, but we understand and wish her well. She is already planning to help in a synagogue library near her new home.

Our chapter now includes Judaica librarians outside of the Sarasota-Manatee area--Naples in the south and Palm Harbor, Tampa, and St. Petersburg in the north. We are considering hold-

ing some meetings in those areas. In the past it has not been easy to get our members to travel to these "far away places," but we are planning to form car pools to induce many more to attend. We are very good at helping each other with our library problems; in our opinion, this is what chapters are all about.

### Long Island Chapter (LI-AJL)

*From Sifria, the Newsletter of LI-AJL, Sept & Oct 2008*

The Long Island Chapter held its September meeting at Enjoy-a-Book Club Bookstore in Lynbrook, where its members had an opportunity to peruse and discuss the latest publications and to help plan the programming for the coming year. On October 16 the chapter celebrated Succot at the home of Ronnie Zolin. Wendy Marx presented a lesson plan on Using Library Resources for Simchat Torah and reviewed Torah books for all age levels.

### New York Metropolitan Area Chapter (AJL-NYMA)

*Rita Lifton, et. al.*

NYMA is planning exciting programs for the coming academic year. The kickoff event is the fall conference on information literacy that will be held in November. Cataloging and reference workshops are being planned. In March the day school/high school workshop will be held at the new Frisch School Campus in Paramus, New Jersey. Watch Hasafran for further details about these events. In the meantime, check out NYMA's website ([www.ajlny.org](http://www.ajlny.org)) for full audio recordings of our programs from 2005 up to the present. This includes our 2008 spring conference, Digital Libraries: Building, Collaboration and Effectiveness.

## Host a Jewish Book Author

Are you looking to bring a Jewish book author to your library in 2009? Don't forget to visit [www.Host-a-Jewish-Book-Author.com](http://www.Host-a-Jewish-Book-Author.com), an independent and free Web source of information on authors of Jewish-themed books worldwide. Created by AJL member and Sydney Taylor Honor Book winner Anna Olswanger, the site is searchable by name, location, and genre. Each listing includes the author's city, book titles, lecture topics, areas of travel, and contact information. Also available are links to author interviews and podcasts. The site's design makes it easy for libraries to book signings and programs with authors, especially around the Jewish holidays.

Over 70 authors are participating in the site, including Maggie Anton, Ron Arons, Hava Ben-Zvi, Haggai Carmon, Poopa Dweck, Michelle Edwards, Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins, Barbara Kessel, Sarah Lamstein, Gregory Levey, Anna Levine, Sonia Levitin, Bob Morris, Rosalind Reisner, Rabbi Dennis Ross, Sylvia Rouss, Arthur Schwartz, Steve Sheinkin, and Yale Strom. Visit [www.Host-a-Jewish-Book-Author.com](http://www.Host-a-Jewish-Book-Author.com) to discover the many authors who want to visit your library. Some of them might just live around the corner!

## Changing of the Guard

### *The Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee*

KATHE PINCHUCK

The Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee appointed three new members, whose four-year terms began in January. Barbara Bietz of Oak Park, California, is the author of *Like a Maccabee* (Yaldah Publishing, 2006). A freelance writer, whose work has appeared in numerous publications, Barbara is also a frequent reviewer for *Jewish Book World* and the *AJL Newsletter*. Barbara holds bachelor of arts and master of education degrees from the University of Arizona. She has also served as a judge on the Mid-West Independent Book Publishers Award Committee.

Debbie Colodny founded Sefer, So Good in 2002. Her company provides book fairs, presentations, and family education programs promoting Jewish literature for synagogues, Jewish preschools and day schools. Debbie is also a part-time librarian at the Cook Memorial Public Library in Libertyville, Illinois, and a master temple educator. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and education from Washington University, and a master of arts in learning disabilities from Northwestern.

Rita Soltan developed new libraries for the West Bloomfield Jewish Community Center and Temple Beth El in Bloomfield Hills. She established the Michigan Mitten Award for Children's Literature for the Michigan Library Association. She has served as chair of the Education Committee of the Association for Library Service to Children (a division of the ALA). Rita also reviews books for *School Library Journal* and *Kirkus*, and she is the author of *Reading Raps: A Book Club Guide for Librarians, Kids, and Families* (Libraries Unlimited, 2005).

The 2008-2009 Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee also includes Susan Berson, Kathy Bloomfield, Heidi Estrin (compiler), and Rachel Kamin (past chair). With an impressive combination of talents and experience, the committee looks forward to the challenge of reading and reviewing over 130 books anticipated to be submitted for consideration.

Tremendous *harkaras hatov* (appreciation) to Nancy Austein, Marci Lavine Bloch, and Etta Gold, who have served on the committee with distinction and whose terms have ended.



Back row L-R: Rita Soltan, Heidi Estrin, Kathy Bloomfield, Etta Gold, Debbie Colodny, Nancy Austein, Susan Berson. Front row L-R: Rachel Kamin, Kathe Pinchuck. Not pictured: Barbara Bietz.



# Reviews of Titles for Adults

EDITED BY MERRILY F. HART AND DANIEL SCHEIDE

## FICTION AND POETRY

**Cohen, Joshua.** *A Heaven of Others.* Buffalo, NY: Starcherone Books, 2007. 178 p. \$16.00 (ISBN 978-0-97888-114-6).

A ten-year-old Jewish boy, the victim of a suicide bombing in Jerusalem finds himself in Heaven. It is not the Heaven that his upbringing had prepared him for, but the Heavenly reward intended for his murderer, a ten-year-old Palestinian Muslim. Often closer to poetry than prose, Cohen's stream-of-consciousness novel explores Jewish and Muslim beliefs in the afterlife. The text is accompanied by Michael Hafftk's evocative and sometimes disturbing drawings, which, on their own, make *A Heaven of Others* a worthwhile purchase.

*Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Elsner, Alan.** *The Nazi Hunter: A Novel.* New York: Arcade Publishing, 2007. 325 p. \$26.00 (ISBN 978-1-55970-839-5).

The unconventional hero of this thriller is an Orthodox Jewish lawyer working for the U.S. Government. Pursuing Nazis, he is pursued by neo-Nazis. The jacket of my copy included extracts from reviews of the book with one recurring theme: the book is "lucid and informative," and also "a great resource," not a simple thriller! The author sees his hero ambiguously. His father changed the family name from "Cohen" to "Cain." Mark Cain is a "hunter." The biblical Cain murdered his brother, and Mark Cain was the unintentional cause of several deaths. Cain's descendant was Nimrod, "the mighty hunter." I do not deny that I learned from this book, but it is primarily to be read for pleasure.

*Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

**Garnet, Eldon.** *Lost Between the Edges.* Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007. 298 p. \$14.95 (ISBN 978-1-58435-042-2).

Weaving together fact, fiction, and primary sources from Holocaust denial literature, Garnet's novel follows a philosophy student known only as "X," as he attempts to assassinate (real-life) Canadian neo-Nazi Ernst Zundel. An examination of racism and the nature of truth in the form of a popular novel.

*Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Gerber, Merrill Joan.** *The Victory Gardens of Brooklyn: A Novel.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press (*Library of Modern Jewish Literature*) 2007. 406 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-81560-892-9).

The author of *The Kingdom of Brooklyn* has written another touching and riveting narrative of growing up in a Jewish family in New York. This is a prequel to her previous work. Gerber follows the lives of three generations: Ava, Musetta, and Gilda; their grandparents, and their children. Participating in the Jewish way of life, assimilating yet not wanting to give up Jewish identity, striving for the American dream of more, yet finding that dreams are often fulfilled in unexpected ways, Gerber draws the reader into life on the Lower East Side and Brooklyn during

the mid-1900s. The ending is not all happiness, leaving the reader with a work of realistic fiction and not a fairy tale.

*Sara Rofofsky Marcus, Queensborough Community College, Bayside, NY*

**Glidden, Sarah.** *How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less. Chapter 1: Orientation; Chapter 2: The Golan Heights. Self published.* [www.smallnoises.com](http://www.smallnoises.com). 2007, 2008.

The author of this graphic novel traveled on a Birthright trip to Israel in 2007. Having mixed feelings and conflicting opinions about Israel, she hoped that the trip would help her learn more about the country and see for herself what life was like there. She also wondered how the official tour guides assigned to the group would present the sensitive political issues surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Chapter 1 has the group arriving in Tel Aviv, meeting the guides, and discussing the Separation Barrier and its effects on the lives of the Palestinians on the other side. Chapter 2 deals with the Golan Heights and related political issues. Each chapter is a separate booklet. The author's website states that she has just signed a contract with Vertigo to publish the entire story as a 200-page color book; interested readers would be best served by waiting for this complete work. It is an interesting, honest presentation of the view of a young woman visiting Israel for the first time.

*Barbara M. Bibel, Oakland Public Library, Oakland, CA; Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA*

**Keats, Jonathan.** *The Book of the Unknown: Tales of the Thirty-Six.* New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2009. 221 p. \$13.00 (ISBN 978-0-81297-897-1). **Advanced review copy.**

The continuation of the world in each generation is based on the existence of 36 hidden righteous people, according to a Jewish belief. In order to remain hidden, these people are usually apparent non-entities, such as a wagon driver or a cobbler. Our author tells the story of 12 such righteous people, but he has gone one step further and his righteous are not just non-entities but are apparently destructive people. Thus we have, Beit the liar, Dalet the thief, Vov the whore, and Yod-Alef the murderer.

The stories read like Hasidic tales. They are more complex than stories about the Baal Shem Tov, but less complex than the tales of Rabbi Nahman of Breslav. They are reminiscent of Rabbi Nahman's stories, in that nothing is what it seems. What the world sees as failure is success. When death disappears from a town and it becomes completely stagnant, a murderer is necessary to save the town!

The stories are entertaining, written with humor. However, there is an ideological message and it is not the usual Jewish Orthodox message of the Hasidic story. It is rather an attack on convention and an emphasis on personal relationships. The author adds the flavor of Rabelais/Chaucer to his Hasidic mix.

*Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel*



**Terman, Philip.** *Rabbis of the Air*. Pittsburgh: Autumn House Press, 2007. 107 p. \$14.95 (ISBN 978-1-93287-015-2).

The author of this collection of poetry is a professor of English with a very strong Jewish identity. He is also a very acute observer of nature and portrays animals and flowers lovingly. The last poem illuminates the title of the collection: the “rabbis” are birds! I was reminded of Psalms 19, “The heavens declare the glory of G-d.”

The first poem in the collection describes how the poet lifts up his daughter into an apple tree and is reminded of the medieval Jewish Spanish poet Jehudah haLevi. Terman returns to Jehudah haLevi in his penultimate poem, forming a frame for the book. There, he attacks haLevi’s concern with the spiritual, emphasizing his preference for “the dandruff of my dead friend’s dark hair rather than the inscribed stones [of] Moses.” Death plays its part in many of the poems, for example, when the author marks the anniversary of Kafka’s decease and says *kaddish*. The professor of English is evident in such lines as: “This is the summer of our content.” Professor Terman’s verse offers its readers much pleasure.

*Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

**Weil, Grete.** *Aftershocks: Stories*. Translated from the German by John S. Barrett. Boston: D.R. Godine, 2008. 113 p. \$16.95 (ISBN 978-1-56792-282-0).

This collection was first published, as a slightly different compilation of stories, in Switzerland in 1992. The English translation is posthumous. The author spent the Second World War in hiding in Holland and her husband died in a concentration camp. The common theme of the stories is the emotional disabilities of Holocaust survivors. The author’s dedication reads: “they who have gotten away with their lives are doomed.”

The high level of the writing is a tribute to both the author and the translator. A quarter of the book is devoted to a long story, “Finish What You Started.” The heroine is a Holocaust survivor, possibly the author herself, on vacation alone in Mexico. She meets a tour guide she believes is a German war criminal whom she encountered during the war and agonizes over taking certain actions, but lacks the courage. An example of the writing and the author’s ability to create an atmosphere: “This is a country one ought to ride through. Alone. Nobody asking you questions. Figure out for yourself what’s beautiful, what’s not ... Burn the letters you got from home without reading them.”

I breathed a sigh of relief that this book was short. It is amazing in how many different ways human beings can be emotional crippled. It is a book to be sampled, not to be read from cover to cover. Read it because it is a change from the second-rate writing we settle for so often.

*Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

**Wenkart, Henny.** *Love Poems of a Philanderer’s Wife*. Translated into Yiddish by Mindy Rinkewich. NY: CYCO Bikher Ferlag, 2007. 69, 72 p. \$12.00 (ISBN 978-0-97245-659-3).

Henny Wenkart founded the Jewish Women’s Poetry Workshop in New York and has brought the work of Jewish women writers to public attention through her many publishing ventures. In honor of her leadership, Kolot, the Center for Jewish Women & Gender Studies at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical

College, has established a writer-in-residence program in her name.

Wenkart was born in Vienna and escaped with her family to America, where she met and later married a German-Jewish refugee. These poems are an autobiographical portrayal of her early life and her feelings about Jewishness and motherhood. Mainly though, they are an unflinching chronicle of her husband’s unfaithfulness. She writes unsparingly of her pain, her shame, and her continuing love for him. Her candor is admirable, but these are more magazine confessionals than poetry. Her bitterness, wit and raw emotion are powerful, but the language is prosaic, even clumsy at times—“squoze” for squeezed, “worry’s secondhandedness.” Overall, the work succeeds more as an honest description of a woman’s experience than as poetry.

Included in the book are Yiddish translations of Wenkart’s poems by Mindy Rinkewich. A contemporary of Wenkart, Rinkewich translates widely and professionally from other languages into English. Dedicated as it to modern Yiddish literature, CYCO has given Rinkewich a vehicle to create Yiddish poetry by translating Wenkart’s work. Libraries collecting Yiddish may want to buy it. It may also interest libraries collecting Jewish poetry or Jewish feminist literature.

*Beth Dwoskin, Proquest, Ann Arbor, MI*

**Yanover, Yori.** *The Cabalist’s Daughter*. Teaneck, NJ: Ben Yehuda Press, 2008. 296 p. \$18.95 (ISBN 978-0-97899-809-7).

I frequently hear complaints from my colleagues that there are no decent novels aimed at an Orthodox audience. Publishers give us only books that show the community in a positive light and that spoon-feed day-old sermons in the guise of barely-readable prose. *The Cabalist’s Daughter*, the first novel from Yori Yanover, is actively attempting to buck this trend. But does he succeed?

The “cabalist” of the title is a thinly-disguised version of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe who, after his death, is cloned by one of his followers. Unexpectedly, the clone turns out to be female and the reader is guided through a world of demons, dybbuks and political intrigue as the girl begins her messianic quest. Yanover’s blend of fantasy and humor, while extremely derivative of Douglas Adams and Terry Pratchett, is a great deal more polished than any fiction being published by Feldheim, Devorah and their ilk.

Yanover, who has written non-fiction about Chabad Hasidism seems intent on offending everyone. From his not-terribly respectful portrayals of biblical figures, his ethnic stereotypes, or his political and religious views, readers from any walk of life will be guaranteed to bristle at something in this novel. Nevertheless, this is a strong debut novel, light years ahead of most of what is out there for Orthodox Jewish fiction.

*Daniel A. Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

## NONFICTION

**Abramson, Glenda.** *Hebrew Writing of the First World War*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008. 405 p. \$30.00 (ISBN-978-0-85303-771-2).

The wealth of writing about the Holocaust and World War II is almost unfathomable, and certainly one could not do justice to it



in one book; that is not the case for the literature of World War I. In this scholarly volume, Glenda Abramson examines the Hebrew literature that emerged as a consequence of the first World War. The author explores the works of about a dozen great writers, in an effort to describe Jewish life in the various warring countries and the tensions caused by Jews fighting Jews. By participating as soldiers for their homelands, many thought that they would be more accepted, and that anti-Semitism would subside. This, however, was not the case for those fighting as Russians or Germans, and their persecution, according to Abramson, has largely been ignored. The author includes in her introduction an extensive statistical overview. Over a million and a quarter Jewish soldiers fought in the war—a staggering number, considering the world Jewish population then.

The writers included in the volume describe the conditions that Jews had to endure, creating a window into that chapter of history. For instance, Agnon's work of that period, *To This Day*, though a novel, serves as a good example of autobiographical experiences in works of literature. Works of Avigdor Hameiri, Uri Zevi Greenberg, Shaul Tchernichowsky, Yehuda Ya'ari, Gershon Shofman, David Vogel, Aharon Reuveni, Ya'akov Hurgin, Yehuda Burla and Y. H. Brenner are analyzed. This title belongs in every large Judaica library collection.

*Michlean Amir, U.S. Memorial Holocaust Museum, Washington, DC*

**Bell, Dean Phillip.** *Jewish Identity in Early Modern Germany: Memory, Power and Community.* Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007. \$99.95 (ISBN 978-0-75465-897-9).

In this richly provocative book, Dean Phillip Bell challenges the view that pre-modern Jews, producing few works of formal history, did not think historically. Using a wide range of sources to demonstrate this awareness, Bell provides a comparative study of early-modern Jewish and Christian views of the past.

In the first chapters, Bell reviews the historiography of memory and its relationship to history. He applies these discussions to probe the manner in which early modern Jewish identity was constructed, arguing that the early modern German Jews narrated the past to enforce order, record traditions, empower authority, and create community. Traditional sources were used both to justify and challenge current communal practices.

