

Editor's note:

From this issue and forward we will be alternating the order of our review sections. Adult reviews will be starting on the first page in the September-October and January-February issues, while Child & Teen reviews will be first in line in the November-December and May-June issues.

Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND REBECCA JEFFERSON

Ackerman-Lieberman, Phillip I. *The Business of Identity: Jews, Muslims, and Economic Life in Medieval Egypt.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014. 446 pp. \$65.00 (9780804787161).

The "Documentary Genizah" is a term referring to the pages found in the Cairo Genizah that are not fragments from copies of literary works such as prayer books or volumes of Talmud, but rather unique documents, written for a specific purpose. It includes personal letters, noteBooks and scribbled notes, court records, and business contracts, most of which were written in Judeo-Arabic. Ackerman-Lieberman took on the task of studying the partnership contracts preserved in the Genizah, which reflect the commercial practices of Jews in Egypt and the region in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. His main finding was that these contracts reflect Jewish legal norms, and that they differ from the rules of partnership law found in Islamic law books of the time. The central question in *The Business of Identity* is what conclusion should be drawn from that fact. Were the Jews of medieval Egypt a self-contained group whose economic practices differed fundamentally from the larger society around them? If so, was S. D. Goitein wrong in speaking of "A Mediterranean Society" in which Jews and Muslims participated equally? This combination of intricate legal history and far-reaching historiographical considerations makes an important contribution to Genizah studies, economic history, and the study of religious minorities.

Pinchas Roth, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

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Ackerman-Lieberman, Phillip and Rakefet Zalashik, eds. *A Jew's Best Friend?: The Image of the Dog throughout Jewish History*. Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2013. 283 pp. \$34.95 (9781845194024).

This compilation of essays explores the impact of our four-legged friend on Jewish life and lore. These scholarly contributions from archaeologists, historians, biographers, and rabbis all demonstrate that “the image of the dog ... is ultimately a mirror image of Jewish self-understanding as a marginalized group through history.” As the editors argue: “The dog is the other’s other – the attempt of subaltern Jews to create their own subaltern.”

The essays, which include sources from folklore, archaeology, rabbinics and media, suggest an ambivalent image. Excavations of canine skeletons at Ashqelon hint at sacrifices in Near Eastern cults. In biblical law dogs are considered unclean; in the First and Second Temple eras, wild or stray packs made them dangerous. Yet in the Talmud and other classic texts they are acknowledged as loyal, protective, and useful. Essays on Hebrew and Yiddish literature reveal the equation of dogs with servile or beaten creatures. Negative attitudes towards dogs were often shared with the host society, particularly Islamic societies, or terrifyingly associated with Nazi guards or gentile landowners.

Later essays parallel the rise of the modern dog’s status, and its positive traits, as in the comic books of Azit, the “paratrooper” German shepherd, with Israeli values – militarism, heroism, valor – all crucial to national defense. Noteworthy is the biography of Rudolphina Menzel, an Austrian émigré who created training and breeding institutions in Palestine. In secularized Jewish-America, Rover has moved beyond pet and accessory: some congregations have even created prayers or rituals for welcoming this new member into the family. As a whole, these essays are engaging and enlightening. *A Jew's Best Friend* would do well in an academic library with a “Jewish Studies” collection.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

The author of the Rashi’s Daughter trilogy and National Jewish Book Award finalist, *Rav Hisda’s Daughter: Book 1 - Apprentice*, has conjured literary magic



Fantastic tales of demons and the Evil Eye, magical incantations, and powerful attractions abound in *Enchantress*, a novel that weaves together Talmudic lore, ancient Jewish magic, and a timeless love story set in fourth-century Babylonia.

ISBN 978-0-452-29822-4

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Coming in September 2014

Angel, Hayyim. *A Synagogue Companion: Insights into the Torah, Haftaret, and Shabbat Morning Prayer Services*. New York: Kodesh Press, 2014. 351 pp. \$18.00 (9780615957579).

The past few years has seen a plethora of new books of Torah *drashot* (commentaries). In this volume, Rabbi Hayyim Angel, the National Scholar of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, gives his own interpretations and more.

The first two-thirds of the book contains a set of Torah commentaries on all of the *parashot*. Some of them are by Rabbi Angel; others come from a variety of sources—Jonathan Sacks, Nahum Sarna and A. J. Heschel are included, as well as other modern and classic commentators. In some cases there is a single short essay; in others there are two or three statements. Part 2 contains similar discussions of the weekly and holiday *haftaret*. All of the sources are noted, and reference notes at the end of each section will help readers. The book concludes with a short section of “Topics in Prayer” that examines important issues—the role of the Prayer Leader, the role of *Keva* (routine), *Kavvanah* (intention) and other topics—and a short summary of the content of the Morning service.

For those libraries that are collecting widely in this area, *A Synagogue Companion* will be a useful and inexpensive addition, especially for those interested in using the *Haftara* as the jumping-off point for personal sermon writing, rather than the Torah portions. The text is easy to follow, though not conversational. Each section includes a bibliography for those interested in further study. Overall, a worthwhile but optional purchase for most synagogue libraries.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Ariel, Ari. *Jewish-Muslim Relations and Migration from Yemen to Palestine in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014. 184 pp. \$123.00 (9789004265363).

In this enlightening new study, Ariel investigates the stimuli driving the migration of Yemeni Jews from the time of Ottoman rule to the establishment of the state of Israel. In conducting his research Ariel’s assertion is that when Middle Eastern Jewish history is generalized and oversimplified the importance of the local context is overlooked. In the case of the Yemenites, neither constant persecution nor the Zionist ideal actually served as the catalyst motivating them to migrate to Palestine. He notes that the Yemenites began their migration in 1881, at a time when the organizers of the Zionist movement in Europe were just beginning to strategize. At the same time, Ariel argues that although intermittent persecution of the Jews did occur in Yemen, it tended to be more of a function of the various Imams’ and warlords’ struggle for power than a result of underlying animosity. Thus, the Orphan Decree renewed by Imam Yahya, which required that Jewish orphans convert to Islam, was actually a power play whereby the Imam could expand his authority over tribal leaders and governors in Yemen.

Ariel compares this with the situation in Libya and Aden and concludes that although there was always “low level aggression” (p. 166) in Yemen there was no colonial power. Where there was a colonial power the Muslim population saw the Jews as being aligned with the colonizers and violence ensued.

According to Ariel, the initial impulses that encouraged Yemenite Jews to migrate were economic and political. When the Ottomans began to exert control over the region, and their contacts open up trade with the world, mass produced materials began to supplant those previously produced by hand in Yemen, and the livelihoods of the Jewish craftsmen were threatened. Their livelihoods thus endangered, many of the Yemenites sought greener pastures in Palestine. The Yemenites’ motivation, as Ariel sees it then, was neither political nor ideological—it was purely practical and economic.

Ariel’s study is fascinating and accessible, well worth perusing. The rather steep price may place it out of reach for individual purchaser, but it is a must for libraries focusing on Middle Eastern culture and migration.

Reviewed by Randall C. Belinfante – American Sephardi Federation



Ballen, Gloria Abella. *The Power of the Hebrew Alphabet*, Santa Fe, NM: Gaon Books, 2014. 239 pp. \$65.00 (9781935604259).

This volume is a collection of artwork born out of the impressions the Hebrew alphabet made on the artist. The art manages to convey its own spiritual message even without recourse to the minimal text describing the meaning of each letter. The short but substantive list of suggested readings will help both the novice and the more experienced reader delve more deeply into Jewish mysticism and the role played by the *aleph bet* within it. If your library collects art, this would be a nice addition to your collection. The stunning artwork would make this a lovely gift for anyone of any religion.

Patricia Fenton, Manager of Public Services Ostrow Library

Bauckham, Richard, James R. Davila and Alexander Panayotiv, eds. *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures. Volume 1.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013. 808 pp. \$90.00 (9780802827395).

The pseudepigrapha is a body of ancient literature which attempts to imitate Scripture or claims to be written by a character in the Hebrew Bible that did not get canonized into the Hebrew Bible or the Christian texts. The texts are sources for historical and theological studies of early Judaism and early Christianity. This book expands and continues the work of James H. Charlesworth in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983). Bauckham's book complements Charlesworth as there is no duplication by design.

This book is a significant contribution to Biblical studies, Jewish history in the Second Temple period, and studies in early Christianity, but will probably not be understood by anyone who is not well learned on one of these disciplines. The texts were drawn from many languages and sources, including Arabic, Latin, Coptic, Aramaic, Greek, Syriac, and Hebrew. I was able to find one Hebrew text to compare to the translation and, as far as I can tell, the English translations are excellent. Nevertheless, the editors' introductions are often more fascinating than the actual texts.

It would have been nice to see the original texts, but that would have added too many pages to this 808-page book. I also would have liked to have seen brief biographies of the contributors.

This book is recommended for academic libraries and Biblical scholars. Hopefully this work will also be used to inform the general public.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Malcolm X College Library, Chicago, IL

Beecham, Naomi. *This Is Israel: Pictorial Guide and Souvenir.* Herzlia, Israel: Palphot Ltd; New Edition, 2013. 144 pp. \$24.00 (9789652801456).

The visual beauty of Israel is unique, and *This is Israel* captures that beauty in over 600 professional photographs. This coffee table book is a visual record of important tourist attractions and religious sites significant to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The pictures are well organized by location, and maps are included. The work contains captions, but they are scanty. Collages of pictures without captions also appear at the end of the book.

I would recommend buying the book rather than wasting precious sightseeing moments in Israel taking photographs (as I have seen tourists do). Buying the book could be a good alternative: when you return from your trip, you can use the book to help you recall the sites or identify the pictures you have taken. It also makes a nice gift. The price is good considering the size of the book and the number of beautifully colored photographs.

Ellen Share, Washington Hebrew Congregation Librarian



Texts and Studies ...

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Ed. by Nicholas de Lange, Julia G. Krivoruchko and Cameron Boyd-Taylor

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 ISBN 978-3-16-149779-7 cloth

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Ben-David, Rabbi Shiloh. *Shalom Aleichem: A Collection of Halachos, Aggados and Anecdotes about Greeting People.* Jerusalem: Menucha Publishers, 2013. 217 pp. \$15.99 (9789657599136).

“Every mitzvah has numerous *halachos* (laws) and details and this mitzvah is no different.” Saying hello to people, or more importantly, wishing them *shalom* (peace) involves consideration of time of day, who the person is, and whether done verbally or in writing. The author references the numerous sources for these laws and explains their practical applications. The second part of the book is a collection of rabbinic literature dealing with the importance of fulfilling the mitzvah, while the third section contains stories about people who fulfilled the mitzvah of greeting people in the proper way and with sincere concern, and accomplished great things.

This volume is the translation of the abridged version of *Shalom Rav Hashalem*. There are many details and considerations when saying hello, and the author catalogs them in detail. The first section, which delves into the *halacha* may not interest many readers, but the second and third sections contain vignettes that can be used in school curricula and *divrei Torah*. They demonstrate how a simple greeting can literally change someone’s life. This interesting resource is a good choice for Orthodox libraries and a strong optional purchase for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Besser, Yisroel. *Like the Seeds of a Pomegranate: A Journalist’s Encounters with Greatness.* Brooklyn, New York: Menucha Publishers, 2013. 279 pp. \$22.99 (9781614651581).

On Rosh Hashanah we ask that our merits increase like the seeds of a pomegranate. The author uses this metaphor to compile a series of vignettes gleaned from his work as a journalist for Orthodox publications. Through interviews with a gamut of people, from giants in the world of Torah interpretation to musicians to prisoners, Besser has collected hundreds of stories, some told first hand, others passed down through generations. From stories about rabbis like the *Chofetz Chaim* (Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan) to a story about a boy’s fear of going home after learning in yeshiva, each provides an example or a lesson.

The stories are organized under three headings: seeds of Torah, seeds of *Avodah*, and seeds of *Chesed*, with the aim of recounting events and providing inspiration. Some are about Torah luminaries, others are about ordinary people. Without a glossary or biographies of the noted rabbis, those who are not familiar with these personalities and the historic periods in which they lived, nor with Yiddish, will not gain a full appreciation of many of the stories. While the anecdotes are short and would serve well in teaching both children and adults, the lack of an index does not facilitate quick reference, making this an optional purchase for libraries serving Orthodox patrons.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Brook, Vincent and Marat Grinberg eds. *Woody on Rye: Jewishness in the Films and Plays of Woody Allen.* Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2014. \$85.00 (9781611684797). Also available as an eBook.

Woody Allen is probably the most prolific, and perhaps the most culturally significant, contemporary American Jewish fiction writer. Not at all a religious believer, his Jewish background still affects many of his films. This collection of eleven essays occasionally strains to find Jewish significance but at least as often provides insight into the Jewish nature of Mr. Allen’s films and plays. Unsurprisingly, there is a certain amount of repetition in these essays, especially regarding the films *Deconstructing Harry* and *Crimes and Misdemeanors* with their high Jewish content. There is no uniformity of opinion: Marat Grinberg thinks Mr. Allen is a serious Jewish thinker while, in the very next essay, Curtis Maloley regards him as uninfluenced intellectually by Judaism. The collection brings out the complexities of this Jewishly ambivalent artist. Recommended for academic collections on film.

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

Carasik, Michael. *The Bible's Many Voices*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2014. 365 pp. \$31.95 (9780827609358).

The author is a lecturer of Near Eastern languages at the University of Pennsylvania and editor of the *Commentators' Bible* series. The book is divided into ten chapters, each discussing literary perspectives or voices found in the books of the Bible. The influence of non-Jewish traditions on the biblical writers is discussed as well as the perspectives of prophets, women, sages and historical figures. The book is also written in such a way as to be relevant to anyone that studies the Hebrew Bible, not only scholars. The index consists strictly of biblical verses cited throughout the book. This book would be a good addition to any non-fiction collection that includes Bible study.

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

Chernofsky, Phil. *And Every Single One Was Someone*. Israel: Gefen Publishing, 2013. 1250 pp. \$80.00 (9789652295910).

This review will be short, for it's difficult to find words when you are confronted by the same word, printed over and over, 4,800 times on each page over the course of 1,250 pages, to be exact. Multiply the figures (I was compelled to do so) and you reach an even six million, a number, as Phil Chernofsky writes, "etched into the Jewish consciousness."

Chernofsky is behind the concept of the book *And Every Single One Was Someone*, a heavy tome in which the word "Jew" is printed 6,000,000 times: a single word representing each Jew killed by the Nazis and their collaborators in concentration camps during the Holocaust. Perhaps befitting that grave matter, the book itself is drenched in heaviness: both physically (it weighs close to seven pounds) and design-wise: open the book to any page and if you don't look closely your eye will fill in the details to create two rectangular blocks of grey for each double-page spread.

When you do look closely, however, the grey blocks separate into distinct lines, distinct words--a distinct word, over and over and over again. The concept is simple yet powerful and gives gravity and substance to the almost incomprehensible idea of six million. The vision is both disturbing and mesmerizing as we spot the patterns, at once meaningless in their constancy--like a computer spitting out endless data--and meaningful in their individuality, with the reminder that each of these words represents someone who was once a living being on this earth. Chernofsky's book is a bit of a paradox: a book that is most likely not going to be read cover to cover by anyone in their right mind... yet one of the most powerful books you'll come across.

John Cutrone, Director, JCBA, Jaffe Center for Book Arts, Florida Atlantic University

Cooper, Lisa. *A Forgotten Land, Growing Up in the Jewish Pale: Based on the recollections of Pearl Unikow Cooper*. Jerusalem; New York: Penina Press, 2013. 230 pp. \$24.95 (9789655241297).

This fascinating memoir of life in the Pale of Jewish Settlement is the author's grandmother's story. It is based on recordings made by the author's father of his mother's tales of her early life. The cassettes recorded in Yiddish were translated, the recollections supplemented with information from questioning other family members, historical research and background reading. The book includes maps of the Ukraine, the Pavolitch area, as well as an abridged family tree. It is divided into four parts, from 1835 to 1925, beginning with great grandfather Akiva. Included is a section of old photographs of the family, a glossary of Yiddish terms and a bibliography. The book's easy reading style captures interest and attention, like a novel. The author is a journalist, from Cornwall, England; this is her first book. It is a useful addition to Judaica collections in academic and public libraries, as well as of interest to Temple and synagogue library users.

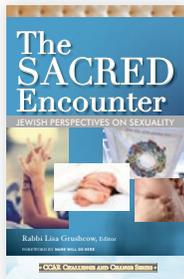
Susan Freiband, Retired library educator, volunteer Temple librarian, Arlington, Virginia



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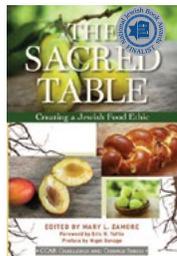
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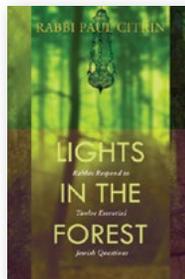
The Sacred Encounter: Jewish Perspectives on Sexuality

Edited by Rabbi Lisa Grushcow, DPhil
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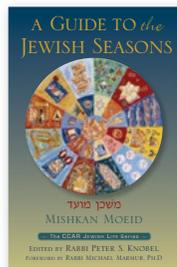
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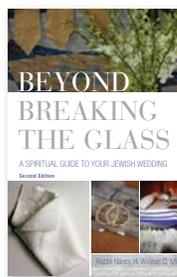
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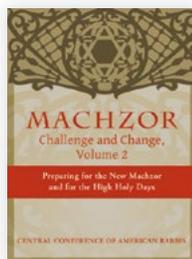
Mishkan Moeid: A Guide to the Jewish Seasons

Edited by Rabbi Peter S. Knobel, PhD
 Foreword by Rabbi Michael Marmor, PhD
 This survey of the sacred days of the Jewish yearly cycle provides detailed guidance on observing Shabbat and the Jewish holidays, including historical background, essays, and extensive notes.



Beyond Breaking the Glass: A Spiritual Guide to Your Jewish Wedding Revised Edition

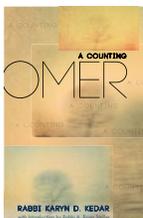
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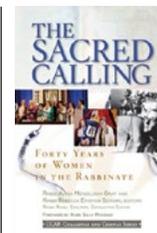
liturgical themes and concepts such as *N'ilah*, *Avodah*, *Eilah Ezkarah*, and High Holy Day Torah portions, as well as *machzor*-related essays from the *CCAR Journal*.



Omer: A Counting

By Rabbi Karyn D. Kedar
 Introduction by Rabbi Brian Stoller
 This volume,

beginning with its informative contextual introduction, provides a spiritual guide for a personal journey through the Omer toward meaningful and purposeful living.



COMING SOON! The Sacred Calling: Forty Years of Women in the Rabbinate

Edited by Rabbi Alysa Mendelson Graf and Rabbi Rebecca Einstein Schorr

In this anthology, rabbis and scholars reflect back on the historic significance of women in the rabbinate and explore issues related to both the professional and personal lives of women rabbis.

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Dinezon, Jacob. *Memories and Scenes: Shtetl, Childhood, Writers*. Translated by Tina Lunson. Raleigh, North Carolina: Jewish Storyteller Press, 2014. 240 pp. \$19.95 (9780979815614).

Dinezon was a prolific and popular Yiddish author in the late 1800s and early 1900s. He was a friend and sometimes mentor to many contemporary authors including I. L. Peretz and Sholem Aleichem. But remarkably, his work had not been translated into English. Scott Davis discovered Dinezon while he was searching for Jewish stories to read to his 9th grade class. When Davis could only find the original language texts, he contracted with Lunson to translate this work, *Zikhroynes un bilder: Shtetl, kinder yorn, shraybers*.

This collection of autobiographical essays tells about the memorable people in Dinezon's life. One character was the town drunk. Normally a quiet practical tailor, he became animated and gullible whenever he took a sip from the special flask he kept in his coat pocket. He would do just about anything for anyone after a sip or two and the village quickly learned to take advantage of him. Another favorite character was actually a goat. When a stray goat appeared in the village, they decided that it might be a first born goat and since it was apparently unblemished, it might be a holy goat. Much to the village's chagrin, the possibility of being holy, apparently did not influence to goat into good behavior.

Told with warmth and humor, this collection is highly recommended.

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

Dynner, Glenn. *Yankel's Tavern: Jews, Liquor, and Life in the Kingdom of Poland*. USA: Oxford University Press, 2013. 249 pp. \$75.00 (9780199988518).

The Jewish tavern-keeper was a permanent feature of Polish society in the pre-partition (prior to 1772) and post partition years (1772-1795). A Polish chronicler by the name of Stefan Garczynski (1690-1756) described it as follows: "All the towns, large and small, are filled with nobody but Jews, who also run the village breweries, roadside taverns, and inns, so that our Poland is more like Jerusalem than a Polish state."

