

Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND REBECCA JEFFERSON

Adler, Elchanan. *Yerach Tov: Birkat HaChodesh in Jewish Law and Liturgy*. NY: OU Press, 2014. 115 pp. \$11.85. (9781879016552).

This translation of *Yerah Tov* succinctly cites a wide range of sources on Birkat ha-Hodesh, the Blessing of the New Month in the Shabbat morning service. Adler examines its history, customs, and laws from early *sidurim* (Rav Amram) to halakhic works: Talmudim, Codes (Tur, Mishneh Torah, Shulhan Arukh), Responsa, and liturgical commentaries. This work contains a line by line explanation of the words of this prayer, discusses its sources, and discusses its place in the liturgy.

The book addresses questions such as: What is the source of the prayer for the new month? What connection does this practice today share with the sanctification of the new moon in antiquity? Why is the prayer omitted before Tishrei? What is the origin of the words in the prayer “*haverim kol Yisra’el*” (all Jews are brethren)? How do the requests for the reinstatement of Temple and of *semikhah* (rabbinical ordination) have roots in ancient prayer? What is the eschatological significance of *Kidush ha-Hodesh*?

Moshe Schapiro helped compose the excellent 17-page historical bibliography of authors and sources cited in the work.

This book is accessible to the layman and scholar alike, and is recommended for all libraries.

David B Levy, Touro College, NY

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Arkin, Kimberly A. *Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic: Fashioning Jewishness in France*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, [2014]. 306 pp. \$65.00. (9780804786003). Also available as an eBook.

“This book is an attempt to illustrate the ways in which a particular set of actors navigated social conditions that were of neither their own choice nor their own making.” (p.12) The book highlights “adolescent racism and racialization,” (p. 8) another way to say that the pupils of the two ultra-Orthodox Jewish day schools in the Paris suburbs in which Arkin did her field work are, simply put, racists; they don’t like Arabs, especially Maghrebin adolescents living in their neighborhood. Arkin liberally applies “racist principles or criteria” to analyze the psychology and behavior of the quite small group of ultra-Orthodox French Jewish youth with whom she became acquainted. These adolescents “were more likely than their elders to reject hybrid identities, refusing the possibility of being Jewish and French, or of being Jewish and Arab...Race became the grounds on which some young Sephardim tried to reconstruct lost or endangered organic communities within the context of multiethnic, multiclass peripheral Parisian neighborhoods.” (p.7) *Rhinestones, religion, and the Republic* is most stimulating when Arkin presents how the Jewish adolescents expressed themselves in their clothing (the subtitle, “fashioning Jewishness in France,” thus explained). In several crucial domains, however, the book is lacking: Arkin has, as she acknowledges, little knowledge of Judaism, its customs and practices, and Hebrew grammar (“a Jewish lawyer married to a goyot,” (p. 264) [for goya, a non-Jewish woman]. A more serious flaw is to speak of the “generation of Sephardi sages like Leon Ashkenazi, Emmanuel Levinas, and Andre Neher,” (p. 257) when Levinas, was born in 1906 in Kaunas (Lithuania) and Neher in 1914 in Obernai (Alsace)! Arkin has written a top-heavy, polemical treatise, playing down factors which do not corroborate her thesis. Recommended only to academic libraries with comprehensive Jewish studies collections.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD

Alshich, Mosheh (Alshekh, Moses). *Commentary on Pirke Avos, Translation and Notes by Avie Gold and Nahum Spirn*. New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2014. 407 pp. \$24.95.. (9781598269987).

The comments on *Pirke Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers) by sixteenth century Rabbi Moses Alshekh were published under the title *Yarim Mosheh*. The present volume is a translation into English of parts of *Yarim Mosheh* with annotations for the modern English reading public. Alshekh often presents a group of questions. He attempts to resolve them and to offer a broader picture, whereby the details of the text are shown to fit together like clockwork. Alshekh’s Biblical and Rabbinic commentaries had great influences on many subsequent later rabbis including Chassidic masters such as R. Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye and R. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. Highly recommended for school, synagogue and JCC libraries, as well as academic Judaica collections.

David B Levy, Touro College, NY

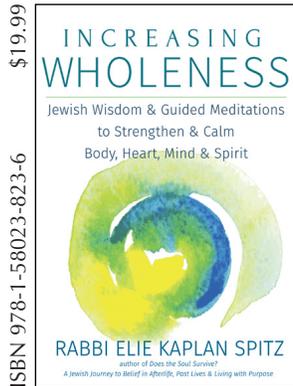
Avineri, Shlomo, *Herzl’s Vision: Theodor Herzl and the Foundation of the Jewish State*. New York: BlueBridge, 2014. 304 pp. \$22.95.. (9781933346984).

Shlomo Avineri is a highly regarded Israeli political theorist who traces Theodor Herzl’s awakening to the complex question of modern Jewish identity. First published in Hebrew in 2008, *Herzl’s Vision: Theodor Herzl and the Foundation of the Jewish State* presents the story of a non-Hebrew speaking, assimilated Viennese Jew who was transformed by the Dreyfus Affair; it also presents the history and evolution of an idea. Avineri has written on other Jewish precursors to Herzl, such as Moses Hess and here he adds to the literature available to students of Jewish history.

Other biographies of Herzl exist but this fairly concise book, written in 2008 and well translated by Haim Waxman, should be on the shelves of university, seminary and large public libraries.

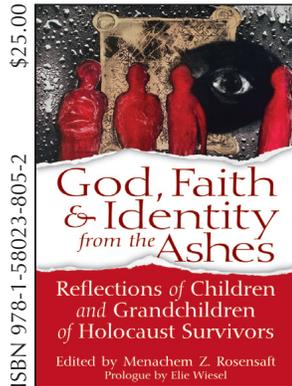
Morton J. Merowitz, Librarian and independent scholar, Buffalo, NY

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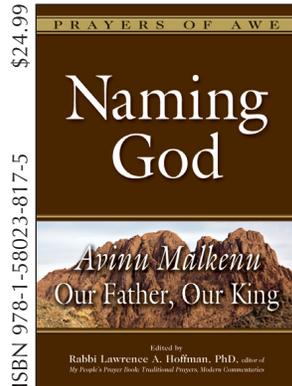
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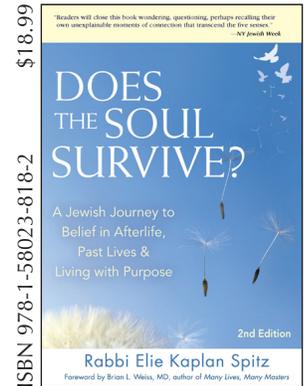
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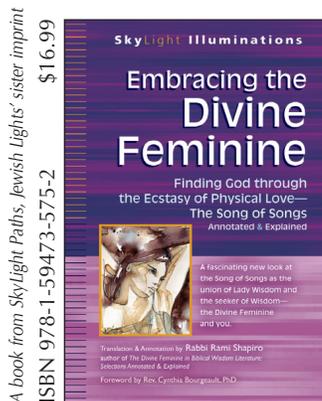
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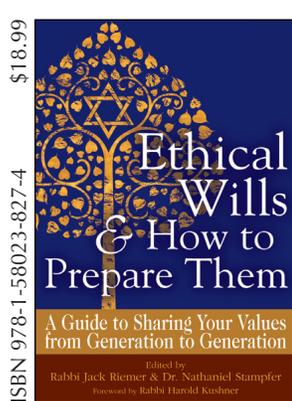
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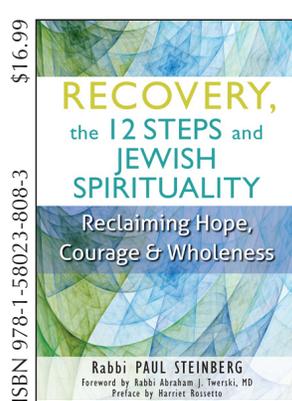
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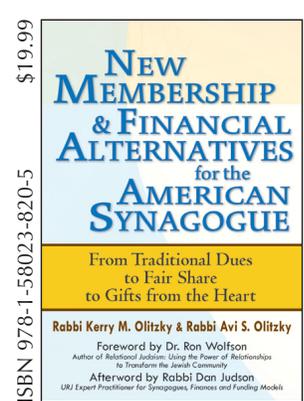
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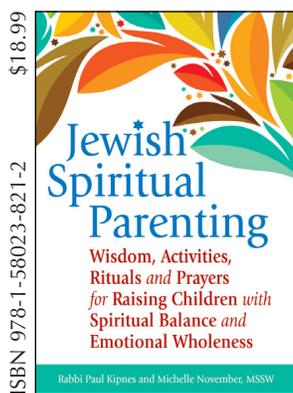
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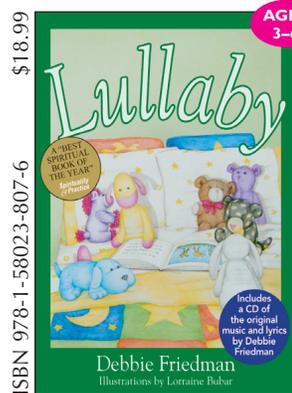
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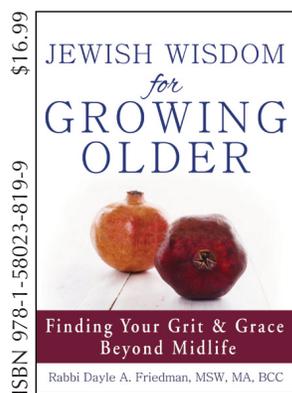
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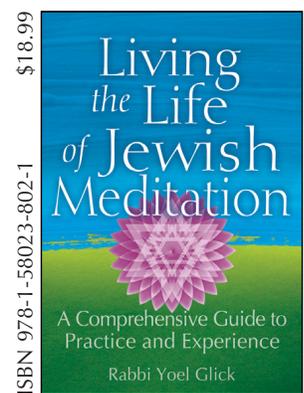
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Barzel, Tamar. *New York Noise: Radical Jewish Music and the Downtown Scene.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. 328 pp. \$75.00.. (9780253015570).

In the early 1990's the Downtown avant-garde music scene began to explore Jewish culture from a myriad of new angles. Loosely centered on composer/saxophonist John Zorn, the Radical Jewish Culture movement mined every aspect of Yiddishkeit for inspiration. Based on years of interviews and field research, ethnomusicologist Tamar Barzel explores the tensions between the religious and secular as well as the identity and gender politics of these artists. She focuses on four musicians in particular: Zorn, pianist Anthony Coleman, avant-garde vocalist Shelly Hirsch, and Sharon Topper, leader of the punk band God Is My Co-Pilot (re-named G-d is My Co-Pilot for Jewish material). Given the sheer volume of work produced by this small but incredibly prolific group of artists, *New York Noise* only scratches the surface of potential research in this area, but Barzel adroitly tackles the larger questions of Jewish identity that Radical Jewish Culture wrestles with. Essential for Jewish libraries.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Bautch, Richard J. and Hibbard, Todd, Eds. *The Book of Isaiah: Enduring Questions Answered Anew.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014. 234 pp. \$35.00. (9780802867735).

This book is a collection of twelve essays on the book of Isaiah and is dedicated to Joseph Blenkinsopp, a scholar specializing in Isaiah studies, as explained in the brief introduction. The book has two sections, each with six essays. Most of the contributing authors are European with a few Americans, all current or retired university professors. The first section includes exegetical studies of specific verses and chapters of Isaiah, with half the essays focusing on chapters 56-66. The second section includes thematic studies, such as idolatry, eschatology and kingship found in the book of Isaiah. The depth of analysis presented would limit this book to serious researchers of Biblical studies, and it is most appropriate for an academic or research library.

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

Ben Rafael, Eliezer. *Confronting Allo-Semitism in Europe: the Case of Belgian Jews (Jewish Identities in a Changing World, v. 21),* Leiden: Brill, 2014. 197 pp. \$128.00. (9789004274051).

Allo-Semitism refers to backlash hatred of the Jews as the unassimilable "other." This otherness has a dark side, as it can lead to hatreds that stereotype the Jew as "a rootless, degenerate, subversive, radical, cosmopolitan, parasitic." In this excellent book, Ben-Rafael analyses Belgian Jews' perceptions of, and reactions to present-day allo-Semitism. The data is drawn from a large-scale research project conducted by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) in a survey from 2012 to 2013 led by the London Institute for Jewish Policy Research to measure the rise of anti-Semitism/allo-Semitism in France, the UK, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Sweden, and Belgium. Ben Rafael analyses the findings of the pan-European survey and focuses on how it sheds light on Belgian Jewry's attitudes towards Jewishness and to the experience of present day anti-semitic hostility, and investigates what makes Belgian Jews unique or similar to Jews in the other countries surveyed. He questions whether allo-Semitism is at all surmountable.

Highly recommended for academic libraries collecting in the history, culture, and sociology of European and Belgian Jewries.

David B Levy, Touro College, NY



Bishop, Patrick. *The Reckoning: Death and Intrigue in the Promised Land—A True Detective Story.* New York: Harper, 2014. 320 pp. \$26.99. (9780062267825).

Avraham Stern, founder and leader of the Lehi underground, which fought against the British to establish a Jewish state, was captured in February 1942. Though unarmed, he was shot and killed by at least one member of the Palestine Police Force, Assistant Superintendent Geoffrey Morton. Patrick Bishop has written an informative account, providing background on both men and their organizations by drawing upon archives and interviews as well as other sources. He has respect for Morton and little but contempt for Stern. Morton claimed that on that fateful day, Stern had made for a window and that he, Morton, feared Stern might be trying to set off an explosive. (No bomb was found.) This account was directly contradicted by another policeman in the room who seems to have had nothing to gain by lying. Bishop weighs the evidence regarding the killing of Stern, but comes to no conclusion. One of his sources, *Stern: The Man and His Gang* by Zev Golan (Yair Publishing, 2011), provides a portrait of Stern (including his assassination), but also a broader and deeper analysis of Lehi. Because of this, Golan's book is probably a better choice for most collections interested in the Jewish undergrounds. Bishop's book is more narrowly focused on the assassination.

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

Bregoli, Francesca. *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform.* (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014. 339 pp. \$65.00. (9780804791595).

The Jewish community (the *Nazione Ebraica*) of the Italian Mediterranean free port city Livorno was the second largest Jewish community in Western Europe in the mid-eighteenth century. Exploring a wide range of archival and literary sources, Francesca Bregoli, assistant professor of history at Queens College, combines cultural, intellectual, social and political history to add nuance to the emerging picture of how communities and Jewish intellectuals interacted with Enlightenment culture and the reforming-absolutist state.

In the first section of the book, Bregoli focuses on how four Jewish intellectuals participated in Italian Enlightenment culture. Joseph Attias, a literary savant, engaged in the "Republic of Letters" with numerous Christian scholars in the 1720s, but compartmentalized his scientific and scholarly pursuits and his rabbinic position. This strategy was continued in the following decades by Livornese Jews educated at the University of Pisa Medical School. While immersed in Gallilean science they were not able to apply professionalizing trends in public health to the traditional Jewish burial and sick care societies.

The last sections of the book deal with Jewish reactions to Tuscan economic and political reform. Studying Jewish coffeehouses and rules of gambling establishments Bregoli shows how developments in the Jewish community paralleled Tuscan reforms of leisure time, resulting in some compromise with Jewish religious rulings. Governmental reforms of free market policies impacted the rise of Hebrew printing after the 1740s.

