

Plan To Attend the AJL Annual Convention in Chicago

CHERYL BANKS

It's time to make your plans to attend the 44th annual convention of the Association of Jewish Libraries in Chicago, July 5 - July 8. The Chicago Convention Committee has been working very hard to make sure that this convention is the best ever. We encourage you to come to Chicago, watch the fireworks, visit all of the sights, and attend all of the convention sessions. Bring your family and make it a summer vacation!



All meetings and meals will be held at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers. The hotel is right downtown, on the Chicago River, two blocks from Lake Michigan. It is easily accessible by public transportation from both airports, Midway and O'Hare, and from Union Station (for Amtrak.) Many tourist sights are an easy walk from the hotel—the Art Institute, Grant Park, Millennium Park, Spertus Institute, Navy Pier, the Loop, the Newberry Library, Washington Cultural Center, and the Magnificent Mile.

The national organization and local convention committee are well aware of the economic situation in the country, and particularly, in nonprofit organizations. We are being careful to keep our costs as low as possible, and the national organization has determined that a large amount of money will be budgeted for convention travel stipends. We want to encourage you to apply for a stipend, after checking about financial support available from your local chapter, so that you can strengthen and broaden your professional knowledge and network with your colleagues. There is no need for anyone not to attend the convention for financial reasons. (See president's message on the next page.)

One of the highlights of our convention will be a special plenary session featuring Barbara Schneider-Kempf, the director general of the Berlin State Library in Germany, speaking

on "Stolen Books: The Third Reich's Exchange Center and the Prussian State Library in the years 1933 through 1945." Thanks to AJL member Philip Miller, who spotted an article in *Welt Online* about the Nazi appropriation of Jewish books, we contacted the Berlin State Library and Mrs. Schneider-Kempf offered to speak at our convention.

As a prologue to Mrs. Schneider-Kempf's presentation, on Sunday evening, July 5, Professor Peter Hayes will deliver the keynote address. Dr. Hayes is 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. He 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), the recently published *From Cooperation to Complicity: Degussa in the Third Reich* (Cambridge/Beck) and the forthcoming *Profits and Persecution: German Big Business and the Holocaust* (Cambridge/Beck) as well as of numerous articles and reviews. In 1997-98, he was the J.B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Senior Scholar in Residence at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Professor Hayes lectures on corporate complicity in the Holocaust, German big business and the Holocaust, and future views of the Holocaust.

We have scheduled over 40 sessions and expect many exhibitors. Tuesday's luncheon will feature a gathering of local Chicago authors. Our diverse program includes sessions on cataloging, digital resources, Israeli film, terrorism and the Internet, Jewish Chicago, manuscripts and conservation, Yiddish and Israeli theater, and Sephardic folklore. Some sessions will be of special interest to SSC librarians, others to academic librarians, and a vast array of sessions will be invitingly "pareve."

This year, the city of Chicago will celebrate the centennial of the *The Plan of Chicago* (the Burnham Plan), which was one of the



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The *AJL Newsletter* (Irene Levin-Wixman z"l, founding editor) is published quarterly by the Association of Jewish Libraries to inform members about association activities and issues related to Judaica libraries. Receipt of the newsletter is one of the benefits of membership. Annual dues are \$50 for individuals or institutions.

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President's Message

SUSAN DUBIN

Being president of this organization is like being the ringmaster in a 500 ring circus. There are so many good things to report! Even though this is an especially difficult time for libraries and librarians, our organization is strong. Because we have been conservative in our spending over the years, we are blessed with a healthy bank account.

The board and council have decided to increase convention subsidies from \$10,000 to \$30,000, to encourage attendance at the Chicago Convention, July 5-8, 2009. AJL will underwrite convention costs in order to keep the registration fee at last year's rate of \$450. The board has also approved \$500 for a joint AJL/ALA program in Chicago.

The Board and Council wrote a letter in support of principles of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany/World Jewish Restitution Organization. (The letter is printed on page 51.) We established an advocacy award to honor those who support their institution's library. A committee of five—Ronda Rose, Liza Stabler, Laurel Wolfson, Leah Moskovitz, and Maureen Reister—will determine how the award will be made.

Constitutional changes were introduced to allow for a designated representative as well as a president to represent chapters on the council, and to change the timeframe for write-ins in national elections. Details on the proposed changes appear on p. 52, and will be voted on at the general membership meeting in Chicago.

The accreditation period has been increased from three to five years, with an interim check to make sure the library's situation has not changed. A logo for accredited institutions is being designed.

A committee was set up to investigate offering coursework for Judaic librarian certification through the University of Maryland. Thanks to the work of Edith Lubetski and Abraham Rosenberg, ten AJL members will present papers at the World Jewish Congress to be held in Israel in August.

Additional members are needed for the Mentoring, Public Relations, Bibliography Bank and National Convention committees. Please volunteer to serve on a committee that piques your interest.

The Valuing Libraries Committee was charged with examining our mission and goals and making recommendations for ways to move our organization forward. Committee members will be reporting on their progress at the convention. We are negotiating to expand the number of publishers in our new discount program. I am in discussion with Baker and Taylor, H. W. Wilson, and Proquest. We have already set up discounts with Pitspopany, Kar-Ben, and Mackin. If anyone has suggestions for others or contacts, please let me know.

I am looking forward to greeting you in Chicago!

Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund

YELENA LUCKERT

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

Recent donations received:

- In memory of Bernard Witt, Carol Witt's husband, by the AJL Capital Area Chapter
- In memory of Margot Berman, by Norma E. Regenold

Please consider giving to this good cause. Send a check to: Doris Ornstein 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.

AJL members can now apply for travel grants from the Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund. Applicants should submit a letter of 500 words or fewer, telling why they would like to attend the convention. Letters should include how long candidates have been employed in a Judaic library, what part of the cost their institutions would pay, their educational backgrounds, and facts about AJL chapters in their area. The letter should be submitted to the Convention Travel Stipend Committee, c/o Yelena Luckert, at the address above. For more information and for the application form, please go to www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/scholarships/orenstein.htm. Letters must be postmarked no later than April 30.



AJL Student Scholarships

SHULAMITH Z. BERGER

The Association of Jewish Libraries is pleased to announce a scholarship of \$500 to a student enrolled or accepted in a graduate school of library and information science. Prospective candidates should have an interest in, and demonstrate a potential for pursuing a career in Judaica librarianship.

Eligibility

Proof of acceptance for the next academic year *or* proof of current enrollment in:

- An ALA accredited library school in the United States or Canada *or*
- An accredited library school in the United Kingdom, Australia or New Zealand *or*
- The graduate library school program at Hebrew University or Bar Ilan University

and

Documentation showing:

- Completion of Jewish studies courses at an academic level *or*
- *Extensive* participation in less formal Jewish studies *or*
- *Extensive* experience working in Judaica libraries *or*
- Any combination of the above

Students who wish to apply for this scholarship should submit to the scholarship co-chair by Wednesday, April 1:

- Completed application form online, *via email* to the Scholarship co-chair, available on the AJL Web site at www.jewish-libraries.org/ajlweb/scholarships/scholarship_form.rtf.
- Documentation of acceptance or enrollment in one of the qualified graduate library school programs mentioned above. Transcripts and/or letters on official letterhead, *submitted via regular surface mail*, will be accepted as documentation.
- Documentation of Jewish studies completed at an academic or less formal level or of experience working in Judaica libraries. Transcripts and/or letters on official letterhead, *submitted via regular surface mail*, will be accepted as documentation.
- Personal statement as a Word or rtf document, *via email* to the Scholarship co-chair. Please submit a short statement (200/300 words) highlighting the extent of your participation in Judaic studies and other relevant experiences. Relate how you feel your involvement in such activities might be reflected in your future career in library and information science.

Submit application and supporting materials to:

Lynn Feinman, Co-Chair
AJL Scholarship Award
92nd Street Y Library
1395 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10128
Phone: 212 415-5543 Fax: 212 427-6119
Email: lfeinman@92Y.org

Further information may be obtained by addressing the scholarship co-chair at any of the contact points mentioned above.

AJL Scholarship Fund

SARAH BARNARD

The great rabbi and sage Maimonides, listed eight levels of charity. The highest level is to prepare a person for gainful employment. You have the unique opportunity to encourage a library student and, at the same time, promote Judaica librarianship by making donations to the AJL Scholarship Fund.

The AJL Scholarship Fund awards two scholarships of \$500 each year to talented library science students who show an interest in pursuing a career in Judaica librarianship. For each gift, an acknowledgment card is sent to the appropriate person. It is a very meaningful way to recognize simchas, send donations in memory of a deceased, or make a donation for a speedy recovery. Your donation will always be appreciated! Send your contributions with the appropriate information. Please remember to include the addresses of the family of those honored or remembered in order that we can notify the appropriate persons.

We always have impressive candidates, and the awards will be given out at the convention in Chicago. Our recipients are always appreciative and need support, especially given the current economic situation.

Please complete the form below and send it, along with your donation, to Sarah M. Barnard, Serials Librarian, Hebrew Union College-Klau Library, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220.

List of Donors to the Margot Berman Memorial Fund and AJL Scholarship Fund for Sept.-Dec. 2008:

- Douglas B. Bauer in memory of Margot Berman
- Elizabeth Weinberg in memory of Margot Berman
- Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund in memory of Margot Berman
- Jean & Mark Patiky and Daniel & Annie Berman in memory of Margot Berman
- Penny Fujiko Willgerodt in memory of Margot Berman
- A. Strauss in memory of Margot Berman
- Nanette and Irv Greif in memory of Margot Berman
- Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors Board & Staff in memory of Margot Berman
- Barbara Y. Leff in honor of Susan Dubin, president of AJL
- Ellen Share in memory of Edith Zober, Sally Korobkin, Evelyn Appelbaum
- Roger Kohn in honor of Ms. Heather Lenson

A thank you goes to each and every donor!!

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Chapter Chatter

TOBY ROSSNER

News from the Chapter Relations Committee

Irene Seff and Roz Reisner, Chapter Relations Committee Co-chairs

Now is the time to be planning ahead for the 2009 AJL Convention, to be held July 5-8 in downtown Chicago. Chapter presidents/coordinators should talk with their chapter members about the benefits of convention attendance. AJL has monies available for first timers and veteran convention attendees. Full information and application forms can be found on the AJL Web site. The deadline is April 1. Many synagogue rabbis have discretionary funds for professional development, and they will often support volunteer staff with these funds. The Chapter Relations Committee will again be holding evening meetings to brainstorm ideas and address specific questions relevant to chapter organization, programming, communications and networking.

If you are not already a member of a chapter we urge you to use the membership directory on the AJL Web site (your password is the member number on your AJL membership card) and make contact with your colleagues. If you are a chapter member, step up and offer your help. And if there is no chapter in your area, consider becoming a regional contact or starting a chapter. Support is available from Chapter Relations to help you through the process.

As a small token of appreciation, the Chapter Relations Committee has distributed attractive, specially designed ceramic pins to all chapter presidents and coordinators. We know that they will be worn with pride and a sense of accomplishment for the many hours of service our chapter leaders devote to their constituencies.

Mid-winter addendum from Roz Reisner

Both Irene and I attended at the AJL midwinter meeting, where we heard lots of exciting news about the upcoming AJL Convention in Chicago and the many programs and initiatives being planned. We were particularly excited about the regional conference, *From Word to Deed: Teaching Values Through Children's Literature*, that the newly formed Seattle Chapter hosted on February 15 at Temple Beth Am in Seattle. The Seattle Chapter members pulled together a wonderful program, which helped to galvanize Jewish librarians in the area. (Details are on the Seattle Chapter Web site at www.ajlnorthwest.org.) They will utilize the expertise they've gained to host the 2010 AJL National Convention. Way to go, Seattle!

If you've ever considered becoming more active in National AJL, here's a great opportunity: many committees need members. It's the perfect way to meet other AJL members and to expand your horizons within the organization. Check out the AJL Web site to see descriptions of the various committees and to contact the committee chairs.

San Antonio Chapter

Submitted by Marlene Reynolds

Well, we finally almost have an AJL chapter here in San Antonio. Five librarians met on November 6, 2008. We introduced ourselves and our diverse libraries: university, synagogues,

community center, and Holocaust. We plan to meet again in February. A retired school librarian and a new librarian to the community said they would like to attend the next meeting. We are very excited to finally get this chapter started. We made a commitment by collecting dues.

Editor's note: In February, 2005, when I was Chapter Relations chair, I made a trip to San Antonio to meet with their Judaica librarians, with the long-range goal of forming a San Antonio chapter. Four years later, this goal has been achieved. I am thrilled! I congratulate Marlene and her colleagues for "taking the leap."

San Diego/Tijuana Chapter

Submitted by Sherry Berlin

The San Diego/Tijuana AJL Chapter held its annual meeting on November 12, 2008 at the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center. The meeting was in conjunction with the San Diego Jewish Book Fair. Our meeting included a presentation on book clubs by member Joan Tedlow from Temple Solel Library. She had some great ideas for starting a book club, rules for a book club, and some of the books that have generated an interesting discussion. After our meeting the group went to the Jewish Book Fair luncheon to hear author Michael Wex, author of *Just Say Nu – Yiddish for Every Occasion (When English Just Won't Do!)*.

Greater Cleveland Chapter (AJL-GCC)

Submitted by Linda Silver

The Greater Cleveland Chapter celebrated Jewish Book Month 2008 with our annual tea, held at the Siegal College of Judaic Studies. We welcomed our new chapter president, Sean Martin, who gave a talk on the history of Jewish life in Cleveland. Sean is the associate curator for Jewish history at the Western Reserve Historical Society, and he gave a version of this talk at the 2008 convention in Cleveland last June. He replaces Andrea Davidson, who resigned for health reasons.

Chapter members also compiled two annual lists, one of notable 2008 books for adults and another for children and teens. The latter includes a section on books honoring Israel @ 60. Cuyahoga County Public Library printed the lists in booklet form and they are the best ever! Both lists are posted on the AJL Web site (www.jewishlibraries.org); AJL members should feel free to print and distribute them. The Greater Cleveland Chapter has members who work in several of the Cleveland area larger public and academic libraries, and our members have benefited from the resources that these libraries have made available to us, usually at no charge.

Merrily Hart, a perennial contributor to the adult list, has retired from Siegal College and moved with her husband Bill to Ann Arbor, Michigan. Merrily was a chapter leader for many years. Even when she didn't hold an official position, her knowledge and advice were always invaluable. The Greater Cleveland Chapter is saddened by Merrily's departure and hopeful that she and Bill will enjoy many happy retirement years with their family.

From the editor: *Reshet*, the newsletter of AJL-GCC, edited by Lee Haas and Anne Biermann, has a new, modern format with

lovely colored photos throughout and lengthy book reviews. Kol HaKavod, Lee and Anne!

South Florida Chapter (SFAJL)

Submitted by Heidi Estrin, with additional material from Headlines and Footnotes.

Two authors spoke at the November 17 meeting of SFAJL—Tsipi Keller, editor and translator of *Poets on the Edge: An Anthology of Contemporary Hebrew Poetry*, and Jerry Glantz, author of the *Man Who Spoke to God/* a book/CD set on the music of Cantor Lieb Glantz (Jerry's father).

SFAJL's Valuing Libraries Workshop on January 8 was very successful! We had 36 people in attendance—SFAJL members as well as many other librarians from the community at large. Our speaker, Joanne Roukens, was funny, down-to-earth, and incredibly well-organized! She provided us with a multitude of handouts, lists of further resources, and step-by-step instructions on articulating the value of our libraries. Don't forget to check the Sunshine State Safran Blogspot at www.sfajl.blogspot.com for book reviews and book lists for all ages and much, much more.

Mazal tov to SFAJL's long-distance member from Tallahassee, Annette Goldsmith, who is now a PhD! On the morning of December 12, 2008 she successfully defended her dissertation *Found In Translation: A Mixed Methods Study Of Decision Making By U.S. Editors Who Acquire Children's Books For Translation*.

Southern California Chapter (AJLSC)

From HaSafran

Sinai Temple, AJLSC, The Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance, and UCLA Department of Jewish Studies sponsored the Jewish Literature for Children Conference: Exploring the Holocaust Through Children's Literature on February 1. Guest speakers included Dr. Hamida Bosmajian (Seattle University), Prof. Eric Sundquist (UCLA), Adaire Klein (Simon Wiesenthal Center), and educators Lisa Silverman and Richard Freydan. The program also included a tour of the new exhibits at the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance.

Houston Chapter

Submitted by Lisa Klein

Members of the Houston Chapter have been working hard within their own libraries arranging for author programs and enriching their students' education. Our community enjoyed a very successful book and arts fair in November, for which we provided input on author selections and had a representative serve on the book fair committee. We hope to increase our participation each year.

We are looking forward to a visit from Susan Dubin in February, for our community day of learning. Susan will present three workshops—Sydney Taylor Books, Jewish Stories Around the Year, and Books to Promote Tolerance and Understanding.

Capital Area Chapter (AJL-CAC)

Submitted by Yelena Luckert

The Capital Area Chapter had a very busy fall. There were numerous activities in which chapter members took part, either as active participants or listeners. The conference on Books, Libraries, and Modern War took place at the University of Maryland on

December 5. Two chapter members presented papers: Michlean Amir, "Books as Memorials: The Creation of Yizkor Books to Commemorate the Victims of the Holocaust," and Irene Munster, "Dirty Lasting Memories: Argentine Publishing in a Time of Repression." The full program for the conference is available at www.lib.umd.edu/MCK/books_and_war.html.

Jewish Cooking and Cookbooks, a chapter meeting on December 7, featured Monique Daoud, a prominent member of Iraqi Jewish community, who talked about Iraqi Jewish food and conducted a hands-on demonstration. Chapter members brought their favorite cookbooks, which were at the core of a wonderful discussion. First-time participant Margarete Diener Levy, wrote the following glowing email:

What a delightful time it was today at Gail (Shirazi)'s home. I am so glad I finally went to an event... Monique, the demo was yummy, and interesting. Gail, thanks for the hospitality. I really enjoyed meeting everyone.

The Borges and the Kabbalah: Seeking Access, an exhibition featuring the artwork of Mirta Kupfermanc in collaboration with writer Saul Sosnowski, linked the writings of famed Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges with the kabbalah. It integrated Kupfermanc's original installations, etchings, and sculptures, Borges own work, traditional Jewish texts, and an art book with commentaries and poems by Dr. Saul Sosnowski. We were privileged to be given a private tour by Dr. Sosnowski.

Long Island Chapter (LI-AJL)

Submitted by Wendy Marx, with additional information from Sifria, the Newsletter of LI-AJL

The December meeting of LI-AJL featured a talk by member Liz Roberts on The Mystery of the Sarajevo Haggadah.

Our chapter is looking forward to some fun spring programming. This includes a Purim spiel creative writing workshop—Esther's story-What is yours?, a joint meeting with the local Tobay Hadassah Chapter and our annual dinner meeting. Many of our members leave for warmer climes during the winter months, and it is difficult to find people to take on the responsibility of arranging, and even attending, meetings. Anyone out there with suggestions to engage our members? Contact me at xmarxts@aol.com.

One of our members, Sandy Wasserman, just wrote *The Sun's Special Blessing*, all about birkat ha-Chamah. You can contact Sandy at sandyfw@gmail.com.

New York Metropolitan Area Chapter (AJL-NYMA)

Submitted by Rita Lifton

NYMA held its 2008 fall conference on December 2 at the Ramaz Lower School. The first half of the program was to have featured Phyllis Chesler, noted author, psychologist and feminist, speaking about Jewish books in general and those that matter to her, in particular. When Ms. Chesler took ill at the last moment, she asked her friends Rivka Haut and Adena Berkowitz to speak in her stead. As NYMA president Leslie Monchar said in thanking Mss. Haut and Berkowitz, NYMA is fortunate that Ms. Chesler has such loyal friends because they gave wonderful presentations.

Ms. Haut spoke about Jewish women and holy books. Historically, the idea of Jewish women learning the holy books was

Illumination Ad

frowned upon in religious circles. It was only in 1918, with Sara Schenirer's founding of Bais Yaakov in Poland, the first Orthodox Jewish education system for girls, that the Orthodox rabbinate agreed to allow the world of learning to begin to be opened up to young, observant Jewish women. Ironically, the concept had to be presented as a negative value to get the rabbis to agree i.e. , that bad things will happen—assimilation for one—if Jewish women would continue to be forbidden to learn the Holy Scriptures. Ms. Haut also spoke about more recent efforts to broaden acceptance of Orthodox Jewish women's rights to learn and pray publicly such as the lawsuits brought by the group Women of the Wall. In the last twenty years, Women of the Wall has brought three lawsuits in order to gain the right to pray publicly as a group at the Kotel. Currently, they are allowed to hold a monthly prayer meeting at the Kotel, but must go to Robinson's Arch to read from the Torah.

Adena Berkowitz raised the question—What is the role of Jewish books in our lives? After exploring that topic she focused on a book that she and Ms. Haut co-edited, *Sha'are Simhah/Gates of Joy: Traditional Prayers, Songs and Modern Inclusive Rituals*. In that book, written from an Orthodox perspective, Grace After Meals as well as other prayers and rituals associated with the Sabbath and holiday table are re-interpreted in order to allow women the possibility of reciting and/or performing them.

The second half of the program was a surprise tribute to Esther Nussbaum who, after thirty years, stepped down from her position as the director of library and media services at Ramaz Upper School this past June. She has taken on a part-time job with a nonprofit agency, which will allow her to spend more time with her children, two of whom live in Israel, and with grandchildren.

Esther was a founding member of NYMA, a NYMA president, an AJL president, co-chair of AJL's 1993 convention in New York City, and a recipient of AJL's Lifetime Achievement Award. In addition to her AJL activities, she served as the editor of *Jewish Book World*. After Leslie Monchar read a letter of tribute from AJL president Susan Dubin, a panel of NYMA members (Edith Lubetski, Eileen Shmidman, Marion Stein, Naomi Steinberger, and Chaya Wiesman) spoke warmly and enthusiastically about different aspects of Esther's career and shared personal reminiscences of their experiences with Esther as a friend and colleague.

NYMA's annual reference workshop, coordinated by Ina Rubin Cohen and Rachail Kurtz, was held on February 12 at the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary. On March 18, the day school/high school workshop will be held at the new Frisch School campus in Paramus, New Jersey.

An audio recording of the fall conference is available on NYMA's Web site, www.ajlnyma.org. To access the recording, click on the "past events" link, select "Fall Conference 2008-2009" and then click on the "audio" link. Audio recordings of other programs from 2008—the reference and school workshops as well as the spring 2008 conference—are also available on the Web site.



Reviews of Titles for Adults

EDITED BY MERRILY F. HART AND DANIEL SCHEIDE

NONFICTION

Abrams, Nathan, ed. *Jews & Sex*. Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2008. 234 p. \$21.50 (ISBN 978-1-90551-234-8).

This volume of essays is strong in representing British experiences and elucidating their differences from American ones. Of particular interest are Roberta Mock's essay about London's burlesque scene, centered in the East End, the former Jewish quarter; and Gavin Schaffer's investigation of conflicting British perceptions of Jewish sexuality in the first half of the twentieth century, the era of eugenics and sexual hygiene. I was gratified also to see Hinde Ena Burstin's ground-breaking work about lesbian imagery in Yiddish poetry. Judith Lewin's article on Sandra Goldbacher's "The Governess" is a welcome addition to the literature on that underappreciated film.

Like a lot of edited volumes of essays, however, this book is uneven and unfocused, and seems to have no particular editorial mission. About one-third of the contributions deal with film (including many Israeli films). The essays have scholarly apparatus but some have no discernible argument, as one would expect in an academic work. Due to its subject matter this book is obviously unsuitable for many libraries; JCC libraries with a liberal-minded readership might find some takers for this title, but otherwise it is strictly an academic library purchase, and an optional one at that.

Faith Jones, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada

Alderman, Geoffrey. *Controversy and Crisis: Studies in the History of the Jews of Modern Britain*. Boston: Academic Studies Press (Judaism and Jewish Life), 2008. 375 p. \$75 (ISBN 978-1-93484-322-2).

This is a collection of essays written for various periodicals that are not always accessible to the interested reader. Professor Geoffrey Alderman is a specialist in the history of Anglo-Jewish history and his *Modern British Jewry* is a well-known basic text on the subject. The essays complement the author's history, since the essay form lends itself to the treatment of different topics of interest. I found the essays on the anti-Jewish riots at the beginning of the twentieth century of interest, since in a monograph disproportionate attention may be paid to London and this sort of subject tends to be neglected. Although the book emphasizes controversy, the so-called "Jacobs' affair" is neglected while a serious political mistake by the present chief rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks, is treated in considerable detail.

The essays are reproduced "as is." There is considerable overlap and the same sentences or even paragraphs may be found in more than one essay. The opening paragraphs of chapters 13 and 14, for example, are almost identical; the two chapters should have been combined. The proofreading is not up to modern standards. I enjoyed: "the general ejection (i.e., election) of 1906" (p. 166). It is a pity that the author did not invest more effort in the editing.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Belling, Veronica Penkin. *Yiddish Theatre in South Africa: A History from the Late Nineteenth Century to 1960*. Cape Town: Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, 2008. 194 p. \$25 includes postage; available from Kaplan-Centre@uct.ac.za (ISBN 978-0-79922-335-4).