Chapter 1 of the book provides an overview of Jewish tavern-keeping throughout pre and post partition Poland-Lithuania. Interestingly, for both Jews and Christians, taverns were valued as important economic centers but also feared because of the perceived negative impact of the "Other." Christians feared the "sober and sinister Jewish tavern-keeper" while Jews feared the "drunken, crude gentile clientele." Chapter 2 discusses how the liquor trade went underground as attempts were made to restrict Jewish tavern-keeping. Interestingly, what kept Jews continuously involved in this endeavor was Jewish-Christian cooperation. Chapter 3 focuses on the towns and the cities where the Jewish tavern-keepers faced challenges such as costlier regulations and frequent expulsions from the best locations. Jews responded to this by appealing to the "enlightened values" of the government officials as well as appealing to their interest in the economic improvement of the area. Chapter 4 describes espionage, smuggling and other black market efforts by Jewish tavern-keepers during the period of the Polish uprising against the Tzar (1830-1865). The fifth Chapter contains a fascinating look at *kvitlekh* (petitions) and through them into the inner lives of male and female Jewish tavern-keepers. The final chapter analyzes governmental efforts at social engineering efforts towards the Jews in general and Jewish tavern-keeping in particular. The government attempted to push Jews away from tavern-keeping and into the military and agricultural trades which ultimately proved futile.

Yankel's Tavern is an interesting work that provides insight into the social, economic, political and religious realities of Jews during this time period. The book is a pleasure to read and accessible to the scholar and non-scholar alike.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

Englander, Yakir and Avi Sagi. גוף ומיניות בשיח הציוני-דתי החדש (*The New Religious-Zionist Discourse on Body and Sexuality*). Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute, 2013. 267 pp. NIS 94 (9789650721091).

The fastest growing type of Halakhic writing in the 21st century is online forums where the wide public can submit questions for a specific rabbi or a team of rabbis to answer. Several such forums have

existed in Israel for the past decade, and a significant proportion of the questions submitted deal with sex. Englander and Sagi's book utilizes these online "*shutim*" (acronym of "*she'elot u-teshuvot*") as a window into the Halakhic thinking of modern Orthodox Israeli rabbis on sexuality and sexual culture as a religious challenge. The responsa posted online are often very short, and Sagi and Englander flesh out their discussion by analyzing print publications by those same rabbis and others within the Religious Zionist community. The book moves, sometimes sharply, between close reading of the *shutim*, invocation of contemporary Western cultural criticism (Foucault, Butler, Lacquer), and comparisons to the New Testament and to medieval and modern western Christianity. The chapters of the book are devoted to extended discussions of male masturbation, lesbianism (and female masturbation) and the laws of *tzeni'ut* (modesty) as they are applied to women. The final chapters set the groundwork for a more liberal Halakhic approach, one which, according to the authors, would be more faithful to the harmonistic worldview of such modern Orthodox thinkers as Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Eliezer Berkovitz.

Pinchas Roth, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Elman, Miriam Fendius, Oded Haklai, and Hendrik Spruyt eds. *Democracy and Conflict Resolution: The Dilemmas of Israel's Peacemaking* (Syracuse Studies on Peace and Conflict Resolution). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014. 288 pp. \$55.00 (9780815633389).

The introduction offers a pooled analysis of the tests on "democratic peace theory" (DPT) covering a wide range of the relative literature. While DPT is not particularly applicable to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the essays in this work demonstrate how democratic institutions facilitate the conclusion of peace agreements. Nine essays are divided into three parts, many of which originated as professional papers presented at the 2008 annual meeting of the International Studies Association. The substantive issues discussed are augmented by an extensive literature review. The editors, Elman and Haklai, are political science professors at Syracuse University and Queens University respectively, while Spruyt is an international relations specialist at Northwestern University. The bulk of the essays concentrate on Israel's strategic approach to conflict resolution with the Palestine Authority with little attention, however, paid to Hamas. Part one focuses on institutional structures and ideological positions and their purveyors who either support or dissent from the official government's policies. Part two examines how religion can have an impact on national identity and political party membership which ultimately impacts policy formulation. Part three looks at the nature of leadership and followership in the Israeli, with a particular emphasis on the contentious issue of Jewish settlements in the administrated territories. The subject matter and the manner in which it is treated (which includes a great deal of academic jargon) makes this book an ideal selection for an academic audience and library.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Feld, Edward. *Joy, Despair, and Hope: Reading Psalms*. Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, c2013. 153 pp. \$19.00 (9781620321744).

"Perhaps I can find solace in the thought that the biblical poet, too, had to give up the idea of hearing God's voice, of experiencing God's presence. This book is a struggle with that question. It explores the voices in Psalms in an attempt to see how these authors dealt with and responded to the presence and absence of God, the contemplation of human finitude, loneliness, and fear and the possibilities of joy and redemption" writes Rabbi Feld in his preface. Six Psalms for Joy (Psalms 1, 19, 8, 91, 82, 23), six Psalms for Despair (Psalms 27, 42, 77, 73, 39, 90), and two for Hope (Psalms 92 & 150). Feld creates his original English translation for each Psalm which he approaches as a unified literary unit, with no attempt at a comparative approach or to grouping Psalms together. Without a heavy scholarly note apparatus, Feld analyzes each Psalm, expanding on its meaning, making it as relevant to the modern reader as possible. The book is well written and accessible to a wide audience.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD

NEW RELEASE



Humanity, Not! takes an in-depth look, in words and images, at the captured emotions of the victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and survivors experiences of the victims as well as some thoughts from philosophers and scholars, helps us understand that, "Reaction to the Holocaust has to be other than mere horror and revulsion. It has to be more than empathy with the victims, sharing their fear and some part of their actual suffering."

«Knowing about what happened to humanity during the Holocaust is urgently needed, because it opens a person up to humanity, someone else's humanity.»

Elie Wiesel

About The Author



Ari Babaknia, MD is a Johns Hopkins trained physician who has practiced Reproductive Medicine in Newport Beach CA, for the past 30 years as well as serving as a Clinical faculty at the School of Medicine, University of California in Irvine. He is one of the pioneers of minimally invasive laparoscopic surgery and usage of laser beams in reproductive medicine since early 1980's. In addition to publishing more than 50 research and clinical articles on women's health and wellness in peer reviewed journals, he is the author and co-author of over dozen books in the field of reproductive health and human nutrition. He is the recipient of the National Medical Research Award for excellence in medical research from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Dr. Babaknia has been a patron of arts and literature for many years. He is the Founder and Chairman of Persian Heritage Foundation (1987-2007), as well as member of the Board of Directors of Several other Scientific, Charity and Cultural Foundations. His latest contribution in directing a team of researchers on Holocaust studies for the past 15 years, culminated in publication of a 4-volume ground breaking book about the Holocaust and other genocides of the last 100 years, in Farsi, (Wyman, 2012), for which he received the Reference Book of the Year award (2013) from the Association of the Jewish Libraries.

Dr. Babaknia has been on a national as well as international book tour promoting genocide awareness and prevention all around the globe. His latest book: "Humanity, Not", with 150 captivating paintings on the Holocaust by world-renowned artist Ardeshir Mohassess, was released in January 2014.

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Freeze, ChaeRan. Y and Jay M. Harris eds. *Everyday Jewish Life in Imperial Russia: Select Documents 1772-1914* (Tauber Institute Series for the Study of European Jewry). Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2013. 635 pp. \$40.00 (9781611684551).

This massive volume contains a fascinating collection of documents exploring every aspect of quotidian life for Jews in Imperial Russia. The topics include relations within families (marriage, divorce, sex, diet, hygiene, parenthood), within the Jewish community (religious questions, education, commerce, etc.), and with the Russian community and government at large (conscription, Jewish life in the army, pogroms, petitions, etc.). The types of documents are similarly diverse and include diaries, memoirs, letters, responsa, newspaper articles and advertisements, court transcripts, government reports and vital records. Suitable for scholars, this book will also interest lay people who just want to dabble in the chapters. Highly recommended.

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

Gelb, Norman. *Herod the Great: Statesman, Visionary, Tyrant*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013. 209 pp. \$34.00 (9781442210653).

This book is more than a biography of Herod; it tells the history of the Greco-Roman world in classical antiquity and the emergence of early Christianity.

Gelb attempts at presenting a balanced picture of Herod, who is known largely for his cruelty (he killed members of his own family!); yet, the Idumean who was appointed by the Romans as King of Judaea had many facets to his personality. Gelb examines Herod's cruelty and paranoia, his genius as a builder and architect, his cunning and cleverness as a diplomat and his able work as an administrator. The book actually goes beyond Herod's reign to the reign of his great grandson, Marcus Julius Agrippa: "the last king of the Herodian dynasty and the last king of the Jews though he never became king of Judaea."

There is a bibliography, notes and an index. The book will be enjoyed by anyone who likes to read about classical antiquity. *Herod the Great* is especially recommended for anyone traveling to Israel because a vast majority of the ancient tourist sites that you visit where originally constructed by Herod-Tower of David Citadel, Masada, Caesarea, etc.

Ellen Share, Librarian, Washington Hebrew Congregation

Golani, Motti. *Palestine between Politics and Terror, 1945-1947* (The Schusterman Series in Israel Studies). Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2013. 255 pp. \$85.00 (9781611684506).

Golani, professor in the Department of Land of Israel Studies at the University of Haifa, describes the administration of British General Sir Alan Gordon Cunningham, who served as the seventh and last high commissioner during the mandatory period in Palestine. He served in this post from his appointment in November 1945 until the British administrative withdrawal from Palestine on May 15, 1948. The context in which this history is presented is conditioned by three elements: the profile of the subject himself; the precarious position England and its empire faced in the aftermath of the Second World War, and the strong sense of helplessness that pervaded the Jewish community in Palestine after the experience of the *Shoah*.

This examination of Cunningham's administration connects the dictates of the Colonial Office in London, the *Yishuv's* Jewish Agency's agenda, and the disruptive program of the Palestinian Arab Higher Committee, though no two of these relationships are treated evenly. The bulk of the history focuses on how Cunningham reacted to British perceptions at home on events in Palestine, often violent, the counter-terrorism policies and measures directed at official and non-official Jewish officials acting in opposition to the British presence, and mollifying Arab anger, distrust and its anti-Zionist position. This is an essential addition to any library collection that has an interest in the history of Mandate Palestine.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Gold, Alethea and Luca Zordan. *Children of Israel*. Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2013. 190 pp. \$36.00 (9789652296238).

This beautiful coffee table book created by Alethea Gold, a fashion stylist and author from Australia, and Luca Zordan, an award-winning U.S. photographer, is about peace and the possibilities of mutual recognition and peaceful coexistence between neighbors, if only politics and prejudice could be put aside. After two successful books portraying the children of China and Africa, Gold and Zordan now turn their camera onto the children of Israel. Photographed in stunning locations, from Masada to the Western Wall in Jerusalem, the authors have captured the personalities of children from all communities and ethnic groups, from religious youngsters to Bedouins, children of Ethiopian origins, and Jewish and Arab children playing together. The authors are donating 100 percent of their proceeds from this book to the Ethiopian children at the Nurit Absorption Center in Be'er Sheva, Israel. Recommended for synagogues and community center libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University

Greenblatt, Rachel L. *To Tell Their Children: Jewish Communal Memory in Early Modern Prague*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture), 2014. 320 pp. \$65.00 (9780804786027).

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi in *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* asked whether early-modern Jews had a historical consciousness. Rachel Greenblatt moves beyond that question to explore the ways in which Jews composed, preserved and transmitted their historical memories. Greenblatt, Associate Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University, uses Prague in the 16th-18th centuries as a case study for the close reading of documents and the examination of material remains, including tombstone inscriptions and synagogue decorations.

Memories were preserved in gravestone inscriptions, in dedications of ritual objects to the synagogue and in *hazkarot* (memorial) lists recited weekly or on holidays, which included the names of martyrs. These genres became more elaborate beginning in the late sixteenth century, with the addition of more individualized autobiographical and historical details. Families recorded their life stories in introductions to books and in handwritten manuscript tales establishing family "Purim" days, expressing their gratitude to God over personal and communal salvations from siege, war, plague and political changes. Communal rabbis wrote liturgies for annual observances of communal "Purim" observances. In these they sometimes crafted the accounts to justify their own political roles or reversals in communal or state politics.

A popular genre that spread as printing became more widespread was the Yiddish historical song, to spread news of local events to surrounding towns. These works recount sieges of the Thirty Years War and a disastrous fire in 1689. One elaborate song was a polemic memorializing a Jewish martyr who died affirming his faith when falsely accused of a blood libel.

Greenblatt traces the transformation of historical memory through the early eighteenth century. She explores how Prague Jews integrated their personal and local histories with the larger story of Jewish and world history. This book is recommended for academic libraries.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA

Gurwitch, Annabelle. *I See You Made an Effort: Compliments, Indignities, and Survival Stories from the Edge of 50*. New York: Penguin Group, 2014. 240 pp. \$25.95 (9780399166181).

As her title so eloquently states, Gurwitch writes about the joys and challenges of reaching middle age, with a focus on the challenges. Her's include trying to connect to her sulky teenage son, a computer help desk guy who does not share her fantasy of a sordid affair, and convincing casting directors that she could play a youngish home-maker as well as an old hag in various television commercials.

Gurwitch, who identifies as an atheist, does not include much Jewish content besides briefly describing her son's bar mitzvah. While many of the chapters are humorous, because of the limited Jewish content, this book is an optional purchase.

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

Hammer, Shalom. *Derash Yehonatan: Around the Year with Rav Yehonatan Eybeshitz.* Jerusalem: Maggid Books (Koren Publishers), 2013. 147 pp. \$24.95 (9781592643035).

Rabbi Yehonatan lived during the 1700's (died 1764) and held many prominent positions in the Jewish community, including head of the school of Talmud in Prague and rabbi of Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbek in Denmark. He was also a prolific writer, authoring works on Jewish law, Talmudic thought and Talmudic commentary. Rabbi Hammer has translated and explained many of Rabbi Yehonatan's works on the Jewish holidays, and they are collected and organized by the Jewish calendar year, starting with Rosh Hashanah and concluding with the Sabbath. The book is "largely based on select discourses which appear in the *Ye'arot Devash*," a collection of sermons. The selection are not word-for-word translations, rather Hammer takes a thought, examines it, and adds his own notes.

The chapter entitled "*Yemei HaGeula*," which encompasses *Yom HaShoa*, *Yom HaZikaron*, and *Yom HaAtzma'ut*, is of particular interest because Rabbi Hammer demonstrates how pertinent these 18th century writings are to current times. Rav Yehonatan articulated a love of Israel and the desire to live there long before the modern state existed. He also discussed the merit of women who supported those involved in Torah study. The section for Tisha B'Av contemplates the act of engaging in Torah study on this day of mourning and shows how Torah study serves "to restore the Torah that was lost during the destruction and evoke a yearning for the Temple," why God is the only source of comfort, and the reasons for the destruction of the Temple.

Rabbi Hammer is a popular lecturer in Israel as well as a contributing writer for *The Jerusalem Post*. He has also translated *The Eybeshitz Haggadah* (Rav Yehonatan's commentary). *Derash Yehonatan* is an excellent reference for insight into the Jewish holidays, and its organization will facilitate use at the Sabbath or holiday table to spur discussion. The book demonstrates that the immortal words of scholars remain relevant throughout the ages, and it is a strong optional purchase for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Kaplan, Dana Evan. *The New Reform Judaism: Challenges and Reflections.* Philadelphia: . The Jewish Publication Society, 2014. 367 pp. \$39.95 (9780827609341).

Rabbi Dana Evan Kaplan has written several books about Reform Judaism. In this new volume he proposes to analyze its current state and provide some answers to its current dilemmas.

The first chapter gives a background on its theological underpinnings; chapter 2 is a short history of the movement, from its beginnings in Germany to the present; chapters 3, 4 and 5 cover questions of observance, worship and practice, values and ethics through the Reform lens; chapter 6 asks "What is a (Reform) Jew?" and chapter 7 discusses the "boundaries" of the movement and what lies beyond (Jewish Budhists (aka JewBu or JuBus), Jews for Jesus, etc.). In chapter 8, Kaplan approaches the question of Spirituality. The conclusion "The Promise of Reform Judaism" is bracketed by essays from Rabbi Eric Yoffie and Rabbi Rick Jacobs, past and current Presidents of the URJ.

Rabbi Kaplan has identified and described the Reform movement's place in the American religious scene, and many of its current issues. While wide ranging, the book lacks some specific topics. There is no reference to Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav, whose spirituality is frequently cited. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan and the Reconstructionist movement, and the wide range of Renewal congregations, are absent as well. More problematically, Rabbi Kaplan's personal thoughts are scattered through the text, and are not always relevant to the questions he has raised. The conclusion turns out to be a plea for Reform to regain theological coherence, rather than an over-arching plan for its revival and future growth. While *The New Reform Judaism* contains some important concepts, it falls short of its ambitious goals. Larger Reform libraries and academic institutions should buy it. For others, it is an optional purchase.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

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Katsis, L. F. and Helen Tolstoy eds. *Jewishness in Russian Culture: Within and Without.* Translated by Elen Rochlin. Leiden; Boston: Brill (Studia Judaeoslavica, 7), 2014. 215 pp. \$133.00 (9789004261617).

This book, the result of a 2009 conference at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, maps the borders between Judaica Rossica and Rossica Judaica, and describes cultural events and literati belonging to both. The findings delineate a dynamic of acculturation and assimilation, the persistence of anti-Semitism, accepting and trying to be accepted, being rejected and/or rejecting, and being within or without. The book depicts a vibrant "heady" Jewish intellectual culture.

Among the subjects are: the Jewish elite in the Russian Empire of the late 18th and 19th centuries; Russian-Jewish playwrights 1880-1910; the failed attempt of an émigré Jewish newspaper in Paris; vampire themes associated with anti-Semitic literature in Russia; the work of Michael Gendelev, a modern Russian-Israeli poet.

Recommended for libraries with research collections in Russian Literature and Slavic studies, and for those interested in secular intellectual Russian-Jewish culture.

David B Levy, Touro College

Kogel, Judith. *Joseph Seniri: Commentary on the Former Prophets – A Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text with Introductory Essays on Grammatical Exegesis in Thirteenth-Century Provence.* Leiden: Brill, 2014. 436 pp. \$174.00 (9789004255913).

Judith Kogel identified a biblical commentary studded with Provençal glosses as the work of Joseph Seniri, a son of the liturgical poet Isaac Seniri. Her book contains three sections – an edition of the Hebrew commentary, an English introduction that focuses on the historical context of the commentary and its relationship to the work of David Kimhi and other medieval commentators from the region, and a French section devoted to the grammatical terminology and the Provençal glosses. Each of these sections is significant in its own right, but the French section is perhaps the most important. It contains detailed and comparative analysis of every grammatical term used in the commentary, each non-Hebrew gloss, and an explanation of how each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is used to transliterate foreign words. Very few scholars possess the range of skills required to study these glosses properly – a sound understanding of the Hebrew text and its meaning, command of medieval Provençal and its neighboring languages, and training in linguistics to reconstruct the phenomena that led to the sometimes eccentric Hebrew transliteration. The book is important for scholars of Jewish biblical exegesis, medieval Hebrew grammar and medieval Provençal Jewish history. Students of the medieval language known as Old Provençal or Occitan should also take advantage of this opportunity to gain access to linguistic information found in Jewish sources.

Pinchas Roth, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Kokotlin, David and Joey Allaham. *The Prime Grill Cookbook*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company Inc., 2013. 208 pp. \$22.79 (9781455617302).

First and foremost this cookbook is PR for the famous Prime Grill Kosher restaurant in New-York: the pictures, stories and biographies are interesting, but only to fans of the restaurant. The menus in the book are examples of the type of items people might be able to order at the restaurant. Again, this is only interesting to its fans. The book's design and photography are satisfactory, but they do not blow the reader away. The recipe pages are quite stark and uninviting. The sauces and rubs that are included in the back of this book are fantastic and the most practical of all the recipes. A glossary and an index in the back of the book are very helpful. The recipes are on several levels of difficulty; some are easier and some quite complex. The ingredients are not always things people will have on hand; cooks must definitely check beforehand and make a shopping list. This book is recommended as an additional purchase for a library with a strong kosher cookbook collection.

Debbie Feder, Director, LRC, Ida Crown Jewish Academy

Lipman, MK Rabbi Dov. *To Unify a Nation: My Vision for the Future of Israel*. Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2014. 96 pp. \$17.95 (9789655241488).

Rabbi Dov Lipman was elected to the Israeli Knesset in 2013 on Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid Party ticket. The party won a surprising 19 seats in the Knesset, with its representatives coming from diverse backgrounds, both in religious affiliation and culture. Since then, Rabbi Lipman has been active and vocal in addressing many issues, particularly those where religious and secular society clash—mandatory military or national service for all Israeli citizens, the role of women in Israeli society, marriage laws. Lipman argues that the greatest threat to the future of the Jewish people is the “abandonment of core Jewish values and ideals which include loving-kindness, respecting others, and not doing unto others what you don't want done to yourself.”

