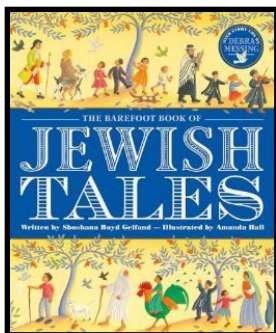


In The Spotlight

Gelfand, Shoshana Boyd. *The Barefoot Book of Jewish Tales*. Illus. by Amanda Hall. Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books, 2013. 80 pp. \$19.99. (9781846868849). Gr. 2-5.



Angels in disguise, a riddle-solving queen, a generous *lamed-vavnik*, and a fowl-minded prince are just a few of the characters found in this delightful collection of Jewish folktales. While far less grim than many offerings in the folklore canon, the eight classic stories presented here, from “Challah in the Ark” to the oft-spun “The Prince Who Thought He Was a Rooster”, are filled with plenty of twists to grab young readers and keep them guessing until all loose ends are stitched and the final kernel of wisdom is unveiled. Gelfand shows a deft touch at keeping the stories well paced, consistently entertaining, and moralistic without being heavy handed. It is a book filled with miracles: an illiterate boy sends cut Hebrew letters aloft to form the prayers in his heart;

a girl gives a weekly gift to God and thus sustains her family for thirty years.

But for anyone who has ever read well-crafted folktales aloud to young children, the real miracle will come in the form of rapt expressions and lessons learned. The book touches on a number of themes, including the joy of sharing, embracing the uniqueness of others, expressing one’s love for God in different ways, and the rewards of kindness. Hall’s bright, fanciful, folk-style illustrations – a combination of watercolor ink, chalk pastel, colored pencil, and digital layering – nicely complement each story. Papercuts of story-appropriate images cleverly line the borders of most pages. The book also includes two CDs of Debra Messing (*Will and Grace*) narrating each story – a bonus for your next long car trip. As Gelfand writes at the end of the first tale, “This is a book of stories to be told from one generation to the next. Tell the stories and pass them on.” Indeed! A wise choice for your Judaic collection.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

CONTENTS

Titles for Children & Teens	p. 1
Spotlight	p. 1
Bible Stories	p. 3
Biography	p. 3
Cookery	p. 4
Fiction - Middle Grades	p. 4
Fiction - Teen	p. 8
Holocaust and WWII	p. 9
Israel	p. 12

Non-Fiction p. 12

Picture Books p. 13

Shabbat and Holidays p. 14

Yiddish p. 15

An Interview with Steven M. Bergson p. 17

Across Divides: Ellen Cassidy and
Cross-Cultural Communication p. 20

Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults p. 22

Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults p. 44

Reviews of Multimedia titles for Adults p. 49

Credits and Contact p. 52

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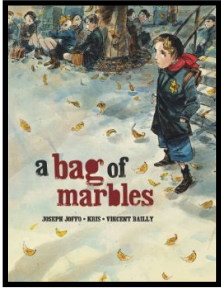


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Joffo, Joseph. *A Bag of Marbles*. Adapted by Kris. Illus. by Vincent Bailly. Minneapolis: Graphic Universe, 2013. 128 pp. \$29.27. (9781467707008). Grades 6–12.

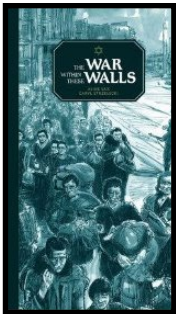


Some stories are perfect fits for graphic novels. *A Bag of Marbles* is one of them. Based on the Holocaust memoir by Joseph Joffo, the new book's art captures the daring spirit of two youngsters fleeing for their lives from occupied northern France to southern, "free" Vichy, France to escape Nazis who are hunting Jews. Despite the true historical setting, the book contains all the major components of classic comic books: danger, adventure, young heroes on their own advancing by their wits and their courage, narrow escapes, evil villains, and interesting characters met along the route. The illustrations sustain the breathless pace. A palette of deep, dark, quiet colors, expressive faces, scenes drawn from varying points of view, and dramatically cropped opening panels produce a constantly moving tableau bursting with energy and suspense until the last three pages of text-free, emotional art.

The Joffo brothers are encouraged to flee German-occupied Paris by their father and mother, second-generation refugees who, like the boys' grandparents, had to flee pogroms and murderous persecution. Now the boys repeat family history, using trains, trucks, carts, and feet to find their older brothers along the Riviera. A map traces their three years of travels. Father and sons are excellent barbers; they put their skill to good use in tight situations. Who is friend? Who is foe? Where can they turn next? Will joining the Resistance help or hinder? Will the boys outlast the war? Will the family reunite at its end? These questions make the book hard to put down. This new, fabulous pictorial rendition is highly recommended for itself and for the possibility that readers will turn to the wonderful language of the original 1973 book.

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

Sax, Aline. *The War Within These Walls*. Illus. by Caryl Strzelecki. Transl. by Laura Watkinson. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. Originally published as *De Kleuren van het Getto*. (Amsterdam: De Eenhoorn, 2011). 176 pp. \$17.00. (9780802854285). Gr. 10–Adult.



From the first page to the last, this illustrated novel about the Warsaw ghetto holds the reader in its grip. In simple but evocative words, young Misha tells the story of how he and his family try to survive as the Nazi noose tightens around the Jews of Warsaw and vicinity. Misha watches helplessly as starvation, brutality, disease, and deportations decimate the Jews of the ghetto. One day, Misha sees a parakeet on the wall. It is a beautiful bird and a symbol of the loss of his hope and freedom. He wonders, "If it was so easy for the bird to fly over the wall, why can't I do the same?" Mordechai Anielewicz, leader of the ghetto uprising, recruits Misha to join the resistance fighters. Misha learns to shoot, make Molotov cocktails, and identify mines. He is determined to have an "honorable death", instead of one in front of a firing squad or in the gas chamber. We watch as Misha grows from a scared boy to a courageous young man. The uprising is brutally extinguished, but at the end, the reader is left with the hope that Misha will escape and tell the story of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising to the world.

Put your e-readers away! *The War Within These Walls* has a tactile quality that is rare nowadays. The book's dimensions (5" x 9") remind one of a brick or of a wall. The expressive, black-and-white illustrations in pen, ink, and pencil almost leap off the page. Perspectives keep shifting—double page, single page, small and large, above, below, up and down. The reader is constantly kept off-balance, as were the victims of the ghetto. Text also changes—small and large, white on black, black on white. Sometimes, words fill the page; other times, one word, phrase, or sentence cries out from the page. Text and art combine into a whole that is greater than its parts. For an illustrated memoir from the viewpoint of the second generation, see Bernice Eisenstein's *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006). Highly recommended for all libraries.

Anne Dublin, author of Stealing Time (Dundurn, 2014), Toronto, Canada

Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN & RACHEL KAMIN

BIBLE STORIES

Ehrlich, Amy. *With a Mighty Hand: The Story in the Torah.* Illus. by Daniel Nevins. Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2013. 224 pp. \$29.99. (9780763643959). All ages.

This magnificent offering retells the stories of the Torah poetically and lyrically with a rhythm and cadence which beg to be recited aloud. It is accompanied by a beautifully written introduction by the author which includes her personal reasons for wishing to undertake this emotionally fulfilling but arduous project as well as a bit of historical background and an explanation of some of her literary choices. A biblical map and genealogy are included for context as well as a set of author's and illustrator's notes for additional explanation and illumination. The most striking feature of this handsome book, though, is the full-page, full-color art which gives the reader the feeling that he or she has wandered into a museum; the artwork enhances the poetry fully and adds quality to the overall experience.

The only proviso to a full and unqualified recommendation for Judaica librarians of this beautiful, artistic endeavor is the tricky issue of religious appropriateness for the many religious groups within the Jewish world. Minefields, both evident and subtle, may abound when Scripture is translated into English. How, for just one obvious example, do we translate the name of God? The choices made for this otherwise impressive volume will not be appropriate for all. Recommended with the above qualification.

Michal Hoschander Malen, North Shore Hebrew Academy Library, Great Neck, NY

BIOGRAPHY

Heiligman, Deborah. *The Boy Who Loved Math: The Improbable Life of Paul Erdos.* Illus. by LeUyen Pham. New York: Roaring Brook, 2013. 44 pp. \$17.99. (9781596433076). K-3.

What if you spent every waking day so engrossed in a single pursuit, so immersed in your life's passion that you had little time, or interest, in learning anything else: how to cook, pay bills, do laundry, or even butter toast? Such is the story of eccentric Hungarian mathematician, Paul Erdos. For Erdos, who published more than 1,500 math papers, time not discussing number theory and combinatorics was time wasted. In *The Boy Who Loved Math*, Heiligman traces Erdos's unconventional life from his early childhood obsession with numbers (he could instantly calculate how many seconds a person had lived based on birth date) to his vagabond-like, academic globetrotting. He would show up on other mathematicians' doorsteps in the middle of the night to stay and work, greeting each with his familiar salutation, "My brain is open!" A man known for having few possessions and living out of two small suitcases, Erdos gave many monetary awards to the poor and set up prize money to be given to those who answered unsolved math problems. He is perhaps most noted for advancing the field through his frequent collaborations with other lovers of numbers.

Heiligman smartly breathes life into both Erdos's genius and peculiarities, giving young readers a much richer portrait than what is often seen in a standard children's biography. Pham's retro-style illustrations capture not only Erdos's idiosyncrasies, but also cleverly incorporate the world of math. She saturates the pages with mathematical concepts such as harmonic primes, amicable numbers, Euclid's Proof of the Infinity of Prime Numbers, and the Sieve of Eratosthenes. Doing so gives the story an added texture and depth. While not mentioned in the body of the book, Erdos's Jewishness is touched upon briefly in the extensive author's note. All "epsilons" (Erdos's word for "children") will enjoy reading about "The Magician from Budapest". Highly recommended.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

COOKERY

Schapira, Leah and Victoria Dwek. *Kids Cooking Made Easy: Favorite Triple-Tested Recipes*. Brooklyn: Mesorah, 2013. 144 pp. \$15.99. (9781422614358). Gr. 3 and up.

There are many children's cookbooks on the market and they have many similarities: colorful presentation, recipes for things that kids like to eat (noodles, chicken nuggets, pizza, tacos, desserts with candy), and relatively simple instructions. This one offers kosher fare, with the following sections: dairy; meat, chicken and fish; side dishes; snacks; desserts and sweets; crafts. Each recipe is presented on a double spread, with the ingredients and instructions on the left, and a clear color photo on the right. What distinguishes Schapira and Dwek's recipe book? The helpful tips in the front matter include measurement conversions, ways to cut and cook onions and garlic, and how to set the table. There is advice for before and after cooking, for halving recipes, and a particularly helpful visual guide, showing the page layout, where to find the recipe yield, and the tools and/or appliances that will be needed. Icons next to recipe ingredients refer to notes on the facing page. The "Cooking School", with cooking tips or definitions, references a highlighted word in the instructions.

While *Kids Cooking Made Easy* contains the standard recipes, there are also some imaginative twists like Toasted Bow Tie Chips, Sour Gummy Rugelach, and Edible Sand Art. There is nothing specific for the Sabbath or any of the Jewish holidays, but healthful selections like Zucchini Spaghetti and Peach and Mango Salad are welcome. The presentation is also creative, with Fisher-Price Little People supporting a plate of Chocolate Bon Bons.

Leah Schapira and Victoria Dwek are the editors of the Whisk section of *Ami Living*, a weekly magazine popular with Orthodox readers. The cookbook follows the format of previous collaborations (*Starters and Sides Made Easy*, 2013; *Passover Made Easy*, 2013). It is a worthwhile purchase for all Jewish libraries servicing budding chefs and gourmets who can read and use the appliances.

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

FICTION – MIDDLE GRADE

Goldblatt, Mark. *Twerp*. New York: Random House, 2013. 288 pp. \$16.99. (9780375971426). Reviewed from an advance reading copy. Grades 4-7.

Julian Twerski's claim to fame is being the fastest sixth-grader at P.S. 23 in Queens. A typical twelve-year-old, he plays with his neighborhood friends, is annoyed by his older sister, and gets bored sitting in Hebrew School. But after "the incident" when Julian is suspended, his English teacher makes him a deal: Instead of a report about Julius Caesar, Julian can keep a journal and write about "the incident". Although first seen as a punishment, his entries force him to look at himself and those around him differently. Through his journal, the reader learns about his anxiety when another boy may usurp his title as "fastest"; his first "girlfriend"; his split and reconciliation with his best friend, Lonnie. Finally, Julian writes about when he and his friends lured a deaf and mentally challenged boy into a vacant lot and pelted him with eggs, an attack which left the boy with injuries requiring dental work. Julian convinces his friends to apologize, and he feels good that they do.

Despite some clichés: weird nicknames; the "Cyrano" letter writing where Jillian is more interested in Julian than his friend; and a happy ending where the boys apologize and Julian wins his race, this is a very special book. The publisher is promoting anti-bullying, but it is also a story of taking responsibility for one's actions. The rabbi's story for Julian is also clichéd: "A schlemiel is the fellow who spills his soup. A schlimazel is the fellow the soups lands on." But his advice, "Watch out for the soup," helps Julian make his own decisions and not just go along with his peers. Other Jewish content includes a discussion of Bar Mitzvahs and the Holocaust-survivor mother of Julian's friend. Authentic voice and incredible

sense of place and time as Julian and his friends walk the streets of Queens, New York in 1969 enhance the reading experience. This book is highly recommended for all Jewish libraries. It is a great “boy book”.

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

Goldman, Karen. *Jordan and the Dreadful Golem*. Illus. by Rachel Moseley. New York: Penlight, 2013. 212 pp. \$15.95. (9870983868521). Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 5–8.

Jordan Gavrieli is a twelve-year-old boy who lives in the village of Kfar Keshet in Israel near the Jordan River. The founder of the village, Miss Sara, gives each child a supernatural power. Jordan’s power is to flow like water and his friend Noam’s power is to make cloud formations. The children must use their powers for good in the world. On a camping trip, Jordan and his friends discover a man who is creating a monster out of dirt. Miss Sara tells the children that what they have witnessed is her evil brother, Lavan, creating a golem who will be used to steal their special powers. Jordan and the other children use their powers to destroy the golem. The story ends with Lavan plotting to avenge the destruction of his golem. Clearly, there will be a sequel.

Although fantasy novels are popular, it is unlikely that this book will be well received by kids. The writing is choppy and the chapters do not flow well. The narrative is bogged down with unnecessary details that do not relate to the main plotline. Also, the story of how Lavan became evil is too complicated and does not make complete sense. He still mourns the loss of his mother in a terrorist bombing. Therefore, Lavan is trying to clone people to make a perfect world of peace. Yet, he terrorizes the village. This novel is not recommended.

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

Steinkellner, Teddy. *Trash Can Days: A Middle School Saga*. New York: Disney Hyperion, 2013. 348 pp. \$16.99. (9781423166320). Gr. 5 and up.

Jake Schwartz and Danny Uribe have been best friends since Danny’s parents starting working for the affluent, Southern California Schwartz family. As seventh grade begins, Jake and Danny enter a new school, San Paulo, and face new challenges, including the very basis of their friendship. This novel is told through the perspectives of multiple characters—Jake, Danny, Jake’s sister Hannah (an eighth-grader), classmate Dorothy Wu, and others—through letters, stories, online chat messages, blog posts, email, and more.

What results is a tortuous mishmash that reads more like a young adult novel than one for middle school. Danny and Hannah form a relationship. Danny joins a gang. Dorothy crushes on hypersensitive Jake and writes literary stories about her “Prince Jacobim”. Dorothy and Jake become buddies when Danny spends more time with Hannah and with his gang. Hannah is labeled a slut and stops talking to Jake after he “outs” her relationship with Danny at a school dance. Hannah takes vengeance through a gossip blog until she has a talk with movie-mogul Dad who tells her to be more creative, thus sparking a more positive slant for her blog. Following Jake’s Bar Mitzvah, which is the only spark of Jewish content here except for the occasional ethnic slur, Jake gets stabbed by a gang member while trying to protect his sister. Not recommended for middle school readers.

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

Weissman, Elissa Brent. *The Short Seller*. New York: Atheneum, 2013. 251 pp, \$15.99. (9781442452558). Gr. 4–7.

Twelve-year-old Lindy Sachs has a lot to deal with: She has a bad case of mononucleosis and has to stay home from school for several weeks, she’s worried about keeping her friends, Steph and Howe, and she just doesn’t get math. Furthermore, as she recovers from her illness but is stuck at home, she’s bored. So, she and her father cook up a scheme whereby Lindy will do some online trading for him, as well as have a small account of her own. Lindy soon realizes that she might have some talent in making money on the stock market but, like the story of the sorcerer’s apprentice, things soon get out of hand.

The Short Seller is a humorous novel with important themes: Relationships are what is most important in life; never, ever, do something that's not legal; actions have consequences. With surprising twists and turns, and with some information about online trading of securities thrown in for good measure, the reader will keep turning the pages to find out what will happen next. Weissman creates characters that are believable; Lindy's sister and her parents are likeable people; friendships ebb and flow. The author captures teens' voices through texts, email messages, and phones, as well as more conventional narrative techniques. Aside from the mention of Lindy's upcoming Bat Mitzvah, this Jewish family is not observant. (The mention of eating lobster will put off Orthodox readers.) This reviewer found several proofreading errors, but they will probably not be noticed by the young reader.

Anne Dublin, author of Stealing Time (Dundurn, spring 2014), Toronto, Canada

FICTION – TEEN

Arnold, Elana K. *Splendor*. New York: Delacorte (Random House), 2013. 352 pp. \$20.99. (9780375990434) Pbk. Reviewed from an ARC. Grades 10 and up.

Elana K. Arnold's *Splendor*, the sequel to her novel *Sacred*, stands on its own as an engaging and complex young adult novel. Scarlett, the sensitive heroine, lives on Catalina Island off California's coast. There she tends to her pregnant horse at her family's inn and tries to accept her parents' recent separation. Scarlett's Jewish boyfriend, Will, possesses intuitive powers that lead him to seek out danger and he is both a source of concern and attraction for her. Lilly, Scarlett's thrill-seeking and impulsive girlfriend, along with the new "bad" boy at school, add an element of dark intrigue to Scarlett's world. With the aid of Will's father and mentor, Scarlett begins to study the *Kabbalah* – specifically the Hebrew text *Zohar* (*Splendor*) – in order to find inspiration for her life.

Some passages in the early part of the novel are awkward, for example where Will's paranormal gifts are reported upon rather than shared with the reader; a few of Scarlett's insights seem too mature. But Arnold manages to weave themes of Jewish spirituality and adolescent angst seamlessly together, whether she is describing sexual attraction, teen friendships, or the fury of disappointment and loss. Readers will be especially impressed with Scarlett's choices of balance over passion and forgiveness over anger. Have a box of Kleenex handy for the book's last scene, where the birth of a foal triumphs over a tragic death. *Splendor*, indeed.

Leda Siskind, YA writer and psychotherapist, Los Angeles, CA

Aronson, Sarah. *Believe*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda LAB, 2013. 290 pp. \$17.95. (9781467706971). Gr. 9–12.

Janine Collins is struggling to come to terms with her survival of a terrorist attack when she was a child visiting Israel. She asks the typical question of survivors – why me? In trying to understand who she really is, Janine sacrifices her friendships and even her strong belief in her mother's love for her and her family. She discovers that she may not be the faith healer people want to believe she is. She also learns that her remembrance of the horrible days when she was buried in rubble may not have happened as she thought. In trying to come to terms with these discoveries, she starts to understand the importance of believing in oneself.

The author's portrayal of Janine with all her faults does not make for an easily likable main character. However, the scathing portrayal of media frenzy and its tragic results give modern readers pause. Although the title of the book, *Believe*, can refer to a belief in God, the story is more a cry to believe in oneself. Janine is used by a sect of faith healers (who themselves are duped by a boy in a wheelchair) who falsely claims he is able to walk again after being touched by Janine. The readers find out that the leader of the group, who had rescued Janine in Israel, orchestrates the false healing to get money. Even though this leader could be cast as a complete villain, the author manages to make him a sympathetic character that readers like even though he is flawed. In fact, his deception is the catalyst for Janine's

coming to terms with who she really is.

