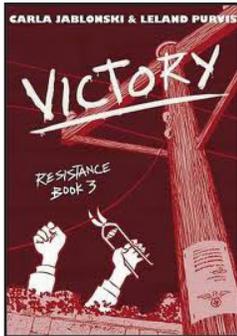


In The Spotlight

Jablonski, Carla. *Victory: Resistance Book 3*. Illus. by Leland Pervis. New York: Roaring Book Press, 2012. 125 pp. \$17.99. (9781596432932) Pbk. Gr 6 and up.



Fans of the *Resistance* books will not be disappointed in the final episode of the trilogy. The three siblings in the Tessier family are active in the resistance movement. Older sister, Sylvie, dates a German soldier so she can gather information, while young Paul becomes a courier. Marie takes on an unexpected role of caring for a resistance pilot whose plane has crashed. Intertwining stories take the reader on an exciting adventure and underscore the anxiety of not knowing whom to trust in perilous situations. Through a series of events, Paul is eventually reunited with his friend, Henri. As with all good young adult literature, the inspiring, energized characters face their challenges and grow as individuals in the process. The end of the war brings a satisfying conclusion to their story. The author does an excellent job of telling a compelling story while including back matter that will encourage further thought and discussion about the impact of the war on individuals and communities. The setting and characters are well represented in the

evocative graphic illustrations. The deep hues shift tone in varying settings, giving the reader a true sense of time and place. Historical fiction in a graphic novel format makes history accessible to readers of all levels. For teachers and librarians in need of books with male characters, *Victory* should be a top choice. Ideally, libraries will offer all three books in the trilogy. Highly recommended for Jewish and community libraries.

Barbara Bietz, Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Oak Park, CA

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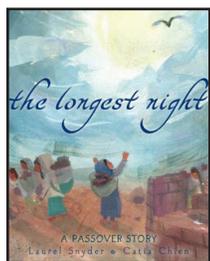
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In The Spotlight

Snyder, Laurel. *The Longest Night: A Passover Story*. Illus. by Catia Chien. New York: Schwartz & Wade, 2013. 32 pp. \$17.99. (9780375869426). Gr. 1-3.

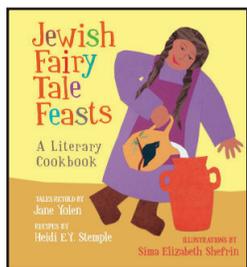


Relive the Passover saga from the point of view of a young girl who details her pain of slavery, the fearsome might of the plagues, the Jews' sudden flight, and the brave crossing to joyous freedom. This is Exodus from a narrator the age of targeted readers. Her emotions connect; her facts stick. Endless, long, hard days mean a grey life when suddenly the plagues change everything – not just for the Egyptians, but also for the untouched Jews who watch and hope even as they fear. When the last plague arrives, it is perfectly from a child's understanding: She notices the 'X' in lamb's blood, and hears sad cries that jolt the Jews who pack and run. There is no mention of killing children, first-born or otherwise. She notes they run *from*, but also *to*! During the longest night, they dash away from their homes to emerge from the parted sea at sunrise, reveling in freedom with dances and shouts.

The child's voice telling this drama is charming and realistically young. She mentions Aba, Ima, sister (but not Moses or Miriam). Her couplet rhymes are smart; the meter is consistent. The poem delivers the plagues in Haggadah order. The illustrations are dark and muted; they lie flat against the background. While they support the story, they primarily deliver a people rather than the individual recounting the amazing tale. Despite this artistic style, the readers will connect to the child informing them through her emotional voice and history. Children who read this volume will have a stronger tie to the Seder service because they hear it from one of their own. Here is a wonderful read, a cut above the average holiday tale, well deserving of a strong recommendation.

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

Yolen, Jane. *Jewish Fairy Tale Feasts: A Literary Cookbook*. Illus. by Sima Elizabeth Shefrin. Recipes by Heidi E.Y. Stemple. Northampton, MA: Interlink, 2013. 200 pp. \$25.00. (9781566569095). Ages 5 and up.



Are you looking for a gift for a special birthday or bar/bat mitzvah? Look no further. This is it! Master storyteller, Jane Yolen, searched the Jewish folktale landscape and found eighteen stories – some well-known, others more obscure – but all told with verve and originality. The stories and recipes are organized into four main categories: brunch, soup, main courses, dessert. The tales encompass a wide range of locales (Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa), time periods (ancient to modern), and characters (rabbis, prophets, tricksters, demons and, of course, ordinary people). Preceding each story is an apt Jewish saying, for example, “Worries go down better with soup than without.” Sidebars add further information about elements contained in the stories and recipes: Jewish holidays and customs, dietary laws, and specific ingredients. Yolen gives her source(s), explains vocabulary, and mixes in tidbits about story variations. She adds a bonus for storytellers and folklorists – the Aarne-Thompson “tale type” reference numbers. Unfortunately, several typos mar what is an otherwise excellent book.

Each recipe is matched, closely or loosely, to its corresponding story. For example, “A Little Bit of Soup” is followed by a recipe for chicken soup. But not all these recipes are as well-known as blintzes and noodle kugel. Stemple gives directions for less-familiar dishes such as *shakshuka* and pomegranate couscous. Each recipe contains thorough, detailed instructions along with safety precautions for the kitchen. The recipes also include lively personal touches: “I don’t like baking.... So I am always looking for shortcuts.” An awkward aspect of these recipes is the fact that one must often turn the page to get to the next step. Rather messy if one’s hands are covered with flour or oil!

Shefrin’s colorful collage illustrations capture the place and time of these stories in a modest but lively manner. *Jewish Fairy Tale Feasts* has generous margins and a beautiful design – almost too beautiful. Don’t be surprised if the book comes back to your library spattered with oil from *latkes* or sticky with jam from *rugalach* or *hamantaschen*. Buy two copies – one as a cookbook, the other for your folktale collection. Bon appétit!

Anne Dublin, author of *The Baby Experiment* (Dundurn, 2012), Toronto, Canada

Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN & RACHEL KAMIN

BIOGRAPHY

Ridley, Sarah. *Anne Frank and Her Diary. (History Makers). North Mankato, MN: Sea-to-Sea Publications, 2013. 24 pp. \$25.65. (9781597713917). Kindergarten-Gr. 2.*

With an extra-large font, simple sentence structure, and a low vocabulary level, this 24-page biography of Anne Frank is clearly geared towards beginning readers. Each page includes one or two short sentences along with black and white photographs and drawings. A timeline, spanning the period from 1925 to 1947, runs along the bottom of each page. However, the question remains: Do beginning readers need to be introduced to Anne Frank with this type of book? The historical context of the Frank family's life in Germany and in Amsterdam is completely glossed over. While the author states that Hitler and the Nazi Party wanted "to rid Germany of Jews and other people" and that the Franks "no longer felt safe in Germany", she repeatedly makes oversimplified statements such as: "The Germans make laws about what Dutch Jews may or may not do" and "Thousands of Jewish prisoners are dying in concentration camps." When the Secret Annex is discovered, the text explains: "Anne Frank died in a concentration camp in 1945, like six million other Jews." The author is incorrect when she states that six million Jews died in concentration camps. This catastrophic number is the total of Jews who died in the Holocaust—in labor and concentration camps, in ghettos, in hiding, by death squads and pogroms. It is also important to note that Anne Frank died of typhus in Bergen-Belsen, but her death and that of so many others was the result of disease and starvation systematically perpetrated by the Nazis. In other words, murder.

The glossary actually defines concentration camp as merely a prison camp "where millions of people lived and died in horrible conditions". While the other subjects, like Florence Nightingale and Martin Luther King, in the *History Makers* series might be better suited for this type of book, introducing Anne Frank in this way does a disservice to young readers. Picture book biographies like *A Picture Book of Anne Frank* by David Adler (Holiday House, 1993) and *Anne Frank* by Josephine Poole (Knopf, 2005) are much better choices for lower-elementary students to learn about Anne Frank in a shared reading experience with an adult.

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

Rubin, Laurie. *Do You Dream in Color? New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012. 400 pp. \$18.95. (9781609804244). Grades 8-12.*

Mezzo-soprano Laurie Rubin has been blind since birth. She feels she must be "one step ahead of the game at all times" to prove she is just as talented and capable as everyone whose vision is not impaired. Rubin's memoir shares her memories of learning mobility skills at a school for the blind and her transition to being mainstreamed in middle and high school. Laurie is drawn to music and when it is discovered she has perfect pitch, her parents provide her with piano and voice lessons to nurture her talent. She studies music as an undergraduate at Oberlin and pursues her master's degree at Yale.

Each chapter begins with a poem describing a color and how Laurie experiences the color even though she can't physically see it. A CD of Laurie's poems set to music, also titled *Do You Dream in Color*, has been released to coincide with the publication of the book. Readers will be moved by Laurie's independence and determination to be successful in all her artistic and physical endeavors beyond singing. She learns to ski and creates her own jewelry collection. She recounts the joys and challenges of training a guide dog. Laurie candidly discusses her experiences dating and discovering her sexual identity as a lesbian. Teens who may feel isolated and different from their peers will relate to Laurie's struggle to fit in with her peers. The Jewish content is limited; however, readers will be fascinated by Laurie's preparations for her bat mitzvah. She learns Hebrew Braille and donates money to the Jewish Braille Institute so other blind children can experience a bar or bat mitzvah of their own. High school students involved with theater or the arts will be especially drawn to Laurie's inspiring memoir and several noted musicians make appearances. Recommended as an additional purchase for school and synagogue libraries that serve teen readers.

Aimee Lurie, The Agnon School, Beachwood, OH, and Chair of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

BOARD BOOKS

Balsley, Tilda. *Lotsa Matzah*. Illus. by Akemi Gutierrez. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2012. 10 pp. \$5.95. (9780761366294) Board. Preschool.

Just when you thought there couldn't be another Passover board book, author Tilda Balsley makes a charming contribution to the category with *Lotsa Matzah*. Told in rhyming couplets, Balsley does a remarkable job covering the basics of why we eat matzah to hiding the *afikomen* to culinary variations on the "lotsa matzah" we eat throughout the eight days of Passover. "So Moses drew his people near. / Good news! We're getting out of here. / Hurry take the dough for bread. / No time to let it rise, he said." The colloquial language is easy and inviting. The watercolor and pencil illustrations are lovely. This is a recommended purchase for home, school, and synagogue libraries with a preschool population.

Rena Citrin, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, IL

***My Alef Beis*. New York: Judaica Press, 2012. 10 pp. \$8.95. (9781607630821) Board.**

***My Torah Colors*. New York: Judaica Press, 2012. 10 pp. \$8.95 (9781607630814) Board.**

***My Torah Numbers*. New York: Judaica Press, 2012. 10 pp. \$8.95. (9781607630807) Board. / All books for Pre-K. All books in slipcase. (9781607631132) \$23.95.**

These board books introduce young children to Judaic items such as *dreidels*, *challah*, *kiddush* cups, *mezuzahs*, and *yarmulkes* along with everyday items such as a ball, a banana, and a pair of shoes. Each book features five double-page spreads of bright and colorful photographs with the accompanying word for each item in a clear, easy-to-read font. The alphabet book includes the Hebrew word of each item plus an enlarged example of the beginning letter. The extra thick and sturdy pages will stand up to multiple readings in both the classroom and home settings. All three books are perfect selections for the pre-literate, preschool crowd.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

Goetz, Bracha. *My Very Own Mitzvah Feet*. Illus. by Malka Wolf. New York: Judaica Press, 2013. 22 pp. \$12.95. (9781607631217). Preschool.

Goetz, Bracha. *My Very Own Mitzvah Hands*. Illus. by Malka Wolf. New York: Judaica Press, 2013. 22 pp. \$12.95. (9781607631125). Preschool.

Two board books in this new series introduce ways in which our hands and feet are involved in and participate in doing *mitzvos*. The book about hands begins: "My two hands are gifts from Hashem, so I try to do *mitzvos* with them!" Very simple rhymes, neither clever nor catchy, deliver the positive messages, such as sharing toys, helping to get ready for Shabbos, and preparing to give *tzedaka*. Illustrations are simplistic and bleak in nature. They do not give an air of happiness to anything the children are doing, even though the children seem to be enjoying the acts they are performing. Children and adults are dressed in ultra-Orthodox garb and perform all kinds of daily acts and rituals. As such, the characters and their actions will not appeal to children in modern Orthodox, Conservative or Reform homes. Recommended only for preschool children in *haredi* homes.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood New Jersey

COOKERY

[Editor's note: See the review of *Jewish Fairy Tale Feasts: A Literary Cookbook: "In the Spotlight"* section above.]

FICTION - MIDDLE GRADES

Deutsch, Barry. *Hereville: How Mirka Met a Meteorite*. New York: Amulet, 2013. 128 pp. \$16.95. (9781419703980). Gr. 3-6.

After the troll summons a meteorite, Mirka enlists the help of the witch to help her stop it from destroying Hereville. By taking three strands of Mirka's hair, the witch transforms the meteorite into nearly an exact copy of Mirka, "but stronger, smarter and prettier". At first, Mirka is excited about her twin, whom her sister names Metty, and plans on splitting her life with her. Mirka tolerates Metty stealing her food, leaving her to do all the chores, ruining her grades, and spoiling basketball games; however, when Metty steals Shabbos from her,

Mirka decides Metty must go. Metty refuses to leave Hereville because she believes she is the better Mirka and challenges the real Mirka to a contest. Fortunately, Mirka (in spite of her flaws) is the better Mirka and Metty heads back to space.

Fans of *Hereville: How Mirka Got Her Sword*, will not be disappointed in the latest installment. Deutsch's illustrations are as quirky and engaging as Mirka herself. The artwork, done primarily in shades of green and orange, is fresh and visually stunning with a unique panel layout on each page. Like the first novel, Yiddish is sprinkled throughout the text and Jewish rituals are observed from an Orthodox point of view. Shabbat is lovingly portrayed as a sacred and spiritual time. Hereville is a unique setting for a fantasy, but it's clear that it faces the same challenges as all communities when bullies threaten Mirka. Readers of all levels of observance will connect to the story, and its elements of fantasy will appeal to girls and boys. The powerful theme of accepting yourself as you are makes this book a winning choice for all libraries. Strongly recommended.

Aimee Lurie, The Agnon School, Beachwood, OH, and Chair of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

[Editor's note: *Hereville: How Mirka Got Her Sword* received the 2011 Sydney Taylor Award for older readers.]

Schonzeit, Miriam. *There's a Zucchini in the Chocolate Cake and Other Stories*. Brooklyn, NY: The Judaica Press, 2012. 288 pp. \$17.95. (9781607631057). Gr. 2-5.

Here is a collection of short stories, each of which is designed to teach a lesson. The trick is finding the lesson and also determining the target audience for the book as a whole. If you try to judge the book by its cover, you would expect to find stories for *haredi* girls between second to fifth grades; however, some of the stories are intended for older girls. The text is written in a casual conversational style. It does not challenge the reader at all, for the vocabulary is on an elementary school level. It is clear that the options offered to the girls via these stories are well within the confines of a *haredi* social setting. Some stories have some suspense and teach valid lessons, but there is nothing remarkable or mind-expanding about these stories. There are absolutely no illustrations and the psychologically-based *mussar* is completely predictable. This book goes along with so many others of its kind – when you've read one you've read them all! This book might comfortably join its genre on the shelves of a *haredi* girls' school or library. Outside of that setting, there is little appeal in the larger Jewish community.

Marion M. Stein, retired from The Abraham Heschel High School, Brooklyn, NY and past president of AJL-NYMA

FICTION - TEEN

Lieberman, Leanne. *Lauren Yanofsky Hates the Holocaust*. Custer, WA: Orca, 2013. 240 pp. \$12.95. (9781459801097) Pbk. Gr. 7 and up.

Lauren Yanofsky rejects entreaties from her mother to join Jewish youth groups and from her father, a noted Holocaust historian, to give her mother a break. Instead of attending the local Jewish day school, Lauren goes to the local public high school, where she ultimately doesn't get a respite from her Jewishness or from the Holocaust. Jesse, the cutest boy in the school and Lauren's lab partner (a nod to *Twilight*?) becomes involved with Nazi war games. Lauren is confused but her best friend, Alexis, now living in Seattle, is not. "You have to tell someone," she pressures Lauren through texts and phone calls. We spend the rest of the book witnessing how Lauren's dilemma plays out in the shifting, complex background of high school friendships, romance, and her Asperger Syndrome brother's upcoming *bar mitzvah*.