Between the years 1881 and 1914, approximately 40,000 Jewish refugees from Russia and Eastern Europe settled in South Africa. According to Belling, the first Yiddish theater performance on record in Johannesburg appears in the mid-1890s. The author identifies four major time periods: the early development of the Yiddish stage in South Africa in the 1880s and 1890s; the "golden years" from 1890 to 1910; the "barren years" of the 1910s and 1920s; and the emergence of community Yiddish theater in Transvaal and in the Cape in the 1930s. A brief revival after World War II failed to take hold and interest in Yiddish theater declined thereafter. An examination of each period is preceded by an overview of world Yiddish theater, illustrating the historical, political, and cultural context of events in South Africa. Belling, who is the Jewish studies librarian at the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research and the University of Cape Town Libraries, includes a handy chronology of important dates relating to visiting theater troupes, actors, directors, and playwrights. An extensive bibliography of secondary sources covering Jews in South Africa as well as Yiddish theater world-wide is useful for both students and scholars. Belling brings together an impressive collection of illustrations, including individual and group photographs, playbills, and posters. Unfortunately, many of the reproductions are too small to fully read, and some photographs are poorly scanned. Belling's *Yiddish Theatre in South Africa* offers a wide-ranging examination of this often overlooked aspect of South African culture and is recommended for academic libraries.

Sheila L. Darrow, Central State University, Wilberforce, OH

Bermant, Chaim. *On the Other Hand*. London, Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007. 338 p. \$34.95 (ISBN 978-0-85303-870-2).

Born in Lithuania, and raised in Scotland, Chaim Bermant was the son of a rabbi. He was Orthodox in practice but at odds with the Orthodox establishment. Bermant wrote for the *Jewish Chronicle*. After his death in 1998, his wife selected 150 articles which were published as a book, and reprinted in 2007 with a new introduction. The essays are arranged by subject. Many deal with Anglo-Jewish life, many more look at Israel, and there are some very personal essays, such as one on becoming a grandfather. Bermant's views are not always conventional and one is at liberty to disagree with him, but however much I disagree, I derive pleasure from his logical presentation and from the humorous asides, many of which are aimed to shock. In his chapter on beards, he claims: "it seems to me the reason why women have never been allowed a full part in communal Jewish life derives ... from ... the fact that they cannot grow beards."

I also share his view of cricket as a cure for insomnia; comparing it to the Sabbath, he says: "It is not only restful to watch, it

is restful to play and, with the possible exception of listening to sermons, I know of no experience which is more soporific.”

The book is a well observed picture of Anglo-Jewry and Israel in the second half of the twentieth century, written by a first-class essayist.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Bostom, Andrew G., ed. *The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism: From Sacred Texts to Solemn History*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, Publishers, 2008. 766 p. \$39.95 (ISBN 978-1-59102-554-2).

Bostom has compiled a massive compendium of primary and secondary material from a wide range of sources emanating from the Islamic world from the time of its inception up to 2006. At first blush, I give credit for the reference to antisemitism without the use of a hyphen. However, the term Judeophobia would be more appropriate than antisemitism, given the temporal origin of the latter term. The material is compartmentalized into ten parts: four focusing on the sacred corpus of the Islamic spiritual belief system as found in the Qur'an and the Hadith (the Prophet's sayings); one set from the Sira (biographies of the Prophet from the earliest era); two covering commentaries from Muslim jurists, theologians, and scholars from the beginning to 2006; a set of historical maps; and one part dealing with dhimmitude (the practice of toleration of the People of the Book in Muslim lands). The book ends with additional documents and eyewitness accounts, a list of Muslim jurists, theologians, and historians, and an extensive bibliography. Without a formal conclusion, the reader is left only with an implicit assumption that the “legacy” of the subtitle is a tradition of hatred of Jews by mainstream Muslims.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Cohen, Naomi W. *What the Rabbis Said: The Public Discourse of Nineteenth-Century American Rabbis*. New York, NYU Press, 2008. 260 p. \$45.00 (ISBN 978-0-81471-688-5).

Professor Naomi Cohen has long been known as a superb analyst of Jewish life in America. Her latest book cogently examines the world of the first generations of the American rabbinate—especially, but not exclusively, reformers—from the 1840s to the turn of the century. The first chapter reminds the reader of the strictures placed on sermons and other public comments by 19th-century clergy. The rabbis' statements, said the lay leaders, must focus on the Bible, ethics, and history, not on social issues. The book returns to the theme of restriction and openness frequently, as an underlying source of uncertainty within American Jewry at the time. Professor Cohen's other chapters are equally wide-ranging. They include an essay on Rabbi Sabato Morais, the leading moderate reformer of the 1870s and 1880s; a wonderful overview of two early periodicals for Jewish children; a discussion of proto-Zionism and beliefs about Jewish return to the land of Palestine; shifting anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age; and an examination of the World's Parliament of Religions at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. The concluding section explores the process of “Building a Profession” that the early rabbis went through.

Cohen uses contemporary texts—both books of sermons and articles in periodicals—to analyze the development of Jewish clergy in America. Her perspective on the Kohut-Kohler debates in 1885 is especially enlightening. The book is generally easy

to read and enormously informative. It is recommended for all academic Judaica collections, and for larger synagogue libraries. The price, however, puts it out of reach of most non-academic collections.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Crawford, Sidnie White. *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans (Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature Series), 2008. 172 p. \$16.00 (ISBN-978-0-80284-740-9).

In this brief and challenging work, Crawford makes several contributions to the study of Second Temple Judaism by illustrating a spectrum of “inner biblical exegesis” within a selection of Qumran texts, and a “line of priestly-levitical/Essene interpretation” among these texts. While there are many examples of inner biblical exegesis (interpreting a text within another written text) in Second Temple Judaism, Crawford limits her analysis to examples of rewritten Pentateuchal texts at Qumran, leaving readers with much to consider, discuss, and debate. Texts on one end of the exegetical spectrum (e.g., 4QDeutⁿ) utilize the technique of harmonization, whereby scribes created authoritative texts by smoothing out contradictions or omissions in older texts. Next on the spectrum are texts that not only employ harmonization, but also incorporate some material beyond the texts upon which they are based (e.g., 4Q364, 4Q365, 4Q366, and 4Q367). Then there are texts that incorporate so much material from other sources that a new work is created (e.g., Jubilees, the Temple Scroll, and the Genesis Apocryphon). Finally, on the other end of the spectrum, is 4QCommentary on Genesis A, which combines the inner scriptural interpretative techniques mentioned above with a “citation plus commentary” style of interpretation. After the first century BCE, when a fixed, unchangeable textual tradition was accepted, inner scriptural interpretation ended and citation plus commentary became the dominant style of exegesis.

Crawford notes that the texts she has examined have a distinct theological agenda—a “priestly-levitical/Essene” agenda that stresses the following themes/motifs: the use of the solar calendar, an emphasis on the Levites, and the observance of the Law by righteous ancestors, some of whom also exercised the priestly office (e.g., Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Isaac). She maintains that these and related themes are found in other Qumran texts also. This book is recommended for academic libraries.

Beth A. Biddlack, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, IL

Feldman, Leibl. *The Jews of Johannesburg (Until Union—31st May, 1910)*. Translated from the Yiddish by Veronica Belling. Cape Town: Jewish Publications-South Africa; Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, University of Cape Town, 2007. 245 p. \$25.00 includes postage; available from Kaplan-Centre@uct.ac.za (ISBN 978-0-7992-2325-5).

Mining towns the world over attracted enterprising Jewish immigrants during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One of these was Johannesburg, established in 1886 atop a rich vein of gold. The book's cover drawing, from the original Yiddish edition (1956), sets the scene: in the foreground are the unpaved streets of a mining camp; behind them, steel-frame towers and mounds of ore from which the precious minerals have been extracted; and in the background, the skyscrapers of a modern metropolis.

Feldman sketches the complex circumstances surrounding the rapid growth of the city's Jewish community during its first three decades. He discusses its institutional history and provides brief biographies of leading personages, among them the future chief rabbi of the British Empire, Joseph H. Hertz. South African Jewry has long been distinguished by its strong commitment to Zionism, an adherence toward which Feldman, a devoted socialist, takes a skeptical view. He is also sensitive to the slights suffered by Yiddish-speaking immigrants at the hands of the community's British and German Jewish leadership.

South Africa's racial and national antagonisms are by no means neglected in this book. *The Jews of Johannesburg* was published during the first decade of official apartheid, and for some of its original readers the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902) was still a living memory. This is a richly researched, non-academic study, and is recommended for research libraries and other collections with strong holdings on Jewish Diaspora communities.

Zachary M. Baker, *Stanford University Stanford, CA*

Finestein, Israel. *Studies and Profiles in Anglo-Jewish History: From Picciotto to Bermant.* London: Vallentine Mitchell (Parkes-Wiener Series on Jewish Studies), 2008. 290 p. \$74.95 (ISBN 978-0-85303-577-0).

One of my hobbies is Anglo-Jewish history, and in spite of my prior knowledge this book taught me a lot. It covers the nineteenth and twentieth century. Most of the chapters are biographical, but three of the fourteen chapters are more general. One is devoted to education, another to prominent women. The third, and to my mind most interesting chapter, deals with the relationship between the London community and provincial communities. As someone who grew up in a provincial town, the status of the chief rabbi, who theoretically was only the chief rabbi of the London United Synagogue, was always a puzzle. The ambiguity of his role has not changed.

The author's biographical essays are very thorough. Even a casual reader can feel that most of the leaders chosen were pragmatic. Anglo-Jewry, it seems, had very few thinkers. The last two chapters are devoted to Chaim Bermant and Harold Fish, people whom I had known. In both chapters the author's deep understanding of the subject's character is apparent, together with considerable affection. There is no doubt that the author was a good friend to both men! Each of the essays is reprinted with revisions. This is a book that is a pleasure to read.

Chaim Seymour, *Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

Fishbane, Michael. *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008. 238 p. \$30 (ISBN 978-0-226-25171-4).

Should AJL give an annual award for "best Jewish essay," this book would win hands down. Fishbane's work began as an ethical will for his family, but has become an extended essay for all Jews on how to live in communion with God, with other human beings and within the natural order. Well-read in a variety of disciplines, the author interacts with the likes of Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Aristotle, James Agee, and Wallace Stevens. But mostly that material provides him only with context. His style is occasionally ponderous, resorting to vocabulary that is either archaic or not found in a typical dictionary, but he usually soars,

especially in the central sections of his book where his sources are almost exclusively drawn from the classics of Jewish legal, philosophical, midrashic, cabalistic, and Hasidic literature. Prayer, study, and deeds of loving-kindness make up the central pillars of his thought. He has included several pages of notes at the end, but has omitted endnote numbers in the body of the work. This enables the reader to read and interact with the text on its own terms and without distraction. The notes are mostly references to rabbinical texts with succinct comments by the author.

This book would be a challenge for most. However, it is not beyond any mature reader with a good basic Jewish and liberal arts education. It would be an ideal text for Hevruta or communal learning. Reading it alone, I filled the margins with comments, questions, and references.

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

Fishbane, Simcha. *The Boldness of an Halakhist: An Analysis of the Writings of Rabbi Yechiel Mechel Halevi Epstein the Arukh Hashulhan: A Collection of Social-Anthropological Essays.* Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2008. 184 p. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-1-93484-303-1).

Rabbi Jehiel Michal ben Aaron Isaac ha-Levi Epstein (1829-1908) was a leading halakhic authority. According to the second edition of the Jewish Encyclopaedia (2007), "Epstein's fame rests upon his Arukh ha-Shulhan ... novellae and halakhic rulings on the four parts of the Shulhan Arukh," first published between 1884 and 1907 which has now become an authoritative halakhic work of reference. Fishbane's book begins with a brief biography of Rabbi Epstein, followed by chapters on his political and social views, more specifically on the status of women, response to violence, attitude toward religious vows, and on secular studies as supplement to Torah study. Fishbane gives generous citations of the major work of Rabbi Epstein, but also from his other works, especially his homilies. He often contrasts Rabbi Epstein to another halakhist, the author of the other leading compendium of rabbinic law, the Mishnah Berurah, Israel Meir ha-Kohen Kagan, known as the Hafez Hayyim (1883-1933), and he concludes that Rabbi Epstein was more lenient in his decisions than his contemporary.

The subtitle of this book is "collection of social-anthropological essays," which seems to allow Fishbane to repeat the same biographic information at the beginning of almost every chapter after chapter 1. The work would have greatly benefited from the expertise of a copy-editor to refine the flow of words. One sentence starting with "furthermore" is followed by another which starts with "moreover." There are also many typographical errors, and no consistency in transcribing Hebrew proper names. The same text that appears in chapter 1 is repeated in chapter 5, quoting the same examples in the same order. Recommended only to comprehensive collections in Jewish studies.

Roger S. Kohn, *Silver Spring, MD*

Frank, Daniel and Goldish, Matt, eds. *Rabbinic Culture and Its Critics: Jewish Authority, Dissent, and Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Times.* Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2008. 528 p. \$49.95 (ISBN 978-0-81433-237-5).

While rabbinic Judaism has held the dominant position in Jewish culture and thought from medieval times through the early

modern period, it never was monolithic. The fascinating essays in this study, presented by leading scholars, paint a picture of conflicts within rabbinic Judaism, as well as from sectarians and heretics. The articles are revised from papers originally presented at a conference at Ohio State University in 2001.

The time scan of the book begins with the period of the Geonim, and goes up to the Maskilim and Hassidic movement. In their introductory essay, the editors of the volume, Daniel Frank and Matt Goldish, provide an overview of rabbinic culture and survey the critiques leveled against it. The papers present different forms of dissent, covering attacks on fundamentalist beliefs presented in Spanish poetic satire, Maimonides' critique of contemporary beliefs, the Maimonidian controversy, philosophy versus kabbalah, positions on anthropomorphism, Karaite-Rabbanite polemics and cooperation, the difficulties of Conversos in accepting rabbinic teachings, Spinoza, conflicts over the messianism of Shabbatai Zvi and Jacob Frank, and polemics of the Maskilim and Hassidism.

With its wide range the book provides an overview of the pre-modern rabbinic world in its varied intellectual, social and cultural formulations. Highly recommended for academic libraries.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College, Newton Centre, MA

Friedmann, Jonathan L. and Brad Stetson, eds. *Jewish Sacred Music and Jewish Identity: Continuity and Fragmentation*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 2008. 163 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-1-55778-872-6).

The fascinating and deeply insightful comments of Cantor William Sharlin provide the basis of this book. Sharlin, who serves Leo Baeck Temple in Los Angeles, is a cantor, intellectual, teacher, composer and pianist, as Jonathan Friedman points out in his preface. This book is a gift to all those who wish to understand the thinking of a longtime cantor in today's Jewish world. The book starts with an excellent essay by Friedman on the philosophy of Jewish sacred music, followed by an essay by Sharlin, an autobiographical sketch, and a transcript of an interview. Unfortunately, it was not possible for the editors to ascertain the dates of Sharlin's writings; therefore the book is further arranged into four chapters of commentary on the themes of continuity and fragmentation, preservation and innovation, sacred and secular, and past and future. Cantor Sharlin's writings let us understand his ideas of davening and the proper roles of the cantor in bringing people to true prayer. Tremendous insights into why Jews pray, and the significance of music in the contemporary synagogue dynamic of congregants and worship are provided. The bibliography clearly shows someone who has kept up with the newest research on Jewish music, even in his late eighties. Sharlin's deep love, knowledge, and commitment to Jewish synagogue music, as well as his realism, skepticism, and practicality as a pulpit cantor shine through his writing. This book could easily be the basis of workshops or synagogue discussion groups. Recommended.

Judith S. Pinnolis, Brandeis University, Boston, MA



Glantz, Jerry. *The Man Who Spoke to God*. NY: J. Levine/Millennium, 2008. 541 p. + 2 compact discs. \$75.00 (ISBN 978-0-61519-665-7).

This monumental work was written by the son of one of the most acclaimed chazzans in recent years, Leib Glantz. It is not only a biography, but includes scores and recordings of his performances. Leib Glantz was born in 1898 in Kiev. His mother was the daughter of a cantor, and when Leib was eight years old, he sang with his grandfather. As his voice was changing, he directed a choir, and later sang with his father, Kalman. In 1916, he moved to Moldova to escape anti-Semitism in the Ukraine and to avoid being drafted into the Russian army. Later he returned to Kiev, where he studied piano and voice. He became active in the Labor Zionist movement and was a delegate to the World Zionist Congress. In 1926, he came to the United States and was offered the position of chief cantor at the Ohev Shalom Synagogue in New York. Glantz served in congregations in Los Angeles and in Israel, where he died in 1964. This book is a must for all synagogue libraries, particularly for cantors and choir directors.

Lee Wixman, Boynton Beach, FL

Gottlieb, Naftali Tzvi, compiler. *Rabbi, Mystic, Leader: The Life and Times of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson*. Translated by Elchonon Lesches. Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2008. 271 p. \$22.95 (ISBN 978-0-82660-097-4).

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson (1878-1944) was the father of the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt"l, and a dynamic Jewish figure in his own right. This biography examines his piety and scholarship, his rabbinic career, and his imprisonment and exile under the Stalinist regime.

The somewhat pedestrian prose (translated from Hebrew) and loosely integrated anecdotes still manage to convey the strength of the rabbi's character, his devotion to the oppressed communities of Russia—in particular Yekaterinoslav, where he was chief rabbi—and, above all, his strict religious standards. As director of kashrut, he refused to allow for treife, and even in the merciless climate of Kazakhstan, where he was exiled, he maintained the Sabbath and holidays. Transcripts of interrogations by the secret police show the absurd accusations directed at him. Mention is made of friends and congregants who helped him, most notably fellow Lubavitchers. Above all was his amazing wife, Chana, who famously gathered herbs and boiled them into ink with which her husband could write his mystical commentaries. She traveled extensively and pleaded with officials in order to secure food and provisions for her husband, whose health was damaged by prison and exile.

There are brief supplements with glossary, dateline, and sources. The book has an earnest appeal that honors the memory of this leader and his dramatic era. For synagogue libraries, especially those with Hassidic collections.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, NY

Gross, Benjamin. *The Holy Tongue and How It Changed the Course of History*. Translated from the French by Alan Clayman. New York: Devora Publishing, 2008. 315 p. \$27.95 (ISBN 978-1-93444-001-8).

Dr. Benjamin Gross, professor of general and Jewish philosophy at Bar-Ilan University, has also served as head of the

Department of Philosophy and dean of the Faculty of Humanities. He has written extensively on spirituality, ethics, and Jewish thought. In this tome, Gross traces the life, death, and rebirth of the Hebrew language. He demonstrates how the great Jewish thinkers throughout history interacted with the language itself, not just with the thoughts that the language communicated. Their connection with the language informed the Judaism we live today.

This is a scholarly text, not really appropriate for the casual reader. Dr. Gross's work requires prior introduction to the writings of the great Jewish thinkers and a good working knowledge of the philosophy of language. Although it would not be out of place in a larger synagogue library, for those with smaller collections, the money might be better spent on more basic introductions to Jewish thought and thinkers.

I recommend this book for academic libraries, particularly those supporting Jewish studies and philosophy of language.

Rachel M. Minkin, *Lansing Community College, Kehillat Israel, Lansing, MI*

Hacohen, Aviad, ed. *Commitment and Complexity: Jewish Wisdom in an Age of Upheaval: Selections from the Writings of Rabbi Yehuda Amital*. Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House. 2008. 162 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-1-60280-030-4).

The original Hebrew version of this volume was published to celebrate Rabbi Yehuda Amital's 80th birthday. In Israel, Rav Amital is known both as the rosh yeshiva Har Etzion, which he founded after the Six Day War, as well as the founder of the Meimad political party.

This volume covers a wide range of topics organized alphabetically. Each section contains one or more short selections derived from books and articles published by Rav Amital. Many of the selections have been translated and appear in English for the first time. Although complexity is a theme in this compilation, the decision to divide many of the articles into small bits, tends to over-simplify many of the issues. A collection or selection of complete essays would have given the reader a better opportunity to understand the power of Rav Amital's thought.

Paul Howard Hamburg, *University of California, Berkeley, CA*

Heinemann, Isaac. *The Reasons for the Commandments in Jewish Thought from the Bible to the Renaissance*. Translated by Leonard Levin. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2008. 226 p. \$50.00 (ISBN 978-1-93484-304-8).

Heinemann (1876-1957) taught Philo and aggadah (non-legalistic literature) for many years at the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau, a moderately liberal school preparing students for rabbinic leadership in a turbulent era. This book, originally written in German in 1942 and subsequently translated into Hebrew, reviews the long and complex topic of taamei hamitzvot (rationale for the commandments). This topic has long fascinated rabbis and philosophers who have pondered the issue of how the divine word of God can be transmitted to man's limited psyche.

Dr. Levin's highly readable and accurate English translation should make this text available to a wider audience. My only reservation about the organization and presentation of this book is that the translator adds his notes to the author's notes, thereby

creating a certain degree of confusion in the mind of the careful reader. Nevertheless, Dr. Levin is to be highly commended for undertaking this project and producing this seminal scholarly work. Recommended for seminary and university library collections.

Morton Merowitz, *Amherst, NY*

Hoberman Michael. *How Strange It Seems: The Cultural Life of Jews in Small-Town New England*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press. 2008. 253 p. \$28.95 (ISBN 978-1-55849-646-0).

How Strange it Seems is a scholarly work that is part oral history and part interpretation of life in several small New England towns. Hoberman describes Jewish settlement and civic and economic life through interviews with men and women he calls "tradition bearers." In "A Note on Method," the author states that his purpose is to give the reader a "collective psychic experience of small town New England Jews." *How Strange it Seems* includes a list of interviews, notes, and an index. As a special feature Hoberman includes 16 pages of black-and-white photographs of the people he interviewed.

Recommended for academic libraries.

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

JPS Guide: *The Jewish Bible*. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. 291p. \$22.00 (ISBN 978-0-82760-851-1).

Anyone embarking on a voyage through the Bible needs a guide. An understanding of its origins, organization, and place within Judaism will enrich the reader's experience. The Jewish Publication Society (JPS) has produced a concise guide that will help anyone engaged in Bible study. The JPS staff assembled a group of eminent scholars who worked on various Bible commentaries, *Etz Chaim*, and *The Contemporary Torah* as well as educators and librarians to create a guidebook that covers everything from the origins of the Bible to methods of study and commentaries. The book includes information about the history of the Bible, the Torah scrolls, Bible translations, and the question of gender when translating. It also discusses law, poetry, prophecy, and storytelling in the Bible. Commentaries and famous commentators, midrash, and summaries of the books of the Bible appear, often beautifully illustrated with photographs of pages from rare books. A chart of biblical personalities, as well as chronologies of events, prophets, and monarchies will help students keep events straight. A glossary, list of famous quotations, and a table of biblical weights and measures will satisfy curiosity and increase understanding. Maps, a bibliography, and a list of recommended books and Web sites will provide further information for students. This is an excellent book for school, synagogue, and public libraries. Both students and teachers will want personal copies as well.

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

Janner, Greville, and Derek Taylor. *Jewish Parliamentarians*. Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008. 228 p. \$32.95 (ISBN 978-0-85303-817-7).

This book was written to mark the 150th anniversary of the passing of the Oath Act, which opened the door of the British

Academic Studies Ad

Parliament to Jews. The authors know their subject well and this is immediately apparent to the casual reader. The book is divided into 10 chapters, arranged by period. Each chapter begins with two or three pages of background. These introductions are a pleasure to read. The rest of each chapter is devoted to short biographies of selected Members of Parliament (M.P.). The total is 706, although an M.P. who was elected twice will be counted twice, etc. The book has an excellent index.

There are two recurring themes. The first is the extent of the contribution of Anglo-Jewry to British life. The second theme is how wonderful is British society that permitted the Jews to contribute. A complementary or subsidiary theme is an attack on those people who claim that the Holocaust could also happen in Britain. On a personal note, I was born and grew up in Britain and maintain connections there. It saddens me that the authors felt the need to write such a book with its apologetic tone.

The structure of the book is not appropriate for continuous reading. It can be used as a specialized reference tool.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Kamenetzky, Rabbi Mordechai. *The Parsha Parables Anthology*. Nanuet, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 2008. 880 p. (3 volumes) \$72.99 (ISBN 978-1-58330-304-7).

Rabbi Kamenetzky used to fax a friend a homiletic thought every week. The friend enjoyed it so much that he shared it with others, who wanted to be added to the distribution list. Its popularity grew, and this anthology is the culmination of that learning experience. Presented in a three-volume set, it contains more than 350 stories, including 40 never before published essays. For each weekly Torah portion, there are five or six stories that relate to it, each with an introduction and discussion of the important points. There are also parables for all of the Jewish holidays. The third volume includes a topic index, an index of Torah personalities, a list of selected books that are referred to in the text, an index of secular and historical figures, and a list of places and landmarks mentioned. There is also biographical information on the rabbis mentioned in the stories, and a list of selected sources.

The publisher describes this set as "a unique blend of wit, wisdom, and wonderful stories and teachings with a contemporary flavor and a wealth of perspective." Rabbi Kamenetzky uses such diverse personalities as Yogi Berra and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, z"tl, to illuminate the weekly portion. He draws heavily from his grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky, z"tl. The set is a little pricey and more suited to home use than the library. Family friendly, it is very highly recommended for Orthodox readers, and a solid optional purchase for most Jewish libraries. Parables for the current week are available at <http://torah.org/learning/drasha>.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Kirsch, Adam. *Benjamin Disraeli*. New York: Next Book/Schocken (Jewish Encounters), 2008. 257 p. \$21 (ISBN 978-0-80524-249-2).