In the 1780s Jews unsuccessfully fought for rights of political inclusion and legal equality as individuals but continued to be viewed by the conservative Livornese through the early modern ideas of economic utility to the state as a corporate merchant group. In contrast to other port Jews like those in Trieste, the Sephardim of Livorno did not reform their religion or communal structure.

Highly recommended for academic libraries.

Harvey Sukeinic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA

Brody, Shlomo. *A Guide to the Complex: Contemporary Halakhic Debates.* Jerusalem: Maggid, 2014. 456 pp. \$29.95. (9781592643516).

Containing over one hundred and thirty short essays, *A Guide to the Complex* addresses contemporary Halakhic topics in a clear, engaging, articulate way. These essays were originally serialized as part of the *Jerusalem Post* "Ask the Rabbi" column. Each essay summarizes in approximately 1000 words

the background relevant for understanding topics in Jewish law, as well as the major opinions by modern and contemporary Orthodox decisors, though generally Brody pays little attention to Halakhic discussion outside of Orthodox boundaries. Rarely taking a stand, Brody identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the various Halakhic positions taken by these decisors, leaving the reader with an awareness of the complexity and richness of Orthodox Halakhic discourse in the 21st century. Topics range from problems in medical ethics such as abortion and fertility treatments, through matters of ritual like the growing of *peyos* (sidelocks) and prayer, as well as business ethics and contemporary technology. Remarkably, Brody manages to be concise without sacrificing clarity, sophistication, or precision, which makes his book an excellent introduction to topics for both scholars and laypeople.

Yoel Finkelman, The National Library of Israel

Bronner, Simon J. ed. *Framing Jewish Culture: Boundaries and Representations. (Jewish Cultural Studies, Volume 4).* Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014. 436 pp. \$34.95. (9781906764081).

Understanding the “Other” has always been difficult because one perceives through the lens of the social constructs of one’s own group. This book examines tangent points where Jews interact with various inter-Jewish and non-Jewish groups, and examines how Jews see themselves in relation to other peoples in today’s constantly changing contexts. In the modern world, “Jewish” is often a constructed and shifting identity created by individuals based on their own experiences and community. Boundaries come from both sides: from inside the Jewish community looking out, and by social forces emanating from non-Jews. The writers of these essays examine these intersections. What are the essential cultural differences, for example, between a secular Jew and his non-Jewish counterpart? What defines these differences? Where are the lines drawn?

There are four book sections, each touching on a different aspect. The first part establishes a framework for examining boundaries between “Jews” and “non-Jews,” how these came about, how they are constructed and constituted, and how they have been maintained. The second and third sections are devoted to expressions of Jewish identity, including artistic expressions. The third section is devoted more to the institutionalization of Jewish culture, history and identity, such as in museums. The last section includes a discussion of the ironic phenomenon of attempts to revitalize Jewish culture in European lands without many Jews; in the same places where a thousand years of Jewish life was destroyed. In the aggregate, these essays help us understand the social dynamics of Jewish identity and how identity is constructed in modern life.

Judith S. Pinnolis Brandeis University, retired

Brysk, Miriam M. and Margaret G. Lincoln. *The Stones Weep: Teaching the Holocaust through a Survivor’s Art.* East Stroudsburg, PA: Gihon River Press, 2014. 168 pp. \$27.95. (978989084109).

Miriam M. Brysk survived the Holocaust because partisans hiding in the forest needed her father’s surgical skills and brought the family into their enclave (see *Amidst the Shadow of Trees*, Gihon River Press, 2013 for her autobiography). When noted school librarian Margaret Lincoln saw an exhibit of Brysk’s Holocaust-related art, the two met and collaborated on several projects. Both felt the educational aspects were key, and worked together to craft art-based curricula for middle and high school students. The book includes seven lessons plans created by teachers that incorporate the artwork, poetry, historical websites, and student participation through art and writing. Several of the lessons include the Core Standards addressed in the lesson, as well as rubrics for measuring the success of the lesson and the students. The book also includes 48 pages of 4-color art from Brysk’s collections “In a Confined Silence” and “Children of the Holocaust.”

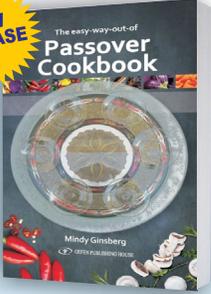
There is a lot of verbiage with chapters of “Introduction,” “Historical Overview,” “Art and the Holocaust,” and “Introduction to the Teacher-Created Lessons” that is often repetitive and dealt with more adroitly by other sources. It would have been more interesting to learn more about Brysk’s art: her inspiration, her

feelings during and after creating it, her choice of media, etc. The lesson plans are excellent, providing clear instructional goals, reliable resources, and interesting ways to present Holocaust information and involve students. The book is an essential purchase for Holocaust Resource Centers and libraries with large Holocaust collections and that serve teachers, and a strong optional purchase for other Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

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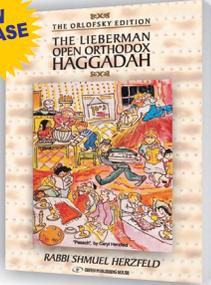
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Buber Agassi, Judith. *Jewish Women Prisoners of Ravensbrück: Who Were They?* 2nd ed. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2014. 336 pp. \$29.95. (9780896728721).

Ravensbrück was a concentration camp that opened in the spring of 1939 and functioned until April of 1945. It was the only major concentration camp exclusively for women (though some men did end up spending some time there), and because its original purpose was to imprison social dissidents (e.g. communists and others) the percentage of Jewish prisoners varied from a low 7.9% to 23.65 % of the total camp population. In total, over 16,000 Jews were incarcerated there for varying periods of time.

For many years, and for many reasons, including the fact that Ravensbrück was located in what became East Germany, little research was done on this concentration camp. However, that situation has since changed: Rochelle Saidel's study, *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp* and Irith Dyblon-Knebel's work, *A Holocaust Crossroads: Jewish Women and Children in Ravensbruck*, as well as personal memoirs, have supplied the Holocaust researcher with much more information about the hell that was life in this camp.

Judith Buber Agassi, whose own mother was imprisoned in Ravensbrück, has conducted a thorough sociological analysis of the Jewish women and girls who were deported to Ravensbrück. Her study is

divided into five time periods, and because about half of the original arrival lists are still extant, as are many of the transfer lists, she is able to frame a picture of both who these women were (country of origin, age, etc.) and thanks to the hundreds of interviews she conducted, what happened to them (survival rate, e.g.). This well-documented volume is recommended for academic Holocaust collections.

Beverly Geller, Librarian, The Frisch School, Paramus, NJ

Cohen, Julia Phillips and Sarah Abrevaya Stein (eds). *Sephardi Lives: a Documentary History, 1700-1950*. (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014. 480 pp. \$90.00. (9780804771658). Also available as an eBook.

This collection is a most welcome contribution to Jewish studies in general and Sephardi studies in particular. It provides diverse documents on Sephardi lives in the Judeo-Spanish heartland, the Ottoman Empire, as well as in the Sephardi diaspora, from the beginning of the 18th century to the mid-20th century. The collection includes 153 documents, some of which were originally written in English, while most others were written in fifteen languages and translated into English, introduced and annotated by numerous experts in the field. The book opens with an introduction on the Judeo-Spanish world and its diaspora. This is followed by six parts: Everyday life: on the street and in the synagogue, from court to courtyard; Violence, war, and regional transformation; Political movements and ideologies; The Second World War and its aftermath; Diasporic and émigré circles; The emergence of Sephardi studies. The texts are very well chosen, presented in clear language, and each one is enhanced by an informative introduction and footnotes, providing reference notes regarding the source, its location in cases of archival sources and private collections, original language, and translator. While previous publications included texts regarding specific topics, places and periods, this collection provides a broad view of Sephardi lives in the Ottoman Empire and the Sephardi diaspora, with numerous documents dealing with WWII, and an important section on the development of Sephardi studies in various countries. It brings to light numerous aspects of Sephardi lives over a long period and broad geographical spectrum. It is an important contribution not only to Sephardi studies but to Jewish studies in general as well as to minority and cultural studies, and will most likely become a basic reference source.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University Library, Princeton NJ 08540

Deutsch, Yosef. *Let My Nation Be Warned* (Let My Nation Series). Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 2014. 139 pp. \$16.99. (9781598261158).

While many think the Book of Yonah is about warning non-Jews to repent, it is an equally strong message for Jews to repent, and thus it is read during the afternoon service on Yom Kippur. The story of Yonah trying to “run away” from God, being swallowed by a big fish, and eventually completing his task is amplified by many commentaries. The author, as he has done with the other books in this series, uses many of these commentaries to weave a more narrative tale on the subject. In many scenes God is “speaking” with Yonah, and at one point there is a hunchback missing teeth conversing with the King of Nineveh. Through the commentaries one learns that Jonah was not trying to shirk his duties as a prophet, but was worried about whether Jews would take the example of Nineveh and repent. A Hebrew-English Book of Yonah is included.

For a short (four chapter) book of the Tanach, there is much commentary, with many rabbis finding the story of Yonah an allegory. While the material is interesting, finding an audience for the book is a challenge. A key or glossary listing all the commentaries with the authors and the authors’ short biographies would have been helpful. While the conversational style is often comical, the vocabulary is a little advanced for younger readers. Fans of the series will appreciate another addition, but given the simplicity of the original text and commentary included in most *Machzorim* (Yom Kippur prayer book), it is an optional purchase for Orthodox libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel

Eilam, Ehud. *The Next War between Israel and Egypt: Examining a High-intensity War between Two of the Strongest Militaries in the Middle East.* London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2014. 247 pp. \$78.91. (9780853038382).

What is promised is a speculative account of a possible armed conflict between Israel and its most likely adversary, neighboring Egypt, an opponent in four previous wars. What is provided is something a bit different: an historical review of all the previous conflicts Israel has had with its Arab neighbors. The author certainly provides a wealth of material of interest to the military historian, specialists on Middle Eastern military affairs, and students of Israeli political studies. Ehud Eilam, an Israeli who was involved with the Israeli military establishment, brings to the reader such basic themes as doctrine and military build-up as well as air and ground operations in both an offensive and defensive postures. Within the operational sector, there is coverage of command-and-control systems of both national militaries along with hardware in the Israeli and Egyptian arsenals. Since any conflict between the two militaries will necessarily take place in the Sinai Peninsula, the history of battles there in 1956, 1967, and 1973 are presented as possible bench marks for any future conflict. One standout feature is the listing of Israeli and to a lesser degree Egyptian order-of-battle. The very narrow subject matter necessarily limits its possible audience.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Ellenson, David. *Jewish Meaning in a World of Choice: Studies in Tradition and Modernity.* Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2014, 376 pp. \$36.00. (9780827612143).

Meyer, Michael and David Myers (eds). *Between Jewish Tradition and Modernity: Rethinking an Old Opposition, Essays in Honor of David Ellenson.* Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2014. 384, pp. \$39.99. (9780814338599).

Distinguished professor, intellectual and Jewish denominational leader, David Ellenson provides a short account of his intellectual development in the preface to *Jewish Meaning in a World of Choice*, a collection of essays written throughout his career. As he relates, Ellenson personally felt the tension during his childhood of being a Jew in the South and the resulting feeling of both belonging and exclusion. He describes also the influence of his professors who taught him that much of modern Jewish history (or at least modern intellectual Jewish history) could be viewed through the question of how Jews responded to the challenges of modernity while simultaneously trying to maintain and affirm their Jewish identity: "all of the essays in this volume center on a description and examination of the multivalent push and pull between Jewish tradition and Western culture."

The book is divided into four parts. Part 1 is titled "Shaping Jewish Life in an Open Society". In this section six chapters spread out topically over hundreds of years, from discussions of Esriel Hildesheimer and Samson Raphael Hirsch to a quick survey of denominationalism in the United States. In two of the six chapters that comprise Part 2, "Searching for a Balanced Theology", Ellenson pays tribute to his teacher, Eugene Borowitz (and describes his contribution to modern Jewish thought) and argues for the inclusion and toleration of LGBT Jews within the Jewish community. Part 3 is titled "Visions for Israel" and discusses, among other topics, Geiger, conversion in Israel and Zionism in the Reform movement. The fourth and final section is about "Rabbis and the Rabbinate" and contains articles about Rabbi Hayim David Halevi and Rabbi Elezer Berkovitz among others.

This excellent compilation of articles demonstrates Ellenson's range and interest in a broad array of topics concerning modern intellectual Jewish history. The book has both academic articles and articles written for a more general audience, but even the former are written clearly and easily accessible to the latter.

The central tension running through Jewish intellectual history for David Ellenson is how Jews respond to the challenges of modernity while simultaneously trying to maintain and affirm their Jewish identity. Edited by Michael Meyer and David Myers, *Between Jewish Tradition and Modernity: Rethinking*

an Old Opposition is a collection of twenty-one essays devoted to that topic and written in Ellenson's honor. The book is divided into four parts according to subject matter. The first part centers on "Law" and each essay explores the ways in which Jewish law has responded to modernity. The articles range from a piece on early 20th century conversion to the treatment of Reform by the Orthodox "majority" in Israel. The second part involves the question of "Ritual" and how it has undergone change due to the challenges of modern society. The articles in this section tell a story of subtle and sometimes significant change, from developments in synagogue worship to the creation of bat mitzvah ceremonies. The third section focuses on the ways in which Jewish "Thought" has evolved in response to modernity; for example, the transformation of the idea of Zion in the diasporic mind to the significant changes of gender roles in Orthodox circles. The final section centers on the role and shift of "Culture," such as the powerful force of secularism and its impact on New York Jewish intellectuals, as well as the weight of the calls for social justice only a handful of decades later and a few miles north.

This is an excellent collection of articles that any reader interested in the work of David Ellenson and the focus of his scholarship will surely appreciate.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

Goodman, James. *But Where Is the Lamb? Imagining the story of Abraham and Isaac*. New York: Schocken Books, 2013. 306 pp. \$25.00. (9780805242539).

As a twenty-first century American Jewish adult, James Goodman is intrigued by the biblical story of the *Akeidah* (The Binding of Isaac). Contemporary history drew him to learn more about the notion of "sacrifice" its origins and various manifestations in Muslim, Christian and Jewish cultures. His thorough exploration of this subject in *But Where is the Lamb?* is conveyed from the perspective of "a reader, a son, a Jew, a father, a skeptic, a historian, a lover of stories, and a writer."

There are endless interpretations and commentaries dealing with the *Akeidah*, and Goodman succeeds in presenting the various sources from ancient times (including the book of Jubilees, Philo, Josephus, Midrash, Islam etc.) through to the present day (philosophers like Levinas, religious leaders like Rav Joseph B. Solovitchik, and Israeli authors like Amos Oz and A.B. Yehoshua, to name but a few). The thirty chapters conclude with clear and useful notes and an index.

Goodman's *But Where Is the Lamb?* is thought-provoking reading: it will stimulate the religiously observant as well as the atheist. This book, which encourages questioning and delving into the subject, will enrich public libraries' collections, Jewish high schools, and theological collections.

*Nira G. Wolfe, Independent researcher, Highland Park, IL;
Head Librarian Hebrew Theological College (retired), Skokie, IL*

Halkin, Hillel. *Jabotinsky: A Life*. (Jewish Lives). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014, 256 pp. \$26.00. (9780300136623).