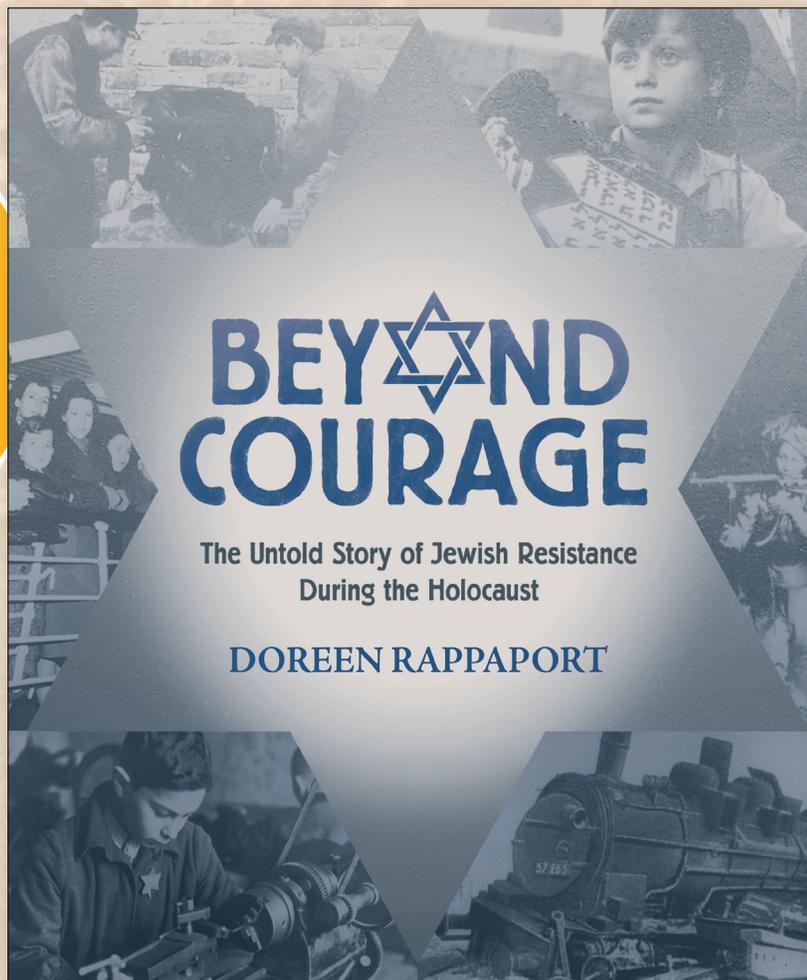
Beautifully written in the present tense, this novel has a compelling plot line and engaging characters. Lieberman focuses on the reluctance of many Jewish educators and students to support Holocaust-based themes in young adult literature. Her genius is that, while she presents reasons why our children and grandchildren want to get past the Holocaust, she also provides a credible reason for continuing to learn: neo-Nazis are alive and well.

However, Lieberman's book displays a fatal flaw: Lauren googles "Jews + genocide" and finds several disturbing articles on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "Is this the end result of the Holocaust?" Lauren ponders. "Jews got a homeland in Israel and the Palestinians lost theirs?" Murderous Jews are never brought up again,



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- ★ “This is one of the few histories to focus in detail on Jewish resistance across Europe.”
— *Booklist* (starred review)
- ★ “Engrossing storytelling will entice many teens to read cover-to-cover.”
— *Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books* (starred review)
- ★ “Belongs in every middle and high school library.”
— *School Library Journal* (starred review)
- ★ “Thorough, deeply researched, and stylistically clear, this is a necessary, exemplary book.”
— *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)
- ★ “Ambitious and expansive.”
— *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

Background image: Leizer Novitzky, © USHMM/Jack Lennard Archive/Yad Vashem Photo Archives, courtesy of Moshe Kaganovich



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but the seed is planted; the damage done; a gratuitous slam that doesn't move the plot forward. What is even more dangerous for middle school and high school readers is the fact that Lauren never questions her sources. If not for that biased paragraph, I would wholeheartedly recommend this book. However, as it stands, I can only give a conditional approval.

Charna Gross, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA and member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

Sutcliffe, William. *The Wall: a Modern Fable*. New York: Walker Books, 2013. 304 pp. \$17.99. (9780802734921) Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 9 and up.

No matter where one is on the political spectrum regarding Israel, no one can deny the plight of Palestinian families on the West Bank who are separated from their farms and orchards and must endure many indignities due to Israeli security concerns. In this political manifesto masquerading as a young adult novel, Sutcliffe presents a scathing "allegory" in which Israeli brutality is the monolithic theme. He does not avoid portraying the violence perpetrated by Palestinians against their own people who are suspected of collaboration. However, there is no mention of the history which resulted in the current unfortunate situation.

Our hero Joshua is an outcast. He lost his father, a reluctant soldier, to a sniper's bullet years before. His stepfather, the chief villain of the story, is an ugly, cruel, religious fanatic conforming to the classic anti-Semitic stereotype. The other Israeli children are portrayed as bloodthirsty, callous youths who are itching to join the army so they can terrorize the enemy civilian population. When Joshua accidentally discovers a tunnel leading under the wall separating his settlement town from the Arab village, he chooses to ignore the danger and crawls through to the other side. After befriending a Palestinian family, he is doubly shunned by his own society and tragically becomes a paraplegic, having been shot by Israeli forces. The boy's constant desire to return to his former home "by the sea" and eventually to "other countries beyond the reach of this lie" is a metaphor for where the Palestinians would really like the Jews to go.

Several other novels for young people lend themselves to a discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the Arab viewpoint: *Where the Streets Had a Name* by Randa Abdel-Fattah, *Habibi* by Naomi Shihab Nye, and *The Shepherd's Granddaughter* by Anne Laurel Carter. *The Wall* is a controversial and provocative book. Disturbingly, it targets a young adult audience who may be vulnerable to Sutcliffe's anti-Israel polemic.

Joyce Levine, North Shore Hebrew Academy High School, Great Neck, NY

Wolf, Elaine. *Camp*. New York: Sky Pony Press, 2012. 238 pp. \$16.95 (9781616086572) Gr. 6 and up.

In the 1960s, fourteen-year-old Amy Becker looks forward to a summer at home. But her father works out a deal with his brother for Amy to spend eight weeks at the camp he recently bought, Camp Takawanda for Girls. Wanting her harsh German immigrant mother to die and reluctant to leave her autistic brother, Amy sets off for camp with her cousin. She lies in her letters home about how great camp is while terrified of the initiation she's heard about. As she struggles to deal with the constant torment created by the mean girls, she develops confidence and friendships. But every secret has its price and when she learns about her mother's past in Europe, their lives change forever.

Debut novelist Wolf, self-dubbed as the "anti-bullyist" novelist, delivers on her message with a light, deft hand. This historical novel provides a story any teen can relate to: A rift with a parent, protective love for a sibling, and a hard time at summer camp with no one to depend on. The characters are well drawn. Amy is the good girl, but even she stoops to solve her own problems – with disastrous results. No character is overtly good or bad – there are nuances and a back story to each character, including the seemingly villainous Amy's mother and bully Rory. Wolf provides plenty of pathos. However, there are lost opportunities here. The name "Camp" could have had a double entendre between mother and daughter. It would have been more memorable if Amy's mother had been in a concentration camp. The reader also expects more guilt and more consequences for Amy after her brother's accidental death. Recommended particularly for girls twelve to fourteen.

Barbara Krasner, Member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, NJ



FOLKTALES

Prenzlau, Sheryl. *Room for One More: A Modern-Day Fairy Tale*. Illus. by Adi Katz. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2013. 42 pp. \$19.99. (9781598269321). Gr. 2-4.

Almost everyone is familiar with the story of a man (Chaim) who lives with his large family in a small house. He consults his rabbi, who instructs him to bring various farm animals into his house. Of course, the situation becomes more unbearable. Finally, the rabbi tells him to clear out all the animals, and the family is amazed at how spacious and quiet the house becomes. What distinguishes this book from the myriad versions available?

The book is presented as a story within a story, as a grandmotherly woman “tells a tale” to young listeners. The story is made up of four-line rhymes; the pacing is fast and even. This is one of the few versions that mention not only the space constraints, but also the odor. The imaginative illustrations complement the text, with the pictures of the crowded house brimming with activity and color, as well as some hidden objects. Another nice touch is that Chaim visits the rabbi in different venues—his office, his home, a wedding, and a *bris*—so that the reader sees different scenes of Jewish life, as well as Chaim’s exasperation. Chaim also learns a valuable lesson from *Pirke Avos* (*Ethics of the Fathers* 4:1): Who is rich? He who is content with his portion. While all the males are wearing *kippot* and the women have their hair covered, the humor and energy of this book make it appropriate for all Jewish libraries and an excellent choice for story time.

Kathe Pinchuck, Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

[Addendum by Reviewer: The book also comes in a Hebrew edition (translated by Meir Erlanger). The translation maintains the rhyme scheme, but it is obviously not an exact translation. For example, “Well, now that you’re settled,” the Rav said, scrunching his brow, “I think that you’re ready to move in a cow” becomes “Now that everything is in order and you have a chicken coop in your room,” in the brain of the Rav was a great idea, “to the house also bring in a cow!” Use this version in a Hebrew class or use both for Hebrew/English story hour.]

GOD & PRAYER

Sherman, Paulette Kouffman. *Shekhina*. Illus. by Rachel Shana Vine. New York: Parachute Jump Publishing, 2013. 26 pp. \$10.95 (9780985246952) Pbk. Preschool-adult.

Paulette Kouffman Sherman, author and psychologist, portrays Shekhina through a Kabbalistic (Jewish mysticism) viewpoint in her self-published picture book. Sherman characterizes the Shekhina as a female deity, mother, and Sabbath bride. Children will relate to the author’s simple, rhyming text that describes the Shekhina as a nurturing and maternal figure. Adults who practice Kabbalah will also appreciate the symbolism of light and the powers of the divine in the narrative. The sensitive and powerful multimedia illustrations further emphasize the spirituality of Shekhina. Vine painted the background bright yellow to represent the Kabbalistic concept of light. Then she drew over the paint with crayon and colored pencils to make childlike images of the deity, children, and parents. Recommended for Jewish libraries.

Heather Lenson, Ratner Media & Technology Center, Jewish Education Center of Cleveland and editor of the Jewish Valuesfinder

Vero-Ban, Linda. *Hello, God: Interactive Jewish Prayer Book for Children*. Illus. by Eszter Paller. Transl. by Ralph Berkin. Budapest: Hillel Jewish Education and Youth Centre Foundation, 2012. 55 pp. No price given. (9786155204043). Gr. 2-6.

The stated goal of this book, published by the Hillel Educational Youth Center Foundation in Budapest, Hungary, is to help children understand what it means to pray to God. The illustrations are appealing to preschool to grade two, but much of the text is more advanced. In fact, some of the ideas are quite sophisticated and some are too abstract for children. The suggestions to color in spaces or draw pictures inside the book are “interactive” but they are also ambiguous. An example of abstraction that is complex and difficult is in the section “Imagination without image”: Drawing hands and numbers on a blank clock face to represent God as time is very unclear and even misleading. The Hebrew excerpts from prayers are not carefully printed and it is clear that the writer lacked a good Hebrew editor. For example, on page 25, the Hebrew text is un-vocalized

(without punctuation marks). All the other Hebrew texts are vocalized. In addition, it looks as if the texts were photocopied from other sources and simply pasted onto the pages. It should also be noted that none of the English are translations; rather, they are all interpretations and should be noted as such. Some teachers might find this offering useful or inspiring, but it is not appropriate for traditional settings (the full Tetragrammaton is used), nor in most liberal settings that prefer God to be represented as gender neutral.

Marion M. Stein, retired from The Abraham Heschel High School, Brooklyn, NY and past president of AJL-NYMA

HISTORY

Bliss, John. *Jewish Migration*. Illus. by Jeff Edwards. (Children's True Stories: Migration Series). Chicago: Raintree, 2012. 32 pp. \$22.49. (9781410940759). Gr. 3-5.

Several stories of Jewish migration relate to the quote from Emma Lazarus's poem, "The New Colossus": "Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. / Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me: / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" According to the author of *Jewish Migration*, Jews could enter the golden doors of only five countries: Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and France. Other countries where Jews fled from persecution are not mentioned.

Although this book is part of the *Children's True Stories: Migration Series* (with some historical photographs), Bliss overlooks some major details in Jewish migration. The most glaring error Bliss and his editors make is being a day late with the date of the establishment of the modern state of Israel. They claim that "On May 15, 1948, the modern state of Israel was founded." Even more confounding is their definition in the glossary about Palestine: "Area of the Middle East at the east end of the Mediterranean Sea. Most of Palestine is now part of Israel." The glossary also defines anti-Semitism as exclusively being prejudice against Jewish people when, in reality, it is prejudice towards Jews and/or Arabs. Next, the author considers how Golda Meir and her family traveled 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) from New York City to Milwaukee and suggests that Milwaukee is in the middle of the country. Finally, this book makes sparse mention of Sephardic or Mizrahi Jewish migration. The redeeming quality of this book may be the accurate index. In conclusion, it is not likely that this book will migrate from libraries too quickly due to its controversial definitions and historical inaccuracies.

Ben Pastcan, Shalom School, Sacramento, CA

Bowers, Rick. *Superman Versus the Ku Klux Klan: The True Story of How the Iconic Superhero Battled the Men of Hate*. Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2012. 160 pp. \$16.95. (9781426309151) Gr. 5-8.

Bowers' book examines one of the strangest confluences in American culture – the history and events leading up to the 16-part "Clan of the Fiery Cross" radio program, which pitted the Man of Steel against the KKK. Ironically, the comic book crime fighter (conceived by two young Jewish men from Cleveland) and a secret club (begun by former Confederate officers) share basic characteristics: Both hide behind secret identities. Both wear disguises. Lastly, both use highly effective PR machines to make money for those involved within each organization. The similarities end there. Superman, the "Champion of the Oppressed", embodied the principles of *tzedakah* (serving the less fortunate) and of *tikkun olam* (doing good works). The KKK, on the other hand, championed oppression, targeting former slaves and post-Civil War Reconstructionists before moving on to "Jews, Catholics, Asians, Mexicans, labor unionists, socialists, and greedy Wall Street tycoons". As a former newspaper reporter and editor, Bowers deftly weaves together the disparate topics of comics and hate groups in concisely written prose guaranteed to capture and captivate the maturing reader. For Superman aficionados ready to transition from Nobleman's *Boys of Steel* (Knopf) picture book to a longer facts-packed chapter book, *Superman Versus the Ku Klux Klan* provides insight and illumination into a chapter of the Superman legend likely unfamiliar to the pre-teen crowd. Full-page, black-and-white illustrations begin each chapter and midway through the book four full-color, glossy pages feature various incarnations of Superman through the years. Includes a bibliography and an index.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH



HOLOCAUST & WORLD WAR II

Arato, Rona. *The Last Train: A Holocaust Story.* Toronto: Owlkids Books, 2013. 142 pp. \$15.95. (9781926973623). Gr. 4 and up.

For decades, Rona Arato's husband, Paul (whose original name was Auslander), tried to repress the terrifying years of his childhood. After the Nazis invaded Hungary in March 1944, Paul's father was taken away to a labor camp. Paul, his older brother, Oscar, and their mother, Lenke, were sent to a ghetto. It seemed that nothing could get worse—until they were shipped to a labor camp and later to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Their nightmarish existence seemed to have one exit—their deaths—especially when Lenke became ill and was unable to work. On April 9, 1945, when the Nazis were losing the war and wanted to destroy the evidence of the atrocities they had committed, they forced prisoners onto a train leaving Bergen-Belsen. Paul, Oscar, and Lenke were among the people crowded into boxcars without sufficient food or water. Five days later, American soldiers discovered the train and liberated its half-dead victims. One soldier even gave Paul a Tootsie Roll.

Sixty-five years later, Paul read an online article about the train. Soon afterwards, he met his rescuer at a symposium organized by Matt Rozell, a high school teacher in Hudson Falls, New York, that brought together liberators and train survivors. *The Last Train* is intended for ages nine and up because it omits the most horrific details about the Holocaust and because the four Auslanders survived. The book is emotionally honest, with moving details about one family's experiences. It has several positive moments, such as Paul's reunion with his father, and is a well-written, smooth read.

Dr. Marcia W. Posner, Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, NY

Macdonald, Maryann. *Odette's Secrets.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. 225 pp. \$16.99. (9781599907505). Gr. 5–8.

Prolific children's author, Maryann Macdonald, was inspired by the memoir *Doors to Madame Marie* by Odette Meyers (University of Washington Press, 1997) about a young, Jewish girl living in France during World War II. She has turned Odette's story into a first-person, fictionalized novel in verse. Odette's family never goes to synagogue but they don't celebrate Christmas. Odette explains: "We are Polish Jews because Mama's and Papa's parents and grandparents in faraway Poland are all Jews." However, Odette is still confused: "Our family speaks French. And we live in Paris now, not Poland. So why are we Polish Jews?" When her father enlists in the French army and is taken prisoner by the Germans, and her mother joins the Resistance, Odette escapes to the village of Chavagnes-en-Paillers in the Vendée. She is taken in by a kind foster family who teaches her, and the other Jewish children in their care, how to make the sign of the cross, the prayers said during Mass, and how to act like all of the other village children. Odette admits, "I almost forget who I really am . . ." and "I know the reason I feel safe in the country. It's because here, I am not a Jew."

After her mother's near arrest, she retrieves Odette, changes their names, and takes them to another village in the country to hide for the remainder of the war. After the war, they return to Paris and are reunited with her father. While she still struggles with her identity, Odette concludes, "I am a Jew. I'm sure of it. And I will always be one." While the free verse format makes the book very accessible and highly readable, the most tragic elements of the story (death of family members, deportation of neighbors, and destruction in Paris) are almost glossed over. The loving landlady and her husband, who act as Odette's godparents and the compassionate foster family in the Vendée are inspiring, touching examples of Righteous Gentiles. Not nearly as gripping or dramatic as *Yellow Star* by Jennifer Roy or *Black Radishes* by Susan Meyer, *Odette's Secrets* can be used as a gentle introduction to the Jewish experience in France during World War II.

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

Wein, Elizabeth. *Code Name Verity.* New York: Hyperion, 2012. 339 pp. \$16.99. (9781423152194). Gr. 9–adult.

Themes of friendship, loyalty, bravery, feminism, and espionage prevail throughout *Code Name Verity*. The story begins in 1938 with the writings of code name "Verity", a female, British prisoner in the Ormaie, Gestapo headquarters in France. She is a Special Operations Executive, a spy, for the British Army due to her bravery and her being trilingual. Between episodes of tortured inquisitions, she tells of her brutal treatment by the guards and recounts her friendship with Maddie Brodatt, a Scottish pilot for the British Air Transport Auxiliary who happens to be a young Jewish woman. Even when Verity is starved and beaten, her writings convey her sense of humor. She never shows self-pity or regret for fighting the Nazi army. Even the head of the prison,

SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Amadeus von Linden, is charmed by Verity's spirit and intelligence. She was found by the Gestapo with Maddie's identification papers on her person, so they think Verity is Maddie. Not until midway into the story is the prisoner's real name or how she was captured in France revealed.