Benjamin Disraeli, born to a Jewish family but baptized as a child, served several times as prime minister of England. Disraeli had no formal Jewish education but took pride in his Jewishness. Kirsch concentrates on Disraeli's Jewish identity.

His conclusions are based on an analysis of Disraeli's extensive fiction and on his political career, with occasional references to his correspondence. I have read very little of Disraeli's fiction but the dangers of using fiction as a biographical source are obvious. Kirsch claims consistently that the heroes of the different novels have elements of Disraeli's character or represent idealized versions of the author. I am skeptical.

The book includes a bibliographic essay, which refers to a number of good biographies of Disraeli. A reviewer's first question must be "Why was this book written?" This volume brings to mind Ecclesiastes' comment, "of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Klug, Lisa Alcalay. *Cool Jew: The Ultimate Guide for Every Member of the Tribe*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2008. 238 p. \$12.99 (ISBN 978-0-7407-7113-2).

Self-deprecation is the hallmark of Jewish comedy, right? Not anymore! The 21st century has seen a surge in love for all things Jewish. Jonathan Kesselman's *The Hebrew Hammer* (2003), media powerhouse "Jewcy.com," Ben Baruch's Internet comic strip "ShaBot 6000," and musician Matisyahu all promote our innate coolness. Now we hip MOTs can add a new name to this list: Lisa Alcalay Klug.

Ms. Klug's newest book, with terrific illustrations by Amos Goldbaum, epitomizes all that is hip, fun, and downright cool, about being Jewish in the 21st century. Lest you think this book is for entertainment only, Klug includes chapters on history, religion, culture, and language. Know all the Ten Commandments? How many famous Jews can you name? Just what is a mani-tini? You'll be so busy laughing that you won't realize you're learning! (And the mani-tini? Delish!)

Recommended for all synagogue libraries with young (and young at heart) congregations. Klug is definitely irreverent (this book is partly parody) so librarians should have a good feel for their congregations before purchasing.

Rachel M. Minkin, Lansing Community College, Kehillat Israel, Lansing, MI

Kogan, Michael S. *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 284 p. \$29.95 (ISBN 978-0-1951159-7).

In the past forty years, several Christian denominations have been reassessing their attitudes toward Judaism. Some have officially ceased their conversionary efforts toward Jews and many are open to learning from their sister religion in the Jewish-Christian dialogue. Michael S. Kogan suggests that it is time for the Jewish side to reassess its attitudes toward Christianity.

Kogan traces the history of Jewish theology concerning non-Jews and presents his own pluralistic theory of multiple revelations. Using the New Testament image of Israel as an olive tree into which gentile believers were grafted, he states, "Now that so many Christians have come to understand that they have not replaced, but joined us, we can feel free to welcome them as ingrafted branches of the tree of Israel reaching out into the world to nourish all people with goodly fruit." In dialogue we grow together and learn from other faith communities. The Jewish people can affirm that "the God of Israel sent Jesus and

his interpreters for the purpose of opening God's covenant with Israel to include non-Jews."

Although this work is far from easy reading, it is well worth the effort. Even those who disagree with Kogan will benefit from grappling with his thoughtful analysis. This book belongs in most academic libraries and in synagogue libraries that serve adults.

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

Kraemer, Joel L. *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds*. New York: Doubleday, 2008. 621 p. \$ 35.00 (ISBN 978-0-38551-199-5).

This latest contribution to the long line of Maimonides biographies is probably one of the heftiest. It is also, more importantly, innovative in its use of sources. Kraemer is an important scholar in the field of Judeo-Arabic studies, and an expert in medieval Islamic philosophy. He goes to great pains to explain the milieu in which Maimonides lived and worked. Every detail—from the topography of Cordoba, where Maimonides was born, to the contents of the Islamic libraries in the towns that he passed through in his wanderings—is recounted with loving care. Kraemer also summarizes the contents of Maimonides' works, including his obscure writings on medicine and astronomy, which are virtually unknown even to most Maimonides scholars.

The book is written in short paragraphs, almost soundbites. The bibliography has been relegated to a Web site, but the volume includes a list of rabbinic works, their contents, and the number of their chapters—a list whose necessity here eludes me. That said, Kraemer has written a wonderful book, overflowing with information and insight, which speaks to the layman and scholar alike.

Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Krauss, Samuel. *The Jews in the Works of the Church Fathers*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias (Analecta Gorgiana 67), 2007. 91 p. \$37.70 (ISBN 978-1-59333-883-1).

The Analecta Gorgiana series of Gorgias Press is dedicated to reprinting "long essays and short monographs which are consistently cited by modern scholars, but previously difficult to find because of their original appearance in obscure publications." This collection is a facsimile reprint of articles originally published in three parts in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (London; Oct. 1892, Oct. 1893, and Jan. 1894). Its author, Samuel Krauss, is the "S. Kr." in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*; indeed, he wrote the original entry for "Church Fathers" in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. He was a prolific writer in several languages, and an internationally recognized expert in philology, history, Bible, Talmud and Christianity. This monograph brings together in one place three articles that are the bedrock for understanding the early church fathers (Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, Ephraem Syrus, and Jerome). Krauss shows how these writings are important in understanding rabbinic literature of the same time period.

As with many reprints, the original article typeset and layout remain the same. This is a scholarly work—knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin is helpful, especially for reading source quotations found in the footnotes. However, Hebrew and English are enough to get quite a bit out of the articles. If you have access to

the original journal, or online periodical collections such as JS-TOR, you may not want to pay the somewhat high price for this book. The entry in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* on the church fathers may be enough information for the interested casual reader. This monograph is recommended for all libraries interested in a scholarly approach to the topic.

Suzanne Smailes, Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH

Lavie, Aliza. *A Jewish Woman's Prayer Book*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2008. 448 p. \$35.00. (ISBN 978-0-385-52274-8). Reviewed from an advance uncorrected proof.

The author, a professor of political science at Bar Ilan University, took on this project when she could not find prayers in the machzor (prayer book) appropriate to comfort a friend for the tremendous loss of both a mother and baby daughter in a terrorist attack. A best seller in Israel, the English-language version is presented in seven sections: Moments in a Woman's Life; Barrenness and Fertility; Prayers for Mothers; Rituals and Customs; Holidays; Times of Crisis; Prayers for Peace and Redemption. From a historical perspective, the book is fascinating. The prayers come from such diverse sources as a book of supplications from 1648 Amsterdam, a woman of Kurdistan, a Holocaust victim, and recent compositions.

Unfortunately, the presentation of this book detracts from its use. Many of the prayers, originally composed in Yiddish or Ladino, were first translated into Hebrew, then into English. The richness of the colloquial Jewish language was lost. There are some mistranslated words; the most egregious example is a word translated as "temptation" instead of "testimony of a seduced woman." The English translation does not line up with the Hebrew text, so it is difficult to find words and phrases of interest. With no glossary or index, and few references for biblical quotes or traditional prayers, it is hard to access the material. But for a woman looking to express her spirituality or use the words of a woman before her, it is worthwhile.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Lesch, David W. *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 495 p. \$66.99 (ISBN 978-0-19517-230-0).

This history of the Arab-Israeli conflict is meant to serve as an undergraduate text and it fulfills the author's objective rather well. Lesch is a well-respected historian of the contemporary Middle East who has produced a well-written and appropriately-balanced treatment of this regional conflict that has consumed the interest of much of the Jewish community and beyond. The textual narrative is periodically separated by historical photographs, most of which have not been seen before, and masterfully created maps, each of which is well placed to supplement the discussion. Insets of biographies and relevant historic documents are included to highlight important junctures. The author begins his task with a discussion of the general cultural and geographical setting of the region, which is followed by the development of the competing nationalist ideologies of Arabism and Zionism. What has become the standard historical continuum is placed in chronological order from the post-World War I mandate era up to and through the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections in January 2006. This history is marked by a certain lack of sanguin-

ity or pessimism, but places the conflict in the perspective of but one in an historical period that began at one point in time and most likely will reach a concluding point at another.

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

Margoshes, Joseph. *A World Apart: A Memoir of Jewish Life in Nineteenth Century Galicia.* Translated from Yiddish by Rebecca Margolis and Ira Robinson. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2008. 195 p. \$50.00 (ISBN 978-1-93484-310-9).

Joseph Margoshes (1866-1955) published his memoirs in Yiddish in New York in 1936. He was then an elder journalist at the Yiddish daily *Morgen Zshurnal*, one of the leading Yiddish newspapers in the city. As Ira Robinson and Simcha Fishbane note in their introduction, "in telling the story of his life, lived in a world that had passed away, and that he doubted would ever be revived, Margoshes provides the reader with important insights into numerous areas of the Jewish life of Austro-Hungarian Galicia. We read of Orthodox and Enlightened Jews and their conflicts, Jewish urban and rural life, the multifaceted relationship between Jews and their gentile neighbors, and much more."

Margoshes was a book collector, and librarians will be especially interested in his bibliographic insights. Margoshes devotes the first chapters to his father and to the Belzer Hasidim, and has much less to say about his mother and her family. Part of his pleasure in writing his memoirs is to settle scores with his despotic father-in-law and with several Jews—some "German" (non-Orthodox), some stingy, and some very cunning—with whom he was acquainted in the small village where he was a lease holder managing an estate for an absent owner. There he took to drinking, playing cards and other pastimes. He delights at retelling a "false wedding," a prank he prepared with other Jews on an older man enamored of a pretty and young woman in his household. Margoshes's focus is more often than not on the economic and social aspect of his life, evaluating the wealth of other lease holders, and he mentions his five children only once. Although marred by a few typographical errors and inconsistency in transliteration from the Yiddish, this translation opens up to English readers a primary document on Jewish life in rural Galicia in the 1880s and 1890s. Recommended to academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohm, *Silver Spring, MD*

Medved, David. *Hidden Light: Science Secrets of the Bible.* New Milford: Maggid Books, 2008. 170 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-59264-185-7).

This book deals with the harmony between science and the Bible. It deals separately with disciplines such as physics, mathematics, chemistry archeology, etc. For whom was this book written? In the author's opinion, it is intended for Orthodox and traditional Jews, Evangelical Christians and the secular population who are "seeking."

The author is a little optimistic! First, much of the scientific discussion is technical and the book requires some scientific background. Second, one has to ask, who is the boss? A religious person's automatic reaction may well be that Judaism and the Bible do not need an endorsement from science. In his book, *In the Beginning*, Prof. Aviezer is very careful to explain that science can offer a new insight into puzzling parts of the

Bible. The chapter on mathematics illustrates the problem. Prof. Medved is replying to critics who say that since the Bible is G-d's word, how can it be so primitive as to use the value of 3 for π , in building the first temple? If one believes that such a question is worthy of an answer, one could assume that the Bible works on a "need to know" basis and there is no reason to introduce science that is far ahead of its time. Medved's approach is to use an arcane form of exegesis (which no secular reader worthy of his salt would accept) to prove that an accurate value of π was hidden in the text.

I recommend that the author define his aims more precisely and that in a second edition he tailor the book to the needs of a specific audience.

Chaim Seymour, *Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

Merback, Mitchell, B., ed. *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture.* Leiden & Boston: Brill (Brill's Series in Jewish Studies, v. 37), 2008. 573 p. \$143.00 (ISBN 978-9-00415-165-9).

This scholarly work of 13 essays by leading art historians sheds light on the relationship between the majority Christian European visual culture's anti-Jewish stereotypes, during the Middle Ages and early modern periods. The book joins the community of earlier investigations in the English language including: Reider's "Jews in Medieval Art," Kraus's *The Living Theatre of Medieval Art*, Zafran's *The Iconography of Anti-Semitism*, Schachar's *The Judensau*, and Ruth Mellinkoff's works.

The historically contextualized essays are thoroughly footnoted, bibliographies are provided, and facsimile plates representing the art objects are included. The essays raise questions regarding: the shifting politics of toleration/intolerance; representation of redeemed Ecclesia and forsaken Synagoga; the visual contra Judaeos/cupla Iudaeorum; the representation of the Adversus Judaeos polemic in the Portal of the Paris Cathedral where Stephen attacks the carnal rabbis as "uncircumcised in heart and ears;" Jewish iconoclasm in the St. Nicholas windows at Chartres; English bestiaries representing the Jew as the donkey with big ears that hears not, the dog that returns to its vomit, and the pig; analysis of the Marian legends where a synagogue is converted into a church after the Jews' expulsion; grotesque lustful images of the executed court Jew Jud Suess Oppenheimer (1698-1738); and the transformation of religious anti-Judaism into modern racial and nationalistic hatreds. The book concludes by portraying more philosemitic representations of Jews in the Italian Renaissance, Protestant Reformation, and Rembrandt's Amsterdam, affirming the chosen people of the book representing Hebraica veritas. *Beyond the Yellow Badge* will be of interest to historians of art, culture, Christian theology, Jewish history, antisemitism, Jewish-Christian relations, and general readers.

Dr. David B. Levy, *Queens NY*

Meszler, Joseph B. *A Man's Responsibility: A Jewish Guide to Being a Son, a Partner in Marriage, a Father and a Community Leader.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008. 171 p. \$21.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-362-0).

An exploration of what it means to be a Jewish man in today's society, *A Man's Responsibility* uses real-life stories to talk about the history of male roles in Judaism, and the stereotypes that go

with them. Discussing the vast changes that have taken place for the typical Jewish male in the past generation or two, Rabbi Meszler goes on to examine the sources that define the ideal Jewish man throughout life as a son, husband, and father, and what his place is in the modern community. Questions at the end of each chapter are ideal for use as a stepping-stone for men's discussion groups or to provide food for thought in individual study. Although slanted more towards a Reform/Conservative audience, this book is highly recommended to Jewish men of all affiliations.

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

Moore, Deborah Dash, ed. *American Jewish Identity Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008. 336 p. \$27.95 (ISBN 978-0-47203-288-4).

How does our history relate to trends in society at large? This volume of essays by some of the best minds in academia provides important guidance toward answering that question.

The eleven essays discuss a wide variety of concerns about Jewish history and its relationship with the American past and present. Opening the book, Deborah Dash Moore, Alvin Rosenfeld, and Hasia Diner explore the effects of the Holocaust on American society in the aftermath of World War II. In the second section four scholars—Arnold Eisen, Jonathan Sarna, Jeffrey Gurock and Arthur Green—analyze various aspects of religion in contemporary society.

Part three examines social issues: Paula Hyman discusses the relationship between Jewish feminism and the women's movement in society-at-large. Stephen Whitfield and Egon Mayer tackle issues of today's Jews in society and Sylvia Fishman looks at mixed marriage and identity. Each writer asks profound questions of immediate relevance, and the reader emerges with a deeper understanding of both the issues and the possible responses.

All of the essays have been previously published. Their presence together, however, reminds us of the inter-connectedness of American Jewish life, and gives an appreciation of where we have been and where we might be headed. For that reason, the book is recommended for academic libraries. While it may be of interest to larger synagogues and their clergy, it is not a critical purchase for the general public.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Perry, Marvin and Schweitzer, Frederick M., eds. *Antisemitic Myths: A Historical and Contemporary Anthology*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007. 352 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-25321-950-3).

The editors have created a well-researched source of anti-semitic myths. The work is divided into three chronological periods: early and medieval, modern, and contemporary. Within each section are brief and easy-to-read chapters dedicated to specific expressions of antisemitism and their history. In addition to covering well known expressions of antisemitism, such as the charge of deicide, the blood libel, and world domination, there are also lesser known myths, such as Jews causing the Black Plague, using the Talmud as an anti-Christian manifesto, and causing their own hardships throughout history. Eight chapters—nearly one third of the volume—are dedicated to Nazi antisemitism,

the Holocaust, and Neo-Nazism. The editors give examples of the perpetrators of antisemitic rhetoric and actions, and of the few voices that denounced antisemitism. Some attention is paid to contemporary efforts by Catholic and Protestant leaders to improve relations with Jews and educate their faithful. This title would be a good addition to any Jewish library.

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

Persoff, Meir. *Faith against Reason: Religious Reform and the British Chief Rabbinate, 1840-1990*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008. 476 p. \$34.95 (ISBN 978-0-85303-670-8).

The British chief rabbi is the religious head of a group of synagogues called The United Synagogue. Theoretically Orthodox, these synagogues have many members who are not. The policy line is moderate Orthodox; however, the chief rabbi is exposed to pressure from the Ultra-Orthodox on one side and from Reform, Liberal and Masorti on the other. His major concern is to ensure that the next generation remain within the United Synagogues; thus there is a common demand to adapt the service in the synagogue to make it more attractive. The book relates how the chief rabbis were as flexible as they thought they could be with regard to the structure of the prayers, but each drew his own specific line regarding compromise. This is not a complete history of the Chief Rabbinate but concentrates on the attempts to influence the chief rabbi and to change the United Synagogue.

Mr. Persoff quotes liberally from original sources. One certain conclusion is that the task of chief rabbi was and is extremely challenging and in many cases far from pleasant.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Robinson, Ira. *Translating a Tradition: Studies in American Jewish History*. Boston, Academic Studies Press, 2008. 327 p. \$70.00 (ISBN 978-1-93484-306-2).

This volume is a collection of previously-published essays by Professor Robinson of Montreal's Concordia University. More than half of the book deals with the life and achievements of Cyrus Adler. One of the first scholars of "Semitics"—he received a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University—Adler later served as the head of Dropsie College in Philadelphia and as president of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. He also was an early member of the American Jewish Committee and worked with the Kehillah of Philadelphia. It may be argued that he was second only to Louis Marshall as the most important American Jew in the first third of the 20th century.

The book's second section explores the growth of Orthodox Judaism (in particular Hasidism) in America. Beginning with the first Hasidic rabbis in the World War I era, Robinson also analyzes early Hasidic congregations, the work of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, and other developments in the U.S. over the past century. The final essay deals with the present debate between evolution and intelligent design ("creation science") and its place in the Jewish community.

Translating a Tradition provides an important service to scholars of American Jewish history. The essays are well written and eminently usable by college students. The notes at the end of each essay are extensive, but the print is very small. Overall, the book is most appropriate for academic libraries with large

collections on American Jewish history. It is not necessary for synagogues, unless there is a special interest in the life and work of Cyrus Adler.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Rubin, Nissan. *Time and Life Cycle in Talmud and Midrash: Socio-Anthropological Perspectives.* Boston: Academic Studies Press (Judaism and Jewish Life), 2008. 225 p. \$70.00 (ISBN-978-1-93484-307-9).

This collection of studies by Nissan Rubin, professor emeritus of sociology and anthropology at Bar Ilan University, reflects his lifelong attempt to bring together the fields of social sciences and Jewish studies. He has published several Hebrew books on the Jewish lifecycle, and that interest in life's events and rituals is reflected in this English-language volume as well. Many of the studies focus on ceremonies—weddings, death, the circumcision rite, and the *pidyon ha-ben* ceremony. The primary focus is on the classical texts of Hazal, requiring a textual analysis prior to the sociological one. Sometimes, however, he slips in reflections on modern Jewish life.

Though Rubin is in dialogue with two highly developed scholarly traditions, his prose is straightforward and accessible to the non-specialist. His readings are usually helpful in plotting out complex rabbinic discussions and explaining their social meaning, and his symbolic interpretations are always interesting and thought-provoking. Appropriate for any library geared towards the Jewish lifecycle.

Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Rustow, Marina. *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008. 435 p. \$55 (ISBN 978-0-80144-582-8).

Karaism stands out in Jewish history as the most durable sect to have broken away from rabbinic Judaism. It is a group that has spent centuries defining its identity, and in rabbinic historical memory it symbolizes the menacing "Other" lurking at the margins of halakhic debate. The central thesis of Marina Rustow's book is that, in the 10th and 11th centuries, the Karaites were an integral and even inextricable component of a larger Jewish community that spread throughout the Middle East, from North Africa to Persia. Most of the discussion follows the political ups and downs of the Geonim in Babylonia and Palestine, showing how they depended upon Karaites' occupying senior positions in the Fatimid government for political support. It seems surprising that the Geonim, the main representatives of Rabbinism, would have had such close ties with Karaites, but the evidence is overwhelming.

Rustow's book is a major new contribution to the genre of Genizah studies. The task of reconstructing a historical narrative from hundreds of battered scraps, in Hebrew, Arabic, and the hybrid Judeo-Arabic, is a daunting one. To do so in prose that is clear and evocative is dazzling. Vital for any academic library, it is long and dense, not an easy read.

Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University, Jerusalem



Scharf Gold, Nili. *Yehudah Amichai: The Making of Israel's National Poet.* Hanover, NE: New England University Press and Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2008. 445 p. \$35.00 (ISBN 978-1-58465-733-0).

This important critical work reveals and discusses aspects of Amichai's biography that are crucial to the understanding of the man and his oeuvre. The author's "Theory of Camouflage," introducing and analyzing "the German truth beneath the Hebrew façade, and the European landscape beneath the Israeli topography and history" is based on previously unpublished notes, letters and drafts of poems, discovered in Amichai's archives in the Beinecke Library at Yale, as well as on materials entrusted to her scrutiny by Ruth Z., a hitherto unknown lover of Amichai from the 1940s.

The research is meticulous and the book includes detailed notes and index, an extensive bibliography, and bilingual texts of the poems referred to in the book. The volume is a valuable addition to any library collecting contemporary Israeli literature. It is a good read and provides insights to Amichai aficionados about lesser known influences on his writing. Highly recommended.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles, CA

Scharfstein, Sol. *Torah and Commentary: The Five Books of Moses: Translation, Rabbinic and Contemporary Commentary.* Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2008. 569 p. \$49.50 cloth (978-0-88125-973-5); \$35.00 pbk. (ISBN 978-1-60280-020-5).

This edition claims to be a unique presentation of the Torah. It is an easy book for a contemporary reader to understand, but it is not the only modern translation of the Torah. It is masterpiece of compromise that is politically correct when it comes to gender: "man" becomes "person," and the masculine orientation is eliminated whenever possible. In an illuminating, concise introduction, Scharfstein explains that his ten-year project aims to spark interest in the divinity of the Torah. The author supplies up-to-date information for the general reader—colorful illustrated essays about Torah history, scholarship, holidays, ornaments and settings, etc.

Each book is prefaced by a summary of its contents and divided into the traditional chapters and *parashot* (portions). Commentaries explain religious, literary, and historical events and locations. A section at the end of the book provides detailed information about the 17 most important commentators and brief information about some others. The book also includes a bibliography of the ten major works that it quotes, and a sensible index. The large format allows for clear print and illustrations. This trendy Torah raises many questions, some of which are quite unsettling. Is this "Torah for Dummies?" If limited motivation and commitment to Torah are a fact, then teachers and students, mainly in the Diaspora, will find this book helpful.

Nira Glily Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Schechter, Joel. *Messiahs of 1933: How American Yiddish Theatre Survived Adversity through Satire.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008. 304 p. \$39.50 (ISBN 978-1-59213-872-2).

It's hard to put a finger on how exactly this well-meaning book goes wrong, but it does so early and never recovers. A professor of theater at San Francisco State University, Schechter doesn't have much feel for Yiddish: referring to Sholem Aleichem as

"Aleichem" is a bit like referring to Boy George as "Boy." Nor does he seem particularly at home with the Left, a milieu that is central to the art of the Depression, Schechter's chosen time period. It's not even clear if this book is meant to be scholarly or popular. There are footnotes, but there are also errors and gross over-simplifications. He is at his best when describing individual plays and locating them in a social context. But these lively accounts are cobbled together with pages of sagging, bulging prose. This is perhaps the real sin: making the Yiddish theater—that hothouse of creativity, egotism, and snake-oil—sound boring. While stronger than Stefan Kanfer's egregious 2006 *Stardust Lost* (the only other recent English-language book on Yiddish theater with a hope of reaching a broad audience), this book is sadly an optional purchase. Instead, read Schechter's charming cartoons on the topic in *Jewish Currents*.

Faith Jones, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada

Schulweis, Harold M. *Conscience: The Duty to Obey and the Duty to Disobey*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2008. 131 p. \$19.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-375-0).

Through examples taken from biblical, talmudic and midrashic sources, Rabbi Schulweis demonstrates how Judaism encourages questioning authority, even when it is the highest authority, i.e. God. Obedience should never be blind, and when moral rectitude and authoritarian law are in conflict with one another, a person must do what is right and not what is commanded. Abraham confronted God to reason with Him before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Moses often reminded God of His covenantal commitment to give the people another

chance. The author cites examples of righteous people who took risks in the name of justice and morality, particularly in the Holocaust. His final chapters describe ways in which we can rear children with consciences developed enough to respond fearlessly to instances of injustice, racism, or bigotry. Listen to your children's questions respectfully and answer them honestly. Teach them kindness and consideration. Protecting the stranger, the orphan and the widow, and pursuing justice are important Jewish values.

In a world where the weak are all too often crushed and might prevails over right, where the lessons of the Holocaust are not remembered, where genocides occur almost everywhere, the lessons contained in this book are urgent and timely. This volume contains notes but neither bibliography nor index. There is one serious error: in writing about the Commandant of Auschwitz, the author calls him Rudolf Hess. Actually, it was Rudolf Hoess, an entirely different individual. This book is recommended for academic and synagogue libraries.

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

Shulman, David. *Dark Hope: Working for Peace in Israel and Palestine*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007. 226 p. \$22.00 (ISBN 978-0-22675-574-8).