The middle chapters provide an overview of Jewish communal organization, governance, and demographics in a wider comparative setting of the Reformation, German politics, and Jewish-Christian relations. Bell finds a historical consciousness and sense of time in works such as books of customs, memory books, communal ledgers, biblical commentary, and religious responsa. Bell provides comparative readings of histories by Josel of Rosheim and David Gans, in the context of contemporary Christian works, as well as a careful reading of Glukel of Hameln's memoir, in light of concepts of honor and prestige. His analysis of fantastic tales and wonder stories in relation to current historical events is innovative.

In the final chapters, Bell argues that Jews were actively shaping their own identity in relationship to the wider Christian context. This book is recommended for academic libraries.

*Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA*

**Bemporad, Jack, ed.** *The Inner Journey: Views from the Jewish Tradition.* Sandpoint, ID: Morning Light Press, 2007. 335 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-59675-015-9).

The latest in *Parabola Magazine's Inner Journey Anthology Series, Views from the Jewish Tradition* is an eclectic collection of excerpts, essays, and interviews. While focusing on Jewish Renewal and other neo-Hasidic movements, there are also selections from the Bible, Talmud, and Zohar, as well as poetry and Hasidic tales. A good introduction to Judaism for those interested in diving into a wide variety of sources as opposed to a formal, organized approach, but those with extensive Jewish backgrounds will find much that is new to them as well.

*Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Besser, Yisroel.** *Reb Shlomo: The Life and Legacy of Rabbi Shlomo Freifeld.* Brooklyn: The Judaica Press, 2008. 344 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-93244-394-30).

Rabbi Freifeld was born in Brooklyn, studied at Yeshivas Chaim Berlin under the tutelage of Rabbi Hutner, and went on to become a leader and influential figure in the Orthodox Jewish community. He started a yeshiva, Sh'or Yoshuv, for boys who were not succeeding in conventional institutions of Jewish study. This biography includes a brief summary of his life, his early years in Brooklyn, the people who influenced his life, and how his outlook made his yeshiva such a success. Many examples of his interactions with others are related in the form of vignettes. There is a glossary in the back of the book, but it could have been more comprehensive.

Rabbi Besser has obviously done a lot of research. Many biographies of great rabbis are hard to read because they contain discussions of esoteric talmudic debates or tales to which most readers cannot relate (e.g., getting frostbite while sleeping in a sukkah; spending four hours looking for a needle). Such is not the case here. Reb Shlomo's practice of respect and concern for everyone he encountered is an example from which all readers can learn. Reading about his untimely death at age 65 and his students' response was particularly touching. This book is very highly recommended for libraries serving Orthodox patrons. For those serving non-Orthodox patrons, it is an optional, but solid choice.

*Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ*

**Board, Barbara.** *Reporting from Palestine 1943-1944.* Nottingham, England: Five Leaves Publications, 2008. 288 p. \$17.88 (£9.99). (ISBN-978-1-905512-32-4).

Board, a female British journalist for the *Daily Mirror*, lived and reported eye-witness accounts of events in Mandatory Palestine from April 1943 to early 1945. In a lively style, she presents an active characterization of the social and political situation during this brief but tumultuous period. Board captures much of the communal sentiment through interviews supplemented by the reporting of the local press, both Jewish and Arab. In doing so, she contrasts the advances of western European culture and education with the lack of basic social services offered in the Arab world, particularly in rural areas. She points out how each Jewish national community retained the veneer of its specific European national sentiment, such as Austrian superiority to the Germans, who saw themselves as better than the Poles, who

looked down upon the Russians. In the North, in Tiberias, the influx of western European Jews created some tension with the local Yemenite Jewish community as well as with the Palestinian Arab population. A great deal of the reporting is devoted to the activities of the Irgun and Lehi, referred to by Board as "gangsters," whose activities are characterized as "terrorism." Palestinian Arab violence, also covered, is described as being carried out by "Arab bandits." The violent activities of a minority of Jews, Board insinuates, seemed to tarnish the character of the entire Jewish community in Palestine, resulting in an increase in anti-Semitic sentiment in Great Britain and to some extent in the US. There is a sense of bitterness displayed by the author, mostly toward ardent Zionists who are portrayed as frequently discriminating against Arab laborers and behaving in a domineering and arrogant fashion toward the local Arab population. The real value of this book is its style of honest representation, regardless of the substance which may offend some readers. It is, in the end, a slice of history of the development of Israel.

*Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Borowitz, Eugene B., and Frances W. Schwartz.** *A Touch of the Sacred: A Theologian's Informal Guide to Jewish Belief.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007. 221 p. \$21.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-337-8).

This overview of Reform Judaism is divided into six parts, each containing eight to ten very brief chapters, from faith through mitzvot, sacred texts, core beliefs, and 20th-century thinkers. A guide to spirituality as well as advice on how to translate that inner state to outer *menschlichkeit*, this is a deeply personal book as Rabbi Borowitz comes to terms with his wife's death. Admiring as he is of "the Rav" (J.B. Soloveichik), this work is not likely to appeal to the modern Orthodox, and Conservative readers may be disappointed with his critique of A.J. Heschel, for failing to resolve the clash between ethics and religion. But it has several possible audiences: Bible study groups, Reconstructionist Jews wanting a post-Kaplan theology, and Christians seeking an understanding of Jewish thought. Feminists will find support for their position; all who seek an evolving conceptualization of religion will be reinforced.

It is a useful introduction to theology and therefore appropriate for public libraries as well as colleges and universities. For those who remember Borowitz's innovative *Sh'ma*, he remains anti-doctrinaire and post-denominational, and profoundly committed to the concept of the covenant.

*Rochelle Berger Elstein, Evanston, IL*

**Bruskin, Grisha.** *Past Imperfect: 318 Episodes from the Life of a Russian Artist.* Translated by Alice Nakhimovsky. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press (*Judaic Traditions in Literature, Music and Art*) 2008. 365 p. \$34.95 (ISBN-978-0-81560-901-8).

Grisha Bruskin, a very successful Russian Jewish expatriate artist, tells the story of his life through a series of pithy, succinct anecdotes. They are full of the mordancy that often characterizes the work of artists who have lived under Soviet rule. Bruskin was born in 1945, and this book is a fascinating picture of growing up Jewish in post-war Russia. As in pre-war Western Europe, Bruskin and his contemporaries suffered constant anti-Semitism but knew very little about being Jewish. He conveys a sense of a

fairly normal upbringing, despite the repressive society around him. He speaks fondly of his family memories, and includes wonderful photographs of his parents and grandparents as they lived out the ideals of the Revolution.

As an unsanctioned artist, Bruskin suffered the constant harassment of the official establishment, and with ironic humor, he gives the details of his struggle to exhibit his art. The book includes photographs of details and fragments from his work, including his brilliant, profound series of Jewish-themed works, the *Alefbet* series. His art borrows from Jewish history, religion, and kabbalah to create mystical images in a style reminiscent of medieval paintings. The work is at once reverent and disturbing.

Though this is a well-written book about a major Jewish artist, the art itself is not traditional. The book will find a place in comprehensive collections about Jewish art, collections that emphasize modern Russian Jewish history, or collections of Jewish biography.

*Beth Dwoskin, Proquest Ann Arbor, MI*

**Cook, Michael J.** *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament: Enhancing Jewish Well-Being in a Christian Environment.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008. 374 p. \$29.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-313-2).

This book grew out of the author's experience teaching New Testament to rabbinic students at HUC-JIR, and one of its aims is to provide resources that rabbis and others can use in their congregations. Cook's primary thesis is that Jews who live among Christians will benefit by engaging in the study of the New Testament. Past ignorance of these texts has left Jews at a disadvantage when trying to understand their Christian neighbors, answer critics, or respond to missionary efforts.

Cook devotes many pages to the detailed analysis of specific New Testament texts. For example, he discusses Passover's attraction for modern Christians and shows how they read Christian theology into the modern Jewish seder. He argues that the original Last Supper must have been an ordinary, non-Passover meal, but after 70 CE, Mark probably edited the story to make it refer to Passover. R. Gamaliel II's formulation of the seder at about the same time may have been in reaction to the use of Passover symbols in emergent Christian texts.

Although Cook is a respected scholar, one should not assume that his views always represent a scholarly consensus. As he remarks, there is disagreement within New Testament scholarship on virtually every subject mentioned in the book. The project to help the American Jewish community become more engaged in New Testament study is a worthy one. This would be a good first book for those who have been avoiding the subject, but it should not be the last.

*Paul A. Miller, American Jewish University, Bel Air, CA*

**Feldt, Jakob.** *The Israeli Memory Struggle: History and Identity in the Age of Globalization.* Odense, Denmark: University of Southern Denmark, 2007. 228 p. \$29.99 (ISBN-978-87-7674-218-8).

Beginning in the 1990s, a scholarly debate began among professional Israeli historians over the nature of Zionism, its origins, and relationship to Judaism and Israel in the modern age.

Feld examines this dialogue, relying heavily upon sociological theories on the function of memory, in an attempt to create an understanding of Israel's past. The "new historians," a group of Israelis whose interpretations of the founding of the state have created a great deal of rancor in Israel and elsewhere, represent, in the opinion of Feld, a new cultural orientation of the Israeli folk. As a representative sample of the current Israeli approach to its ideological underpinnings, the author focuses on the Israeli novelist Orly Castel Bloom, the author of *Dolly City* and *Human Parts*, and the short story writer Etgar Keret. Bringing the discussion to the question of Israeli identity today, Feld relies heavily on a set of Israeli historians and philosophers, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin, and Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, to describe the completed circle, an attempt to bring the Diaspora back to Israel. The most recent example of cultural history can be gleaned from the popular Israeli TV series, *Tekumah*, characterizing Israeli history in a post-Zionist context, memorializing Israel's 50th anniversary. It is sometimes easy to get lost in the convoluted language used by Feld, which employs a heavy dose of rhetoric familiar to philosophers alone. But for those who are brave enough to venture into this discussion, this is a great source for debate and controversy.

*Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Firestone, Reuven.** *An Introduction to Islam for Jews.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. 298 p. \$18.00 (ISBN 978-0-82760-864-1).

This book provides the Jewish reader with a valuable tool: a readable, comprehensive, and reliable introduction to Islam with special attention to issues relevant to Jews regarding past and present events and attitudes. The book is divided into three parts with nine concise chapters each: a survey of Islamic history; God, the Qur'an and Islamic law; and the Umma: Islam in practice. Islamic terminology is used and explained throughout the book, which includes explanatory endnotes, a glossary, bibliography, and subject index. Firestone provides a clear examination of historical events as well as basic Islamic doctrinal issues and practices. He elaborates on Muhammad's attitude towards Jews, the status of Jews in Muslim states within the framework of "the Abode of Islam," and Jews as followers of a monotheistic religion who are regarded as "People of the Book" and as such, are entitled to keep their religion and be "Protected People" of secondary status. Firestone also examines some current issues, like the attitude of Islam to suicide, following the emergence of the phenomenon of suicide bombers. The book would be of greater value had it included maps and a chronology, and cited important people in the index by name rather than by patronymic (e.g., "Ali ibn Abi Talib" instead of "ibn Abi Talib, Ali"). This authoritative and readable book is of value for students and general readers alike.

*Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ*

**Frank, Daniel, and Matt Goldish, eds.** *Rabbinic Culture and Its Critics: Jewish Authority, Dissent, and Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Times.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008. 480 p. \$49.95 (ISBN 978-0-81433-237-5).

It is commonly assumed that, until modern times, Jewish communities were led, advised, and policed by rabbis. The wide

array of studies in this volume is devoted to debunking that assumption. While rabbis were usually in a dominant position, they often found themselves on the receiving end of bitter criticism, accusations, and popular pressure. Sometimes, it was not rabbis themselves who bore the brunt of these attacks, but a more abstract idea of rabbinic culture.

The articles are divided into three sections—the Middle Ages, the Early Modern era, and a self-contained section on the Sabbatean movement. Some of the articles are sure to become vital components in the curriculum of Jewish scholarship. But the volume as a whole will be of interest to synagogues or individuals looking for a historical perspective on the tensions between rabbis and communities, between Jews and their traditions.

*Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University and National Library of Israel, Jerusalem*

**Geller, Victor B.** *Take it Like a Soldier: A Memoir.* New York: Distributed by The Jewish Quarter, 2007. 317 p. \$24.00 (No ISBN). Available from Stuart Verstandig, [stuartdv@Juno.com](mailto:stuartdv@Juno.com).

This autobiographical work is printed privately and distributed by the Jewish Quarter. The author, born in 1925, covers the period of his childhood in the working-class Bronx of the 1930s and his war service, culminating in his work in Buchenwald. In the absence of a Jewish chaplain in his unit, Geller was asked to accept that role, along with his other duties. In Buchenwald, the author acted as an interpreter, helping the survivors to look for members of their families in the United States, and facilitated their emigration. The work ends on a somewhat pessimistic note, describing an anti-Semitic demonstration in post-war Paris.

The descriptions are detailed, creating a vivid picture of the period. The work is characterized by a very appealing sense of humor. I especially enjoyed his description of his work as an interpreter, interpreting between a Scottish officer and an American officer from the Southern United States, who did not realize that the Scot was speaking English.

I recommend the book as background to an historical period and also as a work that can be read for pleasure.

*Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

**Gerstenfeld, Manfred, ed.** *Academics Against Israel and the Jews.* Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2007. 276 p. \$30.00 (ISBN-965-218-057-2).

Beginning in 2002, an intense campaign began to attack Israel through western academic institutions taking the approach of a boycott of Israeli academicians and their respective institutions. This issue is addressed by the editor of a collection of 18 essays. The contributors are connected to the institutions to which they direct their attention, either as a faculty members or as students. They approach this pernicious movement through the use of case studies over a wide range of schools in the United States including Harvard, Columbia, Rutgers, and the Santa Cruz and Irvine campuses of the University of California, universities in Great Britain including the University of London's premier School of African and Asian Studies (SOAS), as well as Australia, Concordia in Canada, Utrecht in the Netherlands, and as might be assumed, Palestinian universities. The period of coverage is from early 2002 to the end of 2007. This component of the political

conflict, which takes place in the vaunted ivory towers, impacts the campus lives of Jewish students and their organizations such as Hillel, as well as the specialized study of the entire region to which many schools have devoted some portion of their curriculum. For a supplement, librarians should look at: *Academic Rights, Academic Responsibilities: A New Approach* (Washington, DC: The Israel on Campus Coalition, 2007).

For those interested in anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli discussions, especially those working with pre-collegiate, Jewish youth, this work is essential reading.

Sanford R. Silverburg, *Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Gur, Janna.** *The Book of New Israeli Food: A Culinary Journey.* New York: Schocken Books, 2007. 303 p. \$35.00 (ISBN 978-0-80521-224-2).

*The Book of New Israeli Food* is a cookbook fit, not only for the kitchen, but for the coffee table as well. This introduction to modern Israeli cuisine features exquisite food with photography courtesy of Israeli photographer Eilon Paz. Janna Gur, founder and editor of *Al ha-Shulhan Gastronomic Monthly*, Israel's leading food and wine magazine, presents staples of Israeli culinary culture as well as recipes that might be less known in the diaspora. In addition to the recipes, all of which are kosher, Gur provides context of the role these foods play in Israeli life. Highly recommended not only for libraries with cookbook collections, but for those with a focus on photography and modern Israeli culture.

Daniel Scheide, *Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Hammer, Shalom.** *Vayaged Yehonatan: The Eybeshitz Haggadah.* New York: Devorah, 2008. 440 p. \$24.95. (ISBN 978-1-93444-024-7).

**Hoffman, Lawrence A., and David Arnov, eds.** *My People's Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2008. 2 v. \$49.95. (ISBN 978-1-58023-354-5).

**Kalderon, Asher.** *A New Passover Haggadah.* Tel Aviv: A. Kalderon Arts, 2008. 120 p. \$65.00.

**Klein, Eliahu J.** *A Mystical Haggadah: Passover Meditations, Teachings and Tales.* Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2008. 189 p. \$16.95. (ISBN 978-1-5564-3649-9).

**Spiegel, Murray, and Rickey Stein.** *300 Ways to Ask the Four Questions.* Roseland, NJ: Spiegel-Stein Publishing, 2008. 368 p. \$39.95. (ISBN 978-0-61515-063-5).

These titles represent a wealth of Passover Haggadot, as Pesach approaches. Although Rabbi Yonatan Eybeshitz was well known in his lifetime as a talmudist, kabbalist, and community leader, most people know his name due to the accusations leveled against him by Rabbi Yaakov Emden. In 1751, Emden claimed that Eybeshitz was a secret Sabbatian or perhaps even a Christian, and this controversy is still debated among historians to this day. In the meantime, Rabbi Shalom Hammer has sought to rescue Rabbi Eybeshitz's teachings from the dustbins of history and present them to the English-speaking public. He had originally planned to compile all of Eybeshitz's writings on the Exodus and Passover and create a Haggadah. Fortunately, the work had already been done for him by an anonymous Israeli editor, and Hammer has translated this work, adding his own comments. While it is often difficult to tell where Eybeshitz's thoughts end

and Hammer's begin, and the idiosyncratic vocabulary might prove difficult to those without an Orthodox background, this Haggadah is not meant to be a scholarly edition, but a vehicle to promote the thought of a neglected Torah giant to a wider audience, and would be a welcome addition to the library of any Orthodox institution.