The narrator switches to Maddie, or code name "Kitty Hawk", in Part Two of the story. After her plane is shot down in France, she hides and works with the French Resistance. She realizes the extra danger of being a British pilot who is also Jewish. Maddie desperately seeks to find out the whereabouts of Verity throughout her time in France. She does finally see her in a line of prisoners who are about to be executed. At that time, she risks her life and commits the greatest act of devotion for her friend. When Maddie discovers the writings of Verity, she realizes her friend's true strength and sense of defiance. Maddie learns that while Verity was being tortured for information, she told the Gestapo false codes and also protected Maddie's true identity.

The "Author's Debriefing" section at the end of the novel explains that the story is fictional, but a true history of the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA). A bibliography of resources about the ATA is provided. This is a World War II story, not a Holocaust story. The Jewish content is minimal. There is only a brief mention of the concentration camps where prisoners of war are sent. However, the gripping story resonates with readers in ways similar to *The Book Thief* by Marcus Zusak. The narrative is difficult to follow at first, but the themes haunt the reader after the story ends. *Code Name Verity* has made the "YALSA's (Young Adult Library Services Association) 2013 Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults." Recommended for all libraries.

*Heather Lenson, Ratner Media & Technology Center, Jewish Education Center of Cleveland,
and editor of the Jewish Valuesfinder*

ISRAEL

Lowenstein, Steven Stark. *For the Love of Israel: The Holy Land From Past to Present – A Primer for Tayarim, Talmidim, Vatikim, Noodnikim, and Dreamers.* Illus. by Mark Anderson. Chicago: Triumph Books, 2012. 48 pp. \$16.95. (9781600786778) Gr. 5–8.

Lowenstein jam packs *For the Love of Israel* with a hodgepodge of facts, quotes, and rhymes about a "land of incredible beauty, character and variety", much like a delicatessen worker cramming corned beef between slices of rye bread. Both labor under the assumption that more is better. As with his earlier alphabet book, *For the Love of Being Jewish* (Triumph Books, 2010), the passion Lowenstein feels for his subject matter shines through, though the book lacks a sense of unity that would make it a satisfying meal. He selects a pastiche of people, products, landmarks, and concepts to represent each letter (for example: C for Chalutzim, E for Elite chocolate, K for Knesset). As with all alphabet books, some letters prove problematic. What's the letter U have to do with Israel? Why, it's the Ukraine, where Yitzchak Rabin's father was born. Likewise for the letter V for Via Dolorosa, the street Jesus walked carrying the cross to his crucifixion. Even the most forgiving readers will find some of the four-line poems which introduce each letter a stretch, leaving an aftertaste of "Oy vey!" on their palates. ("G is for Galilee and Golan Heights / A mountainous region quite rocky / And for teacher and politician Golda Meir / The greatest import from Milwaukee.") Quotes about Israel from famous people and at times fascinating supporting text give the reader plenty to savor on their journey through the book's covers. Anderson's exceptional caricatures – especially of Dylan, Spielberg, and Herzl – bring a touch of panache to the alphabetical smorgasbord, but may be a tad sophisticated for the intended audience.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

Throp Claire. *Countries Around the World: Israel.* Illus. by Oxford Designers & Illustrators. Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2012. 48 pp. \$33.00. (9781432961015). Gr. 3–5.

Claire Throp presents a mostly even-handed view of Israel from a non-Jewish point of view. The text is simple and appropriate for this grade level. The book's format consists of short paragraphs covering history, industry, wildlife, and important personalities including Yassir Arafat and Golda Meir. Large beautiful color photographs accompany the text and greatly enhance the book. Colored text boxes add to the attractiveness of each page. A fact page, some Hebrew and Arabic words, a glossary of terms, and index are also included. In the glossary, the definition of intifada is: "Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip". Although *Countries Around the World: Israel* is a beautiful book, Jewish libraries will find other offerings more appropriate.

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

Wise, Stephen. *Israel: Repairing the World*. Hamilton, Ontario: BlueAppleWorks, 2012. 32 pp. \$11.99. (9780986758218) Pbk. Gr 3-7.

Israel: Repairing the World was written to provide middle-grade students with an introduction to Israel's scientific and cultural accomplishments and its role in "repairing the world"—a Jewish term meant to convey the obligation to make the world a better place. With its succinct, child-friendly language and attractive, colorful format, it provides an account of many of Israel's unique achievements in the areas of medicine, ecology and conservation, agriculture, computer and cell phone technology, humanitarian aid, the arts, and more. From the news media, one might think that war, terrorism, and conflict define life in Israel. This book aims to show students another side of this small nation.

The author wrote with Jewish students and Jewish schools in mind. But since the narrative is entirely factual, simply recounting and describing such Israeli inventions as instant messaging, cell-phone cameras, voicemail technology, and the "Israeli bandage" (which helped to save the life of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords), there is no reason why this title shouldn't also serve public schools, or private non-Jewish schools in their studies of the Middle East. Classroom-size orders (purchased at <http://www.ma-tovu.ca>) will be accompanied by a teacher guide and lesson plans, though it should be noted that these materials are geared for students in a Jewish setting.

Andrea Rapp, Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

Woolf, Alex. *Living Through the Arab-Israeli War Since 1948*. Chicago: Heinemann-Raintree, 2012. 80 pp. \$10.99. (9781432959951). Gr. 5-7.

The cover picture sets the tone: Palestinians armed only with stones facing off against an Israeli tank. Numerous other photos show Israelis as soldiers, while photos of the Arabs tend to be of women and children. Even the vocabulary of the Arab position is adopted. Jerusalem is called the "setting for the Prophet Mohammad's ascent into Heaven" where Muhammad as a "Prophet" who visited heaven is assumed to be fact instead of a religious tenet of Islam. Similarly, Arab violence against Israelis is called "resistance" and a photo caption refers to people made refugees by the Nakba. A historical account would refer to the war for the establishment of Israel, or the Arab-Israeli War of 1948; no objective narrative would use the loaded term "Nakba" (Arabic for "catastrophe") for the birth of the Israeli state.

The brief introductory section about the history of Zionism leaves the erroneous impression that, from the biblical era until 1897, there weren't Jews in the Land of Israel or a continuous Jewish devotion to the historic homeland. The section on the Balfour Declaration evokes the notion that Jews wielded "powerful influence in world affairs"—including Russian affairs—as a British motive for issuing the document (this during an era when Jews by the millions were fleeing pogroms and massacres in the Russian Empire. Some influence!). A whole chapter is given over to the battle at Deir Yassin, a much disputed event, but one where Arabs from the time are on record as admitting that their own leadership fabricated atrocity stories to lure Arab states into the battle on their side. Missing are the numerous threats of violence, *jihad*, and extermination made by Arab and Palestinian leaders prior to and since the November 29, 1947 partition resolution at the United Nations. Also absent are Palestinian Arabs' glorification and elevation of suicide terrorists, and the saturation of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish propaganda in the Palestinian media and schools.

Perhaps the author can be forgiven his less than objective account; after all, since 2004 he has authored dozens of books, on subjects ranging from the human body to the Great Barrier Reef, from the Wall Street Crash to the Amazon Rainforest. Mr. Woolf is wrong in attributing the failure of the Camp David meeting of President Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Barak, and Palestinian Chairman Arafat to Arafat's insisting on more than Barak offered. Arafat made no counter-offer; he walked out of the talks and began a terror campaign against Israel on his return. The assertion in a Venn diagram that the Palestinian position favors a two-state, side-by-side solution is also incorrect, as independent polling of the population negates that belief. Until publishers engage bona fide historians to write their social studies history books, they will continue to churn out books like this one, which is not recommended for purchase by any library.

Andrea Rapp, Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH



JEWISH LIFE & VALUES

Axelrod, Matt. *Surviving Your Bat/Bat Mitzvah: The Ultimate Insider's Guide.* Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, 2012. 197 pp. Index, Appendices. \$16.95. (9780765708878) Pbk. Gr. 6 and up.

There is a shelf of books for families planning *b'nei mitzvah*. One of the best is Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin's *Putting God on the Guest List*. But that volume is almost twenty years old, and speaks much more to the parents than to the children. Enter Cantor Matt Axelrod, who has provided a hands-on, accessible book on the process. His aim is multi-faceted: to provide an overview for young people in contemporary language and to guide the parents. His chapter-titles tell much of the story. "What if I make a mistake" describes some nightmare scenarios, and suggests ways to relieve the stress of the day. "You need to attend services more" tells both parents and children why it's important – they will learn what the service contains, and become comfortable as observers before they are participants. In addition, he discusses Trope, the Jewish calendar, and "What if we're not religious?" The final chapter, "Now what?" reminds children that their *b'nei mitzvah* is not the end of their Jewish education but the beginning of their lives as members of the community. Axelrod includes numerous "Insider's tips" for kids, talking about how to learn and prepare. There are also somewhat more serious "Just for parents" sections, containing genuinely helpful recommendations on how the adults can take part in the process, while acknowledging the child's growing independence. No one should throw out their copies of Salkin, or stop recommending it. But Cantor Axelrod has provided a new, engaging guide for the 21st century. It does not deal with the specifics of the training process, but provides a welcome, conversational handbook that everyone can use. It should be welcome in synagogue and school libraries, and might even be useful for tutors and clergy.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

MUSIC

Mesches, Jason. *Oneg Time!* Altadena, CA: Arroyo, 2012. Audio CD. Preschool–Gr. 2.

Jason Mesches added his personal style to this set of twelve songs which celebrate Jewish life and is geared for younger children. Many of the songs include a children's chorus which enliven the songs and appeal to children listeners. The first track, "Bo-Bo-Bo-Boker Tov", features a lead-in with a Spanish guitar riff. Another song, "The Baby Naming Song", is a melody that names different body parts in Hebrew. "What is Kosher" is amusing and contains good information about the meaning of *kashrut*. "Noah's Ark" is particularly engaging because the children's chorus make the appropriate sounds for each animal mentioned. The description of a hungry boy waiting anxiously for the *Oneg* after Shabbat services is an entertaining title song. "Shabbat in the Parking Lot" is not only upbeat and catchy, but also conveys the message that Jewish spaces can be created anywhere. A more sensitive tune, "Chanukah", is told from the viewpoint of a young child waiting for grandmother to visit at Hanukkah time. Unfortunately, the child does not comprehend that his grandmother has passed away. He finally learns that his grandmother is present in the spirit of the holiday traditions. This audio CD is highly recommended for all libraries in Reconstructionist, Reform or Conservative settings.

Heather Lenson, Ratner Media & Technology Center, Jewish Education Center of Cleveland and editor of the *Jewish Valuesfinder*

SHABBAT & HOLIDAYS

Asner, Anne-Marie Baila. *Hanukkah with Noshy Boy and Friends.* Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2013. 32 pp. \$6.95. (9780975362952) Pbk. Preschool–Gr. 1.

Each year, Noshy Boy hosts a Hanukkah party for his friends. Shluffy Girl takes a nap on the couch, Kvetchy Boy complains about the smell of the oil, Shleppy Boy lugs in a ten-pound bag of potatoes, Shmutzy Girl squirts donut jelly on her dress, and Klutzy Boy trips on a *dreidel*. Zaide gives a brief, basic retelling of the Hanukkah story and the children gather around the table for a festive meal prepared by Bubbe. After lighting the menorah and singing songs, Kvetchy Boy, the self-proclaimed Hanukkah hater, actually wins the *dreidel* game. However, he shares his chocolate *gelt* with the others, admitting that "Hanukkah isn't so bad after all." The simple, computer-generated artwork is colorful and expressive and matches the tone of this slight story. While Matzah Ball Books claims that their mission is "to foster love for and pride in Yiddish and all things Jewish", as with the others

in this series, the books merely introduce Yiddish words as *schtick* and fail to provide any substance that will enlighten or inspire Jewish readers. The slim 6 x 8 ½ inch paperback will literally and figuratively get lost on the already over-crowded shelf of Hanukkah picture books. Recommended where the rest of the series is popular; otherwise, an additional purchase.

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

Gilbert, Faye Alison. *Mushy Red Stuff*. Illus. by Leo Silva. Milwaukee: Mirror Publishing, 2012. 28 pp. \$9.99. (9781612251486) Pbk. Gr. K-6.

What happens when you combine a wicked child who changes himself into a wise child in one evening, a flying grandfather, and strong-tasting horseradish at the Passover table? A reader would hope for a spicy story. But besides a soaring grandfather and humor from family members, this book is almost as dry as *matzah*. If it were not for some of the creative ideas in this book (like comparing the gefilte fish to little footballs) and the vivid illustrations, there is little else that will captivate the reader. A strange feature is the use of bold headings at the top of most pages, as if each page were an individual chapter. Furthermore, the reader may be offended when the main character, Eli, spits in his red *kippah* to make sure it stays on his head.

While Eli learns to love some of his grandfather's traditions (What grandson would not be amazed to see his grandfather fly in the middle of a Passover seder?), and the book has a mushy and touching love story between him and his grandfather, there are enough missing details about the Passover seder (such as the *afikomen*, *charoset*, and parsley) to make it feel as if the reader has to search for the *afikomen* itself while reading this book. No recipe for the grandfather's horseradish is included at the end of the book. It might be better to save \$9.99 and buy a bottle of horseradish or the ingredients to make it at the supermarket rather than rush to buy this book. An optional library purchase.

Ben Pastcan, Shalom School, Sacramento, CA

Keogh, Josie. *Hanukkah*. (PowerKids Readers: Happy Holidays!). New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2013. 24 pp. \$22.60. (9781448896264). Preschool-Grade 1.

The books in the *PowerKids Readers: Happy Holidays* series are intended for kindergarten readers to "discover the traditions that enrich holiday celebrations". Each double-page spread includes a simple sentence on the left accompanied by a contemporary color photograph on the right. The entire text reads: "Hanukkah lasts eight days. It honors what took place in the Jewish Temple. The oil lasted for eight nights! That is why you eat foods fried in oil. *Latkes* are made from potatoes. Light the menorah! The *shamash* is in the middle of it. There are gifts. Spin the *dreidel*! You can win *gelt*." *Latke*, *menorah*, and *shamash* appear in bold and are listed as "words to know" in the back of the book but *dreidel* and *gelt* do not. It's nice that Hanukkah is included in this series alongside Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and St. Patrick's Day and as a non-fiction early reader it might serve a purpose. However, those looking for an introduction to the holiday would be better served by PowerKids' other Hanukkah title, *Let's Throw a Hanukkah Party!* by Rachel Lynette, a book which provides more details about the customs, traditions, and history. *Is It Hanukkah Yet?*, a "Step into Reading Step 1 Book" by Nancy Krulik (Random House, 2000) and *The First Night of Hanukkah*, an "All Aboard Reading Level 2" book by Nicki Weiss (Grosset & Dunlap, 1992) both offer beginning readers a more substantial and engaging Hanukkah story.

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

Kimmelman, Leslie. *Sam and Charlie (and Sam too!)* Illus. by Stefano Tambellini. Chicago: Albert Whitman, 2013. 38 pp. \$13.99. (9780807572139). Gr. 1-3

Sam has a new neighbor named Charlie. At first, Sam is surprised to discover that Charlie is a girl. Charlie has a *sister* named Sam, who they refer to as Sam Too. The storylines of friendship and play are perfect for emerging readers. Large type will appeal to young readers ready for independence. The kids celebrate Jewish holidays in simple ways – eating *hamentashen* and apologizing for hurting one another's feelings on Yom Kippur. The inclusion of Jewish content is refreshing and the Jewish elements are nicely woven into the story. There are few Jewish books in the genre, and this is a good selection for beginning readers. Numerous bold illustrations add charm to the story, support the context nicely, and will engage readers. The Sam Too character might be a little confusing for some, but overall, *Sam and Charlie (and Sam too!)* is a nice little easy reader. Recommended for Jewish libraries.

Barbara Bietz, Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Oak Park, CA

Tal, Rachel Shifra. *If You Give a Frog a Piece of Matzah.* Illus. by Carrie Truitt. Brooklyn: Zahava Publications, 2013. 24 pp. \$12.95. (9781607631231). Ages 3–8.

“If you give a frog a piece of *matzah*, he will want to know the story behind it.” So begins this whimsical and informative book about the ten plagues G-d brought upon Egypt. The frog is proud when he learns that he was one of the plagues, and smacks his lips with pleasure when his friend tells him that locusts covered the land. But he is afraid and hides under a plate when he learns that all the firstborn of Egypt were killed. He has to be reminded that he is a frog, not a plate. The frog has an unusual and amusing reaction to each of the plagues. The colorful, imaginative illustrations enhance the text and bring out the frog’s amusing personality. *If You Give a Frog a Piece of Matzah* is recommended for synagogue and day school libraries.

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

Stern, Ariella. *Purim: Guess Who? A Lift-the-Flap Book.* Illus. by Patti Argoff. Brooklyn, NY: Hachai, 2013. 26 pp. \$9.95. (9781929628735). Preschool.

Stern, Ariella. *Chanukah: Guess Who? A Lift-the-Flap Book.* Illus. by Patti Argoff. Brooklyn, NY: Hachai, 2012. 26 pp. \$9.95. (9781929628681). Preschool.

These two lovely picture books in verse are extremely appropriate for preschool children. Each two-page spread contains hints and helpful information on a particular aspect of the holiday, such as: “I’m a special Purim treat that everybody loves to eat. Why do you think I’m shaped like that? To look like Haman’s ears or hat.” The listener can guess the answer to the riddle and then lift the flap to reveal the answer. The flaps make the shared reading experience truly interactive. Hebrew words in the text are explained in a glossary following the story. The Chanukah book is followed by a list of activities to share; the Purim title includes the four special *mitzvos* of Purim. Illustrations are colorful, simple, and age appropriate. Children and adults are depicted in ultra-Orthodox clothing but the books are accessible to Jewish readers of all backgrounds. Full of Jewish content about the holidays and their history, these two books are joyous presentations that will appeal to preschool children in a classroom setting or at home.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

Don't Forget to Check Out AJL News!