This complicated tale gives the reader much to think about, but it was somehow unsatisfying. Many of the choices Janine made were understandable even though they were wrong, but her constant tendency to make excuses for her behavior and her whining about being in the media spotlight grew tiring. Her inevitable fall when she lost her best friends and discovered she was not really that special were not enough of a comeuppance, nor was her realization that her parents did not have the idyllic life she thought she remembered. Although the story introduced the question of whether faith healing exists, it left the reader unsure of the answer. Like Janine, readers are left with more questions than answers. Optional purchase for most synagogues and high schools.

Susan Dubin, Off-the-Shelf Library Services, Henderson, NV

Bridgeton, Sarah. *Next Year in Israel.* [self-published]: CreateSpace, 2012. 240 pp. \$9.99. (9781484855560). Gr. 8 and up.

Sixteen-year-old Rebecca has been bullied for years and has finally reached a point where she does not know which way to turn. Her divorced parents are busy with their own concerns, her friends have been cowed by the bully and have faded away, and the school administration is unresponsive. Seeing no alternative, Rebecca attempts suicide. When she awakens in the hospital from her failed attempt, she is disappointed rather than relieved. Her grandmother suggests a semester abroad at a school in Israel. Having had no exposure to religion or previous connection to Israel, Rebecca agrees because this is the only way she can think of to remove herself from a social scene which is only getting worse and more painful.

But when she arrives at the *kfar*, the Israeli school which also has a work component, she begins to realize that this is a blank slate with which she can begin to reinvent herself. Perhaps a new self-image and a new attitude will lead to a new social life and a new confident *persona* she can carry back home at the end of the semester. And so Rebecca begins a grand adventure. She tests out new ways of relating to her peers with much trial and error, learning plenty from the error. She discovers Israel and encounters her own Jewish heritage. She grows and matures as she tries to figure out who she wants to be and what is important in life. She returns to the U.S. with good friends, many lessons learned, and with hope for a brighter future. The author includes a follow-up short story titled "This Year At Home" so the reader can see how Rebecca fares upon her return to her U.S. high school.

This is a story about bullying but primarily about the skill it takes to develop the maturity and substance to learn to stand up for yourself. It's a story about learning to have confidence in who you are and what you want because that's really all you need; if self-confidence is in your personal toolkit, a bully has far less power. Recommended for readers thirteen and up who will root for Rebecca and also learn a thing or two along the way about peer pressure and refusing to follow the crowd.

Michal Hoschander Malen, North Shore Hebrew Academy Library, Great Neck, NY

Orlander, Toby. *Who By Fire, Who By Sword: The Journals of Four Courageous Jewish Women in Turbulent Times.* Jerusalem: Urim, 2013. 255 p. \$22.50. (9789655241341). Gr. 10-12.

"Four amazing women" recount in their journals some of the tragic events in Jewish history in a book that is passed down through the generations: Sixteen-year-old Dina's journal is dated "London, 1187". She helps her family escape the path of Crusaders who massacred Jews on the way to Jerusalem; they end up in Burgos, Spain. Freya, also a teenager, whose journal is dated "Toledo, 1492", lives during the Spanish Inquisition; her family exits on the eve of the "official" expulsion, and they go from Lisbon to Antwerp to Prague. Tonya's contribution, "Krakow, 1646", follows her from there to Nemirov, where she survives Chmielnicki's pogrom because she was punished by her evil stepmother, then through Galicia back to Krakow. Necha lives in 1939 Poland, and she is proud to be a "link" to "crimes perpetrated against our Jewish brethren". Hers is a detailed account of surviving the Holocaust by hiding and with the help of righteous gentiles. A glossary is included.

Who By Fire does not read like journal entries, nor is the passing down of the book plausible. With the exception of Necha's entries, which are the author's mother's experiences, there is little here that makes history come alive. The other entries are filled with historical events and known personalities of the time periods and show little introspection. The journal entries are not dated: For example, the "1187" diary is in the year 1189 by chapter ten. The voices are unauthentic: There are long passages about good and evil, wisdom beyond age and experience, forethought based on looking at history from a current perspective, and colloquial speech that detract from the narrative. The sense of place is painted in broad strokes. Even with historical fiction, maps and timelines are a boon to the reader. Part of the author's impetus for writing the book was that "there's so little reading material out there for Haredi girls". Why they would want to read fiction about the blackest times in Jewish history is questionable. Not recommended.

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

Sanders, Shelley. *Rachel's Promise. The Rachel Trilogy. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2013. 278 pp. \$12.95. (9781927583142) Pbk. (9781927583159) Ebook. Gr. 7-10.*

Rachel's Promise, the sequel to *Rachel's Secret*, weaves parallel narratives of Rachel and Sergei. The story begins with Rachel, her sister Nucia, her mother, and Menahem, a young boy brought to Rachel's care by Sergei, as they leave Russia and embark on their journey to Shanghai. (From there, they plan to emigrate to America.) When they enter Shanghai, Rachel's mother is quarantined from the rest of the family due to illness. While trying to save money for passage to America, Rachel, Nucia and Menahem live in a boarding house with other Jewish immigrants. Rachel follows her dream of writing and starts submitting articles to a Jewish newspaper. She begins breaking away from Jewish traditions because she feels that these customs represent her former life in Russia. The story ends with Rachel, Nucia, Nucia's husband, and Menahem traveling to America.

Back in Russia, Sergei's father loses his job as head of the police and has turned to drinking and bullying Sergei. Sergei leaves home and travels to St. Petersburg to look for work and to help support his family. He gets a job at a factory. Enraged by the unfair treatment of workers by the factory owners, Sergei joins a combative group of protesters and becomes an accomplice to the murder of a government official. Sergei is fearful of getting arrested for his part in the murder and also becomes disenchanted by the group's violent ways. He then attends a peaceful demonstration where the czar's army guns down protestors. The story ends with Sergei going into hiding and fleeing St. Petersburg.

Sanders vividly describes the poor conditions of the factory workers while contrasting their lives with the extravagance of the czar's castle and those of diplomats in St. Petersburg. In addition, she conveys information about the Jewish immigrant community in Shanghai during the early twentieth century. An historical note and glossary are included. Recommended for all libraries.

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

[Editor's note: For a review of *Rachel's Secret*, see *AJL Reviews*, Sept/Oct. 2012, p. 1.]

Stampler, Ann Redisch. *Afterparty. New York: Simon Pulse, 2014. 416 pp. \$17.99. (9781442423244). Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 10-adult.*

Ann Redisch Stampler has authored excellent retellings of folklore including: *Something from Nothing*, *The Rooster Prince of Breslov*, *Shlemazel and the Remarkable Spoon of Pohost*, and *The Wooden Sword*, a 2013 Sydney Taylor Honor Book for Younger Readers. She has written one other young adult novel, *Where It Began*. In *Afterparty*, Stampler captures the voice of a teenager. She expresses the longings and insecurities that teenagers feel. The protagonist, Emma, feels pigeonholed as a "good girl" by her overprotective father. He acts this way as a result of Emma's mother's death of a heroin overdose.

Emma and her father move to Los Angeles, where Emma plans to break away from her good girl mold.

Emma befriends Siobhan, a rebellious classmate. Unbeknownst to her father, Emma follows Siobhan into a world of high-risk behaviors including drinking, drugs, and sex. When she gets into a relationship with Dylan, a more principled person, Emma starts to realize that Siobhan is an untrustworthy friend and out of control. Siobhan's outrageous behavior takes a tragic turn at the "afterparty", a warehouse party filled with drug abuse and other illicit behaviors. The extent of Jewish content includes the fact that Emma's father is Jewish, but he does not practice the rituals and traditions of Judaism. However, he does believe in *tikkun olam* (fixing the world), so he insists that Emma volunteer at the local synagogue's food bank. Emma also starts attending synagogue services, after the tragedy at the afterparty. The minimal amount of Jewish content will make this novel an additional purchase for most synagogues and Jewish day school libraries.

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

HOLOCAUST & WORLD WAR II

Darman, Peter, ed. *The Holocaust and Life under Nazi Occupation*. World War II series. New York: Rosen, 2013. 64 pp. \$31.95. (9781448892358). Gr. 6–8.

The horrific policies and actions put into place by Hitler and the Nazis against Jews and others considered undesirable are detailed in this fourth book in the Rosen series. Historical documentation outlines the sequence of laws promulgated and the treatment of the Jewish population, first in Germany in the 1930s, and then throughout Europe in all countries occupied by the Germans. The book has three chapters: The Terror Begins, Racial War in Russia, and Genocide.

Many black and white illustrations with commentary highlight aspects of the Holocaust. In addition, colored boxes add details with photographs of and information about people, places, and topics, such as "The Holocaust and Medical Experiments". These features facilitate research though, at times, the pictures do not match the printed pages and may confuse readers. The text is followed by a five-page timeline, a glossary, bibliographical references, and an index. There is also a link to online websites related to the subjects in the book.

Shelly Feit, Library Consultant, Teaneck, NJ

Kacer, Kathy. *Shanghai Escape*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2013. 250 pp. \$14.95. (9781927583104) Pbk. Gr. 6 and up.

On November 8, 1938, seven-year-old Lili Toufar and her parents prepare to escape from Vienna to Shanghai, leaving her beloved toys and books behind. But at least her family, including her sixteen-year-old Uncle Willi, will be together there. When they arrive in Shanghai, the family ekes out a living, surrounded by other German émigrés. But their world changes again after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The Japanese overtake Shanghai and "stateless refugees" like the Toufars are forced into a ghetto in Hongkew. With little food and no way to earn money, the family is constantly concerned about their survival. Lili must attend a Jewish school. But they are not prepared for Allied bombings that seem to target their home in an old school building.

Kacer tells a story not told before. While the theme of Jews in Shanghai has been the topic of several books, hers is the first to cover the Holocaust era and the effect of Japanese occupation, forcing the question: Where, if anywhere, were Jews safe? Kacer can always be relied upon for diligent research. However, *Shanghai Escape* contains some egregious inaccuracies. For instance, Chapter 1 alludes to the night of November 8 as the beginning of *Kristallnacht*. The date was actually November 9. Oma speaks to Lili using the formal "you" in German, which a grandmother would never do. Most importantly, the book does not say this is a fictionalized account, based on a true story. Still, the book offers important insights into Jewish life during the 1940s. Toufar family photos and other images round out the story. Recommended for all libraries.

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

Osborne, William. *Hitler's Secret*. Somerset, England: Chicken House, 2013. 333 pp. \$17.99. (9780545496469). Gr. 5-9.

Two teenagers who escape to England from the terrors of the Holocaust are sent back to Germany by the British secret service as secret agents whose mission is to capture a German child who has great military value. The teen heroes of the book alternately tell the story, giving equal time to female and male perspectives. Although Otto and Leni are very engaging, the real star of the story is the young girl they have been tasked with kidnapping. This mysterious child is worth a great deal to the German high command, for Heydrich himself has been ordered to prevent her from leaving the country. The Nazi commander follows the teens through Germany and even into Switzerland as he attempts to follow orders. In the end, neither side wins, but the teen protagonists escape with their lives.

The author claims that the plot of this story is based on actual rumors that Hitler fathered a child whom Rudolf Hess told the British about after his attempt at overthrowing the German High Command had failed. The British did use agents who had escaped from Germany, but it is unlikely that they ever used agents as young as Otto and Leni. Although the premise of this novel is somewhat far-fetched, it leaps from one breathtaking adventure to another. Recommended purchase for most synagogues and schools for readers in middle school and high school.

Susan Dubin, Off-the-Shelf Library Services, Henderson, NV

Skrypuch, Marsha Forchuk. *Making Bombs for Hitler*. Richmond Hill, ON: Scholastic Canada, 2012. 186 pp. \$8.99. (9781443107303) Pbk. Grades 9-12.

Not much has been written about the slave raids by the Nazis into Russian territory. This novel tells the story of Lida, who is separated from her younger sister after their parents are killed and who is sent to a slave labor camp. The author describes in chilling detail the horrific conditions under which Lida lives. She hides her real age and makes herself useful by showing her skill as a seamstress, and thus she survives. *Making Bombs for Hitler*, although fiction, reads like a memoir. The details of camp life and the hardships endured by the prisoners give readers another glimpse into the horrendous experiences of victims during the Holocaust. The fact that Lida is not Jewish emphasizes the idea that not all victims of the Nazis were Jews. The book does feature a Jewish girl as one of Lida's friends and points out how much worse the ordeal was for Jewish victims.

Because this book gives graphic details about life inside the camps, it should be carefully reviewed before presenting it to a young reader. Even teens may find some of the descriptions of Lida's treatment difficult to read. The writing is beautiful and the characters are well-drawn even though the story takes the reader to some very dark places. Recommended purchase for most synagogues and schools serving teen readers.

Susan Dubin, Off-the-Shelf Library Services, Henderson, NV

[Editor's note: *Making Bombs for Hitler* is the 2014 winner (young readers' literature) of the Kobzar Literary Award. This biennial award recognizes outstanding contributions to Canadian literary arts by authors who develop a Ukrainian Canadian theme with literary merit in one of several genres: literary non-fiction, fiction, poetry, young readers' literature, plays, screenplays and musicals.]

Watts, Irene N. *Escape from Berlin*. Toronto: Tundra, 2013. 417 pp. \$17.95. (9781770496118). Gr. 6-9.

September 2013 marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the *kindertransport*. Three fiction novels written by Irene N. Watts about the *kindertransport* were reprinted in this omnibus edition, *Escape from Berlin*. The *kindertransport* saved almost ten thousand children, including the author, by transporting them from Nazi Germany to Great Britain between 1938 and 1939. A preface in this edition provides a brief history.

Good-bye Marianne is the first volume and tells the story of Marianne Kohn, an eleven-year-old Jewish girl who, in 1938 Berlin, faces persecution. Marianne is expelled from her school for being Jewish. In addition, her father is targeted by the Nazis because he is a Jewish man who sold books that

were considered subversive. As a result, he is hiding underground. Marianne's mother secures her a place on the first *kindertransport*. Marianne is apprehensive to leave her mother and travel to Great Britain, since she knows little English. On the train to Great Britain, she helps a very young girl, Sophie Mandel, who is also alone.

Remember Me, the sequel to *Good-Bye Marianne*, is about Marianne's life in England. Her host family in Britain is not welcoming, because they expected an older girl who would be a servant. Kids at school and some adults are not accepting of a German girl. Marianne is lonely and misses her mother greatly. Along with other children, she is sent to Wales, a haven from wartime England. Eventually, Marianne is reunited with her mother.

Finding Sophie, the third volume, is about Sophie Mandel, the young girl whom Marianne helped on the *kindertransport* train. She has grown up as a British girl. Sophie is hosted by her parents' friend, whom she calls Aunt Em. She has few memories of her family in Germany, and describes these in snippets. After the war, Sophie fears that she will be forced to leave her home in England and move back to Germany with her father.

In these three novels, Watts provides insights into the feelings of children of the *kindertransport*. These children are sent away from their families and put in unfamiliar environments. They are scared and lonely. Some, like the character Sophie, have grown up without knowing their families and fear leaving their current lives. This omnibus edition, along with the three separate novels, is recommended.

Heather Lenson, Director of the JECC Libraries, Cleveland, OH

Wein, Elizabeth. *Rose Under Fire*. New York: Hyperion, 2013. 368 pp. \$17.99. (9781423183099). Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 9-12.

Rose Moyer Justice is an American who worked for the Air Transport Auxiliary in England during World War II. Her job, as a civilian, was to shuttle people, cargo, and often the plane itself from one location to another. In September 1944, Rose flies off course in France and is intercepted by German planes. She is sent to Ravensbruck and mistakenly classified as French Political Prisoner 51498. During her six-month internment, she suffers from cold and starvation and witnesses the horrors of the concentration camp, but she also forms close friendships. Several of the women are "rabbits", subjects on whom the Nazis performed bone, muscle, and nerve regeneration and bone transplantation experiments, leaving their victims either dead or horribly crippled. Rose recounts her ordeal in her Paris hotel room after her escape. Dispersed between her detailed and graphic recollections is her original poetry. Rose decides to join her friend Maddie (from Wein's *Code Name Verity*) in Scotland, and begins to study medicine. After Rose's poems are published in a literary journal, she reconnects with several of her fellow inmates from the camp. Rose decides to be a reporter at the Nuremberg Military Tribunal "Doctors Trial", where she spends time with her friend Roza. For Christmas, Rose arranges the fulfillment of a fantasy in which they indulged in the camps: They fly to Italy and spend the day at the beach on the Adriatic Sea.

Wein's meticulous research about Ravensbruck makes for an amazing story of courage and friendship. Although there are many vivid details of the horrors of the concentration camp, there are moments of beauty and humor as well, and the ebb and flow between the two creates a tension that propels the reader through the book. Rose has a vibrant personality, and the secondary characters are well developed as well. There is a very strong sense of place and time. Although *Rose Under Fire* has negligible Jewish content, it is highly recommended for libraries with extensive Holocaust collections, and it would make an excellent choice for book clubs.

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



ISRAEL

Manzione, Lisa. *The Adventures of Bella & Harry: Let's Visit Jerusalem! The Adventures of Bella and Harry Series.* Illus. by Kristine Lucco. Delray Beach, FL: Bella & Harry Publishers, 2013. 35 pp. \$16.66. (97881937616007). Gr. K-3.

If a child takes a trip with Bella and Harry in Jerusalem, he or she would feel utterly lost and disoriented. Even though Bella and Harry are Chihuahuas (who should have some sense of direction), the author confuses readers with vague descriptions of Jerusalem as well as tangential visits to Masada and the Dead Sea. The following sites are omitted in Bella and Harry's Jerusalem itinerary: the Knesset, Machane Yehuda market, Ben Yehuda Street, Hebrew University, and Hadassah Hospital. While Manzione correctly identifies the *Kotel* as the Western Wall, she does not go into much detail about any of the other quarters of the Old City. Lucco's illustrations appear to be watercolor instead of the all-too-familiar, computer-generated illustrations present in picture books. Bella and Harry may introduce a young child to Jerusalem, but a visit would be better experienced firsthand rather than through this book. As a travel guide to Jerusalem, *The Adventures of Bella & Harry: Let's Visit Jerusalem!* is an optional purchase.

Ben Pastcan, Librarian, Shalom School, Sacramento, CA

NON-FICTION

Bascomb, Neal. *The Nazi Hunters: How a Team of Spies and Survivors Captured the World's Most Notorious Nazi.* New York: Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, 2013. 256 pp. \$16.99. (9780545431002). Grades 8 and up.

The discovery and capture of Adolf Eichmann in 1960 was a stunning accomplishment. Neal Bascomb brings the enterprise into clear focus in this detailed book for teen readers. The story begins by reviewing Eichmann's biography, his role in the Nazi hierarchy, and his commitment to the elimination of Europe's Jews. It then describes the scheme by which he and other leaders of the Third Reich vanished from sight and left Europe at the end of World War II. Bascomb recounts how, years later, Eichmann and his family were discovered living in Buenos Aires. The book lays out in great detail how the plan to capture Eichmann developed; how the team of Israelis (several of them survivors) organized his taking; and how, in the days after his imprisonment, Eichmann accepted his fate and admitted his real name. Bascomb continues by describing in detail how the Israelis removed their prisoner from Argentina, using both guile and a fortuitous invitation from the government. The story concludes with a quick review of the trial in Jerusalem, which riveted the world and reminded us of the horrors perpetrated by the Nazi regime.

Neal Bascomb has created this volume from a longer adult book published in 2009. It contains dozens of photographs of documents, people, and places – all placed close to their locations in the story. It is a clear and powerful explication of a dramatic moment in history. The reader can feel the tension throughout the narrative, though it is told in fairly bland language. Either as a general twentieth-century history, a non-fiction spy story, or a book about the Shoah itself, this is an excellent discussion of the topic that both young people and adults should appreciate. Includes photos, list of participants, bibliography, notes, and index. It is recommended as an addition to general collections.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Needle, Larry. *Homecourt: The True Story of the Best Basketball Team You've Never Heard of.* Philadelphia: New City Community Press, 2013. 60 pp. \$16.95. (9780981956084). Grades 3-5.

Anyone who has watched the Harlem Globetrotters has heard of Louis "Red" Klotz. As coach of the Washington Generals, Klotz lost thousands of games to the "Clown Princes" of basketball. In this short illustrated book, we see a different side of the legendary "loser" – a humanitarian and sports hero.