On the heels of the successful *My People's Prayerbook* series, Jewish Lights brings us *My People's Passover Haggadah*. This series offers modern commentaries from a wide variety of perspectives and this two-volume examination of the Haggadah is the best to date. The beauty of the series is the number of different perspectives offered on the text. The reader can view the Haggadah through the lens of the midrash, the medieval rabbis, halakhah, Hasidut, or modern non-traditional movements within Judaism. Largely missing from this wealth of resources, however, is any contribution from the world of Middle-Eastern Jewry to the extent that one commentator somehow finds it "ironic" that there are Arabic translations of the Haggadah! This reviewer has always thought the feminist commentaries in this series have often been a weak area, but Wendy I. Zierler's work on these volumes has rectified this problem. Marc Brettler's analysis of biblical references in the Haggadah and Joel M. Hoffman's discussion of translations are highlights as usual, but for some reason the editors chose to leave out the two piyuttim *Va-yehi be-hatsi ha-lailah* and *Ve-amartem zevah Pesah*, both of which are chock full of obscure biblical references which makes literal translation difficult. It would have been fascinating to read these commentators' views on these poems. *My People's Passover Haggadah* is a valuable resource for any Jewish library.

The Haggadah has always been the traditional Jewish text most often subject to artistic interpretation. Israeli artist Asher Kalderon's *New Passover Haggadah* is a gorgeous book, bursting with color. Best known for his design of many Israeli postage stamps, Kalderon fills his work with imagery both familiar and original. Kalderon's Haggadah is unusual in that he includes visual portrayals of God. Even more intriguing is the representation of the Jewish deity in a Haggadah with an eye, given the prominence of this symbol in Egyptian mythology. This caveat aside, any collection of artistic Haggadot should seek out this treasure.

For those with an interest in Kabbalah, there is Eliahu Klein's *Mystical Haggadah*. This is not the pop-kabbalah one can find overflowing from bookstore shelves these days, but ideas from authentic traditional sources. Klein's commentary is based on both Hasidic masters and mekubalim from Middle-Eastern traditions. Although he presents a fascinating personal account of his encounter with the famous kabbalistic yeshiva of Bet El in Jerusalem, the book is weighted towards more familiar Hasidic sources. Some aspects of the commentary may be a little obscure for those without a basic knowledge of kabbalistic concepts, but surprisingly the highlight of this work is the translation of the Haggadah itself. If you intend on owning only one Haggadah, then you should look elsewhere, but if you are familiar with the original Hebrew text or have access to other translations, then Klein's version will be a joy to pore over and compare with others. Influenced by the translations of his teacher Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Klein provides new insights into the text in clear prose. The Haggadah is a perfect text for this style of translation; while



it may not always reflect a literal interpretation of the text, when you can easily lay their hands on a *Maxwell House Haggadah* for comparison, it can't do too much harm. This volume includes many fascinating kabbalistic illustrations used for meditation, but unfortunately Klein does little to explain how they should be used. The book includes a bibliography and glossary, both of which are very helpful, but could have been a bit more thorough. Overall, a welcome addition to any collection of Haggadot.

While the *AJL Newsletter* does not typically review self-published books, we have decided to make an exception in the case of *300 Ways to Ask the Four Questions* which presents the youngest child's Four Questions in more languages than perhaps you were aware of. Readers may recall a very similar book published by Shoken, which was reviewed in a recent *Newsletter*. While that book was enjoyable in its own right, this effort is superior in every way. The languages range from Abkhaz to Zulu, including eight dialects of Chinese, four forms of sign language, four click languages, three forms of Braille, and Hebrew semaphore. Reading the same text in over 300 different languages is liable to make one a bit silly, so the compilers have thoughtfully provided versions in Klingon, Valley Girl, Sullen Teenager, and more. The translations include information about the language, pronunciation notes and fascinating accounts of the difficulties inherent in translating the original Hebrew into a particular language. The book is accompanied by a CD and a DVD with over 340 recordings of the Four Questions, videos of sign language versions, songs, games, and more. The recordings include readings by Theodore Bikel, a Masai warrior, the chief editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a Tuvin throat-singer and a 7-year-old Orthodox Jew fluent in Tamil, English and Yiddish. Highly recommended, particularly for synagogue and school libraries.

Daniel A. Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

**Hazan, Eric.** *Notes on the Occupation: Palestinian Lives.* New York and London: The New Press, 2006. 113 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-1-59558-202-7).

Palestinians find themselves under Israeli military and administrative occupation resulting from the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, which in turn erupted from Arab states' aggressive policies. The protracted occupation has resulted largely from the failure of the Palestinians to work for a negotiated settlement with Israel as a recognized Jewish state. The observations in this thin tome are made by a French free-lance journalist, Eric Hazan, in three cities on the West Bank: Nablus, Qalqilya, and Hebron. Notes were taken during a period of relative calm—May and June 2006—and the book was written in August of that year. Hazan made no attempt to determine the veracity of the tales of woe, but much of what is transcribed has been verified by other sources.

The interviewees in Nablus, who range from merchants to farmers to students, tell their stories in a matter-of-fact pattern. The source of deprivation certainly is laid primarily at the doorstep of the Israelis, but not entirely. The Jordanian kingdom gets its share of criticism, as do Palestinian hoodlums carrying nationalistic banners. The message presented could not be clearer: the ordinary Palestinian faces incessant interruptions by the Israeli military and occupation authorities.

The second city, Qalqilya, sits astride the Separation Barrier (aka the Wall), which creates its own set of difficulties for the residents of this city. Problems created by Israeli settlers and their outposts include water pollution and desecration of olive trees and land. The third city, Hebron, is divided into two segments as a result of the Oslo Accords, one controlled by the Palestinians and one controlled by the Israelis, complicating the description of life there. Many interviewees are veterans of various "resistance movements," and have been in Israeli prisons. The tales told are sad ones, evoking an emotional appeal for support. This slim book provides a candid capsule of what many Palestinians regard as their plight, caught between an inept political authority and a foreign occupying body.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

**Helmreich, William B., Mark Rosenblum, and David Schimel, eds.** *The Jewish Condition: Challenges and Responses, 1938-2008.* New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008. 160 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-41280-802-6).

*The Jewish Condition* is a compilation of speeches given at a well-attended conference in April 2007, at Queens College in New York. Each speaker was asked to address the question, "Are Jews today in a similar situation to the Jews in Europe in 1938?" The speakers were in agreement that we are not in as perilous a situation as were the Jews of Europe in 1938, yet we do have serious problems that need to be addressed. The impressive list of speakers at the conference includes Malcolm Hoenlein, Alan Dershowitz, Norman Podheretz, Yechiel Eckstein, and David Saperstein. The essays are well edited and easy to read for the scholar or layman. Included at the end of the book is a short biography of each speaker as well as an index. This timely and important book is recommended for all libraries.

Ilka Gordon, Siegal College of Judaic Studies, Cleveland, OH

**Hoffman, Stefani, and Ezra Mendelsohn, eds.** *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia's Jews.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. 320 p. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-0-8122-4064-1).

This collection of articles is derived from a conference at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 2004, which focused on the significance of the Revolution of 1905 in the emergence of modern Jewish politics. The papers are rooted in the seminal work, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917*, by Jonathan Frankel, who also participated in the conference. The volume is edited by Hebrew University academics. Contributors include leading scholars such as Abraham Ascher, Dmitri Elyashevich, Agnieszka Friedrich, Semion Goldin, Hannan Hever, Brian Horowitz, Rebecca Kobrin, Mikhail Krutikov, Eli Lederhendler, Vladimir Levin, Kenneth B. Moss, Benjamin Nathans, Barry Trachtenberg, Scott Ury, Jeffrey Veidlinger, Theodore R. Weeks, Robert Weinberg, and Richard Wortman.

Although the events of 1905 have been described by Lenin as a "dress rehearsal" for the Revolution of 1917, the essays seek to loosen the bonds that tie 1905 to its alleged antecedents and consequences—the election of Russia's first democratically elected parliament as well as campaigns of unprecedented murderous anti-Jewish violence—and to confront the ambiguity of its outcome. The studies utilize memoirs by participants and

eyewitnesses, among them, the future prime minister, David Ben Gurion, and Hebrew writers Uri Nissan Gnessin and Yosef Haim Brenner. Topics addressed include: "Reassessing the 1905 Revolution," "The Old Regime Confronts its "Jewish question," "1905 as a Crossroads for the Empire's Jews," "Cultural Reflections of Revolution," "Overseas Ripples: 1905 and American Jewry." Essential for research and synagogue libraries.

Veronica Belling, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

**Keneally, Thomas.** *Searching for Schindler: A Memoir.* New York: Nan A. Talese, 2007. 272 p. \$25.00 (ISBN 978-0-38552-617-3).

"I had not grasped it. It had grasped me," writes Thomas Keneally of his compelling interest in the Oskar Schindler story. Keneally, an accomplished Australian writer, happened across Leopold "Poldek" Page/Pfefferberg, owner of a handbag store in Beverly Hills, when searching for a briefcase during his travels. Leopold, an exuberant and savvy Holocaust survivor, and his wife Misia had been saved by the morally ambiguous Schindler, an ethnic German, who came to Krakow in 1939 to acquire a factory, Deutsche Email Fabrik. His sources of labour were Jewish concentration camp prisoners, whom he succeeded in protecting. Pfefferberg was indefatigable in his efforts to publicize Schindler's deeds. By the time the author stepped in, Leopold had already acquired an "archive" of pertinent sources in his efforts to help MGM produce a movie that never materialized. In 1981, the two embark on an exhaustive, investigative trip interviewing Schindlerjuden and others across the globe. The author shares his personal reactions; the act of writing, with its pleasures and struggles; the role of Catholicism in his life as well as in Schindler's; the support and of his wife and daughters in this project and his concern in verifying information; an account of the legal rights, publication, and the ensuing book tours and fanfare.

Keneally also devotes several chapters to the saga that eventually resulted in Steven Spielberg's movie, *Schindler's List*, from his book. Written with humor and warmth, this title is recommended for all libraries, especially community and synagogue ones.

Leah Cohen, Library and Archives Canada, Gatineau Quebec

**Kurzem, Mark.** *The Mascot: The Extraordinary Story of a Young Jewish Boy and an SS Extermination Squad.* London: Rider, 2007. 340 p. \$26.95 (ISBN 978-1-84604-036-8).

This is the absorbing account of a young boy who escaped the massacre of the Jews in his hometown and ended up in the hands of a Latvian police battalion. While hiding his true identity, five-year-old Alex managed to ingratiate himself with the soldiers, who not only protected him but made him a mascot, dressing him up in miniature SS uniform. During the war Alex accompanied the unit and even appeared in propaganda films as a model Aryan.

This story reads like a mystery novel, with clues tossed here and there and flashbacks, some surreal and disturbing, such as Alex's wandering alone through the forest after the massacre, and surviving on vegetation fertilized by the rotting corpses of soldiers. It begins in Melbourne, where Alex had emigrated after the war, and takes the reader around the world—to Oxford, where the author, his son, was a research student, and eventually to

the former Soviet Union, where Alex had to face sobering truths about his "benefactors" and rescuers. The details are especially vivid because of the author's personal involvement, which begins when his father appears before him clutching a suitcase stuffed with wartime memorabilia and a photograph of himself in the toy soldier outfit. Together they strive to uncover the past, of which his father can only remember two words: *Koidanov* and *Panok*. Slowly he regains his identity, as well as amazing family discoveries.

*The Mascot* is a welcome addition to Holocaust collections, not only for the excellence of writing but for a story that is both unique and ironic. Highly recommended.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, NY

**Lawson, Tom, and James Jordan, eds.** *The Memory of the Holocaust in Australia.* London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008. 152 p. \$74.95 (ISBN 978-0-85303-794-1).

With some 27,000 Holocaust survivors, proportionately more than any country outside of Israel, the Jewish community of Australia (today numbering 100,000), provides a fertile field for the study of Holocaust memory. Australian Jewish identity was shaped by Holocaust survivors who established the first Jewish day schools in the early 1940s, yet it took another 35 years before the actual memory could be articulated. This collection of articles by established as well as younger scholars deals with the history, problems, outward manifestations, and the future of Holocaust memory in Australia. It is edited by UK academics and co-editors of *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*.

Articles include a Holocaust survivor story; the history of the Moriah College in Sydney; responses to the trial of Adolf Eichmann; a critique of the first Australian Holocaust novel, *The Riders in the Chariot* by Nobel prize winner Patrick White; a study of the trans-generational transmission of Holocaust memory; the effect of video testimony on the third generation; and Australian Holocaust memorials in public life, particularly the Sydney Jewish Museum. Characterized by silence until the 1970s, and currently still almost exclusively confined to the Jewish community, Holocaust memory will have to engage with Australia's own xenophobia as well as its colonial genocidal past if it is to remain relevant to future generations.

Recommended for research and synagogue libraries.

Veronica Belling, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

**Medoff, Rafael.** *Rav Chesed: The Life and Times of Rabbi Haskel Lookstein.* Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2008. 162p. \$18.95 (ISBN 978-1-60280-043-4).

*Rav Chesed* is an intimate and loving portrait of Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, principal of Ramaz School and rabbi of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in New York. The book was written as part of the celebration of Rabbi Lookstein's fiftieth year as rabbi of Kehilath Jeshurun. Medoff begins with the role played by Rabbi Lookstein's father, Joseph Lookstein (a prominent rabbi, innovative educator, and world class orator), and Rabbi Joseph Solevechick in the development of Rabbi Haskel's religious and educational philosophy. Rabbi Lookstein's involvement in the major Jewish causes of the past fifty years such as the Soviet Jewry Movement, Jewish women's issues, and Zionism, are discussed

and lauded. *Rav Chesed* is recommended for synagogue libraries, because it gives an insider's view of the accomplishments and struggles going on in the "centrist Orthodox" camp. In addition to being the story of a man's life and accomplishments thus far, it is a brief history of the major Jewish struggles of the last fifty years.

*Ilka Gordon, Siegal College of Judaic Studies, Cleveland OH*

**Meir-Levi, David.** *History Upside Down: The Roots of Palestinian Fascism and the Myth of Israeli Aggression.* New York and London: Encounter Books, 2007. 131 p. \$20.00. (ISBN-978-1-59403-192-2).

Deceptively simple by reason of its length, this book gives the impression of mere description, yet it contains the author's insightful analysis. Meir-Levi's sources appear to be either from Israeli diplomatic or intelligence agencies; together with collateral anecdotal stories, they support his argument well.

Meir-Levi is an American-born Israeli with a background in Israeli and American universities and now a freelance writer and political commentator with the David Horowitz Freedom Center. He presents a popularized narrative depicting a connection between contemporary extremist Islamic exploitation of the religious doctrine of jihad and the European political philosophy of fascism. The origin of the notion clearly began with the creation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna. The Brotherhood railed against the closing era of Islamic control in the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Palestine. With the emergence of Nazi Germany, al-Banna became entangled with Germany as an ally against the common enemy Great Britain. In Palestine, its ideological ally became Haj Amin al-Husayni, the ardent Palestinian nationalist and avowed anti-Zionist. Meir-Levi proceeds with a description of the development of Palestinian nationalism, which was manipulated by surrounding Arab states and then augmented by Soviet-supplied ideological propaganda to support the Palestine Liberation Organization. He then picks apart all the various issues and components of the Arab-Israeli conflict, presenting a strong defense of Israeli policies from settlements to the Separation Barrier to the peace process.

*History Upside Down* is an excellent primer for pre-collegiate Jewish youth, which will prepare them for the anti-Israeli onslaught they are apt to confront on American campuses today.

*Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Offen, Bernard.** *My Hometown Concentration Camp: A Survivors's Account of Life in the Kraków and Plaszów Concentration Camp.* Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, (Library of Holocaust Testimonies) 2008. 138 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-85303-636-4).

This is yet another of hundreds of personal stories written by Holocaust survivors. In his preface, Sir Martin Gilbert states: "The memoirs of each survivor throw new light and cast new perspectives on the fate of the Jews of Europe during the Holocaust ... Each new memoir adds to our knowledge not only of the Holocaust but also of many aspects of the human condition that are universal and timeless."

Bernard was not yet 11 years old, when he and his family were deported from his home in Krakow. Of more than 60 members of his family, only Bernard and his two older brothers survived.

In simple words and with the help of co-author Norman G. Jacobs, the author opens the door to his sorrowful past. This book relates the horrific story of what happened to Bernard and his family, and it serves as a guide to the Krakow of his childhood and the Krakow of today. Its final chapters describe the slow and painful struggle of this survivor to deal with his losses and suffering, and gradually discover new meaning and purpose in his life. Maps and photographs illustrate this narrative. Notes and a 6-page bibliography testify to the research that enhances Offen's autobiographical account. Recommended for libraries with extensive Holocaust collections.

*Susanne M. Batzdorff, Congregation Beth Ami, Santa Rosa, CA*

**Ostricker, Alicia Suskin.** *For the Love of God: The Bible as an Open Book.* New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007. 164 p. \$22.95 (ISBN 978-0-81354-200-3).

Poet Alicia Suskin Ostricker points out that, for better or for worse, the United States is a culture built around the Bible. She feels, however, that certain parts of the Jewish Bible are emphasized to the exclusion of others. *For the Love of God* is a series of meditations on books of the Bible Ostricker feels are being ignored: the Song of Songs, Ruth, Psalms, Kohelet, Jonah and Job. Ostricker struggles deeply with these texts, pitting her modern Western sensibilities against those of the Bible. Whether one agrees with her conclusions or not, any lover of Tanakh will enjoy and derive new insights from her honest grappling with these texts. Highly recommended, in particular for synagogue libraries.

*Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Rohr, Isabelle.** *The Spanish Right and the Jews, 1898-1945: Antisemitism and Opportunism.* Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007. 211 p. \$62.50 cloth (ISBN 978-1-84519-181-1); \$35.00 pbk. (ISBN 978-1-84519-182-5).