Shulman is an Israeli academician, a Jerusalemite, and a peace activist. He is a self-proclaimed member of Ta'ayush, Arab-Jewish Partnership. A personal, but deeply disturbing narrative and not for the Jewish faint of heart, by an author who was trained in the humanities finds the relationship between Jewish values and the behavior of some Israeli military personnel towards Palestinians

City of Refuge Ad

in the Occupied Territories too difficult to integrate. Shulman is openly and strongly opposed to Israel's continued occupation of traditional Palestinian territories. His commentary and insight begin with the eruption of the al-Aqsa Intifada in the autumn of 2000 and continue through September 2006. While he does not admit to any political party identification, he does associate himself with the philosophy of civil disobedience. His point of reference is basically the Israeli army and Jewish settlers on the West Bank who are characterized by stories of unsympathetic Israeli judges coupled with unscrupulous attorneys dealing with issues of land confiscation, appropriation, and expropriation. His tale is an agonizing one, pitting Jew against Jew, filled with incidents of personal cruelty and institutional indifference, plus humiliating treatment of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli officials; it is a litany of degradation. There are numerous points of conflict, often one within another, the outward nationalistic outlook of Israeli versus Palestinian, beneath which is the cultural conflict of western against eastern, and still below is the modern versus the traditional. This is a story that will certainly be controversial in any Jewish community.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Stern, Karen B. *Inscribing Devotion and Death: Archaeological Evidence for Jewish Populations of North Africa.* Leiden, Boston: Brill (Religions of in the Graeco-Roman World, v. 161), 2008. 342 p. \$188.00 (ISBN 978-9-00416-370-6).

Stern began this book as her doctoral dissertation (Department of Religious Studies, Brown University, 2006). Working directly with archaeological materials in North Africa as well as rare materials from numerous museums and archives, Stern examines step-by-step the archaeological evidence of Jewish populations and their cultural history in Roman North Africa. She discusses her methodology and the problems that arise by trying to assess the evidence with old methods. With many photographs and illustrations, she shows the reader examples of the archaeological artifacts she is using in her analysis. Epitaphs, funerary steles, the Jewish names and words that appear on them and how they differ from majority North African (Roman) culture are discussed. She then devotes a lengthy chapter on the synagogue in the Tunisian town of Hammam Lif. Remains of this synagogue (ancient Naro) "constitute the most complete archaeological evidence for Jewish devotional practices in Roman North Africa." It may also be the best known—its mosaic floor has been exhibited in many North American art museums (and discussed in Edward Bleiberg's *Tree of Paradise: Jewish Mosaics from the Roman Empire*). Stern concludes her book with a discussion of North African Jewish responses to death, including burial practices.

This book clearly reflects its thesis beginnings, with all the attendant advantages and disadvantages. The bibliography is outstanding. Recommended for all academic libraries.

Suzanne Smailes, Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH

Tepe, Sultan. *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics and Religion in Israel and Turkey.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. 413 p. \$39.95 (ISBN 978-0-80475-864-2).

The growth of religious political parties in secular democracies since the 1990s raises many puzzling issues for those of us

who have been raised on the notion of the separation of religion and state. Israel and Turkey represent two relatively young secular democracies whose identities have a core religious component. Both countries have allowed the presence of religious political parties that play crucial roles in the political fabric of each country, blurring the lines between secular and sacred. Sultan Tepe, who teaches political science at the University of Illinois at Chicago, presents a cross-cultural, cross-religion and cross-disciplinary study of these religious political parties, which have amassed substantial followings and political power in both countries. Analyzing the two societies in their own unique religious context—Judaism in Israel; Islam in Turkey—Tepe also compares how religion and politics play out in contrasting ways. This volume should find its way to most college and university libraries.

Paul Howard Hamburg, University of California, Berkeley, CA

Urban, Martina. *Aesthetics of Renewal: Martin Buber's Early Representation of Hasidism as Kulturkritik.* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008. 238 p. \$32.00 (ISBN 978-0-22684-270-7).

Martina Urban has written an important monograph on the early writings of Martin Buber—primarily his two early anthologies of Hasidic writings: *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman* (1906) and *The Legends of the Baal-Shem* (1908)—and their role in the re-creation of Jewish identity around Zionism at the beginning of the twentieth century. Professor Urban analyzes these texts as a form of cultural criticism in the construction of new forms of Judaism as well as in the context of the severe criticism of Buber's thought by Gershom Scholem. This volume belongs primarily in college and university libraries. It will be most useful to students and scholars with a thorough familiarity of the concepts of contemporary critical thinking scholarship.

Paul Howard Hamburg, University of California, Berkeley, CA

Vroman, Suzanne. *Hidden Children of the Holocaust: Belgian Nuns and Their Daring Rescue of Young Jews from the Nazis.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 178 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-19-518128-9).

The author, a retired professor of sociology, fled Belgium in 1941 along with her family and settled in the Belgian Congo. She received her early education in a convent school run by Catholic nuns. This book is a very well-written description of the lives of 1500 Jewish children hidden in Belgium. Since Belgium had a highly structured social care network for young and old, the Nazis did not attempt to disturb this well-working system. It was estimated that over 90% of the Jews in Belgium were foreigners, having fled the Nazis from bordering countries; about half escaped deportation and the death camps by going into hiding, with children often separated from parents.

Vroman interviewed a small sample of adults who were hidden children, members of the resistance who assisted in rescue efforts through the Jewish-led Committee for the Defense of Jews, nuns who sheltered the children and historians—all were willing to relate their experiences. While some children were fortunate to have been relocated into welcoming convents, others were moved often due to fear of being exposed, unhappiness, or poor living conditions. Following the war, many hidden children were marginalized as attention was given to those who suffered

in labor camps, death marches, etc. The attitude towards hidden children was “You were lucky, you did not suffer.” It was not until the first gathering of hidden children in 1991 that this group of victims was finally recognized. Yad Vashem honored about 100 Belgium nuns and priests among the Righteous.

The goal of the author is to provide “a deeper understanding for how so-called lucky children were cheated out of their childhoods, suffering losses and sacrifices impossible to evaluate. The haunting truth is that more than 5,000 Jewish children under the age of sixteen were deported from Belgium and exterminated. Every single one should have lived.” This fast reading, short book is an excellent resource for Holocaust collections in high schools, public libraries, and academic libraries. Highly recommended.

Martin Goldberg, Penn State University, Monaca, PA

Weinreich, Max. *History of the Yiddish Language*. Edited by Paul Glasser; translated by Shlomo Noble with the assistance of Joshua A. Fishman. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. Published in cooperation with the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. 2 vols. \$300.00 (ISBN 978-0-300-10887-3 [set]).

This is an expanded edition of a key work of modern Judaic scholarship, first published in Yiddish in 1973 in four volumes and in English translation in 1980 in a single volume. More than just the history of a language, it is the history of the Ashkenaz writ large, as refracted through the everyday vernacular of central and east European Jews over the course of a millennium. Sadly, the author (the long-time research director of the YIVO Institute) died in 1969, four years before the publication of his magnum opus.

Weinreich traces the origins of Yiddish in the Rhine valley, outlines the linguistic “determinants” that formed the language, situates it within the comparative context of other diasporic Jewish languages, and sketches out the deeply religious environment in which the language developed—what he labels *Derekh ha-Shas* (the Talmudic way of life). Weinreich’s hypotheses are not universally accepted by linguists; nevertheless, *History of the Yiddish Language* remains the starting point for any serious discussion of the subject.

This authoritative edition comprises a translation of the original work in its entirety. The extensive index, originally compiled by Bella Hass Weinberg, has been augmented to cover the endnotes (which were omitted from the 1980 edition). Sadly, the book’s high price places it out of reach not only for most individual readers but for many libraries as well. This is cause for regret because Weinreich’s *History* is an essential work, one that deserves to be widely distributed and closely read.

Zachary M. Baker, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, CA

FICTION & POETRY

Agnon, S.Y. *A Book That Was Lost: Thirty-Five Stories*. New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2008. 588 p. \$14.95 (ISBN 978-1-59264-254-0).

In his preface Jonathan Rosen states that the purpose of this new edition of Agnon’s stories is to deliver the best of Agnon in meaningful categories. Categories include “Tales of Childhood,”

“The Artist in the Land of Israel,” and “Buczacz: The Epic life of One Town.” All the stories from *Twenty-One Stories* are included along with ten additional ones. This book is highly recommended for all libraries, even those that already own books and anthologies of Agnon’s work, because of the invaluable added features. The editors include notes that cite the sources of Agnon’s biblical and pseudo-biblical quotes, plus background information to help the reader understand the culture and context of the stories. Unfamiliar terms are explained in a comprehensive glossary at the end of the book. Highly recommended for the literature collection of all public and academic libraries.

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

Borchard, Ruth. *We are Strangers Here: An Enemy Alien in Prison in 1940*. Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008. 152 p. \$25.00 (ISBN 978-0-85303-753-8).

In this work of fiction based on the author’s own experiences, the heroine is the “Aryan” wife of a Jew. In 1940 the couple flees Germany, seeks refuge in England and suffers internment on The Isle of Man. The book focuses on the heroine’s experiences while she is separated from her young daughter, imprisoned prior to internment, and during the journey to the Isle of Man.

The book seems short and the author probably intended to continue writing. Written in 1943, the manuscript was discovered and published after the author’s death. Professor Brinson is more concerned with its value as a document portraying the internment process rather than as a novel. However, this is more than an historic document. The author is genuinely talented and her character portrayal is first-class. One cannot help but smile at the deliciously ironic ending. I enjoyed the novel and was sorry that the author did not see fit to complete it.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Elkins, Dov Peretz, ed. *Jewish Stories from Heaven and Earth*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008. 279 p. \$16.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-363-7).

Jews love telling stories, and Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins, co-editor of *Chicken Soup for the Jewish Soul*, has compiled an amazing collection of truly inspirational stories from all walks of Jewish life. Authors range from famous—Hanoach Teller, Elie Weisel, and Yitzchak Rabin to name a few—to ordinary Jews wanting to share their own out-of-the-ordinary tales of passion, devotion, faith, courage, and achievement that eloquently personify Judaism’s core values, yet are universal enough that they can be enjoyed by anyone. Sections are included on the Holocaust and the State of Israel. A read that is impossible to put down and highly recommended for all types of libraries.

Shoshana Hurwitz, Hurwitz Indexing, Ma’ale Adumim, Israel

Fallenberg, Evan. *Light Fell*. New York: Soho Press, 2008. 229 p. \$22.00 (ISBN 978-1-56947-467-9).

Joseph Licht—a fifty-year-old fop, fuss-budget, and kept man—is having his five grown sons for Shabbat dinner. They have been estranged for twenty years, ever since Joseph met the “love of his life,” divorced their mother, and became something of a pariah in his Orthodox Israeli family because his lover was a rabbi. Not just any rabbi, either, but the genius of his generation, an illui, a brilliant Torah scholar who, after a rapturous affair with Joseph,

kills himself. Having found his true sexual nature with the rabbi, Joseph does not turn from it and it is partly for this reason—to mention what they consider his betrayal of their mother and themselves—that he and his sons are not exactly close. As he muses over the menu, shops, prepares the food, cooks, arranges the flowers, hides the phallic art, and scrubs and polishes both himself and the elegant penthouse in Tel Aviv that he shares with his absent lover, Joseph accomplishes in a few fictional hours what would take several days in real life. Reality has little place in this melodrama, however. In exploring the lives of Joseph Licht and his family, Fallenberg creates one-dimensional characters, an over-heated plot, and a narrative voice that is devoid of either the humor or irony that it sorely needs. Although it has had some success on the Jewish book fair circuit, *Light Fell* is a flawed piece of fiction.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Gutfreund, Amir. *The World a Moment Later*. Translated by Jessica Cohen. New Millford, CT: Toby Press, 2008. 497 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-59264-251-9). Reviewed from an advance uncorrected proof.

Amir Gutfreund's appearance on the scene of contemporary Israeli literature with *Our Holocaust* (2001, translated 2007) introduced readers to a refreshing and lighter approach to viewing the Holocaust through the story of a child growing up in Israel, trying to make sense of the Holocaust's transformative presence in his life. It created a following, evidenced by many weeks on top of the best sellers lists in Israel, and an anticipation for more of the same from Gutfreund.

The World a Moment Later is Gutfreund's second book to be translated by Jessica Cohen and published by Toby Press (which should be recognized for its enormous contribution to bringing contemporary Israeli authors to the attention of the uninitiated).

This epic novel is reminiscent of Meir Shalev's *The Blue Mountain*. Gutfreund tells the stories of the less than mythical characters who came to "build the land and were built by it" (in the words of a popular pioneer song: "Anu banu artzah livnot ulehibanot bah"). Readers who enjoy historic novels will love this one, which spans the years 1909-1978 and pays loving and ironic tribute to the true brick-and-mortar heroes of the Zionist dreams with their passions, idiosyncrasies, and complexities.

The English version includes a chronology which, while helping to place the plot in its historical context, blurs the line between fact and fiction, reality and fantastic realism.

The book is a welcome addition to *Our Holocaust*, and one hopes that the other two books by the same author will soon be translated as well.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles, CA

Kaufman, William D. *The Day My Mother Changed Her Name and Other Stories*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press (Library of Modern Jewish Literature), 2008. 190 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-0-81560-932-2).

A master storyteller, ninety-three-year-old William Kaufman has eloquently transformed tales based on his childhood and that of his immigrant parents into his own, captivating audiences wherever he can find them and now making their way into print.

With sharp wit, detail, and a colorful life to draw experiences from, Kaufman has written a winner that epitomizes the oddities found in Jewish life. Recommended for all types of libraries.

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

***Poets on the Edge: An Anthology of Contemporary Hebrew Poetry*. Selected and translated by Tsipi Keller. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008. 339 p. \$74.50. pbk. (ISBN 978-0-7914-7686-4).**

The publication of newly translated Israeli poetry is always good news because of the access it offers to a modern canon not previously available to English readers. Keller's book offers contemporary Hebrew poetry by 25 Israeli poets in chronological order: from the well established and previously translated Amichai, Carmi, Pagis, Zach (born circa 1920s-1930s) to the less translated Someck, Or, and Hass (circa 1950s-1960s). The collection is introduced with a long essay on Israeli poetry written by Aminadav Dykman, and some poems come with annotations to words and idioms that Keller felt were necessary for the understanding of biblical and cultural allusions. Some of the notes are enigmatic, and the decision to offer biblical references to some poems' imagery while overlooking similar allusions in other poems is puzzling. One may also question the need to retranslate poems that are already available in English without offering a new meaning to the poem, or as in the case of Pagis's "Testimony," missing a nuance that is reflected well in the older translation (S. Mitchell's translation).

These choices become relevant when economy dictates a certain size for such a volume, and it seems that offering fewer poems and publishing a bilingual edition would allow Hebrew readers to enjoy the original as well as the translation.

These reservations notwithstanding, this anthology belongs in all libraries collecting contemporary Israeli literature. It is a good resource for educators and rabbis, as well as lovers of Hebrew poetry.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles, CA

Schwartz, Howard. *Leaves from the Garden of Eden: One Hundred Classic Jewish Folktales*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 544 p. \$35.00 (ISBN 978-0-19533-565-1).

Here is another collection of wonderful Jewish tales by Howard Schwartz, author of numerous books on Jewish myths, stories, and folklore. These 100 tales, spanning many centuries and countries, are divided into four main groups: fairy tales, folktales, supernatural tales, and mystical tales. With the exception of two stories: "The Dybbuk in the Well" and "The Groom who was Destined to Die on his Wedding Day" all of them have appeared in Schwartz's previous books. There are "Jewish versions" of stories like Cinderella, Snow White and Rapunzel as well as stories about Elijah, the Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, demons, dybbuks, Lilith, and angels. The author presents a useful introduction, explaining what makes a Jewish folktale Jewish. The second part of the book includes the sources and commentaries for each and every tale. Useful appendices such as countries of origin, specialized tale types, and stories about specific characters contribute to the accessibility of the book. Recently we have seen a new crop of titles about Jewish folktales, including *The Heart is a Mirror: The Sephardic Folktale*,

by Tamar Alexander-Frizer; and *Folktales of the Jews*, edited by Dan Ben-Amos. These two titles, although similar in content, are more for the scholarly user. *Leaves from the Garden of Eden* will have greater appeal for a wider audience. Recommended for schools and community centers' libraries, but if the budget is tight, and the library collection contains all the books by Howard Schwartz, librarians should consider that most of the material is not new.

Sonia Smith Silva, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

Sherbondy, Maureen A. *Praying at Coffee Shops: Poems.* Charlotte, NC: Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2008. 38 p. \$10.00 (ISBN 978-1-59948-108-1).

An award-winning poet and novelist, Sherbondy includes 22 short poems in this collection—over half have been previously published. Demonstrating lovely imagery and a depth of passion, these works cover rituals, ceremonies, and being Jewish in the Southern United States. The insights provided are rarely identifiable at first glance at the title of the work, yet upon thinking and reading one can truly see the relation between the poetry itself and the title. In "At the Mikveh, Age Four," the reader becomes the narrator, hovering between entering the evil-seeming mikveh and not completing the conversion to Judaism. Evoking tears of compassion and a sense of self-realization these poems are a welcome addition to any literature collection serving an adult or high school population. A section entitled "Notes" would better be listed as "Glossary," as it defines terms used throughout the poetry for the non-Jewish reader. Even a non-Jew would appreciate the literary quality of the work, while the Jewish reader will appreciate the literary and emotional characteristics.

Sara Marcus, Queensborough Community College, Bayside, NY

Shukert, Rachel. *Have You No Shame? And Other Regrettable Stories.* New York: Villard Books, 2008. 258 p. \$14.00 (ISBN 978-0-345-49861-8).

Have You No Shame? is a hilarious, shockingly honest look at a Jewish girl's life as she grows up in Omaha, Nebraska—not exactly a place filled with Jews, or anything remotely resembling shock value, for that matter. More comfortable in her own little world than in reality and always feeling like an outcast, as a child Rachel worries about which non-Jewish friends will hide her in the next Holocaust and dreams of an imaginary boyfriend, Chris McPresbyterian. Her teenage years find her free from the confines of a Jewish school; she joins a youth group at the insistence of her mother, but at times ends up indulging in less-than-holy activities. As an adult Rachel takes her wild imagination to New York City, trying to make her mark on the world. Morbid yet witty, a collection of coming-of-age autobiographical stories that will have readers falling on the floor laughing, the book is even complete with cross-shaped footnotes with explanations for non-Jewish readers and N-shaped footnotes for non-Midwesterners. Recommended, but not for the faint of heart!

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



SOUND RECORDINGS

Cuniot, Denis. *Confidential Klezmer.* Buda Musique, 2007. 1 Compact disc. \$16.98. 860147.

A minimalist recording of Klezmer standards performed through a French lens. Cuniot has been active in the revival of Klezmer in France. His style is highly nostalgic and reserved, quite unlike most performances, and will have an appeal only to a sector of Klezmer fans. Repeated listening makes this recording more and more enjoyable. Appropriate for community libraries with collections of Klezmer.

Paul Howard Hamburg, University of California, Berkeley, CA

From Jewish Life: Music for Cello and Orchestra. Surrey, UK: Avie, 2008. \$18.98. B0014953AI.

The play list includes: Ernst Bloch's "Schelomo: Hebraic Rhapsody" and "Prayer from the suite From Jewish Life;" David Diamond's "Kaddish;" Gerard Schwarz's "In Memoriam;" and Max Bruch's "Kol Nidre: Adagio on Hebrew Melodies." The music is performed by Jonathan Aasgaard, cello and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Gerard Schwarz. The entire repertoire on this beautifully performed disc comes from a lachrymose view of Jewish history—that is, a totally one-sided view emphasizing the sad, somber, and tragic elements of Jewish history. Each of the works performed here may be found on other CDs but only here are they anthologized in a group of very sorrowful "Jewish" music. Aasgaard, the principal cellist of the Liverpool Philharmonic, transcribed the "Prayer" by Ernst Bloch from the original version for violin and piano. The "Kaddish" by David Diamond was composed for Yo-Yo Ma.

Paul Howard Hamburg, University of California, Berkeley, CA

Immersed: Music for Mayyim Hayyim. Newton, MA: Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters Community Mikveh and Education Center, 2007. www.MayyimHayyim.org. 1 Compact Disc (34 min.) \$18.00

Produced by Josh Nelson at a benefit concert for Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters Community Mikveh and Education Center, the CD sales support the work of Mayyim Hayyim which serves the Jewish community of Greater Boston. The CD features ten original songs written and sung by Peter & Ellen Allard, Debbie Friedman, Cantor Jeff Klepper, Danny Maseng, Josh Nelson, Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller, Julie Silver, Peri Smilow and Craig Taubman. The theme is water, with lyrics in Hebrew and English, some based on traditional texts. The message is personal and is intended to be spiritually uplifting. Performing musical instruments incorporate acoustic and electric guitars, backing vocals, bass, keyboards, and percussion.

It is not clear how this CD is supposed to fit into, explain, or enhance the mikveh experience for women and men. If viewed in terms of musical entertainment, then the songs and sounds are not particularly interesting or of a high musical caliber. It is doubtful that a traditional believer in the importance of mikveh will find this CD meaningful. It is also doubtful the CD can inspire non-practicing persons to add mikveh to their way of life.

The accompanying pamphlet includes a small brief about the role of the mikveh and the center, musicians' Web sites,

and production details. Adding the words of the songs in print would have benefited the listener (although they are available on the Web site). Given the vagueness of the CD's objective it is hard to recommend it other than to individuals for their possible personal enjoyment.

Nira Gily Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

VIDEO

Balass, Joe. *Baghdad Twist*. Brooklyn, NY: Icarus Films. DVD 35 min. 2007. \$19.95.

In *Baghdad Twist*, a poignant memoir, Joe Balass interviews his mother about her life in Baghdad in the 50s and 60s. Through home movies, archival images, newsreel footage and family photographs, Balass tells the story of Jewish life in Baghdad. The early scenes of bar mitzvah and wedding celebrations could have taken place anywhere in the U.S. When Israel received its independence in 1948 Jews were persecuted and many immigrated to Israel, but Balass's family remained in Baghdad. After the Six Day War in 1967 the persecution intensified. Balass's father was thrown in jail three times, their phone lines were cut and Jews were not allowed to leave Baghdad. Balass's family sneaked out of Baghdad and fled to Canada.

Baghdad Twist was the official selection at the Toronto International Film Festival and was shown in several other film festivals in the U.S. and around the world. It is only 30 minutes long and ends abruptly with the family's flight to Canada. How they fled or what happened to them afterwards is not mentioned. This DVD is appropriate for high school students and adults. Recommended for the collections of high schools as well as academic and public libraries.

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

The Rape of Europa. Venice, CA: Menemsha Films. DVD 117 min. 2008. \$29.95.

This fascinating documentary tells the story of a little-known aspect of World War II. Hitler planned to create the world's foremost art museum, containing art that he deemed acceptable. To do this, the Nazis embarked on a fanatic attempt to collect the world's great art, looting both museums and private collections. The film documents the efforts of museum curators who hid their treasures while both the German and the allied armies destroyed important historical sites such as Monte Casino and Yasnia Polyana during battles. It also tells the story of the Monument Men, American soldiers who found Nazi art storehouses, saved the precious works found there, and worked to find the owners. The irony of saving art while murdering people comes across in interviews with some of the Monument Men.

Many of the owners of Jewish art and Torah scrolls are gone. These items have been donated to Jewish museums, libraries, and synagogues. There is still much work to be done, and the film has segments about the restoration of German synagogues, the restoration of Pisa's Campo Santo, and the return of art works to surviving family members if possible. This is an excellent film, which offers drama, history, and inspiration while educating the viewer. It belongs in the video collections of public, academic,

and synagogue libraries. It would be a good film for discussion groups, too.

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

Shahak, Boaz. *Reb Shlomo Carlebach*. Israel: Paran Production, 2008. DVD 63 min. Some English subtitles. Consult www.g02films.com for pricing.

This short film is a reminiscence on the life of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach and his impact on the Jewish world in terms of his music, his philosophy, and attracting disenfranchised Jews to return to their heritage. It starts and ends with scenes from the New York City Subway with Reb Carlebach singing in the background. The filmmakers interviewed many diverse people in Israel, Brooklyn, and San Francisco to learn about their experiences. Rabbi Carlebach's philosophy was that one must love every Jew, for "You Never Know" what greatness lies within him.

Rabbi Carlebach received rabbinic ordination in Lakewood, New Jersey, went on to associate with Lubavicher Hasidim, and then decided that the best way to reach people was personally and through his music. Rabbi Carlebach died in 1994, and through scenes of followers dancing at his grave, at a memorial for his yartzheit (anniversary of his death) and in the halls of learning, one can sense how sorely he is missed. There is some footage of Reb Shlomo speaking and singing; his haunting voice and melodies resonate throughout the film. For fans, the film is a great tribute, and for those unfamiliar or uninformed about his life, it is interesting to see how many different people were devoted to Rabbi Carlebach. Recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

These titles, reviewed in the adult readers section, may also be of interest to teenagers:

Books

JPS Guide: The Jewish Bible. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2008.

Schwartz, Howard. *Leaves from the Garden of Eden: One Hundred Classic Jewish Folktales*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Sherbondy, Maureen A. *Praying at Coffee Shops: Poems*. Charlotte, NC: Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2008.

Vroman, Suzanne. *Hidden Children of the Holocaust: Belgian Nuns and Their Daring Rescue of Young Jews from the Nazis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Video

Balass, Joe. *Baghdad Twist*. Brooklyn, NY: Icarus Films, 2007. DVD.