Louis Klotz grew up during the Depression. His parents escaped from Russia and found a new home in Philadelphia, where his father was a cabinet maker. Louis fell in love with basketball as a boy, and became a fan of the South Philadelphia Hebrew Association team, a semipro team that included several excellent players. In *Homecourt*, we see Louis playing basketball, at home with his parents, and as a fan at SPHAS games. We also learn about his best friend, Chuck Drizin, who died at Iwo Jima and about the verbal and physical abuse ballplayers suffered during games. We are introduced to Eddie Gottlieb, the coach of the SPHAS, who famously walked out of a restaurant that would not serve African Americans. The Epilogue tells about Red's long and honorable life as a player and coach. We also hear from Red himself in the Afterword, as he talks about his life, his dreams, and his love of basketball. *Homecourt* is an obvious labor of love. The story it tells is one that everyone needs to hear: Do what you love, do it with passion, and do it the right way. While generations of spectators have watched Red Klotz lose basketball games, this small gem shows the great man underneath. It is appropriate for all libraries.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

PICTURE BOOKS

Fagan, Cary. *Oy, Feh, So?* Illus. by Gary Clement. Toronto: Groundwood, 2013. 40 pp. \$17.95. (9781554983780) Preschool–Gr. 2.

Oy! The characters in this comedic tale are surely set in their ways. When Aunt Chanah, Aunt Essy, and Uncle Sam come to visit every Sunday, it's the same old reaction to every little thing: "Oy! Feh! So?" The kids decide to take action and stage outrageous events in order to prompt their relatives to say something—anything else. How could you possibly say, "Oy, Feh, So?" to a living room robbery, a hungry dragon, or an alien invasion? To the dismay of the children, "Oy, Feh, So?" is exactly what the relatives say. In frustration, the children finally take to mocking their aunts and uncle, and soon everyone is laughing so hard they can barely breathe, let alone say, "Oy, Feh, So?". The children learn that there is more to their family than meets the eye, and the relatives get back in touch with humor and joy. It turns out the two generations have more in common than they think.

Fagan's book makes light of a typical family situation, and it will spark recognition and laughter in students, teachers, and parents alike. The expressions "Oy" and "Feh" offer a great introduction to Yiddish, and the clever illustrations will have readers giggling from start to end. Gary Clement uses a combination of pen, ink, and watercolor to create illustrations that are evocative of each character's personality. Here is a well-written, genuinely funny read that would engage young students in discussion about family relationships, first impressions, and the value of communication. Recommended.

Abby Cooper, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, IL

Stavans, Ilan. *Golemito*. Illus. by Teresa Villegas. Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books, 2013. 32 pp. \$16.95. (9781588382924). Gr. 1–3.

When Sammy, a mechanical tinkerer, and his friend Ilan, a poetry lover, are bullied in school, Sammy comes up with a most unusual survival strategy to thwart their nemeses. Inspired by Ilan's tale about Rabbi Judah Loew of Bezalel who made a golem to defend the Jews from their enemies, Sammy decides to make a golem, too. The boy genius takes the basics from the traditional Eastern European story and mixes in bits and pieces gleaned from Mexican culture and history to form a decidedly unique man of clay. Deviating from the original story, Sammy does not animate his golem using words from the Kabbalah, but by saying, "Ma Zan Moquetzacan", words suggested by Ilan and taken from the Nahuatl battle poem written long ago by Nezahualcoyotl, an Aztec prince. Sammy dubs their tiny defender "Golemito."

Initially the size of an action figure, Golemito is easily smuggled into the school nestled inside a lunch box. Unlike the lumbering clay automaton from Prague, Golemito is "bare-chested, wearing a multicolored feather crown, and holding a shield in one hand and a machete in the other". As hoped, the little buff warrior

with the big attitude subdues the bullies enough to make life tolerable again for Sammy and Ilan. The two boys learn, however, that golems, no matter their country of origin, eventually become as unmanageable as toddlers up long past their bedtimes. Using the oldest trick in the parenting book, Sammy reads to his golem in a soothing voice until it falls asleep and turns into a pile of dust. Villegas' boldly rendered prints, coupled with the use of the non-traditional Anastasia font for Stavan's story, make for a beautifully illustrated and designed book. A welcome addition to the growing canon of golem stories for children.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

[Note from reviewer: Ilan Stavans has written and edited more than fifty books, including *The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories* (1998), *On Borrowed Words* (2001), and *The Schocken Book of Modern Sephardic Literature* (2005). *Golemito* was originally published in *Cricket* magazine, April 2010.]

SHABBAT & HOLIDAYS

Gellman, Ellie B. *Netta and Her Plant*. Illus. by Natascia Ugliano. Minneapolis: Lerner, 2014. 32 pp. \$5.95. (9781467704236) Pbk. Gr. K-2.

This delightful story, set in Israel, is both a Tu B'Shevat tale and a book about coping with change. Netta (meaning "plant" in Hebrew) receives a little tree at preschool on Tu B'Shevat and takes it home to care for it. Watering and singing to her plant, Netta watches it grow, while Netta grows as well. When Ima and Abba recognize that Netta has outgrown her bed, they purchase a larger one. Netta sees her plant has outgrown its pot, so with her parents' help, she buys a larger one. "The plant grew. Netta grew." Soon a new baby arrives, a new, larger home is purchased, and Netta is enrolled in a new kindergarten. The plant keeps growing, needing larger and larger pots, until Netta finds it a new home in the park behind her school. And just as Netta makes new friends, the plant has new friends as well. With each change, Netta talks to her plant, assuring it that all will be well.

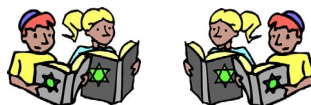
The illustrations, done in soft, yet bright, pastel pencil, make a perfect accompaniment to the story. The characters' round faces and innocent, wide eyes are reminiscent of Margaret Keane's paintings. As a Tu B'Shevat story and a book to assist young ones with change, *Netta and Her Plant* is recommended for Jewish libraries.

Kathy Bloomfield, forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC

Goldman, Dara. *Boris and Stella and the Perfect Gift: A Christmas and Hanukkah Story*. Ann Arbor, MI: Sleeping Bear Press, 2013. 32 pp. \$15.99. (9781585368594). K-Gr. 2.

Boris is a musician from Russia and Stella is a baker from Italy. For Hanukkah, Stella wants to surprise Boris with something special; so she sells her beloved potted Christmas tree and buys Boris a new dreidel to add to his collection. The dreidel is from Israel with Hebrew letters that stand for "A Great Miracle Happened Here". "Stella feels that it was a miracle that she met Boris", so it is the perfect gift. Boris also wants to surprise Stella with something special for Christmas. He sells his much-loved dreidel collection and buys Stella a dazzling glass star for the top of her tree. "Stella was a dazzling star to Boris. And Stella meant star in Italian. It was the perfect gift," he rationalizes. On the eighth night of Hanukkah, they celebrate together with potato latkes and panettone cake and exchange gifts. Disappointed at first, they quickly realize that the new dreidel can be the beginning of a new collection. They also discover a pine cone from Stella's tree that they will plant to grow a new Christmas tree. The pleasant pencil and watercolor illustrations depict a fun-loving bear couple in a contemporary, urban setting. Readers who don't object to bears celebrating both Christmas and Hanukkah or to the overtly Christian themes from O. Henry's story, "The Gift of the Magi", will enjoy this charming inter-faith adaptation.

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



Newman, Tracy. *Shabbat is Coming!* Illus. by Viviana Garofoli. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2014. \$5.95. (9781467713672) Board Book. Preschool.

While most Shabbat books for young children highlight the holiday rituals and symbols—the candles, the wine, the challah—the simple, repetitive text in this board book focuses on the preparations before sunset: “Friday’s here. Jump and cheer. Shabbat is coming.” Braiding the challah, cooking, setting the table, cleaning up, bathing, and giving *tzedakah* (charity) is each given a page with a rhyming couplet and ending with the refrain, “Shabbat is coming.” The culmination: “With candles bright, we greet the night. Hurray! Shabbat is here!” The cheerful, textured illustrations depict a contemporary family, with Dad wearing an apron to bake the challah and cook the soup, and Grandma and Grandpa joining the family for Shabbat dinner. All in all, *Shabbat is Coming!* is a nice addition to board book collections in Jewish settings.

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

Wohl, Lauren. *The Eighth Menorah*. Illus. by Laura Hughes. Chicago: Albert Whitman, 2013. 32 pp. \$16.99. (9780807518921). Preschool–2.

Can a person ever really have too many menorahs? Sam thinks so. He loves Hanukkah and can’t wait to celebrate with his parents and grandma, but he is worried that since his family already owns several menorahs, they have no need for the one he makes in Hebrew school. Though his teacher thinks his mom and dad would love a new addition to their menorah collection, Sam isn’t convinced, and he won’t rest until he finds the perfect home for the eighth menorah.

This story reinforces the idea that it’s not necessarily the number of menorahs you have that matters, but the relationships you nurture, the good deeds you do, and the kind of person you choose to be. When Sam ultimately decides to donate his menorah to his grandma and her friends at her new condo, Mr. Levine, her neighbor, declares “this is the best Hanukkah gift ever, Sam.” In an aside to Grammy, he says, “You’ve got quite a *mensch* there.” *The Eighth Menorah* provides an opportunity for discussion between parents/teachers and children about what it means to be a *mensch*—a discussion that is relevant regardless of the time of year.

In addition to an uplifting story, this book also offers directions for playing *dreidel* as well as colorful, detailed illustrations that are sure to appeal to young readers. Recommended for libraries and synagogues looking for new Hanukkah materials.

Abby Cooper, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, IL

YIDDISH

Steinberg, Eliezer. *A Collection of Poems for Children in Yiddish*. Ed. by Adina Bar-El. Illus. by Nurit Yuval. Jerusalem: Tsur-ot, 2013. Email: adinabarel@gmail.com. 80 pp. \$20.00 + shipping. (9789655530506). Gr. 3–Adult.

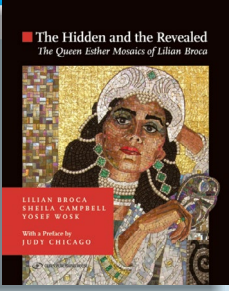
The Jewish Daily Forward (January 3, 2003) called Eliezer Steinberg (1880–1932) the “Yiddish Aesop in poetic form”. His works were widely recited and he became a notable figure in the Yiddish cultural circles in Romania. In this new edition of his selected poems (and one story), the Yiddish reader can have a *forshpayz* (appetizer) of Steinberg’s style and subject matter. The charming story, “Far Vos di Kats Shpayt dem Hunt in Punim Arayn” (“Why the Cat Spits in the Dog’s Face”), is taken from Steinberg’s *Mayslekh* (*Stories*), published in 1936. The poems are mostly in rhyming couplets or rhyme scheme ABAB. They recall an innocent time—at least, more innocent than ours—when children could read about talking insects, frogs, birds, animals, and even inanimate objects that sing, dance, play musical instruments, and laugh together. In fact, these creatures act in quite human-like ways. Sometimes, they get along; other times, they don’t. Included in this collection are fables in poetic form. Two versions of Aesop’s fable, “The Fox and the Crow”, are written with a Yiddish *ta’am* (taste). The fox “redt zikh

tsuker zis" (speaks in a sugar-sweet voice) as he flatters the crow to sing so that he will drop his piece of cheese. Humorous touches lighten these lyrical poems and thus make them appealing to children. For example, in "Di Eybike Krig" ("The Eternal War"), a rooster and a cuckoo argue about whether to say "kukuriku" or "kuku". Not only are these poems amusing, but they also serve as a pedagogical tool. For example, "Dudl Tsaylt" ("Dudl Counts") is an alphabet game with instructions. It is interesting to note that Steinberg did not write these poems for an Orthodox audience. There is no mention of God, prayer, or the synagogue. However, all characters are dressed in modest clothing.

The illustrations are old-fashioned, black and white drawings, often repetitive, but with a certain charm. The design of the book is unimaginative, with text above and illustration below (in most cases). Adina Bar-El has written an introduction and brief biography of Steinberg in Hebrew. Table of contents and index are included. Teachers should be alert to several spelling and typographical errors. Recommended for learners of Yiddish.

Anne Dublin, author of *Stealing Time* (Dundurn, spring 2014), Toronto, Canada

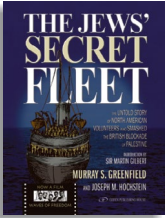
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The Hidden and the Revealed
The Queen Esther Mosaics of Lilian Broca
By Lilian Broca, Sheila Campbell & Yosef Wosk
HC / 190 pp / ISBN 9789652295606 / \$35
Coffee Table size: 12.5" x 10.25"

Lilian Broca's Queen Esther mosaics are one of the most exquisite series of mosaics in contemporary art. Her work won the prestigious Lorenzo de' Medici medal. Art historian Sheila Campbell and Rabbi and scholar Yosef Wosk contribute to this volume to create an all encompassing study of the heroine of Purim. The full Megillah as an illuminated manuscript is included.

MEMORABLE HOLOCAUST TITLES



The Jews' Secret Fleet
The Untold Story of North American Volunteers who Smashed the British Blockade
By Murray S. Greenfield
Introduction by Sir Martin Gilbert
HC / 200pp / ISBN 9789652295170 / \$25


The book details their remarkable journey. *The basis for a documentary film by Alan Rosenthal entitled Waves of Freedom.*

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

Survivors is not just another Holocaust photo album. This moving album shows the survivors as they are today, with the emphasis on hope, on the miracle of rehabilitation, the power of survival, and the unbelievable wonder of continuity, in spite of everything.

Flags over the Warsaw Ghetto
The Untold Story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising
By Moshe Arens
PB / 416pp / ISBN 9789652295279 / \$29.95

The generally accepted account of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is incomplete. In this groundbreaking work, Israel's former Minister of Defense, Moshe Arens, recounts a true and accurate tale of courage and sacrifice. The truth begins with the existence of not one, but two resistance organizations in the ghetto.




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 *Gefen, it's not just good wine*

Don't Forget to Check Out AJL News!

The November/December 2013 issue of *AJL News* has lots of internal AJL organizational news, and lots of exciting articles about the activities of our members all over the world.

An Interview with Steven M. Bergson

BY DANIEL SCHEIDE

Steven M. Bergson is the editor of the forthcoming *Jewish Comix Anthology*, comprised of reprinted and original material (AH Comics, 2014), and writes about comics with Jewish characters at The Jewish Comics Blog (<http://jewishcomics.blogspot.com>). He worked for 9 years as a librarian at the Jewish Public Library of Toronto and is a Past President of the Ontario Chapter of the Association of Jewish Libraries.



Steven M. Bergson

How did you go about choosing the reprinted material?

I tried to be as inclusive as possible. The initial problem was finding where the material was hiding. I also made some decisions as to the story & art quality, but I'm quite happy with the work we're trying to reprint, as is the publisher I'm working with (AH Comics).

Was there much difficulty with copyright?

I've learned that when obtaining reprint rights, patience is a necessary virtue. For example, we discovered the rights to the original lyrics of "Dona Dona" are currently held with three separate companies, making it a longer-than-expected process to obtaining the rights to use it in our Anthology. We love the story and intend to use it for Volume 2, we just won't be able to obtain the rights in time for Volume 1.

It looks like you have a star-studded list of contributors to your anthology. Could you point out some highlights?

As far as big names go, we tentatively have agreements with the representatives for Harvey Pekar and Robert Crumb. We are also currently negotiating with the reps for Will Eisner, Art Spiegelman and Joe Kubert, and we hope to add them to the roster shortly. One of the artists will be the publisher himself, Andy Stanleigh, whose other works include Delta and Hobson's Gate. I can also confirm that I have written an original short story for the book myself, but I can't yet reveal who the illustrator will be.

The term 'comix', rather than 'comics' usually has a connotation of 1960s-70s counterculture, social relevance and/or graphic sexual themes. Is that what we are in store for?

Some of the stories we are trying to get reprinted are from comic books which were approved by the Comics Code Authority (i.e. the equivalent of a "G" rating). Others we are trying to get reprinted are from comics intended for adults. The intended audiences for the books are YA and adult, though it might be possible to publish a G-rated "Junior Edition" in the future (if sales go well enough to warrant it). Using the word "comix" (with the "x") gives the title a more modern edge, congruent with the way some of our artists are giving the older tales a more modern setting. As well, visually, our cover designer will be able to use it in a dynamic way.

As a librarian, I decided not to choose either the term "comix" or the term "comics" for the book because I don't know which keyword people will find it with. I plan to incorporate the other spelling (i.e. "comics") somewhere on both the cover and title page so that it will increase the chances that someone looking for this type of book will notice it when they use search engines.

What sort of guidelines did you give your creators in terms of the Jewish content? Were there any difficulties along those lines?

I'll generalize my remarks to point out that creators can be rather picky about what type of story they would like to do. Based on the title of the book, obviously all of the stories have Jewish characters. Beyond that, though, some creators specifically ask for stories involving the supernatural. Others ask for stories of sin and redemption. We've gotten requests for stories with positive representations of women; one solution for that type of request has been to change the genders of the characters. We've been asked for modern stories or the opportunity to modernize the adaptation. In each case, we try

to be accommodating and when I've been challenged with finding a story which I'm unfamiliar with, that's when I've gotten to flex my library research skills, make extra trips to my local Judaica library, and expand my personal Jewish stories repertoire.

What classic Jewish tales will be adapted in this anthology?

That's a bit of a trick question, as the titles are never uniform and everyone has their own idea of what makes a folk tale a "classic". Anyhow, I'll try to answer as best as I can with examples.

There will be at least 6 different golem stories (including the Kubert one we are trying to get and the Crumb one which we have gotten an agreement for), not all of them origin tales. Since each has a different artist, that alone makes the adaptations different. However, the writers include / exclude details according to how long they want to make the story and what parts of the story they feel were important to tell.

Here are 10 of my favorites.

- *Onions and Garlic*
- *Pillow of Feathers*
- *The Rabbi & the Inquisitor*
- *The Snake & the Peasant*
- *The Faithful Neighbor*
- *The Rooster Prince*
- *The story of Rabbi Ben Dordia (Talmud)*
- *The story of Elijah beheading a man in the synagogue (Talmud)*
- *Elijah story in which he gives a gift to 3 different people*
- *Ya'ish and the Protector (Yemenite)*

The book will probably begin and end with 2 "non-classics" - *The Artist's Search* (handed down from generation to generation, but told by Penninah Schram; we're still waiting for the official go-ahead from Penninah) and *My Zeyde*, which is an adaptation of a contemporary song by Montreal singer Moishe Yess z"l.

FYI, it may seem odd to read that we have a Harvey Pekar story in the collection, as Pekar's oeuvre is 99% biographical, much of it autobiographical. "The Man Who Came to Dinner and Breakfast and Lunch" is a fictional satirical piece (though he obviously gave the character the forename Herschel after himself) and is especially fitting since it sends up Spiegelman's *Maus*. Of course, I'm not telling Artie that it's in the anthology because we want him to let us use his "Prince Rooster" as well.

Has anything surprised you during the process of bringing your idea into print?

My biggest surprise has been the realization that I could get the book published using a Canadian publisher. As a Canadian librarian, I am certainly happy when I have the chance to support local writers, artists, & publishers. The problem is the number of comics publishers in Canada is very small, especially compared to what you have in the U.S. The number of Judaica publishers is virtually nil and most of those publishing Jewish books in Canada are either author-publishers or non-Judaica publishers who decide to publish a Jewish book once in a while. I was lucky to read about Andy Stanleigh in the *Canadian Jewish News*, as he is a combination writer, illustrator, and publisher. From reading the article, I sensed that he might be interested in a publishing a book of Jewish comics and fortunately, that turned out to be the case.

Where can readers find more information about your book?

After we launch the Kickstarter campaign in February, you will be able to search for "jewish comix anthology" in the search window at www.kickstarter.com. We will also have an official Jewish Comix Anthology website, which will be linked from the AH Comics website - www.ahcomics.com - and twitter followers may follow @AHComicsInc.



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Across Divides: Ellen Cassedy and the Art of Cross-Cultural Communication

By YERMIYAHU AHRON TAUB

Nearly as soon as her book *We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust* (reviewed by Beth Dwoskin, *AJL Reviews*, May/June 2013) was published in March 2012, Ellen Cassedy found herself being asked about her next project. To her, this seemed strange. *We Are Here*, the product of nearly ten years of work, had just been born, she felt; its life was really just beginning. And this in fact has turned out to be the case. Without the aid of an agent, marketer, or publicist, Cassedy has been vigorously promoting her book and its message of cross-cultural understanding across the United States and abroad for nearly two years. While she once thought of her book as a kite that, once lifted, would stay airborne, she now sees it more like a beach ball that requires ongoing work to keep it aloft. Her promotion work serves as an illuminating model of how much an author can achieve through targeted market assessment, calibrated message delivery, and sheer perseverance.