Born in 1880 into an assimilated Jewish family in Odessa, Vladimir Jabotinsky's Jewish voice came to the forefront as a result of the 1903 Kishinev pogroms. An established writer and journalist, with a wide platform for the dissemination of his views, he became an outspoken advocate for the need of a Jewish self-defense organization. That same year he was elected as a delegate to the Zionist Congress in Basel and quickly became a charismatic figure in Zionist politics. His belief in Jewish self-defense and the need for a Jewish homeland led Jabotinsky to establish a Jewish legion to fight alongside the British to wrest control of Palestine from the Ottomans. Although never truly a success, the "Zion Mule Corps" was formed and saw limited action, but perhaps more importantly it underscored the need for a Jewish military force. In 1923, over differences of view with Chaim Weitzman, Jabotinsky left the mainstream Zionist organization and established the Revisionist Party and a youth movement called Beitar. Jabotinsky's vision was for the immediate creation of a Jewish state with the assistance of the British, but he envisioned a state without the socialism inherent in mainstream Zionist thought.

His views brought him into conflict with Ben Gurion and Chaim Weitzman, and Jabotinsky was often regarded as a “Lone Wolf” (the title of a two-volume biography of Jabotinsky by Shmuel Katz).

Halkin’s book does a wonderful job of summarizing the complex, contradictory and sometimes enigmatic life of Jabotinsky. In addition to his political career, Halkin devotes adequate space to Jabotinsky’s literary talents and output.

Throughout the book, I could not help wondering what Jabotinsky would think about Israel’s current political situation, and I was pleased to see Halkin’s epilogue which envisions a playful and obviously fictional conversation between the author and Jabotinsky where the author tries to tease out Jabotinsky’s opinions about the modern state of Israel and its challenges.

As with so many of the books in the Yale Jewish Lives series, this is certainly the one volume to read about the life of Vladimir Jabotinsky and is accessible to a wide audience interested in learning more about one of the foundational personalities of modern Zionism.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

Hoffman, Lawrence A (ed). *All the world: Universalism, Particularism and the High Holy Days.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2014. 250 pp. \$24.99. (9781580237833). Also available as an eBook.

Rabbi Hoffman, in his introduction to this collection of essays, answers the question of why prayers are uniform. The one who poses the question can’t understand the drudgery of page after page of prayer without apparent reason. Hoffman answers with a story from his childhood. He remembers long automobile trips with his parents along country roads with endless farms and fields. Occasionally his father would point out something interesting to see. Hoffman compares that to prayer: the prayer book is the endless road with highlights such as the *Amidah* and *Shema*. Hoffman got the concept incorrect. His father is the expert. While the road may be the same – the traffic, the weather, the road, and the journey varies every trip. The driver must pay attention to everything to ensure a safe journey. With prayer, the words may be the same every day, but the journey and surroundings vary from beginning to end. The expert and the beginner learn something every day they pray.

This collection of essays deals with the narrow aspects of universalism and particularism in the High Holy Day liturgy. Rosh Hashanah is the holiday that focuses on the creation of the world and crowning God as king. Most of the essays are commentaries on the prayer *V’khol Ma’aminim* (Everyone believes) which is recited after the *Kedushah* of *Musaf*.

The authors have widely differing points of view, yet they complement one another in describing and commenting on the same topic. Hoffman has edited several books for Jewish Lights and most of the authors have appeared in other books in the Days of Awe series. Reading any one of the essays presented here does not depend on knowledge of the others. One would benefit having a *Mahzor* handy while reading this book. This book is highly recommended for synagogue, school, academic and personal libraries.

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

Houtman, Alberdina, Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman and Hans-Martin Kirn (eds). *A Jewish Targum in a Christian World.* Leiden: Brill, 2014. 311 pp. \$151.07 (9789004267817).

In Late Antiquity the large Jewish centers of Babylonia and the Land of Israel spoke forms of Aramaic as their everyday language. Many important Jewish works were composed in Aramaic – most notably the two Talmuds. The Bible was translated into Aramaic, most notably in the form of the Targums attributed to Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uziel. As Jews dispersed throughout Europe and the Middle East, Aramaic lost its place as a Jewish language. Jews spoke the local vernacular language, and Hebrew remained the language of prayer and study. Nevertheless, the tradition of reading the Aramaic biblical Targum was preserved for centuries.

The articles in this book, mostly the result of a research project devoted to Targum Samuel, fall into two main groups. The first studies the Targum among Jewish communities in medieval Europe,

examining their manuscripts, textual traditions, attitudes towards studying Targum, and the poems they composed around it. The other cluster of articles turns directly to Christianity, studying the attitude towards Targum among medieval and early modern Christian scholars. Semiticists and Bible scholars have long studied the Targums. The present volume, however, considers the Targum as a cultural artifact, and its findings should be of interest to a wide range of scholars.

Pinchas Roth, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Jacobs, Martin. *Reorienting the East: Jewish Travelers to the Medieval Muslim World*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. 331 pp. \$180.00. (9780812246223).

Exploring the medieval Islamic world through some two dozen Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic travel accounts Martin Jacobs sets out to demonstrate how the travelers' representations were utilized: "...as part of their search for definitions of identity, community, and home." and compares their reactions to the attitudes of their Christian contemporaries.

According to Jacobs, earlier accounts (for example, Benjamin of Tudela's *Sefer ha-Massa'ot*), tended to focus on the strange, even outlandish, characteristics of peoples and locations encountered.

Additionally, these early travelers maintained a view of the world which was very different from that of the Christians to whom they paid obeisance at home. Their accounts were often critical of their native lands in contrast to their glowing endorsements of Jewish-Muslim relations.

Over the next several centuries the Western Jewish travel corpus reveals a shift in attitudes towards the Islamic world. Some reports demonstrate a "Western perception" of the people in the east. They reflect condescending attitudes toward Islam, Muslims, and Near Eastern Jews, as their writers struggle over their own issues of identity and self-respect in the Christian west where they were obliged to live. Around 1481, Meshullam of Voltera, a wealthy, status-driven Tuscan Jew wrote about a visit he made to the Near East. He attempted to describe the Islamic world that he had visited, but he used as his "universal" point of comparison "...the norms and values of the home – the Tuscan Jewish Elite."

Yet, despite his struggle to assimilate "Western culture", Meshullam was unable to escape the indignities of anti-Jewish prejudice, finding that Christian sailors and fellow pilgrims treated him with utter contempt. Another contemporary report, by Obadiah of Bertinoro, presented a different perspective. He actually settled in the Near East, and his impartial accounts reveal little religious or cultural bias against the world in which he chose to live.

This is a fascinating study of the evolution of identity among western travelers in the Near East. Jacobs explores a variety of issues confronting Jews throughout history. With excellent notes, bibliography, and index, this wonderful work raises questions with which all Jews are concerned.

Randall C. Belinfante, American Sephardi Federation

Judovits, Mordechai (Martin). *Find It in the Talmud: An Encyclopedia of Jewish Ethics and Conduct: Thousands of Talmudic Subjects, Stories & Expressions*. New York: Urim Publications, 2014. 525 pp. \$31.50. (9789655241464).

This book serves two fairly distinctive purposes: it provides short biographical information about the Rabbis of the Talmud, and it comprises a collection of summaries of stories and quotations focusing on ethics, morality, and proper conduct.

A number of other works supply similar biographical information on Talmudic personalities, including the author's excellent work, *Sages of the Talmud: The Lives, Sayings and Stories of 400 Rabbinic Masters* (2009). While the current work does a serviceable job of collecting the names, identifying the person, and providing a citation, this work is not the best available alternative, especially if you had to select only a couple of biographical reference works.

Judovits does a good job of selecting interesting items illustrative of ethics and proper conduct to include in his 6,000 entries, but there are a large number of other Jewish quotation books and collections

of similar materials, such as *Ein Yaakov* and *Sefer Ha-Aggadah* (Book of Legends).

While this book was conceived for a very worthwhile purpose (it was written to memorialize the many members of Judovits' close family who died in the Holocaust) and prepared professionally, it does not add substantially to the available literature nor is it a replacement for other biographical works or quotation collections.

Nathan Rosen, New York, NY

Lidegaard, Bo. *Countrymen: the Untold Story of how Denmark's Jews Escaped the Nazis, of the Courage of their Fellow Danes, and of the Extraordinary Role of the SS.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013. 396 pp. \$28.95. (9780385350150).

To this day the large-scale rescue of the Danish Jews remains an extraordinary lesson in heroism and an anomaly in Holocaust history. In *Countrymen*, the author combines previously sketchy facts with hitherto unpublished diaries and documents of families forced to flee to present a fuller, more detailed drama of those days in October 1943, when over 7,000 (out of 8,200) refugees were hidden by the local populace and smuggled by fishing boats into Sweden.

The book provides ample prewar and wartime background. Denmark, invaded in 1940, remained a relatively privileged "model Nazi state;" her citizens acted coldly towards the occupiers, and the Jewish population was largely left alone. Because of their assimilation and commitment to the nation's democratic ideals, the Jews earned the loyalty of their fellow Danes. The Communists, in contrast, were never granted courtesy or protection.

Discussed are key figures like George Ferdinand Duckwitz, the German maritime expert who alerted the Danes about the impending roundup of the Jews; and Werner Best, SS general and Reich's chief in Denmark who, like many Nazis late in the war, felt torn between the evil plans of SS boss Himmler and Allied retribution. Photos and explanations of individuals – diplomats, refugees, villains – during that era add understanding. Diary entries of Jewish families describe fearful rumors, shelter in farms and villages, and coastal meeting places. The fishermen, whose actions had long been debated as mercenary, in the end smuggled many Jews free of cost. Safely arrived in Sweden, the Jews were welcomed and accommodated. A riveting and inspiring read, this book is essential for all Holocaust libraries.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

Linhard, Tabea Alexa. *Jewish Spain: a Mediterranean Memory.* (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014. 248 pp. \$60.00. (9780804787390).

In this book, Linhard examines the various ways in which Jews and Judaism and their relation to Spain were treated over time in several forms of Spanish cultural production. Following an introduction "Ask the Mediterranean" elaborating the scope and method of the study, the book is divided into five chapters. Starting with "Mapping Nostalgia," Linhard explores the ways in which Jewish exile and transit appear in Spanish literature. The second chapter, "Exile in Sepharad," focuses on the symbolic

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uses of the past in narratives of Jewish exile in Spain during the Second World War. This is followed by “Responsible for the fate of the world”, dealing with accounts about Spanish diplomats who were instrumental in protecting Jews in Eastern Europe and the Balkans during the Second World War. The fourth chapter “History’s patio: Spanish colonialism in Morocco and the Jewish community” examines literary representations of Jewish women in the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco. The last chapter “Touring the remainders of Sepharad” deals with “memory tourism”, namely, reconstruction for touristic purposes of specific locations in which Spanish and Jewish history intersect. The book concludes with “Asking the Mediterranean, Waiting for an answer”, pointing to the connections between all these issues and the Mediterranean world, with special reference to developments in the eastern Mediterranean. This is an important study about the role of Jews and Judaism in Spanish culture and heritage as well as in modern politics, especially with regards to the Franco regime, the Second World War and the Arab-Israeli conflict. An important contribution to Spanish studies as well as to Sephardi, Jewish and Mediterranean studies.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ

Marchant, Rabbi Dovid. *Gateway to Shemittah: A Comprehensive and Practical Guide*. New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2014. 475 pp. \$21.29. (9781598261189).

Gateway to Shemittah is another volume in the Feldheim tradition of making *Halacha* (Jewish Law) accessible and understandable. While the material of this book can be dry at times, the writing style is approachable. The Feldheim books are geared towards an Orthodox audience; however this is one book that can be used by anyone. An updated version of the 2007 edition, it explores the laws of *shemittah* (letting the land of Israel rest every seven years). The source material section and the organization of the chapters, are two examples of improvements to the work. The book is divided into four sections for easy access, including: General Introduction, Preparation for the Shemittah Year, Halachas for the Shemittah Year, and Halachos of Shemittah for Agriculturists, Horticulturalists, and Garden Owners. Many contemporary issues are addressed here that people will find both interesting and surprising. Source lists, a glossary and index at the back of the book are very helpful, and the footnotes are clear and easily referenced. All the parts of this book make a whole that is a good resource for students and teachers. This book is recommended for Jewish libraries.

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

Mouk, Yascha. *Stranger in My Own Country: A Jewish Family In Modern Germany*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014. 261 pp. \$26.00. (9780374157531).

Yascha Mouk’s uneasy biography about his life, as a German Jew and a cosmopolitan Jew (he lived in Germany, Italy, Sweden, England, France, and the USA), is thought provoking especially with regards to contemporary secular Jewish identity and German contemporary anti-Semitism.

Stranger in My Own Country starts with a short history of Mouk’s immediate family. His mother, Ala, was Jewish and the daughter of avid communists. They survived the Holocaust in Siberia and after the war returned to Poland. Poland was not a good place for Jews, and prospects looked better in Germany, which is where in 1982 Yascha Mouk was born.

Mouk divides his book into four parts: The Past Lingers; The Tyranny of Good Intentions; Ding Dong, The Jews Are Gone; The Past and Germany’s Future. He reaches the climax of his introspection in the Epilogue: No Longer a Jew.

Mouk admits that he knows almost nothing about Judaism and what it stands for. It is this lack of information and knowledge that contributes to his, at best pathetic, comparison of the German attitude regarding Jews and the American attitude towards African-Americans.

Stranger in My Own Country is a readable biography. The curious reader can browse through reference notes at the end of the book; however there is no index and the notes are not numerated. From a Jewish

perspective this is a book that exposes religious and ethnic confusion and ignorance. It is arguable that the book does add information about what it means to be a Jew in Germany, particularly the viewpoint of someone who would like to escape his Jewish identify more than German anti-Semitism. The author presents himself as an “innocent” victim of anti-Semitism because German society imposed upon him his Jewish identify. In America, he hopes, perhaps naively, he will shed himself and his family of all future Jewish identity. The book would only be an appropriate addition to a Jewish library that has no budgetary constraints.

Nira G. Wolfe, *Independent researcher, Highland Park, IL;
Head Librarian Hebrew Theological College (retired), Skokie, IL*

Nelson, Cary and Gabriel Noah Brahm (eds.). *The Case against Academic Boycotts of Israel.* Chicago and New York: MLA Members for Scholar's Rights, distributed by Wayne State University Press, 2015. 549 pp. \$33.02. (9780990331605).

Probably the newest form of anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and an anti-Israel activist statement is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction (BDS) movement. The ideological profile is clearly Left-of-Center and the primary theme, at least expressed, is the perceived oppressed state of Palestinian Arabs in the territories occupied by Israel since the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict and to a lesser extent discrimination of Israeli Arabs. To counter the charges leveled by the BDS, largely on college and university campuses internationally, is this collection of 25 essays, supplemented by an expanded introduction. The collection is divided into six sections: how does one oppose a boycott; examining the minority within the American Studies Association, the humanities group that engineered BDS; how BDS fits within American culture; Israel as a target; a brief historical treatment of Israel, and a subject expose of BDS.

An online listing of related resources augments the collection of essays. The issues confronted are ethical, historical, and political as they are connected to BDS and provide the substance for anyone in a position to oppose a BDS spokesperson. This is a useful tool for individuals and groups that have Israel's interests in mind and have the opportunity to raise an objection to BDS.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Ner-David, Haviva. *Chanah's Voice: A Rabbi Wrestles with Gender, Commandment, and the Women's Rituals of Baking, Bathing, and Brightening.* Teaneck, NJ: Ben Yehuda Press, 2014. 192 pp. \$16.95. (978193730447).

