

### Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND REBECCA JEFFERSON

**Abraham-Klein, Dahlia. *Necessary Mourning: Healing the Loss of a Parent through Jewish Ritual*. Shamashi Press, 2016. 121 pp. \$9.99. (9780692713556).**

*Necessary Mourning* is a pocket-sized, self-published, highly-personal book triggered by the author's loss of her father from multiple myeloma in 2014. Dahlia Abraham-Klein is a new author who is better known for her two books about food, *Silk Road Vegetarian* (Simon & Schuster) and *Spiritual Kneading through the Jewish Months: Building the sacred through Challah* (with Arthur Kurzweil and dedicated to her father and written during her year of mourning). Her educational background is in education and science, and she writes a blog on vegetarian food.

This book focuses on the author's journey during the year following her father's death. She describes the traditional Jewish ritual activities and restrictions that occur during the first seven-days, the thirty-day period, the one-year period, and the yearly anniversary, as well as the communal observance of Yizkor. The book also includes a glossary and index.

While the primary focus was her personal experience with mourning, she does include other people's stories and how important the process of mourning was to their mental and spiritual health. While *Necessary Mourning* does not really break any new ground, or provide any unique insights, it is an easy-to-read, quick summary that might be useful to anyone who is suffering loss. This book could be a nice, inexpensive present to give to someone who would benefit by a simple, general overview of the Jewish practices of mourning.

*Nathan Rosen, New York, NY*

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**Angel, Marc D. *The Wisdom of Solomon and Us: The Quest for Meaning, Morality and a Deeper Relationship with God*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2016. 204 pp. \$18.99. (9781580238557).**

Three of the wisdom books of the Bible are attributed to King Solomon. Rabbi Marc Angel selects a verse from these books to anchor each of his short essays, applying Solomon's words to explore how to live a life of meaning, ethics, and spirituality.

In the first section, "The Quest for Meaning," Rabbi Angel uses verses from Koheleth and Ecclesiastes to investigate theological issues such as the meaning of life, human nature, issues of faith, doubt, and divine justice, leading him to ask: how can we live a life of religious meaning while still questioning? The second section, "Wisdom, Morality, and Righteousness," based on verses from Mishlei and Proverbs, considers how to construct a healthy, happy, just society. How can we help build a society based upon truth and morality? How can we live an ethical life, fighting injustice, inequality, and corruption? Finally, in "The Quest for Relationship with God," verses from the Song of Songs, traditionally interpreted as reflecting the love of Israel for God, Rabbi Angel delves into questions of spirituality and love of God, and how we can establish a relationship with God.

Rabbi Angel is the founder and director of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals and Rabbi emeritus of Congregation Shearith Israel of New York City. He writes about religion and theology in a highly accessible manner, using a wide range of traditional Jewish sources as well as classical literature, world history, social science, philosophy, business, and popular culture. Throughout the book, Rabbi Angel presents an optimistic view of everyday life activities, the value of work, family, love, community, and tradition, while recognizing life's difficulties. He espouses a humane, questioning approach to religious belief and practice.

I recommend this book for community, day school and academic libraries that collect books from a popular modern Orthodox perspective.

*Harvey Sukanic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA*

**Ben Nisan, Hakham Mordecai. *Royal Attire (לבוש מלכות): On Karaite and Rabbanite Beliefs*. Ed. Gabriel Wasserman. Daly City, CA: The Karaite Jews of America Press, 2016. 213 pp. \$30.00. (9780996962929). Also available as an eBook.**

Since the days of the Second Temple, the Karaites have stood out as defiant opponents of rabbinic Judaism. Karaites were adamant that only the written Torah had been divinely revealed. For them the oral Torah of the Rabbanites was little more than rabbinic fabrication.