Cassedy's book was born of twin impulses: to work with words and experience the joy of writing and to communicate to readers ideas of tolerance and understanding. She wanted to examine how a nation was coming to terms with and moving forward from a history of genocide. A central question undergirds Cassedy's project: How can we honor our dead without perpetuating the fears and hatreds of the past? Her exploration began in a personal vein regarding the Jewish side of her own family – those who perished and those who survived – and gradually expanded into an exploration of how Lithuania is (or is not) engaging its Jewish past. Throughout *We Are Here*, she elegantly interweaves her family story, the story of the Holocaust in Lithuania and its fraught contemporary legacy, and her own ongoing engagement with the Yiddish language, including her enrollment in a Yiddish summer program in Vilnius. The result is a work that's difficult to define: part memoir, part history, part travelogue, and yet consistently probing and compelling.

The range of perspectives and voices on such vivid display in her book are a product of Cassedy's considerable skills and experience as a writer and journalist. As a columnist for the *Philadelphia Daily News* in the 1980's, Cassedy wrote a column about work from the worker's point of view. Covering a variety of events in the city, her columns examined policy issues by foregrounding the perspectives of workers such as garbage collectors at the Italian Market, janitors, legal secretaries, nurses, among numerous others. In researching *We Are Here*, Cassedy deliberately sought points of view different from her own. Later, she was a speechwriter in the Clinton Administration.

Even before publication, she sought out opportunities to speak at a variety of venues, including libraries and synagogues such as the Wellfleet Library on Cape Cod, Mass. and the Anshe Chesed Fairmont Temple in Beachwood, Ohio. She wrote articles in such publications as *Bridges*, the *Forward*, *Hadassah*, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), and *Lilith*. Cassedy was never concerned about "giving too much away" before the book's publication. Instead, she saw these efforts both as a sort of "book trailer," a way to arouse interest, and also simply a way to communicate her ideas to others.

Cassedy has continued to make her ideas accessible in a variety of formats following the book's publication, as well. She wrote articles on Lithuanian and Jewish websites, including ReformJudaism.org as recently as January 2014. She contributed op-eds to *Ha'aretz*, the *Jewish Journal* in Los Angeles, and *Washington Jewish Week*. As she stated, "You can't wait for the media to come to you." And she has arranged dozens of book talks, including one at the Association of Jewish Libraries conference in Pasadena, California, in June 2012. Other destinations included Ann Arbor, Boston, Chicago, Durham, N.C., London, Vancouver, B.C., Philadelphia, and New York City. Her book talks are lively presentations carefully tailored to each audience and include PowerPoint presentations with maps, photographs of key protagonists and sites in her book, and archival photographs. Libraries of all kinds, including public libraries, synagogue libraries, and university libraries have been the settings of many of her book talks, and librarians have provided invaluable support for her work. In fact, in one



Ellen Cassedy

Photo Credit:
Yermiyahu Ahron Taub

of her monthly columns on writing for the website SheWrites.com, Cassidy wrote that “libraries are a writer’s best resource,” providing opportunities for research, recharging, and speaking.

The translation of her book into Lithuanian provided an opportunity for Cassidy to return to Lithuania in February 2013, her first trip there since 2004. She spent three weeks in that country and visited numerous towns and cities, including Kaunas, Kedainiai, Panevėžys, Rokiškis, Šiauliai, and Vilnius and speaking at numerous institutions, both specifically Jewish as well as general. For example, she spoke at the Vilnius Book Fair (attended annually by some sixty thousand people), the Vilnius Jewish Library, Jewish community centers, as well as schools throughout the country. Her trip was assisted by United States Embassy in Lithuania, with the support of Hannah Rosenthal, the former Special Envoy to Combat Anti-Semitism.

Prior to her return to Lithuania, Cassidy wondered if the discussions on understanding that she had witnessed on her earlier visit would have continued. She discovered during her trip that, in fact, more work had been done. The project of facing the past had seeped down into levels previously unreached. She met schoolchildren who had learned about the Holocaust through the efforts of committed educators, and talked with Lithuanians about a number of commemorative efforts taking place in their country. To commemorate the September 23rd liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto, young activists arranged for the reading of names of the liquidated at the Benedictine Church which had sheltered Jews. Young tolerance leaders also visited the Lithuanian Parliament to distribute reproductions of yellow stars that Jews were compelled to wear in the Holocaust; they asked Members to wear them as a gesture of solidarity with those who perished. Many at the Parliament did wear the yellow star. Laima Ardaševičienė, a teacher in Kedainiai, invited Cassidy to tour her high school, at which aspects of the Holocaust had been incorporated into virtually every subject of the curriculum, including English, Lithuanian, history, and even physics. The school corridors were lined with art work on the Holocaust. Another teacher who saw anti-Jewish graffiti in Panevėžys took it upon herself to open a tolerance center in the town. In Zagare, businessman Valdas Balciūnas read a memoir by a Jewish descendant of the town and worked to establish a memorial plaque in the town’s square. He didn’t want his children to grow up in ignorance of history or learning outright distortions or lies, he said.

In her discussion at schools Cassidy talked with students about their country’s history and familial experiences and posed challenging questions about their present and future. Will Lithuania’s long history of relatively harmonious multi-cultural co-existence be the norm? Or will neo-Nazis gain the upper hand? She reminded students that the answer depends on them, as democracy requires each citizen to claim responsibility to engage vigorously in the public sphere. As with her book itself and her discussions with adults, her goal in speaking with young people is always to raise questions, rather than provide readily packaged answers. Cassidy recalled that many students possess some basic English skills and that she spoke with them in simple language, often accompanied by visual gestures. Her talks, therefore, both in their content and in their modes of transmission, were themselves exercises in cross-cultural communication.

Cassidy is well aware of the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Lithuania and across Europe perpetrated in a variety of ways. She respects the work of those who devote themselves to calling attention to lingering hatred and acts of intolerance. She feels that her own mission is to shine the spotlight on those who, in an often hostile atmosphere and at considerable risk, take steps to face their country’s Jewish past. The efforts of these individuals fuel her.

Cassidy’s efforts have not gone unrewarded. *We Are Here* was awarded the Grub Street National Book Prize for Nonfiction, a Prakhin International Literary Foundation Award, the Towson Prize for Literature, and a Silver Medal in History for a Book of the Year Award from ForeWord Reviews. She has also been inspired by comments from readers and audience members at her talks and by continuing to learn about the Holocaust remembrance efforts of others. While some writers find the work of promotion to be taxing and are eager to return to their writing desks, Cassidy greatly enjoys connecting with readers and staying in touch with educators in Lithuania. These multiple strands of connection are at the heart of *We Are Here* and extend its life in rich and unexpected ways beyond the page itself.

Yermiyahu Ahron Taub is the author of four books of poetry, including *Prayers of a Heretic/Tfiles fun an apikoyres* (Plain View Press, 2013). Please visit his website at www.yataub.net.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

[January 13, 2014]

Dear Editor,

We are grateful for the review of *Doublelife: One Family, Two Faiths and a Journey of Hope*, in the last issue of AJL Reviews [November/December 2013, p.20], including its recommendation for synagogue libraries. We were surprised, however, by some of the review's characterizations of the book's contents, which are factually at odds with the book itself, and more important, may misrepresent the book's potential usefulness for a synagogue library.

Doublelife chronicles our own journey from intermarried couple to Jewish family. It is, to my knowledge, the only modern account by husband and wife of this path, allowing the reader to glimpse the issues the Jewish and non-Jewish spouse face, and how they resolve them together. Our story works through myriad issues that intermarried families encounter – from the December Dilemma, to raising children, to parental and rabbinic disapproval, to religious and cultural clashes, to Jewish communal efforts at welcoming. In the process, we participated in every movement of Judaism, from Reform to Orthodox, and record our experiences in each setting. We wrote *Doublelife* as inspiration for intermarried families, and have received many letters from intermarried families who struggle with these same issues.

In contrast, the review chose to characterize our journey as outdated and singular, and therefore not entirely relevant to today's interfaith families. For example, it states that our "story begins in the early 1960s when Gayle and Harold meet in college," and that many of our "observations do not reflect contemporary Reform and Conservative Judaism." I was not yet born in the early 1960s, never mind ready for marriage. We provide dates clearly throughout the book, so the reader can see that our journey first begins when we meet in the 1990s. Many of our experiences we describe in Reform and Conservative (as well as Orthodox) settings are current, the book concludes just a few years ago, and our contact with leaders and laypeople in all streams of Judaism to this day informs our writing.

It is our hope that *Doublelife* can offer new perspectives to interfaith couples, wherever they may be in their own journeys.

Sincerely,

Harold Berman

Co-Author, *Doublelife: One Family, Two Faiths and a Journey of Hope*

Berman, Harold. *Doublelife: One Family, Two Faiths and a Journey of Hope*. New York, Longhill Press, 2013. 249 p. \$11.69 (ISBN 9780615721156).

Editor's note

We apologize for the error in Lee Haas's review of *Doublelife: One Family, Two Faiths and a Journey of Hope*, published in the November/December 2013 issue. Ms. Haas erroneously noted that the story "begins in the early 1960s" while in fact it started in the 1990s. Ms. Haas would like to emphasize that *Doublelife* is a good model of how an interfaith couple always kept their love and common interests in mind while struggling with the interfaith issues, and that the book is recommended for center and synagogue libraries.

Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND REBECCA JEFFERSON

Alter, Robert. *Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2013. 852 pp. \$35.00. (9780393082692).

Alter has provided us with a literary translation of the Former Prophets as part of his ongoing translations of the Bible. The translation is largely free of archaic language and brings the characters of Joshua, Deborah, Samson, Saul and David to life. While the Torah is widely read and studied, the Former Prophets deserve greater attention because they follow the events in Jewish history after Moses dies and the Israelites leave the desert. Of particular interest, the Former Prophets trace the evolution of Jewish worship after the wanderings in the desert. Furthermore, they supply information about carrying the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle), conquering the land, dividing the land among the Tribes, establishing the monarchy, Jerusalem becoming the capital, and the fall of the First Temple. *Ancient Israel* provides an insight into the geographical makeup of Israel and the archeology of the Middle East.

In his commentary, Alter displays his extensive knowledge of the Hebrew language, exegesis, as well as an understanding of the traditional commentaries, and a familiarity with the biblical narrative. It would have been helpful, however, if Alter had supplied the Hebrew text in the commentary in addition to the transliteration. If you want to examine the original Hebrew, you need to locate a Hebrew text of the Former Prophets to read along with Alter.

Alter's notes are more extensive on Samuel and Kings than on the book of Joshua, and his knowledge of Saul and David and their lives and conquests is vast. Indeed, as he notes in his introduction, "nearly a third of the Former Prophets is devoted to the story of Saul and David (1 Samuel 8 - 2 Kings 2)." Alter has written in great depth about these two biblical figures in *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary* and *The Art of Biblical Narrative*.

Ancient Israel can be used by all denominations for scholarly or religious studies. While the book is not written from an Orthodox perspective, the fact that the name of God does not appear in Hebrew would make it a possible choice for the Orthodox community.

Ellen Share, Librarian, Washington Hebrew Congregation

Behar, Moshe & Zvi Ben-Dor Benite (eds). *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought: Writings on Identity, Politics & Culture, 1893-1958* (Brandeis Library of Modern Jewish Thought). Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2013. 257 pp. \$26.00. (9781584658849). Also available as an eBook.

The views of Sephardi and Mizrahi intellectuals on political, religious, cultural, and social issues are often missing in discussions regarding modern Jewish thought. In order to overcome this deficiency, Behar and Ben-Dor Benite chose samples from the writings of nineteen Jews (including two women) from the Arab East, written during 1893-1958 in Hebrew, English, French and Arabic (all provided in English) in order to familiarize scholars, students and interested readers in the diversity of opinion among Sephardim and Mizrahim. The editors open with a general discussion on the status of Sephardi and Mizrahi studies and the lack of representation of Sephardim and Mizrahim in studies on modern Jewish thought. While no intellectuals from the Maghreb and Turkey are included, those selected represent a wide spectrum of views on nationalism, Zionism, religion, secularization, identity, culture, and social issues pertaining to the Jewish population as a whole, as well as issues relating specifically to the Sephardim and Mizrahim. Some of the thinkers are well known, while others might be quite obscure, especially to the non-specialist. The value of the selection is increased thanks to biographical notes and clarifying annotations. Presenting the views of these thinkers is an important contribution to the field of modern Jewish thought in general and to Sephardi and Mizrahi studies in particular.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

Bennett, Roger. *Unscrolled: 54 Writers and Artists Wrestle with the Torah*. New York: Workman Publishing Company, Inc, 2013. 375 pp. \$18.00. (9780761169192).

This compilation of essays, charts, infographics, poetry, writings in graphic novel format, and other forms of “wrestling” are arranged according to the order of the weekly *parshiot* (portions) of the Torah. Each portion is summarized by the editor followed by the writer’s particular contribution as a commentary. For example, for the reading of *Sh’mot*, Susan Dominus writes a short but dramatic piece in Miriam’s voice as she sees the Egyptian princess coming down to the river to bathe and spies Miriam’s baby brother in a basket. In this “midrash” on the episode, the princess asks Miriam her name and she says “Teshubah” as she runs off to get her mother. I found this essay pleasing, even exciting to read, but not intellectually stimulating. Other entries in the book are too edgy, displaying gratuitous foul language and, for this reader, other objectionable qualities.

This book is a product of the “REBOOT” project that sponsored Sukkah City a few years ago in Union Square, New York. One of the most ambitious and exciting projects in recent years, its goal was to make the Sukkah, an ancient Jewish custom, relevant to our modern life. It was such a success that it drew thousands of people from all walks of life to Union Square for the week of Sukkot to see the 12 designs that were actually built out of the many hundreds of Sukkah designs submitted in this massive competition. Figuring that the same group responsible for REBOOT would produce a work of note, I was disappointed to discover that something that might have been is not. I am surprised because the list of contributors includes many talented and well-known contemporary writers and artists. This book is not highly recommended despite the occasional flashes of light that do illumine the text.

Marion Stein, retired Judaica librarian

Bierman, Michael A. (ed). *Memories of a Giant: Reflections on Rabbi Dr. Joseph B Soloveitchik zt”l*. Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Publishers and Distributors, Inc., 2013. 368 pp. \$25.95. (9789655241419).

This volume was previously issued as a stand-alone book. It is now being offered as volume I of a series of three volumes entitled “The Rabbi Soloveitchik Library” edited by Dr. Jacob J. Schacter. Here we have a collection of eulogies and other laudatory essays about “the Rav” many of which are very detailed and some comprehensible only to those deeply schooled in the Rav’s philosophy and approach to the Mesorah. The list of contributors reads like a who’s who of the Orthodox scholarly world. One of these selections speaks particularly strongly to this reader. It is the *hesped* (eulogy) offered by Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks, the outgoing Chief Rabbi of the UK, which clarifies the connection between halacha, death and the Jewish spirit and way. Sacks notes that the Rav spoke frequently about death in his work *Halachic Man* and in *The Lonely Man of Faith*. Sacks shows that the Rav understood halacha as the “essence” of what it means to be Jewish. He gives the example of Soloveitchik’s reaction to Abraham Heschel’s book *The Sabbath* in which Heschel calls Shabbat “a sanctuary in time.” The Rav commented that this beautiful poetic statement is lovely, but it is not from poetic statements that Shabbat is built but rather from the 39 *melachot* (categories of work) and their “descendants.” In other words the poetry emerges from the halacha itself. In Sacks’ opinion, the Rav was responsible for bringing the world of Torah and Yeshivot that had been destroyed in the Europe back to life in America. This book is recommended for all serious adult Judaica collections.

Marion Stein, retired Judaica librarian

Borman, Joseph B. *Open Hearts: Memoirs of a Cardiac Surgeon*. Jerusalem; New York: Gefen Publishing House, 2013. 175 pp. \$17.50. (9789652296337).

Joe Borman’s (1929–) autobiography reflects the successful career of a kind human being, pioneer cardiac-surgeon, a Zionist, and one of the pillars of Israeli medicine.

Open Hearts is a Jewish life story that spans the 20th century from after the First World War to the present day. Joseph Borman, as a prototype of the “Wandering Jew,” was born in South Africa

to parents who had emigrated there from Latvia-Russia because of Anti-Semitism. Joe and his sister Hannah grew up in various places in South Africa. He graduated from medical school and traveled to England (1952) for his post doctorate studies. In England he met his Israeli wife, and on their way back to South Africa, he was offered a position at the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem in 1958. Dr. Borman left for Los Angeles, CA in 1962 to specialize in open-heart surgery. In 1964 he opened the department of open-heart surgery at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

Dr. Borman took part in the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War in Israel. He shares with the readers, in a most humane way, his family, friends, professional experiences, as well as national and international affiliations. He writes with sincerity and humility about the ups and downs of a worthwhile life. Even in retirement he travels with his children and grandchildren to explore his family roots in Eastern Europe. He volunteers in the Yad Vashem publication department and as life goes on he concentrates on reading and writing.

Open Hearts is an optimistic memoir that reflects how much an individual can enjoy and contribute to life's challenges. Dr. Borman is an uplifting role model to many. *Open Hearts* should be part of high schools, public libraries as well as personal collections.

Nira Wolfe, Independent Researcher, Highland Park, IL

Boustan, Ra'anán, Matha Himmelfarb and Peter Schäfer (eds). *Hekhalot Literature in Context: Between Byzantium and Babylonia (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, 153)*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013. 439 pp. \$196.53. (9783161525759).

Hekhalot literature, describing mystical visions or cosmological perceptions of the *hekhalot* (halls) inhabited by God and His angels, is the earliest extant form of Jewish mystical writing. The critical study of this literature has grown significantly in recent decades, largely thanks to a series of editions and monographs published by Peter Schäfer and his associates. Every article in this volume, which is the product of a conference at Princeton University in 2010, builds upon Schäfer's work. In the wake of his theory that this mystical literature was first composed in Babylonia and underwent further redaction in Byzantium, many of the authors explore the cultural and religious contexts in both areas that may illuminate these enigmatic texts. One emerging approach connects and compares the Hekhalot writings to Hebrew liturgical *piyut* (poetry), a genre which shares both thematic and linguistic characteristics with the mystical literature. Unlike many volumes of conference proceedings, *Hekhalot Literature in Context* maintains a clear focus and, as a whole, provides a front seat view of the state of research in this fascinating field.

Pinchas Roth, post-doctoral fellow, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Breitman, Richard and Allan J. Lichtman. *FDR and the Jews*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2013. 433 pp. \$29.95. (9780674050266).

Many books have been written about Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his relationship with American Jews, but *FDR and the Jews* sheds new light on this relationship and the evolution of FDR's Jewish policy. Breitman and Lichtman surmise that Roosevelt's opinion on Jewish issues went through an evolution that can be divided into four different time periods: 1933–1936, 1936–1939, 1939–1943, and 1943–1945. When Roosevelt ran for office in 1932, he was the first presidential candidate to denounce anti-Semitism, yet the first term of his presidency was focused primarily on domestic issues and he was, in essence, a bystander to Nazi persecution. It was only during his second term of office that he shifted his perspective on Jewish issues and began to campaign to get Jews out of Europe. In 1938 he proposed a plan to give the Jews of Europe a safe haven, advocated for a Jewish home in Palestine, and fought against the British White Paper that limited immigration to Palestine. A clear change in Roosevelt's priorities occurred once Germany went to war with Poland in 1939, and continued until 1943 when Roosevelt's advisors encouraged him to put internal security above foreign policy. After the true horrors of Europe began to be known by Roosevelt, he changed his tune and revived his interest

in helping Jews. He created the War Refugee Board to rescue Hungarian Jews, and almost 200,000 were saved by the board. While Roosevelt wanted to do more to help the Jews of Europe, he was afraid that any efforts he made would backfire and hurt them.

This book is a fresh look on the life of FDR because it examines his decision making as President from the perspective of his life experiences and full political career. This book is recommended for academic libraries and researchers.

Laura Schutzman, Hebrew Academy of Nassau County, Nathan and Doris Liebman, Memorial Library, Uniondale, NY

Brody, Robert. *Sa'adyah Gaon*. Translated from Hebrew by Betsy Rosenberg. Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013. 180 pp. \$36.50 (9781904113881).