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.

- Adler, Elkan Nathan, *The Jews in Persia: Their Books and Practice*. Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2007.
- Atkinson, Charles M. *The Critical Nexus: Tone-System, Mode, and Notation in Early Medieval Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Biskupski, Mieczyslaw B. & Anthony Polonsky, eds. *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*. Vol. 19. Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007.
- Boccaccini, Gabriele, ed. *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Brauns, Jack. *Recollections and Reflections: How I Turned Despair into an Appreciation of Life*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007.
- Brecher, Daniel Cil. *A Stranger in the Land: Jewish Identity Beyond Nationalism*. New York: Other Press, 2007.
- Chalcraft, David J., ed. *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological Advances*. London: Equinox Publishing, 2007.
- Chalcraft, John. *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Ehrman, Bart D. *The Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot: A New Look at Betrayer and Betrayed*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Geller, Jay. *On Freud's Jewish Body: Mitigating Circumcisions*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007.
- Gilletz, Norene. *Norene's Healthy Kitchen: Eat Your Way to Good Health*. North Vancouver, BC: Whitecap Books, 2007.
- Goodman, Martin. *Rome and Jerusalem: the Clash of Ancient Civilizations*. New York: Vintage Books, 2008, c2007.
- Green, Tim. *American Outrage*. New York: Grand Central, 2009, c2007.
- Guyer, Sara. *Romanticism After Auschwitz*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.
- Katz, Shmuel. *The Aaronsohn Saga*. Jerusalem: Gefen, 2007.
- Kirchheimer, Janet R. *How to Spot One of Us: Poems*. New York: CLAL, 2007.
- Lamb, David T. *Righteous Jehu and His Evil Heirs: The Deuteronomist's Negative Perspective on Dynastic Succession*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Levy, Ernest. *The Single Light: From Boyhood to Manhood and from Nazism and Communism to Freedom*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007.
- Plaut, W. Gunther. *One Voice: the Selected Sermons*. Toronto: Dundrun Press, 2007.

- Reznikoff, Charles. *Holocaust*. Boston: D.R. Godine, 2007.
- Rosenkranz, Moses. *Childhood: an Autobiographical Fragment*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2007.
- Rosnay, Tatiana de. *Sarah's Key*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2007.
- Schwartz, Cipora O. *An American Jewish Odyssey: American Religious Freedom and the Nathan Barnet Memorial Temple*. Jersey City, KTAV, 2007.
- Sherwin, Byron L. *Studies in Jewish Theology: Reflections in the Mirror of Tradition*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007.
- Shreiber, Maeera Y. *Singing in a Strange Land: a Jewish American Poetics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.
- Shtibel, Rachel. *The Violin*. Shtibel, Adam. *A Child's Testimony*. Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2007.
- Shulman, David. *Dark Hope: Working for Peace in Israel and Palestine*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Trilling, Lionel. *The Journey Abandoned: The Unfinished Novel*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
- Wiese, Christian. *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas: Jewish Dimensions*. Waltham, Mass.: University Press of New England, 2007.
- Zimler, Richard. *The Seventh Gate*. London: Constable, 2007.

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Convention Registration

Convention Program

Convention Program

Convention Info

CEU

Request for Financial Support to Attend AJL Annual Convention

All applications must be postmarked or received by e-mail by **April 30, 2009**
You must be a current member of AJL at the time of application and the convention.
Full registration and attendance at the convention are required to be eligible for any support.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

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INSTITUTION: _____

POSITION: _____ YRS HELD: _____

PREVIOUS POSITIONS (if pertinent): _____

IF APPLYING FOR SPECIFIC SUPPORT: (choose which fund you are eligible for)

_____ LITTAUER _____ ORENSTEIN _____ TRAVEL

AJL MEMBERSHIP: Current: _____ Number of years: _____

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CONVENTION PARTICIPATION (attendance, presentation, local committee):

CURRENT: _____ PAST: _____

IS THIS YOUR FIRST AJL CONVENTION? _____

ARE YOU ATTENDING AS AN AVI CHAI BOOKSHELF LIBRARIAN? _____

ANTICIPATED CONVENTION EXPENSES (attach another sheet if needed)

REGISTRATION _____ HOTEL _____ TRAVEL _____

OTHER EXPENSES (please specify) _____ TOTAL _____

OTHER FUNDING SOURCES, CONFIRMED [OR ANTICIPATED]

This must be updated when received

INSTITUTION _____

LOCAL SUPPORT _____

NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL ORGS _____

TOTAL REQUESTED: _____

Chicago Convention

Continued from page 1

most noted architectural essays in the history of city planning. With this plan, Daniel Burnham laid out the foundations of the modern city of Chicago. The plan proposed renovating the lakefront for the public, increasing parks, creating marinas, and building up what is now known as the "Loop." Throughout the past 100 years, Chicago city planners have kept to that design, and Chicago continues to be one of the most beautiful cities in the United States.



Newly opened this year is the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, a project of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois. This new world-class museum, located in Skokie, will be open for tours beginning in April, and we can help you arrange transportation to visit this innovative and impressive

institution. (Skokie is about 20 minutes from the hotel.)

The tentative program, registration forms, CEU information, and hotel information are inside this newsletter issue and on the AJL Web site. We encourage you to register early, to be able to get the lowest prices.

We invite you to the city of Daniel Burnham, Michael Jordan, Richard Daley, Oprah Winfrey, the Sears Tower (tallest building in North America), Second City, Navy Pier, the Museum of Science and Industry, the Cubs, the White Sox, Al Capone, Frank Lloyd Wright, and of course, President Barack Obama. It's "our kind of town."

For more information, please feel free to contact any of the Chicago Convention co-chairs, Cheryl Banks Cheryl.Banks@gmail.com, Shoshanah Seidman Sseidman@northwestern.edu, or Rose Novil, rnovil@oakton.edu.

Report From Denmark

LISA SILVERMAN

According to its Web site, the International Board of Books for Young People (IBBY) is a "non-profit organization which represents an international network of people from all over the world who are committed to bringing books and children together." I have attended two of the US conferences in the past five years but I was looking forward to the day I could experience an international conference. Last September, I went to Copenhagen to present my paper and took the opportunity to hobnob with an international group of children's literature lovers.

The theme of the conference for 2008 was "Stories in History, History in Stories" and I was correct in assuming that the group would be willing to offer a session dealing with children's books on the Holocaust. I have a detailed bibliography on children's illustrated books about the Holocaust and I was interested in sharing it with an international audience. My topic was accepted and I was placed in "Session 16: Holocaust," which included these titles and speakers: "Telling the Holocaust Era to Young Children in Israel" from Dr. Miri Baruch (Israel), "Anti-Semitic Children's Literature and the Real Children it Affected" from Dr. Linda Veltze, (University of North Carolina), "Stories of Good People in Evil Times—How to Tell Children About the Holocaust" from Dr. Adina Bar-El (Israel), "Voices from the Palace of Ashes: Writing a Young Adult Novel about the Holocaust" from Anders Johansen (Denmark), and my topic, "The Holocaust Through Picture Books."

Upon arriving at the venue for the opening plenary session, I took a seat among the 500-600 attendees, and started to look around for my Israeli session partners, whom I had never met. I had no success. Later that day, awards were being given to various illustrators, and I noticed that one was from Israel. I stepped to the back of the room and waited. When the illustrator was presented with her award, I heard a particular group of people clapping louder than the others and noted where they were and later went to introduce myself.

Three of the women were presenters, and one man was a representative of the Israeli Embassy of Denmark, who had prepared a reception in honor of this award winner. I quickly got invited to the Israeli ambassador's lovely home for the party but was warned to be quite secretive in describing to the taxi driver where I wanted to go. I was only to say the address, and my name would be on a list when I got there. It was at this point that I began to realize that international conferences are clearly quite different from those I am used to attending at home.

At the reception, the visiting professors remarked that they had noted a few sessions on the list were clearly from a Palestinian perspective. We all agreed to attend them, as did the embassy representative. One was being led by a vocal Palestinian professor named Jehan Helou, who was elected to the IBBY board of directors at the end of the conference. She had developed a writing project for Palestinian children, and showed examples of their stories on the screen. It seemed that 90% of the children had little to write about besides how bad Israeli soldiers are. Toward the end of the presentation, we were surprised to see that one little girl had chosen to write about her dog. Later we were told

Chicago Major League Baseball Schedule

Chicago Cubs NL Central Champions
chicago.cubs.mlb.com

Sunday July 5	1:20 pm vs. Milwaukee
Monday July 6	7:05 pm vs. Atlanta
Tuesday July 7	7:05 pm vs. Atlanta
Wednesday July 8	1:20 pm vs. Atlanta



White Sox AL Central Champions
chicago.whitesox.mlb.com

Tuesday July 7	time tbd vs. Cleveland
Wednesday July 8	time tbd vs. Cleveland



that this presenter had complained to conference organizers that there was too much mention of the Holocaust and not enough of Arab causes. It is true that in addition to my session, two of the plenary sessions had dealt with the Holocaust—one given by a Danish historical fiction author and the other by a Norwegian.

My session was well received. Afterward, people from Brazil, Japan, Australia, Spain, Germany, and Zimbabwe requested copies of my bibliography. The Japanese woman was a translator of well-known children's books. She was a friend of Fumiko Ishioka, the heroic museum director from the story of *Hana's Suitcase*, whom I had met years before on her visit to Los Angeles.

One of the last plenary sessions was given by Bir Zeit University professor Dr. Sharif Kanaana and entitled, "Stories Told By and For Children in Today's Society: The Palestinian Experience." He was quite interesting and, in my view, said nothing particularly inflammatory. Quite a few of the children's stories were full of humor and bravado about how they cleverly were able to trick Israeli soldiers and run away from them. He also emphasized his displeasure about being censored by the Hamas government.

One of the Israelis was very negative about the Palestinian's presentation. She pounced on even his minor word choices. Later she went up and had words with the moderator, then faxed his entire presentation to the Israeli embassy. "I'm trying to be a

Have You Heard?

LIBBY K. WHITE



In December, 2008 the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) awarded its Fenia and Yaakov Leviant Memorial Prize in Yiddish Studies to Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein for *The World of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century* (Stanford University Press). MLA also honored Chava Motek and Mark Slobin with an Honorable Mention for *Yiddish Folksongs from the Ruth Rubin Archive* (Wayne State University Press).

Shai Reshef, an Israeli residing in Pasadena, California, is launching a worldwide Internet university in fall 2009. The University of the People will initially offer degrees in business administration and computer science. Fees will be nominal. Courses will be taught in English, and will be open to anyone with computer access. Reshef built an online university affiliated with the University of Liverpool in the UK. He currently heads *crampster.com*, an online study community offering homework assistance to college students. Reshef told *The New York Times* that he expects to hire professors and librarians for paid and volunteer positions.

Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, the first Jewish-sponsored secular university in the United States, revealed plans to sell the art collection housed in its Rose Museum. The announcement in late January 2009 called attention to the university's declining endowment. Art critics and Jewish community activists expressed shock and dismay.

good citizen," she said. Interestingly, Jehan Helou, the previous speaker about Palestinian children's stories, seemed not to care for Dr. Kanaana's talk at all, but clearly for different reasons.

I enjoyed my time in beautiful Copenhagen, but I have mixed feelings about attending the 2010 convention in Santiago De Compostela, Spain. My new Israeli friends insisted that we need to make our presence known. They noted that the four communities that receive funding from the new IBBY Children in Crisis Programme are listed as Peru, Colombia, Lebanon, and Gaza, Palestine. (See the latest biennial report, linked at www.ibby.org/index.php?id=260 for more information about the programme.) No Israelis sit on the executive board of this international organization, although Iran, Uganda, China, Palestine, and others are represented.

I wonder if a session on the Sydney Taylor Award winners would interest an international audience. Perhaps I should start to pad my frequent flyer account with enough miles to get me to Europe. The theme for 2010 is "La Fuerza de Las Minorias—The Strength of Minorities."

Publishing News

LINDA R. SILVER

Do You Hear Me, Mr. Lincoln? by Judith Caseley, a new paperback published by Graphia/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, was originally published as a hardback entitled *Praying to A. L.* by Greenwillow in 2000. The paperback edition includes a readers guide.

Lerner Publishing Group has pulled *Angel Girl* by Lori Friedman (Carolrhoda 2008) from the market after it was revealed that parts of survivor Herman Rosenblat's Holocaust love story on which the illustrated book was based were fabricated. According to a press release that the publisher issued on December 29, 2008, "Lerner Publishing Group has canceled all pending reprints and is issuing refunds on all returned books. The company is no longer offering the book for sale and is recalling the book from the market."

Nachshon Press announces that a second edition (copyright 2008) of *Homeland: The Illustrated History of the State of Israel* by Marv Wolfman, Mario Ruiz, and William J. Rubin has been published. It is updated through July 2008 and includes information on the Winograd Commission Report on the war in Lebanon, the threat to Israel by Iran, and Israel's 60th anniversary as a state. *Homeland* was first published in 2007.

Editors' Choices

Books for Children and Teens 2008

ANNE DUBLIN AND LINDA R. SILVER

All of the books for children and teens that were reviewed in the *AJL Newsletter* between February/March 2008 and February/March 2009 were eligible for a spot on this list except for self-published titles. The date next to each entry refers to the issue of the Newsletter in which a review of the book first appeared. One of the year's best books, *How I Learned Geography* by Uri Shulevitz, along with several others were not included because their Jewish content is too slight to be discernible to children. During the year when the 60th anniversary of Israel's founding was celebrated, four out of the fourteen titles that we consider "hits" are about or are set in Israel as well as three of the "misses." The remainder of the titles in both sections of the list represents a fairly typical sampling of the genres and Jewish topics that are published in North America for children and teens, including folklore, holidays, and the Holocaust. Teen fiction is currently where the most daring writing occurs, as readers will discover when they take a closer look at the editors' choices of 2008. We are interested in readers' reactions to "Editors' Choices"—a new Newsletter feature—and urge you to write to us at adublin@sympatico.ca or silverlr@roadrunner.com.

Hits

- The Bat-Chen Diaries*. May/June 2008.
A Bottle in the Gaza Sea by Valerie Zenatti. Feb./March 2008.
Capturing the Moon: Classic and Modern Jewish Tales by Rabbi Edward M. Feinstein. Sept./Oct. 2008.
Engineer Ari and the Rosh Hashanah Ride by Deborah Bodin Cohen. Illus. by Shahar Kober. Sept./Oct. 2008.

- Freefall* by Anna Levine. Feb./March 2009.
Goodnight Sh'ma by Jacqueline Jules. Illus. by Melanie Hall. Sept./Oct. 2008.
Gravity by Leanne Lieberman. Feb./March 2009.
Hanukkah Haiku by Harriet Ziefert. Illus. by Karla Gudeon. Sept./Oct. 2008.
The Hungry Clothes and Other Jewish Folktales by Peninnah Schram. Illus. by Gianni De Conno. Sept./Oct. 2008.
In Defiance of Hitler: The Secret Mission of Varian Fry by Carla McClafferty. Feb./March 2009.
Memories of Babi by Aranka Siegal. Sept./Oct. 2008.
Naming Liberty by Jane Yolen. Illus. by Jim Burke. Sept./Oct. 2008.
Private Joel and the Sewell Mountain Seder by Brynna Fireside. Illus. by Shawn Costello. Feb./March 2008.
Sarah Laughs by Jacqueline Jules. Illus. by Natascia Ugliano. Feb./March 2008.
Uprising by Margaret Peterson Haddix. Feb./March 2008.

Misses

- The Brothers Schlemiel* by Mark Binder. Illus. by Zevi Blum. May/June 2008.
Checkpoints by Marilyn Levy. Sept./Oct. 2008 and Feb./March 2009.
Eight Chanukah Tales by Nissan Mindel. Illus. by Eli Toron and Shmuel Graybar. Feb./March 2008.
Grandpa's Mountain: Letters from a Border Kibbutz in Israel by Arieh Larkey. Feb./March 2008.
The Princess and the Ziz by Jacqueline Jules. Illus. by Katherine Janus Kahn. Sept./Oct. 2008.
Purr-im Cat by Wendy Ruth Gottlieb. May/June 2008.
Unsettled: the Problem of Loving Israel by Marc Aronson. Nov./Dec. 2008.

Another Look at Sydney Taylor Books

ROBIN GLUCK

"Can I reread the books I've already read?" That is the first question my fourth graders ask when I introduce the Sydney Taylor Challenge each February. I always tell them that the wonderful thing about the Sydney Taylor Challenge is rereading their favorite stories.

The Sydney Taylor Challenge started three years ago when I was trying to create a reading incentive program that would focus on the Judaic fiction collection. I had read about Sydney Taylor book clubs, but I felt that format would not engage enough of the students, especially those who are reluctant to pick up Judaic chapter books.

The challenge is simple: How many Sydney Taylor Award and honor books can you read in six weeks? Students can reread their favorite picture books, but everyone must read one chapter book that they haven't read before. Students can participate at any level: for reading 5-10 books students receive the Henrietta Award, for reading 11-18 books, they get the Charlotte Award, for reading 19-25 books they earn

the Gertrude Award, for reading 26-36 books, they get the Ella Award, and for reading 37-50 books students get the top honor, The Sydney Award. At the end of the six weeks, I ask students to write a short summary/review of the chapter book and turn in their Sydney Taylor reading log.

I introduce the challenge during a library visit with the fourth grade Judaic studies teachers. The students are interested in the biography of Sydney Taylor and why an important award is named for her. Some have read the All-of-a-Kind-Family series, but few know about the author. Most importantly, I want them to understand the evolution of Jewish books and publishing. At this visit I also book talk many Sydney Taylor Award winning chapter books.

The challenge has been very successful. During the six weeks there is a flurry of borrowing during recess and lunch breaks. All who participate are honored with a certificate at lunch. We also take a huge group shot of the winners with their certificates for the school newsletter.

Random House Ad

Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY LINDA R. SILVER

We welcome Deborah Abecassis of Quebec, Lisa Katz of California, and Allison Marks of Ohio to the group of volunteer reviewers who make the *AJL Newsletter's* Reviews for Children and Teens possible, and thank all of our reviewers for the time and thought they devote to evaluating books. If you would like to become a reviewer of books for children and teens, please contact the editors at adublin@sympatico.ca or silverlr@roadrunner.com, sending a sample review along with your message.

A full publishing year of reviews, from Feb/March 2008 to Feb/March 2009, is now upon us. We have read most of the books of Jewish content published for kids in 2008 and recorded our critical opinions of them in the pages of the *AJL Newsletter*. A new feature, which may become annual if readers find it thought-provoking or useful, is Editors' Choices, which lists the "hits and misses" of the year. To compile this list, we asked our reviewers for their nominations; the published list reflects those choices, although the editors take full responsibility for the final list. We are happy to note that there are more hits than misses, and hope that this positive imbalance continues, as children's books of Jewish content settle into the mainstream of Anglophone publishing for youth.

Anne Dublin and Linda Silver, co-editors

In The Spotlight

Cheng, Andrea. *The Bear Makers*. Asheville, NC: Front Street, 2008. 170 p. \$16.95 ISBN: 978-1-59078-518-8. Gr. 5 - 8.

In 1947 Hungary, eleven-year-old Kata tries to make sense of the reactions of her family to the Communist take-over of their country. It is a time of shortages, suspicion, spying, and surveillance, with party loyalty trumping every other affiliation. Kata's father lies around their cramped apartment in depression. His factory, which was restored to him for a short time after the war, has been confiscated, and he is forced to attend indoctrination sessions to avoid being persecuted as an enemy of the Party. On the other hand, Kata's mother remains strong. She supports the family by secretly sewing stuffed bears and purses to sell on the black market. Kata's teachers have been replaced by "comrades," and her friend Eva is forced by her opportunistic father into becoming a member of the Young Pioneers. Bela, the big brother Kata idolizes, is always off on secret expeditions and eventually, news arrives that he has escaped first to Vienna and then to the United States. Kata's mother is relieved, while Kata feels that Bela has betrayed her. The narrative is told from an eleven-year-old's perspective and as the plot develops, the character of Kata does, too. At first bewildered by the atmosphere of fear and political coercion that surrounds her at home and at school, she comes to understand, to be more tolerant of her parents and friends, and to become quite adept at avoiding the eye of Big Brother. Even her petulant demands for a stuffed bear of her own are replaced by a realization that the bears are not

merely toys but a means of future escape. Kata's family is Jewish and, while her experiences during the Holocaust are portrayed in flashbacks (printed in italics), there is very little other Jewish content to this story of an assimilated Hungarian family. Both the Holocaust and Communist rule are portrayed obliquely, through the eyes, accumulated experiences, and gradual insights of a child. The writing is expert, with superb characterization, a masterful control of plot, and a setting not often found in children's books. A previous novel by Cheng, also based on her own family, is *Marika*, which was controversial in some Jewish circles for its portrayal of Hungarian Jews who had converted to Christianity in the mistaken idea that this would protect them from the Nazis. Despite *The Bear Makers's* lack of strong Jewish content, it makes for compelling reading and is recommended for all libraries.

Heather Lenson, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH

Jules, Jacqueline. *Benjamin and the Silver Goblet*. Illus. by Natascia Ugliano. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 32 p. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-8757-6. Gr. 1 - 4. Reviewed from a galley.

What happens to younger brothers? Retelling the emotional climax of Joseph's story from the angle of the naive youngest creates a new focus and arouses tender feelings. Benjamin does not understand why he cannot go to Egypt. His brothers return home with grain and without Simon, in jail pending proof they are not spies. This proof is Benjamin; they must return to Egypt with him. Benjamin is on a great lark until he overhears his brothers discussing their punishment for hurting Joseph. Now Benjamin is scared. In Egypt, the great manager, thrilled with him, hosts a banquet. Returning home, they are stopped for stealing a silver goblet discovered in Benjamin's bag. The brothers' offers to sacrifice themselves instead drive Joseph to a tearful declaration of identity.

Remorse, repentance and love merge in this familiar, dramatic tale. Benjamin is as innocent as the targeted readers; his voice stirs immediate interest and empathy in the picture book crowd. Author Jules retells the Bible story with peppy dialogue exposing brotherly rivalry and love. Young readers discover the devastating secret when Benjamin does. They share Benjamin's tension-filled duality: fear of abandonment alternating with security from doting protectiveness. The plot rests on brotherly declamations from JPS's translation of *Tanach*, with the order of some statements rearranged to include Benjamin. The art gives each brother his own individuality. Active scenes in muted earth tones mimic the warmth and depth of the story. One small error: Joseph eats at the banquet with his brothers when Genesis (44:32) says he did not. Despite this, the text is so engaging, the characters so involving, the volume, with its three-hanky ending, is highly recommended.

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



Levine, Anna. *Freefall*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 2008. 256 p. \$16.99. ISBN: 878-0-06-157654-6. Gr. 7 – 9.

For a detail-rich view of an 18-year-old Israeli girl's life, this novel fills the bill. Aggie Jacobs bounces from her family to her old chums to a potential boyfriend to her new friends from combat boot camp as she examines her own options, desires, and fears at the quintessentially Israeli stage between high school and IDF service. Is she tough enough for a combat unit? How will she (and her parents) handle the danger? What should her contribution be to strengthen Israel's fragile security?

Aggie is admirable and spunky. In her world, we observe the diversity (e.g., Ethiopian, Moroccan, and Kurdish Jews) and normalcy (e.g., basketball games, pop music, math tests, and parties) of contemporary Israeli society. Through Aggie and her family and friends, we see that Israelis are tough and loyal. They are all "in it" together, whether they are baking brownies for soldiers, doing alternative service, saving stranded animals in wartime, planning a wedding in a bomb shelter, or serving in the paratrooper or entertainment corps. While the characters are mostly 18-year-olds, this book is also appropriate for middle school readers because of its wholesome messages and easy writing style.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Lieberman, Leanne. *Gravity*. Victoria, BC: Orca, 2008. 130 p. \$14.95. ISBN: 978-1-55469-049-7. Gr. 9 – 12.

Ellie Gold is a teenager suffering more than the average degree of angst. Her parents embrace an Orthodox Judaism and she is well schooled in the strict prohibitions prescribed therein. Although she sincerely performs all the religious rituals and duties, Ellie is also painfully aware of her sexual attraction to a certain young woman, something she knows in an "abomination." During summer vacation with her liberal grandmother in a secluded lake area, she meets and falls in love (rather, lust) with Lindsay. Their encounters evoke conflict and desire, as she prays to be "normal."

Back in the city and into the school year the two begin to meet clandestinely and intimately indulge themselves, but all the while Ellie struggles with her terrible secret. It's not until Lindsay reveals a seriously disturbing side of herself that Ellie can renounce this relationship. However, the awful contradiction remains—how does one reconcile homosexuality with Orthodoxy? How does Ellie find herself and sort out all the pulling in opposite directions, the shame and the joy, the self-punishment and the celebration?

Ellie is a compelling character who meets her dilemma honestly and directly, though not publicly. Her search for answers is alternately enhanced and thwarted by her mother's passion for spirituality, her father's rigidity, and her sister's rejection of all things Jewish, including a belief in God. Author Leanne Lieberman presents an accurate description of a teen's pain and anguish by creating such an intelligent protagonist. Ellie is fascinated by science, and it's her love and knowledge of nature that ultimately allows her to reconcile the diverse directions of her life. Lieberman writes with compassion, humanity, sensuality, and a rich appreciation of the mind of a very bright young woman.