This short volume is a personal manifesto that includes experiences that influenced Rabbi Lipman's world view as well as observations on current Israeli events. Because of the nature of the essays, most references are not sourced in detail. While Rabbi Lipman does not shy away from some of today's pressing issues, including African migrants and women wearing *tallit* (prayer shawl) and praying at the *Kotel* (the Western Wall), most of these matters have been festering for years and will not be solved quickly, even with a return to core Jewish values. He has had success in confronting local extremists and focusing on common ideals in Bet Shemesh. It will be interesting to see which aspects of Rabbi Lipman's vision will be implemented and when during his promising political career. The book is a good choice for libraries whose patrons are interested in the history of modern Israel and its complicated politics.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Majer, Diemut. *“Non-Germans” Under the Third Reich: The Nazi Judicial and Administrative System in Germany and Occupied Eastern Europe, with Special Regard to Occupied Poland, 1939-1945*. Translated by Peter Thomas Hill, Edward Vance Humphrey and Brian Levin. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2013. 1033 pp. \$116.30 (9780896728370).

A massive treatment of the legal institutions in Nazi Germany, and the way that regime handled the affairs of the *Fremdvölkische* (non-native Germans) in eastern Europe who came under its domination, in an English version following two German language editions. The author, Diemut Majer, is eminently qualified to deal with this topic as a professor of public law, constitutional law history, and comparative law at the University of Bern. Not only is the coverage extensive, but it has also been exhaustively researched in a number of national archives, primary sources, and the extant secondary scholarship. Since this is basically a reference work, it will best serve library collections devoted to Holocaust studies, modern Jewish history, and the legal history of eastern Europe during the Second World War.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Milgram, Goldie. *Reclaiming Bar/Bat Mitzvah as a Spiritual Rite of Passage: An empowering Guide for Students, Families, Educators and Clergy.* New Rochelle, NY: Reclaiming Judaism Press, 2014. 236 pp. \$14.99 (9780984804832).

“It takes a village” is a well-used phrase that could be revived as a frame for this new edition of Rabbi Goldie Milgram’s book for B’nai Mitzvah families.

As one of the leading figures in Jewish Renewal, Milgram has attempted to connect Jewish ritual and spirituality within the rubric of American culture. One natural place to do this is with young people having their Bar and Bat Mitzvah (which she calls the “B-Mitzvah”). The book’s eight chapters walk the family from the creation of an Action Plan (“BMAP”) through study, creating a D’var Torah, mitzvah projects, approaching the service with joy rather than trepidation, and the creation of memories for the attendees. At each step in the process she talks alternately to the child, the parents, and other members of the “team” who are involved in the preparation. In addition to the main text side-bars discuss “Tips and Traditions” associated with various aspects of the journey. There are also Excel-style charts to explain and simplify the steps and make them meaningful.

With all of the resources available to families (such as those by Jeffrey Salkin), this volume might seem unnecessary. However, many families want to personalize their family Bar/Bat Mitzvah experiences, and Milgram provides numerous ways to incorporate interpersonal activities (the community is critical for her), and to personalize the entire experience for the family as well as the celebrant. Further, since this book is unlikely to be available in stores, it is a useful (if off-beat) addition to the library.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Ran, Amalia and Jean Axelrad Cahan, eds. *Returning to Babel: Jewish Latin American Experiences, Representations, and Identity (Jewish Latin America: Issues and Methods; I).* Leiden: Brill, 2012. 242 pp. \$142.00 (9789004203952).

Brill’s relatively new series, *Jewish Latin America: Issues and Methods* looks like it will be a welcome addition to the field. The first book in the series, *Returning to Babel: Jewish Latin American Experiences, Representations, and Identity*, begins with a fabulous overview of the topic to the present day, is followed by an essay on desiderata in the field, and then by various articles which deal precisely with the desiderata listed. Topics covered in the monograph include a wide range of fields, including identity, historiography, education, literature, art, gender studies, and more. Translation of Spanish or Portuguese quotations is pretty consistent throughout the text, allowing the neophyte to understand the context of the research as well as the experienced researcher. A full bibliography of materials discussed in all of the chapters lends to the sense of consistence and unification, and makes navigating citations very easy for the reader. Overall, if this book is an indication as to the new series, then I can highly recommend not only the individual title, but the entire series for academic libraries and libraries with an interest in Jews of Latin America.

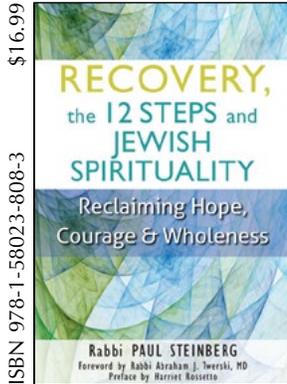
Michelle Chesner, Librarian for Jewish Studies, Columbia University

Reszke, Katka. *Return of the Jew: Identity Narratives of the Third Post-Holocaust Generation of Jews in Poland.* Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2013. 256 pp. \$35.00 (9781618113085).

For her doctoral research, Katka Reszke conducted an in-depth study of the post-Holocaust generation of Jews in Poland. She conducted interviews with 50 young adults who have at least some connection to Judaism, a Jewish parent, or a Jewish grandparent. In this book, Reszke presents the results of her 10 years of research studying Poles who are discovering their Jewish roots and beginning to seek forms of Jewish affiliation, as well as the “renaissance of Jewish culture.” Most of the interviews are presented verbatim, allowing the reader to experience the state of wonder, exhilaration, doubt, pride and most of all responsibility for Jewish survival in this generation. A very academic work, this book is recommended for academic libraries.

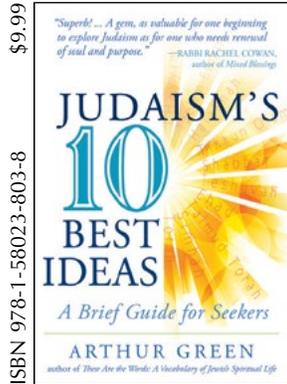
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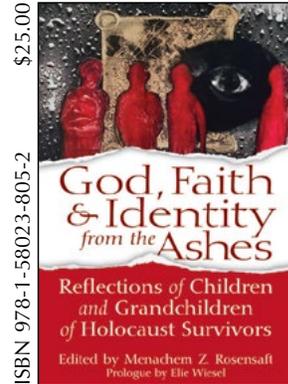
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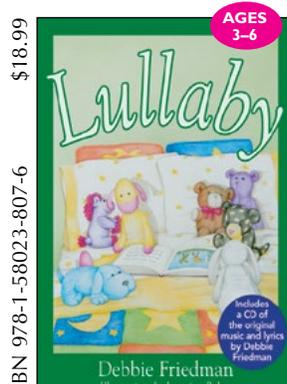
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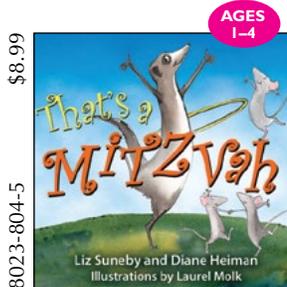
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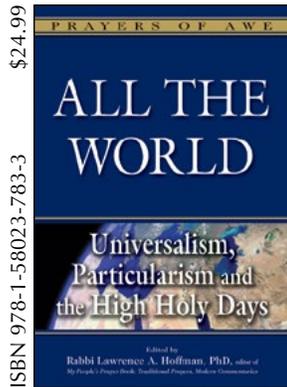
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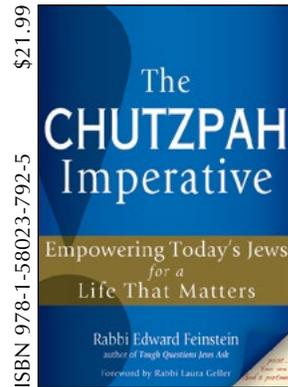
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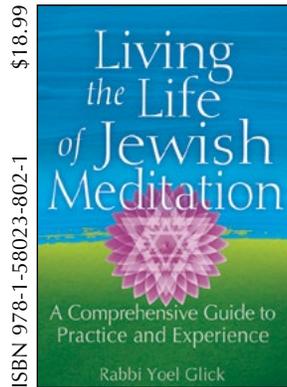
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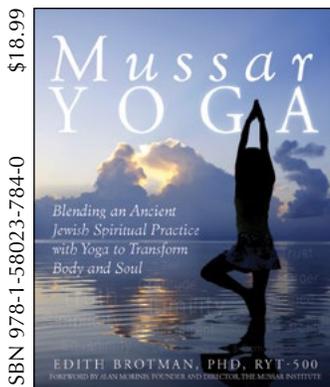
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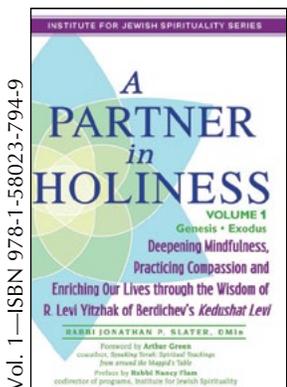
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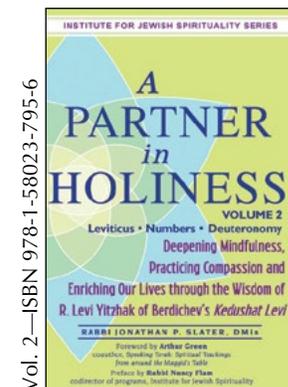
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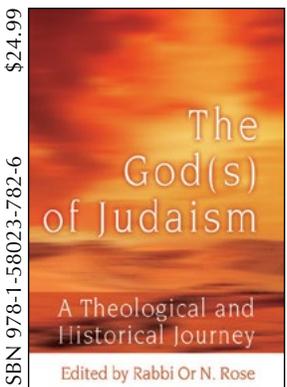


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Robinson, Ira, ed. *Canada's Jews: In Time, Space and Spirit (Jews in Space and Time)*. Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2013. 501 pp. \$60.94 (9781934843864).

This collection of 26 essays offers a comprehensive snapshot of the history of Jews in Canada, their contemporary situation, their spiritual/cultural life, and their representation in Canadian literature.

The first section "In Time: Canada's Jews and their History" opens with the 18th century and ends with an essay providing an overview of Canadian Jewry from World War II to the present.

Many colorful facts emerge such as the first documented arrival of a Jew to New France (today Quebec): the unveiled Esther Brandeau disguised as a sailor named Jacques Lafarge in 1738. The settlement of Jews was extremely varied both in terms of the physical environment, e.g., rural vs. urban; and in terms of the social environment e.g., acculturation of the tiny Jewish community in Montreal in the 19th century vs. the politicized community there following the mass emigration of Eastern European Jews after 1880.

The second section "In Space: Jews in Contemporary Canada" provides two broad essays; one is a demographic profile and the other describes the political organization of Jewish life. This is followed by essays on Jewish communities in specific regions (e.g. Atlantic, Western Canada), cities (e.g., Toronto) or communities (Sephardic).

Section three "In Spirit: the Religious and Cultural Expressions of Canadian Jews" explores the term "spirit" in its widest sense. Different streams of Judaism such as Hasidism and Reform are discussed. Chapters are dedicated also to the role of Yiddish in Canada, the representation of the Jew in in English and French literature and the involvement of Jews in Canadian Art. The final chapter reflects on the state of the field since 1999 and recommends new approaches such as the adoption of cultural studies (e.g. for gender analysis).

The essays are written in a clear style largely by experts in their respective fields. Each essay is followed by a list of sources which are also compiled as a complete bibliography at the end. A glossary of terms and a brief biography of each contributor are included.

This book would serve equally well as a University text book on Canadian Jewish Studies for the uninitiated and as an introduction to the topic for the curious lay person.

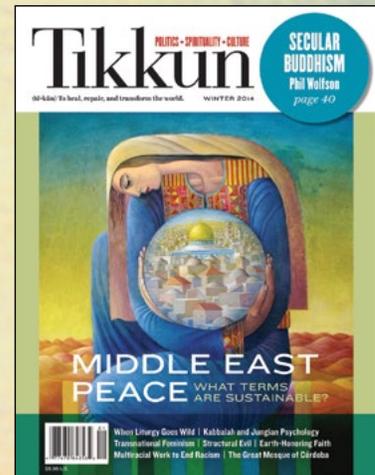
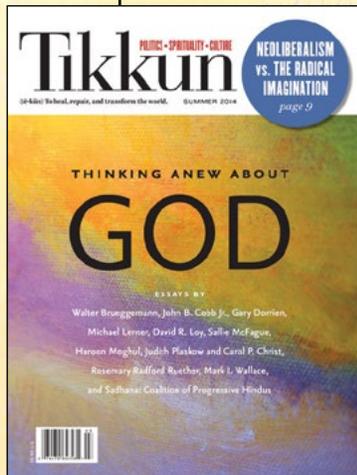
Leah Cohen, Jacob M. Lowy Collection, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Rossner, Rena. *Eating the Bible: Over 50 Delicious Recipes to Feed Your Body and Nourish Your Soul*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2013. 278 pp. \$24.95 (9781626362093).

Eating the Bible is a compilation and modification of the cooking columns Rena Rossner has written for the Jerusalem Post. Each recipe is preceded by a story or insight from the Bible which in some way connects to the recipe on the following page. Some of the connections are a stretch, such as "Technicolor Salad" which relates to Joseph's coat of many colors, "Festive Golden Brisket" to the golden calf and "Cat's Got Your Tongue Cookies" to leprosy as punishment for evil speech. The recipes are interesting and some are unique, including "Sweet White Wine and Olive Oil Bread," "Seven Species Harvest Chicken" and "Fire and Ice Bruschetta." The recipes appear in random order and are not grouped in types as in other cookbooks. They are not complicated and use ingredients found in most kitchens. A sidebar on each recipe page suggests alternative foods that connect to the Biblical passage discussed, and a question is posed that can be discussed at the table. In a supplemental section, Rossner lists biblical ingredients and which Biblical verse mentions the particular ingredient. A glossary of culinary terms, classical Jewish sources referenced, Biblical characters, Hebrew words, places in the Bible and Jewish holidays is included at the end of the book. The professional photographs make the food and ingredients look appetizing and beautiful. Recommended for the cookbook collection of all libraries.

Ilka Gordon, On site director, Aaron Garber library, Beachwood, OH





Tikkun

Michael Lerner, editor

NAMED AFTER THE JEWISH CONCEPT of mending and transforming a fragmented world, *Tikkun* offers analysis and commentary that strive to bridge the cultural divide between religious and secular progressives. The magazine provides rigorous and unconventional critiques of politics, spirituality, social theory, and culture. *Tikkun* is recognized for its coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict, social justice issues, and the environment.

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Ruebner, Josh. *Shattered Hopes: Obama's Failure to Broker Israeli-Palestinian Peace.* London and New York: Verso, 2013. 354 pp. \$26.95 (9781781681206).

This work represents a clear attempt, from a left-of-center perspective, to indict the Obama administration for failing to serve as an interlocutor in the negotiation process to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The author, Josh Ruebner, is the National Advocacy Director of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation. The policy evaluation covers the period from 2009 when President Obama appointed Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell as Special Envoy for Middle East Peace to 2011 and the eruption of the Arab Spring. If errors or miscalculations were made in the establishment of goals or the negotiation process, the author in a knee-jerk fashion blames the Obama administration or Jerusalem. Rarely do the Palestinians come in for any serious criticism. There are two main themes that come into view for examination and condemnation: first, the extremely close—indeed special—relationship that the United States has had with Israel, thus denying a more balanced and perhaps nuanced approach to the conflict. Secondly, the U.S. reaction to Israel's settlement policies and their impact on the daily lives of the Palestinians which has had a harmful effect on American relations with the Palestinian Authority, thus lessening their influence. These views are not new and the discussion is somewhat blatant. While this is a strongly opinionated piece, it is well researched and can serve as a lively discussion piece for a *havurah* gathering.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Shapiro, Patricia Gottlieb. *The Privilege of Aging, Portraits of Twelve Jewish Women.* Santa Fe, New Mexico: Gaon Books, 2013. 127 pp. \$16.00 (9781935604525).

This book presents interviews with twelve Jewish women over 75 who have coped effectively with the challenges that accompany aging. They have been carefully selected to illustrate dynamic, vibrant older women who have made contributions to their professions, communities and families. The author provides a glimpse into their lives, their values and beliefs, their successes and contributions, their legacies. By including each woman's own thoughts and reflections, using direct quotes from the interviewees in italics, the reader can gain understanding about the process of aging. Each woman has her own chapter beginning with her photo and age. They come from different parts of the country, have different lifestyles and economic backgrounds. Their remarkable life stories inspire and educate. The introduction provides a useful context and background for the book. A list of recommended reading is another useful part of the book. The author's specialty is writing and speaking on the issues facing women at mid-life and older; she has a Master's degree in social work, and has written or co-authored nine nonfiction books. Her recent book, *Coming Home to Yourself, Eighteen Wise Women Reflect on their Journeys* (2011) was a best book finalist in the New Mexico/Arizona Book Awards. *The Privilege of Aging* is an important and valuable addition to Judaica collections in academic, public, school and community center libraries.

Susan Freiband, Retired library educator, volunteer Temple librarian, Arlington, Virginia

Sugarman, Martin. *Under the Heel of Bushido: Last Voices of the Jewish POWs of the Japanese in the Second World War.* London and Portland, OR: Valentine Mitchell, 2014. 666 pp. \$89.95 (9780853038771).

This is an exhaustive collection of testimonies from British and Dutch Jewish POWs who found themselves under the control of the Japanese military during the Second World War. Japanese treatment of subjugated folk was unlike that of Nazi Germany in so far as religion played far less of a role than the western cultural orientation of the prisoner population. Sugarman, an archivist of some note, is not new to the collection of names, rank, and roles of Jewish British servicemen during the Second World War, but their effort is clearly denoted here in the Pacific Theater of operations. There are 64 personal testimonies, 24 short histories, 10 Australian short histories, 39 British and Canadian short histories, and 4 Canadian

short stories. Additionally there is a listing of honored servicemen, Dutch civilians, and the names and locations of the camps where prisoners were held. Any library that has a reference collection devoted to or has an interest in Jewish servicemen during the Second World War will welcome this effort.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Tabachnick, Stephen E. *The Quest for Jewish Belief and Identity in the Graphic Novel*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014. 258 pp. \$39.95 (9780817318215).

The field of Jewish comics scholarship has become crowded with books about Jewish-born creators or about the Jewish subtext of secular, non-ethnic characters and stories. Although Stromberg's *Jewish Images in the Comics* focuses on the Jewish content of comics, it only offers a single page of discussion for each entry. Like Stromberg, Tabachnick also focuses primarily on story content, but he provides much more depth in his analyses than Stromberg's book does.

Though Tabachnick humbly explains that his book only looks at "the best" examples of Jewish identity and religious belief, the high number of books and stories he has selected to cover in just 8 chapters is impressive. In addition to sharing his extensive descriptions, superb critiques and comparisons, and fascinating analysis of each example (which includes even the placement of the barcode on the back cover of *Maus*), Tabachnick also discusses—in clear language—the genre in each chapter (e.g. the special qualities of Biblical stories), and the reasons that the sequential art format is suited for that genre. Among the titles Tabachnick includes are ones which have been seldom discussed in academic circles until now, either because of their recency or obscurity. Examples of these are *Throne of Secrets*, *Lily Renee: Escape Artist*, and *Farm 54*.

It's unfortunate that due to space restrictions and timing, Tabachnick was unable to include certain works, like *The Boxer* and *Jewish Comix Anthology* which were published in the latter half of 2014. Colleen Doran's single-page Holocaust-era portrait of the anthropomorphic character Death standing amongst victims at a death camp likewise is worthy of academic discussion, even though it's not technically a comic page.

Tabachnick's book includes bibliographic references and an 8-section bibliography (grouped by subject), which includes a small list of websites. This book is highly recommended for public, high school, synagogue, center, and academic libraries.

Steven M. Bergson, jewishcomics.blogspot.com, Toronto, Canada

Tepper, Aryeh. *Progressive Minds, Conservative Politics: Leo Strauss's Later Writings on Maimonides*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013. \$85.00 (9781438448435). Also available as an eBook.

The title of this book may be a bit misleading. The "progress" involved does not deal with contemporary leftist politics. Progress in this context represents Rambam's idea of progress towards truth within Judaism over time. It also refers to the development of Leo Strauss's ideas about Rambam. Leo Strauss was a serious (though non-orthodox) Jew and one of the twentieth century's most influential political philosophers. Aryeh Tepper (PhD in Jewish Thought, Hebrew University and lecturer at Ben-Gurion University) argues that insufficient attention has been paid to two of Strauss's late writings on Rambam: "How to Begin to Study The Guide of the Perplexed" and "Notes on Maimonides' Book of Knowledge." The former is particularly opaque and Tepper goes through a careful, even minute, analysis of this work. He concludes that Strauss's ideas on Rambam evolved: his later writings reveal that he did not see Rambam (as he once did) writing to protect an intellectual elite and positing a simple conflict between Jerusalem (revealed religion) and Athens (philosophy), but rather he viewed him as a thinker who recognized significant fissures within both Judaism and Greek philosophy. According to Tepper, Strauss ultimately saw Rambam as aiming to reform the Hebraic religion by cleansing it of its remnants of paganism without abandoning it or destroying it altogether. This decision to reform rather than overthrow accounts, in part, for the word conservative in the title of the book. For academic collections.