This careful history traces the determinants of Spanish right-wing policy towards the Jews, traditional Christian anti-Judaism, the role of the *Reconquista* in the national mythos, and the conspiratorial fantasies of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Indeed the last morphed into Judeo-Bolshevik and Judeo-French conspiracy theories, the former especially during the Civil War, when the nationalists fought the Soviet-supported republic and the latter because of French-Spanish imperial rivalry in North Africa. These Spanish imperial designs were partly the inspiration for what Ms. Rohr calls philosephardism. Practically, it meant, for the Spanish right, an attempt to make use of Spanish Jews in North Africa to further Spanish imperial ambitions. The author maintains that the Franco regime's attitude to the rescue of Jews was opportunistic rather than philanthropic, and changed as the tides of the Second World War turned in favor of the allies. One consistent concern of the regime was to avoid the reestablishment of a permanent Jewish community in Spain. Recommended for larger academic collections and collections of Sephardic history.

*Shmuel Ben-Gad, George Washington University, Washington, DC*





**Rothenberg, Celia E., and Anne Vallely, eds. *New Age Judaism*. Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008. 96 p. \$64.95 cloth (ISBN 978-0-85303-850-4); \$27.95 pbk. (ISBN 978-0-85303-860-3).**

Having read this collection of essays three times I can assert that its size belies its depth. There is much here to be contemplated, and much to encourage fruitful discussion. Rothenberg and Vallely have achieved their goal to stimulate further research on the variety of topics subsumed under the theme of "New Age Judaism." These are sociological studies utilizing the observer/participant methodology. Anne Vallely's "Jewish Redemption by Way of the Buddha," although not observer/participant in nature, offers an intriguing study of "JuBus" (or Jewish Buddhists), and Chava Weissler's "Women of Vision" is a study of a Jewish Renewal ritual recognizing the contributions of women to the furthering of Jewish life.

Less strong are Rothenberg's "New Age Jews," because she combines two separate topics—shamanism and yoga—in the same paper, giving insufficient depth to both, and Ayala Fader's "Jewish Spirituality and Late Capitalism," a study of a New York City Conservative congregation in which Jewish spirituality drowns in a sea of "late Capitalism." Marie-Josée Posen's "Beyond New Age," a rather narrow analysis of a few of Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi's more theoretical writings, seems more concerned with the essays of the two scholars with whose writings the research interacts than it is with Reb Zalman and his place in the Jewish Renewal Movement.

I recommend this book to libraries with an interest in all aspects of the contemporary American Jewish community.

*Daniel J. Rettberg, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Cincinnati, OH*

**Ruth Weisberg: *Unfurled*. Los Angeles, CA: Skirball Cultural Center; distributed by University of Washington Press, 2007. 86 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-0-97042-957-5).**

This catalog accompanies Weisberg's exhibit at the Skirball Cultural Center in which her seminal work, *The Scroll*, is shown along with a sampling of her earlier work. At 94 feet long, *The Scroll* is extremely hard to show in book form. The editors offer details of each section, but do not include any picture of the complete work. The article by Matthew Baigell puts Weisberg's work in the context of Jewish American art, and particularly work done by women. He calls *The Scroll* "one of the most important works ever created in the entire history of Jewish American art." In his article, Donald Kuspit, discusses the "spiritual realism" of *the Scroll*. The plates are clear and colorful. Highly recommended for academic libraries.

*Sheryl Stahl, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles, CA*

**Schachter, Stanley J. *Laugh for God's Sake: Where Jewish Humor and Jewish Ethics Meet*. Jersey City, NY: Ktav, 2008. 154 p. (ISBN 978-1-60280-018-2).**

In his preface, Rabbi Schachter concedes that books on Jewish humor abound. But while most books are either collections of humor without analysis or have notes that focus on historical context, his work links the jokes and humorous stories to Jewish values. He says that jokes illustrate the tension between the *yetzer hara* and the *yetzer tov* that is, the tension between what we want to do and what we should do.

Each chapter covers one theme. Schachter introduces the theme and cites biblical or rabbinic sources to illustrate the Jewish ethical position. He then gives numerous examples of jokes that point out the difficulties in living out that position. While written for adults, this book is also appropriate for high school students. Recommended.

*Sheryl Stahl, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles, CA*

**Schnabel, Gunnar and Monika Tatzkow. *The Story of Street Scene: Restitution of Nazi Looted Art, Case and Controversy*. Translated by Casey Butterfield. Berlin: Proprietas-Verlag, 2008. 133 p. \$25.00 (ISBN: 978-3-00024-710-1).**

Translated from the German and published by the original publisher, this book tells the story of the restitution of a Kirchner painting to the heirs of the original owners, Alfred and Tekla Hess. The author provides a very detailed background, describes the case and the decision to return the painting which was followed by considerable public controversy in Germany. There is a chapter on the legal aspects of the case. The book is profusely illustrated, including photographs of documents, and sources are documented extensively.

Nazi Germany in the 1930s was characterized by a series of immoral laws whose aim was to persecute Jews. Jews found themselves in a position where they had no choice but to sell their possessions at well below market price. Many Germans collaborated with the Nazis by taking advantage of the situation.

After the return of the painting, public figures attacked the decision on the grounds that Jews and their lawyers were plundering the German national heritage. The tone of this book is apologetic! There is no reason to be apologetic! The people who attacked the restitution should be told that they are worthy heirs of those Germans who took advantage of the situation in the 1930s.

*Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

**Schoolman, Leonard A. *The Changing Christian World: A Brief Introduction for Jews*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008. 163 p. \$16.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-344-6).**

In this brief book, Rabbi Schoolman covers many issues of concern to Jews in the United States, specifically relations with Christians. The author is quite thorough in comparing Jewish and Christian understandings of sin, salvation, inspiration of scripture, the Messiah, and tradition. In addition, he addresses some problematic points of Christian theology, such as the trinity and the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Schoolman also presents concerns such as anti-Semitism and proselytizing. The author concludes with the hope of improved relations between Jews and Christians in the United States.

The appendix includes the complete text of the document on Jewish-Christian relations, *Dabru Emet*, published in 2000 and signed by more than 150 rabbis and Jewish scholars. The complete text of *Nostra Aetate*, published in 1965 by Pope Paul VI concerning the relation of the Catholic Church to non-Christian religions is also included. This book is written in an accessible manner and is appropriate as a general interest book in the area of Jewish-Christian relations.

*Arthur G. Quinn, St. Vincent de Paul Seminary, Boynton Beach, FL*

**Segal, Eliezer.** *In Those Days, At This Time: Holiness and History in the Jewish Calendar.* Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2007. 324 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-55238-185-4).

As in many of his previous works, Eliezer Segal manages to find the perfect blend of the scholarly and popular approach to the study of Jewish history. The essays in this volume on the Jewish holidays are made up mostly from his regular column for Calgary's *Jewish Free Press*. These are bite-sized chunks of intriguing tidbits gleaned from primary sources and scholarly literature made palatable for the average reader by Segal's down-to-earth style of teaching. Although the book is aimed at a general audience, Segal is meticulous about citing his sources, and most essays are accompanied by bibliographies. Since each essay is only a few pages long, and deals with seasonal topics, one might think that it would be an easy book to browse and return to later, however the reader is so easily drawn into the fascinating little nuggets that Segal draws out of dry scholarly works, it is very difficult to put down. Highly recommended, particularly for school and synagogue libraries.

*Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Shapiro, Marc B.** *Studies in Maimonides and His Interpreters.* Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2008. 172 p. + 33 p. (Hebrew section). \$10.00 (ISBN-978-1-58966-165-3).

This volume is devoted to the complicated relationship between Maimonides, Rambam, and Moses ben Maimon the Spaniard. That the three were one and the same person merely makes it more complicated. Many scholars and rabbis have devoted tracts to the question of whether Maimonides should

be perceived primarily as a philosopher or as a rabbi. Shapiro suggests that, at the end of the day, Maimonides was a human being, and he was not immune from making mistakes, being forgetful, or having strong opinions. This project may sound somewhat trivial, but Shapiro's tremendous erudition provides a long list of Maimonidean interpreters who did not share this assumption regarding Rambam's fallibility.

Beyond this central theme, the book is somewhat random. It includes two major essays on specific topics in Maimonides' halakhic thought, followed by a short piece on Maimonides' attitude towards Muhammad, which was censored from an earlier article. The Hebrew section contains an exchange about Maimonides between two 19th-century scholars, several short letters by the late Yemenite scholar Joseph Kafih, and a selection of comments on Maimonides by Rabbi Yehiel Jacob Weinberg (who was the subject of Shapiro's first book). An important addition to an academic or synagogue library, with plenty of controversial material to pique the interest of the educated layman.

*Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University and National Library of Israel, Jerusalem*

**Shudofsky, Chanoch.** *Jerusalem: A Neighborhood Street Guide.* New York: Devora Publishing, 2008. 559 p. \$21.95 (ISBN-978-1-93444-025-4).

Visitors to Jerusalem walk the paths of our ancestors. The picturesque neighborhoods and streets date back to ancient times. This guidebook will allow both visitors and residents of the Holy City to learn more about the streets. The book has two sections. The first is an alphabetical listing of the 2,500 streets,

squares, thoroughfares, boulevards, and alleyways in the city. Hebrew street names beginning with the article *Ha* appear in the H section. Arabic street names beginning with the article *El* are in the E section. The entry for each street in this section is a see reference to the neighborhood entry and its page number in the second section. The alphabetical neighborhood entries in the second section include information about the name of the neighborhood and its origin, its history, and brief comments about the current demographics. It also lists the boundaries. The street listings follow in alphabetical order with map references and brief information about the origin of the street name. There are also sections with information about neighborhoods and villages with no street listings and neighborhoods that no longer exist. The author includes lists of streets named after women, the years that neighborhoods were founded, and interesting facts about streets and neighborhoods. He also provides pictures of the mayors of Jerusalem and their terms of office, locations of museums and public institutions with phone numbers, emergency phone numbers, and walking tour routes. A 16-page section of detailed maps helps readers locate the streets. This is a wonderful guide for anyone who happens to be *b'Yerushalayim*.

Barbara M. Bibel, Oakland Public Library, Oakland, CA;  
Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA

**Stavans, Ilan. *Resurrecting Hebrew*. New York: Nextbook-Schocken, 2008. 219 p. \$21.00 (ISBN-978-0-8052-4231-7).**

*Resurrecting Hebrew* is the ninth book resulting from a collaboration between Nextbook, the emerging force behind Jewish literary life in North America in the 21st century, and what remains of an old Jewish publishing house, Schocken.

Despite the title, the book is basically a biography of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the father of modern Hebrew, presented in a chatty manner. Stavans relates anecdotes from a trip he took to Israel during which he spoke with various authorities in fields related to the rebirth of the Jewish people and its language in its ancient homeland. The miraculous realization of Ben-Yehuda's dream is described in detail, and the author weaves in philosophical questions concerning the centrality of language to the survival of a nation as well as issues relating to Israel's present-day struggle for its existence in a hostile environment.

The book is a pleasant read, but for a concise history of the development of modern Hebrew and the life of Ben-Yehuda, one may want to resort to a good encyclopedia article. The book belongs in large Judaica libraries and perhaps also in synagogue libraries, where it could be used in book discussion groups.

Michlean Amir, U.S. Memorial Holocaust Museum,  
Washington, DC

**Steinmetz, Devora. *Punishment and Freedom: The Rabbinic Construction of Criminal Law*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. 206 p. \$55.00 (ISBN-978-0-8122-4068-9).**

In its literal sense, jurisprudence studies the wisdom of the law. Steinmetz's book blurs the boundaries between academic talmudic research and legal theory in an effort to reveal the philosophy and wisdom behind the rabbinic legal system. Her study focuses on Jewish criminal law, as enunciated in the tractates *Sanhedrin* and *Makot* (which in early manuscripts still

appear as a single tractate). Many scholarly debates have raged over the question of whether the Talmud reflects a penal system that was in practice at some historical juncture, or whether it is the rabbis' vision of a legal utopia. Steinmetz avoids this vexing question by asking what the rabbis were thinking about when they formulated their system.

This book relies on a close reading of the talmudic back-and-forth, which then leads to reflection on the much larger questions opened up by the text. For example, the seemingly obscure question of which biblical verses provide the basis for the seven Noahide laws (which bind all of humanity, not just Jews) serves as a key to two fundamentally different approaches to natural law. Readers seeking an ethical dimension to biblical and talmudic law will find much food for thought, and the footnotes point the researcher to contemporary scholarship in Israel and the U.S., in Jewish studies and legal theory.

Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University and National Library of Israel,  
Jerusalem

**Tahan, Ilana. *Hebrew Manuscripts: the Power of Script and Image*. London: British Library, 2007. 160 p. \$35.00 (ISBN-978-0-71234-921-5).**

In this volume, the British Library presents nearly 150 beautiful reproductions from its collection of illuminated Hebrew manuscripts. The collection spans over 900 years, from 10th-century Karaite Bibles to menorah plaques from 19th-century India. Recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

**Tarn, Georgie, and Tracey Fine. *The Jewish Princess Cookbook: Having Your Cake & Eating It*. Ithaca, New York: McBooks Press, 2008. 224 p. \$18.95 (ISBN-978-1-59013-161-9).**

First published in London in 2006 by Quadrille Publishing, Tarn and Tracey bring to U.S. readers a selection of easy and quick recipes. These simple recipes are traditionally organized, with the exciting additions of stories from the authors' lives as Jewish princesses, and tidbits of Jewish food-lore. These easy-to-follow recipes are often for complex dishes, although most ingredient lists contain fewer than ten items. Introducing the kosher way of life, *The Jewish Princess Cookbook* is not for the novice chef, as there are not always sufficient details for the uninitiated. Although the recipes are not identified as meat, dairy, or pareve, it is easy enough to determine from the ingredient list. Lacking are suggestions for altering the recipes for serving with other foods. The lively style, vignettes, and commentary interspersed through the book make this a wonderful read for any adult or young adult.

Sara Rofofsky Marcus, Queensborough Community College,  
Bayside, NY

**Teppler, Yaakov Y. *Birkat haMinim: Jews and Christians in Conflict in the Ancient World*. Translated by Susan Weingarten. Tuebingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck (*Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism*). 2007. 413 p. \$189.50. (ISBN 978-3-16149-350-8).**

Teppler addresses a two-fold question: What was the original form of the blessing against the "*minim*" in the *Eighteen Benedictions* in the traditional daily prayers; and against whom was



this blessing originally directed? The crux of the matter lies with the dating of the classical texts. The *Eighteen Benedictions* in their earliest extant forms come from Cairo Geniza fragments and from the complete prayer rites datable generally to the tenth century and later. The author also examines the earliest Jewish liturgical poetry (also medieval) for further clues. Tepler then moves on to the talmudic and midrashic literature. His conclusion is that this blessing was first formulated by Rabban Gamaliel II and his colleagues after 80 C.E., and was specifically directed against all contemporary forms of Christianity. Suffice it to say that not everyone agrees with him. As recently as the beginning of the last decade, David Flusser published an article dating the blessing to second Temple times and arguing that it was directed against the Essenes.

Tepler's presentation is thorough, citing both the Hebrew versions of the earliest form of the prayer as well as the history of the discussion throughout classical Jewish texts. He also cites all the various scholarly opinions in secondary literature. His work will be of value to all scholars of the liturgy, whether or not they agree with his conclusions. I recommend this book for purchase by academic libraries with collections in the history of Jewish liturgy.

Daniel J. Rettberg, *Hebrew Union College-JIR, Cincinnati, OH*

**Tucker, Spencer C., and Priscilla Mary Roberts, eds.** *The Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Political, Social, and Military History*. Santa Barbara, CA, Denver, CO, Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2008. 4 vols. \$395. 1553 p. (ISBN-978-1-85109-841-5).

Certainly encyclopedic, since material covered extends beyond the core agents of the Arab-Israeli conflict, this is an extensive source on an important regional conflict. In each of the first three volumes there is a list of entries, supplemented by photographs and data charts, each of which is followed by a set of related key word-oriented subjects and bibliographic references, and occasionally maps. In the initial volume there is an overview of the conflict followed by relevant entries. The second volume follows similarly with its entries. Volume three continues the pattern, but additionally has a list of regional military ranks, country profiles, a chronology, a glossary, and a selected bibliography. The last volume is, in its own right, a valuable collection of relevant documents, beginning with an 1839 letter from the British foreign secretary to the country's ambassador in Vienna discussing the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and continuing up to the Palestinian Authority's March 2007 attempt to create a unity government. In this volume, there is a host of primary materials for researchers to mine. While there is sufficient coverage over the range of topics, there is also the opportunity to allow proponents of the different perspectives to find a basis of criticism or bias, which ultimately means a reasonable degree of balance. The entries for Israel and Zionism should not trouble the patrons of Jewish libraries, but sensibilities may be bruised when reading about the status of Israeli Arabs. There are more than 100 contributors, but for this reviewer who has been studying the subject matter for more than 50 years, only one could be recognized as a knowledgeable scholar.

This is an impressive resource for students seeking a general introductory statement on any of the multiple facets of the con-

flict. Because of the suggested cost of this material, a suitable alternative for libraries whose budget may be limited would be the *Historical Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, edited by Bernard Reich (Greenwood Press, 1996).

Sanford R. Silverburg, *Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Werner, Mark.** *Army Fatigues: Joining Israel's Army of International Volunteers*. New York: Devora Publishing, 2008. 279 p. \$21.95 (ISBN 978-1-93444-008-7).