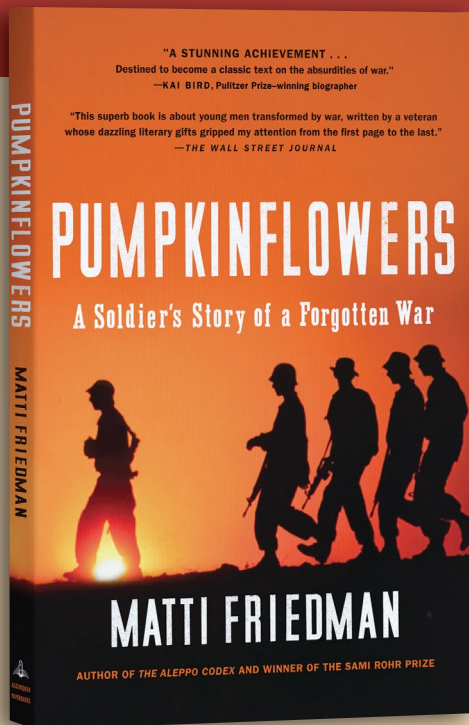
The letter "*Levush Malkhut*" (Royal Attire) was probably written early in the eighteenth century by the Karaite Mordecai Ben Nissan. It was sent to Charles XII, the king of Sweden, and sets out to instruct the king on the differences between the Karaites and the Rabbanites, and to demonstrate the supremacy of the former over the latter. Ben Nissan used the letter to point out instances where, he believed, the rabbis had inappropriately interpreted the Torah laws. He asserted that at the core of these differences lies a very different philosophical approach to the entire Law. Whereas the Rabbanites believed that the written Torah could be modified and molded through a divinely inspired oral law (in order to apply it to changing circumstances), the Karaites insisted that the written Torah was an unchanging document that could never be modified. They considered the oral law espoused by the rabbis as little more than the imaginative creation of Rabbis intent on readjusting the law to suit their purposes.

In this edition, Gabriel Wasserman provides a vocalized Hebrew text and the only known English translation of the letter with annotations. Wasserman is insistent that the material be read with both footnotes and endnotes in order to deliver a more accurate, balanced understanding of the issues. With these astute notes and indexes, this critical study of a little-known document makes available the many sources which underpin the letter's themes.

*Randall C. Belinfante, Director of Library and Archives American Sephardi Federation*

# It was one small hilltop in a small, unnamed war in the Middle East that sent out shock waves still felt worldwide.

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**Band, Debra. *Kabbalat Shabbat: The Grand Unification. Translations and Literary Commentary* by Raymond P. Scheindlin. Potomac, MD: Honeybee in the Garden, 2016. 257 pp. \$49.95. (9780985799649).**

This magnificent book will bring the spirituality of the Sabbath to readers whenever they reach for this book, and it will add extra dimension to the experience when read and studied during the Sabbath. The brightly-colored illuminations are enhanced with medieval style Hebrew and English calligraphy. The blue shades are especially intense at times, perhaps because the original artwork was rendered on “kosher slunk vellum-calfskin taken from a very young calf.” The artist’s selections of reading are inclusive: the traditional Sabbath prayers (including Candle-Lighting, Kiddush, Birkat ha-mazon, Evening Service) and psalms (29, 92-93, 95-99), as well as select Hebrew poets and songs.

The *Grand Unification* can be appreciated and enjoyed by adherents to all branches of Judaism; for non-Jews, it is a good visual introduction to the notion of the Sabbath and its sanctity. A perfect choice for birthday, engagement and wedding gifts, as well as for book collectors in general.

*Ellen Share, Librarian, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington, DC*

**Ben David, Aryeh. *Becoming a Soulful Educator: How to Bring Jewish Learning from Our Minds and Hearts to Our Souls – and into Our Lives*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2016. 114 pp. \$16.99. (9781580238731).**

This book will change how you approach teaching and education. It is aimed at all kinds of educators, including teachers, parents, and supervisors inside and outside the classroom. The approach of *Becoming a Soulful Educator* is the polar opposite of standard teaching methods, which are geared towards examinations or which aim only to impart information. While conveying information is important, the author believes that it is the educator’s role to have a life impact. The method of the soulful educator is to inspire and enable students of any age to discover their better selves through the learning process. Furthermore, this teaching philosophy imparts a love of the subject and a desire for life-long learning; the information relayed in the classroom or in any other teaching sphere will become part of the student’s soul. I highly recommend this book for all library collections including school, public, academic and personal libraries.