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

Veidlinger, Jeffrey. *In the shadow of the shtetl: small-town Jewish life in Soviet Ukraine.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. 385 pp. \$35.00 (9780253011510).

Veidlinger's fascinating and well-researched book illuminates the lives of elderly Soviet Jews in the *shtetlekh* of today's Ukraine, using ethnographic interviews in Yiddish conducted through the University of Indiana's "AHEYM" project. Through the voices of individuals, supported by deep scholarship, the author shatters the popular stereotypes of the *shtetl*. The book provides a personal window into the complicated and inspiring life stories of a generation shaped by the Russian Revolution, pogroms, collectivization, famine, Stalinist terror, the Second World War and post-war anti-Semitism – a largely ignored subset who remained in their hometowns, maintaining Yiddish-speaking communities into the present day.

Among the issues explored in this vast and rich territory are: social and communal life, Yiddish language, education, communal and religious life, food, Jewish identity, and relations with non-Jews. The revelations from these interviews (which will eventually be available online) also deal with the subjects' unique experiences during the Holocaust in a geographic area not well documented in *yizkor* books and markedly different in how it was affected compared to other regions. Cut off from most of the world for nearly 50 years, the subjects maintain a strong Jewish identity and a strong and enduring relationship to their birthplaces.

This excellent book is remarkable both for its ethnographic fieldwork with a largely forgotten group as well as the quality of its scholarship. Recommended for all libraries.

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

Vidro, Nadia. *A Medieval Karaite Pedagogical Grammar of Hebrew: A critical edition and English Translation of Kitāb al- 'Uqūd fīTaṣārīf al-Luġa al- 'Ibrāniyya.* Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013. 427 pp. \$209.00 (9789004262911).

From the 9th through the 12th centuries C.E., Karaite scholars concentrated much of their efforts on the study, analysis, and description of Biblical grammar. The tradition reached its peak in the first half of the 11th century in the writings of Abū al-Faraj Hārūn, most notably in a text entitled *al-Kitāb al-Kāfi fi al-Luġa al- 'Ibrāniyya*. A short time later, another text entitled *Kitāb al- 'Uqūd fīTaṣārīf al-Luġa al- 'Ibrāniyya* (Book of Rules regarding the Grammatical Inflections of the Hebrew Language) was composed by an anonymous author who sought to abridge the more comprehensive text. The new work went beyond abridging the text for it embodied: "...the first Karaite pedagogical grammar, a concise description of Hebrew morphology and syntax prepared specifically to cater for the level of knowledge and the learning needs of students at the beginning of their study of the Hebrew language." The *Kitāb al- 'Uqūd* was extremely important because it was perhaps the only one translated from Judaeo-Arabic into Hebrew, and in this form, "...was instrumental in the transmission of the Karaite grammatical tradition to Byzantium." Vidro argues that it is no surprise that *Kitāb al- 'Uqūd* was preserved, since the work is far more practical than the more learned studies, and was thus more effective in disseminating the teachings of the Karaite school of grammar in Byzantium.

This critical edition and translation is the second of two volumes devoted to this grammar. The first is an analysis and discussion of the grammatical theory of the unknown author. Of the four manuscripts known to her, Vidro based her text on the most extensive copy found in the second Firkovitch Collection in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg. The base copy was compared with the other three copies and, where differences were apparent, they can be found in the critical apparatus.

In translating the text Vidro attempts to use idiomatic English, while at the same time, maintaining a translation that is as close to the Judeo-Arabic original as possible. Vidro asserts that her main objective was to make the translation "as representative of the author's and scribe's grammatical thinking and linguistic reality as the original itself."

This scholarly work is accompanied by a bibliography, glossary and indexes. It will be an essential tool for anyone investigating the Karaites and the history of their grammatical tradition.

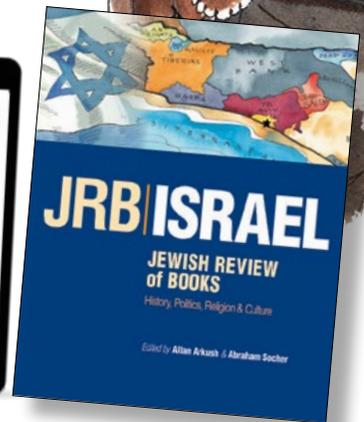
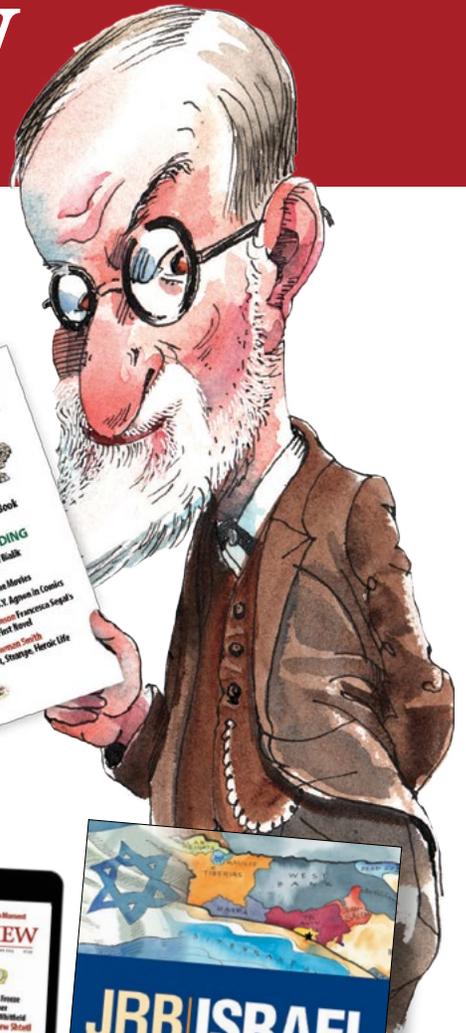
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Wagner, Stanley M and Israel Drazin. *What's Beyond the Bible text? Thought Provoking Comments on the Bible that Stimulate and Stretch the Imagination.* Brooklyn, New York: Mekor Press, 2013. 311 pp. \$19.99 (9781614650935).

This book is the result of unique collaboration between two rabbi/scholars who worked together from 1982 until Dr. Wagner died in February 2013; the publication is dedicated to his memory.

Wagner and Drazin arranged the book according to the weekly Torah portions (*sidrot*). The chapters are not comprehensive commentaries on the text, but rather compilations and selections of commentaries from ancient and modern sources. The authors try to make the reader think about the text and commentary by asking questions that can lead to further discussions; for example, in the chapter on *Toldot*, they ask: "Do you think that this rabbinic portrayal of Esau is fair?"

As a book to make the reader think it is a success. I would even recommend that the library buy two copies so that people can read and share the answers to the questions. As a book of essays or homiletical chapters it works but scholarly citations and footnotes are lacking. Many times the authors quote particular sources such as Maimonides or Nachmonides but fail to give a precise citation. They write about the discrepancies between the editions of Yosef Bechor Schor commentaries, but the bibliography lists only once source. *What's Beyond the Bible Text* is recommended for the general public to read, learn, and enjoy. Biblical scholars should take a pass.

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

Weisz, Georges Yitshak. *Theodor Herzl: a New Reading.* Jerusalem: Gefen, 2013. \$29.95 (9789652295873). Also available as an eBook.

"Zionism is a return to Jewishness even before there is a return to the Jewish land." These words from Theodor Herzl's opening address to the first World Zionist Congress do not fit in with the common perception of the man as a highly assimilated Jew who never had a deeply rooted Jewish identity and who only came up with the idea of the Jewish state because of the anti-Semitism attendant upon the Dreyfus trial in France. In this book, Dr. Weisz sets out to show that each of these elements of the commonly held image of Herzl is incorrect. Basing himself mainly on Herzl's diaries, letters, books, and journalistic writings, the founder of the Zionist movement turns out to be a more interesting figure, one who grew up in a strongly Jewish family and whose Jewish identity deepened as he grew older after a period of despair and self-pity as a young man. The author's case is a credible one overall. He does not duck difficult issues such as Herzl's proposal of the mass baptism of Jews as a cure for anti-Semitism. Some of the book's excursions into rabbinic thought, interesting in themselves, seem digressive. Still, this is an important work and a very worthwhile addition to any library collection on Zionism.

Shmuel Ben-Gad, Gelman Library, George Washington University

Willig, Rabbi Mordechai. *The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat.* Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2013. 285 pp. \$29.95 (9781592643738).

The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat is part of the Practical Halakhah Series produced by Yeshiva University in conjunction with Yeshiva's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. As promised by the title, the book clearly discusses the practical issues involved in cooking and warming food on Shabbat. Each short chapter focuses on a different aspect of the topic, such as the definition of cooking, cooking with solar heat, using a hot plate and the *blech* (metal sheet covering the stove). Further the book analyzes and explains the reasoning behind the rabbinic rulings and conclusions. Included is a comprehensive glossary, list of sources, index and notes by Rabbi Hershel Schachter which further illuminate the rabbinic process used in reaching the rulings presented in this book. Opening the book from right to left the reader finds an extensive section of the original sources, in Hebrew, cited in the text as well as essays in Hebrew which relate to the various topics presented in the book. *The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat* is recommended for the scholar and layman alike. Even a reader

who is not comfortable with the Hebrew text will derive much understanding and insight into the laws and reasoning behind food warming and cooking on Shabbat

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

Yeshiva Me'on Hatorah. *A Taste of Pesach: Trusted Favorites, Simple Preparation, Magnificent Results*. Brooklyn, NY: Artscroll, 2014. 240 pp. \$24.08 (9781422614723).

For a long time, Pesach cookbooks and Pesach food in general have not had a good reputation. This cookbook and a few others over the last couple of years have set out to change that. This book delivers what it says on the cover: "Trusted favorites/simple preparation/magnificent results." There are some wonderful, time tested recipes that look easy to make. The food styling and photography are tremendous. It is an aesthetically pleasing and "coffee-table worthy" book: readers will enjoy poring over the pages. The design is great as well: everything is easy to find; the sections are color coded, and the list of ingredients for each recipe is within a highlighted box. It is excellent that, in addition to the classics, some unexpected sides or salads are included. The directions sound easy and not intimidating: everyone should be able to enjoy these dishes. The ingredients are things that everyone has on hand for Pesach, but these recipes sound so good they don't have to be just for Pesach. This would be a good addition to a collection of kosher cookbooks. Recommended for Jewish libraries.

Debbie Feder, Director, LRC, Ida Crown Jewish Academy

Yudin, Rabbi Benjamin. *Rabbi Benjamin Yudin on the Parsha*. Los Angeles: Mosaica Press, 2013. 233 pp. \$24.95 (9781937887162).

Rabbi Yudin has been expounding on the weekly Torah portion every Friday during a very popular radio segment in the New York Metropolitan area (also available via the internet) for many years. This collection has been selected from those *Divrei Torah* and includes 54 short, yet insightful discussions focusing on a particular aspect of each portion. From "the justice of the night sky" in *Parshat Bereishis*, to a word play in *Parshat Tazria* to an analysis of the poetry of *Parshat Ha'Azinu*, Rabbi Yudin draws from the text, Midrash and commentary.

The essays are relatively short, and can be shared at the Shabbat table or utilized for a quick "dose" of Torah. Rabbi Yudin quotes heavily from the *Gemara*, and all of the quotes are referenced well. The Rabbi also quotes from commentaries and rabbis, so short biographies of these luminaries would be helpful to those unfamiliar with them. It is also notable (especially during a leap year), that there is a *Dvar Torah* for every portion; many books only include one when a double portion is read. The essay for *Parshat Tzav* centers around when the portion is read in conjunction with Purim, making it pertinent in only 7 out of 19 years.

Rabbi Yudin teaches at Yeshiva University and is also a congregational rabbi. His radio *drasha* always begins "Tomorrow we have the privilege of reading..." and his good humor, scholarship and excitement about the weekly reading is as evident in the book as on the radio. The book is highly recommended for Orthodox libraries, and a solid purchase for other libraries whose patrons enjoy short readings about the weekly Torah Portion.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

The Zohar: Pritzker Edition. Volume 8. Translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014. 592 pp. \$55.00 (9780804787260).

The eighth volume of Professor Daniel Matt's *Zohar* covers the second part of Leviticus from *Parashat Qedoshim* to *Parashat Be-Ha'alotekha* in Numbers. This section is most notable for its in-depth narrative, *Idra Rabba*, in which Rabbi Shimon and his *Hevraya* "Companions" explore the nature of God. Before the translation of this complex text could be accomplished, Matt had to create an accurate definitive text of the *Zohar* based on many manuscripts. The text in three versions is available on Stanford University Press website. I consulted

the “user-friendly version,” which has the page numbers of the translation so that one can follow along if desired; the plain version has no underlines, page numbers, and the font is harder to read. The *Zohar* needs to be studied in-depth in order to fully understand it. Since the gems of the *Zohar* are difficult for most people to understand, Matt provides invaluable commentary to put the *Zohar* into context and explain the almost disconnected paragraphs. This book is recommended for synagogue, personal, and academic collections.

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

Zulberg, David J. *The Life Transforming Diet*. New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2014. 352 pp. \$26.75 (9781583309414).

In *The Life Transforming Diet*, Zulberg has designed a unique diet program. It follows the teachings of the Rambam (Maimonides) and addresses some concerns that observant Jews might have while dieting. The program is quite specific and may not be for everyone. The graphic design for this book is visually arresting: the use of color, boxes, and shading creates a clear and interesting page. As a reference work this book is easy to use. The footnotes are effective and show a high level of research. In the first part of the book, the author lays out all the groundwork and medical information that the reader needs to know. The second part details each phase of the diet and lays out the program. Also included are chapters that are cognitively focused to help the dieter conquer the mental aspect of dieting. The third part of the book addresses other material that is important to reader success with this program. Several appendixes supply medical or religiously important information. The success stories along the way inform and motivate the reader. This book is recommended as an additional purchase for larger collections.

Debbie Feder, Director, LRC, Ida Crown Jewish Academy

Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

Astaire, Libi. *36 Candles: Chassidic Tales for Channukah*. Kansas; Jerusalem: Aster press, 2013. 176 pp. \$12.99 (9781492112433).

Libi Astaire, creator of the popular Ezra Melamed mystery series, treats the reader to 36 short, charming and inspiring Chassidic stories. Each story teaches a unique lesson and Jewish value. The stories' contents do not relate to Hanukkah per se, but they present eight thoughts followed by thirty-six stories that illustrate the thought. The Rabbis featured in the tales range from Hillel, the first century sage, to the twentieth century rabbi and doctor Abraham J. Twerski. At the end of the book there are brief biographical sketches of each rabbi. Recommended for the YA and adult collection of all libraries. This collection is also an excellent read aloud selection for younger children.

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

Tucholsky, Kurt. *Rheinsberg; a Storybook for Lovers and Among City Wizards*. Translated by Cindy Opitz. New York: Berlinica Publishing LLC, 2014. 81 pp. \$11.95 (9781935902256).

This short novella, first published in Germany in 1912, was popular with young readers and was a frequent gift to German soldiers who volunteered at the start of World War I. It is by turns wistful, romantic and funny. To the twenty-first century reader it will seem quaint and dated. Tucholsky was a leading journalist and literary figure during the Weimar Republic. Being Jewish and also a socialist and pacifist, he was persecuted when the Nazis came to power. His books were burned and he was driven into exile in Sweden and finally to suicide. He wrote under his own name, but also used four different pseudonyms.

This slight story, though described as “a blueprint for love for an entire generation,” will have little relevance or appeal to today's readers. Recommended only for its historical interest.

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

Reviews of Multimedia

Dror, Duki, Yael Shavit and Paul Saadon. *Shadow in Baghdad*, 2013. Distributed by Go2Films. Hebrew, Arabic and English. English Subtitles. 66 min. Sale (DVD) \$325.00.

Under Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, and even now, hundreds of people have disappeared. Many of them were Jews, including Linda Abdel Aziz Menuhin's father. Menuhin is an Israeli columnist, and she also publishes a blog in Arabic. In 2010, she traveled to the Iraqi election center in Amman, Jordan to vote in the democratic elections. She was detained, refused the right to vote, and sent back to Israel. When she blogged about her experience, an Iraqi journalist contacted her online to learn more about her story.

Menuhin was very suspicious at first, but after consultation with her siblings and children, she agreed to be interviewed. She was born in 1950, and despite discrimination and harassment, her father decided that the family should remain in Iraq. Linda and her brother left for Israel in 1970, her mother and other siblings left in 1972, and their father was abducted on September 17, 1972. They had some sporadic contact, but Linda never knew the details of her father's disappearance and likely demise. The journalist offers to help her investigate further, even placing an advertisement in Iraqi newspapers.

The film documents the relationship between Menuhin and the Iraqi journalist, and her own journey, as she and her siblings reminisce, as she re-reads old letters from her father, and how she decides that although she has no definitive answer, she does not wish to proceed further.

The cinematic elements are good: clear dialog, evocative music and interesting camera work enhance Menuhin's very personal story to make it a universal one of family and exile. A riveting and pertinent film that sheds light on the plight of Jews living in Arab countries post-1948, it is highly recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

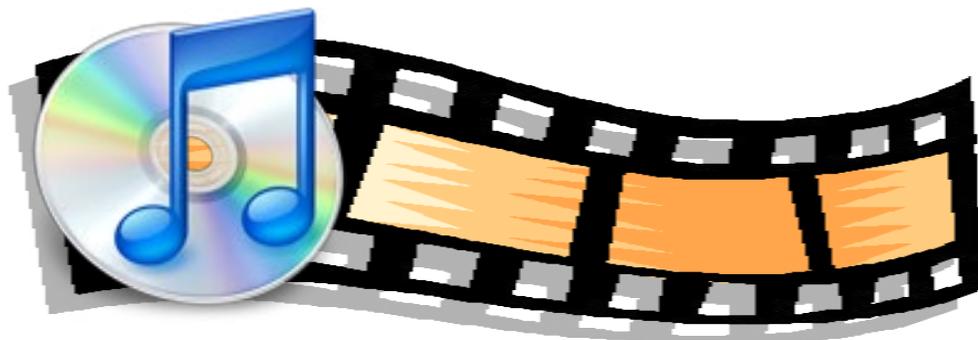
Dudinski, Natasha. *Gisi*, 2014. Distributed by Go2Films. Czech, Slovak, Hebrew and English. English Subtitles. 62 min. Sale (DVD) \$325.00.

Gisi Fleischmann was the leader of the Bratislava Working Group. Thanks to her efforts and self-sacrifice, German and Slovakian officials were bribed and ransoms paid so that the deportations of the remaining Slovakian Jews were delayed from 1942 to 1944. Ms. Fleischmann herself was deported and murdered at Auschwitz in 1944.

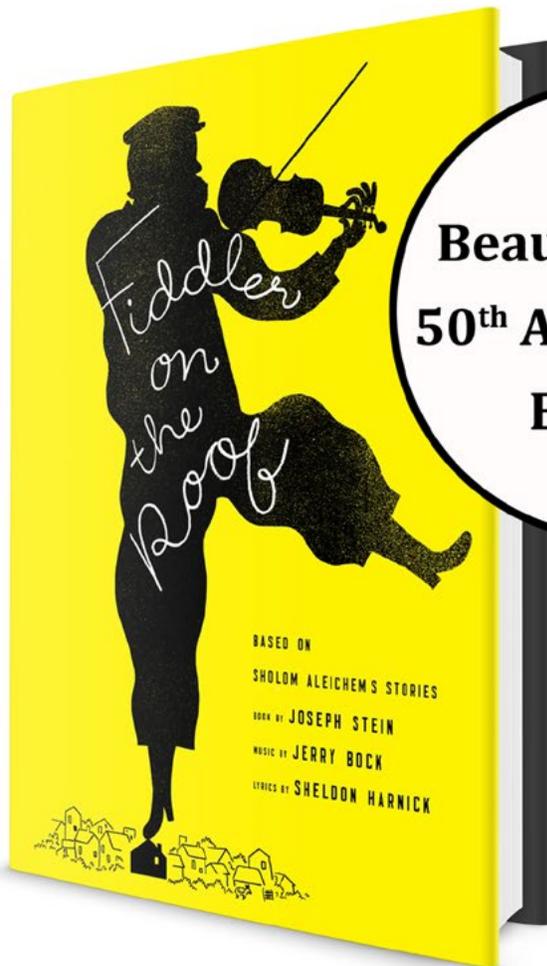
The documentary centers on rehearsals of a production by the Slovak National Theatre about Gisi Fleischmann. Between scenes from these rehearsals, Gisi's niece and nephew walk around present day Bratislava and point out relevant houses and areas. While the camera surveys the surroundings, a narrator reads selections from Gisi's letters. Several historians are interviewed, and Yehuda Bauer confirms that Nazis as high up as Himmler knew about the bribes.