The author, a professor of Talmud at Hebrew University, provides a systematic overview of the writings of one of the greatest Jewish thinkers. This is preceded by a chapter each on Sa'adyah's environment and life. While I wish there was a bit more about Sa'adyah's arguments for creation out of nothing, this relatively brief book is meant as an introduction and, on the whole, Dr. Brody does a good job of balancing brevity with giving a non-superficial sense of Sa'adyah's thought. This is no small feat given the breadth of Sa'adyah's concerns. How many know, for example, that in addition to his philosophical and halakhic endeavors, he also strove to have Hebrew regain its position as a vernacular? The book succeeds in providing a portrait of Sa'adyah as a man, at least in his role as public intellectual, with a deep sense of mission: rationalistic, religious, and polemical. Recommended.

Shmuel Ben-Gad, Gelman Library, George Washington University.

Brofsky, David. *Hilkhot Mo'adim, Understanding the Laws of the Festivals*. Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2011. 772 pp. \$35.95. (9781592643523).

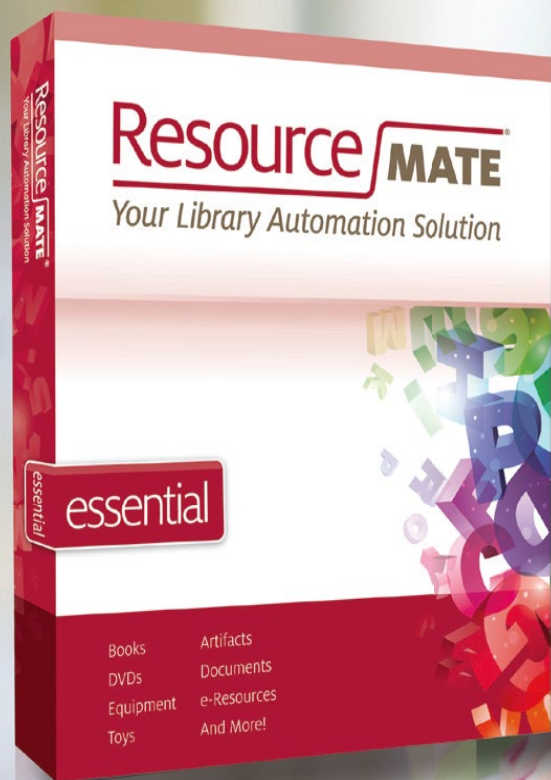
This very clear and well-written book should serve as *the* primer on understanding not only the basis and practical conclusions of Jewish law concerning the Jewish holidays, but also the spiritual lessons to be derived from the Jewish calendar. The book is divided into separate chapters for each of the Jewish holidays. The author begins with an early primary source and then traces the development of law and custom to modern times along with the practical "bottom line" or practical application of the Jewish law or custom to modern practice. Rather than just recounting the dry recitation of legal ruling and reasoning, Brofsky successfully mines the Jewish holidays for their spiritual content to provide added depth and meaning to their observance.

For example, in discussing the possible origins of the Fast of Esther, Brofsky lists three possible explanations. In detailing each one, it becomes clear that, depending on the particular reason, there may be three levels of possible obligation to the fast. He then raises another question about the nature and character of the fast and to what extent the fast stands independent of the holiday of Purim and/or whether it is integrally connected to it. Finally, the author asks an even deeper question, namely; in what way, if at all, does the fast contribute to the Purim celebration?

By analyzing each aspect of Jewish law surrounding every Jewish holiday and all of the Jewish *halachic* (legal) developments and rulings, Brofsky gets to the core of the obligations and meaning of these laws and customs. Although the book is a pleasure to read, it is still dense when discussing technical aspects of Jewish law. Nonetheless, it is quite accessible to the scholar and non-scholar alike and certainly the best work in English on the topic.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY





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Cherlow, Semadar. *The Tzaddiq is the Foundation of the World: Rav Kook's Esoteric Mission and Mystical Experience* (Mahshavot; a Series for Studies in Jewish Thought in Memory of Isidore Friedman). Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2012. 435 pp. \$42.00. (9789652263780). In Hebrew.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak haCohen Kook, HaRaAYaH or HaRav, (1865–1935), was born in Latvia, and grew up in Lithuania. In 1904, he moved to Ottoman Palestine to serve as a Rav to Jaffa and the pioneers' Moshavot. World War I found him in England; however, in 1921 he became the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine and in 1924 he founded the yeshiva of Mercaz HaRav Kook in Jerusalem. HaRaAYaH is known as the founder of Religious Zionism, as a Jewish thinker, Halakhist, Kabbalist, Torah scholar, and prolific writer. He has been active in his outreach to the secular Jews of Israel, though he remained very strict in his demands to follow the *Halakhah* (Jewish Law). The outstanding and most pronounced characteristic of HaRav was his love for each and every Jew irrespective of his level of religious observance.

Dr. Semadar Cherlow delves into Kook's writings, especially those that have been opened recently to the public. She tries to understand and reveal the inner world of the Rav as a Jewish leader; did he consider himself to be a *Tsadik* (righteous man) or a *Massiah* (messiah)?

The volume includes Table of Contents, focused Introduction and Summary, vast Bibliography, and Indices (Personalities and Subjects). Clear and helpful footnotes are dispersed throughout the book at the appropriate pages. *The Tzaddiq is the Foundation of the World* is an insightful research into the mystical base of Judaism and its reflection in the life of HaRaAYaH and his followers. Academic libraries, Yeshivot, and Synagogues, would enhance their collection with its erudite insight.

Nira Wolfe, Independent Researcher, Highland Park, IL

Cohn, Willy. *No Justice in Germany: The Breslau Diaries, 1933-1941* (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture). Edited by Norbert Conrads and translated by Kenneth Kronenberg. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. 414 pp. \$60.00. (9780804773249).

Willy Cohn – historian, educator, and Social Democrat – recorded events under the Third Reich from his home town of Breslau, a prominent Jewish center of Germany, until he and his wife and two youngest children were deported to Lithuania where they perished.

The diary, along with other writings, was placed in hiding by Cohn himself; although portions are either missing or omitted by the editor because of personal or irrelevant content, the bulk is presented here. The result is a painful read, knowing what Willy Cohn does not know but ultimately will find out. His dry account of everyday life – marriage, work, colleagues, relatives, and neighbors – provides chilling insight into the growing horror around him.

Cohn expresses a stubborn patriotism, sometimes even lauding “The Fuhrer” for political or military actions, yet slowly reading the writing on the wall. Innocence gives way to despair, as around him people have either fled or committed suicide. During Kristallnacht Cohn describes the terror of those hauled to concentration camps. Initially reluctant to leave – he even visited Palestine but, sadly, did not stay – he realizes too late the futility of a life in Germany for Jews and any chance of emigration. (He did, however, manage to get his three oldest children out.) In the mounting restrictions, local Jews become confined to curfews and visits to the cemetery instead of the public park, where benches are reserved for Aryans only. Cohn, denied pension or employment, is reduced to penury. When deportations to the East begin, the final entry describes his eviction notice and resignation to an unknown fate. There are photos of Cohn (who was posthumously honored) and footnotes to cultural or historical references. Willy Cohn's diary, though lacking some of the wonder and youthfulness of Anne Frank's, is equally tragic, and valuable as an eyewitness to history. Recommended for libraries with Holocaust or German Studies collections.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

Davila, James R. *Hekhalot Literature in Translation: Major Texts of Merkavah Mysticism*. (Supplements to the Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy, 20). Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2013. 443 pp. \$194.00. (9789004252158).

The *Hekhalot* (Palaces) texts are found in a group of manuscripts (as well as some Genizah fragments) composed in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, although based on traditions which may be older. They describe how a person can set off on a heavenly journey to ascend to the *Merkavah*, the throne-chariot of God. These travelers, for some obscure reason, are known as *Yorde Merkavah*, those who “go down” to the *Merkavah*. The person must travel through six levels of palaces in order to reach the throne in the seventh palace. The distances traveled and other dimensions are wildly fanciful, and the traveler will encounter rivers of fire, water, hail and other materials on the way. The goal is for him to join the angels as they offer praises to God, and sometimes to also receive special magical powers. Another common goal is to gain control over angels, particularly one called *Sar ha-Torah* (Prince of Torah), in order to gain knowledge of Torah without any personal effort.

The texts claim to have mainly been produced by three Tannaim: Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Yishmael, and Rabbi Nehunyah ben ha-Kanah. The famous story of the four rabbis who entered *Pardes* (meaning Paradise in this literature) appears in a number of the texts. There are pages of wonderful poetic liturgy, paralleling and perhaps influencing some prayers in our Siddur. Interspersed with these and with all of the information about the palaces, are incantations, many hundreds of letter combinations supposedly representing names of God, and many other fanciful items.

This English translation of the text is “eclectic.” The Hebrew manuscripts vary a lot in their language, and Davila’s translation tries to bring together a version which is not the “correct” one, but one that he feels may as closely as possible reflect what he believes to have been an original common text.

For those who are not specialists in this field, just reading the text and introductory materials will prove an amazing experience. Scholars will benefit from the extensive footnotes dealing with the manuscript variations. This work is recommended for all academic libraries in Judaica or religion.

Jim Rosenbloom, Brandeis University; Past President, AJL

Debow, Dr. Yocheved. *Talking About Intimacy & Sexuality: A Guide for Orthodox Jewish Parents*. Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Publishing House Inc. and New York: OU Press, 2012. 342 pp. \$26.95. (9781602802209).

It is challenging to discuss intimacy and sexuality with our children, even more so to frame them in the Jewish contexts of respect and holiness. Several issues are repeated through the text: balancing the need to be proactive with giving kids more information than they are ready to process; the pervasive effects of the media (television, internet, cell phones) on everyone’s perceptions of body image and sexuality; and the biblical mandate to be holy. Each chapter begins with a quote and ends with a summary and the footnotes. Topics include Child Development, *Tzniut* (Modesty), Relationships between the Sexes, Masturbation, Homosexuality, Media and Its Challenges, and Sexual Harassment and Abuse. Within the chapters, there are numerous “model conversations” to have with children on different topics, and a list of these is included in the back matter. Appendix I includes separate student guides for both boys and girls, and Appendix II is a recommended reading list. The book includes a glossary and an index.

Dr. Debow has done extensive research about intimacy and sexuality with children and teenagers in the Orthodox community, and has published sexuality curriculum for Jewish schools. Because the book is meant for more Modern Orthodox Jewish parents, who often have greater access to secular books and the internet than less Modern Orthodox Jews would, most of the secular and basic physiological information could be found in other places. The chapter on “Relationships between the Sexes” is particularly important for parents of teenagers who are interacting with opposite-sex peers, and unfortunately, the “Sexual Harassment and Abuse” information is critical. The book is poorly indexed,

which detracts from its usefulness when parents need references on a specific topic. Given that the target audience and the libraries that serve the group are relatively small in number, it is suggested that librarians keep the title on their resource lists. It is recommended for personal and professional purchase.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Freedland, Michael. *Man on the Rock: Mayor Solomon Levy and the Jews of Gibraltar.* London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2013, 193 pp. \$69.95. (9780853038573).

Man on the Rock is the fascinating story of Solomon Levy and his family. Levy's biography parallels the history of Gibraltar's unique Jewish community. Solomon Levy as well as the majority of Jews in Gibraltar are Orthodox. Levy was greatly influenced by Rabbi Kopol Rosen, the charismatic headmaster of the Jewish public school Carmel College in England which Levy attended. When Momy, as the author affectionately calls Levy, returned to Gibraltar he became active in both the Jewish and gentile community. He joined the Royal Gibraltar Regiment, which was required, at age 18. Since he only ate kosher food, his mother cooked his meals and delivered them to his barracks every day. Levy was the first civil Mayor of Gibraltar following his much revered uncle Sir Joshua Hassan who was Gibraltar's Chief Minister for over twenty years. Although Momy spent time in Spain and spoke fluent Spanish, he is fervently loyal to the Queen of England and considers himself British. Momy has fostered a close relationship with the local Catholic clergy, especially its bishop and is recognized and respected by all Gibraltar's citizens. The book includes many quotes by Momy himself as well as his family and friends. Most interesting is his veering from protocol when he met Queen Elizabeth. Highly recommended for libraries that collect biographies and books describing world Jewish communities.

Ilka Gordon, On site director, Aaron Garber Library, Cleveland, OH

Frieden, Menachem Mendel. *A Jewish Life on Three Continents: The Memoir of Menachem Mendel Frieden* (translated, edited, and annotated, and with introductions and an afterword by Lee Shai Weissbach). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013. xlv, 470 pp. \$60.00. (9780804783637). Also available as an eBook.

Menachem Mendel Frieden was born in 1878 in a small remote village in Lithuania, far away from any railroad station or any big city. Frieden is the maternal grandfather of the memoir's editor, Lee S. Weissbach. Weissbach translated his grandfather's manuscript from the original Hebrew in which the author embedded many biblical and rabbinic citations. Frieden devotes the first two chapters to family, on both his paternal and maternal sides, liberally passing judgement on next of kin considered uneducated and coarse. With the third chapter, Frieden starts his autobiography which is full of lengthy digressions on many topics. He attended yeshivot in Dvinsk in Latvia and Lyady in Belarus. Having read profane literature given to him by *maskilim* (Westernized Jews), he did not pursue a rabbinic career. In 1921, Frieden emigrated to Palestine, then spent extended periods in Norfolk, VA., where he was residing when the State of Israel was proclaimed in May 1948. He died in Israel in 1963. In Palestine, during the British Mandate, Frieden lived in the major cities, working for a bank of the Zionist *yishuv* (settlement). Frieden's memoir is a rich source for detailing many aspects of Jewish life in a small rural Jewish community in Lithuania, the Hassidic yeshivot and customs in Latvia and Belarus, the awakening to Western culture of traditional young Jews, the influence of American Zionists on the modern *yishuv*, and on the 1948 Israeli war of independence, among others. Includes index. Recommended to academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.



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Gillman, Neil. *Believing and Its Tensions: A Personal Conversation about God, Torah, Suffering, and Death in Jewish Thought.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013. 144 pp. \$19.99. (9781580236690).

In his introduction, Gillman indicates that he wrote this book as “a shorter book [than *Sacred Fragments*] that would concentrate on the issues on which [his] thinking has changed and the extent to which this change reflected [his] ongoing teaching and lecturing in the past decade.” The book is the “theological legacy” of this retired professor of Jewish philosophy at the Jewish Theological Seminary and exposes his most recent views on the four topics listed in the subtitle, to quote, *God, Torah, suffering, and death*. This slim volume is written in a very accessible language, free from any specialized jargon. Key sentences are highlighted in larger type in shaded boxes on the side of the main text. Gillman often refers to what he has learned from teaching children and also from authors who have influenced him: Clifford Geertz, Paul Tillich, A.J. Heschel, Benjamin Sommer, Judith Hauptman, Harold Kushner, and Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, among others. He always provides a clear and very accessible exposé of the four issues that he covers. The book could be used for discussion in reading groups in Conservative or Reconstructionist synagogues and *havurot* (likeminded Jewish learning groups). Recommended to academic and seminary libraries as well as to the interested lay person.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.

[Editor’s Note: *Sacred Fragments: recovering theology for the modern Jew* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, c1990) was reviewed on pg. 12 of the September/October, 1990 *AJL Newsletter*.]

Grabowski, Jan. *Hunt for Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013. 303 pp. \$35.00. (9780253010742).

A great deal has been written about the tragedy faced by Polish Jewry during the Shoah. But aside from anecdotal material on historic Polish anti-Semitism and its impact upon the Nazi extermination policy in Poland, there is a dearth of coverage – until now. Grabowski, a history professor at the University of Ottawa and fluent in Polish, has provided an outstanding contribution to our understanding of how the Nazis were able to destroy the bulk of the Eastern European Jewish population. Based upon an extensive use of Polish-language sources supplemented by interviews, Grabowski is able to document how some of the gentile population, either as civilians or organized into militias, assisted the German military and occupation authorities to gather up Jews to be sent to concentration camps, or to hunt down Jews who escaped from various dragnets and hiding from their would-be captors. Here is an absolutely essential addition to any Holocaust library or a read for anyone interested in Polish-Jewish relations.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Harris-Gershon, David. *What do you Buy the Children of the Terrorist who Tried to Kill Your Wife? A Memoir of Jerusalem.* London: Oneworld Publications; Berkeley: Publishers Group West, 2013. 325 pp. \$17.99. (9781851689965).

What a question! That’s the first response I had to this title. But David Harris-Gershon wants to teach us that the question is important no matter how we answer it.

The author’s wife Jamie was one of the victims of the Hebrew University cafeteria bombing on July 31, 2002. He first heard about it from a friend who called and said that “she’s fine.” At the hospital, however, they realized she had serious internal injuries. David Harris-Gershon tells the story in five chronological parts: “The Bombing;” “Disconnection;” “Recovery;” “Collective History;” and “Reckoning.” But in doing so he weaves several narrative threads together. One traces their lives through Jamie’s long, complex and intense recovery. At the same time, David went through his own years-long transformation, including personal therapy to deal with post-traumatic stress. Another describes the international security and political issues in which Israel finds itself, including the history of the land and Arab-Israeli relations. A fourth thread follows the bomber and his family as he was captured, tried and imprisoned for the

terrorist attack. At the end of the story David attempts to see the case documents, but is turned away by the Israeli government bureaucracy. He is successful, however, in meeting the man's family.

We have many stories of the difficult, sad and confused situation in Israel. David Harris-Gershon has presented many sides of it in his personal, passionate and compassionate account. In the end, it appears that there is both valiant effort and sad failure at all stages and in many ways. For these reasons this book should be considered by both synagogues and academic libraries; it brings the problems into view in powerful and sensitive ways.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Kahn, Rabbi Ari D. *Echoes of Eden: Sefer Vayikra; In Search of Holiness: Insights into the Weekly Torah Portion*. Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House and New York: OU Press, 2013. 241 pp. \$29.95. (9789652295927).

In this collection of essays about the weekly Torah portion, Rabbi Kahn delves into the biblical text and examines the nuances of language, the structures of sentences, and recurring themes in the Torah. For example, *Parshat Shemini* includes the prohibition against eating pig. Looking at numerous sources, Rabbi Kahn articulates why the pig is singled out as unclean and un-kosher, and how the pig relates to Jewish exile and messianic times. For *Parshat Kedoshim*, a discussion of marriage finds it to be "both the paradigm and the vehicle for man's relationship with God." For the ten weekly readings from the Book of Leviticus, the portions often read together have been combined, so that there are eight "chapters." Most chapters contain two or three essays about the portion.

Rabbi Kahn is a well-known speaker and contributor to several Jewish media sites. His writings have received praise from noted rabbis for innovative ideas and insight. The sources Rabbi Kahn includes are meticulously referenced, often including long tracts in Hebrew and English that take up more space than the text to which it relates. The use of multiple fonts is helpful to those who prefer to skip these sources. For libraries whose patrons enjoy reading about the weekly Torah portion, this book (and series) is highly recommended.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Katz, Maya Balakirsky (ed). *Revising Dreyfus*. (Brill's Series in Jewish Studies, vol. 49). Leiden: Brill, 2013. 424 pp. \$209.00. (9789004256941).

How could France, one of the most enlightened nations of the world, sanction mobs shouting "la mort aux Juifs" (death to the Jews) during the degradation ceremony of Alfred Dreyfus at the Ecole Militaire in 1895? How could a military tribunal and secular court knowingly allow forged documents to frame a Jewish military officer and then cover up this injustice by acquitting the real culprit? What motivated protests of rare men of conscience such as Emile Zola in *J'Accuse*? While radical intellectuals rallied to defend Dreyfus by challenging the military's attempt to intimidate the civilian courts, what other agendas did these intellectual defenders of Dreyfus seek? Did some of the intellectual defenders of Dreyfus stand up for freedom of conscience not so much to defend Jews, but rather to uphold the separation of Church and State and denounce clericalism? How did anti-Dreyfusards use print media, photographs, postcards, broadsides, films, illustrated journal covers, editorial cartooning, and the plastic arts, to spread anti-Semitism? How did the Dreyfus Affair affect Impressionist artists, particularly Degas, Cezanne, and Pissarro, causing rifts among them? What was the effect of the Dreyfus Affair on Herzl? How did the NY Jewish Museum's exhibition "Art, Truth, and Justice" in the 1970s and 1980s influence those active in the movement to help Soviet Jewry?