The May/June 2013 issue of *AJL News* has Award News, lots good information and news from our Chapters, 2013 Conference Information and important reminders!

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Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND REBECCA JEFFERSON

Adwan, Sami, Dan Bar-On and Eyal Naveh. *Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine* (PRIME: Peace Research Institute in the Middle East). New York: The New Press, 2012. 398 pp. \$24.95. (9781595586834).

This book is the product of the organization PRIME (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East). PRIME challenged Israeli and Palestinian teachers to each write the history of their countries and then give it to the other side to teach. The work was done against a background of academic studies of conflict resolution and management and teaching methods geared to promoting understanding of the “other” in children. The histories are presented side by side on facing pages, with illustrations and footnotes. They do not run with exact concurrency and their differing emphasis is apparent from the beginning. It’s impossible for anyone from either side to make an objective evaluation of this work. The Israel story is told in a moderate, dispassionate voice, with full coverage of many regrettable mistakes, and little reference to the expulsion of Jews from Arab lands. The Arab version begins with a view of Zionism as an instrument of British colonialism, and continues in the usual tone of victimhood and paranoia. Both versions are extremely detailed, with references to individual battles, Arab towns and kibbutzim, seminal figures, and poetry as a popular response to nationalism. Each side has contributed a glossary, and there is commentary by teachers who participated in the project. Those involved seem to have found it eye-opening and rewarding on a personal level, but they make no real attempt to deny that implementing this approach of shared histories on a large scale is mostly unworkable. The book contains a bibliography in addition to footnotes. Recommended for academic collections on Israeli history.

Beth Dwoskin, Chair, Library Committee, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

Alpert, Bernard and Fran Alpert. *Archaeology and the Biblical Record*. Lanham, Maryland: Hamilton Books, 2012. xvi, 93 pp. \$24.99. (9780761858355).

The authors, who both have degrees in archaeology from Oxford University, have spent the past 30 years introducing visitors to Israel to the archaeology of the Holy Land. This book is written to help the general reader understand the archaeological evidence for the Biblical periods. The authors draw freely on the knowledge and research of many archaeologists both contemporary and from previous generations. At times they relate the conflicts between scholars with regard to interpretation. Archaeology seeks to tell a story based purely on the artifacts, but scholars frequently disagree on the interpretation of the evidence. While this is an easy read, the text often refers to “this author” leaving the reader confused as to whether “this author” is the person being quoted or the Alperets. This book is recommended for synagogues, schools, and academic collections.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Malcolm X College Library and University of Illinois Library, Chicago, IL

Ascher, Abraham. *Was Hitler a Riddle? Western Democracies and National Socialism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. 243 pp. \$29.95. (9780804783569).

A well-recognized, professional historian, retired from the Graduate School of the City University of New York, Ascher takes on in a most intelligent manner an after-the-fact evaluation of Adolf Hitler’s decision-making process prior to the outbreak of World War II. The method employed is to examine with hindsight the diplomatic records of British, French, and American ambassadors and related staff seconded to Berlin during the 1920s and 1930s. Why, the question is generally asked, did western diplomats whose prescience was assumed to be in place fail to profile, adequately, the ultimate decisions made by the Nazi leadership; or, if conclusions were properly drawn, why did their respective governments decline to act when the opportunity for successful deterrence presented itself? What is presented as a common factor is the general high level social background of many of the diplomats who held Judeo-phobic inclinations, anti-Communist fears, and some commiseration with German anger toward what they believed to be the overly burdensome conditions set out in the Versailles Treaty ending World War I. Ascher shows that until the German invasion of Poland, appeasement qua negotiations was viewed as a viable alternative to more forceful action. German treatment of its Jewish citizens was found to be most deplorable by the Americans over the British and French, but obviously not enough to provide the necessary protection. The quality of the critique and the book’s readability warrant its inclusion in an academic collection as well as a synagogue library that serves a highly literate congregation.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Aylon, Helène. *Whatever Is Contained Must Be Released: My Jewish Orthodox Girlhood, My Life as a Feminist Artist.* New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York (The Reuben/Rifkin Jewish Women Writers Series), 2012. 287 pp. \$22.76. (9781558617681).

Memoirs can be challenging to assess. Most intriguing are often not the “facts,” but the overall structure, the forces and influences considered integral by the memoirist, and the lens constructed to examine a life. What is omitted, the negative spaces, can be as instructive as what is present. In the case of Aylon’s memoir, the title and the sub-title make her approach evident from the outset.

Born in 1931, Aylon vividly presents her girlhood in the Orthodox milieu of Boro (not Borough) Park, Brooklyn—her student days at the Shulamith School for Girls, the family’s summertime trips to a bungalow colony, and the neighborhood institutions. The deep bond between Aylon and her mother Etta is especially affecting.

Aylon’s art and “post-Orthodox” world(s) are also displayed to considerable effect. Interspersed between chapters are photographs of her art and poems and inter/texts that illustrate the artistic experiments she so eloquently discusses within the text. Patriarchy, power relations, and the state of the environment are among the central themes of her oeuvre. Some of her most ambitious projects, such as Sand Gatherings and Earth Ambulance, were made in collaboration with the women’s and anti-militarism movements.

The non-traditional approach of Aylon’s visual art is mirrored in her prose. In plainspoken language, she often veers off into a topic seemingly unrelated. For example, on the pages immediately following her youthful communist self-identification, Aylon discusses the outfit she wore years later to her son’s wedding. The overall effect is successful, but readers expecting a linear approach to autobiography are forewarned.

Some of the book’s Jewish content would have benefited from closer editorial scrutiny. For example, a systematic transliteration of Hebrew and Yiddish words would have helped, particularly because there are many words in those languages throughout the book. Aylon makes no indication that she used one or even sought one out. There are errors, as well. For example, Aylon writes, “Rashi was the Torah commentator we had to study, who wrote his comments in Aramaic.” (p. 25). In fact, Rashi’s commentary is largely in Hebrew. She uses the term “*bein hashmashim*” (p. 53) for dusk instead of “*ben ha-shemashot*.” Still, these are small criticisms of the memoir of a groundbreaking feminist artist. Recommended for academic, community, and public libraries.

Yermiyahu Ahron Taub, www.yataub.net, Washington, D.C.

Azoulay, Ariella and Adi Ophir. *The One-State Condition: Occupation and Democracy in Israel/Palestine.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press (Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures), 2013. 316 pp. \$24.95. (9780804775922).

This is a serious analysis of the Israeli policies that have governed the territories seized by Israel as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict. The perspective guiding the discussion is clearly unfavorable to Jerusalem decision-makers, with descriptions of oppressive and discriminatory measures against the Palestinian Arab population. The Israeli authors are respectively the Director of Photo-Lexic at Tel Aviv University and a political theorist at the same institution. Coverage, divided into three parts, begins with the initial decade of administrative governance, followed by a second decade, two major uprisings (the *intifadas*). Part two reviews the nature of violence perpetrated by armed Palestinian organizations and importantly the background to the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and its implications. The last part is a critical evaluation of the strategy of occupation and the legal structure dealing with Palestinians as non-citizen residents. The authors conclude with alternatives to continued Israeli occupation: a two-state solution, a one-state situation with equal citizenship for Palestinians and Israelis alike, or a federal system. Notably absent is any mention of an obligation on the part of Palestinians to negotiate in good faith with the Israelis without expecting maximum satisfaction. This is a book that will find favor with the Left and serve as outrage to the Right. With that said, the work’s clear bias will become a factor in the decision for inclusion in a collection.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC



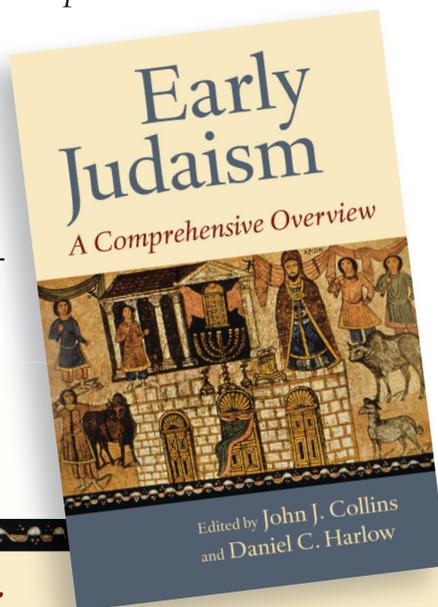
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Benor, Sarah. *Becoming Frum: How Newcomers Learn the Language and Culture of Orthodox Judaism.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012. 248 pp. \$27.95. (9780813553894).

In this fascinating study about language and culture, Sarah Bunin Benor, Associate Professor of Contemporary Jewish Studies at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion (Los Angeles campus) and Adjunct Associate Professor in the University of Southern California Linguistics Department, examines in detail the expressions, new vocabulary and way of speaking of newly observant Jews or Baal Teshuvos (Jews returning to religious observance). Benor's work attempts to respond to three basic questions: What linguistic and cultural practices are encountered by the Baal Teshuvos in Orthodox communities? To what extent do they adopt these new practices? How are these practices learned? The study includes people who are in one of four stages towards becoming observant Jews: Prospective, Peripheral, Community and Yeshiva/Seminary. Her analysis intertwines diverse elements of culture, such as language, identity and social structure. This type of language socialization research can be relevant to other instances when individuals embrace a new role and a new community, such as in cases of migration, a new line of work, or a new life phase, as all these involve changes in physical appearance, activities and speech. The author mainly conducted her ethnographic research in a city situated in Philadelphia but also briefly visited other Orthodox communities in Israel, Brooklyn, Monsey and Mexico. *Becoming Frum* is an academic but accessible study on linguistics, culture and socialization. Recommended for all libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

Bornstein, Kate. *A Queer and Pleasant Danger: A Memoir. The True Story of a Nice Jewish Boy Who Joins the Church of Scientology and Leaves Twelve Years Later to Become the Lovely Lady She is Today.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2012. 258 pp. \$14.40. (9780807001653).

Transgender icon, performer, and author of pioneering books about gender identity, Kate Bornstein wrote this painfully honest and moving memoir in part for her estranged daughter, Jessica. Al Bornstein felt from an early age like a girl, despite having an outwardly male appearance. Later, he was drawn into the cultlike world of Scientology, attracted in part by the Scientologist concept of thetans, spiritual beings that have no gender. Rising in the ranks, he remained there for twelve years until being excommunicated and thus tragically estranged from his young daughter. Coming to terms with his (actually, her) gender identity, Al, now Katherine (Kate) underwent gender reassignment surgery, and also realized her identity as a lesbian, and her sadomasochistic tendencies. Along the way, the author deals with issues of self-esteem, eating disorders, suicidal impulses, and her relationships with others.

Not for the faint of heart, this is a deeply intimate and at times gritty account of struggle. From the turmoil emerges an inspiring story about gender identity and much more. Scientology, gender identity and sexual orientation play the biggest roles in this book, as Bornstein takes her place alongside other Jewish pioneers of gender identity such as Leslie Feinberg and Joy Ladin. This book is recommended for libraries collecting materials on gender, GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender) issues, and biography.

Amanda (Miriyem-Khaye) Seigel, Librarian, Dorot Jewish Division, The New York Public Library

Brink-Danan, Marcy. *Jewish Life in 21st-Century Turkey: the Other Side of Tolerance.* Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012. xviii, 218 pp. \$24.95. (9780253356901).

Brink-Danan provides us with an anthropological examination of current life for the Jewish community of Istanbul, which is nowadays the largest concentration of Jews in Turkey. The book is based on an extensive field study in the early 2000s, publications on Turkish Jews, modern Turkey, and Sephardim in general, as well as other anthropological theoretical studies. The book includes photographs, notes, references and an index. The issue of Jews as cosmopolitans is examined mainly in the second chapter, but often referred to elsewhere as well. The author pays special attention to ways in which Jews relate to their status as cosmopolitan – and how the society at large views them – due to their relations with Jews abroad, knowledge of languages and ideas, and even in such prosaic issues as the names they use in private and in public. The author also examines the issue of “tolerance”: does it really exist in Turkey towards the Jews? If so, why are Jews often putting *mezuzot* inside the house and omitting signage from public Jewish sites, which one can enter only after passing heavy security? And why are some Turkish Jews reluctant to talk and have the author publish on certain sensitive issues? Are Jews, who are citizens and have lived in Turkey for many centuries really regarded as “Turks” by the majority Muslim population? The book provides much important information and analysis on important issues regarding

contemporary Turkish Jews, though some of the theoretical parts might be of more interest to anthropologists. The study is an important contribution to our knowledge of Jewish life in the 21st century Middle East in general and Turkey in particular, and is of relevance as well for those interested in minority and culture studies.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton NJ

Brod, Harry. *Superman Is Jewish? How Comic Book Superheroes Came to Serve Truth, Justice, and the Jewish-American Way.* New York: Free Press, 2012. 240 pp. \$25.00. (9781416595304). Also available as an ebook.

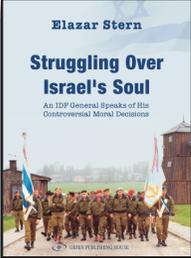
Dr. Harry Brod has written a fascinating book useful to all synagogue (and perhaps church school and even seminary) librarians. *Superman Is Jewish?* is a serious exploration into the relationship between fantasy and history as they intersect with anti-Semitism. Brod, who teaches at the University of Northern Idaho, evidently is a comic book lover and a rather original thinker as to the genesis and evolution of Jewish history. He correctly points out the relationship between art and revolution, as may be seen in the work of Marc Chagall and El Lissitzky (and behold – their heroes fly, like Superman!).

Superman's supernatural ancestor in Jewish lore, the Golem, is examined in the famous legend connected with the Maharal of Prague. Brod points out how the Golem myth served as an emblem for Jewish unity and resistance to the blood libel of those days. Physical strength must be subjugated to the lure and magnetism of the spirit and Brod cleverly connects the poetics of history with the rhythm of historical myth.

A possible sub-text of this fairly concise work is that today's Jewish and world religious leadership must be girded by imagination and reverence of the past but mustn't be intimidated by the shadow of that past! On a lighter note, Spider-Man, X-Men, The Hulk as well as The Thing and their gifted creators, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby along with Superman's originators, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, are all included in this interesting and readable book.

Morton J. Merowitz, Librarian and independent scholar, Buffalo, NY.

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Struggling Over Israel's Soul
An IDF General Speaks of His Controversial Moral Decisions
By Elazar Stern
PB / 373 pp / ISBN 9789652295767 / \$18

"To regard Elazar Stern's remarkable and moving memoir is to plunge into Israel's problems of loyalty and faith, individual morality and political considerations, religious education and the changing strategic necessities: he evokes them with sensitivity and gravity. I warmly recommend this volume to anyone interested in the dramatic and psychological dilemmas Israel is facing on many levels, to this day." – **Elie Wiesel**,

Survivors By Aliza Auerbach
HC / 205pp / ISBN 9789652295866 / \$30
Coffee Table size: 13.5" x 9.75"

Renown photographer, Aliza Auerbach spent five years creating this special work that confirms optimism and vitality. There are 29 black and white portraits of survivors, their autobiographies, photos of some personal objects they have kept and then color photographs of them with their families in Israel.

And Every Single One Was Someone
Concept by Phil Chernofsky
HC / 1250pp / ISBN 9789652295910 / \$60

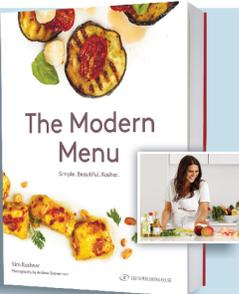
As a math and Jewish studies teacher in a Jewish day school, Chernofsky wanted a different and meaningful way for his students to relate to the Holocaust. From there evolved this book that has just one word, six million times – JEW. What would a book of six million Jews look like? This is a volume meant for library and institution presentations on the Holocaust, a daring attempt to give some small sense of the overwhelming number – six million.

Awesome Creation
By Rabbi Yosef Bitton
HC / 226pp / ISBN 9789652295569 / \$26.95

Drawing on classical Jewish sources as well as current scientific data, Rabbi Bitton offers a fresh reading of the initial words of Scripture. Through a precise understanding of each word of these first three verses – and thanks to today's modern scientific knowledge – we are able to appreciate, as never before, the beauty and sophistication of the Biblical story of Creation.

The Newlywed's Guide to Physical Intimacy
By Dr. Jennie Rosenfeld & Dr. David S. Ribner
PB / 91pp / ISBN 9789652295354 / \$15

"Two mental health professionals combine their experience and knowledge in a book for Orthodox brides and grooms. The material bridges the gap between the halachic (Torah law) instruction usually received before marriage and pertaining mostly to the laws of *niddah* (separation during menstruation), and books about sex available in the secular press....It is highly recommended for all libraries with Orthodox patrons, and a good choice for resource or counseling centers."
– *AJL Reviews*, Feb/March 2012



The Modern Menu
Simple, Beautiful, Kosher
By Kim Kushner
Photography by Andrew Zuckerman
HC / 152pp / ISBN 9789652296115 / \$39.95
PB / 152pp / ISBN 9789652296320 / \$21.95

The Modern Menu is a minimalist guide to creating delicious Kosher food with a fresh, youthful perspective and visual inspiration provided by noted photographer, Andrew Zuckerman. A longtime cooking teacher in Manhattan, Kushner's friends and students had been pestering her for a cookbook for years. Her students always want to know what goes with what, so she organized the recipes into menus, named for the way the dishes make her feel. "Vibrant", "Crisp", "Saucy", "Gutsy".

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Gefen, it's not just good wine





Cassedy, Ellen. *We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. 273 pp. \$19.95. (9780803230125).