*Daniel D. Stuhlman, Temple Shalom Library, Chicago, IL*

**Bogdanor, Paul. *Kasztner’s Crime*. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 2016. 323 pp. \$29.95. (9781412864435).**

Reszō Kasztner’s persona is, depending on the observer’s viewpoint, somewhere between Oskar Schindler and Vidkun Quisling. Kasztner was the acting head of the Jewish rescue committee in Hungary during the latter part of World War II when orders from Berlin to Adolf Eichmann, the SS officer in charge of the Final Solution in Hungary, came down to eliminate Hungary’s Jewish population. Kasztner then either collaborated or worked with Eichmann to rescue some special number of Jews – which included some of Kasztner’s relatives and friends – from deportation to Auschwitz and extermination, while other Jews were sent off to the death camp. Kasztner survived the war and in 1947 immigrated to Palestine where he ultimately assumed a prominent role in the newly established Israeli government. In 1954 Kasztner was prosecuted in Jerusalem as a Nazi collaborator and found guilty. The verdict was appealed to the Israeli Supreme Court but made moot by the assassination of the subject in 1957. Bogdanor, an independent researcher, in an extensively sourced effort, examines Kasztner’s activities in Budapest and comes down on the side of collaboration. This book is ideal for a *havurah* (Jewish adult study group) with the intent of studying questions of morality and the nature of evil.

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



**Drazin, Israel. *Jonah and Amos*. Springfield, NJ: Gefen Publishing House, 2016. 175 pp. \$24.95. (9789652298850).**

The author has published numerous books on biblical interpretation, and on this occasion has turned his attention to the books of Jonah and Amos. What is unique about this volume is the variety of perspectives, including commentaries from Midrash, Josephus, medieval scholars and modern Christian scholars. While thorough in its contributions from different sources, the content is brief and the presentation is given in layman's language. It will be relevant to the casual reader as well as to the scholarly reader seeking multiple viewpoints, as demonstrated in the bibliography. This book would be appropriate in any library that collects biblical commentaries.

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

**Drazin, Israel. *Unusual Bible Interpretations: Ruth, Esther, and Judith*. New York; Jerusalem: Gefen, 2016. 176 pp. \$24.95. (9789652298799).**

This is Drazin's fifth book in his *Unusual Bible Interpretations* series. Drazin includes Judith because he feels the book offers greater religious expression than Ruth or Esther; however, the book of Judith is from the Apocrypha, not from the Jewish Bible canon. According to Drazin we expect Bible stories to portray characters performing acts that we should emulate. Yet, as in the other books of the series, Drazin reveals flawed characters with stories that seem to violate areas within both Biblical and Rabbinic law. For example, there no good explanations why Esther married a pagan, and the story makes no attempt to tell us she worshipped God, observed Shabbat or ate kosher food.

Drazin is a graduate of the Ner Israel Rabbinical College and he holds both a law degree and a PhD; his book is written in an easy-to-read style that falls somewhere between academic writing and typical modern rabbinical commentary. It will open the readers' eyes to new viewpoints on familiar stories. Some of the questions presented will never have adequate answers; such as why we read the book of Ruth on Shavuot. The rabbis have answers, but none are definitive or provable.

This book is recommended for personal, synagogue, school, academic libraries and other libraries with patrons interested in an alternative understanding of familiar Biblical stories.

*Daniel D. Stuhlman, Temple Sholom Library, Chicago, IL*

**Elkins, Rabbi Dov Peretz & Anne E. Pettit (Eds.). *For Those Left Behind: a Jewish Anthology of Comfort and Healing*. Jacksonville, FL: Mazo Publishers, 2016, 197 pp. \$16.95. (9781936778379).**

*For Those Left Behind* is a collection of short stories, quotes, and sayings drawn from ninety sources and organized in twelve chapters. The editors, realizing that "it is the lot of everyone who walks the earth, at one time or another, to meet the dark angel face to face and suffer the results of such an unwanted encounter," bring together words of comfort from the past and more recent times and from a diverse range of Jewish religious, literary, and other writings.