Not content to just sit on the sidelines watching the fate of the Jewish homeland, *Army Fatigues* author Mark Werner has written a captivating account of his experiences with the Israeli army through Sar-el, an organization that takes volunteers worldwide and puts them on military bases throughout Israel to work with soldiers and other volunteers. In journal format, this book takes the reader through Werner's background as an American lawyer and son of a Holocaust survivor, living a comfortable life, to his personal experiences of volunteering for two to three weeks at a time in the Israeli Army and Navy during some of the hardest years in Israel's history. The story relates an emotional journey, which keeps Werner and his fellow volunteers going back again and again, to continue reinforcing their connection to Israel, and also changing people's perceptions of Israel back in their hometowns. Warning: Once you pick up this book you will find it impossible to put it down! Highly recommended for all types of Jewish libraries.

Shoshana Hurwitz, *Hurwitz Indexing, Ma'ale Adumim, Israel*

## SOUND RECORDINGS

**Amaseffer.** *Slaves for Life*. Germany: InsideOut Music, 2008. 1 compact disc \$20.00 IOMCD 296.

Israeli band Amaseffer's debut album, *Slaves for Life*, the first part of a trilogy, combines a blend of orchestral and rock music with lyrics taken from the story of the Exodus to create a unique style of film-score music almost-unheard of in the Jewish world. Some listeners may in fact be wondering why it isn't more popular; rock operas and concept albums, such as *Tommy* by The Who and Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, have been around for decades. The closest thing to this album that I can think of is the soundtrack to *The Prince of Egypt*. Amaseffer seems to fill a niche in Israeli and Jewish music with a product that is truly amazing. Highly recommended for all types of Jewish library collections.

Shoshana Hurwitz, *Hurwitz Indexing, Maale Adumim, Israel*

**Berkman, Bob.** *Klezmerola*. Pianola Enterprises, 2007. 1 compact disc (60 min.) \$18.00 PE-101.

Take an almost-vanished technology (player pianos), add vintage Jewish music and stir with just a hint of ragtime and what do you get? *Klezmerola*, an absolutely delightful CD that is fun, fresh, and *freylekh*. In this album of "Jewish music from rare piano rolls," Bob Berkman does an incredible job of bringing the music to life with a vitality achieved by actually foot-pumping an old upright player piano. The accompanying 16-page booklet provides information about each song and about the rediscovery of Jewish piano rolls. Such old familiar Yiddish songs as "Odesser Bulgar," "Yosel," and "Die Griene Cosina" seem especially well-

suited for Bob Berkman's pianola interpretations. I would be hard pressed to choose a favorite track; I loved them all.

*Maxine Schackman, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Flygande Bokrullen. *Shuff!*. Arko Records, 2007. 1 compact disc. \$24.00 ARCO-CD-009.**

The six Swedish musicians that make up Flygande Bokrullen have transformed the traditional *klezmer* sound into something distinctly modern. Heavy on the brass and percussion, they have created a gritty fast-paced album that beautifully incorporates piano, mandolin, banjo, and accordion.

Of the 15 songs on this CD, five are original compositions. These songs beautifully showcase the talents of the band as they use traditional motifs in totally new and unexpected ways. The arrangements are fresh and creative. Of special note are the original compositions *Manos* and *Barbanjo*. These richly-textured pieces took me on a musical journey that had all the excitement of a roller-coaster ride, juxtaposing melody and frenetically-paced instrumentation.

If your taste in *klezmer* runs towards the work of David Tarras and the wonderful music of the last century you may be jarred by these new interpretations. On the other hand, if you are open to something new that just might wow you, this could be for you.

The recording has a vibrant live feel to it, which draws you in and makes you part of the action. I've listened to this album several times and each time it ends I start it over again, just to hear a little bit more. So in all fairness you must be warned: listening to this CD can become addictive.

*Maxine Schackman, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Geppert, Edyta, and Kroke. *Spiewam Zyce—I Sing Life*. Berlin: Oriente, 2006. 1 compact disc (54 min.) \$17.99 RIENC61.**

*Spiewam Zyce—I Sing Life* presents 14 tracks with a contemporary vibe from a variety of composers, sung by the Polish singer Edyta Geppert and accompanied by the band Kroke (viola, violin, bass, accordion, piano, guitar, and drums). The Polish-language tunes include several Yiddish and *klezmer*-flavored melodies such as "Meshuge" [Crazy], a Polish version of Mordecai Gebirtig's "Kinder Yorn," "Vu Bistu Geven," an Itzik Manger poem set to music, and a Leopold Koslowski tune. This album is an opportunity to explore Yiddish repertoire in Polish translation within the context of the contemporary European music scene. Recommended for academic libraries specializing in world/Jewish music collections.

*Amanda Seigel, The New York Public Library, New York, NY*

**Hirschhorn, Linda. *Becoming*. Berkeley, California: Oyster Albums, 2007. 1 compact disc (48 min.) \$18.99 OA-11110.**

Every life's journey requires revisiting the past with new eyes. This CD represents Linda Hirschhorn's artistic journey back to her earlier work and forward to what she is "becoming." The entire album is permeated with sweetness and light as Hirschhorn's crystal clear voice floats through various melodies and harmonies evoking the peaceful earnestness of a gentle soul. Many of the songs have biblical or liturgical origins. All of them have a quality of serene, almost blissful beauty, especially "My Beloved" and "Dodi Li," both of which were adapted from the Song of Songs. Hirschhorn performs each song flawlessly.

Adding range to the CD is "Mountains of China," which is evocative of the work of folk singers such as Judy Collins and Joan Baez. We are even treated to a spoken poem, "Blue," accompanied by a jazz ensemble in the background. Although reminiscent of the raw, angry poetry of Beat Generation coffee houses, this poem's anger is rubbed smooth as the poet wonders what she is becoming. Exploring the softer side, this upbeat album is beautifully executed by a vocal artist with considerable talent.

*Maxine Schackman, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Klein, Jonathan. *Hear O Israel*. London: Trunk Records, 2008. 1 compact disc. \$17.98.**

Out of print for 40 years, *Hear O Israel* is a remarkable artifact of jazz history. In 1968, 17-year-old Jonathan Klein composed a musical Friday night Shabbat service for his Temple. Through circumstances not entirely clear, a recording of this work was arranged featuring an astonishing group of musicians. This super-group of jazz giants features pianist Herbie Hancock and (in this reviewer's opinion, the greatest jazz bassist of all time) Ron Carter from Miles Davis's "second great quintet," along with trumpeter Thad Jones, drummer Grady Tate and saxophonist Jerome Richardson. They are joined by soprano Antonia Lavanne and contralto Phyllis Bryn-Julson, the latter best known for her exacting performances of the most difficult works in the contemporary classical vocal repertoire. The service consists of Hebrew and English settings of fragments of the traditional liturgy, largely from the Psalms, with long stretches of instrumental improvisation. The late sixties was a time of wild experimentation (musical and otherwise) and fusions of this sort were common with mixed results. While the compositions can be awkward at times, Trunk Records has done the world a great service by unearthing this extraordinary document of some of the greatest musicians in jazz at the height of their powers.

*Daniel A. Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Kroke. *Seventh Trip*. Berlin: Oriente, 2006. 1 compact disc, (59 min.) \$17.99 RIENC63.**

*Seventh Trip* is a fitting name for the seventh album by this Polish band (named after the historic city of Crakow) founded in 1992. Kroke is not a typical *klezmer* band playing well-known *simcha* music, but rather a seasoned group of musicians that have integrated traditional *klezmer* and Sephardic music into their own unique and contemporary style, resulting in sometimes unexpected, but always thoughtful, sounds.

The selections—almost all new compositions by band members—have a range of styles and rhythms, representing the band's musical journey. The skilled musicianship and the musicians' devotion to their art are apparent in these songs, which are well-crafted and have an intensity and improvisational quality that lends itself well to live performance. Recommended for academic libraries specializing in world/Jewish music collections.

*Amanda Seigel, The New York Public Library, New York, NY*

**Lichtenberg, Lenka and Katz, Brian. *Pashtes*. Toronto: Sunflower Records, 2006. 1 compact disc (41 min.) \$14.99.**

*Pashtes* (Simplicity) is a treat for Yiddish and music aficionados—a rare opportunity to hear quality new Yiddish repertoire. The album features Lenka Lichtenberg (vocalist, composer) and

Brian Katz (guitarist, pianist, arranger), in ten compositions from Simcha Simchovitch's Yiddish poetry. The accompanying booklet includes lyrics in Yiddish, transliteration, and English translation.

The songs are beautiful, stirring, and original. Simchovitch's masterful poems are rooted in the Yiddish literary tradition ("Di Goldene Pave," "Morris Rosenfeld") and inspired by the world ("Calcutta"). Lichtenberg's use of Simchovitch's words is fresh and genuine. Her delightfully light, expressive, and versatile voice aptly conveys Simchovitch's many moods, while Katz's guitar and skillful arrangements provide a beautiful and flexible complement to the vocals. At times, the songs recall Joni Mitchell with their thoughtful lyrics and varied styles. "Tsum Kval" (To The Source: Elegy for Yiddish Poets) is powerful and poignant, while "Di Gortn-Parti" (The Garden Party) is playful and full of interesting rhythms and chords, and "Yo, ikh gloyb" (Yes, I Do Believe) is a hopeful and stirring call for a better world. *Pashtes* is a fresh musical interpretation of today's Yiddish literature. Highly recommended for academic and synagogue libraries.

Amanda Seigel, *The New York Public Library, New York, NY*

**Lori Cahan-Simon Ensemble. *Chanukah is Freylekh! Songs my Bubbe Should Have Taught Me: Volume Two.* Lori Cahan-Simon, 2006. 1 compact disc (65 min.) \$15.00 LCS-003.**

Lori Cahan-Simon sings about Chanukah with such joy and vigor that you will have trouble sitting in your seat. Your feet will want to dance and your voice will want to sing along. Cahan-Simon's interpretations of old, familiar songs are energetic and exciting. The CD also contains many songs that she unearthed through rigorous research and that may be new to you. If you enjoy hearing the Yiddish "kvetch," that wonderful soulful cry that is the hallmark of so much Yiddish music, you will not be disappointed by Cahan-Simon's voice and renditions. The 28-page booklet that accompanies the CD not only provides information about each song, but also lyrics in Yiddish and English. For those with dancing feet there are even dance instructions.

Maxine Schackman, *Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Naim, Yael and David Donatien. *Yael Naim and David Donatien.* New York: Atlantic Records, 2007. 1 compact disc. \$13.99 461628-2.**

Israeli-French singer Yael Naim, with the help of percussionist and music arranger David Donatien, has put together a delightful collection of pop-jazz-folk ballads, mixing Hebrew, English, and even a little French. The songs reflect a variety of moods and dreams in their sound and lyrics; the album includes Naim's hit song "New Soul" (featured in the commercial for the Apple MacBook Air laptop), the success of which made her the first Israeli solo artist to have a top-ten song in the U.S. A cover of Britney Spears's hit "Toxic" is a surprising addition to this album, which definitely did not work in Naim's style, but otherwise a great disc recommended for all types of Jewish libraries.

Shoshana Hurwitz, *Hurwitz Indexing, Maale Adumim, Israel*

**Rocky the Rabbi. *Kosher for Passover.* New York: dna productions, 2007. 1 compact disc.**

Rocky the Rabbi's latest release, *Kosher for Passover*, which features traditional Passover tunes done techno-style, was nothing

but disappointing. There are only five songs on the entire album, two of which are "extended versions," which sound exactly like the originals, so there are really only three songs on the album. Rocky's production company, dna productions, specializes in music for commercials, TV, and movie scores, which this album may be a good fit for; not so much for a library patron looking for new Jewish music. Not recommended.

Shoshana Hurwitz, *Hurwitz Indexing, Maale Adumim, Israel*

**Seraphic Fire & George Mordecai. *Shalom/Pax: Jewish and Christian Chant.* Miami: Seraphic Fire, 2008. 1 compact disc. \$15.00.**

Seraphic Fire, the United States' most exciting new chamber choir has carved out a niche for itself, exploring unusual repertoire, both ancient and modern. With *Shalom/Pax*, they team with cantor George Mordecai in combining traditional Iraqi and Sephardic hazzanut with Gregorian chant, medieval organum and Renaissance motets. The result is striking on many levels. From a purely aesthetic standpoint, the effort is an unqualified success. Mordecai and Seraphic Fire have done an outstanding job of weaving these related, yet fundamentally different forms of chant into a perfect counterpoint, which manages to provide a smooth fit while preserving the independence of the individual voices. The performances are simply breathtaking. Depending on one's religious or cultural point of view, however, it can be jarring to hear the familiar *Shalosh Esreh Midot* intertwined with a Kyrie invoking the mercy of Jesus. Given the state of Jewish-Christian relations at the time when these chants were developed, the effect can be downright disturbing. Beautiful and thought-provoking, *Shalom/Pax* is recommended for collections focusing on cantorial music and Jewish-Christian relations.

Daniel A. Scheide, *Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

## VIDEO

***A Sacred Duty: Applying Jewish Values to Help Heal the World.* Directed by Lionel Friedberg. DVD. Jewish Vegetarians of North America, 2007. (Color, 59 minutes.)**

The contrast between beautiful views of nature and disturbing footage of the handling of livestock stand out in this documentary inspired by the writings of vegetarian activist Professor Richard H. Schwartz, who comments frequently throughout the film. Lionel Friedberg narrates, and Theodore Bikel reads biblical quotes that highlight concerns for human health, animals, and the environment. Other commentators include a Hasidic rabbi who lives on a farm in Minnesota, members of environmental advocacy groups in the United States and Israel, and several other rabbis of various denominations.

The "film aims to motivate positive action by applying Jewish teachings to how we use natural resources, take care of our health, obtain our food, and live in peace among our fellow beings." The information is presented in 18 chapters, including "Israel—Microcosm of the World," "Ideal Diet," and "Looming Human Shadow." The viewer will learn that 18 percent of greenhouse gases come from livestock agriculture, and that Israel contains a variety of ecosystems—coastal plain, desert, mountains—packed into a very small geographic area. The



scenes in slaughterhouses and hatcheries are horrific, in obvious violation of the mandate not to hurt animals (*Tsa'ar ba'alei chayim*). While one rabbi asserts that his synagogue has solar panels and has redesigned the bima to look like a banyan tree to remind the congregation of nature, there are few concrete suggestions for healing the world. An interesting social commentary, this one-sided presentation will appeal to libraries whose congregants are interested in health and environmental issues.

*Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ*

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Ms. White,

Thank you for including a review of my book *You Shall Tell Your Children: Holocaust Memory in American Passover Ritual* in your May/June 2008 Newsletter. I want to clarify two points made in that review.

Mr. Scheide is clearly familiar with the original context of many of the religious texts referenced in my book. His short review gives two examples of these original contexts, but my book examines the multiple ways these texts are re-appropriated in contemporary haggadot. In his erudition, Mr. Scheide faults me for citing the works as they appear in the contemporary haggadot and focusing my analysis on those texts.

Mr. Scheide also criticizes the transliterations. I followed the standard academic practice of presenting the texts as they have been published. Mr. Scheide points to a larger problem: Multiple transliteration practices are employed in the texts that are at the heart of my book. As I explained in the first note for my introduction, I did not standardize transliterations. With a clear understanding that my book would then reflect the messiness of current practices, the editors and I decided not to change the original texts that are the data of my analysis.

Sincerely,  
Liora Gubkin  
Associate Professor of Religious Studies  
California State University, Bakersfield

## Daniel Scheide responds

To address the first point, I do not fault Dr. Gubkin for citing and analyzing the re-appropriation of traditional texts as they appear in contemporary Haggadot. In fact, this is what is potentially valuable about her work. What detracts from this value, however is that she does not show these commentaries as re-appropriations, but gives the reader the impression that these are modern, original thoughts and seems to base her analyses on this assumption.

As far as transliteration, perhaps because of the space constraints of the review, I was not entirely clear. I do not fault Dr. Gubkin for the lack of standardized transliteration. I have absolutely no objection to this, especially given the subject matter. What I do object to are transliterations that alter the meaning of the original Hebrew, for example, mistaking "el" meaning "to" and "al" meaning "do not" is not simply a matter of style but of substance.

## Books Received

*These titles will not be reviewed in the AJL Newsletter for reasons of space, scope, or date of publication. They are listed here as a courtesy to the publishers and a service to AJL readers. The materials themselves are donated to libraries.*

- Butcher, Shannon K. *No Escape*. New York: Forever, 2008.
- Diamant, Anita, with Karen Kushner. *How to Raise a Jewish Child*. New York: Schocken Books, 2008, c2000.
- Gelb, Norman. *Kings of the Jews: Exploring the Origins of the Jewish Nation*. New York: iUniverse, 2008.
- Ginsberg, Allen. *The Letters of Allen Ginsberg*. Philadelphia: Da Capo, 2008.
- Graves, Samantha. *Out of Time*. New York: Forever, 2008.
- Nuland, Sherwin B. *Maimonides*. New York: Nextbook, 2005.
- Pinsky, Robert. *The Life of David*. New York: Nextbook, 2005.
- Pollack, Jerry. *Divinely Inspired: Spiritual Awakening of a Soul*. Boynton Beach, FL: Shechinah Third Temple Inc., 2009, c2003.
- Rose, Karen. *Count to Ten*. New York: Grand Central, 2007.
- Wild, David. *He Is ... I Say: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Neil Diamond*. Cambridge Center, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2008.

## Jewish Culture in Krakow

*Continued from page 1*

was a fact—not history. Of course among the Jewish places there are those that are more authentic than others. But one can easily recognize them by the owners, by the people who go there and by the food they serve. Klezmer Hois is a special case; we have our regular customers, and among them are members of the community, for whom it is a home. It is a place where Jewish intellectuals meet, and where, when you come, you meet someone you can talk to.