This book describes a journey the author took to uncover her heritage as the descendant of Lithuanian Jews, some of whom were Holocaust survivors. Most of the book is set in Vilnius, where the author participated in the Yiddish summer program at Vilnius University. She also visited other towns in Lithuania in search of answers about her ancestors and about the attitude of Lithuanians toward their Holocaust history, a history that includes the reality that about 90% of the pre-war Jewish population was massacred not by Germans, but by Lithuanians carrying out German orders. She talked to numerous Lithuanians, Jewish and Gentile, trying to gauge whether present-day Lithuania is ready to come to grips with its past. During her Lithuanian sojourn, she also researched a disturbing fact she learned before her departure—her beloved great-uncle was a ghetto policeman. The book is filled with questions about these difficult matters, and none of them are answered or resolved neatly. Many of these issues have been covered before in personal examinations of the Holocaust. What distinguishes this work is the quality of the writing. Though it is a well-researched and very up-to-date presentation about Lithuania, it never feels dense or academic. It remains fresh and breezy despite its serious subject matter, with vivid descriptions of the beauty of Lithuania's towns and countryside, and of her Yiddish teachers and fellow students. Though there is no bibliography, the author mentions her sources in a note at the end. Recommended for Holocaust and genealogy collections.

Beth Dwoskin, Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

Cohen, J. Simcha. *Jewish Prayer: the right way, resolving halachic dilemmas.* Jerusalem; New York: Urim Publications, c2012. 267 pp. \$25.95. (9789655240689).

Each chapter in Simcha Cohen's book presents a question on Jewish prayer posed by the author which the author then attempts to answer. The problem with this book is that the questions are not always formulated in a way that can be answered definitively. Some of the answers do not even address the questions. The author presents this as a book of halacha, but he never takes into account differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardi tradition or local practices. This book is not recommended.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Malcolm X College Library and University of Illinois Library, Chicago, IL

Cohn, Naftali S. *The Memory of the Temple and the Making of the Rabbis.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. 241 pp. (9780812244571).

The Mishnah has come into its own in recent years as the subject of serious, respectful and innovative academic study. Moving beyond source criticism and textual criticism, scholars have explored and emphasized the complexities of the Mishnah's literary dimensions – the structure of its tractates and chapters, the characteristics and significance of its stories, the subtle shifts in its grammar, and its elusive ideology. Naftali Cohn's book joins the small but growing list of English titles dedicated to this endeavor, focusing on the Mishnah's portrayal of the Second Temple, the last great centralized arena of Jewish life, which had ceased to exist long before the Mishnah was composed. Starting from a careful, philologically informed reading of Mishnah texts which describe the Temple, its rituals and its layout, Cohn uses the critical terms of collective memory, discourse and power to reveal the subtle ways in which the Mishnah was designed to enhance the standing of its composers, the Rabbis. Most Jews at the time had some memory of the Temple, but the Rabbis retrojected themselves into those memories, placing themselves and their institutions, values and concepts at the heart of that commonly held and cherished history. Besides making an important contribution to the critical study of the Mishnah, *The Memory of the Temple* is a fine example of the high quality of research being done today in the field of rabbinics in the United States by scholars who are equally conversant in Hebrew texts and critical theory. Particularly noteworthy in this context is the inclusion of many Mishnah texts in their original Hebrew, based upon the best manuscripts, and the exhaustive lists of source texts in the appendices.

Pinchas Roth, Tikvah Scholar, NYU Tikvah Center.



Damsma, Alinda. *The Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel*. Leiden; Boston: Brill (Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture, 13), 2012. 235 pp. \$149.00. (9789004229907).

This outstanding work of scholarship presents the critical text, translation and commentary to the Kabbalistic lore in Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel chapter 1. This text describes the prophet's vision of the celestial chariot, relating it to the Hekhalot (heavenly palaces) genre and the angels there, and to the *Shi'ur Qomah* tradition in particular. The Targum also incorporates the extensively Talmudic cosmology found in Hagigah 12b, equating the distance between each *raki'a* (firmament), 500 parasangs, as a journey between the theurgic names of the seven heavens [*Shamayim, Sheme Shamayim, Zevul, Arafel, Shehaqim, Aravot*] up to the throne of Hashem. The author of this mystical text demonstrates knowledge of astronomy. Damsma draws on a number of manuscript sources: two are from the Cairo Geniza (11th Century); four are of Yemenite provenance, and one notable manuscript from the 16th century was previously collected by the Italian Kabbalist Rabbi Menachem ha-Recanati.

The volume concludes with a treatment of the Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel in relation to their Aramaic dialect, date, and provenance, as well as their historical and social setting. Appendices include (A) Targumic Versions of the Recovery of the book of Torah, (B) Targumic Versions of Deut. 28:36, (C) The Order of the Heavens, (D) The Stature of the Godhead in Sefer Haqqomah compared with Hayyot in b. Hagigah 13a and Tos. Tgs. Ezekiel 1:2 (E) The Concept of the Macrocosmic Body in the Ancient Near East, (F) Order of the Underworlds in Rabbinic Literature, (G) Aggada on the Premature Exodus of the tribe of Ephraim, Bibliography, and Index.

Damsma is a post-doctoral researcher and teacher at University College London and a teacher at Kings College London. She has published articles on Aramaic, the Targumim, and Jewish mysticism. This remarkable work is highly recommended for academic Judaica collections.

Dr. David B Levy

Dauber, Jonathan. *Knowledge of God and the Development of Early Kabbalah*, Leiden: Brill, 2012. 275 pp. \$156.00. (9789004234260).

In this readable but highly academic work, Jonathan Dauber attempts to describe the emergence of the Kabbalah which, he is quick to point out, should not be confused with the attempt to uncover the origin of the Kabbalah. He attempts to answer what provided the Kabbalistic movement(s) with the "intellectual and religious energy to develop and grow." As with any historical phenomenon, there are often a myriad of underlying factors, such as similar developments then occurring in the Christian milieu and, in this case, the emergence of the 12th century European renaissance. But Dauber focuses specifically on the beginning of a Hebrew tradition of rationalist philosophy that emerges at the same time as a kabbalistic literary tradition. The very same ethos of a Hebrew philosophical tradition that engaged in the investigation of God and was invested with deep religious significance encouraged and perhaps even served as a catalyst for early Kabbalists to develop their practices and doctrines.

In the introduction, Dauber takes the reader through a historiographical journey charting the interplay and tension that existed between philosophy and kabbalah. Chapter one focuses on the work of the early Kabbalists with a particular focus on their creativity. Chapter two centers on the great value placed on investigating God in philosophical literature. In the third chapter Dauber examines classical and



rabbinic texts and demonstrates that investigating God has never been a critical focus of investigation for the Rabbis. In fact, it is first found in the 12th and 13th century with the German pietists who were contemporaries with the early Kabbalists. The fourth chapter details how the early Kabbalists adopted the philosophic tradition and adapted it to their needs. The final two chapters focus specifically on two Kabbalists and their works.

This book is for the academic minded reader with an interest in the emergence and development of the Kabbalah and in general medieval Jewish intellectual history. It is written with clarity and well organized.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

Dever, William G. *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel: where Archaeology and the Bible Intersect*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012. X, 436 pp. \$25.00. (9780802867018).

The Land of Israel (Eretz Yisrael), as the Holy Land, has had more than its share of archaeological excavations. Prominent archaeologists from all over the world have worked in the area; Israeli archaeologists are also very active. Professor Dever claims that archaeology can teach us more about how people lived in biblical times than the Bible. I found his book useful and enlightening.

He starts with a critical analysis of the work of pro-Palestinian scholars, whose aim is to discredit the Bible and negate any Jewish claim to Eretz Yisrael. The early chapters give an overview of the very many archaeological excavations undertaken in this geographical area. The author's brief analysis is of service in placing individual excavations in context. He then continues with a discussion of various aspects of daily life in the 8th and 9th century B.C.E; each chapter includes comparisons with the Biblical sources.

The author's final paragraph is of importance: "Setting the Hebrew Bible into a real-life context, illustrating its stories through the archaeological remains now brought to light, does not detract from it..." Recommended!

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Elmaleh, Raphael David and George Ricketts. *Jews under Moroccan Skies: Two Thousand Years of Jewish Life*. Santa Fe, NM: Gaon Books, 2012. 227 pp. (9781935604242).

Part historical overview, part travel guide and part collection of oral history, this book is intended to give the general reader a picture of Jews in Morocco both of the past and of the present.

Section One provides a brief history complete with a map and timelines, making it accessible to the novice, while Section Two examines the history and contemporary life, if it still exists, of each specific region in Morocco inhabited by Jews: e.g., Mediterranean Coast, Atlantic Coast, Anti-Atlas Mountains etc. In light of the diverse political history, this is crucial. When the information is available the author records the last Jews who inhabited a place and why they had emigrated. Section Three briefly covers the culture specific to Moroccan Jews such as the veneration of *tsadikim*, beliefs and foods eaten.

Elmaleh works for the Jewish Museum in Casablanca which is under the auspices of the Foundation for the History of Culture of Moroccan Jews. He has been actively involved in the collection of artifacts throughout the country, in the oral history project and the restoration of synagogues. His ongoing research and knowledge enhances this work, and it could be a springboard for further research though it is not an academic oeuvre. The book also takes the point of view of one who chose to remain in Morocco and values the largely mutually enriching Jewish-Muslim relations there.

Includes black and white photographs, glossary, recommended readings and index. Strongly recommended for synagogue, community and school libraries.

Leah Cohen, Jacob M. Lowy Collection, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON

Firestone, Reuven. *Holy War in Judaism: The Fall & Rise of a Controversial Idea*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Notes, Bibliog., Index. 384 pp. \$39.95. (9780199860302).

Professor Firestone (of HUC-Los Angeles) has written extensively about the concept of Holy War (war authorized or commanded by God). In this book he examines its history from Biblical times to our own.

Part 1 begins with Biblical warfare, which was considered successful or not depending on its authorization by the Almighty. It continues by discussing the Maccabean War, and concludes by analyzing the unsuccessful attempts to defeat the Romans in 66-70 C.E. and during the Bar Kochba revolt. In Part 2, Firestone moves to the medieval period: he starts with the view of Holy War as it was re-defined by the Talmudic sages; he then moves to the rabbinic typologies of war, and continues with a wide-ranging examination of "Who is the Enemy?" Chapters

seven and eight analyze the differing views of Maimonides and Nachmanides. Part 3 examines Zionist thought. Firestone starts in the 19th century, discussing how war was seen by several of the movement's progenitors and early leaders, and their differing perspectives on the Holy Land. He then moves to Rav Kook's views; the inter-war issues surrounding self-defense (the Haganah); the resistance movements of the 1930s, and the post-Shoah period (1945-48). Part 4 reviews the wars of the State of Israel, including the War for Independence, the 1956 Suez conflict, the Six-Day War, the Yom Kippur War, and the development of new views in the 1970s and 80s.

Holy War in Judaism is a fascinating examination of an important and complex topic. Those interested in the development of the question will find this book extremely worthwhile. While not an easy read, it is clearly written. The footnotes are extensive, as is the bibliography. It is highly recommended for academic collections, but may not be a first-choice title for smaller libraries.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Franklin, Arnold E. *This Noble House: Jewish Descendants of King David in the Medieval Islamic East.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013. 297 pp. (9780812244090)

Dozens of influential Jews in the Middle Ages were identified by the title *Nasi*. The title evoked the Patriarchs of Roman times and the Exilarchs of Babylonia, but while some medieval bearers of the title were the acknowledged leaders of their communities, for others it was no more than an honorific. Focusing on the Jewish communities of medieval Egypt and the area whose documents are found in the Cairo Genizah, Franklin demonstrates that the growing interest in this title, and in its genealogical implication of descent from the line of King David, was an outgrowth of their Islamicized culture. Alongside texts from rabbinic responsa and medieval travelogues, Franklin analyzes many letters in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic from the Genizah, emphasizing and elucidating their use of family lineage claims. Photographs of several of these Genizah letters are included in the book, and an appendix lists more than one hundred medieval Jews who claimed descent from King David. *This Noble House* is a fascinating study in the burgeoning field of Genizah studies, and provides a new perspective on medieval Jewish culture in the Islamic world.

Dr. Pinchas Roth, Tikvah Scholar, NYU Tikvah Center.

Goldstein, Stephen L. *When My Mother No Longer Knew My Name: A son's "course" in "rational" caregiving.* Ashland, OR: Grid Press, 2012. 172 pp. \$21.95. (9781555717018).

Stephen Goldstein, author, journalist, Ph.D. from Columbia University, and radio/TV talk show host tackles an extraordinarily difficult situation and provides us with much to think about. He sets out a very personal and particular story of taking care of his mother which is both heart-wrenching and familiar to anyone who has had the opportunity to care for a loved one.

The author uses his own very unique situation as a springboard to raise the wide variety of issues which anyone taking care of an elderly parent has to consider and plan for. He offers much invaluable advice on how to prepare yourself emotionally and practically when thinking out the choices and dealing with the multitude of hard decisions which have to be made. The book includes a pre-assessment and a post-assessment test of your caregiver readiness. A careful reading of the book will certainly improve one's caregiver readiness score.

Goldstein provides some extraordinary practical techniques that can make a real difference in dealing with tricky and emotionally laden situations. Some of the author's observations seem obvious, while others are controversial. Overall, Goldstein's book is a positive contribution to the subject.

When My Mother No Longer Knew My Name is recommended for anyone dealing with or considering dealing with elderly parents. Do not delay nor wait until the situation is thrust upon you. This book can made a real difference to you, how you make this important decision, and how you cope with an aging parent. Given the demographics of America and especially the Jewish population, social service organizations, synagogues, and libraries should add Goldstein's book to their collection.

Nathan Aaron Rosen, New York, NY



Greenberg, Molly. *Secrets in the Suitcase; Stories my Mother Never Told me.* Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2012. xxii, 158 pp. (9781477282090).

This collection of stories and sketches consists of the reminiscences of a Holocaust survivor who managed to pass as a Gentile in Poland because of her blond hair and blue eyes. She lost most of her family in the Shoah and was deprived of a normal childhood and education. Her written testimony, however, shows that she developed an amazing power of expression in English, when she took a class in autobiographical writing at the local Jewish Community Center. Subsequently she received several awards for creative writing. While she never spoke to her daughters and grandchildren about her past in hiding, her writings are eloquent testimony to what happened and to her emotional and psychological reactions to her experiences.

Most of her sketches and poems are short, a page or less, cast in simple words, yet packing an enormous emotional impact. They range from the happy stories of childhood memories to bearing witness to the murderous activities she witnessed, to descriptions of her adjustment to life in America, but underlying it all, there is always the effort to find meaning in existence, in view of the horrors she had observed and disappointments she had experienced.

Found in a suitcase in the attic after her death, these writings were edited and arranged for publication by her daughter. One might wish for a more logical, chronological arrangement of the stories and poems, but the effect upon the reader will be one of veracity, immediacy and emotional impact. Recommended as a valuable addition to Holocaust testimonials.

Susanne M. Batzdorff, Librarian, retired, Celia Gurevitch Library, Congregation Beth Ami, Santa Rosa, CA.

Harris, Michael J, Daniel Rynhold and Tamra Wright, editors. *Radical Responsibility: Celebrating the Thought of Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks.* Jerusalem: Maggid Books, an imprint of Koren Publishers Jerusalem, Ltd. (in cooperation with the London School of Jewish Studies and the Michael Scharf Publication Trust of YU Press), 2012. 264 pp. \$29.95. (9781592643660).

In his illustrious career as rabbi, author, and philosopher, much of Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks' focus has been on the "challenge to faiths to understand themselves on their own terms with an eye on how those terms can nonetheless form part of the global tapestry." He deems this interaction a framework of "*Torah v'chochmah*," with *chochmah* defined as "the universals of mankind's intellectual quest." The essays in this festschrift are divided into four sections: "Jewish Ethics and Moral Philosophy," which includes discussions about "Torah and Moral Philosophy"; an analysis of "Altruism in Jewish Thought and Law;" a look at "Collective Responsibility and the Sin of Achan," and an essay about "Responsibility: Communal and Individual." Three essays about "The Pursuit of Justice" delve into legal issues and fairness. Essays about "Religion and Contemporary Society" and "Leadership" complete the collection.

The occasion of the Chief Rabbi's 65th birthday, as well as his retirement as the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth prompted this celebration of his accomplishments. All of the authors have either a personal connection to the Chief Rabbi or are familiar with his work, and they all possess impressive credentials. As with other volumes in this genre, the essays present a scholarly and academic focus. They deal with many of the issues brought up in Sack's *To Heal a Fractured World* (Continuum, 2005), *The Dignity of Difference* (Continuum, 2002), and *Future Tense* (Hodder, 2009). Of particular interest is the essay by Charles Taylor, a Catholic, who considers Rabbi Sacks' assertion, "those who are confident in their faith are not threatened but enlarged by the different faith of others," and details how he (Taylor) embraces this truth; as well as Tamra Wright's Afterword suggesting the interaction of cognitive behavioral therapy and Torah to create a new mussar (character development) movement as an application of the rabbi's approach. Rabbi Sacks' books are essential to every Jewish library, so those with patrons who enjoy scholarly discourse will find this one essential, too. For others, it is a very strong optional purchase.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Ilan, Tal, Monika Brockhaus and Tanja Hidde, editors. *Introduction to Seder Qodashim: A Feminist Commentary on the Talmud V.* Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012. 385 pp. \$146.00. (9783161519307).

This volume is part of an ongoing series that will include commentaries on all of the tractates of the Babylonian Talmud, along with collections of scholarly essays. This book's subjects relate to the fifth *sefer* (order) of the Talmud, Qodashim, which deals with the Temple and sacrifices. The goal is not only to research women in

rabbinic literature by studying subjects previously ignored, but to use feminist research methods to find new ways to understand all of the subjects being studied. For example, Christiane Tzuberi in her article “‘And the Woman is a High-Priest’: From the Temple to the Kitchen, From the Laws of Ritual Im/Purity to the Laws of Kashrut,” quotes the famous line in the Babylonian Talmud: “As long as the Temple stood, the altar atoned for Israel, but now a man’s table atones for him” (Berakhot 55a and other places). If the food preparers now function in a way parallel to the way the priests functioned in the Temple, the quote would seem to be referring to women, since they are the ones who prepare items for the (sacred) table. Tzuberi uses this insight to discuss parallels between the laws of Kashrut and the Laws of purity, as well as to examine the rabbis’ attitudes toward women.