In Jewish circles, there are many ongoing discussions concerning egalitarianism and women's practice of the traditionally male rituals in Judaism. In this volume, Ner-David turns her Orthodox and feminist eye to the traditionally female rituals. She cites the Biblical and Talmudic discussions of the women-centered commandments but then takes the discussion much further. She examines (often with the help of her women's study group) community pressures to practice in a certain way, how to

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find her own meaning in the rituals, how to incorporate her husband and children in these practices, and above all how to balance all these aspects in the context of her day-to-day life.

Part Torah-study, part autobiography, and part anthropology, Ner-David writes in a personal, readable manner. Highly recommended for all libraries.

*Sheryl Stahl, Senior Associate Librarian, Frances-Henry Library,
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles.*

Rosenfeld, Alvin H (ed). *Resurgent Anti-Semitism: Global Perspectives*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013. 561 pp. \$35.00. (9780253008787).

Professor Rosenfeld has given us a weighty volume in more ways than one. In this detailed and comprehensive look at anti-Semitism in its many manifestations around the world today, the essays assembled here provide greater understanding of an important and deeply disturbing matter. In his introduction, Rosenfeld quotes British Labour MP Denis MacShane: "We are at the beginning of a long intellectual struggle. It is not [only] about Jews or Israel. It is about everything democrats have long fought for: the truth without fear, no matter one's religion or political beliefs. This new anti-Semitism threatens all of humanity."

The book comprises 19 chapters each by a different expert author describing and commenting on the situation in different locations around the world. An example is: *The Banalization of Hate: Antisemitism in contemporary Turkey* by Rifat N. Bali, an expert in the study of Turkish Jewry. The most troubling chapter for this reader was "The Israeli Scene: Political Criticism and the Politics of anti-Zionism" by Ilan Avisar, the chair of the Second Authority for Television and Radio. Avisar claims that anti-Zionism has become a major phenomenon in Israeli intellectual life. This complex situation, he argues, has arisen due to a lack of Israeli experience with anti-Semitism (something that could easily be disputed), and the feeling that the open democratic society in Israel can support this criticism. Nonetheless, this is a very disturbing development in light of attitudes worldwide that are so unjustly critical of Israel.

Each chapter ends with an index, a list of contributors and endnotes. This book is appropriate for all academic collections and for the well informed and curious lay reader who is prepared for a very heavy read. It might easily serve as a textbook for a course on the subject. This book is highly recommended.

Marion Stein, retired librarian

Schechter, Ronald and Liz Clarke. *Mendoza the Jew: Boxing, Manliness and Nationalism : A Graphic History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 240 pp. \$19.95. (9780199334094).

Although Jews are stereotypically characterized as meek intellectuals who avoid combat, history provides several examples of muscular "supermen" whose physical prowess and fighting ability enabled them to defeat their opponents, whether on the battlefield or in the sporting arena. Samson, Judah Maccabee, Max Baer, and Sammy Luftspring are among the most well-known fighters whose exploits are celebrated and continue to be told. Though he was a crowd-pleasing celebrity in his day, the British-Jewish boxer Daniel Mendoza is a relatively more obscure personality.

Schechter and Clarke use the graphic format to colorfully bring life to Mendoza and his period, vividly capturing the excitement of the boxing ring, the sharpness of Mendoza's keen mind, and the various ideologies which directly and indirectly affected Mendoza and his fellow Jews (such as nationalism, classism, tolerance, and "celebrity culture"). Though Mendoza was an assimilated Jew himself, the biography nonetheless makes reference to Jewish practice (e.g. Jewish schooling, *shiva* observance, synagogue services), including the fact that he was paid to teach boxing to Jewish students on Saturdays. A brief history of Sephardic Jewry serves as an Introduction.

The authors expand upon the graphic narrative with wonderful supplements: a graphic afterword explaining why Schechter decided to embark on this project, reprints of several primary sources, an essay detailing the historical contexts, a "making of" chapter which includes both a script page and

original artwork, suggested written history assignments, a bibliography of primary and secondary sources, and a glossary. *Mendoza the Jew* is highly recommended for either the sports, Jewish biography, or graphic books sections of public, school, academic, and synagogue libraries.

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

Siegel, Elaine V. *Chaos Unbound: A Jewish Childhood in Nazi Berlin*. Montclair, NJ: Keynote Books, 2013. 171 pp. \$27.95. (9780983080749).

Elaine Siegel writes a unique kind of a survivor's memoir. She describes her life as a Jewish-American child growing up in Berlin, Germany from 1931 till 1946. Her biological Christian father immigrated to the USA (from Germany) around 1925. Her Jewish mother joined her husband in 1925, gave birth to their daughter in the USA, divorced her husband and returned with the child to Germany in 1931. Elaine grew up with the help of both sets of grandparents (Jewish & Christian). Her mother remarried and had a son. The author has a very poignant recollection of her mother's constant criticism which was, to the author's mind, unjustified.

Chaos Unbound is a very personal childhood biography written from the recollections of an eighty year-old woman. Siegel is an accomplished woman who achieved an international career as a psychoanalyst and dance therapist and created a happy family in the USA. Her story starts with an interesting prologue and a clarifying introduction followed by the author's recollection of a very traumatic childhood. Siegel focuses also on several interesting and significant relationships with important individuals who contributed to the development of her personality and character as well as her professional success.

The book has fourteen chapters, black and white photos (from the Siegel family archive). Unfortunately there are no notes. *Chaos Unbound* is an intimate memoir that anyone interested in a new aspect of the Shoah will find interesting. It befits high school Holocaust collections or personal libraries.

Nira G. Wolfe, *Independent researcher, Highland Park, IL; Head Librarian Hebrew Theological College (retired), Skokie, IL*

Steinberg, Rabbi Paul. *Recovery, the 12 Steps and Jewish Spirituality: Reclaiming Hope, Courage & Wholeness*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2014. 176 pp. \$16.99. (9781580238083).

When nationally acclaimed rabbi and author, Rabbi Paul Steinberg, a "man of God and Torah," admitted his alcohol addiction, he feared losing his family and his status. As he began his recovery, he found himself "continually referencing his Jewish spirituality." The book is divided into three parts. In the first, Rabbi Steinberg discusses how Jewish values and teachings help him deal with addiction in terms of believing in God and in the dignity of man as well as fighting the evil inclination (*yetzer hara*). He also addresses the challenge of celebrating Jewish holidays like Purim and Passover as an alcoholic. Each chapter is followed by "Personal Reflections." The second part of the book "aligns Jewish spirituality with AA." Several of the tenets of the 12-Step Program and tools of recovery are also intrinsic to Judaism: study of basic texts; prayer and meditation; repentance or working on correcting character faults; and service to others. The final section reviews the 12 Steps and relates each one to Jewish sources. There is a glossary of Jewish terms and thinkers and suggestions for further reading.

True to Step Twelve, Rabbi Steinberg "having had a spiritual awakening...has carried this message to alcoholics." While there is much material available on 12-Step Programs and addiction, Rabbi Steinberg's personal story, as well as the easy style in which he parallels Jewish sources and values with the 12 Step Program will be helpful to those in recovery and those with friends and family members in recovery. This book is recommended for all Jewish libraries.

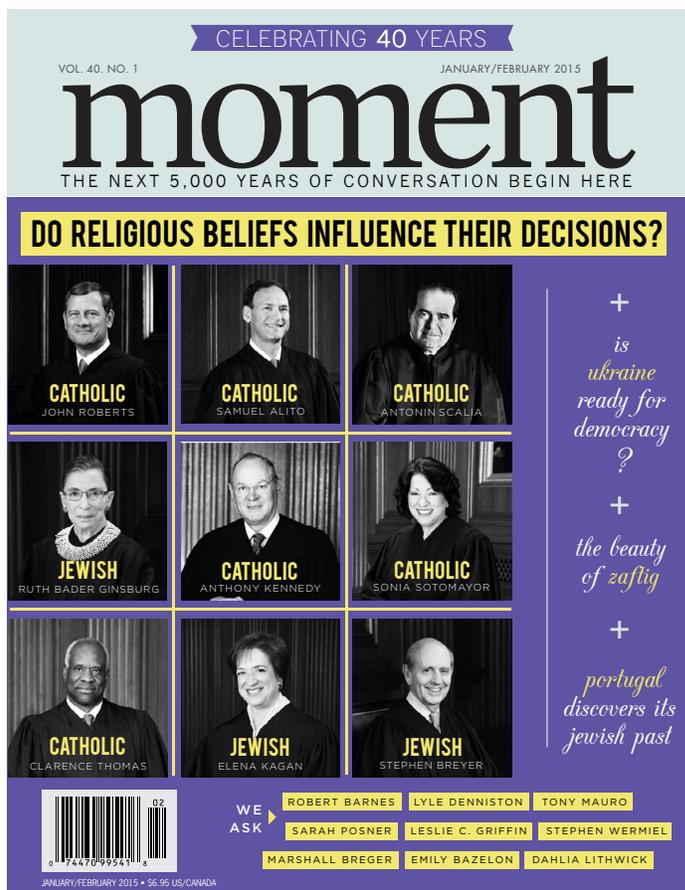
Kathe Pinchuck, *Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*



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Stutchkoff, Nahum. *Mame-loshn*. Edited by Alec Eliezer Burko, with an introduction and comprehensive bibliography by Alec Eliezer Burko and Amanda Seigel. New York: Forward, 2014. 387 pp. \$15.00. (9781495406584).

Nahum Stutchkoff [Nokhem Stutshkov] (1893-1965) was a Yiddish actor, playwright, radio dramatist, and lexicographer. His *Thesaurus of the Yiddish Language* (*Der Oytser fun der Yidisher shprakh*, 1950) – modeled on Roget’s *Thesaurus* – “remains the largest completed work of Yiddish lexicography to this day,” writes Alec Eliezer Burko. During the 1940s Stutchkoff combined his linguistic expertise with his broadcasting chops by producing over 600 fifteen-minute radio commentaries on Yiddish words and expressions. Scripts for these and others of his radio programs are in his extensive archive at the New York Public Library. The *Mame-loshn* [“mother tongue”] commentaries are subdivided into broad topical categories: philological perspectives on Yiddish, explications of individual words and sayings, expressions relating to Jewish holidays, nicknames of Eastern European cities and towns, and “how-do-you-say-it-Yiddish (“*Yidish-taytshn*”). The English introduction offers a few brief samples of these commentaries, but for the remainder readers must turn to the main section of the book, which is entirely in Yiddish. The much more extensive Yiddish-language introduction and the comprehensive bibliography on Stutchkoff make this an essential reference work for libraries with strong Yiddish collections. Its reference value would, however, have been enhanced had it included an English table of contents and a complete translation of the Yiddish introduction, which provides detailed background on Nahum Stutchkoff’s extraordinary career. (For additional background, see “Nahum Stutchkoff’s Yiddish Play and Radio Scripts in the Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library,” by Amanda [Miryem-Khaye] Seigel, in *Judaica Librarianship* 16/17 [2011].)

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

Taylor, Derek. *Chief Rabbi Hertz: the Wars of the Lord*. London, England; Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2014. 297 pp. \$84.95. (9780853039181). Also available as an eBook.

In many ways I grew up knowing Rabbi Joseph H. Hertz. My shul gave every bar/bat mitzvah child a copy of the Hertz *Siddur* and his *Book of Jewish Thoughts*. My copy of the *Siddur* is well-used and has wine stains on the *kiddish* page. But I knew very little about the personal and professional life of Rabbi Hertz before I read this book.

Chief Rabbi Hertz led British Jewry from 1913 until his death in 1946. During his tenure the world fought two wars, Britain issued the Balfour Declaration, and there were internal pressures on the Jewish community to be less observant of *halacha* (i.e. more British) on one side and more like an Eastern European shtetl on the other.

Rabbi Hertz was the rabbi of the United Synagogue, a group of synagogues equivalent of what we call Modern Orthodox. Rabbi Victor Schonfeld was the rabbi of the very Orthodox Adath Yisraol synagogue. They disagreed on many community and religious issues, but their children married each other, and son-in-law Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld became one of Hertz’s partners and supporters.

Taylor spends many pages dealing also with the acrimonious relationship with the vice-president of the United Synagogue, Sir Robert Waley Cohen. Waley Cohen was a wealthy businessman who worked tirelessly without pay for the United Synagogue; however, he was not an observant Jew. Hertz and Waley Cohen disagreed on issues such as the role of the chief rabbi in the community, religious observance, *kashrut*, and the relationship with the British government.

This is an important book for understanding Rabbi Hertz and British Jewry in general. I learned a great deal about how the British experience both contrasts and mirrors the American experience. I recommend this book for all libraries; it is, however, a little pricey for personal collections.

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



Tobi, Yosef Tobi and Tsivia Tobi. *Judeo-Arabic Literature in Tunisia, 1850-1950.* (Raphael Patai Series in Jewish Folklore and Anthropology). Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2014. 376 pp. \$59.99. (9780814328712). Also available as an eBook.

While focusing on Tunisia, this book provides a broad examination of modern Judeo-Arabic literature. It opens with an introduction on the flowering of Judeo-Arabic literature in North Africa, on the background of medieval Judeo-Arabic language and literature. This is followed by seven chapters examining various literary genres: *piyyutim* (Liturgical poems), the most constant literary genre in North Africa, including Tunisia; *malzumut* (Satirical ballads), a new genre in Judeo-Arabic literature in Tunisia, which together with the following genre, *Qinot*, were the most important genres in the first half of the 20th century; *Qinot* (Laments); *Ghnayat* (Songs), which were of Arab-Muslim origin and often performed in coffeehouses and amusement places; Essays on ideology and propaganda; Drama and the theater; and *hikayat* (Stories) and deeds of religious men, mostly East European sages. Each chapter deals thoroughly with the specific genre, often providing examples in English translation. Information about the authors of the literary works is provided as well as the protagonists. Thus, for example, the Tobis examine the life of the famous Tunisian Jewish singer and actress, Habiba Messica, about whose tragic end several laments were composed. The 9th chapter is a thoroughly annotated translation from the French of Daniel Hagege's 1939 study: "Circulation of Tunisian Judeo-Arabic Books," which provides detailed information on the literary production up to the late 1930s. The book also includes two important appendixes. The first is an alphabetical list of Judeo-Arabic journals and other periodicals, providing the title in Judeo-Arabic, its English translation, and its founders, owners or writers. The second is an alphabetical list of Judeo-Arabic books, including the title in Judeo-Arabic, its translation in English, and its author(s). This book combines detailed information, often based on rare publications and manuscripts, with thorough analysis. It is an important contribution to the study of Jewish culture in Tunisia in general and Judeo-Arabic literature in particular. It is likewise important for general cultural, literary and linguistic studies on North Africa as well as Jewish studies.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ 08540

Tokayer, Marvin and Ellen Rodman. *Pepper, Silk & Ivory: Amazing Tales about Jews and the Far East.* Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2014. 316 pp. \$24.95. (9789652396474).