**REG:** Why did you expand to Budapest? What are your plans there? What differences do you find between Budapest and Krakow, between Kazimierz and the Budapest's 7th District, the old Jewish quarter there?

**Wojtek and Malgosia Ornat:** Budapest is a step forward toward our idea of Central European publishing. We hope to open further branches in Prague and Vilnius. Budapest's 7th District reminds us of how Kazimierz was when we started out. It is slowly changing: We can be eyewitnesses to those changes, as we were in Kazimierz.

## Keeping Current

LIBBY K. WHITE

An article in *The Forward*, dated October 23, 2008, had a heading that caught my eye: "Facing Tough Times, Archive Prepares to Close." Indeed, the news was what I had feared. The reporter, Anthony Weiss, bemoaned the approaching demise of the Philadelphia Jewish Community Archives due to funding problems. As a "stand-alone" institution, the archives had struggled for years at a number of locations, since being founded in 1972.

The archives, which contain the records and artifacts of almost two hundred years of Philadelphia Jewish history, will become part of the Urban Archives of Temple University in North Philadelphia. Archives president Carole LeFaivre-Rochester blamed the adverse climate for small non-profits. While praising the quality of the Philadelphia collections, Dr. Jonathan Sarna, professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis suggested that archives are not "a high funding priority" for donors. Others cited competition for Jewish cultural dollars as the ultimate cause.

Some years ago as a graduate student, I made several visits to the Philadelphia Jewish Community Archives. I was doing research for a paper on a local synagogue, The Frank Memorial Synagogue, a national landmark on the grounds of the Albert Einstein Medical Center. The Frank Synagogue was designed in the late 19th century by prominent architect Arnold Brunner to resemble Galilean synagogues of the Greco-Roman period. Brunner traveled to the land of Israel to study the ruins of these synagogues.

I was pleased to have access to the archives. The information more than filled my needs. The staff was knowledgeable and eager to assist me. I dedicated my "opus" to the archives staff and sent them a copy, for which I was graciously thanked in the archives' newsletter. Over the years I have continued to receive the newsletter and to send in my modest contributions. It is sad

to think that my paper on the Frank Synagogue will join a massive transfer of so much Jewish history to Temple University. On the other hand, it is possible that my work has already been transferred via the classic weeding route. In one sense, it does not matter. In my memory and in my heart, the Philadelphia Jewish Community Archives and the treasures it held for me will continue to live on.

## ACJS Call for Papers

The Association for Canadian Jewish Studies (ACJS) will be holding its 33rd Annual Conference May 24-26, 2009, at Carleton University in Ottawa, as part of the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. The conference provides a platform for original scholarly research in Canadian Jewish history, life, and culture. Individuals are invited to send proposals for paper presentations 20 minutes in length (approximately 2,000 words) that concern some aspect of the Canadian Jewish experience. The deadline for submission is January 7, 2009.

Please e-mail proposals to Prof. Rebecca Margolis, Program Chair at: Vered Jewish Canadian Studies Program, University of Ottawa, 52 University #205, Ottawa, ON K1N 7L1 Canada; e-mail: [rmargoli@uOttawa.ca](mailto:rmargoli@uOttawa.ca).

## AJL Goes to the Pacific Northwest

Word to Deed: Teaching our Children Through Literature," will take place in Seattle on Sunday, February 15, 2009. The focus will be on Jewish values from two different viewpoints. The first, an exploration of values through text and midrash will be presented by noted Northwest educator, Rivy Poupko Kletenik. The second viewpoint, an examination of values through stories for youth, will feature Lisa Silverman.

Kletenik is currently head of school of Seattle Hebrew Academy. Prior to her leadership there, she spent ten years as Director of Education for the Jewish Education Council of the Jewish Federation of Seattle.

Silverman is library head at Sinai Temple in Los Angeles and children's book editor of Jewish Book World. She is a frequent lecturer on children's literature at AJL and other educational conferences, both Jewish and secular. Ms. Silverman will include children's Holocaust literature in her presentation, an area in which has particular expertise.

This one-day mini-conference will provide a taste of what is to come July 4-7, 2010, when the international annual AJL conference will be held in Seattle. People from throughout the Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia areas are urged to meet up with their colleagues in Seattle on February 15, 2009. Home hospitality will be provided. For further information and/or to get on the mailing list, please contact [ajlnw@earthlink.net](mailto:ajlnw@earthlink.net).

# Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN

## In The Spotlight

**Greene, Jacqueline Dembar.** *Nathan's Hanukkah Bargain.* Illus. by Judith Hierstein. Gretna, LA: Pelican, 2008. 32pp. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-1-58980-454-8. Grades 2-4.

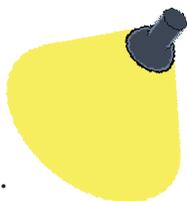
Jacqueline Dembar Greene, writer of historical novels, and Judith Hierstein, illustrator of the Toby Belfer books, have combined their talents to create an appealing and unusual story about a little boy and his grandfather. Nathan has five dollars and with it, he wants to buy a Hanukkah menorah. With Grandpa as a companion he visits a number of shops, never finding one he likes or that he can afford. Grandpa wistfully tells him about the old days when it was possible to bargain with peddlers for the goods they sold. When, in an old junk store, Nathan finds just the menorah he wants, he puts Grandpa's lessons in bargaining to work and finds that his five dollars is just enough. The engaging plot is delivered with lots of dialogue that moves it along and establishes a warm friendship between the little boy and the old man. Hierstein's large, slightly exaggerated, and thoroughly distinctive illustrations are essential to the story because they illuminate character as well as setting and provide meaningful details. With only three major characters, each rendered lovingly, this is a Hanukkah story with something new to tell.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

**Hesse, Karen.** *Brooklyn Bridge.* New York: Feiwel and Friends, 2008. 134pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-312-37886-8. Grades 5-8.

In a fictionalized account of the Michtom family, Joseph is a fourteen-year-old boy growing up in Brooklyn in 1903. His parents have created a cottage industry with their creation of the original Teddy Bear. Hesse brings to life the immigrant experience in New York, including a sense of extended family that is so reflective of the time. In spite of the family's growing wealth, Joseph is the unlucky kid who has never been to Coney Island. His journey to the amusement park parallels his growth as a young man. Readers will relate to Joseph, a well-rounded character with a good heart, honorable intentions, and realistic boyish faults. The characters are well defined. Joseph's relationships with his family members and friends ring true for any era. Joseph's aunts and uncles play a significant role in his life. They are appealing characters with quirky, believable ways. There is an element of mystery and the supernatural in a sub-plot that Hesse uses as a vehicle to share the plight of homeless children. *Brooklyn Bridge* is historical fiction at its best. Interesting details about the setting are masterfully integrated into the story. A perfect selection for school or synagogue libraries, *Brooklyn Bridge* will fit well into classroom curricula.

Barbara Bietz, Oak Park, CA



**Kimmel, Eric.** *The Mysterious Guests.* Illus. by Katya Krenina. New York: Holiday House, 2008. 32pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-8234-1893-6. Kindergarten-grade 4.

A beautiful picture book, *The Mysterious Guests* introduces children to the traditional notion that our forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are said to visit our sukkot every year "as weary travelers," without revealing their identities. The book explains, "If they are welcomed as honored guests, they leave a blessing. If not, they teach a lesson that is not soon forgotten." This concept is then illustrated with the story of two brothers, Eben and Ezra, one rich and selfish, the other kind and generous. When the patriarchs are treated rudely by Eben in his elaborate and unwelcoming sukkah, the sukkah rots and fills with toads, worms, and other slimy animals. When they are warmly welcomed by Ezra at his humble but generous gathering, his sukkah fruits and flowers turn to silver and gold. In an instructive message for young readers, Eben changes his ways. The illustrations in this book are extremely appealing and filled with the warm colors of autumn. Eric Kimmel has added a beautiful book to the Sukkot literature for children. My only reservation is that, for contemporary Jewish families that incorporate this idea into their holiday celebration, the guests might include our matriarchs as well.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

## BIBLE

**Pinnington, Andrea.** *Sparkle and Shine Noah's Ark.* Illus. by Fiona Gowen. New York: DK, 2008. \$9.99. 18pp. ISBN: 978-0-7566-4006-4. Padded board book. Preschool-kindergarten.

Of the making of Noah's Ark stories, there is no end. This latest offering, engagingly illustrated with models and written in rhyme, has an educational purpose in mind, because there are questions that test the observational powers of children on each page and notes to parents about how to get the most out of the book. The format is slightly different from the usual board book: larger and a bit longer, with padded covers. As the simply-told story unfolds, modeled figures draw the eye to the pages. They also enhance the clarity of the narrative with their bright colors and sparkling foil, which is especially pretty as a rainbow on the last double-page spread. The story follows the biblical account without undue emphasis on its grimmer parts. Recommended for all libraries.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

## FICTION: PICTURE BOOKS

**Patricia Pollaco.** *Someone for Mr. Sussman.* Illus. by Patricia Pollaco. New York: Philomel Books, 2008. Unpaginated. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-399-25-75-0. Grades 2-4.

Jerome's bubbie is a matchmaker with a problem. "No pot is so crooked that there isn't a lid to fit it" is her mantra, but she cannot find a match for picky Mr. Sussman, her most favorite

client. Each week Mr. Sussman has a new request for the type of match he would like: an observant woman who remembers the old country, someone who loves the color blue, someone who likes to bake, an exercise enthusiast, and a dancer. Each week, with his help Jerome's bubbie remakes herself as the type of woman Mr. Sussman is looking for, but he does not take the hint that she is interested. Fed-up with Mr. Sussman's lack of attention, she sends him on his way. When he returns he realizes how special Jerome's bubbie is, and a match is made.

Fans of Pollacco will be pleased with this book. Anyone unfamiliar with the Yiddish and Hebrew terms will find them defined in an easy-to-understand way. The pictures jump off the page and Jerome's bubbie's fashion savvy (and long red fingernails) makes her a very memorable character. School-aged children will relate to the book's message of being true to yourself and not changing to impress anyone. One complaint: at the beginning of the book some of bubbie's miraculous matches are listed. One such match is for "the Firesteins' very large son" and on the following page there is a picture of an obese couple standing under a chuppa. With childhood obesity on the rise, it seems a little unfair to the children afflicted with this to have the impression that it would be a "miracle" for them to ever find love.

*Aimee Lurie, Fairmount Temple and The Temple-Tifereth Israel, Cleveland, OH*

**Ganz, Yaffa. *Raise a Rabbit, Grow a Goose: A Mimmy and Simmy Story*. Illus. by Harvey Klineman. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2008. 30pp. \$14.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-235-3. Preschool-grade 3.**

Another winner from Yaffa Ganz, author of more than 40 Jewish juvenile titles. Ganz continues the story of the lovely friendship between two neighbors, Mimmy and Simmy; this is the fourth in the series. Each one has been able to save \$10, which she opts to use to buy a pet. Mimmy chooses a gosling, while Simmy chooses a rabbit, which can live in a box in her room. All is well until the pets begin to grow and need more room. The girls realize, alas, that their pets, along with the seven newborn bunnies and the eggs that the grown-up goose now lays, belong on a farm. They also learn gratitude and appreciation for their parents' care. The book ends with two appropriate quotes on the role of Hashem in the lives of all his creatures. There are no Hebrew words in the book, and it is timely for all children. The text is age-appropriate and rings true to a child's ears. Lovely illustrations by Harvey Klineman are a perfect complement to the text. Recommended as a read-to for ages four to six, and as an independent read for six- to eight-year-olds.

*Shelly Feit, Moriah School, Englewood NJ*

## FICTION: GRADES 4 AND UP

**Baldini, Michelle and Lynn Biederman. *Unraveling*. New York: Random House/Delacorte Press, 2008. 230pp. \$15.99. ISBN: 978-0-385-73540-7. Grades 9-12.**

Desperate to break into the "in crowd," 15-year-old Amanda Himmelfarb is blown away when Rick Hayes, the hottest guy in school, starts paying attention to her. Not only popular, Rick is also the boyfriend of Amanda's arch enemy, Courtney Flakey, who has been teasing her relentlessly since middle school. But

Courtney refuses to go all the way with Rick. So, after secret make-out sessions in his car, Amanda agrees to have sex with him in exchange for a public date to the homecoming dance. While Amanda is convinced that this will be a sure fire way to seek revenge on Courtney, win Rick's heart, and shed her loser image, readers will easily predict that Amanda's plan will only lead to heartbreak and regret. This highly readable novel, which integrates thought-provoking quotes, free verse poetry, and e-mail messages, also describes Amanda's difficult relationship with her mother and touches on themes of sibling rivalry, family dysfunction, illness, and death. While the Jewish content is incidental, Amanda's family is clearly identified as Jewish. A significant scene takes place at Amanda's sister's bat mitzvah, and Hanukkah is mentioned along with a family trip to Israel. Highly recommended for libraries interested in expanding their collections of contemporary YA fiction featuring characters that happen to be Jewish. *Unraveling* would also be a good choice for high school or mother-daughter book clubs.

*Rachel Kamin, North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Highland Park, IL*

**Durango, Julia. *The Walls of Cartagena*. Illus. by Tom Pohrt. New York: Simon & Schuster for Young Readers, 2008. 152pp. \$15.99. ISBN: 978-1-4169-4102-6. Grades 4-6.**

This is not a Jewish book, but converts to one. It contains one Jewish character who exemplifies Jewish values, as does the book and its Catholic central figures. The historical fiction, based on actual people, is a first-person narration by a 13-year-old freed slave, a narration which turns out to be a story written for the Jewish doctor to entertain him during his Inquisition imposed jail term for illegal religious observance. The straight-forward plot is declaimed at the front piece: the heroes are a priest, a pirate, and slaves. The novel opens in 1638 in Cartagena, Colombia, where slave-labor mined gold and jewels were stored until galleons hauled the riches to Spain. The proselytizing Jesuits ruled the area; one of them, Father Pedro (later canonized as the patron saint of slaves), gathered translators to board arriving slave ships to interpret the African dialects and aid them. The narrator, Calepino, was born, then orphaned, on such a ship. Rescued by Father Pedro, he received a most atypical upbringing in the home of a rich woman, Pedro's patron. The Jewish doctor, López de Campo, was the resident, and only, medic at the local leper colony where the Jesuits sent Calepino to work, thus the disparate characters intertwine. The action revolves around freeing slaves until the doctor is unexpectedly arrested and the community works for his release. Social justice, freeing the captive, caring for the sick, and tikun olam rule the fast-moving if superficial tale, though not in so many words. Recommended for school libraries wishing more 17th-century historical fiction adorned with nice black-and-white drawings and laced with values.

*Ellen G. Cole, Temple Isaiah, Los Angeles, CA*

**Friedman, Robin. *Nothing*. Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2008. 232pp. \$9.95. ISBN: 978-0-7387-1304-5. Grades 9-12.**

In alternating chapters, Parker Rabinowitz and his younger sister Danielle gradually reveal the terrible secret—a serious eating disorder—that hides behind Parker's good looks, great grades,

ambitious college résumé, pre-med plans, and success with girls. Their high-pressure suburban Jewish lifestyle is emotionally empty. Mom is passive, and Dad's all-purpose advice is "Anything less than success is a failure." A Jewish environment pervades the story, from Jewish friends to the JCC to teen tzedakah projects. Unfortunately, this can be obnoxious at times (such as a reference to a "hot shiksa") and the author finds it necessary to define Jewish terms. The story is a mixed bag. On the one hand, teens will recognize the high stakes, pressure-filled high school scene (perhaps overly prevalent in some Jewish circles?) and the circumstances that can lead teen boys to stifle their emotions. Also, Danielle's free verse insights are quite perceptive. On the other hand, the portrayals are exaggerated, and the male bulimia (Parker's) and male breast cancer (Dad's) are highly unusual. In the end, this is a good discussion book because the well-written story raises difficult issues that confront Jewish teens.

*Susan Berson, Denver, CO*

**Garcia, Cristina.** *I Wanna Be Your Shoebox.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008. 198pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-1-4169-3928-3. Grades 6-9.

Eighth grader Yumi Ruiz-Hirsch, part Cuban, part Japanese, and part Russian Jew, lives in Southern California with her over-protective mother. She also spends a significant amount of time with her father, a struggling musician and piano tuner, and her paternal grandparents, Saul, a 92-year-old Brooklyn native, and Hiroko, the woman 25 years his junior who he met while stationed in post-World War II Japan. While the story touches on many of the themes often found in middle grade novels—friend-

ship, first-love, family dysfunction, mother-daughter dissonance, and divorce and remarriage—*I Wanna Be Your Shoebox* also centers on Yumi's desire to learn about her grandfather's past. While on his deathbed, Saul tells her stories of his childhood as the son of poor, Jewish immigrants, his business successes in Japan and his struggles upon returning to the States, and his views on love, life, parenting, and death. The Jewish content is extremely marginal. Judaism does not play a significant role in Saul's life beyond his food preferences and occasional use of Yiddish, and only serves to add diversity and discord to Yumi's blended identity. While well-written and interesting, this is most likely an unnecessary purchase for most Jewish collections.