The shifts between the rehearsals and other scenes, the need to follow the subtitles, and the slow pace of the film necessitate the viewer's intense focus. But the working of the theatre group, striving to be historically accurate and sincere are very interesting, and Gisi's story is fascinating. Highly recommended for libraries with Holocaust and/or film collections, it also shows what one person can accomplish when they are passionate and determined.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel



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FIDDLER will be back on Broadway in Fall 2015.

Kitson, Hugh and Ian Cullen. *The Forsaken Promise*. Hatikvah Film Foundation. Distributed in the US by Alden Films, Clarksburg, N.J. 117 min. Sale (DVD) \$20.00 (9781877684494).

The Forsaken Promise is a two-hour documentary-style legalistic examination of the failure of Britain to live up to the Balfour Declaration. Starting with the role evangelicals played in influencing Britain's promise of a Jewish homeland, the film is a mixture of a British-Jewish and evangelical Christian narratives of the founding of Israel (Hatikvah Film Foundation is a Christian ministry). The main message seems to be a (religious?) lesson. The script links the coinciding decline of Britain in the world with the appalling mistreatments given the Jews by British officials before, during, and after the Holocaust during the Mandate period. The writer invokes Biblical warnings, such as Jeremiah 30:3. The film does contain some interesting snippets of interviews with churchmen, scholars, British soldiers, Israelis and eyewitnesses of the period. Unfortunately, there are multiple repetitions of some of these segments. Additionally, some documentary footage is repeatedly used while the narrative describes different incidents. The film seethes with a litany of Britain's negative political actions and abandonments including: stranding a shipload of Jews off the coast of Turkey (which was then sunk); deporting Holocaust survivors to further imprisonment in detention camps; forcing Jews from the *Exodus* to prison ships bound to Europe; British soldiers beating emaciated Jewish survivors in Hamburg; British arming of Arabs against the Jews, and other atrocities. This film falls short as a scholarly documentary, and viewers must bear in mind the Christian evangelical perspective; however, many may learn a lot about the Balfour Declaration and Britain's actions against the Jews.

Judith S. Pinnolis, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA

Metheny, Pat. *Tap*. New York: Tzadik/Nonesuch, 2013. CD. \$16.00

John Zorn's Masada compositions have been widely recorded, but until recently, only by a close-knit group of the Downtown avant-garde. This album by guitarist Pat Metheny brings Zorn's work into the mainstream. Various recordings in this series have chosen to emphasize or obscure the Jewish character of these compositions; Metheny takes both approaches, providing great stylistic variety. He also alternates between his more familiar, accessible style and a harder edge that surfaces less frequently in his output. Metheny plays all instruments aside from drums as part of his ongoing Orchestrion experiments; controlling instruments through robots from his guitar. Given Zorn's mastery as an arranger and Metheny's melodicism, one only hopes that Zorn playing Metheny will be in the works. A welcome addition to any Jewish music collection.

Daniel Schiede, Librarian, Wimberly Library, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Don't Forget to Check Out AJL News!

The September/October 2014 issue of *AJL News* has lots of internal

AJL organizational news, including the strategic plan,

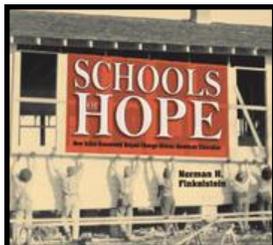
and lots of exciting articles about the activities of our members all over the world.

Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN & RACHEL KAMIN

In The Spotlight

Finkelstein, Norman H. *Schools of Hope: How Julius Rosenwald Helped Change African American Education*. Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek, 2014. 80 pp. \$16.95 (9781590788417). Gr. 4-7.

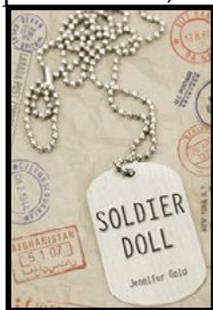


Tzedakah (charity) jumps to life in this fantastic, focused book about one Jewish man's well-conceived and spectacularly successful charity. Julius Rosenwald was a generous man who always believed in giving to help others. When he met famous black educator, Booker T. Washington, Rosenwald found a new passion for his self-made wealth as president of Sears Roebuck. He decided to invest in schools in desperately poor areas of America's rural South, wielding charity as seed money. Local governments, school districts, and families would contribute to the building and maintenance of each school. His architectural blueprints

compensated for prejudiced conditions in twentieth-century black schools: no electricity, running water, or indoor bathrooms. He added libraries, helped fund book purchases, and set up library schools in black colleges for professional staffing. This clearly written volume with a strong vocabulary and numerous historical photographs is not a traditional biography, although facts about Rosenwald's life slip in at times. The book follows Rosenwald's dream, his philosophy of giving, and his fine work with Jewish charities and community charities in Chicago. Over the course of twenty years (1912-1932) of dedicated care, he oversaw the construction of 5,357 schools that educated 600,000 African American children, trained teachers, and gave scholarships to soon-famous Americans who needed this chance to jumpstart their own brilliant careers. Highly recommended for delivering information not widely known about a role model, a mensch, and the importance of *tzedakah*. Illustrated with black and white photographs.

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

Gold, Jennifer. *Soldier Doll*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2013. 256 pp. \$11.95 (9781927583296) Pbk. Reviewed from an advanced reading copy. Grades 7-12.



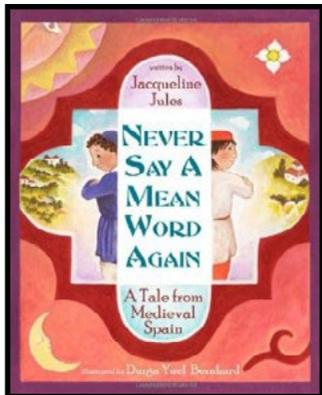
Soldier Doll begins as a modern day novel when fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Bryant finds an antique painted doll, dressed in military attire, at a garage sale in Toronto. Could this doll, Elizabeth wonders, be the very one that inspired a famous poem about World War I and its aftermath? The story quickly becomes framed as an historical journey to Flanders Field, through World War II and the Holocaust, jumping to the war in Vietnam and then to present-day Afghanistan. The reader becomes involved with the doll's various owners: a naïve British boy, a Jewish German prisoner, a Czech Holocaust survivor, her American soldier son, and a Vietnamese young girl. The deft prose describes both the physical grittiness of muddy fields and concentration camps, as well as the emotional devastation of war. Elizabeth, whose investigation of the doll eventually leads her to its rightful owner, is not spared from the torments of military conflict.

Her father, working for the Canadian military, is part of the mission in Afghanistan.

Gold has a keen ear for dialogue, whether it is humorous banter between Elizabeth and her mother or a swift review of *Kristallnacht*. The author's invention of a fictional poet and her "Soldier Doll" poem elevates the object and helps bring the story to a satisfying end. *Soldier Doll* is an insightful and compassionate contemplation about war that wisely does not preach or take sides, but allows each of the characters, in their unique historical settings, to speak for themselves.

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

Jules, Jacqueline. *Never Say a Mean Word Again: A Tale from Medieval Spain*. Illus. by Durga Yael Bernhard. Bloomington, IN: Wisdom Tales, 2014. 32 pp. \$16.95 (9781937786205). Preschool-Gr. 3.

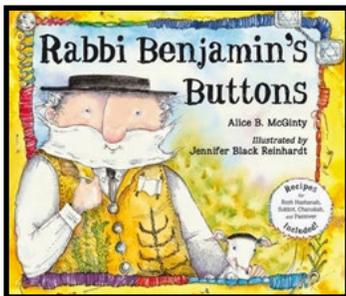


In this loose adaptation of a medieval legend, Samuel Ha-Nagid, the eleventh century Jewish poet and royal advisor in Muslim Granada, is re-imagined as the grand vizier's son. Prone to daydreaming and clumsiness, Samuel manages to offend Hamza, the son of the Muslim tax collector, on two separate occasions. First he bumps into Hamza in the castle courtyard and later splashes lamb sauce on Hamza's white tunic at a banquet. In both instances, Samuel is clearly at fault. But two accidental wrongs don't make it right when Hamza, in a fit of anger, calls Samuel a "Donkey Brain" and "stupid." Samuel's father overhears the one-sided verbal exchange and instructs his son to "make sure Hamza never says a mean word to you again." Samuel finds this is easier said than done. A few of the punishments he devises involve making Hamza eat a lemon, write a promise, compete in a chess match, and engage in a water fight. However, all of Samuel's schemes backfire. The carte blanche decree to chastise his "enemy" is turned on its head when the two boys soon become fast friends. Bernhard's earth-toned illustrations with stylized mosaic flowers and arch motifs enhance the story's multicultural flavor. An author's note provides historical background. *Never Say a Mean Word Again* should be required reading for all youngsters – and adults – as a means to promote civility and cooperation.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

[Note from reviewer: Jacqueline Jules is the author of *The Hardest Word* (Kar-Ben 2001), a National Jewish Book Award finalist, *Sarah Laughs* (Kar-Ben 2008), and *Benjamin and the Silver Goblet* (Kar-Ben 2009), both Sydney Taylor Honor Award winners. Durga Yael Bernhard wrote and illustrated *Around the World in One Shabbat* (Jewish Lights 2011), a Sydney Taylor Honor Award winner, and illustrated *Green Bible Stories for Children* (Kar-Ben 2011), an honorable mention in the Green Book Festival, San Francisco.]

McGinty, Alice B. *Rabbi Benjamin's Buttons*. Illus. by Jennifer Black Reinhardt. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2014. 32 pp. \$17.95 (9781580894326). Preschool-Gr. 3.



As a token of their love for Rabbi Benjamin, his Walnut Street congregants give him a yellow vest embroidered with a menorah, lulav branches, and torah scrolls. Four shiny silver buttons down its front complete the rabbi's new multi-holiday look. Over the course of the year, as Rabbi Benjamin liberally samples Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot, Hanukkah, and Passover foods, his belly expands. Eventually, the vest fabric stretches so much that each silver button pops off. Lacking basic sewing skills, the portly rabbi uses a safety pin, *tallit* clips, string, and staples in a makeshift attempt to replace the stray buttons. Over the summer, Rabbi Benjamin loses the extra weight by planting a garden, hiding Hanukkah presents, fishing for carp, and harvesting apples. The now baggy vest still doesn't fit, but the story's sweet ending is tailor-made to bring a smile to every food-loving fashionista. Reinhardt's illustrations of the bearded rabbi, who favors not only cheery vests but also high-water black pants, are done in watercolor and ink. The book includes a one-page glossary of Judaic terms and recipes for honey cake, fruit strudel, latkes, and matzo ball soup.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

BIBLE STORIES

Golick, Margie. *Let There Be Light: Stories from Genesis in Verse.* Margie Golick, 2013. 36 pp. \$12.00 (9780988038523). Gr. 4–7.

As the title implies, this is “light” verse—a play on the word that also accurately describes the text. Golick is very skilled at doggerel and her poems retell many of the most familiar events from Genesis. Although the style suggests verse that is light in meaning as well as style, she manages to also convey values. A useful resource for teachers, the poems could easily be set to music for students to perform.

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

BIOGRAPHY

Berne, Jennifer. *On a Beam of Light: A Story of Albert Einstein.* Illus. by Vladimir Radunsky. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2013. 56 pp. \$17.99 (9780811872355). Gr. 1–4.

This biography about Einstein shows how “imagining, wondering, figuring, and thinking” worked together to turn a strange, silent child into a unique, world-famous genius. Berne condenses Einstein’s long life into an understandable form that uses playful, yet instructive language set in an engaging layout. Radunsky’s illustrations, freely rendered in gouache, pen and ink, echo the universe’s dynamic nature and the idea that “everything is always moving.” The pale red text that highlights the story at times fades into the textured background. This happens especially on the two-page author’s note, causing the reader to squint, as if deciphering the lowest row of print on an optometrist’s eye chart. While there is no specific Jewish content, the book is a good introduction to the physicist who attempted “to discover the hidden mysteries in the world” and come up with explanations about time, space, and the nature of matter.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

Greene, Meg. *Elena Kagan: A Biography.* Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Biographies, 2014. 180 pp. \$26.45 (9781440828973). Gr. 9 to Adult.

Former African American Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall, once quipped that Elena Kagan was a “knucklehead” when she clerked under him. His joke and characterization might be considered inaccurate today, for Kagan went on to earn the prestigious titles of dean at Harvard Law School and then followed in Marshall’s footsteps. Among Kagan’s seminal decisions were whether gays should be recruited into the military as well as regulations regarding tobacco. This book mentions little about Judaism but does reference Kagan’s bat mitzvah in a Philadelphia synagogue—a first for young girls growing up at that time. Black and white photos, the occasional spelling mistake, and challenging academic and legal vocabulary don’t make this a biographical thriller. However, the bibliography, table of contents, timeline, and index do make it useful for a student or teacher. While Kagan’s life can be seen as extraordinary and there are not a plethora of books about her, the verdict on buying this book for a Jewish day school is optional.

Ben Pastcan, Shalom School, Sacramento, CA

Hoefnagel, Marian. *Anne Frank: Her Life.* Transl. by Robin Pascoe. London: ReadZone Books, 2014. 124 pp. \$8.99 (9781783220045) Pbk. Gr. 2–4

This rendition of Anne Frank’s life is an easy-to-read introduction for young readers. It is specifically aimed at those children who may be too young to actually read the diary themselves or have yet to understand the context in which it was written. Ms. Pascoe’s translation is simple yet powerful, and the glossary in the back will help children understand words such as “Radio Oranje” and “SS.” Readers may notice how British the translation is (Margot is “mad” about her sister Anne), but Anne’s words and her poignant story are what drive the narrative.

The book is augmented with many photographs of Anne's family, their cohorts in hiding, as well as pictures of the hidden annex itself. Ms. Hoefnagel has wisely focused on the daily details of Anne's brief life, such as her ambivalent feelings toward Peter and Margot's dreams of becoming a midwife in Palestine after the war. The author has not shied away from describing the fate of Anne and the others in the concentration camps and has also included a chapter that asks the question of who betrayed the Franks. The author's choice to include Anne's discussion of her menstrual cycle with Peter, however, is puzzling. Although historically factual, this topic may be distracting to a seven-year-old reader. This concern, however, is small when compared to this clear and heartfelt version of the Holocaust's most famous victim.

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

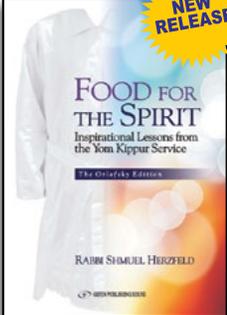
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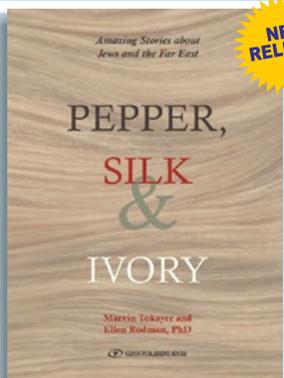
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Yocheved Golani, author and reviewer



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 *Gefen, it's not just good wine*





Reef, Catherine. *Leonard Bernstein and American Music*. Modern Music Masters. Greensboro, NC: Morgan Reynolds. 128 pp. \$17.99 (9781599351254). Gr. 7-10.

From a young age, while pounding out songs he'd learned from the radio on an old piano, Leonard Bernstein knew that music was "it." In ten chapters of this Modern Music Masters series biography, expert biographer Catherine Reef presents the over-the-top personality that was Leonard Bernstein, musical genius. She shows his drive, passion, and the support he gained from reigning music impresarios Igor Stravinsky, Aaron Copeland, Dmitri Mitropoulos, and Serge Koussevitzky to make him the first American-born and trained conductor to lead a major orchestra before the age of thirty. Reef poignantly describes the concert Bernstein held in Palestine in 1947, emphasizing throughout the book his commitment to the burgeoning Jewish nation, and covers his major works, struggles, and decisions. Quotes from Bernstein and others get at the emotional truth behind the man and his music. Ample photos and cultural context round out the biography.

While a series book, Reef presents a narrative that rises far above the typical educational publishing standard. Perhaps because this is a series book, it focuses more on Bernstein's career than on his family. For that, readers can turn to Susan Goldman Rubin's *Music Was It!* (Charlesbridge, 2011). Substantial back matter includes a timeline, source notes, bibliography, websites, a listing of Bernstein's major works, and an index.

Barbara Krasner, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, New Jersey

COOKERY

Ansh, Tamar. *Let My Children Cook! A Passover Cookbook for Kids*. New York: The Judaica Press, 2014. 96 pp. \$9.95 (9781607631422). Pbk. Gr. 2-Adult.

It is not the seder meal that requires creative thought and planning. It is those days following the seder, when one more night of leftovers with matzo might just have your family running out of the house in search of anything resembling an interesting meal –and NOT matzo meal! Enter *Let My Children Cook!* with everything from Spicy Chicken Bake (p. 47) to Pizza Potatoes (p. 56) to Rocky Road Brownies (p. 76) and so many fascinating and delectable sounding edible treats in between.

Starting with "Cooking and Safety Tips" for all ages and Jewish denominations, this recipe book includes those "Very Important Recipes" – charoset, matzo balls, etc. that no Passover home should be without. It then provides recipes for the little one to enjoy, and then food ideas in every category. Each recipe begins with "Let's get to it!" – a list of ingredients required, how many servings it will make, and whether the recipe is pareve, dairy or meat. Then follows "And here's how you do it": a step-by-step list of instructions for creating all this deliciousness. Of course, not every food will resonate with every individual – Pastel-Colored Soup may not be for everyone – but there are plenty of food items to fill the entire holiday period with little effort. There are even craft ideas in the back of the book for aprons, placemats, pillows, and more. This is a wonderful book for the holiday cooking section of every Jewish library.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC

FICTION - MIDDLE GRADES

Baron, Jeff. *Sean Rosen is Not for Sale*. New York: Greenwillow, 2014. \$16.99. 372 pp. (9780062187505). Gr. 5-8.

Sean Rosen is a precocious thirteen-year-old who already has a successful podcast. However, his true ambition is to write a Hollywood screenplay called "A Week with Your Grandparents." He negotiates selling the unfinished screenplay to Hollywood agents through Dan Welch, a fake manager. Also, he tells peers that he can help them with this fictional agent. Eventually, Sean makes a connection between his own fraud and his grandfather, who is in jail for stealing money from friends. There are some funny scenarios and Sean is a relatable preteen struggling with bullies and friendships. This story can stand alone but readers would have a better understanding of Sean's screenwriting and the various characters if they read *I Represent Sean Rosen*. Sean's mother is Christian and his father is Jewish, but there is very little mention of religion in this book. Therefore, it is not an essential purchase for Jewish libraries.

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

Greene, Jacqueline Dembar. *A Growing Suspicion: A Rebecca Mystery*. American Girl series. Middleton, WI: American Girl Publishing, 2014. 165 pp. \$6.95 (9781609583064). Gr. 3-5.

Rebecca Rubin, American Girl's Jewish character, returns in a well-constructed third mystery. Rebecca visits her cousin Anna, who lives in Brooklyn in a typical Jewish immigrant home. Their relationship – brave Rebecca/shy Anna – remains the same as in the earlier six historical novels and two mysteries, here spiced by Anna's anger at Rebecca. Anna's newfound love of plants inspires her

to start her own vegetable garden in the courtyard of her apartment house, only to find a strange combination of missing tools and cared-for plants. Who is doing this? Seeking clues, they bump into another immigrant neighbor, Japanese landscaper Mr. Tanaka, brought to America to create our first public Japanese Garden. He takes the two girls to the Botanic Garden where they meet instructors hired to introduce tenement children to nature, their helpers, Mrs. Tanaka, and strange tourists. As the girls help Mr. Tanaka, they discover damage to the Japanese garden, a different vandalism every day, pinned on the two youngsters, who, though innocent, cannot prove it and face banishment from the gardens. Rebecca decides they must investigate without adults to find the culprit to clear themselves and to save the garden. They do this over the book's timespan of a week, the short period keeping tensions high and competing culprits clear.

Sprightly dialog, red herrings, and careful clues keep the pages turning. The unexpected ending's moral includes *rachmones* (compassion), and thus satisfies readers. This mild story about sweet children contains enough plot twists and defiance of authority to hold targeted readers until the solution. There is no date in the text; the historical fiction is set early in the last century. The era arrives through time capsule objects such as clotheslines, evening newspapers, indoor plumbing – a new technology – and the unattainable cost of a dime. The endnote explains that the setting celebrates the centennial of the Brooklyn Botanic Children's Garden's and, established one year later, the Japanese Garden, both still open today. Recommended for Rebecca fans, mystery lovers, and devotees of bygone days.

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

Strager, Joan Trotter. *Spaghetti Rain*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2013. \$11.95. 129 pp. (9781491705155) Pbk.; (9781491705148) HC; (9781491705131) eBook. Gr. 5–8.