Rabbi Marvin Tokayer served as a chaplain in the United States Air Force in Japan in 1962. He later returned to the Far East, serving as a rabbi for the Jewish communities there from 1968 to 1976. He has learned a great deal about the area and the little-known contributions of the Jews to life in Asia. He used his time there to document the history of these Jews. The twenty-three chapters each tell the story of an individual Jew or Jewish community. Readers will meet Beate Sirota Gordon, the woman who made sure that women's and children's rights were included in Japan's constitution after World War II; famous baseball player Moe Berg, who obtained Ivy League degrees despite the Jewish quotas and spied for the United States while playing an exhibition game in Japan, and the colorful Sephardic and refugee communities in Shanghai. The stories are both entertaining and informative, full of interesting characters and fascinating details. A visit to the lost Jewish community of Kaifeng, China, and to a synagogue in Rangoon, Burma with 126 Torahs, offer a view of Jewish life in regions far from the traditional areas studied in Jewish history classes. Public, academic, school, and synagogue libraries will want to add this to their collections. Book clubs will enjoy it as well.

Barbara M. Bibel, Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA.

Varon, Jeremy. *The New Life: Jewish Students of Postwar Germany.* Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2014. 358 pp. \$34.99. (9780814339619).

In December 1945 the Jewish Displaced Persons (DP) students that remained in Germany numbered about eight hundred. These students formed the Jewish Students' Union in Munich. The fact that young

Jewish survivors chose to stay in Germany after the Holocaust (most of them temporarily) reveals their unusual emotional state of mind when they set out to resume their post holocaust lives. Most of their families had perished; they had no identity or educational documents to confirm and validate that they ever existed, and on top of this, the students encountered bureaucracy as well as anti-Semitism. This is a book about young people with tremendous strength and a belief in life; it is about the victory of spirit over emotional and material adversity.

In 1999, Jeremy Varon was successful in tracking down (worldwide) 225 of the still living DP Jewish students. He sent them a sixty-two-question survey. He refers vaguely to the respondents' as "more than a fifth..." Between the years 2000 to 2006, Varon conducted 40 interviews in the U.S. and in Israel; yet, it is not clear if the 40 came from the above "fifth" or if they were in addition to that number. What distinguished the responders from the non-responders is not known. However, *The New Life* is a collection of interesting individual histories, it is not a statistical analysis.

Varon does well in presenting a human face to these unusual narratives. Black and white personal and group photos are dispersed throughout the text. The book has a clear introduction as well as erudite notes, extensive bibliography, and an index. It would benefit from the addition of German and European maps. *The New Life: Jewish Students of Postwar Germany* belongs in all Holocaust collections, academic libraries, synagogues, Jewish high-schools, and public libraries.

Nira G. Wolfe, Independent researcher, Highland Park, IL; Head Librarian Hebrew Theological College (retired), Skokie, IL

Weinberg, Robert. *Blood Libel in Imperial Russia: The Ritual Murder Trial of Mendel Beilis*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014. 188 pp. \$24.00. (9780253011077).

In 1992, Robert Weinberg observed a small gathering outside the Lenin Library in Moscow as he arrived there to conduct research. The demonstrators were objecting to the transfer of the fifth Lubavitcher *Rebbe's* books and manuscripts to the United States, which many of them believed held the secrets of the ritual blood libel. Thus began Weinberg's fascination with the famous Mendel Beilis blood libel trial of 1913 and its implications for anti-Semitism today.

The accusation of Jewish ritual murder, which had begun in 12th-century Europe and was prevalent until the 16th century, re-emerged full force in the 19th century with the rise of modern anti-Semitism, and in the 1890s as many as 79 ritual murder charges were recorded. The Beilis case was the only blood libel trial conducted in the 20th century, but like the Damascus Affair and the Dreyfus Affair in the preceding century, it drew a huge amount of international attention.

Mendel Beilis was a factory manager in Kiev who was charged with the ritual murder of Andrei Iushchinski, a local Christian boy. Beilis, who in fact had little to do with his religion, was charged solely on the basis that his factory was situated near the crime scene. The Tsarist police and government quickly realized the benefit of directing the energies of the dissatisfied masses towards the Jews, and the sensational trial that followed was tainted by official corruption, bias and the suppression of evidence. Due to international pressure, Beilis was finally acquitted, but the jury still ruled that the death had been due to ritual murder. Today, Iushchinski's grave is a site of pilgrimage for nationalists and anti-Semites.

Weinberg's research is based on a wealth of published and unpublished sources, including trial transcripts, newspaper articles, political cartoons and Beilis's memoirs. The book has a good bibliography and index, and the fascinating documents pertaining to the trial are transcribed in the back.

This is an excellent historical reconstruction told in a gripping and deeply engaging style. Highly recommended for all library collections.

Rebecca Jefferson, Isser and Rae Price Library of Judaica, University of Florida, FL



Wolpe, David. *David: the Divided Heart*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014. 176 pp. \$25.00. (9780300188783).

David Wolpe has been named “the most influential rabbi in America” by Newsweek magazine and leads one of the largest Conservative synagogues in the country. In his most recent book, “David: A Divided Heart,” Wolpe has written an accessible and engaging book about the biblical King David.

The book follows the chronological life of David, as related in the Bible, from when we are first introduced to him in the book of Samuel, when the prophet Samuel is looking for a new king of Israel, to David’s death in the book of Kings. The book is divided into nine chapters following the various “stages” in the David story: “Young David”, “Lover and Husband”, “Fugitive”, “The King”, “The Sinner”, “Father”, “Caretaker”, “Death of a King” and a postscript/conclusion of sorts titled “The Once and Future King”.

As Wolpe retells the story he adds his own thoughts, insights and wisdom, depicting the brilliance and timeliness of the biblical story and the astounding complexity inherent in David’s character. Adding to his original insights, Wolpe invokes many other voices, including Phillis Wheatley, Carl Jung, Winston Churchill, Martin Buber and even Stephen King.

David: A Divided Heart is an estimable book brimming with insight, and an excellent short reworking of the story of the biblical David in a way that both educates and instructs. This book deserves a space in every Jewish library.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

Yeshaya, Joachim. *Poetry and Memory in Karaite Prayer: The Liturgical Poetry of the Karaite Poet Moses ben Abraham Dar’i*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014. 317 pp. \$180.00. (9789004259911).

In this perceptive study, Joachim Yeshaya examines the poetry of the Karaite poet Moses Dar’i, seeking to understand its place in the early development of liturgy and “memory” among both Karaites and Rabbanites. The main text used in this study is manuscript NLR Evr. I 805, fol. 75a-135b, a collection of 96 poems composed to accompany and to annotate the *parashot* of the Torah as it is read in the synagogue each Sabbath. Yeshaya asserts that the Karaite *parashot* are identical to those used by Rabbinic Jews, and since each one is identified with a distinct Judeo-Arabic heading, he was readily able to discern the biblical texts. This enabled him to compare them to the contents of the Dar’i poems.

By analyzing a hitherto unpublished introduction to the poems, Yeshaya was able to ascertain that they were composed in the middle of the 12th century, well before Aaron ben Joseph composed the much better known Karaite prayer book in the late 13th century. Yeshaya identifies some remarkable parallels to Rabbanite liturgy in the work of Moses Dar’i. He infers “... that no cultural border between Karaites and Rabbanites prevented Dar’i from using a Rabbanite feature (*piyyūt*) in Karaite prayer.”

Dar’i was motivated by more than a desire to annotate the *parashot*. He sought to invigorate Karaite liturgy and to reassure his Karaite audience, proffering “...the consolation that they would soon be delivered from their exile in Egypt.” In recalling this exile Dar’i seems also to be engaged in imbuing Karaite liturgy with the “memory” of being exiled from Jerusalem, employing what Yosef Haim Yerushalmi describes as a “vehicle of medieval Jewish memory.” In Yeshaya’s enlightening study one can observe the dramatic impact of Dar’i’s liturgical work, which not only became a foundation for later works, but also served as a vehicle for conveying memory.

Randall C. Belinfante – American Sephardi Federation



Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

Agnon, S.Y. *The Parable and Its Lesson (HaMashal vahaNimshal)*. Translated from Hebrew and annotated by James S. Diamond, with an introduction and critical essay by Alan Mintz. (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014. 160 pp. \$19.95. (9780804788724).

The Parable and Its Lesson (HaMashal vahaNimshal) is a novella by Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888-1970), the Nobel Prize winner for literature in 1966. The story was compiled, along with other stories, by Agnon's daughter Emunah Yaron, according to her father's instructions, and published, in Hebrew, under the title *Ir Umeloa'h (A City in Its Fullness)* in 1973. The original work, *HaMashal vahaNimshal*, was first published in *Haaretz* newspaper in 1958.

This is a story based in Agnon's childhood hometown Buczacz (now in Ukraine). It describes Jewish life in this Shtetl, about fifty years after the pogroms of Bogdan Khmel'nitski (1648-49). The Shamash (Sexton of the synagogue), who is on trial, tells the story of his trip to *Gehinnom* (the Netherworld) undertaken with the Rabbi.

James Diamond's fluid translation and helpful comments enable English speakers to enjoy and experience Agnon at his best. Alan Mintz with his introduction and illuminating *Essay on The Parable and Its Lesson* (about the same length as the novella itself) explains many hidden details and a connection to the Holocaust.

The Parable and Its Lesson is a most welcome addition to all literature lovers. It should be part of all academic libraries, as well as public libraries and high school collections.

Nira G. Wolfe, Independent researcher, Highland Park, IL; Head Librarian Hebrew Theological College (retired), Skokie, IL

Berman, Sandy. *Klara with a K*. Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014. 262 pp. \$12.98. (9781497339927).

In this intense novel, two men fall in love with an attractive Holocaust survivor in an evacuation hospital. Sam Rosstein, the sergeant who liberated Klara from Buchenwald, visits and cheers her at every opportunity. Dr. Thomas Compton, who saved Klara's life, is also attracted to her. Klara prefers Sam, although she feels greatly obligated to Thomas. Sam and Klara decide to marry after the war.

Dismayed, Thomas uses his influence to have Sam's unit transferred. Sam writes Klara a note asking her to wait for him, but Thomas intercepts the delivery of the message. Despite reservations, Klara marries Thomas so that she can get out of Germany. Thomas doesn't realize that Klara is Jewish.

After the war, Klara and Thomas move into the Compton family estate in Atlanta. Meanwhile, Klara discovers that she is pregnant and knows that Sam is the father. She doesn't tell Thomas.

For the next nineteen years, Klara agonizes over her secrets. She cannot forget her family and her Holocaust experiences, yet she hesitates to talk about them with Thomas. Moreover, she prefers civil rights work to country club life.

Meanwhile, Sam, who lost his leg in the war, has become a lawyer with the Dept. of Justice in Washington, DC. Through his job, he and Klara see each other again, and their romance is rekindled. Complications mount, but ultimately, this three-way relationship is resolved.

Berman skillfully maintains tension throughout the story. While there are numerous coincidences, the book is a good read.

Recommended for center and synagogue libraries.

Lee Haas, Beth Israel-The West Temple, Cleveland, OH



Keret, Etgar and Assaf Gavron (eds). *Tel Aviv Noir*. Brooklyn, NY: Akashic Books, 2014. 280 pp. \$26.95. (9781617753152).

Akashic Books has published many noir short story collections focused on particular cities. This is their first excursion into Israel. The fourteen stories vary in tone, and I would not consider them all strictly noir. Some of the narratives are absurdist (e.g., “Women” by Matan Harmoni, “Death in Pajamas” by Alex Epstein, and “Allergies” by Etgar Keret); others are not absurdist but not focused on crime (e.g., “Slow Cooking” by Deakla Keydar and “Who’s a Good Boy?” by Julia Fermentto). Some of the stories are truly of the genre in both content and tone and these, to my mind, are often the best. Notable among them are “Sleeping Mask” by Gadi Taub, a tale of love within a world of prostitution; “The Tour Guide” by Yoav Katz about two men engaged in guiding tours of the dark side of the city; “The Expendables” by Gai Ad about an artist’s widow and corruption in real estate, and “Center” by Assaf Gavron about two complete amateurs masquerading as detectives who enter a world of corporate politics. At least a couple of the stories are sexually explicit.

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

Mishani, D. A. *A Possibility of Violence*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014. 288 pp. \$26.99. (9780062195401). Also available as an eBook.

This is the second mystery novel featuring Holon police inspector Avraham Avraham (the first, *The Missing File*, was reviewed in the May/June, 2014 *AJL Reviews*). An inoperative bomb in a suitcase is found near a child day care center. The subsequent investigation involves both the director of the center and a father of one of the children. This is a well-constructed tale (though there is one loose end: one character receives letters from her sister but her sister denies sending them). Avraham is deeply concerned not to make any errors as he is haunted by a mistake he made in *The Missing File*. The author’s clever technique of mentioning a fact or event and only explaining it sometime later whets the reader’s curiosity. Avraham’s relationships with his Slovene lover, Marianka, a member of the Belgian police, and his superintendent, Ilana Lis, are developed from the first book. (It should be mentioned that the mystery in *The Missing File* is summarized and explained in this book, so it is best to read it before reading this tale). This is a psychologically interesting detective story. Recommended for popular fiction collections.

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

Rudin, Phyllis. *Evie the Baby and the Wife: a Novel*. Toronto: Inanna Publications, 2014. 215 pp. \$22.95. (9781771331340).

This novel, masterfully written, highlights the relationship between a feminist mother and a modern daughter. With the neurotics of a Jewish mother, the rejection of religion, the anti-Shabbos gatherings of the younger generation – with a full house on Friday night and a vegan pot luck – and a full repertoire of Yiddish expressions, you can’t help but laugh out loud. The plot is woven in Montreal where we meet Marilyn, mother of Evie, who participated in her youth on the Abortion Caravan, Canada’s first national feminist protest. Estranged from her mom, Evie will reconnect with her again when she decides to have a surrogate baby. This baby will be a present to the barren Amélie, the ex-wife of a friend, but she is the last to know that a baby is coming her way. The book could have benefited from a glossary on the Yiddish expressions, but even if some readers don’t get some of the Yiddish lingo, a good laugh is still guaranteed. A funny, feel good read about fighting for your rights and being a *mentsch*. Recommended for all community and synagogues libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University



Reviews of Multimedia

Bador, Galia. *Jerusalem Is Proud to Present*, 2007. Distributed by Seventh Art Releasing. Color DVD, in English and Hebrew, English subtitles (1:22 minutes).

Jerusalem Open House, a center for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community, hoped to host the annual "WorldPride" Event, and make it a week-long festival in August 2006. Approved by Interpride Membership from all over the world and enthusiastically organized by homosexuals and lesbians in Israel, the march was predicted to create "an international statement." In a very rare meeting, the Jewish, Christian and Muslim clergy in Israel vehemently denounced the event, likening it to "the spiritual rape" of Jerusalem.

The film goes on to document the obstacles to the event: abuse and threats against members of alternative communities in Jerusalem, including city council member Sa'ar Nesanel; bitter fights in the city council, where the Orthodox mayor, Uri Lopianski, and ultra-orthodox factions berate those they oppose, and negotiating dates and location with the police. Due to events over the summer (bombing in Haifa, rockets from the north, two kidnapped soldiers), the parade was postponed, but events in closed venues took place. After violent riots by the ultra-orthodox, a compromise was reached: a demonstration was held in Givat Ram Stadium on November 10th.

The faint of heart will be affronted by rabbis talking Sodom and Gemorrah, a drag queen lip synching to "Jerusalem of Gold," and by the spin placed on a stabbing incident at a previous pride event. Although the film attempts to document both sides of the issues, it would seem that those "on the dark side" resorting to violence and steeped in ignorance and hate are the ones polluting Jerusalem's holy streets. A film that will likely spur discussion, it is an essential purchase for Jewish libraries serving the LGBT community, and recommended for Jewish libraries that collect movies or whose patrons have interests in politics in Israel or the subject matter.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Gottlieb, Ayelet Rose. *Roadsides*. New York: BMI, 2013. 1 compact disc. \$13.17.