The articles in this book address Temple and purity related issues as reflected in the order of Qodashim itself, as well as in other parts of the Talmud. Some articles deal with the reality of the Second Temple, while others deal with the theoretical discussions in the later Talmud that often may not present an accurate picture of the earlier realities. This is a wonderful collection. It belongs in any academic Judaica library.

Jim Rosenbloom, Judaica Librarian at Brandeis University, and Past President of AJL

Jany, Janos. *Judging in the Islamic, Jewish and Zoroastrian Legal Traditions: A Comparison of Theory and Practice*. Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012. 231 pp. \$124.95. (9781409437161).

In this fascinating new book, Janus Jany presents, as his subtitle suggests, a comparative analysis of the Islamic, Jewish and Zoroastrian judiciary systems. Jany is particularly focused on the judiciary since, as he points out, it is the judge who is given the responsibility of evaluating and administering the legal texts held by each group. At the same time, a judge must keep in mind the existing social realities, and realize that these may sometimes be in conflict with the laws. Jany actually shies away from using the term “religious legal system,” arguing that it is an anachronism based on a concept “of legal systems which are considered traditional, incapable of change, backward and irrational” (p.2). In practice, within these cultures, the judge may depart from the religious rules and, taking into account social practice and political and economic factors, create a new legal regimen which can best serve the society within which he works. Jany explains the choice of these three systems as being based on commonalities in language, ethnicity and culture and “a legal system based on similar theoretical considerations” (p.3). The author initially provides an historical and theoretical background and then goes on to examine the legal institutions and the role of the judge in practice. With notes, extensive tables and bibliography, and an excellent index, this work represents a worthy acquisition for libraries with foci on Middle Eastern and/ or legal studies.

Randall C. Belinfante, American Sephardi Federation

Kagan, Jeremy. *The Choice To Be: A Jewish Path to Self and Spirituality*. Jerusalem and Nanuet, NY: Feldheim, 2012. 452 pp. \$24.99. (9781598268218).

Rabbi Jeremy Kagan, a Yale educated principal at a seminary for women in Jerusalem, Midreshet Tehilla, has written a dense, tightly argued work of cosmic Jewish history and traditional Jewish theology couched in modern language. Although it won the 2011 National Jewish Book Award for Modern Jewish Thought and Experience, it can take a while to get into the book.

Using classical rabbinic sources including Midrash, Zohar, the Maharal and the Ramchal Kagan traces how we have reached the end of the Roman exile, the last of the four classical exiles, with both our individual souls and collective national Jewish soul estranged from the divine. We desire closeness to God but creation necessitated the soul being embedded in a material body. Free choice led to a series of exiles beginning with Adam down through the destruction of the two temples, with our sins bringing on the hegemony of foreign rulers. Our world view, even for religious Jews, has been so changed by secular scientific thinking that only rare individuals can truly see reality; that God is above history and nature. Kagan strongly argues that science can not be reconciled to religion, using the analogy of a music connoisseur and a deaf person describing a jazz concert they both attended. Only a complete change of mentality will enable us to fulfill our individual and national goal of return to the divine.

Dealing with cosmic history, Kagan has only an oblique reference to the Holocaust and no mention of the state of Israel. He does mention the current Arab world in his conclusion seeing us overcoming our enemies only through prayer or in divine assistance in the model of our salvation in the Purim story. While marketed towards secular Jews and “seeking” religious Jews, the traditional rabbinic historical framework will distance most readers.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA

Kanarfogel, Ephraim. *The intellectual history and rabbinic culture of medieval Ashkenaz.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, c2013. xvii, 565 pp. \$59.95. (9780814330241). Also available as an ebook.

This is a solid and exhaustive presentation of the “salient differences in talmudic and halakhic studies between the Tosafist centers of northern France and Germany” (chapter 1), especially their Biblical commentaries (chapters 3-4), liturgical poetry (chapter 5), and mysticism (chapter 6). Unlike Spanish medieval thinkers, the Tosafists were involved in a number of varied disciplines beside Talmud and Halakah which, according to Kanarfogel, have received “scant attention in modern scholarship.” The author used manuscript and published sources but there is only an index of the manuscripts cited and no bibliography at the end of the volume. The index of Biblical citations exists, but it is in the subject index, under the name of each author of a biblical commentary. A separate index of the Biblical sources cited would have been a nice addition. This book is not an introduction for the uninitiated but rather a comprehensive exposition in English of the last four or five decades of research in the field, with many extensive footnotes of bibliography or reviews of the current scholarship. For academic libraries serving comprehensive graduate programs in Jewish Studies.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.

Kraus, Donald, translation and annotation. *The Book of Job: Annotated & Explained.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing; SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2012. 216pp. \$16.99. (9781594733895).

The Book of Job is my favorite biblical book because of its difficulties and controversial nature. A multitude of translations and a great many commentaries have been published on this book. In this small paperback edition, Kraus attempts to provide a new translation of The Book of Job by using regular words said by real people. He intends the work to be as intelligible as possible, and he succeeds overall but leaves the reader fundamentally dissatisfied.

The author, who is not a scholar of languages (although Executive Editor for Bibles at Oxford University Press), recognizes that the text of Job is difficult for a number of reasons, including defects in transmission and construction. His translation is aimed at the general reader and so he has written it as clearly as possible with

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much paraphrasing. Less than 100 pages of this small book comprise the actual translation; the rest is Kraus's introductory discussion and some textual notes. The author presents some of the puzzles regarding the dialogue and the form of the book; he discusses many questions but most are left unanswered, leaving us wanting more. Currently there is a substantial academic and religious body of literature discussing *The Book of Job*, but the author fails to share much of the available collective knowledge with the reader. While I enjoyed the translation, Kraus leaves me unsatisfied and disappointed, wishing for deeper probing and more analysis. For most libraries and readers, Kraus's new translation will not really add any depth or breadth to their knowledge of the Book of Job.

Nathan Aaron Rosen, New York, NY

Kushner, Harold S. *The Book of Job: When Bad Things Happened to a Good Person*. New York: Nextbook/Schocken, 2012. 202 pp. \$24.00. (9780805242928). Also available as an ebook.

This book is a tremendous accomplishment. If you want to read one recent book about the Book of Job – this is the one. Harold Kushner smoothly condenses an extensive body of Job scholarship into an accessible book.

Kushner progresses through the Book of Job translating the text, focusing on historically problematic language, bringing forth key historical commentators, providing insight, and discussing the meaning of the three friends' speeches. He summarizes many of the most popular commentaries, such as those by Maimonides, Spinoza, Isaac Luria, Martin Buber, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Archibald MacLeish (author of the play *J.B.*). Kushner also contributes his own unique insights, which are the culmination of tragic personal loss and decades of counseling congregants and others through suffering and loss.

With this work Kushner completes the circle that he started nearly fifty years ago with his desire as a young man to write his Ph.D. dissertation on Job at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Professor Harold Ginsberg convinced him that he had not yet lived sufficiently to write about Job. Five decades later, he is ready: having experienced the tragic death of his young son (which he describes as the single defining moment of his life), written his best-selling book, *When Bad Things Happened to Good People*, and counseled hundreds of people who suffered death or tragedy.

Harold Kushner is the Rabbi Laureate of Temple Israel in a Boston suburb and earned his Ph.D. in biblical literature from the Jewish Theological Seminary. He has published other works helping people endure difficult times, including a wonderful translation and analysis of the 23rd Psalm, *The Lord is My Shepherd*.

I recommend this book to anyone who is struggling with suffering or loss and to counselors, especially Rabbis, Psychologists and Social Workers. It is strongly recommended for every synagogue library.

Nathan Aaron Rosen, New York, NY

Lawler, Justus George. *Were the Popes Against the Jews? Tracking the Myths, Confronting the Ideologies*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012. xviii. 387 pp. (9780802866295).

Author, editor and translator Justus George Lawler has written on a wide range of subjects, including English literature, Popes and Politics, Animal Rights and more.

In this book he has taken on the cause of the popes who have been accused by various authors as anti-Semites, particularly Pius the XI and XII. His sharpest criticism is directed against David I. Kertzer's *The Popes Against the Jews* and John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope*.

He dissects Kertzer's statements and accuses him of using unethical and unscholarly methods, such as quoting out of context and engaging in mind-reading when he is unable to base his conclusions on facts. Lawler's reasoning might be more readily accepted, were it not cast in arrogant, sarcastic and abstruse language. Lawler's tone is so consistently offensive and contemptuous that it makes the reader reluctant to accept his arguments, even when they appear well reasoned. For example, in reference to Kertzer, we read: "Once again the omniscient, clairvoyant takes over" (p. 68-69), and on pp. 209 his arrogance is unmistakable: "Perhaps a little **real** history will clarify matters." At times he indulges in some of the same speculation of which he accuses his adversaries; thus, on p. 238, he conjectures: "If the pope had spoken up, it would not have had any effect on Hitler's anti-Semitic policy."

The last chapter of his book considers how well the Catholic Church, the United States of America and the Jewish people have kept faith with their core values despite their occasional deviations from them, This would be an interesting academic exercise and historical analysis, were it not for the false premise by which Lawler equates Judaism and the Jewish people with the State of Israel, thus holding all Jews, whether living in Israel

or in the diaspora, responsible for the sins of the Jewish State. His harsh judgment of Israel makes for painful reading, and one questions the purpose of including quite unrelated subject matter in the book.

Due to the writer's extreme positions and intemperate attitude this book is not recommended.

Susanne M. Batzdorff, Librarian, retired, Celia Gurevitch Library, Congregation Beth Ami, Santa Rosa, CA.

Lev, Efraim and Leigh Chipman. *Medical Prescriptions in the Cambridge Genizah Collections: Practical Medicine and Pharmacology in Medieval Egypt*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012. viii, 187 pp. \$220.00. (9789004234888).

In their latest work, *Medical Prescriptions in the Cambridge Genizah Collections*, Efraim Lev and Leigh Chipman present an innovative understanding of the practice of medicine in medieval Mediterranean society. The authors note that, although 30 prescriptions are featured in this book, a large number of medical prescriptions are to be found in the Cairo Genizah and their research actually involved the examination of 140 prescriptions in all. Their discussion of this material seeks to answer several significant questions such as who wrote and prepared these prescriptions; what was the relationship between theory, practice and public health, and why were many of the prescriptions written in Judaeo-Arabic as opposed to Arabic?

Lev and Chipman assert that, contrary to the theory advanced by Goitein, the prescriptions were commonly composed by physicians rather than by pharmacists, thus demonstrating a close relationship between physician and patient. The use of Judaeo-Arabic shows that the prescriptions were written in order to be understood by physician, pharmacist and patient alike. Overall, the prescriptions provide a picture of disease and public health in medieval Cairo that reinforces the evidence until now found largely in medical books.

This is an outstanding elucidation of medicine as practiced within the Jewish community of medieval Cairo. The transcriptions, translations and commentaries are accompanied by extensive footnotes, a bibliography, and glossary (describing terms in both Arabic and Judeo-Arabic). The book presents an intriguing exposition of a topic which has thus far received little attention in the study of the treasure trove of the Cairo Genizah.

Randall C. Belinfante, American Sephardi Federation

Levine, Aaron. *Economic Morality and Jewish Law*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 263 pp. \$65.00. (9780199826865).

Masekhet Shabbat 31a in the name of Rava notes that when we all appear before the throne of Hashem, one of the questions asked of all souls is whether one conducted business transactions with ethical behavior. Aaron Levine not only makes a strong case for the relevance of biblical ethics, as understood in Rabbinic law, to modern policy concerns and to the necessity of the interplay between Jewish ethics and economics, but also illustrates deep insights into how Torah teachings, when refracted through their evolving Rabbinic understanding, inform moral behaviors of individuals, institutions, and economic policies of the government.

This volume's eight essays address the connections between traditional Jewish law and modern welfare economics. Despite the very different approaches that welfare economics and Jewish law take in evaluating the worthiness of an economic action, Levine reveals some symmetries between the two in their prescriptions for certain economic issues. Topics analyzed include price controls, monopolies, education vouchers in the context of Rabbi Yehoshua b. Gamla's ordinance in Bava Batra 21a, merit pay, the living wage, price fraud, price controls, short selling, Ronald Coase's seminal theories on negative externalities, and the purchase of "lemons." It includes notes, glossary, a bibliography, and name and subject indexes. Levine's other essential works include: *Free Enterprise and Jewish Law*; *Jewish Business Ethics: The Firm and its Stakeholders*; *Moral Issues of the Marketplace in Jewish Law*. All these works should be in any library collection. The late Aaron Levine was the Samson and Halina Bitensky Professor of Economics at Yeshivah University, and remains a leading authority on Jewish commercial law, especially as it relates to public policy and to modern business practices. Highly recommended for all libraries.

Dr. David B Levy, Touro College

Maier, Aren M., Jodi Magness and Lawrence H. Schiffman, editors "Go Out and Study the Land" (Judges 18:2): Archaeological, Historical and Textual Studies in Honor of Hanan Eshel. Leiden and Boston: Brill (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, 148), 2012. 455 pp. \$196.00. (9789004202689).

The research interests of Hanan Eshel, who died following a long illness just before this book was published, included the archaeology and history of the Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumran, and other related subjects.

This combination of an archaeologist with a scholar doing detailed textual research is reflected in the subjects of this volume. For example, Menahem Kister has an article on parallels between the Pseudepigrapha and the eighth century Midrash *Pirke de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* that does not necessarily suggest direct influence. Jodi Magness has a very interesting article: *Disposing of the Dead: An Illustration of the Intersection of Archaeology and Text*. Emanuel Tov writes on *Eclectic Text Editions of Hebrew Scripture*, and Lawrence Schiffman writes on Jews in the Qumran area in the first two centuries C.E. This very interesting volume belongs in any academic Judaica collection in Second Temple Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Jim Rosenbloom, Judaica Librarian at Brandeis University, and Past President of AJL

Mandelbaum, David Avraham. *The Daf Yomi: A Pictorial History*. New York: Feldheim, 2012, 470 pp. \$55.00

This is a resource that many synagogues will find useful and interesting. As the title suggests, this book provides a pictorial history of the Daf Yomi program (a program of studying a leaf of Talmud a day) implemented by the inaugural Knessia Gedola of the World Agudath Israel. The book is organized in a chronological way that is easy to follow. It starts with the formation and theological foundation of the program and continues with the important milestones in each "cycle." Being a pictorial history, an abundance of pictures and documents help tell the story; text is supplied to support the other material. The first through the eleventh cycles are covered. There are also sections on the programs that followed in the "footsteps" of the Daf Yomi program such as Halacha Yomi, Rambam Yomi, and Shmirat Halashon Yomi. In addition to all of the material on the history of Daf Yomi, there is a considerable amount of historical information on the Agudath Israel itself. Also included are the many stories and memories of the people involved in the Daf Yomi program and excerpts of Drashot and other speeches. This book may be more comfortable for an Orthodox audience, however. There is language in both the documents and the text that may not be easily navigated without a background in Yiddish or Hebrew. This book is recommended for Jewish libraries.

Debbie Feder, Director, Library Resource Center, Ida Crown Jewish Academy, Chicago, IL

Mikva, Rachel S. *Midrash vaYosha: A Medieval Midrash on the Song at the Sea*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012. 364 pp. €99. (9783161510090).

Midrash vaYosha is one of the "minor" Midrashim, so-called because they are later than the classic Midrash collections best represented by Genesis Rabbah and Leviticus Rabbah, and also because they are usually short and narrowly defined. VaYosha is a midrashic elaboration of the Song recited by the Israelites at the splitting of the Red Sea, and its first unequivocal appearance is in the 13th century. In this book, based on her JTS doctoral dissertation, Rachel Mikva presents an edition of the Midrash with English translation and extensive commentary. Her edition is diplomatic, presenting two versions of the Midrash each based on a single manuscript, discussing specific variant readings in the footnotes. Each biblical verse is reproduced with translation, followed by Redaction B and then Redaction A, with translation on facing pages, followed by a commentary focused on themes and literary features. The commentary is very far-ranging, providing comparisons to parallels throughout rabbinic literature and in Christian and Islamic traditions. The bibliography is extensive, covering the latest developments in the study of Midrash in the United States, Israel and Europe, and Mikva supplies extensive and detailed descriptions of all the manuscripts containing this work. Her introduction explores some fascinating questions about the development of the Midrash in different environments and its implications for the question of orality in the transmission of rabbinic literature. Unfortunately, the differences between the two recensions of the Midrash are not explored or explained in detail, nor are the texts clearly set off from each other in the edition. That aside, this edition is thorough and readable and the commentary is replete with incisive comments. I can only hope that more midrashim receive such careful attention and appear in such high quality scholarly editions.

Dr. Pinchas Roth, Tikvah Scholar, NYU Tikvah Center.

Milstein, Mati, *My New Middle East: Inside the Israeli Conundrum*. Santa Fe, NM: Gaon Books, 2012. 266 pp. \$19.95. (9781935604457).

The author is a photojournalist from New Mexico who made *aliyah* and ultimately served in an infantry unit in the IDF. This collection of 90 anecdotal newspaper columns, written between October 1999 and December 2009, reflect the real-life impression of an average non-sabra, Jewish observer of contemporary Israeli society. The overall context appears to be an emphasis on the realities of the difficulties of Israeli life and its dark side. Milstein, while an IDF soldier, served in the Occupied Territories where contact with Palestinian Arabs ranged

from friendly instances to engagement with armed terrorists. This spectrum guided the approach upon which many Israelis based their method of contact with the local Arab population. Milstein frequently compares American life styles with Israeli counterparts as he travels between his home in New Mexico and Israel. There are no spectacular revelations provided, but this book does offer a candid alternative view of Israeli life from the more popular vision of a land of milk and honey.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Oz, Amos and Fania Oz-Salzberger. *jewsandwords*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012, Hardcover 232 pp. \$25.00. (9780300156478).