Dov Peretz Elkins is an author of more than thirty-five books, including being the co-editor of the best-selling *Chicken Soup for the Jewish Soul* and a winner of the National Jewish Book Award for *Worlds Lost and Found: Discoveries in Biblical Archeology*. He graduated from with a doctorate in counseling and humanistic education from Colgate Rochester Divinity School and spent his career as a pulpit Rabbi in Philadelphia, Florida, New York, Ohio, and New Jersey. His co-editor Anne Pettit graduated from Columbia University, studied at Jewish Theological Seminary, earned a JD from Fordham University School of Law, and graduated from Drisha Institute.

The topics covered by some of the chapter titles are clear (like "Kaddish: Alone Together"), while other chapters have vaguer themes (such as "Fallen Heroes"), but you can pick up and start reading anywhere for a few minutes and then return to the book for inspiration whenever you want. This is extremely beneficial to the reader in mourning looking for occasional comfort or for someone skimming to find the right words to help someone in grief. In addition, the editors include a two-page collection of glossary terms and abbreviations. I recommend this book to anyone in need of healing and inspiration and to all Jewish libraries.

*Nathan Rosen, New York, NY*

**Feder, Yaakov. *The Sefiros and the Self: A Divine Blueprint for Self-Discovery and Personal Growth*. Jerusalem, New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2016. 271 pp. \$22.99. (9781680252255).**

In *The Sefiros and the Self*, Rabbi Feder seeks to guide the reader to build character and repair character flaws with the help of the ten tools (Sefiros) through which the human being interact with the world. The book has two main sections: 1. The ten Sefiros: creating and achieving goals; 2. Subconscious Sefiros: discovering identity and revealing will. Each section has multiple chapters, and each chapter opens with a case study and consists of three parts: symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment. In addition, bibliographic and explanatory notes are provided at the bottom of the appropriate pages; however, there is no index. The book concludes with an optimistic message: the human being is capable of connecting to higher consciousness via Torah study and performance of Mitzvos.

*The Sefiros and the Self* is a self-help Jewish book. It requires time and concentration as well as knowledge of Judaism. It stimulates interest in additional investigation and learning. This volume will enrich academic Jewish philosophy collections, Yeshivot libraries, as well as personal collections and Jewish sections of public reference libraries.

Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

**Frankel-Fersel, Etsy, *Converted Masters: World Famous Masterpieces with a Jewish Twist. Colored Artwork*. Hong Kong, Jerusalem, USA: Menorah Books, 2016. 151 pp. \$44.95. (9781940516677).**

Esty Frankel-Fersel, a Jewish artist, has produced her own personal colorful album (9.5x14 inches) of world famous artwork masterpieces with a Jewish twist. Thus, for example, in Frankel-Fersel's reproduction of the *Mona Lisa*, the lady with the enigmatic smile now wears a sheitel and a Star of David necklace.

The book has nine sections: Torah, Shabbat, Yom Tov/ Jewish Holidays, Purim, Shidduchim/ Matches and Marriages, Mitzvahs/ Commandments, Learning and Prayers, Kabbalah, The Messianic Period, Yiddish Expressions. It provides an elaborate table of contents but there is no index. Each Frankel-Fersel painting is accompanied by a miniature of the original masterpiece, as well as some explanatory (and often amusing) text. Thus, she writes that Claude Monet's *The Seine at Jenfocee* reminds her of "toiveling (immersion) in the river," and Ando Hiroshige's *Whirlpool and Waves at Naruto, Awa Province* promotes her to paint the splitting of the Red Sea, though in Hebrew she writes "רִיחַ מִי תַּאֲרִיק" which means, "Reading the Red Sea." (Pun on the words 'splitting' and 'reading' in Hebrew). The book is full of humor and the funniest are the Yiddish Expressions like *farmished* (confused/befuddled) added to Picasso's *nude with vase* or *farbissen* (bitter) to an altered expression of Van Gough. *Converted Masters* is Esty Frankel-Fersel own Jewish point of view of the world of art. The album will bring joy and entertainment to private collections.

Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

**Hecker, Joel (translation and commentary). *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition, Volume 11*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016. 781 pp. \$75.00. (9780804784504).**

Volume eleven of the Pritzker Zohar presents a range of Zoharic texts and compositions. It opens with *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Song of Songs and its discussion on the mystical import of kissing and why the Shin in *Shir ha-Shirim* is written large. Chapter 2 comprises *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth, which addresses among many things the spiritual theurgic function of the Kaddish prayer, the origin and fate of the soul, and mystical eating practices. Chapter 3 is *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Lamentations wherein the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Babylon eulogize the ruined Jerusalem and compete as to whose suffering is greater. The last four chapters, representing a variety of mystical texts and dialogues, are given the overarching title "Zoharic compositions." This clear translation by Joel Hecker, Associate Professor of Jewish Mysticism at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and author of several works on the Zohar, is another welcome addition to the excellent Pritzker series. Highly Recommended for all libraries.

David B Levy, Touro College, NYC

# Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts

Edited by the Leo Baeck Institut London

in collaboration with Michael Brenner, Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, Sander Gilman, Raphael Gross, Daniel Jütte, Miriam Rürup, Stefanie Schüler-Springorum and Daniel Wildmann (managing)

The **Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts** is one of the leading series in the field of German-Jewish history. The first volume was published in 1959; since then more than 70 monographs and edited volumes have been published in the series. The **Schriftenreihe** covers the period between the Enlightenment and the Modern Era with a special focus on European history of the nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries; it includes classic approaches to social and political history as well as intellectual history, cultural history, gender studies, history of the body, scholarship, and musicology. Among the authors, names such as Selma Stern and Jacob Toury from the founding generation of the field are to be found, while contemporary research representatives include the likes of Christian Wiese and Simone Lässig.



2017. 560 pages (est.) (SchrLBI).  
ISBN 978-3-16-155021-8 hardcover  
(June)

## Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus 1933–1941

Edited by Francis R. Nicosia

Published in German

*Documents on the History of German Zionism  
1933–1941*

This volume contains the most important archival sources that deal with German Zionism, and the work of the Zionist movement in the time between Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 and the year 1941 when the National Socialist state's policy shifted to the total physi-

cal annihilation of the Jewish people. The documents reflect the development of the anti-Jewish policies of the Nazi regime and the increasing problems Jews and Jewish communities had in fleeing their persecutors. At the same time, the texts reveal the growing importance of Zionism for German Jews, and their response to the National Socialist environment.



2017. 350 pages (est.) (SchrLBI).  
ISBN 978-3-16-155253-3 hardcover  
(June)

## Assaf Shelleg Musikalische Grenzgänge

Europäisch-jüdische Kunstmusik und der Soundtrack der israelischen Geschichte

Published in German

*Jewish Contiguities and the Soundtrack of Israeli  
History*

In this book, Assaf Shelleg explores the history of Israeli art music and its ongoing discourse with modern Jewish art music. He introduces the reader to various aesthetic dilemmas involved in the emergence of this music, ranging from auto-exoticism through the hues of self-hatred to the disarticulation of Jewish musical markers. He then considers part of the music's translocation to Mandatory Palestine, studying its brisk discourse with

Hebrew culture, and how composers grappled with modern and Zionist images of the self. Unlike previous efforts in the field, Shelleg unearths the mechanism of what he calls "Zionist musical onomatopoeias", but, more importantly, their dilution by the non-western Arab-Jewish oral musical traditions.

The English original edition of this book, which was published by Oxford University Press, won the 2015 Engle Prize for the Study of Hebrew Music, and the 2016 Jordan Schnitzer Book Award.

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**Ganz, Yaffa. *The Jewish Fact Finder: A Bookful of Important Torah Facts and Handy Jewish Information*. Jerusalem; New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2015. 120 pp. \$12.99. (9781598261455).**

This is the third revised edition of Yaffa Ganz's *The Jewish Fact Finder*. Indeed, it is an organized collection of useful Jewish information. The book is in English, Hebrew, and it utilizes Hebrew transliterations.