This beautiful collection is based on Israeli and Palestinian poetry put to music by vocalist Ayelet Rose Gottlieb. The poetry speaks about the diversity of the Israeli and Palestinian experience, but also about everyday things like Agi Mishol's ironic poem "At the Supermarket." Many of the songs have a jazzy sound with a mid-twentieth century vibe and manage to be modern and classic at the same time. Some of the tracks have a slow tempo lending a relaxing feel to the music. Gottlieb's voice is smooth and well suited to this genre of music; the musicians that accompany her are wonderful. The work includes several guest vocalists, such as the well-known Israeli singer-songwriter, Alon Oleartchick, in duet with Gottlieb. The album is a credit to all who worked on it. It will be well-worth adding to an Israeli music collection. Recommended for Jewish libraries.

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

Shapiro, Paul. *Shofarot Verses*. New York: Tzadik, 2014. \$15.00. TZ8185.

Combining jazz and soul, surf and rock with traditional High Holiday music, *Shofarot Verses* is pure fun. Saxophonist Paul Shapiro is joined by one of the founders of the Radical Jewish Culture movement, guitarist Marc Ribot trading solos over the unfailing rhythm section of Brad Jones and Tony Lewis. Shapiro occasionally doubles on shofar, but this seems almost like an afterthought. Particularly noteworthy are readings of the traditional liturgical melodies, *Ashamnu* and *Hashivenu*. Buy it.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL



Weich-Shahak, Susana. *Judeo-Spanish Songs for the Life Cycle in the Eastern Mediterranean (Cantares Judeo-españoles del Ciclo de la Vida en el Mediterráneo Oriental)* Susana Weich-Shahak 2014. (Anthology of Music Traditions in Israel, No. 24, ed. Edwin Seroussi). Jerusalem: Jewish Music Research Centre, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Booklet, 2 CDs. \$30.00.

Susana Weich-Shahak is among an elite community of music scholars generating fieldwork and large collections of archival materials in the rich traditions of the Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) speaking Jews. This collection, focusing on Jews in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire, centers on a type of song called *cantigas*, which are lyrical poems often containing a dialogue. The *cantigas* are structured works, usually in a major or minor key, although occasionally reflecting Turkish modes. They consist of a strophic verse and often a refrain that presents a little scene of everyday Jewish life. Life events including birth, circumcision, Sephardic wedding rituals such as the bride's dowry, wedding dress, dances, ritual bath, farewell to her family, and wedding night, are included along with songs about death and mourning customs. The CD booklet provides brief explanations of the life cycle events putting each song into context. Songs are organized accordingly, with translations into English, Spanish and Hebrew, and information on the informant, location, and recording dates. The *cantiga* titles follow the Proyecto Folklor; a few romances follow Armistead's *Catalogo-indice* of 1978, while titles of the *coplas* follow the catalogue of Romero, Hassan and Carracedo, 1992. Melodies are often presented by multiple informants which demonstrates the variety of styles, giving an idea of song development and preservation by different communities. This is a scholarly edition: most of the voices are folkloristic and of uneven quality for Western ears; but scholars of Sephardic music and any musicians looking for new Sephardic repertoire will be delighted.

Judith S. Pinnolis, Brandeis University, retired

Yom. *Le Silence de L'Exode (The Silence of the Exodus)*. France: Buda Musique, 2014. Distributed by Allegro. (57:09 minutes) Available in MP3 format: \$8.99. (ASIN: BOOLVG7QTA); \$20.00. N.B.: Review based on online listening at www.yom.storyamp.com

This latest release from Yom, known for his *Klezmer* clarinet, was originally a commission by the Festival d'Île-de-France on the themes of Diasporas. Yom is on clarinet, accompanied by Claude Tchamitchian on the contrabass, Farid D. on the cello, and Bijan Chemirani on percussion. There are fourteen tracks, each leading into the next, that musically follow the Israelites from Egypt through their wanderings in the desert and into the Promised Land. The composition opens with "Ramses," which reminds the listener of the desert, with it echoing and trilling at the lower end of the scale. "Rouge" builds on the themes from Ramses with a more pronounced bass line while the clarinet climbs into treble, followed by a long string section. In "Chaos," "Sarab" (Mirage), and "L'eau Jallie du Rocher" (Water Gushed from the Rock), Yom's *Klezmer* background is evident in the playful discordance. "Sinai" follows and is more subdued and somber, with the strings taking the lead. "Ivresse" (Inebriation) and "Solitude 2" are the most melodic offerings, with strong clarinet set against rhythm, while "Solitude 1" is Bijan Chermirani's chance to solo on percussion. The two selections most evocative of the biblical telling of the Exodus are "Mémoires (Memories), a doleful melody that leads one to imagine the Israelites lamenting "We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for free" (Number 11:5); and "Moïse" (Moses), which captures the weight of responsibility on the Israelites' leader, and his remorse at not being able to enter the Promised Land.

The musicians' talent and versatility is evident, as three instruments and percussion create sounds that mimic nature and other instruments, moving effortlessly through Jazz, *Klezmer*, and Eastern motifs. This music is a good choice for Jewish libraries that collect music. It could also be used in an educational setting for guided drawing, music appreciation, or multi-media approaches to teaching about the Exodus.

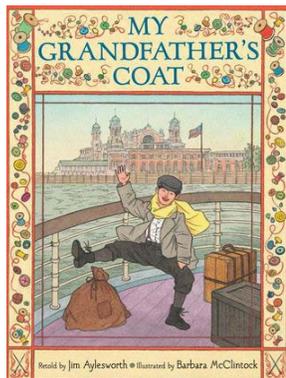
Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN & RACHEL KAMIN

In The Spotlight

Aylesworth, Jim. *My Grandfather's Coat*. Illus. by Barbara McClintock. New York: Scholastic, 2014. 32 pp. \$17.99. (9780439925457). Preschool–Gr. 2.

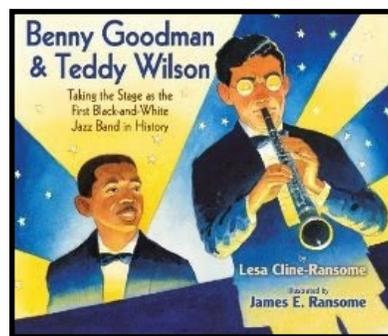


The Yiddish folksong “I Had a Little Overcoat” has been adapted into the picture book format many times—*Something from Nothing* by Phoebe Gilman (Scholastic, 1993), *Bit by Bit* by Steve Sanfield (Philomel, 1995), and *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat* by Simms Taback (Viking, 1999). This most recent incarnation about a coat being recycled into smaller and smaller pieces of clothing throughout the generations is as charming as its literary predecessors. Aylesworth’s marvelous storytelling coupled with McClintock’s endearing ink and watercolor illustrations bring the old song to a new generation of young readers. The book includes notes by the author and the artist about their family’s backgrounds.

Allison Marks, Akron, OH

The 2015 Sydney Taylor Book Award Winner for Younger Readers

Cline-Ransome, Lesa. *Benny Goodman & Teddy Wilson: Taking the Stage as the First Black-and-White Jazz Band in History*. Illus. by James E. Ransome. New York: Holiday House, 2014. 32 pp. \$16.95. (9780823423620). Gr. 3–5.



This picture book biography swings as it describes the historic black-white jazz band formed by musical greats Jewish Benny Goodman and African American Teddy Wilson.

Not a complete biography, but a tightly edited capsule of events leading to the first interracial band to perform publicly in the United States, the story follows the two main characters from their youth to the watershed performance in 1936. The book is very alive, not just from the speed of its development or hot dance beat, but from its attachment to the present as events unfold. The dramatic buildup to the band’s appearance alternates between each star player. Boys from two distinct races grow up bound to strong rhythm, danceable tunes, and a determination to practice their way to the top. Locale is

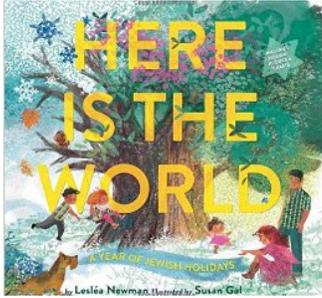
as important as music; environment and family affect each man. Benny plays the clarinet because this is the instrument his synagogue marching band gave to him.

Readers absorb social justice via a musical showstopper through well-written blank verse which is quick, concise and creative, evoking sound and motion. The illustrations are mobile, crowded, action-packed and fabulous. Pictures back up story facts, enriching as they register emotion. This is a clean snap-shot biography: no wives, lovers, drugs or hatred. Readers may wonder why the audience was “ready” for a racially mixed band; there is no background about segregation or prejudice. Historic icons such as Maxwell Street, Hull House and vinyl are mentioned without definition, but may spur research. A glossary describes the musicians noted in the story. A detailed paragraph of each man’s life appears in the back, but keeping with the spirit of being alive, neither has a date of death. Readers are energized as a white Northerner finds a jazz soul mate in a black Southerner in this highly recommended volume for an older picture book crowd who won’t want to miss its fast moving facts, music, art and poetic writing.

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

In The Spotlight

Newman, Leslea. *Here Is the World: A Year of Jewish Holidays.* Illus. by Susan Gal. New York: Abrams, 2014. 45 pp. \$18.95. (9781419711855). Preschool.



Gifted and prolific children's book author Leslea Newman has struck gold again with her newest book for young children. *Here Is the World* echoes the child's perception of her environment beginning with parents and siblings and expanding to the rabbi and synagogue before the author ably introduces the Jewish year according to the seasons. The seemingly simple text skillfully prompts deeper discussion with the young child. For example, the "Naming Ceremony": Here are your parents, with arms open wide. / Here are your siblings, to stand by your side. / Here is the rabbi, with blessings to share. / Here is a wish and a hope and a prayer."

This inspiring text can lead to wonderful shared family stories of who the child was named for. This beautiful picture book is framed by the celebration of Shabbat with the major holidays of the year in between. A brief explanation of each holiday follows the story, making this an ideal text for both families familiar and unfamiliar with the Jewish year. Easy arts and crafts projects and recipes are a valuable addition at the very end of the book. Susan Gal's illustrations are exquisite two-page spreads. The world Gal creates is colorful and inviting. If only the reader could climb inside each picture!

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

A 2015 Sydney Taylor Notable Book for Younger Readers

BIBLE STORIES

Firszt, Chaim Natan. *Every Picture Tells a Story. Volume One: Bereishis. Volume Two: Shmos.* Illus. by Emil (Ya'akov) Grunberg. Jerusalem: Menorah, 2014. Hebrew and English. Vol.1: 107 pp. \$25.56. (9781940516080). Vol.2: 113 pp. \$26.06. (9781940516103). Kindergarten-Gr. 5.

The subtitles of these books are "Illustrated Torah verses and commentary for every age." Youngsters growing up in a traditional Orthodox religious environment will find these books quite appealing. The books open left-to-right, as Hebrew is first on each page, with the corresponding English translation below it. (Note that transliteration is according to Ashkenazic pronunciation). Each book tells the stories in the Torah verse by verse. Opposite each text page is a detailed illustration in full color, which also contains a wealth of information. Indeed, each picture can stand alone as a lesson in Torah study which would facilitate discussion of the story or topic depicted.

The text is meant to be read aloud by an adult to a child, since both the Hebrew and English are well beyond the reading level of the target audience. Both the text and the illustrations reinforce and augment what children are learning in Orthodox yeshivas. Appropriate stories from the *Midrash* as well as ethical lessons are presented along with the Torah verses. Supplementary material such as Biblical genealogy and diagrams of the Tabernacle are also provided. Includes glossary. Corresponding coloring books are also available.

Joyce Levine, North Shore Hebrew Academy High School, Great Neck, NY and AJL Publications Chair

Greene, Rhonda Gowler. *Noah and the Mighty Ark.* Illus. by Margaret Spengler. Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderkidz, 2014. 22 pp. \$9.99. (9780310732174). Preschool-Gr. 2.

Rhonda Gowler Greene's rhyming text for this new retelling of the Noah's Ark story is appealing and understandable for very young children, from lullaby with caregivers, to story time in a classroom setting. The bare bones of this famous story are simply presented: "Then, he called the creatures two by two – the elephant and kangaroo, the crocodile, the chimpanzee, the busy buzzing bumblebee...." The chronology

of the story is intact, making this slim picture book another addition to an already rich bibliography of Noah stories for our youngest audience. The only qualm with this volume is the illustrations. The air-brushed, facially anthropomorphized animals look as if they are about to break out in song. Peter Spier's 1978 Caldecott winner, *Noah's Ark*, still remains the stand-out.

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

BOARD BOOKS

Friedman, Maya. *3 Falafels in My Pita: A Counting Book of Israel*. Illus. by Steve Mack. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2015. \$5.95 board book; \$5.99 eBook. (9781467734721). Preschool.

Using Israeli foods and other aspects of contemporary Israeli life, toddlers are introduced to the numbers 1 through 10. "1 cable car going up Masada...2 friends playing paddle-ball on the beach...3 falafels in my pita...4 camels resting in the shade...5 tall buildings in Tel Aviv...6 swimmers snorkeling in Eilat...7 watermelons for sale at the *shuk* (bazaar)...8 notes placed in The Western Wall...9 oranges growing on the tree...10 children dancing the hora." The cartoon illustrations are bright and cheery, depicting adorable, multicultural children with oversized heads, rosy cheeks, and big smiles though nothing is particularly unique or specific to Israel. The illustration of Masada focuses on the cable car; the tall buildings in Tel Aviv and the snorkelers in Eilat could be anywhere in the world; only the watermelons appear, not the *shuk*. Numerals are used in the text and illustrations, and it seems like this would have been a perfect opportunity to also introduce the numbers in Hebrew. Strangely, the only Hebrew word in the book is *avatiyah* (watermelon). However, this is an attractive offering that will certainly appeal to other fans of Kar-Ben's "Very First Board Books" series.

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

Suneby, Liz and Diane Heiman. *That's a Mitzvah*. Illus. by Laurel Molk. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2014. \$8.99. (97815810238045) Board book. Preschool.

The full-size picture book *It's a...It's a...It's a...Mitzvah* by Suneby and Heiman (Jewish Lights, 2012) has been pared down for the board book audience. While the adorable, endearing illustrations of various animals performing *mitzvot* remain the same, the text (inspired by familiar nursery rhymes) is totally different. "Pat a cake, pat a cake / Rub your tummy. / Share food with others that's good and yummy", and "Roses are red / violets are blue. / When someone makes a mistake / say 'I forgive you'" are just two examples; all follow with the refrain "That's a...that's a...that's a mitzvah." Being nice to someone new, returning a lost item, visiting the sick, helping those in need, and celebrating Shabbat are also included. A wonderful addition to Jewish board book collections.

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

FICTION – MIDDLE GRADES

Attar, M.R. *Elisha Davidson and the Letters of Fire – Part One of a Trilogy*. Jerusalem: Menorah, 2014. 234 pp. \$18.95. (9780874419290) Pbk. Gr. 6-9.