Amos Oz, well-known Israeli novelist, and his daughter, Fania Oz-Salzberger, a professor of history at the University of Haifa, have collaborated to create an essay that will both challenge and delight readers. Published as a companion to the new *Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization*, the book was written in English rather than the authors' native Hebrew. In the tradition of Jewish scholars, they share classic biblical, rabbinic, and literary texts that may be unfamiliar to American readers while claiming to be "atheists of the book." The lower case title is part of the fun. They lament the fact that these texts are increasingly becoming the property of the religious and nationalist extremists as secular Jews turn away from text study. Readers may disagree with these authors, but the writers are happy to engage them in a spirited debate. They celebrate our reverence for words and discussion, offering a secular blessing: "May our controversies keep sizzling. May we all be locking horns to the end of time... and knowledge shall be increased." Their notes provide the texts for study so that this tradition may continue. Book clubs will have much to discuss here.

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

Pribble, Aaron. *Pitching in the Promised Land: a Story of the First and Only Season in the Israel Baseball League*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011. 238 pp. \$24.95. (9780803234727).

Pitching in the Promised Land is the story of Israel's one season baseball league as seen through the eyes of Aaron Pribble, an American who was recruited to play in the league. Pribble had played collegiate baseball at the University of Hawaii and had played professionally in France. The summer he played in Israel, he was on vacation from his job as a high school teacher in the United States. A good part of the book goes into great detail about the games and the strategy employed by the players and coaches. Some of these baseball minutiae will be interesting to avid baseball fans. Non-baseball aficionados will find his relationship with the other players and his religious growth more interesting. Pribble is a political liberal. He prefaces some of his chapters with newspaper articles that are unfavorable to Israel. The book includes black and white photographs of his teammates and the day he spent visiting Ramallah. Recommended for synagogue libraries whose patrons are especially interested in Israel's baseball season. Recommended as an alternative selection for other libraries.

Ilka Gordon, Librarian, Aaron Garber Library, Cleveland, OH

Price, Dena G. *The Everything Kosher Slow Cooker Cookbook*. Avon, MA: Adams Media (Everything series), 2012. 304 pp. \$17.95. (9781440543500). Also available as an ebook.

The Everything Kosher Slow Cooker Cookbook is part of the Adams Media Everything series. The format is easy to follow. Ingredients are placed in a light green box on the left side of each page; instructions for cooking are printed on a white background on the right side of the page. Some of the recipes include helpful hints and extra information such as what makes creamed corn creamy (not dairy ingredients); how to easily remove spent herbs, and what is saffron and chili powder. The recipes vary and include traditional ones like chicken soup and kugel, and more gourmet fare such as pumpkin challah pudding with caramel sauce and spicy red lentil dal. Most of the recipes are easy to prepare and delicious. Unfortunately, not every recipe is a "throw it all in the pot at once" slow cooker recipe. For example, Russian sweet and sour cabbage soup instructs the cook to sauté all the vegetables before putting them into the slow cooker. Likewise, the recipe for mock chopped liver, which is one of my favorites and tastes like authentic chopped liver, calls for cooking the lentils in the slow cooker for three hours. The rest of the ingredients have to be sautéed. Included is a standard U.S./Metric conversion chart, an index and worthwhile information about a kosher kitchen. This book is recommended for all libraries that collect cookbooks, but do not expect every recipe to be a one pot dish.

Ilka Gordon, Librarian, Aaron Garber Library, Beachwood, OH

Prinz, Deborah R. *On the Chocolate Trail; a Delicious Adventure Connecting Jews, Religions, History, Travel, Rituals and Recipes to the Magic of Cocoa.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing 2013. 235 pp. \$18.99. (9781580234870)

This book is like a box of bonbons. You have the sweet nougat filled stories of how Jews were involved in the early trade and production of chocolate. There are lots of bitter chocolate pieces about Jews and the Inquisition and the Holocaust (I didn't know about the cruelties in the chocolate trade, so it made my dark chocolate taste even more bitter). There is the foil covered *gelt* of the chocolate industry in Israel, and multi-layered squares about ritual practices using chocolate in several religions. My only wish was that this book was more like a tunnel of fudge cake where you get stuck in all of the molten filling and can't put the book down.

Nevertheless, *On the Chocolate Trail* is an easy to pick up read. Every chapter is divided into different sections, each of which could be read in one sitting. Notwithstanding these brief nuggets of information, this is a thorough study of the subject with footnotes, a timeline, maps, index and glossary. In addition, the author supplies a few bonus items not usually found in scholarly works: a resource guide for buying ethically produced chocolate, a list of chocolate museums worldwide and, of course, the reason all synagogue libraries will want to buy this volume, the unique recipes for chocolate. Research libraries will want to add this to their history section and not in the cookbook section as dictated by its LC classification. Don't forget to buy a white eraser when you buy the book so you can clean the chocolate fingerprints off the pages when patrons return it.

Jacqueline Ben-Efraim, Special Collections Librarian, Ostrow Library, American Jewish University, CA

Rabinovitch, Lara, Shiri Goren and Hannah S. Pressman, editors. *Choosing Yiddish: New frontiers of language and culture.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013. 394 pp. (9780814334447).

This wide-ranging anthology is devoted to the field of Yiddish Studies which, by its nature, is multidisciplinary, encompassing history, literature, ethnomusicology, and linguistics, to name a few, as well as different time periods and places. *Choosing Yiddish* fills a niche not yet addressed by previous collections, and marks the growth of Yiddish Studies in tandem with Jewish Studies. The essays provide for the most part a fresh and timely perspective on historical and current topics, utilizing innovative research sources and methods to shed light on issues that remain relevant.

There is enough variety here to interest readers, with most essays coming from contemporary, and relatively young, Yiddish scholars, including many graduate students, which is quite heartening. The selections are divided into several rubrics, each introduced by an established scholar. Among the topics addressed are Yiddish cultural and linguistic expression and representation in film, literature, music, press, and daily speech; Jewish organizational and educational life; the relationship between Yiddish and Hebrew; gender roles; anti-Semitism, and political movements. Chronologically, the entries range from the turn of the last century to the present; and geographically, from Europe to Israel to the Americas.

Diverse, intriguing, and inspiring, *Choosing Yiddish* is indeed a worthwhile choice. Recommended for academic libraries collecting in the area of Jewish Studies.

Amanda (Miryem-Khaye) Seigel, Librarian, Dorot Jewish Division, The New York Public Library



Ken Blady, M.A., Yiddish Translator

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I have been translating Yiddish material in a professional capacity since 1973. I'm a native speaker, having been raised in Chassidic Brooklyn. I am the translator or collaborating translator of five works from Yiddish to English and dozens of unpublished manuscripts.

Biography
Resume

Resnicoff, Steven H. *Understanding Jewish Law*. New Providence, NJ; San Francisco, CA: LexisNexis, 2012. 284 pp. \$43.00. (9781422490204).

In his Supreme Court opinion on the case *Caperton v. A. T. Massey Coal Co.*, Justice Antonin Scalia quoted the Talmud. He observed that those steeped in the study of Talmud were better able to understand the American legal process.

Jewish law covers every aspect of life including civil (contracts, financial dealings, torts, procedures and family law) and religious law (Shabbat and holidays) with a history going back to the Torah.

Jewish law is based on Divine commandments while American law is based on inalienable rights, freedoms and justice, but the two share many common goals and precedents. This book can be used as part of an adult studies course or for individual study. It is recommended for personal, synagogue and academic libraries.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Malcolm X College Library and University of Illinois Library, Chicago, IL

Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman and Joel Segel. *Davening: A Guide to Meaningful Jewish Prayer*, Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2012. 218 pp. \$18.99. (9781580236270).

Reb Zalman wants people to understand and appreciate the power and process of prayer. He notes that too many Jews repeat the words by rote without thinking about them. This book explains Jewish prayer and provides a pathway for becoming fully engaged in it. Reb Zalman discusses *kavanah*, intention, and how to prepare to pray. He demonstrates the power of poetry, song, and body movements as methods for deepening the prayer experience. He also talks about the order of prayer and how to *daven* if one has only a short time to do so. Bringing elements of Kabbalah into the process enriches it, and the author provides many examples of this. A glossary and notes provide further reference. This is an excellent tool for anyone who leads services as well as anyone who wants a deeper experience during *tefilah*. It is a good source for both synagogue and personal libraries.

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

Shapiro, Rami M. *Amazing Chesed: Living a Grace-filled Judaism*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013. 147 pp. \$16.99. (9781580236249).

A gently provocative book which purpose is to “highlight the role of grace in key aspects of Jewish practice, such as forgiveness, the Ten Sayings, and Shabbat, and do so in a way that will allow you to apply the lens of grace as you explore other aspects of Judaism on your own.” Grace is what God does, so instead of speaking of God and creation, Shapiro speaks about Grace and creation and, similarly, of Grace and humanity, Grace and covenant, Grace and forgiveness, etc. Shapiro reformulates the Ten Commandments as the “Ten Sayings” to serve as “guidelines of living graciously.” Recommended to anyone ready to be pushed lightly out of his or her Jewish comfort zone.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.

Shinan, Avigdor, Yair Zakovitch *From Gods to God: How the Bible Debunked, Suppressed or Changed Ancient Myths and Legends*. Translated by Valerie Zakovitch. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press as a Jewish Publication Society book, 2012, 320 pp. \$27.95. (9780827609082).

The overarching theme of this fascinating book is the author’s contention that the Hebrew Bible, written over hundreds of years, was an attempt to educate its readers toward a belief in one god. This process involved the transformation (and evolution) of polytheistic traditions which were elevated and purified to better reflect the monotheistic interests of the biblical writers. Three methodological strategies are employed to describe this process: the first identifies where there are multiple versions of the same written tradition and locates and extracts the salient differences to find hints of older discarded traditions. The second utilizes examples of ancient Near Eastern literature that shed light on the traditions that the biblical writers sought to disown. The third analyzes post-Biblical literature which often preserved remnants of ancient traditions that were excised from the Biblical text but continued to be transmitted orally even after the close of the Biblical canon.

A case in point is the polytheistic legends involving great battles among the gods that resulted in the creation of the world. Cassuto points out how the calm and orderly Biblical creation story provides a polemical counterweight to its chaotic predecessor. And yet, among descriptions of the Biblical creation is the presence of the Leviathan that was reminiscent of the “great sea dragon” of pagan accounts. The authors show that not only were the pagan stories not completely suppressed in the Bible, they emerged centuries later in the Psalms, apocryphal literature

and even rabbinic sources. The authors make clear that it is not their intent to “uncover historical fact” but rather to know “what people told about the history of their world, their people and their heroes.”

Although the book is written with the specialist in mind, it is written and translated clearly and effectively and is accessible to the general interested reader. This book will not be welcome in many traditional Jewish settings because of its assumed human authorship of the Bible.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

Smiles, Shira. *Torah Tapestries: Words of Wisdom Woven from the Weekly Parashah – Vayikra*. Self-published, 2013. 209 pp. \$19.99. (9781933143439).

In her previous books on the weekly Torah portion (*Breishis*, Feldheim, 2010; *Shmos*, Feldheim 2012), Rebbetzin Smiles used her formidable scholarship to explore the Torah and commentaries and elucidate their relevance today. While it is not an easy task to do this with the first two books of the Torah, it is a greater challenge to do so with the third, which describes the intricate laws of Temple sacrifices and details of many of the mitzvot. For the first *parshah*, *Vayikra*, she notes the custom of beginning Torah instruction for young children with this subject matter. This leads to a discussion of the analogy of Jewish education to bringing a sacrifice and the goals of parenting. *Tazri'a* and *Metzora* provide the opportunity to discuss the causes of *lashon hara* (gossip) as well as the significance of the biblical purification process in addressing this affliction. Essays on other portions include a discussion of the wording of a particular phrase in the Torah (*Acharei Mos*) and *Shmittah* has a model for faith (*Behar*). Also included is a discussion of prayer as a proactive response to tragedy, and some interesting thoughts on the Counting of the Omer. Each essay ends with a wish that incorporates the topic of discussion. The book includes a bibliography of sources as well as a glossary, though the definitions of Hebrew and Aramaic words are included in parentheses within the text.

The first few essays quote heavily from Rabbi Mattisyahu Solomon and Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe; the rest of the pieces include a broader variety of sources that answer the questions Rebbetzin Smiles proposes. Either on its own, or to add to the previous volumes, her book is highly recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Sorin, Gerald. *Howard Fast: Life and Literature in the Left Lane*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012. 528 pp. \$40.00. (9780253007278). Also available as an ebook.

In the post-war era, Howard Fast was known both as a best-selling novelist and as a leading member of the Communist party. In this important biography (winner of the National Jewish Book Award, 2012), Professor Sorin describes Fast's tumultuous life.

Born in 1914, Fast grew up poor. During the 1930s, as he became a novelist, he was attracted to left-wing causes. During World War II, while working for the Office of War Information (the government's propaganda arm), he joined the Communist party. Two-thirds of the book is a detailed chronicle of Fast's fifteen years in the party, despite Russian anti-Semitism, the Stalinist purges, and attacks on him by the American Government. Several chapters examine his defense of his own rights both in court and before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). While all this transpired, Fast remained a well-known author. His early books on Thomas Paine and the Maccabees, among others, brought him fame, but his later writings brought fury from both the Communist left and American patriotic right. At the same time, the book recounts Fast's sincere commitment to racial equality and social justice. Finally, Sorin describes Fast's successful later career – which brought him wealth – and his messy personal life.

This biography, which was written with help from his family, presents Fast with his flaws and passions intact. Regrettably, the reader's copy I read was missing the Index and was poorly printed. As it is, the book is most appropriate in academic libraries wanting insights into mid-century American Left-wing politics. While there are references to Judaism (and a nod to Jewish themes in some of Fast's books), it does not focus heavily on those topics. For most synagogues, therefore, it is an optional purchase.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA



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Stavans, Ilan. *Singer's Typewriter and Mine: Reflections on Jewish Culture.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. 353 pp. \$24.95. (9780803271364).

A wonderful collection of humorous, witty and thought-provoking articles by Ilan Stavans, the Lewis-Sebring Professor in Latin American and Latino Culture at Amherst College, Massachusetts. A follow-up to *The Inveterate Dreamer* (Nebraska, 2001), this new collection of essays explores a variety of issues close to Stavans's heart: Yiddish, Spanglish and the Jewish-Latino-American identity through language and literature. With his triple heritage as a Mexican, Jew and American, his topics are broad and varied; from Isaac Bashevis Singer's literary works, to Leo Rosten's *The Joys of Yiddish*, and the discrepancies in the translations of Sholem Aleichem's *Tevy der Milkhiker*; Antisemitism in Latin America and the literary work produced by Jewish political prisoners in South America; Sephardic literature in diverse areas of the world as well as the changes and dualism in Jewish American identity. Stavans is an engaged cultural observer with a gift for the written word. This book is recommended for all libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

Stein, Dina. *Textual Mirrors: Reflexivity, Midrash, and the Rabbinic Self.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2012. 202 pp. (9780812244366).

The application of literary theory to Jewish studies has found particularly fertile ground in the modern study of Midrash and Talmudic stories. Dina Stein's new book (following her 2004 Hebrew study of *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*) is a particularly sophisticated and sensitive reading of rabbinic literature. Stein focuses on several stories, culled from a range of sources (Tosefta, Talmuds, Pesikta de-Rav Kahana and later Midrashim), which she claims can be seen as self-reflective exercises in which the Rabbis tried to think about their own identities as Midrash makers. Moving between the work of theorists like Derrida and Hillis Miller and Talmudists like JN Epstein and Shamma Friedman, *Textual Mirrors* is a fascinating and challenging contribution to the critical study of Midrash.

Dr. Pinchas Roth, Tikvah Scholar, NYU Tikvah Center.

Tanny, Jarrod. *City of Rogues and Schnorrers: Russia's Jews and the Myth of Old Odessa.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011. 265 pp. \$27.95. (9780253223289).

Russia's port city on the Black Sea is examined in this rollicking account of the Jews who flocked there in the nineteenth century and helped to forge its freewheeling society. The author, professor of history at the University of North Carolina, affectionately describes a boom town which, like San Francisco or New Orleans, attracted the ambitious and the rootless and where the cosmopolitanism created a vibrant criminal, as well as mercantile, class.

An overview of the creative energy – the cabarets, klezmer bands, and theatres that flourished amid the mansions – along with contemporary jokes and anecdotes about the crass and sleazy characters reveal how the mythology was created around Odessa as a haven for mavericks. In particular the author traces the Jewish influences behind the counterculture. As in New York and Warsaw, the large Jewish population gave the city its flavor, largely comic, and contributed to its image of a glitz capital. Since its inception in 1794, "Old" (Tsarist) Odessa became the stuff of legend, of plays and stories by Isaac Babel about sly and grasping dreamers, and the birthplace of Sholem Aleichem and Vladimir Jabotinsky. The stereotypes solidified Odessa's reputation, which persisted even after the Revolution and the Soviet attempts to sanitize the city. Ironically the attempts, which were met largely with local defiance, reinforced the notoriety: oppressed Soviet citizens viewed Odessa as a sort of oasis. The book ends with the sad and nostalgic attempts, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, to revive the city's original irreverent spirit.