Explicit sexuality occurs throughout the story.

Etta D. Gold, Temple Beth Am, Miami, FL

Weber, Elka. *The Yankee at the Seder*. Illus. by Adam Gustavson. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press, 2009. 40 p. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-1-58246-256-1. Gr. 2 – 4.

Just in time for the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth and Passover arrives a delicious story of a Jewish soldier in the Civil War. The war is, literally, just over on the day before Passover. Virginians are terrified of the Northern troops patrolling their streets. Jews in the victorious army receive leave to find a seder. Corporal Levy finds a Jewish home when he spies a young boy munching matzah on his front porch. The boy pines to be "The Defiant Rebel." To his horror, his mother invites the Yankee to their seder where discussions of slavery and evil government occur. These themes are fluidly tied to the Bible, 19th-century history, and the traditional injunction, "Let all who are hungry come and eat." The soldier proves his gratitude the following year when life is even harder in the South by sending the necessities for seder observance to his hosts.

History, text, art are excellent and engaging. Full of delightful humor, this story ponders good character and the meaning of freedom. A divisive war and a hated peace underlie a book that soars to a hopeful ending. Co-religionists overlook their political differences; they seek what unites rather than divides them, providing a valuable world view. The young corporal's actions and the boy's dreams mesh into a moving definition of courage. This charming vignette is based on Levy's tale to his family, repeated by his niece in a letter to a respected rabbi and Civil War historian. A "hearsay" history like the 2007 Sydney Taylor Award Winner *Hanukkah at Valley Forge*, this book is more lighthearted. Sophisticated art supports the warm, involving text. People and setting look real and believable. The quiet, earthy tones, dominated by greys and browns, are perfectly suited to a war story. Dynamic scenes capture gestures and actions; many illustrations break their frame to add edge. The slim volume makes you smile as you absorb moral behavior and accurate American history. I recommend it very highly.

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

BIBLE

Blitz, Shmuel. *ArtScroll Children's Tehillim*. Illus. by Tova Katz. New York: Mesorah, 2008. 96 p. \$17.99. ISBN: 1-4226-0751-8. Gr. 4 – 8.

In child-friendly translation, with clarifications in parentheses, these selected psalms praise and thank G-d. An introduction to each psalm summarizes its subject, and "A Closer Look" and "Did You Know?" boxed sections offer historical and observance notes, or point out how the psalm relates to a child's life. Intended for Orthodox children, difficult and perhaps frightening concepts are addressed in the psalms and comments. For example, themes include persecution, disease, death, enemies, war, rebellion, exile, destruction, and pain. When King David is sick, it is because G-d is punishing him. A snake doesn't kill a person; the snake is a messenger sent by G-d to punish someone. Even the Babylonians and Romans are said to have been doing G-d's will, i.e., the Jewish people's sins result in their persecution. On the other hand, tehillim are intended to comfort one in difficult

times, and the book's themes also include trust, faith, rescue, deliverance, gratitude, safety, hope, and love. But non-Orthodox contemporary children may find it hard to see in tehillim "a Jew's closest friend" as the publisher claims on the rear cover. The illustrations have a dated, 1950s quality, especially the little boy and little girl in the boxed explanations.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Cohen, Deborah Bodin. *Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim.* Illus. by Jago. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 31 p. \$17.95. ISBN 978-0-8225-8764-4. Reviewed from an advance reader's copy. Kdg. – Gr. 3.

Based on midrash, this picture book tells the story of Nachshon, a brave Israelite slave whose only fear is of water. When Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt, Nachshon faces and overcomes his fear, stepping into the Sea of Reeds as Pharaoh's army approaches, leading to the miracle of the parting of the sea. The subtitle of the book is "A Passover Story" but the main theme of the story is facing your fears, making it suitable for year-round use. Some familiarity with the traditional Exodus story and the ten plagues will make this book easier for readers to understand. Cohen's text is lyrical and carefully crafted; it almost has the cadence of live storytelling. Jago's illustrations, too, are skillfully created in a flat, opaque style. Somehow, though, text and graphics do not combine smoothly. The illustrative style is perhaps too cartoony, and the faces not expressive enough, to truly support a story about emotions. That said, this unique approach to the Passover story with its universal message will be a welcome addition to any Judaic collection serving children grades K-3.

Heidi Estrin, Congregation B'nai Israel, Boca Raton, FL

Rouss, Sylvia. *The Littlest Fish.* Illus. by Carlos Avalone. New York: Pitspopany Press, 2008. 32 p. \$12.95. ISBN: 978-1-934440-53-7.

The Littlest Fish, written in rhyme, "went swimming one day, in search of a friend with whom he could play." He asks a jellyfish, an octopus, a crab and a shark if they would like to play with him but each sea creature stares at him menacingly and threatens to eat him, so the littlest fish wisely swims away. Finally he meets a very large fish with a tummy ache. The littlest fish, who conveniently has a flashlight attached to his head, offers to swim inside the big fish to see what is causing him such pain. Inside he finds Jonah, who briefly tells the littlest fish the story of how he got there. The littlest fish tells Jonah, "If you'll do God's command them I'm sure I can get you onto dry land," so they decide to work together to escape. The octopus, jellyfish, crab, and shark are also trapped inside the large sea creature. They wiggle and giggle until the large sea creature spits them out with a large burp. Everyone is happy and suddenly the littlest fish has found friends who want to play with him, because he showed them the "meaning of friendship and caring." The word Jewish does not appear in this book. The story of Jonah is told so briefly that anyone not already familiar with the story would not know that Jonah is a biblical character. The book does not teach any Jewish values. Are the sea creatures Jewish? Is the littlest fish Jewish? Carlos Avalone's full-page color illustrations are beautiful and add interest and excitement to a bland text.

Recommended for libraries that collect all of the books in this series by the author.

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

BIOGRAPHY

McClafferty, Carla Killough. *In Defiance of Hitler: The Secret Mission of Varian Fry.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008. 196 p. \$19.95. ISBN: 978-0-374-38204-9.

The exploits of Varian Fry have remained underground. His saga has only surfaced in the past few years. Nonetheless, Fry's story in its depth and fascination is equal to that of Chiune Sugihara's and Oskar Schindlers. As a college student at Harvard in the 1920s, Fry joined with Lincoln Kirstein to found the literary journal *Hound and Horn*. After graduation in 1931 he became a magazine writer, and joined the well-known journal *The Living Age*. In 1935 he took a three-month trip to Europe, to see the impact of Nazi rule in Germany. While there he witnessed an anti-Semitic riot in Berlin. In 1940, after the Nazi Blitz had overrun France, the Emergency Rescue Committee was formed in New York by Americans wishing to save European intellectuals and others. They recruited Fry to go to France and work on two levels. The first was to operate within the law and provide documents for refugees who wanted to emigrate. In this role he helped hundreds of people, including Nobel-winning chemist Otto Meyerhof, pianist Wanda Landowska, and writer Thomas Mann, move to the United States. His second responsibility was to smuggle Jews and others who could not acquire visas across the border into Spain, and ultimately to Portugal. This secret mission saved dozens of Jews, including artists Jacques Lipchitz, Max Ernst, and Marc Chagall, and some of their artwork as well. Fry worked with a small band of dedicated associates for over a year, providing shelter, documents, and funding for more than a thousand people on their way out of Nazi Europe. Like the brave deeds of Sugihara and Schindler, Fry's accomplishments need to be recognized. This book for pre-teens provides excellent coverage, without descending into melodrama. It should be considered for all school and synagogue libraries, as well as colleges that cover Holocaust studies and America's role in the Shoah. Bibliography and index.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

FICTION

Alma, Ann. *Brave Deeds: How One Family Saved Many from the Nazis.* Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2008. 94 p. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-88899-791-3. Gr. 4 – 8.

Short, compelling reading, *Brave Deeds* is a fictional account of a real-life, heroic, compassionate Dutch couple, the Braals, who, as conscientious objectors, hid Jews and others hunted by the Nazis, forged documents, and fed and warmed hundreds of people in the countryside outside of Rotterdam during World War II. The story is told with the point of view and authentic voice of an unnamed, fictional child (representing "all children who go through

war”), who lives with the couple while her parents are in hiding elsewhere, presumably for their Resistance activities. While the threats, fear, and deprivations are real, there is no overt violence. The author even shares charming details about the games, skits, presentations, food preparation, and outdoor play that keep the children entertained. The Jewish content is minimal, but one of the hidden children is identified as Jewish, and one can imagine other Jews living under similar conditions in Holland in 1944-45. In an epilogue, the author discusses the fate of Dutch Jews under Nazi occupation. Canadian Jewish war veterans planted 50 trees in Israel in honor of the Braals. The book is based on the memories of Mies Braal and includes photos from her personal archives. It would be an excellent companion to *The Diary of Anne Frank* and other narratives of hidden children such as *The Lily Cupboard* by Shulamith Oppenheim and *The Key Is Lost* by Ida Vos.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Altein, Chani. *Shining Star*. New York: Judaica Press, 2008. 240 p. \$18.95. ISBN: 978-1-932443-85-1. Gr. 4 – 7.

In the Weiss family, it appears that everyone is accomplished in some way—except Adina. Constantly feeling overshadowed by her brothers and sister, Adina decides—after hearing a cousin refer to her as a “sweetie” with no special talents—to devote herself to finding a way to shine. She confides in her cousin, Dassy, and the two girls embark on a chesed project to visit a younger student, Gili, afflicted with a heart condition in the hospital. Tentative at first, Adina soon becomes attached to Gili and is inspired by her courage. This friendship, combined with other experiences such as competing in a Brachos Bee and studying about great Jewish women, allows Adina to realize that the special qualities she already has make her a star. Chani Altein’s novel is a warm and engaging depiction of an American Orthodox community. Girls of all levels of observance, especially if they have numerous siblings, will find Adina to be a likeable character and will relate to her struggle to allow her best qualities to shine at home and among her peers. Readers unfamiliar with the Orthodox community are aided by a glossary that defines all Hebrew and Yiddish terms. A must for libraries that serve Orthodox communities and recommended as a supplemental purchase for libraries where there is an interest in the Orthodox lifestyle and learning.

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

Brown, Jason Robert and Dan Elish. *13: A Novel*. New York: Laura Geringer Books/HarperCollins, 2008. 201 p. \$15.99. ISBN 978-0-06-078749-3. Gr. 6 – 8.

Do you remember what it was like to be 13 and preparing for your bar or bat mitzvah? Do you remember the pressure to perform in school, or in the social scene, and for your parents? Well, Evan Goldman is having a very hard time. It is three months before his bar mitzvah, his mom and dad have just separated, and now he has to move from posh New York City to Appleton, Indiana. Evan learns that there are no Jews in Appleton, so nobody even knows what a bar mitzvah is. While his dad remains in New York City and dates a young flight attendant, Evan and his mom go nuts as they try to start all over again. In Appleton, Evan wants to be “cool” and make friends but unfortunately it isn’t so easy

when your nickname is “the brain.” This is quick, easy, and fun reading about the emotional ups and downs of being a teenager and becoming a man. The authors, Jason Robert Brown and Dan Elish, who also collaborated on the musical *13*, use humor and a wholesome moral outlook to portray peer pressure, life lessons, and learning to accept others for who they really are.

Lisa Katz, Lefferts Jewish Community Library, San Rafael, CA

Fox, Beverly Fried. *The Homesteader Bride*. Chicago: TreeMother Design, 2008, no ISBN. Contact: www.treemother.com. Gr. 4 – 8.

The late Beverly Fried Fox based her novel, subtitled “A Journey to the North Dakota Prairie,” on the diary of Rachel Calof, a Jewish 18-year-old, and on the reminiscences of her descendants and acquaintances. Rachel documents her travels from Eastern Europe alone as a mail-order bride for Jacob, whose family ventured from the East Coast to farm on the vast, lonely plains. Far from the Jewish community, they manage to keep kosher, make their own wine, and celebrate Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah. Rachel and Jacob form a loving family despite his mother’s superstitions, infrequent contact with relatives left behind, snakes, hard work, and fear of Indian attacks. Both Rachel and Jacob are kind, considerate, resourceful, hardworking, and self-deprecating. This unusual immigration story is simply written and, unlike many current books for this age group, contains absolutely no objectionable storylines. Therefore, it is particularly appropriate for Orthodox girls.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Ganz, Yaffa. *Four in One! Four Favorites by Yaffa Ganz*. Illus. by Harvey Klineman. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2008. Unpaged. \$24.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-183-7. Gr. 1 – 3.

This is a clever repackaging of previously published short books by a very popular author, the creator of the Savta Simcha series, making them available for a new generation. The books were published between 1987 and 1990 and each one tells a good story in a child-friendly style and contains a message. The contents include “The Gift that Grew,” a story with an environmental message encouraging us to preserve fruit trees, presented as the mitzvah of not destroying trees unnecessarily (bal tashchit); “Yedidya and the Esrog Tree,” about a small boy in Australia who makes history by growing his own etrog tree; “Me and My Bubby, My Zeidy and Me,” about loving relationships between the generations; and “Teasers, Twisters, and Stumpers,” a collection of Torah riddles, organized by level of difficulty, that would be useful in the classroom. All are illustrated in a simple yet appropriate style by Harvey Klineman. There is no pagination for the entire book and there is no title page or table of contents for this new edition. Where appropriate, a glossary follows at the end of the story with Hebrew words that appear in the text. Excellent as a read-to for ages four to seven, and for independent readers from six to nine. The appeal of the stories is not limited to Orthodox audiences, as each has a message for all Jewish children.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood NJ



Guttentag, Deborah. *In The Dark.* Southfield, MI: Targum Press, 2008. \$22.99. ISBN: 978-1-568-71-470-7. Gr. 7 – 10.

The impact of the Nazi regime was felt throughout Europe. Even those families that managed to escape the horrors of the camps suffered in other ways. In the cities of England many parents sent their children to live in the country in order to protect them from bombs. For Jewish families, this was a particular hardship because the children were often sent to non-Jewish families and had to struggle to keep up with their religious practices. This time in history provides the setting for *In The Dark*, a chilling, thrilling mystery that captures the essence of the era in a tangled web of a page-turning tale.

Young Rochel and her little brother Daniel become borders in the home of Miss Darwen, a school teacher who lives in a rundown estate. While most of the other children find comfort in the homes of friendly families in the farming community, Miss Darwen is mysterious and unpredictable. At times she seems harsh, others warm and accepting. She encourages Rochel to draw, but keeps her isolated from friends. Just as Rochel begins to grow attached to Miss Darwen, it is time to return home. At home, her parents seem worried and her mother is short-tempered. When bombings occur, the children are sent back to Miss Darwen. Rochel begins to suspect Miss Darwen is hiding a dark secret, and in the end it is Rochel who solves a shocking mystery about Miss Darwen's real motivations. In the face of the trauma and discord, Rochel is a proud Jewish girl who does all she can to maintain a Jewish life for herself and her brother. Despite her fear, she stands up to Miss Darwen when her beliefs are challenged. She is an ordinary girl in an extraordinary situation—a believable, likeable heroine. Librarians, both secular and Judaic, should have this book on their shelves. Historical facts are deftly intertwined in a compelling story of intrigue and suspense that will have readers' hearts racing.

Barbara Bietz, Oak Park, CA

Another View

During World War II, German-Jewish refugee children Rochel and Daniel are sent for their safety to the village of Burroclough, outside of Liverpool, as English cities come under attack. They are taken in by stern, moody Miss Darwen, who grudgingly allows them to continue their Jewish observances. Mystery and secrets surround Miss Darwen's old house, and she goes out nightly, leaving the children alone. It turns out that Miss Darwin and her brother are anti-Semitic spies, saboteurs, and traitors. Rochel wants to please Miss Darwen and is afraid of her, but in the end she is the one who discovers and reveals their evil deeds. While it is suspenseful, the story is too wordy and drawn out—it could have been better told in a third the number of pages—and the Jewish content is minimal. Includes historical background information and a timeline.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Katz, Carolyn Falk. *The Peddler: A Tale of the American Dream.* Illus. by Nel Slaughter. Published by the author, 2008. (Printed by Mississippi State University Printing Services). 21 p. \$7.99. ISBN 978-0-615-22259-2 Pbk. Gr. 2 – 4.

Jewish life in the American south has not often been featured in children's literature and this small book attempts to remedy

that situation. Based on the true story of the author's father-in-law, it is a coming-to-America from Eastern Europe story, complete with the kind Jewish peddler traveling from town to town with his horse and buggy. The somewhat unusual twist has this peddler settling in Mississippi and eventually opening his own general store in 1904. Illustrations are in pastel colors and are somewhat dreamy in quality, not exciting enough to entice child readers.

Recommended as an independent read for third to fourth grade, but as a read-to, particularly in the classroom, for any elementary school child.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood NJ

Matas, Carol. *The Freak III: Far.* Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2008. 152 p. \$7.95. ISBN: 1-55470-094-9 Pbk. Gr. 6 – 8.

The third book in the author's "The Freak" series brings 15-year-old psychic Jade on vacation with her family in southern California. In addition to fun in the sun with Baba, her Jewish grandmother, Jade is tested by the staff of a local university with a department in "anomalous knowing," i.e., psychic studies, to determine the power and range of her ability to hear things, see things, and know things, as well as to read others' thoughts and see the future, albeit unclearly. She also communicates with her Zaida in her dreams. Jade wants to understand her powers better: Do her messages come from G-d? If she can predict the future, what becomes of free will? Can unseen things be real? Even though the story raises religious questions such as these, this face-paced, readable, suspenseful story has minimal Jewish content. Its weaknesses lie in its tendency to be melodramatic and in the presence of several unlikely scenarios. Its strengths lie in Jade's believable character, the scary predicament with a dangerous university student, her relationships with her high school friends and boyfriend, her kind and supportive family, and the central role of e-mailing, texting, and social networking in teenage life. In this book, Jade's psychic powers are revealed to her peers. In future books, it will be interesting to see if she follows her Baba's advice and uses her special skills to help them.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

O'Connell, Rebecca. *Penina Levine is a Potato Pancake.* Illus. by Majella Lue Sue. New York: Roaring Book Press, 2008. 135 p. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-59643-213-0. Reviewed from an advance review copy. Gr. 3 – 5.

Penina Levine returns for a Hanukkah prequel to *Penina Levine is a Hard-Boiled Egg*. Unfortunately, she lacks the spunk and humor that she possessed previously. Instead, she is portrayed as a whiny, emotional character who cries easily over frustrations, most involving her parents and little sister. Although Penina is supposed to be eleven years old, her concerns and interests seem more typical of an eight or nine year-old. For example, she is devastated when her teacher, Mrs. Brown, leaves school mid-year, something more likely to affect primary grade children rather than peer-oriented pre-adolescents. She is also upset that her best friend is going to Aruba over winter vacation and won't be around to play with her. Even her interest in making crafts such as snowflakes seems young for an eleven-year-old. The story revives a little when Penina's grandmother visits because she comforts Penina by telling her about her prickly relationship

Jewish Lights Ad

with Penina's mother, which is similar to the one that causes Penina so much resentment and so many tears. Set before and during Hanukkah, with a strong emphasis on getting presents, the minor Jewish content is delivered mostly by Grandma, who sprinkles her words of wisdom with Yiddish. Majella Lue Sue's illustrations add to the age disconnect. Penina is drawn as an adorable child with dark curly hair and an olive complexion who looks about nine. In fact, the simplicity of the writing and pictorial styles make this disappointing story an appropriate chapter book for primary grade children.

Heather Lenson, *Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH*

Polak, Monique. *What World is Left*. Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 2008. 215 p. \$12.95. ISBN: 978-1-55143-847-4 Pbk. Gr. 6 - 10.

Anneke arrives in Theresienstadt at the age of fourteen with her parents and younger brother. Living in cramped, unsanitary quarters, battling bed bugs and lice, scrubbing huge caldrons in the diet kitchen, and living off of watered down soup, she is repeatedly told that she is one of the lucky ones. For Theresienstadt, the Nazi's "model city" designed to dupe the Danish Red Cross and the rest of the world into believing that the Jews are prospering in the concentration camps, is not a death camp. As long as her father can keep their family's name off the transport lists, their chances of survival are greatly increased. But what does Anneke's father, a Dutch artist and well-known cartoonist, do to insure his family's safety? Do his propaganda drawings and his involvement in the production of a propaganda film help the Nazis to perpetuate their lies? And, does his teenage daughter have the right to question his decisions? Based on her mother's experiences, Monique Polak presents an emotionally honest and gripping account of a young girl's experiences in Theresienstadt. She expertly integrates historical facts, figures, and events such as the Painters' Affair, the Embellishment, the opera *Brundibar*, the filmmaker Kurt Geron, and Rabbi Leo Baeck, and includes an author's note, bibliography, and list of Web sites. Pair with *Fireflies in the Dark: The Story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and the Children of Terezin* and *The Cat With The Yellow Star: Coming of Age in Terezin*, both by Susan Goldman Rubin, and *Hana's Suitcase* by Karen Levine, for a more detailed, fictionalized account of life in Theresienstadt. It should be noted that Anneke is sexually assaulted by a Nazi officer and has a brief romance with an older man.

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

Walfish, Miriam. *Into the Fire*. New York: Judaica Press, 2008. 262 p. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-1-932443-96-7. Gr. 7 - 12.

"Kol Yisrael arevim aeh l'zeh" (All of Israel are responsible for each other) is one of many fundamental Jewish and human values that are central themes in Miriam Walfish's book. It is a historical novel about two young, Jewish boys during World War I. The specific period is July 1916 to September 1917 in London, England and Salonika, Greece. Daniel Sheinfeld and eleven of his Jewish friends from London's East End, enlist together, as Orthodox Jews, in the British Army. At the same time, in Salonika, Greece, the eleven year old orphan Gavriel Florentin is put into The Allatini Orphanage for Jewish Boys. He is to

wait there until he can secure passage to England where he is to join his aunt and uncle. The plot is engrossing and shifts from London to Salonika, from the Western front to the Eastern front. Of particular interest is the researched information about the frum (observant) Jewish soldiers who participated in WWI, their condition, and those who helped them. The book includes a useful glossary of terms in Ladino, Yiddish, and Hebrew and an Author's Note that provides interesting historical facts. Walfish treats the subject of military service for observant Jews with sensitivity and eloquence. *Into the Fire* shows how Jewish wisdom and faith guides Jews to moral, constructive life for the benefit of klal Yisrael and humanity at large. This is a good book for teenagers to read, absorb, and apply to contemporary life, be it in Israel or in the Diaspora. It is a worthwhile addition to day schools, synagogue, and public libraries.

Nira Wolfe, *Oak Park, IL*

Another View

It is July 1916, and two religious Jewish boys, one in London and one in Salonika, are about to see their lives change forever. With a group of his Jewish friends, Daniel, age 19, signs up to be a British soldier in World War II and is sent to Salonika. Gavriel, age 11, has lost his parents and is sent to a Jewish orphanage. His dream is to get passage on a British ship to England where he will find his aunt and uncle in Leeds. Predictably, Daniel and Gavriel meet in Salonika, Gavriel helps Daniel when he is hospitalized with pneumonia, Daniel saves Gavriel's life in a fire, the two travel together to England, and Daniel's little sister makes the connection between Gavriel and his English family who have been searching for him. This work of historical fiction offers details of period Jewish life in London and Salonika as well as the horrors of World War I, but it is too wordy, the writing is lackluster, and the plot lacks suspense.

Susan Berson, *Denver, CO*

Walfish, Miriam. *Penina's Plan. Jewish Girls Around the World Series*. Illus. by Louise Poulson. New York: Judaica Press, 2008. 160 p. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-60763-001-2. Gr. 3 - 5.

This is a sweet, wholesome, somewhat contrived story about too-good-to-be-true sisters—Penina, age 9, and Shoshanna, age 12—who enjoy a well-to-do life in 19th-century London. Members of a successful Sephardic family, they have a nanny, butler, cook, governess, coachman, and other servants. Descriptions of their family life give some insight into Sephardic life at that time, with contrasting views of impoverished Eastern European immigrants in the East End. When Penina is suddenly exposed to the difficulties other children face, she hatches a plan to give poor children the clothes she and her sister no longer need or wear. Despite her father's desire to protect her from "unpleasantness," spunky Penina persists and wins over her widowed father, nanny, and abuela (grandmother). The story, which is the first in a "Jewish Girls Around the World" series, extols the Jewish virtues of kindness, modesty, patience, tzedakah, prayer, and compassion.

Susan Berson, *Denver, CO*



Weilerstein, Sadie Rose. *Ten and a Kid*. Revised edition. Lakewood, NJ: Israel Bookshop, 2008. 184 p. \$14.95. ISBN: 978-1-60091-055-5. Gr. 3 – 5.

Originally published in 1961, this is a slightly revised edition of a story about a family of eight children, two parents, and a goat that mysteriously appeared one Passover. Set in Lithuania, it is a heartwarming, somewhat romanticized, tale told in chapters of shtetl life in a bygone era. Trips occur via horse-drawn wagon, food is baked in a neighbor's oven, and extreme poverty does not bother any of the happy children in the family. An ambitious daughter who teaches herself to read and to learn Jewish studies with the boys, is an outstanding character. Pictures are updated, though still simple and in black and white, and continue to illustrate an old world setting. The font in this edition is clearer than in the earlier one. Yiddish and Hebrew words, which are sprinkled throughout the story, are defined and explained in a glossary at the end. This classic story is, unfortunately, outdated for contemporary juvenile readers. Recommended only for libraries in which the use of Hebrew and Yiddish terms would be appropriate or which collect vintage stories.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School, Englewood, NJ

Wiseman, Eva. *Puppet*. Plattsburg, NY: Tundra Books of Northern New York, 2009. 240 p. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-88776-828-6. Reviewed from an advance review copy. Gr.8 – 10.