Elisha Davidson is a sixth grader at North Temple Mount Academy in Jerusalem. From the opening pages of this story, it is clear that Elisha has some special gifts—at least that is what he, his parents, his grandfather, and many others think. However, at no time in the story are those gifts discussed. We learn that "something" happened to him when he was younger, but not what that something was. During the book, Elisha has many "experiences" with unusual and mystical items—a large stone only he can lift, a metal triangle that can take him through the stone, the quest to discover "The Kohen of Light." Filled as it is with references to Kabbalah, magic, and secret knowledge, it feels as if a deep understanding of these subjects is required to read this book. Yet there is no information provided

within the story or at the back of the book to define or explain these concepts.

As a part of this volume, readers also meet Jonathan Marks, who is in therapy for amnesia, and Professor Bezalel, who is recovering from a head trauma. Rav Kodesh and a beggar named Aaron, who seem to know more than they reveal, are also introduced. These storylines are never resolved, even though these secondary characters repeatedly appear in the narrative. The entire book is a mishmash of details with no satisfying finish for any of the webs that are woven. Books that begin as part of a series should provide the reader with some feeling of closure at the end of each book, while still maintaining a reason to move on to the next book. *Elisha Davidson* just leaves a tangle of unanswered questions, events, characters, and potential disaster at its conclusion. A frustrating read that is unlikely to find an audience.

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

Cutler, Jane. *Susan Marcus Bends the Rules*. New York: Holiday House, 2014. 108 pp. \$16.95. (9780823430475). Gr. 3-5.

In the summer of 1943, the middle of World War II, ten-year-old Susan's family leaves the Bronx and resettles in Clayton, Missouri. Susan must adapt quickly, losing her New York accent and finding new friends in a strange place. She quickly finds one friend in her neighbor Marlene, and another in Loretta, an African-American girl whose mother is the building's janitor. Through Loretta, Susan learns about Jim Crow and race relations. As a small protest, the girls make a statement by riding together on the bus, breaking the unwritten code of behavior. (Though much of St. Louis was legally segregated, transportation was officially integrated in the 1940s.) When they arrive downtown, they eat lunch in the local Chinese restaurant, just after it has been vandalized and "Jap" has been written on the wall. The book ends with the beginning of the school year, but the reader already knows that Susan will challenge other people and situations if given the opportunity. Susan's (somewhat mild but valuable) adventures and curious nature should find interested readers. Life in the 1940s, when their grandparents (or great-grandparents) were children may be of interest. However, except for a couple of passing references to anti-Semitism (but nothing about religion), there is no substantive Jewish content here.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

FICTION – TEEN

Becker, Helaine. *Gottika*. Illus. by Alexander Griggs-Burr. Toronto: Dancing Cat, 2014. 256 pp. \$12.95. (9781770863910) Pbk. Gr. 6-12.

This is a retelling of the golem legend set in a dystopian world where "Stoons" are oppressed by the "Gottikins." They are made to wear red berets when they leave their homes. They cannot own pets, land or guns. They are under a strict curfew, and live in a walled-off part of the city, the "favala". Sounding familiar? This is the story of Dany and his family and their life as Stoons in *Gottika*. It is a wild story filled with deceit, betrayal, mystery, and redemption. It is peppered throughout with graphic novel style illustrations. There are constant references to Jewish tradition: Jewish prayers ("Who by Stone... Who by Fire"), Jewish ritual ("a week of mourning"), and Torah teachings (repairing the world). When "the Troubles" come, Dany's father, Reb Judah, returns to his magician roots and creates a man out of clay – a Gol. As in the legend, the Gol protects the Scoons. A vast web of secrets and lies is uncovered which bring the story to a satisfying conclusion. For young fantasy and science fiction fans, this is a very engaging, exciting and entertaining read.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwardsbooks.com, Washington, DC
A 2015 Sydney Taylor Notable Book for Teen Readers



GOD & PRAYER

Wigger, J. Bradley. *Thank You, God.* Illus. by Jago. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014. 32 pp. \$16.00. (9780802854247). **Preschool–Gr. 2.**

A stunningly beautiful book of gratitude for all that God has made and given to us. Simple language leads the reader through thanking God for the sun and the stars, family and friends, for food, for learning, for everything outside, for rain, for animals, and moon and stars. The accompanying illustrations by Jago (*Nachshon, Who was Afraid to Swim* and *Oh No, Jonah*) are rich and beautiful, perfectly complementing lines such as “Thank You God for all that breathes / bees and beetles / and beluga whales, / birds and baboons / and bats in the breeze.” This is accompanied by a magnificent illustration of all these animals pictured in what looks to be a display case. Yes, this book is published by a Christian publishing house. Yes, the book is dedicated to the children of a Presbyterian church. Neither of these factors should stop any library from adding this book to its collection. This is ultimately just a simple prayer, with outstanding illustrations that can be read to a group of young children to explain how to be grateful for all we have.

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

HOLIDAYS – OTHER THAN PASSOVER

Greenwald, Carolyn. *The Gelt Giving Golem.* Illus. by Suzy Hill. Ithaca, NY: Suca Arts, 2014. 30 pp. (9780990547006) Pbk. Plush Toy & Book, \$36.00. **Preschool–Gr. 1.**

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then the creators of *The Elf on the Shelf* must be bursting with pride. Not happy to be left out of this so-called “family tradition,” the Jewish community has responded with not one, not two, but three little spies for the Hanukkah season. First, there was *Maccabee on the Mantel*, then *The Mensch on the Bench* (thank you, *Shark Tank!*) and now *The Gelt Giving Golem*, all determined to rescue us from that Christmas elf.

This book/plush package—frighteningly resembling the Elf’s box—is by far the least imaginative of the three. With juvenile, cartoonish illustrations and an unsophisticated, non-rhythmic rhyme, it insults the legendary Golem by turning that frightening, powerful, piece of animated clay into a soft, cute, happy little “toy” that gives *gelt* (money) away. This golem, like its legendary cousin, lives in Prague (where the similarity ends.) It is not explained why Rabbi ben Bazelel created this golem on the first day of Hanukkah. The only information provided is that it loves chocolate and decides its role in life is to search out children who are being nice or doing *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) and reward them with a piece of chocolate *gelt*. “If you make wise choices in all that you do, / come morning, I’ll have a coin just for you. / But if you don’t see *gelt* waiting nearby, / give nice behavior another nice try.” Perhaps this book should really be titled *The GUILT Giving Golem*.

Why is it that some parents feel the need to have a holiday toy that “spies” on children to ensure their good behavior? There is certainly nothing healthy about creating an attitude of mistrust in a family. Nevertheless, the need is there and like other books of this type, it appears to be popular for a family’s bookshelf. It has, however, no place in a library collection.

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



HOLIDAYS – PASSOVER

Cohen, Deborah Bodin. *Engineer Ari and the Passover Rush*. Illus. by Shahar Kober. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2015. 32 pp. \$17.95 HC; \$7.95 Pbk. (9781467734707). Reviewed from a galley. Gr. K-2.

Engineer Ari and his friends, engineers Jessie and Nathaniel, return in a fourth story, this time about the Passover Seder. Ari rushes through a last train run to Jerusalem, making sure to find everything he needs for the Seder plate for the celebration that very night. Riding along on Ari's trip readers absorb the mixed Arab-Jewish population of late nineteenth-century Palestine through the mobile, charming illustrations. Ari collects Seder items from neighbors and people he knows along the route. The matzah comes from a factory in the old city, introducing young readers to the baking process. His rush-rush trip and organizing are successful, but tiring; in a cute ending, Ari falls asleep before the Seder begins. This is the fourth collaboration for Cohen and Kober; main characters are recognizable by picture and personality. However, this tale never develops beyond a laundry list of what sits on the Seder's ceremonial plate. There is no wine. There is no why. There is no background history about the holiday or the meal.

The first three books added strength to the plot of rushing to collect symbolic objects by tying them to history, the meaning of observance or practice. This slim volume advances the qualities of friendship helping to arrange a complex holiday, but retreats from the secrets behind the things everyone is rushing to trade or buy. The book is rewarding as a few cheerful pages reuniting readers with a funny old friend but has too little to say about Passover and is therefore a marginal purchase.

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

Edwards, Michelle. *Max Makes a Cake*. Illus. by Charles Santoso. New York: Random House, 2014. 24 pp. \$17.99. (9780449814314). Preschool.

Baking at Passover time is always a challenge. Many people resort to using a ready-made cake mix rather than separating and beating and smooshing a dozen eggs into potato starch and cake meal. So, when Max wants to bake a surprise birthday cake for his mother at Passover time but his baby sister Trudy distracts his father from helping, Max eventually creates his own unique matzah-jam cake. This picture book is a typical preschool story where the child protagonist finds the solution to a problem. Edwards writes in a warm and charming way, with suspense (What if Mama comes upstairs before the cake is done?) and humor (Max's cake is called a "Hurry, hurry, hurry Passover cake".) An added bonus for sticky fingers is the cake recipe as well as a simplified Passover story at the end. Charles Santoso's illustrations, in pencil and colored digitally, are bold and expressive, adding wit and sparkle to the characters. The only problem for an Orthodox audience is that Max and his father don't wear *kippot* throughout the book. A PJ Library selection, this is a sweet story to add to a synagogue, community, or public library collection.

*Anne Dublin, who has a Passover birthday, is co-author of
Odyssey through Hell: Escape from the Warsaw Ghetto. Toronto, Canada*

Gehl, Laura. *And Then Another Sheep Turned Up*. Illus. by Amy Adele. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2015. 32 pp. \$17.95; \$7.95 Pbk. (9781467711883). Reviewed from a galley. Gr. K-2.

The Seder table takes a back seat to chairs in this woolly attempt at a humorous tale about too many guests and too few seats at the ceremonial Passover service and meal. The picture book's first slip is that the celebrants are not people, but animals, sheep as the title proclaims. Next, the guest list has not been carefully considered. The nuclear family starts without any grandparents, who turn out to live in town, then show up unexpectedly and separately, huh? Who plans Seder without extended family, especially grandma and grandpa? How far does a reader extend disbelief: Yes sheep? No grandparents? Four other sheep friends and relatives, each silly in a fun way, turn up one by one.

The emphasis turns to searching for seats. The book, written in rhymes, some forced, some clever, contains repetition, a good factor in a children's book. Here, unfortunately, the repetition is over finding

chairs: six pages are wasted on a full-page rhyme about chairs at the expense of fleshing out Passover information. There is no mention of the *Seder* plate of symbols: for shame, no pascal lamb bone at a Sheep Seder. A full illustration of it on the table appears on two pages while the text talks about other things. Elsewhere, words mention the *afikomen* hunt, but there is no picture of the young sheep participating. The rhymes breeze by the first cup of wine – skipping the other three – dipping *karpas*, *charosis*, *maror*, *Dayenu*, the Four Questions, and opening the door for Elijah, with no explanation. The layout claims another page about seats. Excepting the animal players, this is a sweet tale that no doubt began with good intentions that never made it through execution. *Only Nine Chairs* by Deborah Uchill Miller (Kar-Ben) remains the classic in information, art, math and hilarity, not to mention those who come to Miller's *Seder* are people!

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

Redner, Rebecca. *The Gateway Haggadah*. Illus. by Rebecca Redner. Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 2015. 64 pp. \$9.95. (9780874419290) Pbk. All ages.

This concise Haggadah uses detailed and colorful pictograms (picture communication symbols developed by Mayer-Johnson™,) as well as clear and explicit photographs, to describe each step of the *Seder* and many of its prayers and songs. It is designed to make the Passover *Seder* a welcoming and respectful experience for all participants, regardless of their abilities. Its features include simple and specific directions for each step of the *Seder* along with photographic cues and supportive messages such as “If you don’t want to eat any matzah, put it down on your plate.” Additionally, “The Four Children” are specifically written to address children with speech, language, learning and emotional challenges.

Prayers and songs are transliterated – using precise pictograms – and translated. Sadly, the *Seder* songs at the end of the Haggadah, such favorites as “Adir Hu”, “Chad Gadya”, and “Echad Mi Yodei’a?”, while also transliterated, are not accompanied by translations, an oversight that can be remedied by searching the websites provided at the back of the book. Overall, this is an excellent Haggadah for families with special needs children, and for the libraries and schools that support them.

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

HOLOCAUST & WORLD WAR II

Ackerman, Margareta. *Running from Giants: The Holocaust Through the Eyes of a Child*. Illus. by Vivien Mildemberger. Beit Shemesh, Israel: Stuart Schnee, 2014. 86 pp. \$7.99 Pbk; \$5.99 eBook. (9781492330967) Pbk. Gr. 8-12.

One of the ways many Holocaust survivors lived through the horrors and trauma of the Holocaust was because they vowed to tell the stories of their murdered family members. Memory removed by one generation is difficult; by two generations, doubly so. In *Running from Giants*, Ackerman tells her grandfather, Srulik's, story: the peaceful (although personally painful) time in a small town in Poland before World War II (“Twin”); the murder of Srulik's parents and older brother by the Nazis, and the ten-year-old's subsequent flight to the forest (“Orphan”); his time living in the ghetto with his uncle and family (“Prisoner”); finally, his escape from the ghetto and eventual rescue (“Survivor”).

Although some of the anecdotes and vignettes are touching, this fictionalized memoir does not hold together. Stilted, invented dialogue, gaps in the chronology of events, and a paucity of details prevent the reader from truly entering the story. Another hindrance is its too-small, too-light font and close leading. Finally, who is the audience? Although the subject matter is mature, the level of language would be appropriate for the middle-grade reader. However, Mildemberger's black-and-white, pen and ink illustrations are evocative. Especially powerful is the way the perspective changes. As the story progresses, the boots of the Nazi soldiers become gigantic, as people shrink to the size of ants and buildings to the size of toy structures. For a more gripping story of a boy trying to survive alone during the Holocaust, see Jack Kuper's *Child of the Holocaust* (re-issue, Berkley, 1999) or Uri Orlev's *Run Boy Run* (10th edition, HMH Books, 2007).

Anne Dublin, co-author of *Odyssey through Hell: Escape from the Warsaw Ghetto*. Toronto, Canada

Kositsky, Lynne. *With Fearful Bravery*. Toronto: Dancing Cat, 2014. 240 pp. \$14.95. (978177086410-8). Gr. 6–9.

Most middle-school children know something about the Holocaust. Few are aware, however, that a significant number of Jews who escaped Europe spent the war years in Shanghai. This novel tells about a German refugee family's experience there between 1940 and 1945. The story begins as eleven-year-old Freda, her mother and three-year-old sister Lotte board a ship bound from Italy to China. When they arrive in Shanghai, their grim life gets progressively more difficult. Freda first goes to the hospital to cure her pneumonia. The family's home is a corner of a single room in a collective apartment building. Her mother finds work in a dance-hall/brothel, and then abandons her daughters. Freda cannot continue in school, and goes to work at the bar. While there, she meets a German soldier whom she played with as a child. But she also has found friends who band together as a community. After their neighborhood is closed into a ghetto, Freda finds work in a kindly refugee's watch-repair shop. With the bits of money they can make, the sisters and their friends survive. At the end of the war, the girls prepare to move to Canada, to live with a new-found relative. And in a happy twist of fate, they find that their father is alive.

This book is a powerful story of endurance. Freda and her sister survive, but their lives have been devastated. While the incidents ring true, the sordid details are profoundly sad. While the reading level is pitched toward sixth graders, the content may not be appropriate for young people until they are a bit older. Despite, or perhaps because of its "do anything to survive" message, it is an optional purchase.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Lewis, J. Patrick. *The Wren and the Sparrow*. Illus. by Yevgenia Nayberg. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2015. 32 pp. \$7.95. (9781467719513) Pbk. Gr. 3–6.