Along with footnotes are photos that include 1920s Soviet movie stills depicting Jewish lowlifes as symbols of pre-Revolutionary decadence. Today statues of fiddlers and artists fill the parks of Odessa, testaments to more colorful, if tawdry, times. Recommended for college libraries, particularly with Russian Studies collections.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

Veljic, Aleksander. *Genocide Revealed: New Light on the Massacre of Serbs and Jews Under Hungarian Occupation.* Madison, WI: Something or Other Publishing, 2012, 121 pp. \$29.95. (9780984693818).

The history of the Holocaust in Hungary with regard to its Jewish and Serbian population is certainly worthy of additional exposure, but this book is not worthy of credible attention. Portions of this book have appeared previously published in Serbia. Veljic is a native Serb whose English-language fluency is not developed enough

to describe the subject matter in a manner suitable for a broad audience. There is an attempt to uncover the role of Admiral Miklos Horthy, the Hungarian regent and collaborator with Nazi Germany, in the *Razzia* (the Great Raid) in Hungary during World War II. To the author's credit, he employs a wide range of Serb, Hungarian, Jewish, German, and Swedish documentation to piece together the story of the destruction of Jews and Serbs in the Backa region of northern Serbia. If there is favorable attention to be assigned, it would be the listing by ethnic background and family names of the victims of a raid on Novi Sad, a Serbian city, in January 1942. Additional value can be placed on a review of the materials used in the study, which should influence the decision whether or not to add this slim item to a Holocaust library collection.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Wagner, Stanley M and Israel Drazin. *Understanding Onkelos : the greatest Bible Translator*. Brooklyn, NY: Targum Press (distributed by Menucha Publishers), 2012. xiv, 401 pp. \$33.99. (9781568717524).

Onkelos translated the Pentateuch into Aramaic and, according to Wagner and Drazin, lived and worked in the fourth century C.E. The authors' first project was to translate Onkelos' Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch into English. The current publication is a handbook to their translation.

Why should one translate a translation and then prepare a handbook to that translation, particularly when one considers that Onkelos, unlike the Aramaic translation of the Book of Esther, was quite faithful to his source text? Yet, Onkelos' choice of vocabulary in Aramaic does reveal his understanding of the Pentateuch. Furthermore, Rashi takes advantage of Onkelos' translation fairly often in his commentary. Modern translators try to be neutral and let the author speak for himself. However, Onkelos' beliefs did influence his approach. A recurring example is the disappearance of anthropomorphisms such as God's hand, etc. or his change of singular into plural or vice versa in order to clarify the meaning of the verse.

One of the few places where the translation of Onkelos is not literal is at the end of Genesis, where Jacob blesses his sons. Here the authors claim that this is not Onkelos' original text, but that somebody has tampered with it. Indeed, I was surprised by the authors' claim that there are more than 10,000 cases where the translation was not literal.

The book is organized by *parshiyot* (the weekly torah readings). In each case the chapter includes a summary of the content, an elucidation of a single point in the translation, questions on Onkelos' methodology and general questions on the biblical text. One can feel the work of a professional teacher at hand. I learned a great deal from the book and would certainly have learned a lot more if I worked through the exercises. The authors have written a useful teachers' aid.

Librarians may wish to note that the words "Targum Press" appear on the dust jacket but not on the title page or on verso. The title page contains the following note: "A guide ... to study and understand the weekly Torah reading through the eyes of its most important translator."

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Walzer, Michael. *In God's Shadow: Politics in the Hebrew Bible*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012. xxi, 232 pp. \$28.00. (9780300180442)

Some years ago, I encountered a comment by Rabbi S. R. Hirsch in his commentary to the Book of Genesis. Hirsch explained that the magicians had failed to interpret Pharaoh's dreams because Pharaoh had retold his dreams incorrectly in order to mislead them. I interpreted this biblical passage as a bad "reference interview." My profession contributed to my understanding of the Bible. If we assume that the people in the Bible are not that different from people living today, then a political scientist like Walzer has a lot to teach us.

Professor Walzer's book is well organized. He starts with the Pentateuch, and then considers Judges, Kings, Prophets and Priests; his last chapter deals with Messianism.

The book is well written and specific comments are often brilliant. A comment on Job, for instance: "[I]t is only his own case that Job presses. His is not a class action suit" (p. 163).

A person who reads the Bible in a traditional manner will have some difficulty with this book, however. The author accepts all the hypotheses of contemporary academic biblical scholarship; namely, that the Pentateuch is a compendium of texts written by different editors (the documentary hypothesis). In addition, there are, in the author's opinion, two or even three Isaiahs. Premises which are unacceptable to a traditional reader lead to unacceptable conclusions; for example, "The existence of three codes means that Israel's legal tradition was pluralist in character, encompassing (with what degree of strain we don't know) argument and disagreement" (p. 31).

As I read the book, I assumed that I would not be able to accept the author's conclusions but would enjoy individual remarks and comments. However, the general conclusions are less dependent upon the academic hypotheses. The book concludes with an excellent discussion of the limits of political activity in a theocracy. If this is the scholarly version, I would look forward to a popular version, free of the academic treatment of the Bible.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Weinstein, Roni. *הקבלה והמודרניות היהודית: שברו את הכלים: Shavru et ha-Kelim: ha-kabalah ve-ha-moderniyut ha-Yehudit (Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity).* Tel-Aviv: The Haim Rubin Tel Aviv University Press, 2011. 647 pp. I.S. 84. (9789657241493).

In the 16th and 17th century, Safed was an important center for Jewish mysticism. In this book, Professor Roni Weinstein focuses on the well-known mystics, Rabbi Isaac Luria and his major disciple Haim Vital. He also refers to a number of other important colleagues or disciples of Rabbi Luria.

The author pays some attention to the theology of the mystics but ultimately is more interested in the sociological aspects of this movement and makes a number of interesting claims. Weinstein is of the opinion that the mystical approach impacted the halakhic approach and ushered in the modern period. There is no doubt that the Hassidic movement owed a debt to the mystics in Safed.

The revolution in Safed was a response to and direct result of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1497. The Sephardic community was populous and strong and wielded considerable influence in every place in which it settled. The Marranos who returned to Judaism also had a very distinctive influence.

According to Weinstein, the novelty of the movement in Safed was that they did not restrict their mysticism to an elite but in essence their's was the first "Kabbalah for the people" movement (see p. 571), and an attempt to save the ordinary Jew's soul and reform him.

The author also points out the influences of Christianity and Islam on the structure and approach of the Safed community. I found this an interesting book, but the author can be a trifle repetitive.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

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Zadoff, Mirjam. *Next Year in Marienbad: The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture.* Translated by William Templer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press (Jewish Culture and Contexts), c2012. 304 pp. \$49.95. (9780812244663)

This book is a thorough treatment of a well-known but little-studied phenomenon of European Jewish life. For more than 50 years, Jews from all over Europe spent their summers at Carlsbad, Marienbad, and Franzensbad, three mineral spas in Bohemia, in the modern Czech Republic. So popular were the spas that the author calls them “Jewish places” and she portrays them as exemplifying the dichotomous nature of Jewish existence in Europe as a whole. Jews went to the spas partially at doctors’ orders to “take the cure” but also to have vacations, and Zadoff’s descriptions of the spas make them sound strangely similar to cruise ships. The spas were a place for Jews from east and west to mingle, as whole Hasidic courts would often install themselves in hotels with kitchens and prayer houses built just for them. Zadoff covers the whole history of the spas, concentrating on Carlsbad, where the year-round Jewish community was able to establish itself officially. She describes the Jewish medical involvement with the spas, the increasing anti-Semitism after World War I, and the hypocrisy of the local German population, which practiced hospitality to Jews in the summer and anti-Semitism in the winter. The most interesting sections of the book cover the era after the first world war, when the 12th Zionist Congress was held in Carlsbad, and Zionist activity increased in the region, as Jews who had already settled in Palestine came to the spas in the summer, along with Zionist leaders from all over Europe, even as growing German and Czech nationalism put the local Jews in an impossible position. The writing and/or translation of this book is a bit dry and clumsy, with a few grammatical errors, and the tone in general is fairly academic. There are numerous footnotes, an index, and a lengthy bibliography that includes many items in German. Recommended for academic collections.

Beth Dwoskin, Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

Henkin, Joshua. *The World Without You.* New York: Pantheon Books, 2012. 321 pp. \$25.95. (9780375424366).

This novel is about the effect on a family of the death of their son and brother, Leo, who is killed by terrorists in Iraq in a manner reminiscent of the death of Daniel Pearl. A year later, the family gathers on July Fourth weekend in their summer home to hold a memorial for Leo in the nearby town. The remaining children are three grown women, plus Leo’s widow and the novel is really about their relationship to each other, to the men in their lives, and to Marilyn and David, their parents. It’s not that common for a male writer to write from a woman’s viewpoint, and Henkin does a good job of capturing the desperation of Clarissa, the sister who fears she may never become pregnant. He also paints a realistic picture of the background of Noelle, the only child of the four who was an academic failure but who found her identity in Israel as an observant Jew. Despite these strengths, readers might find this book less than compelling. None of the characters is overly sympathetic or likable, and nothing terribly momentous happens during the course of the weekend. There’s a lot of narration of mundane activity such as tennis, cooking, pregnancy testing, board games, drinking beer, and awkward sex. The family in the story is a highly assimilated Jewish one with the exception of the almost accidentally observant Noelle and Thisbe, Leo’s widow. Recommended for synagogue fiction collections where Henkin’s other works are popular.

Beth Dwoskin, Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

King, Anna. *Adele (The Rabbi’s Mother: Book One).* Three Kings Books, 2012. 336 pp. \$12.99. (9781478200284).

Adele Rothstein is a sexy 75-year-old who may be psychic. When a member of her son’s congregation is brutally attacked, she involves herself in the investigation. As she becomes closer to Sol, the victim’s son, they both hope to find clues as to who could have wanted to hurt his mother. Much to the dismay of the rabbi and her current love interest, Adele looks for a motive. She consults with a psychic with whom Rose Wiseman, the victim, had met, and supports Sol as he bickers with his family and hopes that his mother will wake from her coma. As Sol is investigating, he is kidnapped and taken to upstate New York. Adele is on the trail, and soon they subdue Terry Berman, a romance writer who was having an affair with Sol’s father and wanted his mother out of the picture. Sol and Adele return

to Manhattan, determined to rouse Rose from her coma. In the epilogue, the reader learns that Rose recovers and divorces her husband; Sol is accepted to Princeton, and Adele wants to learn more about her psychic abilities.

Anna King is a pen name of Josephine Carr, and this self-published novel reads much like *The Dewey Decimal System of Love* (Penguin/NAL, 2003) with martini drinking, a little too much information about digestive problems and sexual preferences, quite a few F-bombs and a good dose of humor. There are many twists and turns, including the rabbi's troubles over investing the synagogue's money with Madoff, the sibling rivalry between Rabbi Benjy Rothstein and his sister Ruth, a suspicious neighbor and both Adele's and Sol's love lives. Unfortunately, there are also many mistakes and inconsistencies as to Jewish practice and ritual. The most egregious is when Sol and Adele go to the ICU to perform a ritual with candles (!) and *mikveh* water that seems more like an exorcism than anything out of Judaism. Unless lines like "How could it be that she'd feel such desire for such a wrinkled *tuchus*?" would appeal to patrons, this book is not suggested for your library.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Marcus, Jerry. *Shoshana's Song*. Chicago: Brittany Publications, Ltd., 2012. 270 pp. \$19.00. (9780941394086).

Shoshana Rosen has been brought up in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn and attended the traditional girls' school – Beth Jacob. Most high school graduates aspire to marry soon after graduation and support their Torah scholar husbands. Shoshana seeks a different path, and moves to Chicago to hold onto her freedom and individuality. Her role model is Chana Rochel, the Maiden of Ludomir, a 19th century woman who also shunned the traditional woman's role in order to learn and grow on her own terms. Observing, commenting and interceding from on high are the "Laughing Angels," the "Righteous Ones," and Chana Rochel. Shoshana starts out working in a school for special needs children. Fast forward ten years, and she is a doctor of philosophy and now ready for a husband. She and her best friends marry men who would not "limit their freedom and hold them hostage to ideas they did not approve of."

The book could use sharper editing as it is repetitive and the narration frequently changes between first and several third persons. Nothing stands out in terms of reader appeal. Shoshana is not a particularly compelling protagonist, and the other characters are not fully developed. The voices of Shoshana and her peers are not authentic, especially when she speaks with a teenage boy who describes his sister as "respecting the individuality of others." Between the repetitiveness and Shoshana's nebulous goals, the pace is extremely slow. Although the book takes place in Brooklyn and Chicago starting in 1965, there is neither sense of time nor place. The element of debate between the "Laughing Angels," the "Righteous Ones," and Chana Rochel of Ludomir with God adds an element of the supernatural, but also an element of heresy, with lines like "Everything was God's cruel joke on his [sic] subjects." Not recommended.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Margoshes, Dave. *A Book of Great Worth*. Regina, Saskatchewan: Coteau Books, 2012. 250 pp. \$18.95. (9781550504767). Also available as an eBook.

"A few years after his return to New York from out west, but before the introduction to my mother that would change his life, my father met and became friendly with a man to whom he would always refer, usually accompanied by a wink, as 'the notorious Leon Arrow.'" So begins the story "A Romantic Secret."

The author's stories of his father's life as an aspiring novelist and journalist for the New York Yiddish paper *The Day* are rich with warmth, humor and fascinating characters. Writing in the first person, the author always refers to his protagonist, Harry Morgenstern as "my father," which, along with the colorful details of time and place in New York and Cleveland in the 1920s and 1930s, lend a patina of age.

Most of the stories take place before the author was born, when Harry was a fledgling journalist or moving up in his career in New York. After giving up his aspirations to become a novelist, Harry fled to Cleveland, attempting to avoid the long shadow of his father's and brother's journalistic careers in New York. Harry's stint at writing an advice column for the Cleveland Yiddish paper provides one of the more humorous stories ("The Wisdom of Solomon"). In the title story the author writes of his father's presence at the Hindenburg disaster in 1937, although the disaster is only a small part of this tale. His participation in the strike at *The Day* in 1941 focuses more on his friendship with the first man he knew who was a homosexual than the ultimate personal cost of the strike: the loss of the first house he and his wife ever owned ("The Barking Dog").

The stories are a blend of fact and fiction, but they are based on and honor his father. Recommended.

Merrily F. Hart, retired librarian, Ann Arbor, MI

Picoult, Jodi. *The Storyteller*. New York: Artria/Emily Bestler Books (an imprint of Simon & Schuster), 2013. 480 pp. \$28.99. (9781439102763). [This review is based on the UK edition published by Hodder & Stoughton; ISBN 9781444766646].

Sage Singer, whose face bears the scars of a car accident, seems to have retreated from life. She lives in a small New Hampshire town, works at night as a baker and is having an affair with a married man. She attends a grief group to deal with her mother's death, where she meets Josef Weber. As they become close, he reveals that he is really Reiner Hartmann, one of the officers in charge at Auschwitz. The nonagenarian asks her to assist him in dying—he wants a Jew to forgive him for his crimes and mete out his punishment. Sage is ambivalent. She is not a practicing Jew, and her grandmother, Minka survived Auschwitz. While considering this, she contacts the Department of Justice and gives information to Leo Stein, an attorney in the Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section. He eventually goes to New Hampshire, is immediately attracted to Sage, and they both hear Minka's life story, which she never related to Sage before. The next day she passes away. When Sage finally kills Weber/Hartmann with poisoned baked goods, she learns that he was actually Reiner's brother, Franz, who had saved her grandmother's life when she was caught stealing.

Ms. Picoult is a *New York Times* bestselling author whose talent, in this book as in others, is creating multi-faceted characters that waver between being victims, heroes, and villains. Picoult was inspired by *The Sunflower* by Simon Wiesenthal, with its "moral conundrum" of a victim facing a perpetrator. Her research includes first person accounts of the Lodz ghetto and Third Reich experts. Those familiar with the Holocaust will find that Minka's experience incorporates a few too many familiar aspects: a mother who suffocates her baby trying to keep him quiet and her subsequent suicide; telling stories in the barracks to keep spirits up, etc. The likelihood of Minka's tormentor living nearby as well as the relationship between Leo and Sage stretches believability. Despite this, it is notable that the subject is dealt with so adeptly in "popular" literature, and the book is recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Rubin, Joshua. *Jonah the Woodchopper: Encouraging Stories for Finding Your Way through the Forest of Life*. Brooklyn, New York: Penlight Publications, 2012. 207 pp. \$14.95. (9780983868514).

Jonah came out of the woods, approached the Village Elder, and asked to live on the outskirts of the village and chop wood. He befriends David, an orphan, and encounters many of the villagers with questions or challenges. All are answered with a story that addresses their concerns. For the reader, each story is followed by its message, exercises "to help you personalize each story's message," and affirmations "to empower you on your journey forward." The stories are short: usually one or two pages and the exercises are either writing assignments, points to ponder, or activities that reinforce the message. The stories focus on four areas: "You Can Find Encouragement," "Building Happy Relationships," "Encouragement as You Walk Through the Forest of Life," and "Better Attitudes Award You a Happier Life." The forest, trees and chopping wood are often used as metaphors, and many of the stories are about hugging and being open to love.

Using stories to teach lessons and values is a Jewish tradition, so in theory, it could be a valuable tool. Unfortunately, presumably for universal appeal, the text has been wiped clean of anything Jewish. In the author's note at the end, he thanks "the Chassidic tradition of storytelling," and notes that he has "reworked some of these lovely, traditional narratives and integrated them..." There is a fine line between "reworking" and not crediting sources, and the author has crossed it. Besides Chassidic tales, there are non-Chassidic stories, Midrashim, folklore, and elements of 12-Step recovery programs, all used without attribution. In addition, "the message of each story is summed up at the end of each story," yet a good story will get the message across without having to point it out. Some of the original stories could probably be used in a school setting, adult discussion group or "Write Your Own Midrash" workshop. But, as most people today would be cautious about a stranger who walks out of the woods and tells stories, a similar attitude should be taken with this book.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

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