Set in a Hungarian village in the late 1800s, Wiseman's newest novel deals with a case of blood libel. The cruelty of the story is unrelenting. It is told from the point of view of a teenage girl whose mother has died and whose brutish father has given her as a servant to the town jailer while he collects her wages. From her vantage point in the jail, Julie experiences first-hand the persecution of the town's Jews and the charge that several of them have murdered a missing girl, Julie's friend, in their synagogue and drained her blood for their Passover rituals. A Jewish boy about Julie's age is mentally and physically tortured into swearing, and eventually believing, that he witnessed such a crime, accusing his own father of being part of it. At their trial, the Jews are defended by a prominent Gentile lawyer from Budapest and in a suspenseful climax, Julie, despite a beating from her father to discourage her, comes forth with testimony that clears the Jews of any crime. She gets little thanks for this because almost everyone connected with the story is a vicious anti-Semite, including the pathetic Jewish boy—the puppet of the title—who has been brainwashed into renouncing Judaism and declaring himself a Christian. Morris Scharf is the boy's name and he was an actual figure in the case, which took place in Tisza-Eszlar, Hungary in 1883. Like all of Wiseman's fiction, this is well written, with a gripping, fast-moving plot and intensely real characters. However, it lacks one essential element: motivation for the characters' anti-Semitism. A curious teenage reader who has not yet learned about the history of Christian anti-Semitism may find this hatred puzzling and wonder what the Jews did to cause it. That and the graphic brutality of the story would make one hesitant to recommend it.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH



FOLKLORE AND LEGEND

Lazarus, Ashley. *Of Heaven & Earth: Stories of the Chassidic Masters*. Illus. by Devora Levenberg. Jerusalem: Mahrwood Press, 2008. 56p. \$18.95. ISBN: 978-1-58330-953-7. Gr. 3 – 6.

Of Heaven & Earth: Stories of the Chassidic Masters is a graphic novel that tells brief stories of Chassidic rebbes. Included are the Ba'al Shem Tov, The Maggid of Mezeritch, Reb Zusha of Anipoli, and Rev Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. This volume is the third book in a series published with the cooperation of The Destiny Foundation. The other books in the series are *Rambam* and *Rashi Hakadosh*. The text and illustrations have been certified by the Va'ad HaKashruth for Sefarm (certifying agency for books) as being "Kosher, fitting and proper to read." After the Haskamah, written in both Hebrew and English, Rabbi Berel Wein introduces the book by giving a brief history of Jewish storytelling and Chasidus. The colorful graphics, printed on shiny paper, complement the text. Devora Levenberg's depiction of Reb Zusha's sweet and smiling face is especially pleasing. The reader needs an elementary knowledge of several common Hebrew words such as bracha, tzedakah, and Hashem to fully understand the text. *Of Heaven & Earth*, appropriate for ages 8-12 is recommended for libraries whose patrons want an authentic glimpse into the joy and kindness exemplified by Chassidic rebbes.

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

Olson, Arielle North and Howard Schwartz. *More Bones: Scary Stories From Around the World*. Illus. by E.M. Cist. New York: Viking, 2008. 162 p. \$15.99. ISBN:978-0-670-06339-0. Gr. 3 – 7.

Not for the faint of heart, this collection of stories—a sequel to *Ask the Bones*—will find an enthusiastic audience, especially among boys. On the front cover, a one-eyed skull placed among books on a shelf ensures that this book will not stay on the shelf for long. Spooky black-and-white illustrations are a rich complement to the book's 22 stories about ghosts, werewolves, witches, and other ghastly spirits. The stories are short, often with spine-tingling endings, and would be wonderful to read aloud or tell. At the end of the book, there is an annotated list of the stories' sources showing six of them to be of Jewish origin. The six stories themselves lack even a suggestion of Jewish content, unfortunately, so *More Bones* is a marginal purchase for Judaic libraries.

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

Thong, Rosanne. *Wish: Wishing Traditions Around the World*. Illus. by Elisa Kleven. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2008. 36 p. \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-8118-5716-1. Grades 2 – 5.

Why do we make wishes on birthday candles or dandelion clocks? This book rounds up wishing traditions from fifteen countries, including Israel, where the notes tucked into the Western Wall are described as wishes rather than prayers. Gorgeous full-color spreads portray the various exotic settings with architectural and floral abundance, smiling children, and commendable diversity, including a mix of skin-tones where appropriate and even a child in a wheelchair (see Japan). A rhyming introduction to each wish tradition is followed by a prose explanation, with additional snippets of information for

each country collected at the back of the book. The inclusion of Israel is not enough to make this a Jewish book. However, it is a lovely multicultural book that will attract children who enjoy a touch of the mystical. An additional purchase for large Jewish collections.

Heidi Estrin, Congregation B'nai Israel, Boca Raton, FL

GOD

Tutu, Bishop Desmond, and Douglas Carlton Abrams. *God's Dream*. Illus. by LeUyen Pham. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick, 2008. 36 p. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-7636-3388-2. Preschool.

"Dear Child of God, What do you dream about in your loveliest of dreams?" the authors ask, providing several examples of children's dreams and then going on to describe God's dreams, among which are children sharing, caring, playing together, and forgiving one another. A mixed message confuses when the text first states that "God does not force us to be friends or to love one another" (an odd sentiment coming from a Christian cleric) but later says that "when we love one another, the pieces of God's heart are made whole." The flat writing style fluctuates as well, ranging from nursery usage like "mommies and daddies" to the adult concept of "being treated like a full person." Perhaps inconsistencies don't matter except to the pickiest of reviewers in so ecumenical, multicultural, and politically correct of picture books, written by a celebrity anti-Zionist Anglican bishop who is also a Nobel laureate, aided by a co-author who works with "visionary authors to create a wiser, healthier, and more just world." Little children of all races and many ethnic backgrounds are featured in the inviting, full-page color illustrations by the versatile LeUyen Pham. Recognizably Jewish tots and symbols are absent from them however, except for one double-page spread that shows a little boy wearing a kippah and a prayer shawl. There are several books of stronger Jewish content that convey a similar message so *God's Dream* is unnecessary for Jewish libraries.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

HISTORY

Landau, Elaine. *Ellis Island. A True Book*. New York: Children's Press, 2008. 48 p. \$26.00. ISBN: 978-0-531-12631-8. Gr. 2 - 4.

Both the juvenile genealogist and the young historian will uncover many useful facts and interesting statistics between the boldly colored covers of Elaine Landau's *Ellis Island*. Primary-school-age scholars will learn the main reasons their ancestors emigrated to America, the details of the ocean passage, the physical layout of Ellis Island, the step-by-step immigration process, and the effect immigration quotas had on the facility. Archival and contemporary photographs are liberally sprinkled throughout the easy-to-read text. The book also includes a short timeline providing a brief history of the immigration center, a map depicting emigration flows, a bibliography for further reading, a glossary of bold-faced words, an index, and a list of organizations and Web sites from which to obtain more informa-

tion. Judaic librarians will welcome this fresh and updated book about the historical site that played an important role in many Jewish-American families.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

HOLIDAYS

Berman, Seryl. *Around the Shabbos Table*. Illus. by Ari Binus. New York: Hachai, 2009. 36 p. \$10.95. ISBN: 978-1-929628-44-5. Preschool - Gr. 2.

Tova Leiba is everything her name implies. Excited by her father's return from synagogue Friday night, she good-heartedly accommodates each of her siblings' complaints about his or her chair at the table and switches with them. As she moves around the Shabbos table, she discovers how each new seat is the best place for her. Her positivity and optimism convey the warmth and spirituality she feels for her family and for Shabbat. Berman moves Tova Leiba around the table through the various traditional courses of a Shabbat dinner. From Kiddush, handwashing and challah, through gefilte fish, chicken soup, chicken, and kugel, Tova Leiba enjoys the cool air from the air conditioner, holding hands with her father as he sings, feeding her baby sister, and looking out the window. Her repeated refrain—"Here or there, in any chair, I'll be happy anywhere!"—draws young listeners and readers into the rhythm of the text and the values of the story. Sibling rivalry, family time, good-natured cooperation, and showing hospitality to guests are themes to which children of diverse backgrounds can relate. The names in the story (Tova Leiba, Bentzie, Yaakov), the reference to Shabbos (rather than Sabbath or Shabbat) and the details of Shabbat depicted in the pictures reflect the Orthodox background from whence the book is published. The pictures are bright, colorful, and full of rich, realistic details, and they communicate the bustle of activity (chaos?) at mealtime in a large family. *Around the Shabbos Table* has many elements to engage young readers and listeners ages 4-8, and is recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Deborah Abecassis, Montreal, QC

Fantastic Foto Hunt Pesach. *Fantastic Foto Hunt Series*. New York: Judaica Press, 2008. 36 p. \$11.50. ISBN: 978-1-932443-84-4. Kdg. - Gr. 3.

Fantastic Foto Hunt Pesach is the second in a new series whose first book is *Fantastic Foto Hunt Chanukah*. Readers are asked, in rhyme, to find ten changes and the afikoman in what appear to be identical photos on facing pages. Beneath each picture is one sentence describing a historical fact or Pesach symbol that rhymes with the sentence on the facing page. The differences in the photos are very difficult to find. Many of the objects or animals pictured differ only in color or orientation. A cleaning sponge may be blue on one page and pink on the facing page or a frog may be facing right on one page and facing left on the other. The rhymes are forced, for example: "Matzah covers come in a range of design. If you find all ten changes, you're doing just fine!" An answer key and a page describing Passover customs can be found at end of the book. The author and photographer responsible for the book are not credited. The beautiful colorful photographs are

printed on glossy paper. *Fantastic Foto Hunt Pesach*, appropriate for ages 5-8, is recommended for those librarians who liked the first in the series or as an alternate selection for other librarians. Readers must be somewhat familiar with the practices and customs of Pesach in order to understand this book.

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

Geller, Beverly Mach. *Ellie's Shabbat Surprise*. Illus. by S. Kim Glassman. Israel: Gefen Books, 2008. 32 p. \$13.95. ISBN: 978-965-229-390-9. Preschool – Gr. 1.

Six-year-old Ellie has a problem. Tomorrow she is supposed to be a soloist for her Shabbat group, but something is wrong with her voice. Although her Ima reassures her that her voice will be fine the next day, she devises a plan after her brother asks if she is going to sound like a goat or a lamb. Carrying a white costume in a bag, Ellie and her mother head to the Shabbat group. When it is her turn for the solo Ellie, dressed as a lamb declares, "Hashem loves all creatures, even lambs in the field. So I'm going to be a lamb today and sing my song to Hashem." Everyone in the audience cheered Ellie's Shabbat surprise. Geller's latest addition to the series of books about Ellie's family will charm and delight its readers. The engaging pictures and descriptive text bring to life Shabbat for Ellie's observant family in their Jerusalem neighborhood. The rituals of Shabbat are shown in a way that young children will easily understand. An afterword explains Shabbat and there is a glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish Words. Recommended for synagogue libraries and early childhood classroom use.

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

Gordon, Ellen. *A Verseful of Jewish Holidays*. Illus. by Avi Katz. Jerusalem: Mazo, 2008. 24 p. \$9.95. ISBN: 978-965-7344-47-7 Pbk. Preschool – Gr. 6.

A Verseful of Jewish Holidays brings together ballads and other types of poems representative of the joyous Jewish holidays of Passover, Lag B'Omer, Shavuot, Hanukkah, Tu B'Shvat, and Purim. Each poem tells a story involving the holidays where the characters provide the main interest. The illustrations by Avi Katz capture the best aspects of each poem. Katz's use of muted colors and softly drawn characters help the poems come alive. Different fonts are used in each poem thereby giving each a unique composition.

The first poem, "Passover Prattle," is a ballad, while most of the others are in rhyming couplets. Each poem is two to four pages long and may be tedious for the younger reader. The vocabulary is also more advanced and would be better understood by the readers ten years old and over. One particular poem, "The Tu B'Shvat Trees," is especially heartwarming. The story it tells has a wonderful environmental message and could even be used as a play. This book is a welcome addition to the holiday picture book collection and is recommended for teachers, parents, and synagogue libraries.

Tammy Gerson, Cohen Library, Athens, GA



Pfeiffer, Chaviva Krohn. *Maggid Stories for Children: Holidays Around the Year*. Illus. by Chani Stern. Maggid Stories for Children Series/Artscroll Youth Series. Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah, 2008. 48 p. \$4.99. ISBN: 1-4226-0648-1. Gr. 2 – 6.

This is the third volume in a series of stories culled by his daughter from the adult-level books by Rabbi Paysach Krohn called *Stories of the Maggid*. Each anecdote is very short and related to a particular Jewish holiday or Shabbat. The stories are set mostly in Israel or in towns in Europe before World War II; several are set in the United States. Each story teaches a moral or value for children to learn, such as respecting your elders, being kind to neighbors, or observing mitzvot. Examples of the mitzvot are keeping Shabbat, building a Sukkah, baking matzot, fasting on Yom Kippur, and listening to and obeying your rabbinic leaders. The tales, while moralistic, are written in an interesting style. Illustrations help to define the people and events covered in the narrative. This book could be used in schools or programs as a read-to for grades one through three and as independent reading for grades four through six.

Recommended mostly for children from Orthodox Jewish homes.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood NJ

HOLOCAUST

Haugen, Brenda. *The Holocaust Museum*. Minneapolis, MN: Compass Point Books, 2008. 48 p. \$16.60. ISBN: 978-0-7565-3357-1. Gr. 6 – 9.

Compass Point's public is middle school libraries and its aim is to explore historical and scientific topics for children. This volume is part of the "Modern America" sub-set of its "We the People" series, which deals with events in American and world history since 1890. The book has six chapters. The introductory section describes the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993. The next three parts describe the Holocaust itself, using photographs and narrative to describe Nazi Germany, the laws Jews lived under, and the concentration camps. Some of the topics of the photos are well-known (Kristallnacht, Auschwitz survivors), while others are a bit more esoteric. All of them are powerful and representative of the era and the Nazi horrors, but not too graphic for 4th graders. Chapter 5 tells about the creation of the museum itself, and describes some of the permanent exhibits (with photos). The final chapter discusses the museum's educational role.

Following the narrative are a glossary, a short list of resources, and a list of four "Important People": Anne Frank, Hitler, Raoul Wallenberg, and Elie Wiesel. This might be a useful title for a teacher to introduce the Shoah in a public school setting. Most Jewish libraries, however, both in schools and synagogues, have a wide selection of worthwhile children's books on the topic. This volume should be considered optional for all but the smallest libraries just starting to develop children's collections.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA



ISRAEL

Hall, John G. *The Palestinian National Authority. With additional text by Adam Woog.* 2nd edition. Creation of the Modern Middle East Series. New York: Chelsea House, 2009. 134 p. \$35.00. ISBN: 978-1-60413 020-1. Gr. 8 - 12.

Most trade books about the Arab-Israeli conflict dance around the subject of ultimate Arab goals. They write vaguely about justice for the Palestinians, or the desire for a Palestinian state, but omit specifics about what constitutes “justice” and what the borders of the Arab state might be. Not so this book by John Hall. He is clear that “from the beginning ... Arabs ... argued that the establishment of a Jewish state ... was ... illegitimate. (p. 81.) It doesn’t take much reading between the lines to see that the ultimate goal is to do away with Israel, and the author himself seems sympathetic: His belief is that “Israel is, by definition, a settler colony.” (p. 83). While it’s fine to align oneself openly with one side or another on an issue, there is still the two-fold obligation to convey information that is correct and factual and to give recognition to events that are significant to the historical account.

Regarding factual accuracy, one must question this author’s credentials when his account includes gross errors such as the statement that Muslims revere Jerusalem because “Moses is believed to have ascended to heaven on a miraculous night journey from the area of Solomon’s temple” (p. 14). It was Muhammad, not Moses, who, according to Muslim tradition, took the night journey through the sky. Or when he asserts that the Koran calls Palestine the “Holy Land” (p. 24). In Islam, the words “Holy Land” refer to the Arabian peninsula.

Important facts are omitted from the narrative. There is a lot of material about the Palestinian leader and grand mufti in the 1930s and ‘40s, Amin al-Husseini, without mentioning his important role as a Nazi collaborator; he was a guest of Hitler in Berlin during the War and in radio broadcasts called for the extermination of Jews. A history of the Mandate period and the conflict over land purchases by Jews should inform that in 1922, Great Britain lopped off 75% of the Mandate territory, putting it off limits to Jews. In the discussion of the Hamas assumption of control over Gaza after 2006, the thousands of rockets launched at Israel from Gaza since that takeover would also seem worthy of mention. Considering the factual errors and omission of significant parts of the historical record, a caveat is called for regarding purchase or assignment of this volume.

Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

Another View

Levy, Marilyn. *Checkpoints.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. 151p. \$14.00. ISBN: 978-0-8276-0870-2 Pbk. Gr. 8 - 10. First reviewed in the Sept./Oct. 2009 issue of the Newsletter.

Checkpoints reflects a number of anti-Israel biases that frequently appear in books that deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict. One such view is that pre-1948 Palestine was a place of peace and tolerance, disrupted by the creation of the state of Israel. A related view questions Israel’s right to exist at all. Even the Jews in the story buy into these two arguments. We see them presented—but not challenged—in the final, dramatic scene of the novel—a fam-

ily seder where Jewish hosts and Arab guests release their pent-up emotions about the Arab-Israeli conflict. For example, Ari, the soldier who refused to serve on the West Bank, says that there are people, and not just Arabs, “who believe that it’s unnatural for us Jews to live here. That we don’t belong.” He adds, “Sometimes I think maybe they’re right.” The only counter-argument that Ari’s parents can muster is that they belong because—well, because Israel is the only home they know. “We’re here now, regardless of how we got here,” says Ari’s father, implying that “how we got here” was somehow illegitimate.

Their Arab physician friend, Abed, chimes in that he feels deeply that this land “was stolen from my people,” whereupon Maha, another Arab guest at the seder, becomes angry, seconds Abed’s opinion, and begins a tirade against Israel. Finally, from Abed comes the oft-heard false claim that after all, Arabs and Jews “lived together peacefully ... before there was a Jewish state.” Palestine will become a Muslim country again, he asserts, and then Jews “will be welcome again.” So here we have a character in the book—the sympathetic, gentle Arab doctor—who has just asserted that Israel should be annihilated, buttressed by his historically false claim that Jews were “welcome” and unmolested in Palestine before they had their state, and everyone else in this story is helpless to respond! No one in Noa’s family seems to have an inkling about the Arab terrorist squads organized by the Nazi collaborator Mufti Haj Amin al Husseini in the 1920s and ‘30s, about the anti-Jewish riots and violence in the decades before 1948, about the 1929 Arab riots in Jerusalem, which spilled into nearby towns, including Hebron, where Jews in that ancient community were murdered in their homes. By leaving the false impression that the creation of Israel is to blame for Middle East violence, that jihad and terror were not a part of the story well before 1948, and that Jews have no legitimate claims to sovereignty in their historic homeland, *Checkpoints* fails to serve the cause of knowledge and understanding about the current conflict. Instead, it adds to the confusion.

Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

Mason, Paul. *Israel and Palestine.* Global HotSpots Series. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008. 32 p. \$28.50. ISBN: 978-0-7614-3181-7. Gr. 3 - 5.

There is no pretense of either objectivity or serious background study underlying this poorly produced volume of one-sided propaganda. Garish text boxes and headlines in hot pink, orange, and other neon colors adorn pages where photos, graphics, and empty space dwarf the text. The text consists of short, choppy, one-paragraph treatments of large topics such as “Religion,” and “Ottoman Empire.” The sentences read as if a first or second grader composed them; in addition to their primitive style, they are often inaccurate. Example: On every [Israeli] border is a country that is mainly lived in by Arabs and Israelis.” (Neither Israelis—nor Jews—live in the Arab countries bordering Israel, although well over a million Arabs live freely in democratic Israel.) The book’s cover promises “the story behind the headlines,” but the simplistic story told here is that there was a land called Palestine, Israel was formed in Palestine, and “Palestinians did not want Israel to be formed.” Arafat is presented as a peacemaker, not a terrorist leader, Arab violence is excused, and Hamas “members” wear face masks as protection from Israeli

security forces. A typical photo caption reads: "A Palestinian woman shouts at Israeli soldiers. They are guarding a bulldozer that is destroying her home." Not surprisingly, the book lacks any bibliography or list of sources consulted or recommended by the author. This title is not recommended for purchase.

Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

Slavicek, Louise Chipley. *Israel. Second Edition. Creation of the Modern Middle East Series.* New York: Chelsea House, 2009. 128 p. \$35.00. ISBN: 978-0-7910-9775-5. Gr. 6 – 9.

Since its original publication in 2003, Slavicek's *Israel* has been one of the best sources of accurate and unbiased information about the Arab-Israeli conflict for middle school readers. The new edition has been substantially revised. Some fuzzy photographs and an introduction by an Arab scholar have been removed at no loss of value whatsoever. The text, expanded to eight chapters, now includes discussions of Sharon's and Olmert's policies, the rise of Hamas and Hezbollah, the PLO under Abbas, disengagement from Gaza, the security fence, and the threat of Iran. New maps, charts, and photographs have also been added, enhancing a format that is clearer and easier to read than the 2003 version of the book. The appended material has also been improved and now consists of a chronology and timeline, a bibliography of authoritative adult books and Web sites, a selection of books and Web sites for young people's use, an index, and summaries of the qualifications of both the author and the series editor. Every Jewish library serving readers beyond the primary grades should own this book, and the replacement of the older version with this excellent revision is advisable.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Whiting, Jim. *The Creation of Israel. Monumental Milestones—Great Events of Modern Times Series.* Hockessin, DE: Mitchell Lane Publishers, 2008. 48 p. \$25.95. ISBN: 978-1-58415-538-6. Gr. 8 – 12.

Covering the period of the birth of modern Zionism at the end of the 19th century through the Israeli War of Independence in 1948, Whiting's book of five short chapters succeeds in giving a great deal of accurate information about Zionism, the British Mandate in Palestine, and the establishment of Israel. Unlike many other series books about the Middle East, it contains abundant footnoted documentation. The sources Whiting cites are works by solid historians, both mainstream (Barbara Tuchman, Michael Oren) and leftist (Avi Shlaim, Benny Morris). He seems to have more than a passing familiarity with the subject and has produced a well-written account notable for its attempt to be fair and unbiased.

There are a few errors, mainly minor: Herzl's *The Jewish State* was not a novel; Jews in Turkey and North Africa were not Ashkenazim. The detailed timeline errs when it says that the PLO formally revoked clauses in its charter calling for the dissolution of Israel. (The motion to do so was tabled, and never acted upon.) Whiting is a bit too gullible about terming the battle at Deir Yasin a "massacre," although he does offer some counterviews. Overall, this is one of the better series books on the subject of Israel and the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The short list of suggested further reading is excellent, also.

Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

LANGUAGE

Goldeen, Ruth. *Alef-Bet Yoga for Kids.* Photos by Bill Goldeen. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 32 p. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-8756-9. Reviewed from an advance review copy. Preschool – Gr. 3.

The husband-and-wife team of Ruth and Bill Goldeen has created a kid-friendly guide to the Hebrew alphabet. They illustrate modified yoga poses whereby children can learn the letters in a fun-filled and practical way. This book will appeal to children who learn kinesthetically, as well as those who learn visually. The design is eye-catching. Each Hebrew letter has a complete page to itself. The name and shape of the letter are printed in a large font somewhere on the page. A full-page shape of the letter is shown against a brightly colored background and on top of the letter, a child is photographed in a yoga pose.

Two useful features are at the back of the book: a summary of the shape of the letters with their yoga poses—this time, reading from right to left, and a glossary titled *Alef-Bet Yoga Poses*. The glossary describes the Hebrew letter, the yoga pose, its health benefits, and even the images a teacher can use to help a child achieve the pose. For example, in "lamed" the child sits on a "make-believe chair" while reaching for the sky. In a primary Hebrew school class, the alef-bet poses can be used to spell out a child's name or the names of simple objects. In a yoga class for children, these letters will add another dimension of meaning to the poses. A bibliography would have been helpful for people who wish to go beyond this book. A good resource for teachers is *Torah Yoga* by Diane Bloomfield (Wiley, 2004); for kids, *Yoga Bear: Yoga for Youngsters* by Karen Pierce (Northwood, 2004). Here's a Hebrew alphabet book that is attractive and good for you, too.

Anne Dublin, Toronto, Canada

Sussman, Joni Kibort, Ed. *My First Yiddish Word Book.* Illus. by Pépi Marzel. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 32 p. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-8755-2. Reviewed from an advance review copy. Preschool – Gr. 3.