In 1949, Ruthie is a thirteen-year-old girl who lives in the Washington Heights area of New York City. Her mother is Jewish and her father is a non-Jewish Italian immigrant with a very volatile temper. The family is not especially observant of any particular religion – aside from at Christmas time, when they ice skate at Rockefeller Center and have a small fake tree in their apartment. After hearing the horror stories of how two of her Jewish friends narrowly escaped the Holocaust in Europe, Ruthie becomes interested in observing Hanukkah. Ruthie's parents support her interest by buying her a Hanukkah and the family lights candles. That is the extent of their Jewish observance. Ruthie has many different experiences, such as feeling like an awkward tomboy to going to a club with her aunt who was a chorus girl. In discovering a traumatic family secret, Ruthie changes her view of her mother and her grandmother. She also travels to Miami with her other aunt and uncle and witnesses racism as well as anti-Semitism in the South.

The format of the book is Ruthie's diary entries followed by a narrative explaining the events she relates. Many of the entries are unrelated and the book feels fragmented. In addition, it seems as if the narrative takes off in too many different, underdeveloped directions. This book may interest middle grade readers, especially the stories that are unique to growing up in New York City. However, it is recommended as an additional purchase for synagogue and day school libraries.

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

FICTION – TEEN

Berkowitz, Ira T. *A Wolf in the Soul*, Pikesville: Leviathan Press, 2014. 462 pp. \$19.99 (9781881927136) Pbk. Gr. 9–Adult.

Greg Samstag is turning into a wolf. Not a werewolf, but an actual, grey-haired, long-toothed, howl-at-the-moon wolf. Why this is happening, he has no idea, but dogs of all shapes and sizes are following him, he is tracking deer in his neighborhood park, and his daydreams are very realistic images of a

wolf's life from birth through its arrival in New York City. As Greg searches for answers to why his inner animal is "coming out," he travels from New York's Columbia University to a private yeshiva in Jerusalem to a Chasidic psychotherapist's office in Brooklyn in search of help. Torah, Talmud, Kabbalah, metaphysics, Eastern Arurvedic wisdom, and more all come together to assist Greg with his extreme dilemma. When at last he discovers that a frustrating wish that his parents "go to Hell" because their marriage was breaking up is what set him on this shape-shifting journey, Greg begins to make the life changes necessary to ensure he will not remain a wolf forever. Torah study, prayer, and right living are his answers, and it is touch-and-go until the very last pages.

This is a wordy, ill-edited book with a preachy message about the need to live a devout lifestyle in order to avoid the evils of the world, in this case "turning into a wolf." Even fans of fantasy fiction and magical realism will be stretched to the limit of credulity while reading this outlandish tale.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC

Hewes. Agnes Danforth. *Spice and the Devil's Cave*. Illus. by Lynd Ward. New York: Dover, 2014. (Reprint of 1930 edition, originally published by Alfred A. Knopf, NY.) 331 pp. \$5.99 (9780486492872) Pbk. Gr. 7 and up.

This historical novel about the dawning of the golden age of Portuguese exploration was a Newbery Honor book in 1931. Dover reprints famous classic books and offers them inexpensively, hoping they will find a new audience. The problem, of course, is that popular adventure fiction for young people has changed a great deal since 1930, and it would be hard to recommend this title to a typical teenager of 2014. The writing is excellent, though of an old-fashioned, melodramatic style; however, the placing of words into the mouths of real-life people such as Vasco Da Gama, Ferdinand Magellan, and Bartholomew Diaz just isn't done anymore. The other issue concerns the unlikelihood of young people having much idea about the historical circumstances or geography of the Portuguese desire to be the first to get to India by going around the tip of Africa in 1498. The omission of maps of any sort, while various names of African or Indian ports of call are bandied about, is a real problem for any reader. The Jewish connection is in the character of Abel Zacuto, seafaring enthusiast, banker and astrolabe/mapmaker whose workshop is the location for all the explorers and their intrigues. The Portuguese expulsion decree of the Inquisition occurs in one chapter, and Zacuto (an invented brother of the real Abraham Zacuto) considers leaving until the decree is lifted. The author does not include the forced conversions that are part of the historical record of the Portuguese Inquisition and, in fact, celebrates the Jewish contributions to exploration by putting words of thanks in the mouths of Da Gama and Magellan. The side plots of evil pirates, rival Venetian explorers, and a kidnapped Arab princess remind one of the works of Robert Louis Stevenson. Recommended only for curious, geographically-savvy teens who like a good challenge.

Lisa Silverman, Sinai Temple Library, Los Angeles, CA

Levin, Menucha Chana. *A Family for Frayda*. Brooklyn: Hamodia Treasures, 2014. 430 pp. \$17.99 (9780988814585). Gr. 6-12.

Frayda Rosenbloom longs for a family. After her parents divorced, her mother moved to the United States and remarried a wealthy man with married children. Frayda remained in Israel with her father, who subsequently had a heart attack and passed away. Now at fifteen, she boards with a family friend who works long hours while Frayda spends her year of mourning sadly thinking of her father and wishing for connection. On a visit to a bookstore, Frayda meets Elisheva, who introduces her to the Glazer family. When the family friend goes to London for an extended business trip, Frayda moves in with the Glazers and helps with the young children. Overweight and self-conscious, Frayda's self-esteem grows as she is embraced by the family and included in their activities. On a vacation trip to the United States, Frayda is subject to her mother's sharp criticism and need to dissociate from the past.

Frayda is thrilled to return to Israel, where she wins a writing contest, finds opportunities to do good deeds, and finds contentment with the Glazers.

This story appeared as a serial in *Binah Magazine*. Sometimes it is obvious that the plot evolved in weekly installments, but the author has avoided overly dramatic cliffhangers that are prevalent in many magazine serials. On the surface, the book is about an Orthodox girl and her life at school and at home, but Ms. Levin delves deeply into relationships and how a community can often become a family. Also refreshing in this book are the nuanced characters of Frayda's mother and Nomi Lightman, who initially seem "bad," but are struggling with their own issues. While popular YA fiction is more dramatic (and much less clean), the simple charm of this book makes it a good choice for all Jewish libraries. Many teens will identify with Frayda's challenges.

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

Raziel, Sara and Ilana Pollack. *Learning Curve*. New York: Feldheim, 2014. 215 pp. \$16.99 (9781598269796). Gr. 7-10.

Yehudis Tannenbaum gets all A's in school, but she feels as if no one notices anything else about her. Starting high school with a new group of girls gives her the opportunity to make new friends, but that proves to be much more difficult than she expects. Yehudis runs afoul of a teacher early in the school year, her new classmates call her only when they need help with homework or studying for a test, and geometry class presents her with the first academic challenge she can recall. To make matters worse, her inability to act, sing, or dance means that she is part of the costume team for the school play – and she can't sew either. Events surrounding her brother's marriage to the aunt of a classmate mark the point where things begin to improve.

Making new friends can be hard, but this "kosher" novel for young adults presents only a superficial look at some of the challenges. Though Yehudis is frustrated that her classmates notice only one aspect of her, she doesn't seem to notice the irony in her looking at them the same way. It takes her a very long time to recognize that she needs to play an active role in forming new friendships, too. The acknowledgments suggest that the authors, writing under pseudonyms, wrote the book while they were in high school. The authors' youth shows in Yehudis' sudden change of heart and the way the characters speak. Hebrew and Yiddish expressions are sprinkled throughout the text, and there is no glossary to help readers who are not familiar with those terms.

*Marci Lavine Bloch, D&R International, Silver Spring, MD
and past member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee*

Wiseman, Eva. *The World Outside*. Toronto: Tundra, 2014. 232 pp. \$19.99 (9780887769818) HC; (9780887769825) eBook. Gr. 6-10.

Wiseman, who has written several other young adult novels about Jewish history, spotlights a long-forgotten incident – the deaths of Gavin Cato and Yankel Rosenbaum and the Crown Heights riots of 1991. Chanie Altman is a seventeen-year-old Lubavitch girl living in Brooklyn. Her world is bound by Chasidic norms, but there is a great deal of dissonance in her life. There is an underlying sense of guilt which Chanie feels as the "normal" twin whose brother was handicapped due to a birth accident. There are constant conflicts with her mother, a seemingly harsh woman full of contradictions. There is subtle and sometimes overt hostility on the part of secular people who are scornful of Chasidim, as well as between "native born" Chasidim and "newly observant" families. Chanie's relationship with David, a non-Chasidic Jew, must be kept secret but their friendship grows as they meet in Prospect Park and he encourages her to reach beyond her boundaries. Blessed with a beautiful voice, she dreams of going to Juilliard and becoming a singer. She must also conceal her budding friendship with a young black woman, even though her mother has displayed kindness toward her black neighbors. The underlying clash between the black population of Crown Heights and the Jews comes to a head at the climax

of the book, when the riots occur and the police fail to take immediate action to stop them. Chanie's grandmother jumps out of a window and perishes when the riots revive her memories of the Holocaust. Although the plot seems to be leading up to Chanie's break with her community, the conclusion, in a dramatic twist, resolves many of her conflicts. This novel would be helpful in introducing the world of a Chasidic girl to Jewish and non-Jewish teens alike. Includes glossary.

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

Zadoff, Allen. *I Am the Weapon. (The Unknown Assassin: Book One).* New York: Little Brown and Company, 2013. \$6.66 (9780316335409). Gr. 10–12.

[Reviewer's note: Review based on first eBook edition (May 2014). The book was first published June 2013 as *Boy Nobody*. (352 pp. \$18.00 (9780316199681) HC; 368 pp. \$10.00 (9780316199674) Pbk. Released in Great Britain as *The Hit*.]

Zadoff, Allen. *I Am the Mission. (The Unknown Assassin: Book Two).* New York: Little Brown and Company, 2014. 432 pp. \$18.00 (9780316199698). Review based on eBook galley entitled *The Lost Mission*. Gr. 10–12.

"Ben" was recruited at age twelve to a group known as "The Program," which conducts covert operations to protect the United States. Now a trained assassin at age sixteen, he is tasked with taking out the mayor of New York City. He attends high school and tries to get close to the mayor's daughter. His assignment is complicated when he falls for Sam, who has her own secrets: her Israeli boyfriend has involved her in a plot to kill the visiting Israeli Prime Minister. When Ben's handlers, known as "Mom" and "Dad," change the target to Sam, Ben is torn. But he eventually foils the plot, which involves explosives at the mayor's residence and hand-to-hand combat with Sam's boyfriend, Gideon. Ben kills Sam to complete his mission; then he is on to his next assignment. The mysteriousness of Ben and The Program add to the tension, as do the short chapters, foreshadowing, and past recollections, both of Ben's life before The Program and of past assignments, that often interrupt the action at critical moments. The Jewish connection is Mayor Goldberg (modeled after former New York City Mayor Bloomberg?), the plot to kill the Israeli Prime Minister, and Ben's real identity – Zach Abram.

In the second book of the series, "Daniel Martin" begins to question the purposes and goals of The Program as his assignment is to infiltrate a paramilitary camp for teens and eliminate its charismatic leader. Again he is attracted to his target's daughter. The book is narrated in the first person, with minute-by-minute detail of the narrator's thoughts and actions. Readers will anxiously anticipate the next installment, as the Unknown Assassin's computer hacker friend, Howard, disappears at the end of this mission. Casual sex, underage drinking and expletives accompany the violence of fights, explosions, and assassinations. The minimal Jewish content and lack of Jewish values make this YA fiction more suitable for a public library.

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

GRAPHIC NOVELS

Klein, Yonah. *Skullcaps and Crossbones: The Adventures of Shmuel Kafri.* Illus. by Jacky Yarhi. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2014. 52 pp. \$15.95 (9781598269789). Gr. 5–8.

This graphic novel contains not one, not two, but three concurrent story lines within its covers. The graphic portion begins with the true story of Yaakov Koriel, a Jewish pirate who, as a way to escape the Spanish Inquisition, became a member of the Spanish navy, went up the ranks to captain, only to be discovered as a Jew. Saved by some crypto-Jewish crewmates, he captured a ship and became a pirate, and when he had enough of that, sailed to Israel and studied Kabbalah with a famous teacher there. His story is intertwined with the fictional story of three characters from the "Jewish Antiquities

Society,” who are invited to Israel to evaluate the contents of a *genizah* (a repository for books) at an archaeological dig. Inside an old chest from the sixteenth century, they discover Yaakov Koriel’s diary. While reading the diary, they discover his map indicating where he buried his treasure on an island off the coast of Jamaica. Apparently, someone else is also in search of this information as their room is ransacked in search of the map both in Israel and Jamaica. Together, the graphic novel is a suspenseful and engaging account of pirate life on the high seas, archaeological discoveries in Israel, and Jewish life in Jamaica. The artwork is detailed, colorful and imaginative. While all this is going on in words and pictures, supplemental factual and historical information about pirate life, Jewish history, and Jewish life in Jamaica is provided along the bottom edge of each page to support all facets of the story. It is an excellent and clear mix of fact and fiction.

The book is published by an Orthodox publisher, therefore the term “Hashem,” men wearing *tzitzit* and *yarmulkes*, and featuring only men throughout the story, is the norm. In addition, there is the occasional pedantic refrain, for example, “There were many heroic Jews who sacrificed all; but, unfortunately, there were others who wavered” (referring to the Spanish Inquisition). These issues aside, however, this is an exciting, interesting and highly engaging graphic novel—a great adventure book that should find a place in most libraries’ graphic novel collections.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC

Margalit, Rav Aharon. *Ahrele 1: The Incredible, Touching Story of Rav Aharon Margalit, Shlit”a*. Illus. by Gold. Transl. by C. Goldwasser. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2014. 60 pp. \$19.99 (9781598261066). Gr. 3–6.

As the first in a series of graphic novel adaptations of *As Long As I Live: The Life Story of Rav Aharon Margalit*, this volume begins in 1958 with six-year-old Ahrele (Rav Aharon’s boyhood name) lying paralyzed in a Jerusalem rehabilitation center. He is an extraordinarily knowledgeable and precocious child, especially given the fact that he has been paralyzed since he was two years old. His *Ima* (mother) has come to learn physiotherapy skills and takes him back to the *moshav* (an Israeli cooperative agricultural community) where they live. During the ambulance ride back to the *moshav*, Ima recounts how, in 1954 when Ahrele was two years old, he was stricken with polio during an epidemic in Israel. She describes her life-and-death attempts to reach the hospitals in time, to get the doctors to do everything possible to save him, to find—and stand up to—the Belzer Rebbe in order to receive a promise that her son would recover completely from this terrible disease. Upon arriving back home, Ahrele’s mother begins a program of physical and mental recovery that is demanding and persistent. Eventually, Ahrele learns to walk on crutches, returns to school, and begins playing on the school soccer team. Ahrele’s strong will to live and his mother’s unshakeable faith in Hashem, combined with her tireless and insistent drive to ensure he receives every opportunity to improve, make for a story that can only have a happy ending. Through determination, prayer, and no small number of miracles, this volume leaves Ahrele getting better every day, with only a speech impediment left to work on.

The book is Ultra-Orthodox in its viewpoint. Ima is constantly praying *Tehillim* (Psalms). The “Saintly Belzer Rebbe” appears three times and saves lives on each occasion. Hebrew words are not translated. There is no glossary to explain polio, iron lung, *moshav*, or any of the Hebrew, Jewish, or other words that may seem out of the ordinary to a child reading this story. In addition, while this is a graphic novel, the illustrations are flat and the layout is often confusing. While the life story of Rav Aharon Margalit is no doubt incredible and touching, it loses something in this graphic novel format.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC



HOLOCAUST & WORLD WAR II

Blankman, Anne. *Prisoner of Night and Fog.* New York: Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins. 416 pp. \$17.99 (9780062278814). Gr. 7-12.

In 1931 Munich, Gretchen Müller is a daughter of the National Socialist Party and a favorite of Adolf Hitler. Her father gave his life to save "Uncle Dolf." Gretchen believes Uncle Dolf and the party views about Jews until a Jewish reporter, Daniel Cohen, suggests her father was murdered. She uncovers evidence that proves her martyred father was shot from the back and while falling, shielded Hitler from bullets. She is forced to question all that she has been told her entire life while facing severe harm from her psychopathic brother, Reinhard, a member of the deadly Cell G. Learning the truth, and losing Hitler's favorite niece Geli to suicide and her friend Eva Braun to Hitler adulation, she now becomes one of the hunted with Daniel.

As early as 1931, Hitler's plan for the Jews is evident. Exquisitely researched and well told, this novel engrosses the mind and senses. Blankman shows herself to be a master of tension. Pages cannot be turned quickly enough to keep up once Gretchen confronts Uncle Dolf as her father's murderer and a fallible, sick man. Back matter includes a selected bibliography and an extensive author's note. Some extra care could have been given to produce a more Germanic sensibility, such as that shown in Robert Sharenow's *The Berlin Boxing Club* (Balzer + Bray, 2012). Some minor Americanisms pop up every now and then, such as the use of miles instead of kilometers and the term "bohemian" used as an artsy adjective and not geographic term. Also, Blankman uses the French moniker "Charlemagne" instead of the German, Karl the Great, for the ruler. The reference to Goethe's "Der Erlkonig" ("The Elf King") and its lines about night and fog seem contrived as a means to give the book its title. Finally, Gretchen has blond hair yet is shown differently on the cover. A sequel to this novel is already in the works.

Barbara Krasner, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, New Jersey

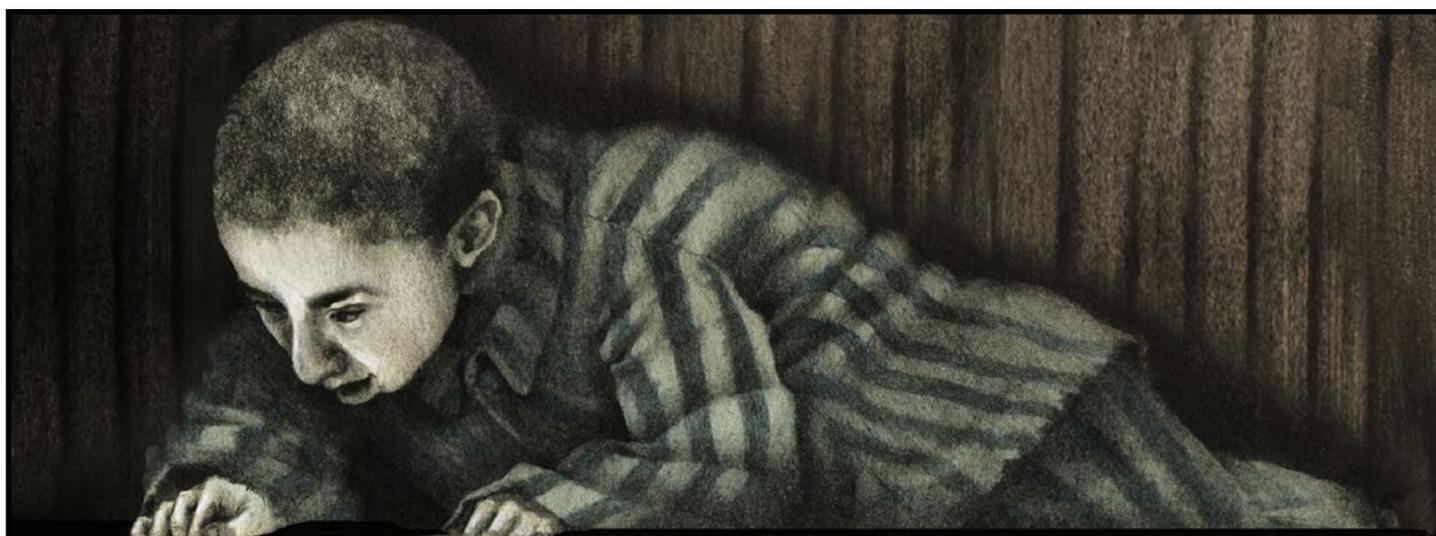
Farrant, Natasha. *What We Did For Love: Resistance, Heartbreak, Betrayal.* Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow, 2014. 208 pp. \$17.95 (9781623240288). Gr. 9-12.

Set in the fictional village of Samaroux, France, from February to June 1944, this historical romance begins like many teen novels. Fifteen-year-old Arianne falls for Luc, the handsome boy who has returned to the village after an absence of five years. Among the cast of characters is Romy, jealous of Luc and Arianne's romance; Solange, Arianne's friend and cousin; and Father Julien, priest and secret leader of the local Resistance. Problems and arguments ensue along the way but are ultimately resolved. However, *What We Did For Love* is much more than a Harlequin romance. The plot moves forward as Luc decides to join the Resistance and helps two *Résistants* who have blown up a train. The particularly brutal way the Germans punish the innocent villagers is based on events that occurred in the village of Oradour-sur-Glane, France, on June 10, 1944.