These and many more questions are addressed in this excellent and well written insightful work. It looks at the Dreyfus Affair from the perspective of disciplines such as art history, film, media, theater, sociology, and history to arrive at new understandings. This volume addresses the legacy of the Dreyfus Affair in three national contexts – France, Israel, and America. Highly recommended for all libraries, although the high cost may deter some libraries from buying it.

David B Levy, Touro College, NY

Katzburg-Yungman, Mira. *Hadassah: American Women Zionists and the Rebirth of Israel* (translated from the Hebrew by Tammy Berkowitz). Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012. 365 pp. \$49.50. (9781874774839).

Katzburg-Yungman greatly expanded her doctoral dissertation into this comprehensive and very readable text. Supplemented with a lot of photographs, the text examines the work of Hadassah from several perspectives. She begins with the early history of the group and then looks at their work from an American perspective, from the point of view of the World Zionist Organization, from a post-statehood Israeli perspective, and finally in the context of feminist works and other similar organizations. The focus is from Hadassah's establishment in 1912 to the mid 1950's. The work includes a bibliography and index. Recommended.

Sheryl Stahl, Senior Associate Librarian, Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR

Klapper, Melissa R. *Ballots, Babies, and Banners of Peace: American Jewish Women's Activism 1890-1940*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2013, xi, 290 pp. \$39.00. (9780814748947). Also available as an eBook.

Ballots, Babies, and Banners of Peace explores in great detail the contributions of Jewish American women activists to American feminism as they participated in suffrage, the peace movement and the birth control movement, as well as their prominence in Jewish movements such as Zionist and labor Activism. Well written and extensively documented and illustrated, the book describes the complexities of their struggles and the central role their Jewish identities played in their commitment to better the world. Highly recommended for libraries collecting in the areas of American-Jewish History, Gender Studies, and Modern Social Movements.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, The Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR Los Angeles

Larrimore, Mark. *The Book of Job: A Biography*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. 286 pp. \$24.95. (9780691147598).

A unique addition to any Jewish library because this biography of Job brings together an extraordinary variety of sources condensed into a compact book.

The author, Mark Larrimore, is the Associate Professor in Religious Studies at Eugene Lang College after earning his PhD in Religion from Princeton University. Larrimore's history dealing with the Book of Job goes back to his playing in Archibald MacLeish's play *J.B.* He confronts the Book of Job as a paradoxical, iconic, & enduring book dealing with reward & punishment, and God's involvement in our lives. He examines Job from many angles highlighting the puzzles that the book presents to the scholar and readers from ancient times to the modern.

Larrimore's work is very tightly written and targeted toward the non-scholar. *The Book of Job: A biography* is recommended for anyone interested in Job, as it speaks to everyone, universally, across two thousand years.

While short in pages, *Job* is rich in content; while frustrating, it is very rewarding. The author paints Job as the canvas on which the reader confronts evil and suffering. Job appeals to people especially today; partly because of the ambiguity of his religious identity and partly because analyzing Job reveals as much about the interpreters as Job himself.

Chapters include Job in ancient interpreters, medieval interpreters, Christian approaches, modern western commentaries and historical critical understanding since the Shoah and includes commentaries not usually seen in lay literature, such as Pope Gregory's *Morals in Job*, the *Testament of Job*, the play *La Pénitence de Job*, Blakes' *Illustrations of Book of Job* and observations by Elie Wiesel.

This book helps the readers in their struggle to articulate the meaning of the story while at the same time providing both comfort and provocation as it speaks to and for broken people who have suffered loss. A worthwhile addition to all synagogue and Hebrew School libraries.

Nathan Rosen, New York, NY

Lau, Binyamin. *Jeremiah: the Fate of a Prophet* (translated by Sara Daniel). Jerusalem, Israel; New Milford, CT: Koren Publishers, Maggid Books, 2013. 230 pp. \$24.59. (9781592641949).

Rabbi Binyamin Lau's book adds a unique and relevant portrait of the prophet Jeremiah. *Jeremiah: the Fate of a Prophet* is written in a style that will interest a diverse Jewish community both in Israel and in the Diaspora. The book was originally published in 2010 in Hebrew.

Rabbi Lau compares the status of the prophet within society to the role of a responsible public intellectual who is both critical and loving. Jeremiah prophesized the destruction of the Temple and the exile to Babylonia (he is the author of *Eikhah* which is read during the 9th of Av service). Lau's book provides great clarity in understanding the personality and character of Jeremiah, stressing his never-ending love for his people, and his belief in their posterity. The book teaches contemporary society applicable lessons about nationalism, autonomy, and identity.

By rearranging the chapters of Jeremiah according to chronological order, Rabbi Lau divides the book into three parts: The Reign of Josiah (640–609 BCE); The Reign of Jehoiakim (609–598 BCE); The Reign of Zedekiah (597–586 BCE). Jeremiah carried his prophetic mission from a young age, in Anatot (territory of Benjamin), when King Josiah wanted to reunite the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Jeremiah ends his life moving from Egypt to Babylonia. His last prophesy is about the flourishing of Jeconiah in Babylonia. Two generations later the exiles return and build the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Lau's *Jeremiah* stimulates the reader and encourages one to pursue further examination of the subject. Clear and helpful footnotes add to the interesting content and constitute an extensive and significant guide for future reference. The book concludes with two indexes of the chapters of Jeremiah: the first is the original order (as it appears in the Book of Jeremiah), and the second is chronological. *Jeremiah: the Fate of a Prophet* is a worthy acquisition for Academic libraries, Yeshivot, Jewish day schools, and Synagogues.

Nira Wolfe, Independent Researcher, Highland Park, IL

Lustig, Bette H. *Judaism in Marcel Proust: Anti-Semitism, Philo-Semitism and Judaic Perspectives in Art*. New York: Peter Lang, 2012. 155 pp. \$74.95. (9781433120343). Also available as an eBook.

Published in the series of *Currents in Comparative Romance Languages and Literatures*, the book sets out to explore everything and anything Jewish in Marcel Proust's oeuvre. From the historical context of the Dreyfus Affair to Sartre's *Jewish Question*, through his biblical and ritualistic/legalistic interpretations, and ending with his engagement with Jewish art, the author offers many Proustian textual references to support her theories. Alas, however, for non-French reading Jewish aficionados of Proust, these crucial passages are offered in their original French without the benefits of a translation or a summary, thereby limiting the readers' ability to enjoy her scholarship and insights. Recommended for Francophiles well versed in French.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, The Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR Los Angeles

Nahshon, Edna, ed., *Jews and Theatre in an Intercultural Context*. (Brill's Series in Jewish Studies, 46). Leiden, Brill, 2012. 388 pp. \$189.00. (9789004227170). Also available as an eBook.

Edited volumes are not necessarily meant to be read cover to cover, and perhaps this was the root of my frustration while reading *Jews and Theatre in an Intercultural Context*. While many of the articles were interesting and informative, some would have been better off left out of the volume. At nearly 400 pages, featuring 18 articles in six categories, the book would have benefitted tremendously from closer editing. One article that featured artistic imagery included an illustration that was quite pixelated, making it very hard for the reader to appreciate the author's analysis of the piece. Errors such as missing words and grammatical mistakes appeared too many times. Notwithstanding their titles, some of the articles had to stretch quite a bit to fall under the category of "Jewish," ("Between 'I and Thou': Buber, Expressionism and Ernst Toller's Search for Community"), while others didn't quite fit in the realm of "Theatre" ("Angel, She-ass, Prophet: The Play and its Set Design," and "Diaspora Disneys: 'Jewface' Minstrelsy and 'Jewfacade' Display in East-Central Europe and Eurasia"). The categories

were confusing as well – the vast majority of the articles featured the Holocaust in some way, but only three articles were included under the “Holocaust” category. I was also surprised to see that the index did not include a mention for “Israel,” although Israel and Zionism were discussed in a number of the chapters in the book. Notwithstanding the editorial errors, many of the articles were well-researched and important for scholarship, and so I recommend this book for academic libraries.

Michelle Chesner, Columbia University

Nirenberg, David. *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2013. 610 pp. \$35.00. (9780393058246).

In his first book, *Communities of Violence*, David Nirenberg made the claim that violence against minority groups in medieval Spain – specifically, Jews, Muslims and lepers – fulfilled a social function that did not relate entirely to the people against whom the violence was being exerted. An attack on a Jewish community, while certainly significant for the Jews suffering from it, was often conceived by its perpetrators as a blow against royal authority. Violence against others functioned as a tool of social struggle. In his new book, *Anti-Judaism*, Nirenberg makes a more general claim. Throughout history, antagonism towards Jews and the Jewish religion has played an important role in how a long procession of societies have thought about themselves and their relationship with the world around them. Neither the presence nor the absence of Jews in those societies was a determining factor in how they thought about Jews. The utility of Jews as a category had no direct connection to the reality of living Jews. They were important for the way they served political, religious and philosophical discourses.

The chronological sweep of this book is vast. It opens with Hellenistic Egypt, where the biblical Exodus story had particular local resonance. After tracing the place of Judaism in the thought of early Christians and Muslims, the narrative moves through the Middle Ages and into the modern period, culminating in the intellectual debates of Weimar Germany. Nirenberg writes here for a general audience, without jargon or technical terminology, and with enough context and even the occasional joke to put any reader at ease, but with an astonishing command of the material and careful scholarship that is backed up by endnotes. Explicitly endeavoring to distance his book from histories of anti-Semitism that seek to find the roots of the Holocaust in earlier history, Nirenberg ends up making a much more disturbing claim – that negative assessments, beliefs and prejudices against Jews lie at the bedrock of every major intellectual current in Western history.

Pinchas Roth, post-doctoral fellow, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Rabinovitch, Simon (editor). *Jews & Diaspora Nationalism: Writings on Jewish Peoplehood in Europe and the United States*. (Brandeis Library of Modern Jewish Thought). Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012. 251 pp. \$26.00. (9781584657613).

This is a valuable collection of primary source essays devoted to the theme of Jewish peoplehood outside the state of Israel. The book is divided into three sections—From Haskala to National Renaissance, Socialism and the Question of Jewish Peoplehood, and Preservation and Reconstruction in the Republics—and includes an epilogue. Some of the writers, such as the historian Simon Dubnov and Yiddish writer I. L. Peretz may be familiar to many English-language readers; others, such as René Hirschler and Jacob Lestschinsky, may very well not be. Varying degrees of emphasis are placed throughout the essays on variables such as communal self-governance, language, religion, tradition, and Jewish learning and texts. The book covers a wide range of settings, and the foci of its writers vary accordingly. Dubnov, for example, argued that “Jewish nationality cannot be reduced to religion alone.” and that, like Czechs or Poles, Jews are a people that could simultaneously claim national rights and belong to a multi-ethnic empire. Writers in the United States such as Horace Kallen and Israel Knox were concerned with the challenge of embracing the possibilities of democracy without losing distinctiveness or assimilating altogether.

It is important to read these essays as products of their day, and sometimes, of a moment. However dated some of them might appear to the contemporary reader, the stakes were quite high for the writers, especially in the competitive Jewish ideological marketplace of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, Zhitlowsky writes, "It will be different now. Since we have begun to write socialist material for Jews in Yiddish we have turned a new page in the history of the Jewish people." As we know, Zhitlowsky's dreams for socialism and Yiddish did not quite materialize. Using the term "ideological nomads," Rabinovitch makes clear that in many cases, the essays presented here represent only a moment in the writer's thinking, as their views changed over the course of their careers.

Two of the essays, "What is Jewish Tradition?" by Avrom Golomb and "Jerusalem and Babylon" by Simon Rawidowicz, are particularly worthy of mention. Golomb's is one of the most eloquent articulations of the meaning of Jewish tradition I have ever read. Rawidowicz highlights the centrality of both Israel and the Diaspora to ongoing Jewish vitality and serves as a fitting epilogue to the volume.

Editor Simon Rabinovitch is to be commended for his imaginative selection of these little-known essays, for commissioning the translation of the ones not written in English, and for his erudite elucidation of their often obscure contexts and references. Essential for academic libraries; also recommended for community center libraries with strong holdings in Jewish history and philosophy.

Yermiyahu Ahron Taub, Washington, D.C., <http://www.yataub.net>

Ravid, Liora. *Daily Life in Biblical Times* (translated by Jessica Setbon). Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2013. 467 pp. \$19.70. (9789652296092).

The author, Dr. Liora Ravid, is a native of Israel and earned her doctorate in biblical studies. The book is divided into six parts, each covering topics in biblical culture, including family structure, the place of women, sexual violence, inheritance, and the historicity of the Bible. The author explains in the introduction that the intention of the book is to describe biblical stories within their cultural and historical context. Within the six parts are twenty-six chapters, each devoted to explaining details related to the topic in each part, with emphasis on the patriarchs and their experiences of family, marriage, conflict, and tradition. The book concludes with a selected bibliography that covers a wide range of sources. What is unique about the book is its scholarly explanation of biblical concepts in layman's terms making the text of the book appropriate for any adult or young adult reader. This book is appropriate for any library's non-fiction collection.

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

Rodov, Ilia M. *The Torah Ark in Renaissance Poland: A Jewish Revival of Classical Antiquity*. (Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series, 23). Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013. 400 pp. \$220.00. (9789004242845).

Renaissance influences on the Jewish community of Poland in the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century have not been widely studied. This sophisticated monograph of art, intellectual and cultural history explores the introduction of Renaissance styles into synagogue architecture, focusing on a small number of Torah arks that have survived from this period. Ilia Rodov, Lecturer in the Department of Jewish Art at Bar-Ilan University, traces the development of synagogue imagery from the medieval period through the Renaissance. Using archival materials and rabbinic sources he uncovers links between the Jewish communities of Italy and Poland among the Polish rabbinic elite, who also had ties to the Polish court and nobility. Rodov identifies the Italian artisans and Polish artisans trained in Italy who built churches, sculptural monuments and tombs in Poland, and were employed to fabricate synagogue artifacts. Christian motifs were transformed to transmit a Jewish message and religious polemic to the synagogue worshiper, visualizing the Holy Temple and kabbalistic imagery.

Rodov studies the six Torah arks from this period that have survived with another examined from a pre-war drawing and pictures. The first half of the book investigates the first Renaissance ark from the Isserls' family synagogue in Kazimierz, then a suburb of Cracow. This family memorial chapel was

established by Israel Isserl, a financier to the king, and his son Moses Isserles, the renowned scholar [the Rema] in 1553. Expanded into a synagogue a few years later, a stone Torah ark was commissioned, with a columned and pedimented Renaissance frame with carved plant reliefs. The remainder of the book traces the changes in designs in the additional arks in Kazimierz synagogues, as well as in neighboring towns. With 187 magnificent illustrations in the back of the book increasing the cost, this book is only recommended for specialized academic libraries.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA

Roiz, Javier. *A Vigilant Society: Jewish Thought and the State in Medieval Spain* (translated by Selma L. Margaretten). Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013. 320 pp. \$90.00. (9781438445632).

In this work of political theory Javier Roiz uses the medieval Spanish Jewish community to investigate the “genealogy of the state.” He seeks to examine the tensions between it and what he describes as the “Vigilant Society.” According to Roiz the “vigilant society” or “vigilant democracy”, originated in 13th century Western Europe and “produced a new vision of the public sphere and individual that are still in effect today.” Among the characteristics of such a society Roiz identifies watchfulness, struggle and an understanding that “knowledge is power.”

Roiz explains that his reason for examining the Jewish community in Medieval Spain in such detail is because here we see what he views as a “vigilant society” that was maintained and guided by its common rules, traditions, and practices. Although the Jews lived without sovereignty under the jurisdiction of others they had a “rich tradition of thought and practical politics.” So adept at adjusting to their circumstances were they that they came to regard these locations as their homes. Yet they kept their ties to Jewish communities elsewhere and Roiz sees this as providing “cross-pollination” from other developing states and differing political models. He appears to view the functioning of the Spanish Jewish community as an antecedent to later developments in society and the state, and he explores his thesis through the work of Maimonides, Nahmanides and the traditions of Cabala.

Roiz concludes that there are significant tensions between the society and the state, and it is not always easy to discern which can be described as “vigilant.” When a society becomes too rigid and authoritarian (as in Nazi Germany), it is not wrong for a “State” like the US to topple it. Yet, when an authoritarian “State” (like that in Spain prior to 1978) persists, it is also not wrong for a new “Society” to break free from it.

Randall C. Belinfante, American Sephardi Federation

Roskies, David G., and Naomi Diamant. *Holocaust Literature: A History and Guide*. (The Tauber Institute Series for the Study of European Jewry). Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012. 355 pp. \$35.00 (9781611683585).

The book’s subtitle alerts the reader that the work is divided into two distinct parts. The first is a history of Holocaust literature that defines the genre as comprising “all forms of writing, both documentary and discursive, and in any language, that have shaped the public memory of the Holocaust and been shaped by it.” Roskies then divides these works into five time periods: Wartime Writing in the Free Zone (1939–1945); Wartime Writing in the Jew-Zone (1939–1945); Communal Memory (1945–1960); Provisional Memory (1960–1985); and Authorized Memory (1985–Present). He outlines events and influences in each time period, and then discusses the major writers, as well as prevalent themes, often comparing and contrasting the literature with classic works.

The second part is a guide to the first hundred books, presented in order of writing or completion, not necessarily by date of first publication. These are detailed annotations that encompass the plot, the author background, and literary analysis of style and content. While the standard list of books is included (*The Diary of Anne Frank*, Elie Wiesel’s *Night*, Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*), the authors also include lesser-known works, works that have not been translated to English from their original language, and books that have become dated, but were relevant when first published. A long list of Works Cited and

a detailed index make up the back matter. Black and white images of the book covers are dispersed through the book, and an eight-page section of color plates is included to emphasize the importance of the cover art in the presentation of the book. A complete curriculum guide is available at www.brandeis.edu/tauber/roskies.html.

The author's comprehensive research and analysis put the individual works and the body of Holocaust literature into both a historical and literary context. There are strong opinions throughout, including the observation that "Wiesel has rendered the Jewish victim accessible to a Christian audience. He is the archetypal translator figure, a sort of John the Baptist to the Holocaust." An essential acquisition for Holocaust Centers and large Holocaust collections, the book is a valuable resource for research and book selection (collection development and reading groups) and is recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Rottenberg, Catherine (ed). *Black Harlem and the Jewish Lower East Side: Narratives out of Time.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013. 196 pp. \$80 (9781438445212).

The contributors in this slim volume seek to compare and contrast the "spatial representations" revealed in the literature emanating from what has come to be described as "Black Harlem" and the "Jewish Lower East Side." They argue that, although both of these "communal spaces" engendered promise in some way, the literature that emerged yielded very different responses on the part of their writers. In the case of Black Harlem, there is considerable ambivalence about the setting. The optimism and promise are mixed with expressions of desperation and anguish. In the case of the Jewish Lower East Side however, the desperate poverty of the early immigrants is seen as an antecedent mitigated through a class struggle that would see the population rise to a better place for all. Indeed, as Rottenberg points out, as their racial label fell by the wayside Jews were able to proceed in a linear fashion, both horizontally and vertically. Looking backward through what Hasia Diner describes as a "Lower East Side Memory Culture," they even came to view the space as a golden source of traditional Jewish Americanism. Blacks, however, were unable to divest themselves of their racial label, and, as a result, were doomed to a much more tortuous process that yielded a literature that sustained a great deal more frustration and agony. A pioneering work, this book does not claim to be definitive, but seeks to lay a foundation for the future study of the literatures of the two communities. With a valuable index and extensive notes accompanying most of the articles, this work would be a useful addition for libraries which deal with comparative literature and culture.

Randall C. Belinfante, American Sephardi Federation

Ruttman, Larry. *American Jews and America's Game: Voices of a growing legacy in Baseball.* Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2013. 510 pp. \$34.95. (9780803264755).

Baseball is not only America's pastime; it has also served as a window on our national life. In this large book, Larry Ruttman demonstrates how Jews have contributed to the sport over the past 80 years, both on and off the field.