*Rachel Kamin, North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Highland Park, IL*

**Green, John.** *Paper Towns.* New York: Dutton Books, 2008. 305pp. \$17.99. ISBN: 978-0-525-47818-8. Grades 9-12.

Childhood friends and next door neighbors, Quentin "Q" Jacobsen and Margo Roth Spiegelman, find a dead body at the playground near their suburban Orlando homes when they are ten years old. While their friendship doesn't survive past elementary school, they share a common past. When the popular, elusive, and seductive Margo suddenly comes back into his life, Q is unable to resist getting involved in her crazy schemes and adventures. He ultimately finds himself obsessed with solving the mystery of Margo's sudden disappearance just two weeks before high school graduation. Though never mentioned or even implied, it is presumed that the main characters are Jewish: Margo uses her bat mitzvah money to fund her wild night of revenge, Quentin's dad refers to a dream he had in Hebrew, and Quentin mentions saying Kaddish and names his mini-van "The Dreidel" after a near-fatal spin-out. These minor details are insignificant and incidental to the plot and the characters, but libraries interested in expanding their collection of contemporary young adult fiction featuring characters that happen to be Jewish might want to consider this insightful, fast-paced, emotionally-charged offering from Printz Medalist John Green.

*Rachel Kamin, North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Highland Park, IL*

**Greenberg, David T.** *A Tugging String.* New York: Dutton, 2008, 167pp. \$17.99. ISBN: 978-0-525-47967-3 Pbk. Grades 7-12.

In his novel, David T. Greenberg depicts the key role played by his father, the attorney Jack Greenberg, in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1965. The author focuses on the court case in which Jack Greenberg argues to obtain permission for Martin Luther King Jr. and his followers to demonstrate in the Selma-Montgomery Voting Rights March. Two stories of overcoming obstacles are added to the discussion of the case. The first story is about David Greenberg's feelings of being "invisible" to other children his age and his struggle to embrace his true self; the other story involves fictional characters Dorothy and Hector Milton, an African American couple in the South who fight for the right to vote.

Greenberg sets the tone of events that influenced the civil rights movement. These events include World War II, still fresh in the minds of many adults, and the growing frustration over the Vietnam War. Unfortunately, Greenberg distorts the his-

toric dates and facts too often in the narrative, and thus reduces the credibility of the story. For instance, the fictional character Dorothy Milton is asked to pay a toll tax for voting. Greenberg inserts a footnote at the bottom stating, "Actually, the poll tax was eliminated in early 1964. (But I took some liberty to illustrate the kinds of obstacles that voting officials threw in the way of blacks who wished to vote.)" Another example is the description of the assassination attempt on his father. A footnote states this incident is fictional but his father did receive death threats. These footnotes distract the readers. Furthermore, the dialogue seems contrived when Jack Greenberg explains to his children the obstacles that African Americans in the United States faced in the 1960s. One strong point in the story's dialogue is the authentic use of terms for the 1960s. African Americans are referred to as "negroes" by all characters, a term now considered offensive. Also, Southern whites against civil rights called African Americans offensive names such as "coons" or "niggers." They referred to Jack Greenberg as the "Jew Jack Greenberg." Had the author been consistent with this authenticity, the novel would have had more integrity.

Heather Lenson, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH

## FOLKLORE

**Rosenfeld, Dina.** *The King in the Field*. Jessica Schiffman, Brooklyn, NY, Hachai Publishing, 2008. 30pp. \$10.95. ISBN: 978-1-929628-42-1.

*The King in the Field* is based a parable of the Ba'al HaTanya, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of the Chabad Hassidic group. Five friends—the farmer, the baker, the blacksmith, the tailor, and the shoemaker—meet in the field and discuss what favors they would request if they were granted an audience with the king. Suddenly they see the king walking in the field. Each man approaches the king with his request and the king answers each one. The parable, written in rhyme that does not always work, is explained on the last page. Hashem is our king and in the month of Elul He is near; therefore, "It's the best time to ask for a wonderful year!" The full-page color illustrations are beautifully drawn and feel like a fairy tale. This book is recommended for all libraries since there are not many books available that deal with the month of Elul and its significance in the Jewish calendar.

Ilka Gordon, Siegal College of Judaic Studies, Beachwood, OH

## HISTORY

**Altman, Linda Jacobs.** *Genocide: The Systematic Killing of a People*. Revised and expanded. Issues in Focus Today Series. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow, 2009. 128pp. \$31.95. ISBN: 978-0-7660-3358-0. Grades 6–8.

Young readers will find this brief but well-written account a succinct introduction to the subject. The author stresses that genocide doesn't solely mean the actual destruction of "the other" but rather, the intent to do so. She touches on genocidal acts in antiquity and the Middle Ages, citing, for example, the murderous Assyrians of the Hebrew Bible, the Spanish Inquisition, and the Crusades. However, the book's main chapters treat

the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, Stalin's starvation of the Ukrainian kulaks, the Cambodian massacres, and the extirpation of Native Americans. In the last chapter, Altman pleads for tolerance of "the other" and cites ways and means of achieving this. The earlier edition of this book (1995) was not available for comparison. This revised edition also contains information on Bosnia and Darfur, probably not included in the earlier volume. Includes a glossary, bibliography, and index. Useful for classroom discussion and a good choice for middle school grades.

Robert A. Silver, Cleveland, OH

**Finkelstein, Norman H.** *Three Across: The Great Transatlantic Air Race of 1927*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2008. 134pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-1-59078-462-4. Ages 9–14.

Award-winning author Norman Finkelstein has written a superb book about early aviation. He tells the story of the \$25,000 prize that was offered to the first pilot who flew from New York to Paris and of the three airplanes that made it. Well, sort of. Most people have heard of Charles A. Lindbergh, who was the first to accomplish this daring and grueling feat in his airplane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*. Less known are the two other planes that reached Europe: Richard E. Byrd led a team of four in his plane called the *America*; pilot Clarence Chamberlin and businessman Charles A. Levine reached Germany in the *Columbia*. Finkelstein chronicles their ordeals and achievements with meticulous details and wonderful quotes. Photos are appropriate (although captions are too large); index, source notes, and bibliography are thorough.

Is *Three Across* a Jewish book? It is true that the author is Jewish. It is also true that Charles Levine was Jewish. However, there is a troubling aspect to this book. Although Finkelstein admires these aviators for their courage and fortitude, they are not upstanding role models for young people. Levine was involved in shady and often illegal business dealings; he disputed contracts; he broke promises. Charles Lindbergh was certainly an American hero, but he was also anti-Semitic and pro-German during the 1930s. And Richard Byrd was so obsessed with testing and preparing his plane that this reader wondered if he would ever get off the ground at all. He did manage to reach Europe, but crash landed off the coast of France.

*Three Across* is a marginal purchase for Jewish libraries, although it could serve in public libraries to depict a fascinating slice of aviation history.

Anne Dublin, Toronto, Canada

## HOLIDAYS

**Penn, Audrey.** *The Miracle Jar*. Illus. by Lea Lyon. Terre Haute, IN: Tanglewood Press, 2008. Unpaged. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-933718-16-3. Kindergarten–grade 3.

The Old Country is sentimentalized in this Hanukkah story about a comfortable family—they can afford a decent house, gold coins, and plenty of oil and food for the holiday—whose holiday miracle is not a miracle at all, but rather an example of mom's ingenuity in making the oil last eight days. The oil must last because there's too much snow on the ground for them to go to the store for more! False notes include the children's not

knowing the Hanukkah story (so it can be conveniently told for the uninformed reader) and the serving of jelly donuts, an Israeli Hanukkah treat.

*Susan Berson, Denver, CO*

## HOLOCAUST

**Goldstein, Susy, Gina Hamilton, and Wendy Share. *Ten Marks and a Train Ticket*. League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada, 2008. 114pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-9784174-0-6. Grades 5-8.**

As his children and grandchildren turns nine years old, they are told the story of nine-year-old Benno's escape from Nazi Germany and his eventual survival in England with his older brother as part of the 9600 children saved by the Kindertransport. Benno's parents and younger brother were killed at Auschwitz. This book, written by his daughters, is based on Benno's writings and memories from this traumatic period. In clear language, and with historical information and archival photos alongside Benno's personal story, the authors enable us to empathize with Benno's feelings of uncertainty, loneliness, fear, and homesickness as he moves from private home to convent to orphanage and to work at age fourteen. Eventually, he comes to understand his parents' tremendous sacrifice to save his life. The book, which will have special appeal for boys, includes a glossary, a timeline, and questions for discussion. It is accompanied by a 10-minute DVD featuring comments by Benno and his daughters, material which adds even more to its sense of authenticity. This book is part of B'nai Brith Canada's "Holocaust & Hope Testimonial Series."

*Susan Berson, Denver, CO*

**Kacer, Kathy. *The Diary of Laura's Twin*. A Holocaust Remembrance Book for Young Readers. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2008. 202pp. \$14.95. ISBN: 978-1-897187-39-5. Pbk. Grades 4-7.**

Laura is less than thrilled with the assignment given to her by her rabbi, three weeks before her bat mitzvah, to research the fate of a child who lived during the Holocaust. Busy with preparations, school, babysitting her young sister, and also feeling a lack of any personal connection to the Holocaust, she confides in her rabbi her reluctance to complete the assignment. While he sympathizes with Laura, he convinces her to meet with Mrs. Mandelcorn, an elderly woman whom he feels might give her a new perspective on the project. Laura agrees to the meeting, and Mrs. Mandelcorn gives her a diary she translated from Polish of a young girl, Sara Gittler, who lived in the Warsaw Ghetto. Captivated by Sara's story, Laura gains new insight into her own Jewish identity. The highlight of Laura's bat mitzvah experience is not shopping for a dress or the party; it is the courage and maturity she gleans from learning about a Jewish girl her same age in the Holocaust.

Kathy Kacer has written a readable story based on an interesting premise. Twinning ceremonies are gaining popularity in Canada and abroad, and readers will be drawn into Laura's journey as well as Sara's depiction of life in the Warsaw Ghetto. The publisher's recommended age of 9-13 is right on target. This

is a great entry into Holocaust literature for tweens who do not have the maturity for more sophisticated and emotionally complicated stories. The book concludes with an author's note, which provides historical information about the Warsaw Ghetto, biographies of Jewish resistance fighters in the ghetto, and true stories of twinning ceremonies. Recommended.

*Aimee Lurie, Cleveland, OH*

**LeZotte, Ann Clare. *T4*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 2008. 109pp \$14.00. ISBN: 978-0-547-04684-6. Grades 6-10.**

A free verse novel that reads like historical fiction, this is the story of 13-year-old Paula Becker, who is deaf and living in 1939 Germany. She is offered a safe house by the local priest as rumors abound that the Germans are planning to take away all disabled people. Tiergartenstrasse 4 (T4) is the Nazi headquarters, which has orders to kill any mentally ill or disabled person. In the course of Paula's escape, she meets a Jewish family who is also suffering as they hide, and realizes that children and adults with disabilities are not the only ones being persecuted. The novel presents an unusual point of view of the Holocaust, written by a published and talented poet who is deaf. It is also a sensitive story of coping strategies used by deaf children. A beautifully written book, it is recommended for middle school children because of the subject and the suffering endured by its characters.

*Shelly Feit, Moriah School, Englewood NJ*

**Watts, Irene N. *Good-Bye Marianne: The Graphic Novel*. Illus. by Kathryn E. Shoemaker. Toronto: Tundra, 2008. 124pp. \$12.95. ISBN: 978-0-88776-830-9. Pbk. Ages 8-11.**

In reading this moving and touching story, retold in graphic novel form, I was struck by the awkwardness of the dialog and narrative, which had been made to fit into the graphic frames. When prose is broken up, it can affect the flow of the story and distort how the reader perceives the action and dialog taking place. The main character, Marianne, does not seem thoughtful enough; she appears to accept separation from her mother and father without the despair you would normally expect from a child. The cruel realities of war, and especially of the Holocaust, are not elaborated or expressed. Consummate fear and desperation are only lightly touched upon. The original book is much more thought-provoking.

Kathryn Shoemaker has put great effort into detailing the mood and feelings of the story and characters. The soft-pencil drawings in gray tones convey the innocence of youth together with the bleak future for the Jewish community. With its frames and captions, this book falls somewhere in the family of graphic novels but without the intensities of stark realism, making it seem more like a longer picture book. The sequence of the story leaves open spaces. The reader knows that the action takes place in November and December 1938, but letters are dated out of sequence. The important, yellow star has been left off the clothing.

This is a good introduction to a personal memory of the Holocaust without the difficult realities that accompanied it.

*Tammy Gerson, Librarian, Cohen Library, Athens, GA*

### Another view:

This graphic novel is simply but carefully drawn, from interesting angles, with natural dialog from the point of view of

Marianne, an eleven-year-old child in 1938 Berlin. The story is familiar: Marianne's father must hide from the Nazis, her home is invaded by the Gestapo, Marianne encounters a German girl who rejects her, and she is expelled from school because she's Jewish. At one point, she makes a new friend, Ernest, and successfully stands up to his intolerant and uninformed views about Jews. The tenor of the story is one of gradually spreading fear and insecurity, reaching the climax when Marianne must leave her mother and travel by train to England with the Kindertransport. Marianne has spunk, but she is not sentimentalized or idealized. Highly recommended.

*Susan Berson, Denver, Colorado*

**Editor's note:** This is a graphic version of a book of the same title, written by Irene Watts and published by Tundra Books in 1999.

## ISRAEL

**Aronson, Marc. *Unsettled: The Problem of Loving Israel*. New York: Atheneum, 2008. 184pp. \$18.99. ISBN: 978-1-14169-1261-3. Grades 9-12.**

Aronson has written a rambling and self-obsessed account of his tormented feelings about the State of Israel. At first, he tries to convince both himself and the reader that he really loves Israel, but he must recall his childhood viewpoint to explain why. Growing up, Israel was the perfect David, the underdog you could feel proud about supporting. Back then, with its astounding accomplishments against all odds, Israel was so easy to like and

everyone was rooting for it (p. 86, 87). Clearly, an American Jewish youngster could love this version of Israel and still fit in.

But the unexpected happened. Despite the fact that Israel built a vibrant democracy in a region of tyrannies, created the only state in the region where all religions can flourish, absorbed a million Jewish refugees expelled from Arab and other lands, and made the desert bloom, all the while beset by terror raids, its enemies in the Muslim world refused to recognize its legitimacy. When Israel survived and triumphed in the 1967 attempt by its neighbors to destroy it, it stopped being that perfect David (p. 91), and public opinion in some quarters turned hostile. One recalls the book title by Israeli satirist Ephraim Kishon: *Sorry, We Won*. Now it wasn't so easy for one who loved Israel to fit in.

Aronson's narrative—it is by no means a history, but a personal, on-the-psychiatrist's-couch release of anger and angst—shows this adolescent concern with fitting in, with being liked. "Why do so many nations hate Israel?" he asks, and like the battered wife or abused child, he concludes that it must be the victim's fault. Aronson has to ignore or distort a lot of history to make his case. To plead that the Palestinians need their own state, too (p. 26), he must elide the fact that they turned down the opportunity for statehood several times: in 1937, 1947, and in 2000. To say that both sides would rather hold on to their fears than reach an agreement, he ignores the unprecedented risks Israelis took—and the cost they have paid—in the Oslo Accords by actually letting Arafat and his guerillas back among them, and arming them to boot! To ask whether winning the 1967 war ruined Israel he must overlook that losing the war would have meant Israel's annihilation. To assert that the occupation is wrong he discounts the fact that

Israel wants it to end but that her enemies refuse to sign a peace treaty! And to equate Hamas and Islamic Jihad with Orthodox rabbis in Israel (p. 129), he forgets that Orthodox rabbis don't blow up buses and restaurants or preach death for non-believers, nor do they toss their political opponents out of windows and off rooftops. Aronson seems so ignorant of the violent, jihadist ideology that permeates Palestinian mosques, schools, media, and speeches, that he makes the preposterous charge of blaming Israel for the lack of nonviolent leadership among Arabs. In his warped view of history, the blame for the Palestinians' not having their own state rests on just about everyone except the Palestinians themselves. He buys into what Lebanese scholar Dr. Fouad Ajami calls that mix of belligerence and self-pity so common in Arab writings. Aronson's delusions seem boundless. In Jerusalem, he wonders whether his wife's brown skin evokes tacit prejudice—this in the country that has welcomed brown Jews from India and Yemen, black Jews from Ethiopia, Oriental Jews from Asia, provided haven to Vietnamese boat people and now to black-skinned Muslim refugees from Sudan! By book's end, his self-hatred reaches a fever pitch. Ehud Barak is too Israeli. Being near devout Jews is stifling: the very air felt choked with prayers and rules (p. 140). Israel feels so alien to me.

Therapists have studied the phenomenon of individuals and communities who cope with a state of constant siege or defamation by embracing the indictments of their enemies and seeking to appease them. This phenomenon has appeared often among Diaspora Jews. Marc Aronson is its latest manifestation and he should see a real therapist instead of using teen readers as a stand-in.

*Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH*

## JUDAISM

**Bloomfield, Jill Colella.** *Jewish Holidays Cookbook: Festive Meals for Celebrating the Year.* New York: DK, 2008. 128pp. \$19.99. ISBN: 978-0-7566-4089-7. Grades 4–8.

A cookbook for the entire family, with many outstanding features. Most important are the recipes, which are clearly written, easy to follow, and varied between traditional food like challah and blintzes and more modern creations like gefilte fish cutouts. There are about 45 recipes, organized by the holidays of Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Hanukkah, Tu B'Shevat, Purim, Pesach, Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Lag B'Omer, and Shavuot. Each recipe is given a double-page spread, so along with a list of ingredients and the cooking directions, there are striking color photographs showing the food in preparation and in its finished version, notes on simple recipe variants, and comments by Rabbi Janet Ozur-Bass on the history and culture of Jewish food, its relevance to the holiday when it is usually eaten, and anecdotes about Rabbi Ozur-Bass's personal experiences. These comments, which also introduce each holiday, add a great deal of interest to the book and have the potential to make each cooking experience a lively lesson in Judaism as well. Supplementary material includes a list of necessary equipment, notes on kitchen safety and on kashrut, and an index. With recipes on the sweet side, this will tempt the pickiest of palates.

*Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH*

**Bob, Steven M. and Lisa Bob Howard.** *The Bar and Bat Mitzvah Manual: Six Steps to a Memorable Family Celebration.* Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 2008. 60pp. \$8.95. ISBN: 978-0-87441-812-5. Pbk. Age 12–adult.

Touted as a workbook that will help rabbis, cantors, education directors, and family programmers to prepare b'nai mitzvah students and their families for this important life-cycle event, *The Bar and Bat Mitzvah Manual* disappoints from beginning to end. Although there are some positive components to this book—clear language, manageable chunks of activities and “real world” examples, the negative features outweigh the positive. The text is printed blue on white; all the photos inside the book are also tinted blue. This format gives one the feeling of an old-fashioned workbook that would have little appeal to young people today.

With its patronizing tone, *The Bar and Bat Mitzvah Manual* seems like a “Bar and Bat Mitzvah for Dummies” book. For example, the section about how to prepare a d'var Torah is sadly lacking in depth. The components skim the surface, without showing the student how to do the research or write his or her d'var Torah. For a better overview of b'nai mitzvah, use your budget to buy a new edition of *Putting God on the Guest List* by Jeffrey K. Salkin or *Whose Bar/Bat Mitzvah Is This, Anyway?* by Judith Davis.

*Anne Dublin, Toronto, Canada*

**Dumas, Chava, and Aryeh Mahr.** *Mysteries of the Alef-Beis.* Mahrwood Press, 2008. \$18.95. ISBN: 978-1-59826-211-7. Grades 3–7.

Based on a similar work published 25 years ago, this book is intended for beginning to advanced students, but it would seem to appeal mainly to those children who already know the basics and wish to expand their knowledge in a deeper religious and kabbalistic direction. It concisely conveys the “secrets” of the Hebrew alphabet through a story for each letter, drawings that illustrate aspects of its character, lessons from the letters' shapes, and the numerical value of the letters and their components. Two pages are devoted to each letter, illustrated with cartoon characters. While some of the material assumes considerable background knowledge, and many terms are not translated from the Hebrew, there is much valuable information here, presented in a very charming manner. The bibliography is entirely in Hebrew. Also included are cards for trading and games.

*Susan Berson, Denver, CO*

**Feltquate, Barbara.** *Kiddish Yiddish: Jewish Tradition and Culture in Rhyme.* Illus. by Tom Post. Sarasota, FL: Bardoff, 2008. 28pp. \$18.95. ISBN: 978-0-9778199-3-5. Kindergarten–grade 3.

*Kiddish Yiddish* is a collection of 40 short, rhymed poems explaining common places, items, and concepts of importance to Jews. Loosely structured around the Jewish calendar, the first entries cover such general terms as “bagel,” “Yiddish,” “bubbe,” and “zayde.” From these, the author moves on to Shabbat ideas, including “challah” and “Kiddush”; then to Jewish holidays, beginning, interestingly, with Shavuot. The book concludes with life-cycle-related terms like “ketubah” and “mazel tov.” Bob Post's illustrations feature muted colors and bright-eyed children. Each term has its own picture, with several combining

smoothly for a few spreads, including the page featuring “shul” and “chazzan.”

There are a number of problems with *Kiddish Yiddish*. Most of the poems are written with a very even, sing-songy rhythm, which would make for good reading aloud to young children, but too many end with lines that don't scan well. The sexism inherent in the descriptions of Zayde teaching the narrator to pray and stopping at the bakery for a treat, alongside Bubbe in the kitchen, presents an antiquated view of grandparents. The poems for “challah” tells the reader that Bubbe used to bake the traditional bread, but now mama buys it—and it's not as good. Despite the title, more than half the terms are, in fact, Hebrew. A notation beside each term indicates whether it is Hebrew or Yiddish, and provides transliteration; the entry for “seder plate” includes neither derivation nor pronunciation guide. Some of the term choices are surprising—for example, “chuppah” and “ketubah” are included, but “bris/brit milah” is not. Children may be confused by the description of “menorah,” which not only explains about the Chanukah candles, but suggests that Shabbat candles are lit in a 7-branched candelabrum.

It is hard to envision a suitable audience for the book; the poems are not detailed enough to stand alone, and the book is not sufficiently cohesive to be read as a whole. The inclusion of both Hebrew and Yiddish makes it unlikely that this volume would be an effective teaching tool for either language. While Feltquate's desire to introduce Jewish children to terms they are likely to encounter in their religious experience is commendable, *Kiddish Yiddish* is likely to appeal to adults as a good book for children more than it will delight readers of any age.

*Marci Lavine Bloch, Silver Spring, MD*

## MITZVOT

**Herzog, Pearl.** *The Pink Dollhouse*. Photographs by Itai Bodel. Nanuet, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 2008. 112pp. \$29.99. ISBN: 978-1-58330-797-7. Kindergarten–grade 3.

Designed to teach character development and proper actions (e.g., when getting lost or being scared, showing kindness, making others feel better, what to do when things go wrong), this unattractive book is illustrated with garish photographs of dolls and toys in various situations. Activities are offered so children can practice what they have learned. Its heart is in the right place, but the execution is very poor.

*Susan Berson, Denver, CO*

**Schreiber, Elisheva.** *My Tzitzis Book*. Illus. by Batsheva Ravad. Nanuet, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 2008. \$16.99. 978-1-59826-155-4. Kindergarten–grade 3.

A young Orthodox reader will learn that wearing his tzitzis will help him remember to keep his mitzvot and “be an all-day mitzvah boy.” Some of the text is in rhyme, and some is in prose. Illustrated with clay figures and actual samples of the materials that go into the making of tzitzis at various stages, the details of wool processing, spinning, dying, winding, and knotting tzitzis are discussed. The explanation of the blue dye from the rare chilazon snail is particularly interesting.

*Susan Berson, Denver, CO*

## PRAYER

**Salmon, Howard.** *Comic Book Siddur for Shabbat Morning Services*. Tucson, AZ: Self-published, 2008. 144pp. ISBN: 978-0-615-20639-4. Grades 4 and up.

Howard Salmon presents a prayer book for a traditional Shabbat morning service in a very non-traditional form. Designed in comic book style, this siddur introduces the dubious hero Captain Aleph, along with his sidekick Marty the Flying Matzoh Ball. The text of the prayers is printed clearly, in large bold type on bright white paper. The accompanying illustrations explain the traditional Hebrew words, making use of such comic book conventions as speech bubbles and characters drawn more as caricatures than real people. The females are (of course) all buxom, and all are depicted in tight tops—the one wearing the shirt featuring Hebrew letters spelling “Torah” across her chest is particularly lamentable.

Notwithstanding Rabbi Sharff's introduction suggesting that we, as Jews, have superpowers that can change the world through our prayers, this volume is not successful in making prayer more accessible. The comics do not stand on their own, and when combined with the prayers serve mainly to distract from the ancient, sacred text.

*Marci Lavine Bloch, Silver Spring, MD*

## Reissue

*Tell No One Who You Are: The Hidden Childhood of Regine Miller* by Walter Buchignani has been reissued in paperback by Tundra Books.



## Editors' Picks

Watch the February/March 2009 issue for Editors' Choices: The Best and the Worst of Jewish Kids' Books in 2008. Anne Dublin and Linda Silver, co-editors of reviews for children and teen in the *AJL*

*Newsletter*, fearlessly pick not only the “must haves” but the “must avoids” among the 2008 books for young people reviewed in the newsletter.



## Chicago, Chicago, That Toddlin' Town ...

Things are really shaping up for next year's convention in Chicago, July 5-9. Sessions will include Web 2.0, "chick-lit" books, library management, collaboration, social media, children's literature (including award-winning Jewish children's literature authors!), adult literature, Yiddish, ethnomusicology, art, digitization, Sephardic Jewry, and much, much more.

The keynote speaker on Sunday evening will be Peter Hayes, professor of history and German and the Theodore Z. Weiss-Holocaust Educational Foundation Professor of Holocaust Studies at Northwestern University, where he has taught since 1980. Dr. Hayes is the author or editor of eight books including the prize-winning titles *Industry and Ideology: IG Farben in the Nazi Era* (Cambridge University Press, 1987; new edition, 2000) and *Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World* (Northwestern University Press, 1991), as well as numerous articles and reviews. On Sunday afternoon, we will offer a Chicago Jewish tradition—"Chicago Jewish Roots," a bus tour of Chicago's Jewish history, led by renowned geographer and historian Dr. Irving Cutler.

Did you know that skyscrapers were invented in Chicago? The best way to see them, and all of the stunning architecture in downtown Chicago, is to go by boat up the Chicago River. We will pre-arrange architectural boat tours of the city on Sunday or Wednesday afternoon. And speaking of architecture, there

will be an exhibit at the Art Institute on the master architect of Chicago, Daniel Burnham. Your itinerary could also include a visit to the Spertus Institute Museum, the new Illinois Holocaust Museum, the Museum of Science and Industry, the Field Museum, the Shedd Aquarium, the Adler Planetarium, and beautiful Michigan Avenue. There are "el" tours, walking tours, jazz and comedy clubs, Frank Lloyd Wright home tours, and Second City. The Chicago Cubs will have home games that week and the White Sox will be playing Cleveland at Cellular Field on July 7 and 8. (NOTE: The convention planners are not going to purchase a block of tickets—we encourage you to make plans on your own.)

The convention will be held at the Sheraton Chicago and Towers, located right on the Chicago River, one block from Lake Michigan. Rooms are only \$156/night (plus tax). The hotel is near the Pritzker Pavilion, where the Grant Park Symphony performs, for free, almost every night. Information about online and phone-in registration is on the AJL web site. The hotel is convenient from Midway and O'Hare International Airport. The American Library Association's annual meeting will be held in Chicago, from July 9 to 15, and the Sheraton is one of the ALA hotels.

For more information, please contact the co-chairs: Cheryl Banks, at Cheryl.Banks@gmail.com; Rose Novil at rnovil@oakton.edu; or Shoshanah Seidman at sseidman@northwestern.edu.

# Treasurer's Report 2007/2008

SCHLOMIT SCHWARZER

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Description</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
Gifts	1,500.00	5,100.00
Membership dues	52,000.00	53,803.91
Membership labels	2,000.00	1,640.00
Publications	500.00	1,315.00
Ref. Bk. Award	900.00	1,000.00
Bibliography award	900.00	1,000.00
RAS Body of Work Award	2,000.00	0.00
S. Taylor Bk award	5,000.00	5,605.00
S. Taylor Ms award	1,500.00	1,500.00
S. Taylor Bk award from membship	600.00	500.00
Sydney Taylor Award Poster	100.00	29.00
ST 40th Anniv celebration	0.00	0.00
Values Finder	0.00	0.00
JL Income	0.00	78.08
Advertisement Income	1,500.00	3,720.00
Professional Dev/Ed. com.	1,000.00	3,080.00
CDs Interest	2,000.00	1,820.42
Bank interest	2,000.00	3,944.69
Reserve account interest	2,000.00	2,420.32
Orenstein convention subsidies	250.00	465.00
Scholarship fund	750.00	894.00
Travel Fund	1,000.00	1,000.00
Tribute cards	100.00	178.00
2007 Convention Income	10,000.00	20,705.39
2008 Convention Income		0.00
2008 Conv travel grants (Littauer grant)	4,250.00	
TOTAL	\$91,600.00	\$114,048.81

<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Description</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
President	2,000.00	172.38
National Mailings	1,500.00	0.00
National office - telephone	750.00	728.15
Legal services	2,500.00	1,509.00
Corporate filings	550.00	456.00
Liability insurance for Board	1,200.00	974.50
Accounting Services	2,000.00	1,225.00
Consultant	500.00	0.00
Vice President	1,500.00	521.00
Membership	2,000.00	2,035.39
Membership recruitment	250.00	0.00
Membership directory & cards	0.00	0.00
Membership printing, brochure	0.00	0.00
Life membs/Fan. Goldstein Awds	50.00	0.00
Publications	1,500.00	401.82
Stationery	500.00	0.00
Corresponding Secretary	250.00	285.91
Recording Secretary	25.00	0.00
Treasurer	350.00	233.42
RAS	500.00	956.00
Reference Book Award	1,100.00	500.00
Bibliography award	1,100.00	500.00
RAS Body of Work Award	3,000.00	1,363.00
SSC President	1,000.00	431.26
Sydney Taylor Book Award	5,000.00	2,868.55

<b>EXPENDITURES (cont.)</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Description</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award	1,750.00	500.00
Sydney Taylor Award Poster	0.00	0.00
Values Finder	3,000.00	1,633.80
ST 40th Anniv Celebration	2,500.00	3,169.60
Judaica Librarianship	12,000.00	8,900.57
Newsletter	26,000.00	22,661.59
Newsletter Advertising	100.00	0.00
Proceedings	25.00	0.00
Public Relations Committee	5,000.00	2,074.95
Prof. Dues NISO	200.00	200.00
Professional Dev/Education Com	1,000.00	1,815.37
Library accreditation	1,000.00	0.00
Mentor Committee	1,000.00	496.98
Chapter relations	2,000.00	944.19
Bank charges	150.00	12.78
Orenstein convention subsidies	300.00	306.11
Scholarship fund	2,000.00	1,000.00
Archives	100.00	0.00
Special Projects/Fundraising	1,500.00	1,500.00
Tribute cards	0.00	0.00
Midwinter travel	10,000.00	3,724.41
Midwinter food	500.00	541.51
Web page	1,400.00	1,215.80
Internat'l Liaison	750.00	0.00
National Convention Committee	3,000.00	268.80
2008 Convention Seed Money	10,000.00	10,000.00
2008 Convention travel grants (Littauer)	4,000.00	3,450.00
2008 Convention travel grants (AJL)	10,000.00	7,874.31
2008 Convention Clerical Support	5,000.00	350.00
2009 Convention Seed Money	5,000.00	5,000.00
TOTAL	138,400.00	92,802.15

	<b>Budget</b>	<b>YTD bal</b>
	<b>2007/2008</b>	<b>7/17/08</b>
INCOME	91,600.00	114,048.81
EXPENDITURES	138,400.00	92,802.15
DIFFERENCE	(46,800.00)	21,246.66

#### **Account Balances**

Checking	30,827.64
Savings	33.03
Money Market	106,613.80
Money Market II (Reserve)	83,495.45
15 mo. CD	51,820.44
Accounts Total	272,790.36
Liabilities (outstanding checks)	9,469.28

# Jewish Blogging: The Wave of the Future

SHOSHANA HURWITZ

I was privileged to participate in the First International Jewish Bloggers Convention, which was hosted by Nefesh b'Nefesh and took place in Jerusalem in August. The convention occurred just weeks after my aliyah, about which I have been writing in my own blog, Hurwitz Family Aliyah Scrapbook (<http://hurwitz-aliyah-scrapbook.blogspot.com>). I try to keep the blog interesting by combining musings about our aliyah adventure with digital scrapbook techniques.

The response to the convention, expected to be tiny, was anything but—200 people showed up in person and over a thousand (at last count) attended via the live webcast on the NBN website. The “meat ‘n’ greet” deli supper felt much like a high school reunion—everyone looking around scanning each other’s name tags, faces occasionally lighting up with recognition and an exclaim of “I read you!”

Several of the evening’s speakers were actually American bloggers who arrived in Israel for the convention in a very interesting way: these high-profile bloggers were each matched up with a person or family on this week’s Nefesh b'Nefesh aliyah flight and will be blogging about their aliyah journeys in the near future.

The first half of the program consisted of a discussion among several panelists who are well-known in the Jewish blogosphere, about ways to increase a blog’s readership and promote ideas. Some of these ideas included adding your blog to Jewish blog aggregators, emailing blog posts to people whom you think will be interested in them (but within reason!), and including your blog URL in your email signature line. Other ways to find readers are to get more involved with the “blogger community” by creating a blogroll, which is a list of your favorite blogs that goes

down the side of your own blog, and to comment one another’s posts, which gets your name out there and raises the chances that someone reading your friend’s blog might also read yours.

The first panel was interrupted by a surprise speaker: former Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu (only in Israel!), who spoke on the importance of blogging in today’s Jewish world and how it contributes to the future of Israel, Zionism, and the Jewish people. To put a political leader in a room full of such wildly opinionated, not to mention ideologically varied, people that Jewish bloggers are, created quite a stir, but the moderators did their best to keep the focus on blogging and not politics. Nevertheless, Netanyahu was very down-to-earth, had a great sense of humor, and was a welcome addition to the night’s variety of speakers!

After a short comedy performance from popular blogger Frum Satire, a presentation and second set of panelists discussed the importance of creating positive branding of Israel through social networks such as blogs. With the technological advances of today, every Jew has the power to make a difference to the world using the three Ms—magnetize, motivate, and mobilize—through their blogs.

One comment from a panelist that really hit home was that we never know who is reading our blogs and what kind of impact we are having. We can only hope that through blogging we are sending a positive message to the world about Israel and Judaism, one that is not often presented in the news. Blogs represent all walks of life and all types of backgrounds—this is the real Israel, and it’s our job to get the picture of this real Israel out there.

All in all it, was a fantastic and informative evening that is sure to give many in the Jewish blogosphere food for thought, and posts, for some time to come.

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## Association of Jewish Libraries

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