Although the theme is gripping, several problems are evident in this novel: An unknown narrator begins in first person but soon the narration switches to third person—from Arianne's point of view, or Luc's, or Romy's, or even a German soldier's called Alois Grand. Another confusing element is the abrupt changes in setting. Much of the action occurs in Samaroux and the surrounding area, but without any cues, the author moves several times from the village to the Eastern Front and back again. Lastly, several modern phrases, like "drop-dead gorgeous," are used that do not belong in the 1940s.

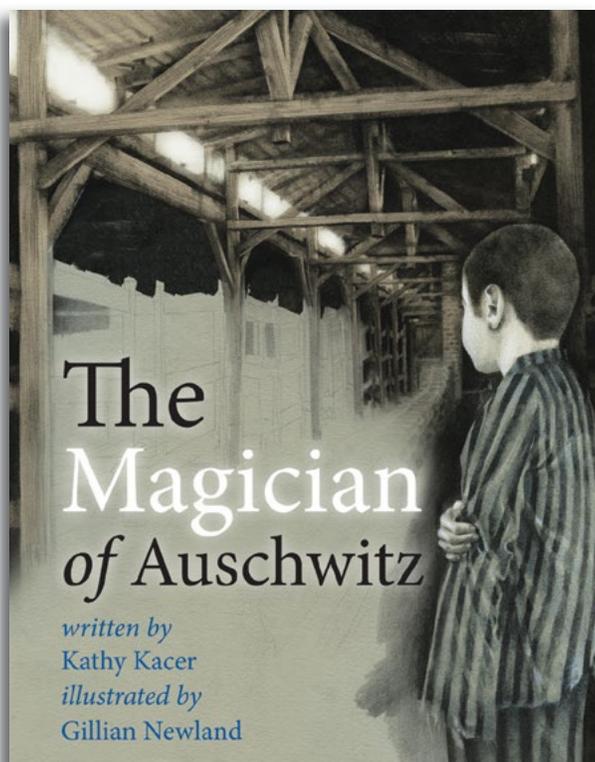
The amount of Jewish content is scanty but significant: Luc's grandfather betrays a Jewish couple and their little girl to the Gestapo in exchange for a carton of cigarettes; Alois Grand is part of a group whose aim is "to rid the Eastern Territories of Jews and Communists." How they accomplish this goal is told in graphic detail. Criticism aside, this novel contains lovely poetic descriptions of the countryside as well as intense action. It may appeal to teens trying to understand the complexities of the Occupation. Because of scenes containing graphic violence and sex, this novel may not be appropriate for all teen readers.

Anne Dublin, author of Stealing Time, Toronto, Canada



Kathy Kacer

The Magician of Auschwitz



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Kathy Kacer is the award-winning author of more than ten books in the Holocaust Remembrance Series for Young Readers, including *The Secret of Gabi’s Dresser*, *Hiding Edith*, and *Shanghai Escape*.

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Florida-James, Mark. *Berlin Wolf*. Leicestershire, U.K.: Matador, 2014. 369 pp. \$18.95 (9781783060054). Pbk. Gr. 6-12.

Fifteen-year-old Peter Stern accompanies his Jewish parents in November 1941 to Lake Wannsee to escape from Nazis, Berlin, and Germany. The tugboat captain takes them onto the River Spree and heaves Peter's large black dog, Wolfie, overboard. Peter jumps in after him and witnesses the captain's betrayal of his parents from afar. Now on his own with his dog, he sets up camp, learns to hunt and fish, and finds an abandoned boat. One day, a boy called Franz, a fifteen-year-old refugee from a labor camp, stumbles into the camp. The boys develop a friendship, for their skills are complementary. They turn to Franz's Aunt Berta for help and they enjoy food and peace until Berta's adopted son, Kurt, shows up. A Nazi fanatic, Kurt leads a raid and the boys are once more on the run. Together with Berta's friend, movie actress Lotte, and Professor Blumenthal, they form a band to help other enemies of the Nazis find freedom.

Author Mark Florida-James spent two summers in Berlin, affording him the opportunity to conduct research. However, the book suffers from a slow first third where Peter is on his own and from a constantly shifting point of view from character to character, even to Wolfie. The plot encompasses many events of the Nazi period, which may not have been truly essential to the story, in what seems to be an attempt to show what the author has learned in his research. At times, the narrative loses sight of chronology. For example, the author refers to several months passing when only one has passed. This novel shines in demonstrating the risks and hardships of the times and the importance of friendship and loyalty. For a far more satisfying read, *The Berlin Boxing Club* by Robert Sharenow (Balzer + Bray, 2012) is a preferred choice.

Barbara Krasner, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, New Jersey

Kerr, Philip. *The Winter Horses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014. 278 pp. \$16.99 (9780385755436). \$10.99 (9780385755450) eBook. Gr. 7-Adult.

Kerr weaves facts with fast-paced storytelling in his new book about Nazi intolerance for those deemed "biologically unfit." In this case, those slated for execution are the herd of Przewalski's horses living at the State Steppe Nature Reserve in the Ukraine. This rare breed of wild horses dates back to prehistoric times and their likenesses adorn cave walls in southwestern France. However, the hardy and headstrong breed is seen as an inferior evolutionary throwback capable of contaminating "the line of decent domesticated horses." Max, the sanctuary's elderly caretaker and Kalinka, a Jewish girl displaced by the massacre in her village, join forces to save the last breeding pair. Kalinka's horse-whispering ability creates an inter-species partnership of refugees fleeing Captain Grenzmann's obsession to carry out his orders. The girl and the horses' flight to freedom share elements straight out of an Indiana Jones movie: fanatical Nazi pursuers, an ancient burial chamber, and acquaintances that turn into deadly foes. The ending of this well-written tale, loosely based on a lesser known aspect of World War II, will satisfy readers who desire a happy ending. The book may also inspire some to read more about the history of the Przewalski's horses.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

Kopelman, Judy Tal. *Grandpa's Third Drawer: Unlocking Holocaust Memories*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society. 32 pp. \$17.95 (9780827612044). Gr. 1-5.

Young Uri loves to visit his grandparents, Genia and Yuda, especially when he can spend his vacations at their house. He notices the house is quiet, a silence of people who come from a vanished world that still lives in memories. Uri prefers to play in Grandpa's study where Grandpa has a desk with three drawers. The first drawer holds pens and paper and Uri's pencil case and his favorite crayons. The second drawer holds old toys made of wood and metal that belonged to Grandpa when he was a boy in Germany. The third drawer is always locked and is forbidden. One winter day while Grandma and Grandpa are out, Uri finds the key to the third drawer and opens it. Grandpa yells at him

when he returns and Uri wants to go home. Grandpa then explains the items: his sister's doll and diary from Terezín, the yellow Star of David, ghetto food ration stamps, and a set of wooden dominoes. Uri understands how brave his grandpa was and loves him even more now.

Kopelman takes an innovative approach to the illustrations through use of composed photographs of objects and photographs. This is a beautifully produced book. However, while intended as a gentle introduction to the Holocaust and featuring an attribution from noted Holocaust authority Elie Wiesel, *Grandpa's Third Drawer* has two serious flaws. First, several of the photographed objects that comprise the illustrations include items labeled in German, which would need to be explained. Second, and because this book was first written in Hebrew and then translated for an American market, young Uri is at the age where he draws with crayons yet he is left at his grandparents' home alone. A more palatable introduction to the Holocaust is Ellen Bari's *The Tattered Prayer Book* (Gihon River Press, 2013), which requires no explanation yet encourages discussion.

Barbara Krasner, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, New Jersey

Nardo, Don. *Hitler in Paris*. Captured World History series. Mankato, MN: Compass Point Books/Capstone Press, 2014. 64 pp. \$33.99 (978756547332). Gr. 6-12.

A picture is worth a thousand words. In the 1930s and 1940s, Heinrich Hoffmann captured the daily actions of the Nazi regime and its leader, Adolf Hitler, in photographs. *Hitler in Paris* focuses on a single event: Hitler's visit to Paris after Nazi forces defeated the French. Hoffmann accompanied him on the trip, as he often did, and shot a photograph of Hitler with architect Albert Speer and sculptor Arno Brek standing in front of the Eiffel Tower, the symbol of France. Author Don Nardo takes an inventive look at the Nazi regime from two angles: Adolf Hitler, and his photographer Heinrich Hoffmann. Readers learn about Hitler's youth and eventual position as Germany's chancellor. They read about Hoffmann's rise as Hitler's official photographer. Drawing on primary and secondary sources, readers are treated to a page-turning narrative not usually associated with series books. *Hitler in Paris* could easily be positioned as a standalone title and its readability goes beyond standard research-paper purpose. It demonstrates the power of photography to contemporary audiences and to generations that follow. The inclusion of Hoffmann's public-domain photographs adds to the book's appeal. Back matter includes a timeline of Hitler's and Hoffmann's lives, glossary, additional resources, source notes, select bibliography, and index.

Barbara Krasner, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, New Jersey

Nardo, Don. *Life in a Nazi Concentration Camp*. Living History series. San Diego, CA: Reference Point Press, 2014. 96 pp. \$28.95 (9781601525109). Gr. 8-12.

Even the most experienced writer and historian would find it challenging to compress descriptions of life in a concentration camp into a mere ninety-six pages. Don Nardo has done an admirable job in tackling this challenge, relying heavily on survivor accounts and some scholarly sources. Sidebars "In Their Own Words" and "Looking Back" provide necessary details that give readers a real sense of what life was like. The book addresses selection, housing, food, other living conditions, forced labor, inmate exploitation (including medical experiments), threats of punishment and death, survival, and liberation. The map of concentration camp locations is particularly useful. While well written, the text cannot match the graphic power of the photographs, shocking in their details. Even the captions seem to understate. Ample back matter includes source notes, bibliography, book and Internet resource listings for further research, and an index.

It is surprising that no reference is made to Raul Hilberg's definitive *The Destruction of the European Jews*, although scholar and survivor Saul Friedländer receives mention in the back matter. In a similar vein, survivor memoirist Primo Levi is noted, but not Elie Wiesel. None of the more than 50,000 survivor video accounts housed in the USC Shoah Foundation is referenced or suggested.

Barbara Krasner, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, New Jersey

Raum, Elizabeth. *A World War II Timeline*. Smithsonian War Timelines. Mankato, MI: Capstone, 2014. 48 pp. \$33.99 (9781476541587). Gr. 4–7.

This volume in the Smithsonian War Timelines series focuses on World War II. It follows the chronology of the war in both the European and Pacific Theaters. Photos not only enhance the text, but also create a satisfying experience. The book is categorized into twenty sections, ranging from the “World War II” introduction and “The Crisis Begins” to “Final Days” and “Recovering from War.” They demonstrate the devastation and effects of war; how dissatisfaction with World War I treaties created a horrifying aftermath—consequences of which are still happening today. Back matter includes a glossary, suggestions for further reading, a listing of web sites, and an index.

Some of the timeline entries seem forced, such as one about Albert Einstein. This volume will be most helpful to the student looking for information about a particular subject pertaining to World War II (aided by the index). However, the chapters make it difficult to holistically comprehend the total World War II chronology. It would have been useful to mention the Final Solution in the introduction, so readers could understand Hitler’s strategy so evident in *Mein Kampf*.

Barbara Krasner, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, New Jersey

Zail, Suzy. *Playing for the Commandant*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2014. \$16.99. 256 pp. (9780763664039), (9780763666736) eBook. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 7–12.

Hanna Mendel is a fifteen-year-old Jewish young woman trapped inside the Debrecen Ghetto in Hungary. She dreams of playing piano in Paris like her hero, the famous pianist, Clara Schumann. Those dreams are crushed permanently when she and her family are deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. She gets placed in a bunk with her sister Erika and mother. Her mother has an emotional breakdown and is taken to the camp “Infirmery,” never to be seen again. Although she is not Jewish, Piri, Hanna’s former teacher, is also at Auschwitz-Birkenau because she had Jewish students. Piri recommends to the camp officials that Hannah audition to play for the commandment. By a stroke of luck, Hanna gets the job. At the commandment’s villa, she stays warm, is given clean clothes, and food is snuck to her by the other prisoners and the commandant’s son, Karl. In spite of these “perks,” Hanna’s working so closely under the eye of the short-tempered and cruel commandant is nerve-racking. In contrast, Erika and other prisoners must work outside in the cold as they move stone in the quarry. Hanna sneaks Erika extra food, but still feels guilty about her own “comfort” opposed to Erika’s suffering. Also, Hanna feels conflicted because she develops romantic feelings for Karl. When the camp is liberated, Hanna returns to her town to find other people living in her home. She reunites with Erika and decides to reach out to Karl.

There are vivid descriptions of life for prisoners suffering in concentration camps—starvation, overwork, and brutalization by Nazi guards. Readers also feel the pressure as Hanna tries to please the commandant while witnessing his brutality. There is a good description as well of the complicated relationship between the Jewish bunk leader and the other Jewish prisoners. *Playing for the Commandant* shows a different aspect of life for the few “fortunate” Jewish prisoners in concentration camps who had special talents. The novel will appeal to a wide range of readers.

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



ISRAEL

Lehman-Wilzig, Tami. *Stork's Landing*. Illus. by Anna Shuttlewood. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2014. 32 pp. \$17.95 (9781467713955) HC; \$7.95 (9781467713962) Pbk; \$6.95 (9781467746731) eBook. Review based on PDF file. Ages 4–8.

Maya lives on a kibbutz and enjoys watching the migrating birds as they return north after wintering in Africa. When a stork gets caught and injures itself, the residents build her a nest in which to recover. The seasons change and soon a male visits and builds a nest in a tree. A female joins him and soon there are baby storks. When the female does not return from a venture from the nest, Maya and her father have an idea: they use the kibbutz's bucket loader to lift the once-injured bird to the nest in the tree—completing “a new family of storks.”

Simple, colorful illustrations complement the text, with the white and gray of the storks set against vibrant spring blossoms and muted shades of autumn skies. Several aspects of life in Israel enhance the story: the annual migration of birds and the cooperative community environment of the kibbutz. A note or suggested reading about the migration of hundreds of species of birds through Israel as well as the nature of storks would have provided context. Otherwise, this sweet story is recommended for all Jewish libraries.

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

Murray, Julie. *Israel*. Explore the Countries series. Minneapolis: ABDO Publishing, 2014. 40 pp. \$27.31 (9781617838132). Gr. 3–5.

This entry is another compendium of double-page spreads featuring color photos of Israel opposite a page of large-font, short, choppy sentences which cover topics such as cities, borders, flora and fauna, the country's flag and languages, bordering nations, and so on. Pages on contemporary history have the obligatory assurances that “many people are working for peace,” and people continue “struggling for peace.” The book is adequate if one is looking for the sketchiest of information about Israel for third or fourth graders. Oddly missing is the presence of Christian holy places and Christian history from the presentation. *Israel* by Jennifer Rozines Roy (Benchmark Books, 2004) and *Israel* by Marcia Gresko (Lerner Publications, 2009) do a better and fuller job of providing basic information on Israel for primary/middle grade schoolchildren.

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

JEWISH LIFE AND VALUES

Verzov, Ella and Chana Oirechman. *Tamar of Venice*. Young Lamplighters series. Brooklyn: Menucha Publishers, 2013. 55 pp. \$16.99 (9781614651703). Gr. 1–4.

Verzov, Ella and Chana Oirechman. *Moshe of Japan*. Young Lamplighters series. Brooklyn: Menucha Publishers, 2013. 52 pp. \$16.99 (9781614651710). Gr. 1–4.

For the very first time, a series of books focuses on the children of Chabad Lubavitch *shluchim* (emissaries). There are over 3,000 *shluchim* stationed around the world. They are living in cities large and small, with active, developing, or transient Jewish populations. And often, these couples and their children are among a handful of Jews in their city. Their job is to bring *Yiddishkeit* (Jewish culture) and learning to their environs. What the Lamplighters series of books makes touchingly clear is that the children of the official emissaries are true emissaries, too.

In *Tamar of Venice*, we are introduced to eight-year-old Tamar, who lives in the historic Jewish ghetto in Venice with her parents and younger brothers. She shows us around her picturesque island city with pride. She goes to school each day by *vaporetto* (water bus) and has only one other girl in

her class. Shabbat is the highlight of the week when her family hosts many guests from the *yeshiva* (Orthodox Jewish college) where her father teaches, from the community, as well as tourists from around the globe. She helps her mother plan the menu and make challah. Tamar attends one of the old synagogues in Venice each Shabbat where she helps “girls pray by showing them which prayers to say and when.” While Tamar longs to visit family and friends in Israel, she knows that living in Venice is very important: “I think about all of the people we are bringing close to Torah. I know that very soon, with the coming of *Mashiach* (Messiah), we will all be together in Jerusalem, in the Holy Land.”

The second book in the Lamplighters series is *Moshe of Japan*. It follows eight-year-old Moshe, who lives in Tokyo with his parents and siblings. There is no Jewish day school in Tokyo, so Moshe goes to school online with other emissary boys from around the world. It’s tough not having many friends to play with, but Moshe shows us that Tokyo is a fascinating, clean, and safe city. Like Tamar, Moshe misses family, friends and food from Israel, but he recognizes that he is part of a long chain going back to his great-grandfather in Russia who made sacrifices to teach Torah to others.

Both books have high production values: great photography, excellent graphic layout, and fascinating “did you know” additional fact pages. The translation from Hebrew to English often feels “clunky,” particularly in Tamar’s story. While there are photos of the children’s fathers in each book, regrettably, there are none of the mothers. This is an unfortunate oversight. The series expresses an Orthodox/Lubavitch sensibility without being didactic. *Mendy of Siberia* is already in print; *Rivka of Thailand* is expected soon. Recommended for family, school, and synagogue libraries that welcome stories about Orthodox Jewish observance.

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

NON-FICTION

Silver, Mitchell. *The Veterans of History: A Young Person’s History of the Jews*. Brookline, MA: Boston Workmen’s Circle, 2014. 334 pp. \$19.95 (9780615957340) Pbk. Gr. 8–12.

Back when dinosaurs roamed the earth, Solomon Grayzel’s *History of the Jews* was the “go-to” volume for Jewish teens. Mitchell Silver’s volume retells the story and updates it into the twenty-first century. *The Veterans of History* begins with the Torah, which it treats as unprovable myth. The rest of its twenty chapters recount the Jewish story, beginning with King David. The narrative’s 153 essays (most under two pages long) focus on important aspects of Jewish communal history: the Roman period, the Golden Age of Spain, life in Eastern Europe, and the immigrant experience in America. The writing is not overly stiff and tries to connect young people to the past. Understandably, there is an emphasis on the past 250 years, particularly the role Jews have played in social justice. This includes the development of socialism and the Bund in Europe (Chapter 15). In America, life on the Lower East Side dominates Chapter 16. Chapter 17, on the Shoah, may be confusing for students new to the topic. Chapters 18 and 19 tell the story of Israel: first the era before Independence, then the past sixty-five years.

Since Grayzel published his book in 1947, no book for young people has quite matched his coverage. Mitchell Silver, to his credit, has made a stab at completeness. But his telling has a strongly secularist, socialist bent. The sections about life in Poland and the struggles of Russian Jews in the nineteenth century dominate the text. There is very little about life in Northern Europe before the 1800s, or about the Jews who settled in Holland after the expulsions, for example. Also, the review copy did not have an index or bibliography, so it was not possible to evaluate the sources.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA



PICTURE BOOKS

Korngold, Jamie. *Sadie, Ori and Nuggles Go to Camp*. Illus. by Julie Fortenberry. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2014. 24 pp. \$17.95 (9781467704243). Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. K-1.

Sadie and her younger brother Ori return in a fifth story filled with more sweetness than *Judaica*. The two delightful youngsters—very recognizable thanks to the same illustrator as the other books—are off to Jewish sleep-away camp. Three items provide the entire Jewish content: the setting, a “shalom” greeting, and a statement that at camp Sadie does not have to explain things as she does at school where she is the only Jewish child in her class. The fiction is soundly mainstream and soundly positive. This picture book’s lively text and sprightly pictures present a predictable ending that works for readers’ hearts and the plot. Sadie looks forward to seeing her camp friends again, while Ori, attending for the first time, is nervous about not sleeping with his favorite stuffy, Nuggles. Torn between sleepless nights and being called a baby by his peers, Ori tries his parents’ suggestion only to decide Nuggles must go with him. When his counselor takes him to his cabin he finds all his bunkmates have stuffies too. While not as cute as Tamar Fox’s *No Baths at Camp* (AJL Reviews, Feb./Mar. 2013), this quiet story is recommended for its warmth, its understanding of human nature, and for its inviting delivery of Jewish camp for the very young about to sleep away for the very first time.

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

Editor’s note: The fourth title in the Sadie & Ori series (*Sadie’s Lag Ba’Omer Mystery*) is reviewed below.

Skye, Ione. *My Yiddish Vacation*. Illus. by Scott Menchin. New York: Henry Holt, 2014. 30 pp. \$17.99 (9780805095128) Pbk. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 2-4.