Ruttman begins with Hank Greenberg, but he expands his examination through interviews with Greenberg's children: Aviva Kempner (who produced the documentary on his life), and Ralph Kiner (a Hall of Fame player and long-time friend). He also discusses his encounters with other Jewish players from the 1940s until today, including Sandy Koufax, Al Rosen, Brad Ausmus, and Kevin Youkilis. We are also introduced to a gallery of Jewish insiders who have had an impact on the game – team owner Jerry Reinsdorf; player representative Marvin Miller; sportswriters Roger Kahn and Ira Berkow; and economist Andrew Zimbalist. Finally, there are conversations with a variety of famous Jews, whose lives have been touched by the sport, including Jeffrey Gurock and Alan Dershowitz. In the end, Ruttman seeks to demonstrate that American life is intimately connected with Jewish values, and that baseball is one of the points of intersection. At times his interviews have less to do with the game than with the

process of Americanization, the present and future of Judaism, and occasionally the state of Israel.

Because of its range of interview subjects and the topics they discuss, this book will interest followers of the game and cultural historians. Unfortunately, the index is focused on people, not topics. Notably, many of the interviewees are either cultural Jews or nominal members of synagogues; this book, therefore, is appropriate primarily for large libraries with an interest in American Jewish life and culture.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Sanos, Sandrine. *The Aesthetics of Hate: Far-Right Intellectuals, Antisemitism, and Gender in 1930s France*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013. 384 pp. \$65.00. (9780804774574).

The French Right that is the subject of this study was anti-capitalist, anti-socialist, and anti-democratic. It believed that France was in an abject state and in dire need of both a cultural and a political regeneration. While Charles Maurras and his *L'Action Française* loom large, the emphasis is upon younger intellectuals, both fascist and non-fascist. The anti-Semitism of some was cultural, with others it was racial. The author attempts, not always convincingly to this reader, to tie the far-right politics of these young men to a concern for self-definition. The book contains a mass of detail, but it is not terribly successful at synthesis. In addition, the style is not particularly pellucid. The result is not the penetrating exploration of the connection between the aesthetics of the French interwar nationalism and anti-Semitism that one could wish for. A book for comprehensive, or at least large, academic collections.

Shmuel Ben-Gad, Gelman Library, George Washington University

Simms, Norman. *In the Context of His Times: Alfred Dreyfus as Lover, Intellectual, Poet, and Jew*. (Reference Library of Jewish Intellectual History). Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2013. 410 pp. \$79.00. (9781618112361).

An assumption of a certain amount of knowledge has to be inserted for any potential reader: an elementary understanding of French, classic French literature, and the philosophical sub-topics of epistemology and metaphysics. Although the thesis surrounds Alfred Dreyfus, no background or any real discussion is included regarding "the Dreyfus Affair." Those familiar with this episode in modern French history know that the defamed Alsatian, Jewish, French military officer, was unjustly charged with treasonous espionage and, ultimately, spent four years in the penal colony of Devils Island. During this period of imprisonment, in order to maintain some semblance of sanity, Dreyfus wrote letters, essays, and drawings to his wife Lucie Halamard. As known to those familiar with the case, Dreyfus' defense was taken up by the prominent French author, Emile Zola, whose published efforts ultimately led to a judicial review and a reversal of the charges. Simms places his review and analysis of Dreyfus' erudite writings in the cultural context of the *fin de siècle*. The book's language is dense making an appreciation of this worthy work somewhat limited and confined to a relatively small audience.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Smart, Michael (ed.) & Barbara Ashkenas (conceiver). *Kaddish: Women's Voices*. New York: Urim Publications, 2013. 271 pp. \$25.00. (9789655241501).

This excellent collection consists of fifty-two insightful essays addressing the various experiences and issues faced by women mourners who recite Kaddish. The book is very helpful and thought provoking for individual mourners and for the Jewish community as a whole.

The contributors come from a wide range of Jewish denominations, backgrounds, religious involvement and education. The writers share their viewpoints and reveal their courage in confronting difficult situations. All testify to the ways in which reciting Kaddish invoked deep spiritual and meaningful experiences. Several of the essays portray the warm presence of community support and solace and the establishment or affirmation of their involvement with Jewish communal life. For them, the recitation of Kaddish indeed served to sanctify God's name. Others portray synagogues and

minyanim where the opposite occurred. At a time where community is most needed, the mourners were set adrift and even faced outright hostility and ostracism. There, the communal response reflected a lack of respect for the dead, the wounding of the mourner and a desecration of God's name.

This book is well worth purchasing and reading. The essays reflect individual and common experiences and issues that may be unique to women or may be shared by all mourners. Readers will find that many essays speak directly to them on many levels.

Nathan Rosen, New York, NY

Sohn, Ruth H. *Crossing Cairo: a Jewish Woman's Encounter with Egypt*. Santa Fe, NM: Gaon Books, 2013. 270 pp. \$18.95. (9781935604501).

Rabbi Sohn and her family stayed in Cairo for six months in 2006 because her husband, Prof. Reuven Firestone, who specializes in Middle Eastern and Jewish studies, wanted to deepen his understanding of the contemporary Arab world. Thus, we get Sohn's impressions regarding her neighbors and her neighborhood, her sons' education and friends, contacts with Israeli representatives and the leadership and dwindling membership of the Jewish community as well as the conditions of Muslim women and political views of the people she encountered. Consequently, the strong points of the book are her observations on daily life, the attitudes of the Muslim Egyptians she met towards Jews and Israel, the various issues she relates regarding the Jewish community and the condition of Muslim women she came in contact with, like her Arabic teacher and her housekeeper. Her impressions from visits in 2007 and post-revolution 2011 are also included as are several photographs. It's a pity that in several photographs (e.g., pages 2, 190 and 252), the site of the 2011 demonstrations is described as "Tahir Square," even though it is spelled correctly as "Tahrir" in the text. Notwithstanding this error, the book all in all provides interesting vignettes into life in Cairo as viewed by an American female rabbi.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

Soloveitchik, Haym, *Collected Essays I*. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013. 336 pp. \$59.50. (9781904113973).

These essays on the culture of Ashkenaz in the Middle Ages reflect the author's lifelong interest in the stimuli for change in the unfolding of *halakhic* (Jewish legal) ideas. Documentation in footnotes draws on secondary sources and primary unpublished manuscripts.

The book's sections are: 1. Studies on Rashi and the Tosafists; 2. *Ribbit* (usury), money-lending, and pawn broking; 3. The ban on *yein nesekh* (Gentile wine) as related to moneylending in the context of viticulture; 4. General conclusions about the communal self-image of Ashkenaz, showing that the fine line between adaptation and deviance, and where a society draws that line, reveals its values.

Previously published articles are updated and expanded and those formerly in Hebrew are rendered into English. Two essays are new. Bringing the essays together reveals an inner unifying coherence. This first volume is part of a multi-volume series of the author's collected essays. Highly recommended for all interested in the history of *halakhah*.

David B Levy, Touro College, NY

Szegedy-Maszák, Marianne. *I Kiss Your Hands Many Times: Hearts, Souls, and Wars in Hungary*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013. 370 pp. \$27.00. (9780385524858).

The author explores her parent's relationship and how their love survived despite separation and sadness. The phrase "*kezét csókolom?*" ("may I kiss your hand?") in Hungarian is more than an expression of welcome and departure: it defines a culture of politeness and regal deportment. At the height of Hungarian culture and the eminence of Budapest, prior to World War I, the author's family enjoyed the lifestyle of the upper class. Her mother Hanna's grandfather was Manfred Weiss, and he, her father and her uncle were some of the foremost businessmen in Hungary. Her father Aladár's family was

Christian, and his intelligence and manner earned him a post in the foreign ministry. Although most of the family converted to Christianity, when the Nazis invaded Hungary, they knew they were in trouble. The Weiss clan literally made a deal with the devil, trading their massive holdings in exchange for an escape to Portugal. Aladár was sent to Dachau for his pro-Allies stance and came back changed forever. After World War II, Aladár was appointed as the Hungarian minister to the United States. He and Hanna married and went to live in Washington DC. But the turbulence in post-war Hungary and the eventual Soviet Communist takeover left Aladár without a job. The death of their first-born infant son broke their hearts. Her father worked for the Voice of America, and eventually the rest of Hanna's family came to America. The author glosses from this point to her parents' deaths.

The thread of personal experience weaved into historic events show the multiple effects of the war on an extended family. Reminiscent of Lucette Lagnado's *Man in the White Sharkskin Suit* (HarperCollins, 2009), Szegedy-Maszák's father had been a "great and important person" in Hungary; he became depressed and disillusioned, feeling like an exile in the United States. Besides her own memories, translation of family documents and several trips to Hungary, Szegedy-Maszák includes an extensive bibliography of related reading. There is minimal Jewish content, but the memoir is engaging and informative. It is recommended for libraries with large Holocaust collections or large sections about Hungary.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Taylor, Derek. 'Thank you for your Business': The Jewish Contribution to the British Economy. London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2013. 352 pp. \$74.95. (9780853038535).

This volume presents the contribution of Jews to the economic success of Great Britain for the last 350 years. However, it does not proceed chronologically or historically but is arranged thematically by groups of businesses such as food, clothing, cars, show biz and entertainment, real estate, etc. Each name is followed by a brief description of how the person came to start her/his business and turn it into a success, and the ultimate fate of the business (e.g., today's worth and whether closed, bought out or merged). Taylor additionally includes information about the owner's involvement in charities or Jewish institutions. Some of the entrepreneurs were knighted for their contributions to Britain. The language is very British in orientation, for example, using the term "The Slump" for what Americans would call the "Great Depression." Americans will not recognize many of the local firms like Tesco, Stencor, or Raines Dairy, unless they became international chains such as Planet Hollywood, Saatchi and Saatchi, Reuters, or Marks & Spencer. The contribution of Jews to Britain reflects successive waves of immigration, starting with Sephardim from Amsterdam in the late 17th century and including international traders of Gibraltar in the late 18th century, escapees from the revolutions of 1848, German-educated chemists in World War I, Nazi refugees who aided the British victory in World War II, South Africans in the 1960s, and Iranians who built their businesses after the fall of the Shah. The author proves that "Tolerance pays very large dividends." Provided is a handy index of individuals and their firms, a list of provincial companies by location, and a short bibliography. This volume is more encyclopedic in nature than a book for reading and so it belongs in a research-oriented library that wishes to provide extra depth to the subject of Jewish economic activity in the diaspora.

Marlene Schiffman, Gottesman Library, Yeshiva University





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Perceptions 2010: An International Survey of Library Automation

(Published January 2011)

<http://www.librarytechnology.org/perceptions2010.pl>

Warburg, A. Yehuda (ed). *Rabbinic Authority: The Vision and The Reality: Beit Din Decisions in English*. New York; Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2013. 341 pp. \$26.00. (9789655241440).

Halakhah embodies the legal and communal traditions that began when the Torah was given and transmitted through Moses, the elders, and the rabbis. This book attempts to introduce English speakers to the concept of rabbinic authority. The author is a legal scholar in both secular law and Jewish law; this book is written based on both bodies of knowledge.

Warburg's book is excellent overall, but it has several shortcomings. First, it is a very slow read as it is tedious to read the text with several hundred footnotes. Second, the book is lacking a glossary and a topical or subject index. Thus, this book is not for the beginning student, and the audience listed in the preface is not the audience who will understand the text.

Rabbinic Authority has two parts; each reflected in the title. The first part "vision" defines rabbinic authority and attempts to put authority in a communal or global context. The second part "reality" summarizes cases brought before a *beit din* (religious court) with explanations and decisions. By the time an issue is filed in court, the parties are so far apart only a legal decision can solve the problem. Warburg chooses cases in both business and family law. In one family law case a brother is sued by his two sisters over the estate of their father. While Warburg treats this as an academic example for explaining the law, the reader is left to wonder how the family dynamic could deteriorate to a point to where the court needed to decide the disposition of the estate.

This book is in search of an audience. Beginners in Jewish law will not be able to understand it and rabbinical law experts will not learn anything new. I enjoyed reading it because I have a deep, personal interest in the law—Jewish and secular, business and family. *Rabbinic Authority* is recommended for libraries that seek to collect academic Jewish law books and have well-educated readers.

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

Weiss Halivni, David. *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud* (translated by Jeffrey L. Rubenstein), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 352 pp. \$65.00. (9780199739882).

The translator of this work (from Hebrew) is surely correct when he notes that "this book is certainly the most comprehensive account of the processes that produced the Babylonian Talmud written in nearly a century and probably the most inclusive and complete ever." Halivni continues and builds upon some of his earlier works in attempting to determine the various historical and narrative strands of the Babylonian Talmud. In doing so, Halivni provides a new timetable of the writing, editing and redaction of the Talmud and certainly affects our understanding of the formation of the Talmudic canon.

In an earlier work, Halivni discussed how the Talmud contains two primary layers. The first layer includes the attributed sayings of the Amora'im (approximately 200–500 CE), and the second layer contains anonymous discussions of these Amoraic positions. There are significant differences in the style and substance of these layers. The former are terse in nature and primarily consist of legal rulings or brief explanations of earlier legal material. The second, anonymous layer is verbose and the style is complex and dialectical; it is often comprised of objection and counter objection and rhetorical questions. Perhaps most significantly to Halivni, this layer contains many forced explanations. Halivni rejects the traditional notion of these two strata both belonging to the Amoraic period. Instead, he proposes that the second layer was written anywhere between 50 to 250 years after the end of Amoraic period. The name Halivni gives to these authors (and compilers) are "Stammaim." Because the Stammaim lived so many years after the Amora'im they were often unable to explicate the discussions of their predecessors due to the passage of time. Halivni's bold thesis is that half of the Talmud should be viewed as not being Amoraic in origin but instead written by these Stammaim many years later. It is this quite revolutionary understanding that has become the cornerstone of modern critical Talmud style. The book contains careful analyses of Talmudic text demonstrating the author's thesis. This book will be of great interest to any student of the Talmud. I would not recommend it for the casual reader.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

Zuccotti, Susan. *Père Marie-Benoît and Jewish Rescue: How a French Priest Together with Jewish Friends Saved Thousands During the Holocaust.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. 276 pp. \$35.00. (9780253008534).

This remarkable story, presented by Susan Zuccotti, a historian from Columbus University and author of several books about the Holocaust, is about the life of Père Marie- Benoît and his noteworthy success in saving the lives of countless Jews during World War II. Through research in French and Italian archives and personal interviews with Père Marie- Benoît, his family, Jewish rescuers with whom he worked, and the survivors he helped, the author presents us with the biography of an extraordinary man.

Born Pierre Péteul, Père Marie-Benoît was attracted to the Catholic Church early in his life. He joined the French Army in World War I in North Africa, and was wounded at Verdun. Later he became a member of the Capuchin order, a branch of the Franciscans, and became a priest stationed in Marseilles. It was this Capuchin monastery that became his headquarters during World War II, where he ran an operation focused on finding ways to smuggle Jews out of an increasingly hostile France. Père Marie-Benoît, with the collaboration of Jewish organizations and members of the French resistance, organized a massive forging operation, installing and improvising printing facilities to create fake passports, baptism certificates, and other documents that aided thousands of refugees in crossing the border to Spain and Switzerland. As he was wanted by the Gestapo, he escaped to Rome, where he continued his efforts to help the Jews. After the War, he became a strong voice for Jewish-Catholic reconciliation and an early advocate of many of the reforms promulgated by Vatican II in the 1960s. On April 26, 1966, Yad Vashem recognized Father Pierre-Marie Benoît as Righteous among the Nations. This book is highly recommended for all academic libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

Forman, Frieda Johles (ed) and Sam Blatt, et al (trans). *The Exile Book of Yiddish Women Writers.* Holstein, ON: Exile Editions, 2013. 306 pp. \$17.95 (9781550963113).

Reading this anthology is like having a very warm repast—a satisfying and filling feast of many servings. Each story has its own taste, not only in its writing styles but in time, place and the intimacy of the characters described in the stories. *The Exile Book of Yiddish Women Writers* provides a much-needed volume of English translations. The Toronto Yiddish Translation Group has provided a wider audience with an entrée into the Yiddish world from the feminine perspective, which has long been missing from the short stories and excerpts of Yiddish literature by women writers such as Chava Rosenfarb, Ida Maze, Miriam Waddington, Lili Berger, Rokhl Brokhes, Sarah Hamer-Jacklyn, Shira Gorshman, Chayele Grober and others. From the time of the czars to the contemporary era, (and even a Yiddish story about a Yemenite family), these stories fill us with the dreams, despairs, horrors, pain, longings and love from the point of view of women. Filled with the intimacies of family life, relationships, restrictions, secrets and discoveries are of a world beyond the stereotypes of European Jewish lives. Poverty and cruelty, kindness and warmth, cleverness and success meet the protagonists of these stories in clear, distinctive Canadian voices, yet still containing echoes from the better-known Yiddish writers. Nothing should be given away. Here much thoughtfulness and some unexpected truths await the reader. These short stories will provide excellent pieces for book groups, temple talks and those who love great literature. Recommended for synagogue, public, and academic libraries.

Judith S. Pinnolis, Brandeis University

Glickman, Mary. *Marching to Zion*. New York: Open Road Media, 2013. 247 pp. \$16.99 (9781480435629).

While the story of immigrant Jews to the United States at the beginning of the 20th century is well-known, Mary Glickman writes a compelling novel that provides a different perspective on the immigrant experience. *Marching to Zion* tells the story of Minerva Fishbein, a child of the pogroms, and her relationship with an African-American man, Magnus Bailey. The story begins in St. Louis in 1916, with the arrival of Mags Preacher, an African-American woman looking for work who ends up working for Mr. Fishbein at his funeral parlor. The story follows the family through the East St. Louis Riots of 1917, and to their eventual new life in New Orleans. Minerva and Magus have a decades-long love affair, which ends in tragedy, but really defines how Jewish-Black relations existed in the Deep South during the first half of the 20th century.

Glickman makes real comparisons to the pogroms of Europe and the East St. Louis race riots, which gives the story another level of depth that draws the reader into truly understanding what life was like for African-Americans prior to the United States entering into World War I.

The third book by this award-winning author, *Marching to Zion* is suitable for all types of libraries, specifically school libraries. Historical comparisons can be drawn from the story and the book can be a tool used in the classroom to teach about the Jewish immigrant experience and race relations in the south in the early 20th century.

Laura Schutzman, Hebrew Academy of Nassau County, Nathan and Doris Liebman Memorial Library, Uniondale, NY

Green, Gila. *King of the Class*. Vancouver, Canada: Now or Never Publishing, 2013. 237 pp. \$19.95 (9781926942148).

This first novel was written by a Canadian-born writer who immigrated to Israel in 1994. The story begins in a seaside kibbutz in the year 2019, taking place in a post-civil war Israel divided into a secular and a religious state. It involves a family with conflicts that deeply affect their relationships. The novel reflects contemporary Israeli religious life. It is an appropriate addition to collections in Jewish community centers, public libraries, temples and synagogues.

Susan Freiband, Volunteer Temple Librarian, Arlington, Virginia

Kulbak, Moyshe. *The Zelmenyaners: A Family Saga*. Translated by Hillel Halkin (New Yiddish Library Series). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013. 304 pp. \$25 (9780300112320).

It is often said that in Jewish families one generation strives to forget while another strives to preserve tradition. In the aftermath of the death of the family patriarch, Reb Zemele Khvost, the Zelmenyaners are completely losing their Jewish identity. Within a generation, Reb Zemele's grandchildren become proper Soviet citizens, much to the chagrin of the older generation.

Moyshe Kulbak's *The Zelmenyaners* was first published as a series of comic stories, in the *Shtern* (Star), a Soviet Yiddish newspaper, from 1929–1935, a period of great cultural, technological and political change in the Soviet Union. The Khvosts are described in a mock ethnography "compiled" by Reb Zemele's grandson Tsalel as a separate people who created their own systems of medicine, geography, zoology and botany. Dark and bony with fleshy noses and a unique odor of musky hay, the Zelmenyaners march to the beat of their own drum. Their isolation from the rest of the world ends when Bereh, the first Zelmenyaner to become a Soviet, connects electricity to the family courtyard. When the trolley system is built, younger Zelmenyaners move away from home, returning from their journeys with non-Jewish lovers, spouses and children.

The Zelmenyaners is filled with intergenerational conflict between the older generation, Reb Zemele's sons, Folye, Itshe, Yuda and Zishe, who watch in disdain as their children, Bereh, Sonya, Falke, Tsalel and Tonke, abandon Jewish traditions, such as weddings under the *chuppah*, the Jewish wedding canopy, ritual circumcision and Passover seders. The children, in true Socialist Realist fashion, serve as mentors, dragging their elders, kicking and screaming into communist culture.