J. Patrick Lewis is a well-known children's author and poet. Mostly his work is joyful, rhyming, and funny. With this new picture book for older readers, he has taken on the difficult task of creating a Holocaust fable that was inspired by the liquidation of the Lodz Ghetto. An old man and a young girl live together in a Polish house in a "dark time" where a "tyrant" rules, food is rationed, and music is no longer heard. The old man's most prized possession is a hurdy-gurdy—a word that is not explained to the reader, although there is an illustration of an instrument on a table. "On a day that shamed the sky", people are herded into town and forced to hand over their musical instruments to the Tyrant's guards. The writing is lyrical, and the illustrations are stylish and clever, while at the same time, a bit ominous and off-kilter, which befits the storyline. The man eventually gives up what the guard calls his "rattle-box", and plays one last song before he is carted away, never to return. When the young girl bravely rescues the hurdy-gurdy from the pile of instruments, she stashes it behind a boiler in an apartment building until it is eventually discovered by a child survivor. The boy finds an emotional message inside it, "as if it were a note in a bottle floating at sea". The note tells him to keep the instrument because it is a token from a dark time. He brings it with him to America, where it is kept safe and into which he places a note of his own for his great-grandchildren to find "so that no one will forget."

The Wren and the Sparrow may have been inspired by a photo (included in the end notes) of a Jewish boy playing a violin in the Warsaw ghetto in 1941. The author notes that music was an important way for oppressed people to assert their humanity. That being said, there is still the issue as to who is the intended reader of this type of book. There are dozens of Holocaust books in picture book format and this one does not particularly add anything new. A theme of children finding a historically important object (and from this, learn to remember the past) is also not new. The story is too sad to read to a young child, but could certainly move a reader who has some understanding of the Holocaust already—maybe from fifth grade and up. The loveliness of the prose and the interesting illustration style may entice teachers to read it aloud in order to elicit discussion from teens on how they would interpret the fable. However, other Holocaust-related stories, such as *Luba, The Angel of Bergen-Belsen* (Tricycle Press, 2003), or *Irena's Jars of Secrets* (Lee & Low, 2011) are educational, inspirational, but depict actual events.

Lisa Silverman, Sinai Temple Library, Los Angeles

[Editor's note: For another controversial Holocaust "picture book", see the review of *Let the Celebrations Begin! A Story of Hope for the Liberation* on [page 38](#) of this issue].

ISRAEL

Derovan, David. *Israeli Culture in Perspective.* (World Cultures in Perspectives). Hockessin, DE: Mitchell Lane, 2015. 64 pp. \$24.50. (9781612286051). Gr. 5–6.

What do you get when you put six fictional Israeli teenagers together? Sure, there can be lots of hormones, wildness, and the joys of being above the age of Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Surprisingly at this age, there is empathy for each other and their backgrounds. For example, five Israeli Jewish teenagers who are around the age of fourteen visit Mahmoud and the Salman family in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem for coffee. And then all too coincidentally, Ori, a Sephardic Jew, and Nadav, an Ashkenazic Jew, discover they are from the same family roots and eat *ma'aloumim* (Sephardic cookies with a recipe towards the back). Rabbi Derovan's book is filled with idealism and does not touch too much on the realities of terrorism and mistrust. No bomb shelters, vehicular accidents, and weapons are mentioned. Maybe this was Rabbi Derovan's point—to expose readers to the other side of Israel not seen in the news? The only other issues are that Mizrahi Jews are not mentioned in the book and the Druze and Bedouins are given sparse references. If you are looking for an upbeat book about Israel that by and large is very accurate and authentic, then this is what you need in your library. The recipe and art project at the back are helpful. The glossary, index, and bibliography add depth to this excellent academic work which is a worthy purchase in print or as an eBook.

Ben Pastcan, Shalom School, Sacramento, CA

Silverman, Elisa. *Understanding Israel Today.* (A Kid's Guide to the Middle East). Hockessin, DE: Mitchell Lane, 2015. 63 pp. \$27.95. (9781612286501). Gr. 3–6.

A major emphasis in this splashy, abundantly-illustrated (with color photographs) book is on the different ethnic backgrounds of Israelis. Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Mizrahim, are all explained (although the author is confused about distinguishing the latter two from each other), as well as Ethiopian Jews, Soviet immigrant Jews, haredi Jews, Samaritans, Muslims, Christian Arabs, Druze, Bedouins, and Circassians. A curious concern seems to be which groups do and do not serve in the Israeli Defense Forces. Because of the preoccupation with minority populations, the photographs give the impression of a nation where many people are dressed in various exotic garb, from the cylindrical *shtreimels* (hats) of the Hasidim to the sword-bedecked kaftans of the Circassians. There are adequate, short sections on history, on Israel's form of government, and its concern over Iran's nuclear program as well as conflict over the West Bank, but nothing about Israel as a high-tech industrial prodigy, or its great accomplishments in science and technology or cultural life. An editor could have clarified or improved statements such as: "Israel is a popular tourist destination for birds" and "At the age of twelve or thirteen, a young Jew becomes a daughter or son of the commandments, regardless of whether there's a big party." Does a sunbeam really "enter" the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem at two in the afternoon on Easter and ignite a lamp inside the tomb? There is no peace because "both sides" violated the Oslo Accords (this reader would like to see documentation of Israel's violations). All these problems overshadow decent pages about Golda Meir, Israel's national anthem, Zionism, and the threat from Iran. The book concludes with a recipe for *Oznei haman/hamantachen* with no explanation of what they are or their connection to a Jewish holiday. The craft project is a "sukkot lantern" that is in no way a lantern, just a tissue-decorated plastic bottle. There are chapter notes, index, glossary, and bibliography. In sum, a disappointing effort overall, with some useful bits of information.

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

JEWISH LIFE & VALUES

Perlowitz, Rebecca. *In My Family.* Illus. by Avi Katz. Israel: Zmanma Publishing, 2014. 30 pp. \$10.95. (9789657514108) Pbk. Preschool–Gr. 2.

Ahavas Yisrael, the love of Jews for each other, is a very difficult *mitzvah* (commandment) to fulfill.

So much so that our sages tell us that strife among the Jewish people is delaying the coming of the Messiah. Becky Perlowitz, an early childhood educator in Israel, addresses the idea of *kol yisrael areyvim zeh la'zeh* (all Jews are interdependent, one with the other,) in her charming picture book, *In My Family*. Though we may come from different countries, religious practices, political beliefs and skin colors, we are all bound by our heritage as Jews. This timeless message is told in rhyming couplets that are accessible to young children: "From Seattle to Bombay, across a bridge and a highway / to help a fellow Jew in need, they will do a special deed. / We can count on one another, she's your sister, he's your brother. / There is so much you can do, to help along a fellow Jew." No matter who you are or where you live, you are welcome into the "tent" of the Jewish people with love and warmth. Morah Becky, as Rebecca Perlowitz is best known, does a great service in this slim volume to help promote the notion that all Jews are interconnected kindred spirits. If children and their parents absorb this vital message, can the Messiah be far away? Avi Katz's illustrations portray the diversity and the dynamism of the Jewish people with a warm color palate. Great care is given to avoid stereotypes of any sort. *In My Family* is recommended for all home, school and synagogue libraries.

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

Peterseil, Yaacov. *What Can You Do With a Cheshire Smile?* Illus. by James Balkovek. Israel: Zmanma Publishing, 2014. 32 pp. \$16.95. (9789657514092). Preschool.

One afternoon Giddy asks his grandfather to show him how to make faces. Grandfather tells him about the "Magical Cheshire Smile." A week later, the pair visits a hospital, and visit a (random) patient. The man looks angry until Grandfather beams his Cheshire smile; after a while, the man begins to smile. Later, Grandfather helps Giddy develop his own smile, which he uses to brighten up his classroom—and escape punishment (he has forgotten his pencil that day). That evening, when Giddy asks Grandfather how he learned the smile, Grandfather points up to the sky where a bright crescent moon shines. "And we both smiled," the story ends.

The author had a perfect opportunity to teach *derech eretz* (ethics). Unfortunately, he has ignored discussion of two important *mitzvoth* – *bikkur cholim* (visiting the sick) and telling the truth. Instead, he has focused on the power of the smile rather than teach what it means to act for others' benefit. Sadly, an obvious opportunity to teach Jewish values has been lost here.

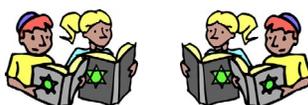
Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Rosenfeld, Dina. *It's Called Kibud Av Va'eim! A Story about Honoring Parents.* Illus. by Len Ebert. Brooklyn: Hachai, 2014. 30 pp. \$10.95. (9781929628780). Preschool.

It's easy for the fifth of the Ten Commandments, *kibud av va'eim* (honoring one's father and mother) to get lost in our current culture of overly indulged children and "helicopter parents." Dina Rosenfeld's newest book is a good primer for our very youngest lapsit readers that it is a *mitzvah* (commandment) to honor parents in very particular ways. Using simple rhymes, the author enumerates ten ways that young children should honor their parents – from not waking them up when they are sleeping, to doing what they are told, to not sitting in a parent's chair. Helping children understand and integrate this *mitzvah* goes a long way in ensuring the preservation of civil society and basic Jewish culture.

The lovely, full-color illustrations by Len Ebert depict an Orthodox family with yarmulkes and tzitzes showing; women only wear skirts, and *negel vasser* (water for handwashing) is shown on the nightstand next to each child. The pages of this volume are laminated to extend the wear. While the theme of this book is universal to Jewish families everywhere, the illustrations may limit its appeal to Orthodox homes, schools and synagogues.

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



PICTURE BOOKS

Aronson, Deborah. *Where's My Tushy?* Illus. by Ivica Stevanovic. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda, 2014. 24 pp. \$17.95. (9781467711975). Gr. K-2.

The residents of a small town are shocked when they awaken sans backsides one morning! The derrieres' disappearance was deliberate! They needed a break and headed to the seashore to work on their tans. Meanwhile, the townspeople were "bummed" and dismayed! How would they sit or keep their pants up? Fortunately, the tushies have a change of heart and returned to their "hindquarters". Preschoolers may find this fanciful fanny tale funny, but there is no Jewish content. Overall, Stevanovic's illustrations are bright, cheery and kid-friendly, but adult readers may find her depictions of posteriors—complete with arms, legs, and faces—odd. Because they are covered with underpants that do not cover the entire bottoms, they appear to look more like escaping cleavages than rumps off on a romp.

Aimee Lurie, The Agnon School, Beachwood, OH

Cohen, Santiago. *The Yiddish Fish.* Illus. by author. New York: Sky Pony Press, 2014. 32 pp. \$16.95. (9781629146331). Preschool-Gr. 1.

For many years, award-winning artist Santiago Cohen has been fascinated by animal stories that appeared in the media. One result of this interest is *The Yiddish Fish*, a picture book filled with fantasy and humor. Rob Costello works at the Brooklyn Fish Market. One day, cleaver in hand and fish on the table, Rob hears the fish screaming in Yiddish, "*Der sof iz do!* The end is here!" Amazed, Rob runs to his boss, Mr. Lipshitz, who cries, "It sounds like my aunt Louise!" How the two men solve the problem will make readers—young and old—smile and reflect. The illustrations are boldly-outlined, filled with predominant shades of blue and green and using varying perspectives. End matter includes an author's note about his inspiration for the story and scientific findings about fish communication, activities and experiments, and sources for more information. *The Yiddish Fish* is an amusing story that will make readers think twice before biting into their next piece of gefilte fish. For more "fishy" books, see *Five Little Gefiltes* by Dave Horowitz (Putnam's, 2007) or *How Yussel Caught the Shabbos Fish* by Charlotte Herman (Dutton, 1999).

Anne Dublin, co-author of Odyssey Through Hell: Escape from the Warsaw Ghetto. Toronto, Canada

Kafka, Rebecca. *Alef is for Abba / Alef is for Ima.* Illus. by Constanza Basaluzzo. Minneapolis: Karben, 2014. Unpaged. \$17.95. (9781467721561). Preschool-Gr. 2.

This two-in-one flip book features the story *Alef is for Abba*. Turn the book upside down and *Alef is for Ima* is on the other side. Hebrew words that begin with the letter *alef* are included on each page. The Hebrew word, the transliteration, and the definition are listed. Most of the words are items in the house such as *or* (light) and *oniyah* (boat) or in everyday life as *adom* (red) or *ochel* (food). The bright, primary-colored illustrations portray characters in activities defining the words. A simple book that will appeal to young children learning Hebrew.

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

Shtull, Dina. *Why the Rabbi Played Clarinet in the Sauna.* Illus. by Loretta Bradfield with photos. Charleston, SC, 2013. 68 pp. \$14.99. (978148265405-9). Preschool-Gr. 1.

There are a number of books that depict rabbis at work. This children's book shows the human side of a rabbi, as seen by his daughter. Instead of dates and big events, it tells a series of stories about Rabbi Jacob (Jack) Shtull. The author is Rabbi Shtull's daughter. The reader learns that Jack loved the outdoors, that he was a passionate teacher, and that he seemed always to be on the lookout for *mitzvah* opportunities. There are stories about small gestures he made to help others, and what they did for him in return. There are family memories, personal anecdotes about his life (including the reason for the book's title), and a

few professional vignettes. One story recounts that during a rabbinic conference, he played hooky and spent the afternoon ice skating. Though the body of the book is very short on adult-style details, there is a two-page biography at the back. Rabbi Jack Shtull was born in 1925 and was ordained at JTS in 1953. He served for 48 years as the rabbi at Congregation Shaarey Tikvah in Cleveland. He also taught at the Cleveland College. This is a sweet story told with love. It seems to be a memorial volume, meant for the Rabbi's family and for members of his congregation but is an optional volume for others.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

RE-ISSUE

Wild, Margaret. *Let the Celebrations Begin! A Story of Hope for the Liberation.* Illus. by Julie Vivas. Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2013. 36 pp. \$16.99. (9780763670139). Gr. 6–12.

I loved this book when it was first published in 1991. Of course, Holocaust picture books were few and far between at that time. The story combined with the artwork astounded me. Now, over twenty years later, it has been reprinted with a new cover, smaller font size, a very few layout changes and edits, and recollections from the publisher, author and illustrator regarding the making of the book. It is still astounding, and if you never purchased this for your library, absolutely do so now. In the words of the author, Margaret Wild, "...the book is not meant for four-year-olds, yet because it is in picture book format, some people automatically think it can be read to little kids... [others] felt it made a very difficult and sensitive topic accessible and gave them the opportunity to talk to older children about the terrible suffering of millions of people..." Of the many Holocaust picture books I have read, this is still my favorite – if such books can be "favorites." I believe it should have a place in every Jewish library.

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

[Editor's note: This book was originally published as *A Time for Toys* (Toronto: Tundra, 1991). At the time, the book elicited some controversy. The AJL review was published in the May/June 1992 issue.]

TAKE NOTE

Two previously out-of-print books by Sarah Lamstein are now available in paperback: *Annie's Shabbat*, illustrated by Cecily Lang, and *Letter on the Wind*, illustrated by Neil Waldman, a 2008 Sydney Taylor Honor book.

Alice McGinty, author of *Rabbi Benjamin's Buttons*, illustrated by Jennifer Black Reinhardt (Charlesbridge, 2014) has produced a six-page educator's guide. The guide is available at www.alicebmcginty.com. The book was "In the Spotlight" of the September/October 2014 issue of *AJL Reviews*.

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