The premise of this picture book is charming. Seven-year-old Ruth and thirteen-year-old Sammy are going on a weekend visit to their grandparents in Florida. The story is told from Ruth’s point of view in a breezy, conversational style. The kids enjoy their time—swimming, playing, dancing—and realize they’ve given their grandparents a lot of *nachas* (pride, joy) by the time the visit is over. Based on Skye’s nostalgic memories of visits to her grandparents in Florida, the storytelling has an authentic ring augmented by Skye’s photos. The narrative is sprinkled with many Yiddish words, but herein lies the problem. For the Yiddish purist, this book rubs the wrong way: A number of errors in Yiddish grammar and transliteration (e.g. *shluf* should be *shlof*) are evident. More egregious yet is the use of *alter kockers* to describe old people. This vulgar expression is not appropriate in a book for children who are learning a few Yiddish words and phrases, even in such a casual, colloquial manner.

The pen and ink, brightly-colored illustrations are detailed and expressive. Award-winning illustrator, Scott Menchin, has obviously researched this period for the hairstyles, clothing, wallpaper, and furniture. The layout is varied and the illustrations complement the text. Because this is an advance reader’s copy, one hopes the Yiddish errors will be corrected in the final published edition.

Anne Dublin, author of Stealing Time, Toronto, Canada

SHABBAT & HOLIDAYS

Adler, David A. *The Story of Passover*. Illus. by Jill Weber. New York: Holiday House, 2014. 32 pp. \$15.95 (9780823429028). Gr. 1-3.

In this companion volume to 2011’s *The Story of Hanukkah*, David Adler once again presents a retelling of a Jewish holiday story in an accessible, highly engaging format. In this book, he focuses on the high points of the Exodus story from Jacob settling into Egypt through the enslavement of the Hebrews, the death of the Hebrew boys, Baby Moses in the Nile, the Burning Bush, the Ten Plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and the drowning of the Egyptians. Each page is accompanied by Jill Weber’s

bold, colorful acrylic paintings which feature Egyptian stylistic details in appropriate places. This picture book could easily be used as the Maggid portion during any seder. The very last page explains the Passover holiday in brief and the seder in a bit more detail. Overall, this is an excellent reference book for families with young children to explain the holiday as well as for educators to use in their classrooms and would make an outstanding addition to any library's holiday collection.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwardsbooks.com, Washington, DC

Brown, Barbara. *Hanukkah in Alaska*. Illus. by Stacey Schuett. New York: Henry Holt, 2013. 32 pp. \$16.99 (9780805097481). Preschool- Gr. 3.

Brown, a resident of Anchorage, crafts a tale about a place where wildlife can become a part of one's daily life. In Alaska, "daylight is only five hours long" in winter and snow falls so heavily that it covers the windows. During this time, hungry moose are known to come into towns looking for food. In this story, one moose takes up residence in a family's backyard, chewing on their trees and eschewing the carrots, cookies, apples, and spinach offered as inducements to make it leave. On the last night of Hanukkah, the family goes outside to watch nature's version of lit menorah candles—the aurora borealis brightening the night sky in a rainbow of colors. During the heavenly lightshow, the moose's antlers become entangled in a tree swing. Only when a trail of latkes is placed down the driveway does the unwelcome guest eat and walk its way out of the family's life. Schuett's muted illustrations in acrylic and gouache reflect the subdued tones found in this northern land during the long winter months. The book includes an explanation of Hanukkah and of the aurora borealis. Schuett also illustrated *The Feather-Bed Journey* (Albert Whitman, 1995) and *Papa's Latkes* (Candlewick, 2004). A version of this story appeared in *A Hanukkah Treasury*, edited by Eric A. Kimmel (Henry Holt, 1998).

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

Diamond, Shani. *Mish and Mush series*. Illus. by Nissa Niasoff. Nanuet, NY: Feldheim 2013. 17 pp. \$3.99 (978-1877039188) Pbk. Grade K-1.

The ten books reviewed are: *Hashem Loves Me; A Taste of Shabbos; What Am I?; Let's All Run, Let's All Race, Let's All Catch the Alef Bais; Tick Tick Tick; How Many Coins in the Pushka Today?; Spin a Dreidel Story; When I Grow Up; Thank You Hashem; Eight Tiny Flames*. Nine jelly beans and one duck are the characters that populate each book. The pages are laminated and the books are small (6" x 6"). The colorful, smiling jelly bean characters are whimsical and entertaining. Most of the books are written in fluid rhyme. Each book emphasizes a Jewish value; for example thanking Hashem for the beauty in the world, helping other people, learning Torah, and keeping Shabbos. Some of the books are interactive. The reader is given a clue and asked to find the answer before turning the page. Children will enjoy the rhymes, the colorful pictures, and searching for answers to clues.

Ilka Gordon, Aaron Garber Library, Cleveland, OH

Herskowitz, Benjie. *Passover with a Twist: Rachel Imagines the Passover Story*. Illus. by Avi Katz. Israel: Contento De Semrik, 2014. 32 pp. \$10.95 (9789655503074) Pbk. Gr. K-4.

Meet Rachel, the youngest in her family. After she recites the Four Questions at the Passover seder, her father answers the questions by explaining the story of Pharaoh by using clichés to get the point across. For example, he explains how "The wicked, stubborn Pharaoh had finally given in and freed the Jewish People. He was not only punished, but ended up EATING HIS WORDS." This cleverly written story, with explanations of each cliché and brightly colored, cartoon-like illustrations, helps get the point across to the younger readers. It is a great story for those with a sense of humor. Rachel learns that sometimes parents use words to mean one thing but kids might imagine something completely different. Kids will love the zany images that Rachel conjures up in her head when her father uses clichés like "Burying His Head in the Sand" or "Got a Taste of His Own Medicine" to describe Pharaoh's stubbornness. The author includes

a cliché definition page as well as a brief Children's Haggadah in English and Hebrew. This could be a great addition to any Jewish day school library as well as an English lesson on the use of clichés.

Lisa Katz, Corte Madera Public Library, Corte Madera, CA

Kimmel, Eric A. *Simon and the Bear: A Hanukkah Tale*. Illus. by Matthew Trueman. Los Angeles: Hyperion Books, 2014. 40 pp. \$16.99 (9781423143550). Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. K-3.

Prolific Hanukkah picture book author Kimmel tells a fantastical tale about self-sacrifice and the power of faith in this new offering. During a transatlantic crossing to America, young Simon finds that his mother's parting words are prophetic: "You may need a miracle on your long journey." When the ship hits an iceberg on the first night of Hanukkah, Simon selflessly gives up his spot in a lifeboat to another passenger. Before the ship sinks, he saves himself by jumping onto the "floating ice mountain." Despite Simon's initial despair at his dire predicament, hope resurfaces, along with the resolve to celebrate the holiday. Simon's plea for a Hanukkah miracle is heard and materializes in the form of a polar bear exquisitely drawn like a cuddly plush Steiff come to life. The bear has a strong maternal instinct and stays to take care of the stranded boy. After Simon is rescued by a passing ship on the eighth night, more miracles ensue, benefiting both Simon and his entire family. The warm, aqua-tinted illustrations by Trueman (*When the Chickens Went on Strike* and *A Picture for Marc*) are a highlight of this lovingly crafted ode to courage and perseverance. The book includes a brief overview of the holiday. Note to parents: Don't be surprised if after reading this book, "a real polar bear" ends up at the top of your child's Hanukkah wish list.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

Korngold, Jamie. *Sadie's Lag Ba'Omer Mystery*. Illus. by Julie Fortenberry. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2014. 32 pp. \$17.95 (9780761390473). Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. K-3.

Curious Sadie and her brother Ori return in a fourth story filled with tradition and delight. The two youngsters are problem solvers. When they hear about a new holiday, Lag Ba'Omer, they declare it a mystery to be solved. They search first in books, then among holiday ceremonial objects; they discover information about nine Jewish holidays, none of them the new one. They turn to adults, asking pointed questions. The delivery man admits he does not bring gift boxes. Aunt Katy has a hint about picnics; Uncle Danny about bonfires and campfire songs; Grandma about eating yummy food. Grandpa reveals all as they nestle with him on the porch. As Sadie and Ori learn, so do the targeted readers. Direct text explains the ancient Roman decree preventing Torah study for Jews, great teacher Rabbi bar Yochai's secret cave where he continued to teach, and the camouflage of picnic or hunting gear used when approaching his hideout. The story ends with a picnic of mouthwatering foods, a bonfire and songs: a happy celebration recalling the courage of ancient teacher and students. The end note expands holiday facts to include the significance of the Omer and customs during its days, Yochai's writing of the Zohar, the mourning for the plague that hit his students, and the meaning of the name "Lag Ba'Omer." The artist is the same as in the earlier volumes; Sadie, Ori and family will be familiar to readers in colorful spreads of crowded, active art which reinforce the text. This delicious story fills a need: an elementary grades' explanation of an historical holiday in a stand-alone book smartly targeted to its audience that delivers to children and the adults who read it to them. Highly recommended for expanding celebration information and for bringing us once again the irrepressible, charming Sadie and Ori.

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

Murray, Julie. *Rosh Hashanah*. Holiday series. Minneapolis: ABDO, 2014. 24 pp. \$23.09 (9781624031878). Gr. 2-3.

Rosh Hashanah, "the head of the year," is a meaningful Jewish holiday. Murray's compact book adequately explains the holiday with photographs, a glossary, index, bibliography, and organized explanatory text. The majority of the book is accurate; however, it is lacking in sufficient explanations of the holiday customs and bibliographic resources. For example, missing are the number of shofar

blasts during the holiday or the concept of *tzedakah* (usually translated as charity). Two paragraphs about Yom Kippur, “The Day of Atonement,” are tacked onto the end of the book. Most readers will be better served by Deborah Heiligman’s *Celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: With Honey, Prayers, and the Shofar* (National Geographic, 2007), which is a more comprehensive resource that includes Rosh Hashanah customs, a holiday recipe, larger photographs, and detailed explanations.

Ben Pastcan, *Shalom School, Sacramento, CA*

Rockliff, Mara. *Chik Chak Shabbat*. Illus. by Krysten Brooker. Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2014. 32 pp. \$15.99 (9780763655280). Reviewed from an ARC. Preschool–Gr. 2.

Every Saturday, the enticing smell of *cholent* drifts throughout the five-story building from Goldie Simcha’s apartment. And every Saturday, Goldie shares the slowly-simmered stew with her culturally diverse neighbors living below in a weekly meal celebrating togetherness. For her, “the taste of *cholent* is...Shabbat” and is a dish one cannot make hurriedly or “*chik chak*.” However, one week, this favorite routine is upset when Goldie becomes sick and is unable to cook. To help salvage the tradition, her neighbors raid their pantries and refrigerators. They quickly gather together potato curry, Korean barley tea, tomato pizza, and beans and rice into an impromptu potluck. By doing so, they add the most important ingredient to any Shabbat meal – a sense of sharing and community. Brooker’s illustrations (*Runaway Dreidel!* Square Fish, 2007), done in oil paint and textured collage, have a lively three-dimensional quality. The book is a tasty addition to the growing trend of children’s books that blend the culinary and literary arts, such as *The Little Red Hen and the Passover Matzah* by Leslie Kimmelman (Holiday House, 2010), *The Princess of Borscht* by Leda Schubert (Roaring Brook Press, 2011), and *Rise & Shine: A Challah-Day Tale* by Karen Ostrove (Kar-Ben, 2013). Includes a recipe for vegetarian *cholent*.

Allison Marks, *Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH*

Rosenthal, Sally. *Matzo Frogs*. Illus. by David Sheldon. Alabama: NewSouth Books, 2014. 32 pp. \$17.95 (9781588383020). Preschool–Gr.2.

Minnie is getting ready for Shabbat and her favorite cousins are coming for dinner. She is busy preparing the meal when she accidentally spills the matzo ball soup all over the floor. What a mess! But Minnie has no time to make more soup. What is she to do? Luckily for Minnie, there are some kind-hearted Jewish frogs that live nearby and decide to save her Shabbat dinner by cooking the soup themselves. In this hilarious, yet creative story, watch how the frogs become wonderful chefs and save the day.

This is a beautifully illustrated story with bright, colorful paintings that portray the whimsical frogs and their personalities. Meet Sol, Mel, Gilda and Golda Frog—just to name a few. These silly frogs are chopping the carrots, stirring the broth, and creating matzo ball sculptures. With their unique personalities, the frogs learn that working together as a community is important and that one *mitzvah* (good deed) always leads to another *mitzvah*. *Matzo Frogs* is a sweet, simple story with a great message for young readers: the importance of *mitzvot*, community, and teamwork.

Lisa Katz, *Corte Madera Public Library, California*

Sabbag, Galia. *RIMON for Shira: A Rosh Hashanah Story*. 24 pp. \$10.00 (9781629511702) Pbk. *Shira at the Temple—a Yom Kippur Story* (978-1629516585) Pbk. Illus. by Erin Taylor. John’s Creek, GA: <http://shirasseries.com>. 2013. Gr. 1–3.

RIMON for Shira is the story of one of those situations every parent encounters when his or her child learns something new at school. Shira learns about “rimonim” in Hebrew school and immediately wants to have this new fruit at her Rosh Hashanah table. Her mother agrees to take her to the market to find one; however, after visiting several stores with no luck—none of the vendors have ever heard of a “rimon”—Shira and her mom are ready to give up. With one last store to visit, Shira walks in to see an enormous pile of “rimonim” in front of her. She is thrilled and her mom is delighted to find that what they had been looking for was pomegranates.

Shira at the Temple is based on the Chasidic story about the little boy who wants to say a Yom Kippur prayer, but doesn't know how to read. As he recites his *alef bet* instead, God – hearing the boy's heartfelt intention – closes the gates and seals everyone for a good life. In this story, Shira wants to participate in the Yom Kippur service, but does not know how to read. Nevertheless, she steps up to the *bimah* and bravely asks the rabbi if she might say something to the congregation. She then proceeds to say her *alef bet* loudly and with feeling. Everyone is amazed and delighted.

These two stories are charming and delightful. While what look to be ink and watercolor illustrations (they could be computer generated) are cute and a bit cartoonish in appearance, Shira is quite expressive and that comes through in the illustrations. All of the major symbols of the holidays are represented. Sure to find a place on many Jewish shelves during the High Holiday season, however, there are a few things to be aware of: these stories contain many Hebrew words and/or blessings, but unless the word is the transliteration of itself (e.g. *rimon*/רמון, *shofar*/שופר), there are no transliterations for non-Hebrew speakers either in the text or in a glossary at the back of the books. Therefore, the reader will learn that Hebrew in Hebrew is עברית and see the entire Shecheyanu prayer printed on the page, but the Hebrew words will not be transliterated. In fact, to see the transliterations, one must go to the books' website (<http://shirasseries.com>) and find each title, click on the Resource page, and see the Vocabulary list for the book – not particularly conducive to book time or bedtime reading.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC

Simpson, Martha Seif. *The Dreidel That Wouldn't Spin: A Toyshop Tale of Hanukkah*. Illus. by Durga Yael Bernhard. Bloomington, IN: Wisdom Tales, 2014. 32 pp. \$16.95 (9781937786281). Reviewed from an ARC. Preschool-Gr. 2.

With Hanukkah fast approaching, the toy shopkeeper is thrilled to purchase a finely carved and hand-painted wooden dreidel from a passing peddler because he knows it will command a large sum of money. He dismisses the peddler's advice that "the miracle of Hanukkah cannot be bought," for he sees only profit, not miracles, coming from the small toy. On two separate occasions, the shopkeeper sells it to overly-indulged children. Each time, the dreidel is returned and the money refunded when it refuses to spin. Only when a father and son of modest means come into the store, grateful for the chance to window-shop, and truly appreciative of the beauty of each toy, does the shopkeeper realize that true happiness is not a commodity. He gives the boy the dreidel as a Hanukkah gift. Only then does it spin, the words on its sides changing to "Nes katan hayah poh," meaning "a small miracle happened here." Bernhard's softly rendered illustrations help to make this gently taught lesson about the priceless nature of gratitude a story to be shared for many years to come. Includes an overview of Hanukkah and instructions on how to play the dreidel game.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

Soffer, Allison Sarnoff. *Apple Days: A Rosh Hashanah Story*. Illus. by Bob McMahon. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2014. 32 pp. \$17.95 HC; \$7.95 Pbk. (9781467712033) HC; (9781467712040) Pbk. Reviewed from an ARC. Preschool-Gr. 1.

In this lovely holiday story, Katy prepares to make applesauce from scratch with her mother for Rosh Hashanah, an annual event they both look forward to. They begin the process with a trip to the orchard to select their apples, hoping to pick the perfect fruit. As soon as there is a date planned for "Apple Day," Katy shares this information with everyone she knows – her dad, her neighbors, Sam the shoe store man, Carla the hairdresser, all the friends in her preschool class, and even the principal and the rabbi. She is clearly surrounded by a loving community. Katy's disappointment is palpable as the long-awaited date is cancelled due to the early arrival of her new cousin. Each person she has told of the plan now needs to be informed of the change, and everyone joins to help her deal with the disappointment; each one contributes something to make her less sad. Many friends give her an apple, Sam gives her a jar of cinnamon, and

Carla adds to the gifts with a lemon and some sugar. When they arrive at home, Katy lines up her apples on the kitchen counter and realizes that it is her job to remember what to do next. Her father offers to help. He peels and chops the apples and undertakes the online search to find a recipe. Katy finds the big pot and together she and her dad add the apples, cinnamon, sugar, and lemon juice. In a very short time, a sweet smell fills the kitchen. The applesauce comes out perfect! Katy then shares the finished product with her classmates the next day. At Rosh Hashanah when the family gathers, there is applesauce for all, and her new cousin, Will. The age-appropriate story is followed by Katy's applesauce recipe. There is no overt Jewish content, but Rosh Hashanah traditions and family togetherness are clear and beautifully portrayed. Colorful pictures with emotion-filled faces—both happy and sad—are a perfect accompaniment to the story. Illustrations are done digitally, from sketch to final color artwork. An excellent read-aloud.

Shelly Feit, Library Consultant, Teaneck, NJ.

Yacowitz, Caryn. *I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Dreidel.* Illus. by David Slonim. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2014. 32 pp. \$16.99 (9780439915304). Gr. K-5.

"I Know an Old Lady who Swallowed a Fly" is a traditional folk song that has been set to music by various artists as well as published in books. The song tells the ridiculous story of an old lady who swallows increasingly larger animals. There are many variations to this song with rhyming verses usually leading to the death of the old lady after swallowing a horse, of course. Here, Caryn Yacowitz created a similar story changing the theme to an old lady swallowing a dreidel instead of a fly. The family is gathering for Hanukkah and Grandma swallows a misplaced dreidel that she thought was a bagel. The story continues with her eating more items for Hanukkah: latkes, brisket, *gelt* (chocolate money), and even a menorah.

Slonim cleverly uses famous artwork from as far back as the 1500s to convey each item that the little old lady is eating. While this approach is unique, it feels too contrived and probably a bit of a stretch for the younger audience. The artist leads the reader through art history by creating paintings similar to famous paintings such as the *Mona Lisa*, *The Scream*, *The Milkmaid*, and *The Starry Night*, with each scene of the old lady eating something else for Hanukkah. The author's note clearly explains each illustration and the painting it parodies. While this is wonderful for those that appreciate artwork, the emphasis in this story is certainly not on the holiday of Hanukkah. While some might think this is a hilarious take on the world's greatest works of art as well as one of the most sung songs for toddlers with a hint of Hanukkah, it may not find an appreciative audience in synagogue and day school libraries. *I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Dreidel* can't compare to Simms Taback's celebrated version of the original story.

Lisa Katz, Children's Librarian, Corte Madera Public Library, Corte Madera, CA

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Association of Jewish Libraries

P.O. Box 1118
Teaneck, NJ 07666
(201) 371-3255

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Editor-in-Chief

Uri Kolodney
University of Texas Libraries
The University of Texas at Austin
One University Station S5400
Austin, TX 78712-8916
generaleditor@jewishlibraries.org

Copy Editing and Page Layout

Karen Ulric
Golda Och Academy
1418 Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, NJ 07052
ajlcopyeditor@gmail.com

Adult Review Editors

Daniel Scheide
S.E. Wimberly Library
Florida Atlantic University
777 Glades Road
Boca Raton, FL 33431-6424
561-297-0519
dascheide@gmail.com

Dr. Rebecca Jefferson
Head, Isser and Rae Price
Library of Judaica
539, Library West
George A. Smathers Libraries
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL. 32611-7010
Phone: (352) 273-2650
Fax: (352) 392-8118
jefferson@ufl.edu

Please send adult books for review to D. Scheide

Children and YA Review Editors

Rachel Kamin
1054 Holly Circle
Lake Zurich, IL 60047
rachelkamin@gmail.com
and Anne Dublin
adublin@sympatico.ca

Please send children's and YA books for review to R. Kamin

Please send requests for membership and dues information to:

AJL VP for Membership
Sheryl Stahl
Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR
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Los Angeles, CA 90007
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