While reading this book, I wondered what would have become of families, such as the Khvosts, when the Nazis invaded. The Soviets wanted Jews to be Soviet citizens, but, to the Nazis, they would always be Jews. It is sadly ironic that as this family lost their Jewish identity, that identity would be forced upon them by those who would even deny them their right to exist.

Yossi Gremillion, Librarian Volunteer at Temple Beth El, Boca and Librarian, Broward County, FL

Lefer, Diane. *The Fiery Alphabet*. Atlanta, GA: Loose Leaves Publishing, 2013. 322 pp. \$18.99 (9781624320040).

When a mysterious stranger, with an interest in her family's Jewish past, shows up at her door, Daniela Messo and her father are charmed. Daniela, who has lived for the past seventeen years in isolation under her father's care and tutelage, joins Giuseppe Balsamo for a life of travel throughout Europe, swindling the wealthy, using Kabbalistic practices learned in Daniela's shed, changing identities as they travel. In *The Fiery Alphabet*, Daniela begins life with Balsamo as co-conspirator, and with experience, becomes a swindler, in her own right, using the Kabbalah to become known as a holy woman, a sojourner bringing luck to those whom she encounters and health to the myriads of children she adopts.

The Fiery Alphabet is a confusing story told in excerpts from Daniela's travelogue and the correspondence sent between her and others while on the road. The story has a logical turn-of-events, but I finished the book with unanswered questions. No good case is made for Balsamo and Daniela's study of Kabbalah, other than to prove their authenticity as scholars. I would like to have had more details about the lives of her mother and grandmother that would explain what they were practicing. We glean that they were considered witches because of their perceived magical powers, which explains why Daniela was living in isolation.

This is not a good book for leisure reading. The story is imaginative and the dialogue is very colorful but too many unanswered questions make it difficult to maintain interest.

Yossi Gremillion, Librarian Volunteer at Temple Beth El, Boca and Librarian, Broward County, FL

Ragen, Naomi. *The Sisters Weiss*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013. 324 pp. \$24.99 (9780312570194). ARC.

The Sisters Weiss, Naomi Ragen's tenth novel, is a coming of age story about two young Haredi women who leave the ultra-orthodox community to pursue life outside that strict and sheltered society. Rose Weiss discovers the world of books, photography and intellectual pursuits through contact with a classmate in her ultra-orthodox girls' school. The night before her arranged marriage she runs away from home, leaving her perplexed parents and loving little sister Pearl behind. Pearl is greatly affected by her sister's departure and as a result becomes even more committed to the Haredi way of life. Forty years later Pearl's naïve and poorly educated daughter, Rivka, runs away from home, arrives at Hannah's house (Rose's daughter) and asks for help. Rose and Pearl's experiences are very similar. The Haredi world had not changed in the forty years between Rose and Pearl's defection. The outside world is likewise harsh and cruel to both Rose and Pearl, but they persevere, struggle and make a life for themselves. Recommended for libraries that collect Jewish-themed novels, especially those whose patrons are Naomi Ragen fans.

Ilka Gordon, On site Director, Aaron Garber Library, Beachwood, OH

Reich, Tova. *One Hundred Philistine Foreskins*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2013. 363 pp. \$25 (9781619021075).

One Hundred Philistine Foreskins is a very timely story, given the struggle of Jewish women in Israel to pray at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Verbally and physically harassed by opponents who oppose their freedom to pray, the women remain persistent in their fight for equality. What if the tables were turned in Hasidic groups? What if there were Hasidic groups that were led by a female rebbe, surrounded and served by women while men performed background duties, sitting behind *mehitzahs* or in the balconies of the Shul? Ima Temima Ba'alat Ov, an extraordinarily gifted Torah scholar, has become a rebbe with wondrous insight and whose healing reputation attracts attention from men and women.

Born Tema Bavli, to a Brooklyn kosher slaughterer and his melancholic wife, Tema is exceptionally gifted as a young child at Torah interpretation, but she is discouraged from studying by her father whose only concern is finding her a husband. After her mother's suicide, Tema retreats in sorrow and abandonment into her own world, studying Torah independently. After resisting her father's matchmaking efforts, Tema marries Howie Stern out of convenience and in name only. The two move to Israel where the couple separate, Howie becoming an extreme Zionist and Tema a leader of outcasts and misfits, such as prostitutes and women whose husbands refuse to give them a *get*, the Jewish bill of divorce.

One Hundred Philistine Foreskins is an imaginative story. One criticism, however, is that the story is bogged down with absurd episodes and details. Reich spends too much time focusing on Temima's complicated relationship with dubious leader, Abba Kadosh, a self-professed Jew whose rabbinic authority has been challenged by the rabbinical authorities. To fully enjoy and appreciate this book, one must be very patient; willing to re-read passages, in the same way a Talmudic scholar reads a little text and then digests what has been written. I am very impressed, as a whole, with Reich's story; however, I don't recommend this book for leisure reading.

Yossi Gremillion, Librarian Volunteer at Temple Beth El, Boca and Librarian, Broward County, FL

Schmidt, Judith Sarah. *Longing for the Blessing, Midrashic Voices from Toldot*. St. Louis, Missouri: Time Being Press, 2013. 84 pp. \$15.95 (9781568092171).

The voices of Isaac, Jacob, Esau and Rebecca are presented in poetry and prose in a midrashic retelling of the stories in the *Toldot* portion of the Torah. In addition, the author weaves the story of her own family, using her own voice. Schmidt is a clinical psychologist from New York who has published a work on coping with grief, as well as poems and articles. A short introduction sets the stage for the rest of the book, and the concluding chapter, midrashic musings on angels and blessings, provides a good ending. This is an original, creative contribution to biblical literature which provides insights into the Torah. The writing is clear, interesting, and captures the readers' attention. The book is an appropriate addition to collections in Jewish public, school and academic libraries, as well Temple and synagogue libraries.

Susan Freiband, Volunteer Temple Librarian, Arlington, Virginia

Silbert, Layle. *Yudl and Other Stories*. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2013. 304 pp. \$17.95 (9781609804404).

Millions have come to America, the *goldene medina*, a land paved with proverbial gold, for a better life, escaping poverty and religious and political persecution. But for Yudl, America is not home. Having fled the yeshivas of Eastern Europe for enlightenment, he finds himself, yet again, displaced. As other immigrants, even his own family, have adopted the American dream, starting businesses and owning property, Yudl watches in disdain.

The entire family, Yudl, wife Ryah and daughters Ellen and Baby/Bedee, live in exile in an unhappy existence. Yudl and Ryah's marriage is one of convenience (Ryah showed up at his office, in search of, in Yudl's words, "opportunity"). Yudl cautions the imaginative Ellen not to rush into marriage because marriage changes one's life forever and one does not get used to being married. Ryah yearns to be independent and to have her own money, much to the chagrin of her husband. Ellen dreams of being rich and married, away from her tyrannical mother.

Layle Silbert's *Yudl and Other Stories*, provide vignettes of a new American family's life as they adjust to a bigger, colder, newer world. The Landaus are people who continue to live in exile, yearning to have more or to be in other places or with other people. During the midst of the Red Scare when immigrants and others who fought for workers' rights were seen as enemies of America, Yudl and others bring the fear of persecution from "over there", as their daughter, Ellen, calls Russia. After the lynching of Leo Frank and the executions of Sacco and Valenti, Yudl is a man in exile with no homeland, living a life that he does not want. Silbert's stories are fraught with underlying meanings in the thoughts and conversations of each of these characters. Like in Elie Wiesel's *Night*, the narrator speaks more by what he or she does not say, by

alluding to the past, protecting “little ears” from the pain brought from the old country.

These are excellent short stories of intergenerational conflict between one generation, a newer, English-speaking one, concerned with becoming rich and married, and an older, Yiddish-accented, English-speaking generation experienced with past persecution and with a different idea of the American dream.

Yossi Gremillion, Librarian Volunteer at Temple Beth El, Boca and Librarian, Broward County, FL

Taub, Yermiyahu Ahron. *Prayers of a Heretic: Poems*. Austin, TX: Plain View Press, 2013. 142 pp. \$14.95 (9781891386015).

To question is part of the human experience and critical thinking. In Yermiyahu Ahron Taub’s book of poetry, *Prayers of a Heretic*, the “heretic” can pinpoint the moment at which he realized that his fate was not to be part of insular community, unified by communal agreement to following religious law. In the poem, *Cataclysm in Hebrew Class, How Yermiyahu First Went Astray*, the student makes the mistake of asking WHY Hebrew letters must be written a certain way when there are different ways of making the same letter. The “heretic” cries in embarrassment and the teacher is only concerned with losing his place in the world-to-come by embarrassing another person.

Taub’s poems are divided into two sections: *Visits and Visitations*, in which the heretic wonders WHY: why did his friend commit suicide, why is he buried in the corner of the Jewish cemetery, marginalized in death as he was in life. In the section entitled *In The Gleaning*, Taub writes humorous poems about the writing and editing process, and the frustration with writing for those who do not understand the beautiful Yiddish and Hebrew terms that he uses in his poems. Taub compares the editing process with weeding a garden, the unwanted weeds are the misspellings, grammatical errors, etc.

The term heretic, as used by Taub, is a misnomer. Questioning or doubting is not heretical. It is part of having faith. Reading Taub’s poetry is like reading vignettes of the so-called heretic’s life and, having read the book, I feel like I was inside his brain and soul. The “heretic” was not meant to live in isolation but to live in, and write about, the world in which he resides and the world that he left behind. As painful as his journey must often be, his foray into the rest of the world is welcome and appreciated.

Yossi Gremillion, Librarian Volunteer at Temple Beth El, Boca and Librarian, Broward County, FL

Yehoshua, A.B. *The Retrospective*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013. 336 pp. \$26 (9780547496962).

The Retrospective, eminent Israeli author A.B. Yehosua’s tenth novel, examines the life and memories of fictional director Yair Moses. Moses is invited to Santiago de Compostela, Spain to view a retrospective of his early works and to receive a small monetary prize. His favorite actress, Ruth, who has played the main character in most of his films, is invited along with him and they share a hotel room. Above the bed is a disturbing painting that reminds Yair of the clash and ultimate breakup with his brilliant screenwriter, Trigrano. The films are dubbed in Spanish, a language Moses does not understand, so during the screenings he is lost in his private thoughts and memories of the films, his childhood home (which was used as the location for three films), Ruth and Trigrano’s love affair, and the breakup with his now estranged screenwriter. The characters and their relationship to each other is complex. In the first half of the book Yehoshua describes the fictional movie plots in great detail. In the second part Moses searches for and finds Trigrano. Moses visits Trigrano and tries to understand what caused the animosity between them. Recommended for the fiction collection of all libraries.

Ilka Gordon, On Site Director, Aaron Garber Library, Beachwood, OH



Reviews of Multimedia

SOUND RECORDINGS

Curran, Alvin. *Shofar Rags*. New York: Tzadik, 2013. (music, CD) \$15.35.

Alvin Curran has created and produced an extraordinary album in *Shofar Rags*. Curran is an American composer; he is also the co-founder, with Frederic Rzewski and Richard Teitelbaum, of Musica Elettronica Viva, and a former student of Elliott Carter. The album is experimental in its sound and in its use of instruments and technology, and while the star of the album is the shofar, there are many other instruments and voices involved as well. The tribal quality of this music evokes primal, emotional responses.

The booklet accompanying the CD provides a plethora of information, including a developmental history of the album, photos of the sheet music and the artist playing the shofar, and information about where each track has been featured.

Many different types of music are referenced in these pieces. The first track has almost a bagpipe feel, the fourth track has a sense of 80's techno, and influences of klezmer and chazanut can be heard in the last two tracks. Some of this music is a little hard on the ears: the piercing pitches of the shofar are not what most ears are used to. This music is definitely not conventional. *Shofar Rags* is recommended as an additional purchase for Jewish libraries.

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

VIDEO RECORDINGS

Anjou, Eric (director). *The Klezmatics: On Holy Ground*. Los Angeles, CA: Seventh Art Releasing. 106 min. (DVD). Refer to www.7thart.com for pricing.

This colorful and lively documentary follows the Grammy Award winning musical group "The Klezmatics." The group is composed of a collection of extremely creative and eclectic individuals. Part hippie and part old-world Yiddish it is hard to categorize this band and its music. Their album *Wonder Wheel* won a Grammy Award in 2006 for the Best Contemporary World Music Album.

The movie follows the band through a year of touring, performing, and planning. The cameras caught some very candid moments between band members and shows the dichotomy between the sparkle of a show and the nitty-gritty of real life. These musicians are extremely down to earth considering the kind of success that the band has had. It was fascinating being "on the bus" with them: their lifestyle mirrors the kind of life that the old time Klezmers would have had. Some of the band members even invited the cameras into their homes, allowing the viewer a more personal look into the lives of these musicians than most such documentaries permit. The performance scenes were especially amusing to watch. The music is thoroughly enjoyable, and libraries will enjoy having this movie in their collection. It is recommended for Jewish libraries.

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

Ayres, Ian. *Tony Curtis: Driven to Stardom*. Los Angeles, CA: Seventh Art Releasing, 2012. 96 min. (DVD). Refer to www.7thart.com for pricing.

This DVD tells the life story of the Jewish movie star we know as Tony Curtis. The format consists of a good mix of interviews with co-stars and footage of Curtis from films throughout his career. The old photos and early film clips from New York from Curtis' youth are real screen gems. This work sheds new light on Mr. Curtis' passion to fight segregation, risking his career to star with Sidney Poitier in *The Defiant Ones*.

There is not a great deal of Jewish content in this film other than some footage of a Nazi sympathizer parade in New York, and the ubiquitous shots of New York's Lower East side, so even though it

is a well-made biopic, it would not be high up on a list of acquisitions for a small Jewish library. I would recommend this film for libraries that have strong film collections. As to what really drove Tony Curtis...you'll have to watch *Driven to Stardom* to find out.

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

Kofman, Gil (director). *The Memory Thief*. Los Angeles, CA: Seventh Art Releasing, 2013. 92 min. (DVD). Refer to www.7thart.com for pricing.

Lukas, a toll collector on a major thoroughfare in Los Angeles, is going through a boring existence when he is tossed a copy of *Mein Kampf* from a driver. In turn, he is confronted by a Holocaust survivor who spies his reading material. Lukas, whose mother is hospitalized in a vegetative state, is a lonely young man and seems to have no direction. At some point, he goes to the home of the driver who challenged his choice of books and who recently passed away. His family is sitting *shiva* when Lukas shows up, wearing a *kipah*. He doesn't know the family and is confronted by a family member who questions the reason for his presence. Lukas then becomes obsessed with the anguish of *Shoah* survivors and gets an internship with a Holocaust foundation's archive operation. He also attempts to learn Jewish customs and Hebrew liturgy. He is then introduced to the notion that atrocities have occurred to others besides Jews. Lukas represses much of his personal past and replaces it with the memory of others, substituting the pain of others for his, searching to explain his personal suffering. The experience leaves him with excruciating physical and mental pain.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Mekonen, Avishai and Shari Rothfarb Mekonen (directors). *400 Miles to Freedom*. Los Angeles, CA: Seventh Art Releasing, 2012. 60 min. (DVD). Educational \$350.00.

This documentary uniquely preserves a personal account of the incredible 1984 *aliyah* (emigration) of the Ethiopian Beta Israel Jews to Israel. Directors Avishai Yeganyahu Mekonen and, his wife, Shari Rothfarb Mekonen, present the story of Avishai's family and their community of Beta Israel who left Ethiopia on foot and walked to Sudan where they stayed in camps until they were picked up by Israeli planes and flown to Israel. All their lives they had dreamed of Jerusalem and finally they arrived there. While the community waited in Sudan, the young Avishai was kidnapped by child traffickers but was miraculously reunited with his family after couple of weeks. With the encouragement of his wife, Avishai uses the film to come to terms with this horrific experience, while telling the inspiring absorption story of the Ethiopian Jews in Israel.

400 Miles to Freedom is a personal story, yet it illuminates beautifully the ideal and the sometimes harsher reality of the Jewish concept of *Kibbutz Galuyot* (Gathering of the Exiles). This is a contemporary validation of Jewish existence and the importance of the creation of the State of Israel.

400 Miles to Freedom is a warm, candid historical picture, the existence of which every Jew should be aware. This DVD is recommended for all Jewish day school libraries, as well as public and academic collections that deal with Jewish history.

Nira Wolfe, Independent Researcher, Highland Park, IL.

Pertnoy, Michael and Michael Kleiman (directors). *Last Survivor*. Los Angeles, CA: Seventh Art Releasing, 2012. 84 min. (DVD). Educational \$279.00.

How does it feel to be the only one in a family to survive genocide? Does the survivor feel guilty for surviving, determined to take revenge, or does a tragedy of this proportion propel a person to reach out to others and educate? Pertnoy and Kleiman interview four survivors from genocides and mass atrocities: Rwanda, Sudan, Congo and the Holocaust. Each of the survivors suffered terrible losses, but this uplifting film shows us that there are people who are capable not only of rebuilding their lives after a tragedy but also able to reach out and inspire other people. Winner of several film festivals, this documentary gives us a

deeper understanding of the crime of genocide and conveys a powerful message of tolerance. Appropriate for use in upper high school and college, this film would inspire viewers to be more understanding of injustice, refugee issues, and the role that each and every person can play in order to avoid a repetition of these atrocities. Highly recommended for Synagogues, High Schools, colleges and Universities libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

Schwartz, Mike and Avi Kanner (directors). *Liga Terezin*. Los Angeles, CA: **Seventh Art Releasing, 2013. 52 min. (DVD).** Refer to www.7thart.com for pricing.

Theresienstadt was the Czech fortress the Nazis presented as a “model” concentration camp to the Red Cross and the outside world to prove how the privileged Jews of Germany and Central Europe were humanely treated under their sponsorship. In fact, what the Nazis did was to select a number of Europe’s most cultured and educated Jews to show off as a prized protectorate. During the years 1942 to 1944 and under these oppressive conditions, the Nazis manufactured for publicity purposes a soccer field on which seven-a-side Jewish teams competed with one another in an artificial soccer league – they were not permitted to play against ‘Aryan’ teams. The film clip of one of these games was sourced by Schwartz while working for CNN on assignment to the Theresienstadt Remembrance Association at Kibbutz Givat Haim Ihud. The game takes place in the summer 1944 and directed by the noted German film director Kurt Geron. Oded Breda, while watching the film years later, saw his uncle, Pavel Breda as one of the soccer players. He then travels to Terezin and traces his uncle’s experiences there in the camp. Breda also visits many of Europe’s most well-known soccer clubs to place the activity in some kind of a context. This theme is then compared to incidents of racism in the current soccer world, with examples shown in clips from British films to highlight the trend.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Scott, Eric (director). *Leaving the Fold*, 2008. A Bunbury Films/Ontic Media Production; distributed by **Seventh Art Releasing. English, French and Hebrew. 52 min. (DVD).** Refer to www.7thart.com for pricing.

Five young people discuss their reasons for leaving Orthodox communities and their lives since they left. These include Levi and Hudi Riven, brothers from Montreal; Basya Schechter, a musician from Borough Park, Brooklyn; Sara Lock, who lived in the insular Meah Shearim neighborhood of Jerusalem; and another young man who prefers to remain anonymous.

The film opens on a scene of *Tashlich* – the symbolic casting of sins into the water during the High Holiday season. Levi Riven talks about his doubts growing up; the fact that you are told the correct way to do everything, down to putting on your shoes, and his desire to be able to choose for himself. His brother Hudi speaks more strongly, claiming “religion is evil and its rules are made by man to control man.” He asserts that he believes in a Higher Power. They are still in contact with their father, and while their father prays for them, he is open to discussing their issues with them. Basya Schechter had a love of music and dance from childhood, but felt the artistic parts of her personality were out of place in the ultra-Orthodox world because women are discouraged from attracting attention, and they are only allowed to perform for other women. The anonymous young man in Israel felt he just didn’t fit into Haredi society. He lamented that “you feel like you’re on a train with someone else driving.” He divorced his wife and does not have contact with his children. Sara Lock left when she was 15 after she saw that her older sister was having fun and enjoying life away from their insular neighborhood. Sara helps others who have left their families and communities.

The cinematic aspects are very good: clear filming and audio, good translation in the subtitles, and different camera angles and backgrounds that set the context. The subjects are articulate and interesting, and the documentary remains impartial, with no judgment of the subjects’ decisions. Because of the subject matter, the film is best suited to libraries with large film collections or as part of a film series.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

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