Similar to *My First Hebrew Word Book*, also published by Kar-Ben, this book has both positive and negative aspects. The editor, Joni Sussman, is to be commended for introducing some basic Yiddish vocabulary to children, and perhaps even to adults. Each double-page spread deals with a different theme, like city, supermarket, or school. The watercolor illustrations are attractive in a muted way. One large illustration fills the page, with smaller segments on the bottom margin, along with the word in Hebrew letters, transliteration, and English translation. An English-Yiddish word list is included at the back of the book. However, the book has a number of shortcomings: The themes should be better organized. For example, bathroom and bedroom should be in the section about the house, rather than after four other sections—school, playground, city, and grocery. Another puzzling aspect about this book is the question of audience. Nowadays, the majority of Yiddish-speaking children are Orthodox. Although the illustrations depict modest dress for girls and women, none of the boys wears a *kippah*. If this book isn't for the Orthodox, then why are the clothes so unlike those of secular Jewish kids? Not one pair of jeans is in sight! Beyond problems of organization and audience, the question arises: Where's the

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pizzazz? Why would a child, or indeed an adult, want to look at these many lists of words? The book lacks the humor, liveliness, and imagination of the best of Richard Scarry, Marie-Louise Gay, or Phoebe Gilman. Aside from pedagogic and perhaps nostalgic appeal, *My First Yiddish Word Book* has little merit and is an optional purchase.

Anne Dublin, Toronto, Canada

VALUES

Amar, Elisheva. *One Word Too Many*. Nanuet, NY: Feldheim, 2008. 119 p. \$26.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-210-0. Gr. 3 – 6.

The subtitle of this collection of eight stories, “Stories for Kids about the Life-Changing Impact of Words,” indicates that the topic is *lashen hara*—the power of words when speaking about others, and the necessity of being in control of what we say. Designed for an Orthodox audience (with Hebrew, Yiddish, and Aramaic phrases explained in a glossary), the stories cover negative behaviors such as eavesdropping, gossiping, jumping to conclusions, judging people harshly, and not giving “the benefit of the doubt” as well as positive behaviors such as holding your tongue and telling the truth even when it is painful. Some are set in an Eastern European shtetl, others are placed in contemporary times, and one occurs in the Temple era. As a consequence of loose speech, a child is stolen by the czar’s soldiers, a friendship is broken, a man is wrongly accused. In one story, a boy gets leprosy as Hashem’s punishment for his *lashen hara*. In another, a child fears being sold into slavery. In a third, a boy is hidden alone in a barn as he cries out for his mother. These themes could be terrifying for a child. On the other hand, the “Kids Guide to Proper Speech” at the end of the book, highlights 37 helpful and practical speech rules. The book’s unusual illustrations feature cartoonish characters set in photographic-style backgrounds.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Baer, Edith. *Words Are Like Faces*. Illus. by Kyra Teis. New York: Star Bright Books, 2007. 32 p. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-1-59572-108-2. Preschool – Kdg.

Lilting verses about the importance of words speak directly to the experiences of young children. The language is simple but the concept it conveys is profound—reminding children, at the conclusion, that “Hurtful words spoken can’t be unsaid, be careful with words and choose kind ones instead.” The colorful paper collage illustrations show children of different races and how they use and think about words. The author, Edith Baer, is best known by Jewish readers for two outstanding novels for teens about the Holocaust (*A Frost In the Night* and *Walk the Dark Streets*) and she proves here that she writes well at the early childhood level, too. While there is no Jewish content in the story, it deals with an important Jewish precept (the prohibition against *lashon hora*) so it should find a place among the few books on that topic for young children.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH



Fuchs, Menucha. *Book #3, Avigayil and Her Little Friends. The Smile With Avigayil Series*. Illus. by Esti Haas. New York: Judaica Press, 2008. 63 p. \$12.95. ISBN: 978-1-932443-86-8.

Fuchs, Menucha. *Book #4, Avigayil and the Little Chick. The Smile With Avigayil Series*. Illus. by Esti Haas. New York: Judaica Press, 2008. 63 p. \$12.95. ISBN: 978-1-932443-87-5. Kdg. – Gr. 3.

The Smile with Avigayil series is a collection of hardbound chapter books for beginning readers, grades K-3. The stories are written in simple language with short sentences, lots of repetition and expressive black-and-white ink drawings. Avigayil is a colorful character with facial expressions that really bring her to life for the reader. The series is most appropriate for Orthodox libraries and schools.

Avigayil and Her Friends is a story about friendship in a modern Orthodox setting, using Yiddish expressions and simple Hebrew words. When Avigayil has to go to the hospital to have stitches in her injured foot, she is given her own picture of a bunny to sew while the doctor sews up her foot. “I’m done with my stitching, are you done with yours?” asks the doctor. In reply, Avigayil giggles that she has only sewn one ear of the rabbit and didn’t even notice that her foot was being stitched up as well. The story shows the importance of friendship and taking care of each other.

In *Avigayil and the Little Chick*, Avigayil hears a little chirping sound outside her door and believes there is a baby chick stuck in the bushes. She spends her time trying to find someone on the street to help her get the little chick out. Each neighbor who walks down the sidewalk is happy to help Avigayil but for whatever reason can’t seem to find the lost chick in the bushes. Suddenly the firefighters come to the rescue and with all the neighbors watching they find a big surprise. The sentences are a bit more challenging than Book 3, with no repetition in the wording, but the same expressive black-and-white ink illustrations that bring Avigayil and the characters to life.

Lisa Katz, Lefferts Jewish Community Library, San Rafael, CA

Jacobs, Rabbi Fishel. *Two Kings: Let’s Go Play, Volume 1*. Lakewood, NJ: Israel Book Shop, 2008. 36 p. \$12.95. ISBN: 978-0-9673481-5-5. Preschool.

David faces a dilemma when his friends want him to play outside but his mother wants him to babysit his little sister. A Good King and a Bad King try to influence him. The Good King suggests that David invite his friends to come inside and play. He does, the friends join him to color, and David and his family are very proud. Instead of an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other, often depicted in cartoons, the *yetzer hatov* (good inclination) fights the *yetzer hara* (the evil inclination) as a Good King dressed in blue versus the Bad King dressed in red. Their arguing and wrestling in David’s mind is interesting but the premise and the moral—listen to your parents and they will be proud—is about as unsubtle as possible. Most boys would not give up running around outside to go inside and sit quietly. It would seem that if David is responsible enough to watch a baby, he is probably older than the target audience for this book, again emphasizing the incongruence of the message with the example. Recommended for Orthodox preschools only.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Michal, Tanya. *Why Weren't You Zisha? and Other Stories.* Illus. by Avi Katz. New York: Mesorah, 2008. 47 p. \$15.99. ISBN: 978-1-4226-0815-9. Gr. 3 – 6.

Based on rabbinic tales, *Why Weren't you Zisha?* and the three other stories in this volume develop the idea of doing and being the best you can. In the title story, Reb Zisha worries not about whether Hashem will think he is as good as biblical leaders but whether he has been the best Zisha he could be. With examples pertinent to the concerns of school-age children, the text advises them not to compare themselves to others. The second story, *Keep your Door Wide Open*, is about Reb Pichas, to whom people come from all over to ask questions. Exhausted from advising strangers all day, he prays to Hashem for help, and immediately the people cease to approach him. When Avraham Avinu refuses to enter Reb Pinchas's sukkah, he recognizes his selfishness and prays to Hashem to "let things be the way they were before." The third story, *A Good Shabbos to Me and You – A Good Shabbos to Every Jew*, tells of two angels that accompany us on return from synagogue Friday night. The harsh angel is hoping to find a messy house devoid of family and Shabbat preparations while the good angel and Hashem hope to find the candles lit, the table set, and the family at home. The final story, *True Love for Hashem*, is about a young boy who walks into the Baal Shem Tov's shul on Yom Kippur and wants to pray. With all his heart, he crows like a rooster because it is the only way he can think of to convey his feelings to Hashem. While the people in the shul are horrified at the noise, the wise Baal Shem Tov teaches them that Hashem values honesty and sincerity and the best way to serve Him is to do their best in whatever they do.

The volume is best suited for an Orthodox audience of children age 8 and up. Each story is told in an A-B-C-B rhyme scheme that at times is inelegant, and the thematic thread connecting the stories is unsubtle. Nonetheless, the illustrations are rich in color and detail and depict the content of each stanza of text. The attempt to link the lessons of the sages to the experiences of its readers is notable, and the positive values that can be extracted are plentiful.

Deborah Abecassis, Montreal, QC, Canada

Rouss, Sylvia A. *Sammy Spider's First Day of School.* Illus. by Katherine Janus Kahn. Minneapolis, MN. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 32 p. \$6.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-8583-1. Preschool – Gr. 3.

Sammy Spider's First Day of School is a great new addition to the growing series of *Sammy Spider* books. Through the familiar paper collage artwork, Katherine Kahn brings the characters to life with an exciting splash of colors. Large fonts make it easy for young readers to enjoy the story. Sylvia Rouss expertly captures the first day of kindergarten for the children. Sammy and his human friend, Josh, experience a new adventure in different ways. The children learn about the Jewish value of kindness to animals when the teacher reads to them about Noah's Ark. Josh saves his friend, Sammy, when the children become frightened of the spider. Sammy once again learns an important lesson—spiders don't go to school. Spiders spin webs.

Young children will find it easy to follow the story and empathize with the characters. The mixture of a sense of adventure, coupled with a fear of the unknown, is creatively captured. The remarkable openness of children's curiosity is an important and

real aspect of the story. Recommended for all libraries with a children's collection.

Tammy Gerson, Cohen Library, Athens, GA

BRIEFLY NOTED

Abraham, Michelle Shapiro. *Shavua Tov! A Good Week.* Illus. by Ann D. Koffsky. New York: URJ Press, 2008. 16 p. \$6.95. ISBN: 978-0-8074-1084-4 Pbk. Preschool.

A companion to Abraham and Koffsky's *Good Morning, Boker Tov* and *Good Night, Lilah Tov*, this book introduces young children to the ceremony of Havdalah that "tells Shabbat good-bye." Havdalah blessings in Hebrew and English accompany a short rhymed story expressing the joy of Shabbat and the reverence that marks its conclusion. The lyrics of a Shavua Tov song are included. All three of these short stories are excellent introductions to Judaism for the youngest child and their use reaches beyond Reform congregations and families.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Hubner, Chaya. *The Mysterious Shoebox and Other Leah Lamdan Holiday Mysteries.* New York: Mesorah, 2008. 310 p. \$17.99. ISBN: 1-4226-0621-X Gr. 4 – 6.

Twelve stories feature a religious teenager named Leah Lamden, an "amateur detective who solves crimes" in her spare time. Each of the stories is tangentially related to a Jewish holiday. Filled with Hebrew phrases and vocabulary familiar to an observant reader, the stories unfortunately offer confused plots, unlikely coincidences, and didactic explanations.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Scott-Brown, Anna. *Creation Song.* Illus. by Elena Gomez. Oxford, England: Lion Children's Books/Lion Hudson, 2007. 28 p. \$12.99. ISBN: 0-7459-6049-9. Distributed in North America by Independent Publishers Group, www.ipgbook.com. Preschool – Gr. 2.

A lyrical interpretation of Genesis, describing the story of Creation as the product of God's dreaming, singing, and dancing. The attractive illustrations, done mainly in pastels, reflect the wonder of creation as the earth fills with water and mountains, trees and flowers, animals and finally, woman and man. There are several versions of this biblical story for children and while *Creation Song* has no particular Jewish flavor, it captures the splendor of creation for young children.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Wigden, Susan. *A Mitzva for Zelda.* Illus. by Iosi Salem. New York: Pitspopany, 2008. 32 p. \$12.95. ISBN: 1-978-1-934440-54-4. Preschool – Gr. 2.

"Zelda Zebraman was a mentch indeed/ For she knitted kippas for those in need." Men with flat heads, big round heads, small pointy heads, and bushy-haired heads all come to her house where Zelda sits in her rocking chair, knitting each one a perfectly fitting kipah. Then, when Zelda gets too old to knit, her friends repay her kindness by making her a blanket to keep her warm and cozy. Zany, cartoon-like illustrations match the

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rhyming story and keep it bouncing along to its heartwarming conclusion.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Zolkower, Edie Stolz. *When It's Purim*. Illus. by Barb Bjornson. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 12 p. \$5.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-8947-1 Board Book. Preschool.

A sprightly introduction to Purim for very young children, this board book features a menagerie of cuddlesome woodland animals making hamentaschen. With just two lines per page and a very simplified holiday concept, it is another good addition to Kar-Ben's toddler-friendly Very First Board Book series.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Letter to the Editor

It is always gratifying to be reviewed in your publication. I hope you will permit me respectfully to respond to some of the concerns expressed by Tammy Gerson in her thoughtful criticisms of *Good-Bye Marianne*, the graphic novel. I quote: "The important yellow star has been left off the clothing." However, the yellow star used to identify and humiliate European Jewry was not introduced to Berlin until September 1941, and was not mentioned in either the original novel, *Goodbye, Marianne*, or in the graphic version due to this fact. Marianne, like other Jewish children at this time, wore her necklace with the Jewish star but unobtrusively and this is highlighted in the scene about the quarrel with Ernest.

The reviewer is also concerned that I did not emphasize the Shoah or the horrors of war. She is right! The novel is about the three-week period between November 15 and December 1st 1938 when the first of the Kindertransport trains left for Britain. My characters can only express what they know. War was nine months away, and though the cruelty of concentrations camps was beginning to be common knowledge no one could have foreseen what 1942 would bring. That was not made public until the end of the war. Both these events are described in some detail for older readers in my award winning books, *Remember Me* and *Finding Sophie*.

Marianne is shattered at being sent away alone and I think her cry of anguish, "Mothers don't send their children away" (pp.94-95) makes that apparent. What Ms. Gerson calls "awkward dialogue" is the same as that of the original novel. Kathryn Shoemaker and I worked together to decide where and in what panels dialogue should be placed and it was not "made to fit the graphic frames!"

Our book is about bullying and what it may lead to, about separation and how a parent can bear to send a child away, but it is intended as a book about hope, hope fulfilled by ten thousand of us who were saved from unspeakable later events. I hope the young readers for whom this book is intended will understand this. Different genres of necessity must lose or sacrifice some aspects found in earlier works but the gains in making this still little known story known to a new and younger generation, are I hope present in some measure!

Sincerely,
Irene N. Watts

Tammy Gerson replies:

I defer to Irene Watts's knowledge and appreciate her pointing out the historical background unknown to me when I wrote my review. However, I stand behind my comments about the book in graphic novel form. Despite mentioning what I consider to be a few flaws, I concluded my review with a recommendation. Ms. Watts, through her three books about Marianne (*Goodbye, Marianne*, *Remember Me*, and *Finding Sophie*) has given children a very moving, very real picture of the Kindertransport and its aftermath.

AJL Resolution on Nazi-Era Looted Art and Books

SUSAN DUBIN

The Council of the Association of Jewish Libraries voted to send a resolution in support of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany and the World Jewish Restitution Organization. The resolution follows:

The Association of Jewish Libraries, representing over 1000 members world-wide, recognizes the unique, distinct position that Jewish libraries hold with regard to the issue of Nazi-era, looted, or otherwise displaced, cultural property. We appreciate that often our member libraries were depositories of choice for owners of Judaica, as well as for the distributors of heirless property, particularly the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc., established in 1947 and recognized by the American government as the trustee of heirless Jewish cultural property found in the American zone of Germany following World War II.

The Association of Jewish Libraries supports and encourages the wider efforts of the American Association of Museums, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany/World Jewish Restitution Organization and others to promote the return of looted, or otherwise displaced, Nazi-era, cultural property to its former pre-War owners or their heirs.

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.

Visit the AJL Web site at www.jewishlibraries.org.

Proposed Changes to the Constitution

A vote on these changes will be held during the general membership meeting, Wed. July 8, 2009.

1. Chapter representatives on Council

ARTICLE V—ADMINISTRATION

Section 1. The governing body of the Association shall be the Council which shall consist of the Executive Board, the chairpersons of all committees, the Webmaster, the editors of Judaica Librarianship and the AJL Newsletter, and the coordinator of Hasafran. ~~Three Chapter Presidents~~ Chapter Presidents or other chapter representatives, designated by the ~~Chapters' Coordinator~~ Chapter Relations Committee Chair, will represent all chapter presidents as members of Council.

Explanation: The chair of the Chapter Relations Committee now serves the function of the Chapters' Coordinator. In some cases, chapter presidents are unable to take on the additional responsibility of attending council meetings. The appointment of a different representative would ensure that chapters continue to be represented on Council.

2. Reporting the slate of nominations

Section 2. a. The nominating committee shall report its nominations in the official ~~journal~~ newsletter of the Association not less than three months before the annual convention.

Explanation: The slate of officers is always published in the AJL Newsletter, not Judaica Librarianship. This change is to clarify the intent of this section.

3. Provision for write-in votes

b. By six weeks before the convention, any member may present to the chairperson of the nominating committee a petition signed by not fewer than five members proposing one or more additional nominations for one or more officers, provided the nominees have consented in writing.

b. In any national election, additional names may be placed in nomination for any office by any member in good standing. These nominations must be submitted to the chair of the nominating committee no later than two weeks after the proposed slate of officers is officially transmitted to the membership. Nominations must have the support of five members in good standing, and the consent of the nominee.

Explanation: The provision for write-in nominations is an important part of any democratically-run election. The current procedure dates from a time when AJL elections were actually held at convention. Now, we hold elections by electronic ballot, and the requirement to submit nominations in writing is out of synch with the rest of our procedures; the revised procedure allows for submission by email. The timetable for submitting write-in nominations must be moved back in order to include them in the ballot.

Mandarin Ad

New AJL Publication

DEBBIE STERN

I am very pleased to announce that Merrily Hart has updated her publication *Creating a Collection: A Resource Booklist for a Beginning Judaic Library*, now in its 5th edition. This very useful annotated subject bibliography is a guide to developing a core collection in a synagogue, school, or community center library, and is equally helpful as a guide to individuals wishing to create personal Judaic libraries.

This publication has a new appearance and is available to purchasers in new ways. No longer will AJL monographs receive uniform, standard covers; each publication will now have its unique cover designed by a graphic artist. The covers will continue to display the AJL logo so that the quality of the content can be easily discerned. In order to make AJL monographs easier to locate by the general public and easier to purchase, starting with *Creating a Collection*, they will be available on the Internet at Amazon.com and at a discount to AJL members only at the CreateSpace Web site.

To purchase *Creating a Collection* online from the CreateSpace e-store, go to the Web site: <https://wwwcreatespace.com/3359875>. The list price is \$20.00 plus shipping. AJL members are entitled to a 10% discount. To obtain the code that must be entered at time of purchase, find the instructions on the AJL Web site under News & Announcements. You will be prompted for your AJL username and password in order to access this discount code. Your username and password are listed on your AJL membership card. If you can't access your membership card, email Laurie Haas, Membership VP at lhaas@torahacademy.org.

You may purchase *Creating a Collection* from Amazon.com. There is no AJL member discount available through Amazon.

Creating a Collection is not available for purchase by mail from the AJL Vice-president for Publications, but you are welcome to contact me with any questions about the purchasing procedure.

We have also decided to offer another recent publication, *Jewish Classics for Kids*, by Linda Silver, for sale over the Internet. Purchase *Jewish Classics for Kids* from the CreateSpace e-store at: <https://wwwcreatespace.com/3360356>. The list price is \$20.00 plus shipping; AJL members are entitled to a 10% discount. The procedure to obtain the discount code is the same as that for *Creating a Collection* above. You may also purchase *Jewish Classics for Kids* from Amazon.com. There is no AJL member discount available through Amazon. Additionally, a limited number of *Jewish Classics for Kids* are still available for purchase by mail via the AJL publications order form, a copy of which appears on the next two pages.

After you purchase copies of these publications, be sure to go to Amazon.com and post your reviews of them. Help spread the word about AJL and the expertise of our members far and wide!

Calling All Catalogers!

If you're a cataloger or interested in Judaica classification schemes or in library technical services, think about working on a new publication for AJL about these topics. We need a good guide for members, especially those who find themselves in charge of a Judaica collection for the first time, on how to decide which classification scheme to use, how to obtain cataloging information and records, what software to use for cataloging, how to process books and journals. Come join the ranks of illustrious AJL authors and find yourself too on Amazon.

AJL Welcomes New Members

Aharon Bejell
Tessa Bennion
Mollie L. Berch
Brenda Berger
Katherine Blumberg
Laura Buckner
Chavah Carp
Barbara J. Carr
Linda K. Cohen
Solomon Davidoff
Ruth Diskin
Eva Eisenstein
Joan Freedman
Evelyn Freeman
Barbara Gamble

Nancy Gerlach (Poole)
Jerry Glantz
Linda Goodbrandson
Jackie Hasson
Ruth L. Imber
E. J. Jarvis
Lauren Marcus Johnson
Michael (Yitzchok) Kahn
Geri W. Kolesar
Tova S. Krausz
Karen Kriegel
Kim Kukler
Anna M. Levia
Audrey H. Liebross
Scott Machol

Chaim Mazo
Andrea Meyerhoff
Nadia Moro
Michelle Parker-Rock
Isabel Pinson
Renee Riyz
Gil Rosen
Leslye A. Rosenbaum
Diana Rothschild
Toby C. Sanchez
Michelle Gail Sandler
Marjorie M. Sandy
Maxine Shackman
Laura Schutzman
Robin B. Shapiro

Mitchell L. Silverman
Peggy Sinclair
Rachel Smith
Eileen Steinberg
Danielle Stordy
Shira Sussman
David Wachtel
Aviva Wasser
April Halprin Wayland
Judy Weintraub
Rivka Yerushalmi
Ditza (Dana) Young
Nachum Zitter

הרב'ים והב'ים

Publication Order Form

Publication Order Form

2009 Sydney Taylor Book Award Winners

KATHE PINCHUCK



Richard Michelson and Raul Colon, author and illustrator of *As Good As Anybody: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel's Amazing March Toward Freedom*, Karen Hesse, author of *Brooklyn Bridge*, and Valerie Zenatti, author of *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea*, are the 2009 winners of the prestigious Sydney Taylor Book Award. The award honors new books for children and teens that exemplify the highest literary standards while authentically portraying the Jewish experience. The winners will receive their awards at convention in Chicago this July.

Michelson and Colon will receive the 2009 gold medal in the Sydney Taylor Book Award's younger readers category for *As Good As Anybody: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel's Amazing March Toward Freedom*, published by Alfred A. Knopf. Two very special clergymen, one a rabbi, the other an African American reverend, are raised in different countries yet experience similar levels of persecution and bigotry that will one day bring them together. As colleagues in America's struggle for civil rights, they march together from Selma to Montgomery in March 1965. Colon's colored pencil and watercolor illustrations "offer a beautiful complement to the text, describing two unique paths from childhood to adult life—Martin's in the rich, warm brown-tones of the American south and Abraham's in cool blues and grays that reminded the illustrator of old World War II movies. When the two exemplary men join in their march for tolerance, the palettes merge in full color harmony," comments Debbie Colodny, a member of the award committee. This book is recommended for grades 2-5.

Karen Hesse will receive the 2009 gold medal in the Sydney Taylor Book Award's older readers category for *Brooklyn Bridge*, published by Feiweil & Friends. While his family left the anti-Semitism of Russia to build the American dream, Joey Michtom's dream is to visit the glittering Coney Island. "Crafting a story from the spark of a true event, the invention of the Teddy Bear in 1903, Hesse masterfully weaves multiple themes of hard-work, survival, homelessness, and familial dedication with interlocking and parallel stories of families who live reasonably well opposite those less fortunate living in the shadows below the imposing Brooklyn Bridge," comments Rita Soltan, a member of the Award Committee. This book is recommended for grades

5-8. Hesse also won the 1992 Award for Older Readers for *Letters from Rifka*, and *The Cats in Kransinski Square* was named an 2004 Honor Book.

Valerie Zenatti will receive the 2009 gold medal in the Sydney Taylor Book Award's teen readers category for *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea*, published by Bloomsbury. "This story about the relationship between an Israeli girl, Tal, and a Palestinian boy, Naim, via e-mail and instant messaging, is honest but hopeful. Well-written and compelling, the tale of their relationship conveys the confusion, anger, exhaustion, and depression felt by many young people during the 2003 intifada," comments Susan Berson, a member of the award committee. Zenatti's memoir, *When I Was a Soldier*, was a 2005-6 AJL Notable Book for Older Readers.

Six Sydney Taylor Honor Books were named for 2009. For younger readers, Honor Books are: *Engineer Ari and the Rosh Hashanah Ride* by Deborah Bodin Cohen with illustrations by Shahar Kober (Kar-Ben), *Sarah Laughs* by Jacqueline Jules with illustrations by Natascia Ugliano (Kar-Ben), *A is for Abraham: A Jewish Family Alphabet* by Richard Michelson with illustrations by Ron Mazellan (Sleeping Bear Press) and *Naming Liberty* by Jane Yolen with paintings by Jim Burke (Philomel Books). Aranka Siegal's *Memories of Babi* (Farrar Straus and Giroux) was named an Honor Book for Older Readers, and *Freefall* by Anna Levine (Greenwillow Books) was named an Honor Book in the teen reader category.

In addition to the medal-winners, the award committee designated 22 Notable Books of Jewish Content for 2009: six in the younger readers category, ten in the older readers category, and four for teens. *Genesis—the Book with Seventy Faces: A Guide for the Family* by Esther Takac with illustrations by Anna Pignataro (Pitspopany Press) and *Celebrating with Jewish Crafts* by Rebecca Edid Ruzansky with photographs by Roberto Zeballos-Peralta (self-published) impressed the award committee with their uniqueness and range. They have been designated Notable Books for all ages. Notable titles, and more information about the Sydney Taylor Book Award, may be found online at www.SydneyTaylorBookAward.org. A blog about the awards can be found at www.sydneytaylorbookaward.blogspot.com.

Association of Jewish Libraries

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