The reader accesses her search for handy Jewish information via the elaborate table of contents. There is no index, so if one were looking for the Jewish calendar, for example, he/she would find it at section H: Time – All around the Calendar. This section has ten divisions: Periods in Jewish history; important historical dates; the months and their zodiac signs; leap years; *shemittah* years; *birkas hachamah* (Blessing of the Sun); *chagim* and *yemei tzom* (holidays and fast days); the four new years; the four seasons of the year; the four exiles.

Among other subjects, in the book, there are: People in the Tanach; Mesorah; the *mishkan* and *beis hamikdash*; Eretz Yisrael; *berachos* (blessings); and miscellanea: *middos*, *mitzvos*, *melachos*, measurements, and more... Yaffa Ganz provides her sources in the short Bibliography that ends the book. *The Jewish Fact Finder* contains relevant and useful data in a unique size format (4.5" x 10"). It is a practical reference tool for every Jewish home.

Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

**Gold, Dina. *Stolen Legacy: Nazi Theft and the Quest for Justice at Krausenstrasse 17/18 Berlin*. Chicago, IL: Ankerwycke, 2015. 304 pp. \$17.95. (9781627229708).**

Dina Gold's personal journey to retrieve property stolen by the Nazi's in the 1930's, *Stolen Legacy*, is a true testament to her unrelenting commitment to discover the truth. Gold's family members were prominent fur traders before the rise of the Nazi's, and were forced to sell their property in Berlin as the Nuremburg Laws were enacted. Much of the family was able to escape to Israel, the US, and England, but one of her relatives remained, and was unfortunately killed by the Nazis. In spite of his belief that he was safe, due to being a veteran of World War I and renouncing Judaism, Fritz Wolff was eventually rounded up in 1943 and killed in Auschwitz.

After the war, the surviving family members told tales of the family's fortune and lavish life style prior to the war, and Dina Gold grew up hearing these stories. After the fall of the Soviet Union, and the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, she began her quest to find out the truth about her family's property. Over a course of almost 20 years, she undertook immense research to recover the truth and has written a detailed account on the history of the Wolff family, their property, and what happened to Krausenstrasse 17/18 Berlin in the years between the Nazi take over and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Included in the book are family photographs, documents, and pictures of the building throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The book has a selected bibliography in English and German, a glossary, information about the building, a map, and a detailed index as well. This book is recommended for academic libraries, especially ones that focused on collecting Holocaust literature; its style may be too academic for the casual reader.

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

**Gilburd, Olga. *Happiness the Jewish Way: A Practical Guide to Happiness through the Lens of Jewish Wisdom*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015. 388 pp. \$19.99. (9781514111246).**

Many Jewish sources (both religious and secular) consider happiness as essential to life. In *Happiness the Jewish Way*, Olga Gilburd defines what happiness is and how a human being can achieve this state by treating happiness as a skill which can be learned. Gilburd shares her own experience, as a registered nurse holding an MA in Public Service, in this self-help book. She divides the work into three main parts: Part I: What is happiness; Part II: The Jewish way, and Part III: Put happiness to practice; each part begins with a short summary introduction. In the third part, the chapters conclude with clear instructions. For example: chapter 48 "Stay Interested in Life" ends with instructions to change things up, stay curious



experiment, and explore the unknown; chapter 57 “Change Your Behavior” tells the reader how to get motivated, start small, be consistent, and not to stress out. The book concludes with an afterword, a glossary of Jewish personalities and terms, and notes; there is no separate index or bibliography.

*Happiness the Jewish Way* utilizes wise quotations from diverse Jewish sources: Biblical, Rabbinic and contemporary. It is a delightful help for lay persons, and it is an appropriate addition for private collections, synagogue libraries as well as public libraries.

Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

**Ginsburg, Ruth Bader. *My Own Words*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016. 370 pp. \$30. (9781501145247).**

*My Own Words* includes biographical and scholarly writings, mostly by the Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg herself, with editorial introductions and notes by Mary Harnett and Wendy W. Williams, who collaborated with Ginsburg in the past on issues related to gender and the law. While the book provides biographical information, and presents major stages in Ginsburg’s life and career, it is not a full-scale biography or autobiography.

The first part, “Early Years and Lighter Side”, includes some of Ginsburg’s early writings and already shows her progressive views and precise style. The “lighter side” deals mainly with her relations with Justice Antonin Scalia, who despite their frequent differing opinions, had close relations, especially regarding their love of the opera. The second part, “Tributes to Waypavers and Pathmakers” comprises short essays on persons Ginsburg admired, including Jewish Justices and several women. The third part, “On Gender Equality: Women and the Law”, examines several instances in which Ginsburg was involved in seeking to achieve gender equality. The fourth part, “A Judge Becomes a Justice”, provides Ginsburg’s acceptance speech upon being chosen for the Supreme Court and her opening statement during the Senate confirmation hearing. The last part, “The Justice on Judging and Justice”, provides Ginsburg’s opinions on judicial independence, the value of comparative perspective in constitutional adjudication, human dignity and equal justice under law, the role of dissenting opinions, and the highlights of the Supreme Court’s 2015-16 term.

Most of the entries have been previously published in several versions, including public speeches. Together, they highlight Ginsburg’s views on topics important to her, especially regarding gender and equality and allow one to get a closer glimpse at Ginsburg’s personality. Since the entries are aimed at the general public, they are easy to read despite being learned. I was frustrated, though, with the way the book handles references. When trying to locate them, I encountered “A Note on Sources” which states “Our publisher recommended that instead of including the full citations in the print edition of the book, it would benefit the environment and most of our readers to instead house the majority of the legal citations from briefs and articles on the book’s website ...” I find citations to be an integral part of a publication, and should be presented in the format it was published – or be omitted altogether. As for benefiting the environment: there are some twenty blank pages throughout the book; not knowing how many copies were printed, it’s hard to tell how many trees had been sacrificed.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton NJ

**Goldberg, Sylvie Anne. *Clepsydra: Essay on the Plurality of Time in Judaism*. Translation, Benjamin Ivry. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016. 364 pp. \$65.00. (9780804789059). Also available as an eBook.**

According to Sylvie Anne Goldberg this narrative “endeavors to highlight the importance of the multiplicity of temporal registers ...” It is a study in two parts: Part I, ‘Narrated time,’ attempts to show “the kind of bricolage upon which the standard view of Jewish time is based ...” concluding that “Judaism invented a form of temporality that is forever being reenacted by the reseeded of the past in the present, and that denies Jews any relation to history.” In Part II, ‘Time counted down, or the world order’

the validity of the theory that “a break occurred between Jews and history after the destruction of the Second Temple” is examined. Goldberg consults biblical and rabbinic sources and refers to medieval and modern texts to understand the different sorts of consciousness of time found in Judaism. In Jewish time, Goldberg argues, past, present, and future are intertwined and comprise one perpetual narrative. Rather technical and difficult to follow, *Clepsydra* provides “a moment in the research of the historian who has spent years gathering archival documents, materials of all kinds ...” and will reward the reader who will spend the time. Includes bibliographical references and index. Recommended to large academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.

**Gordon, Susan J. *Because of Eva: A Jewish Genealogical Journey*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2016, 256 pp. \$29.95. (9780815610663).**

This braided narrative tells the story of Susan Gordon’s search for a grandfather, his niece, her own father, and ultimately herself. At the core lies a myth that no one in the family died in the Holocaust and tears in the limbs of the family tree. Her parents’ divorce results in little to no contact with her father. But her grandmother who raises her also walked out on her husband. Gordon knows nothing really about her maternal grandfather, Aaron. Her search for him leads her into unanticipated territory. She finds the name of Eva on Aaron’s death certificate and works through a network of relatives, genealogists, and documents to determine this woman’s identity and relationship to Aaron. It is Eva’s story that generates the most interest in this book, the story of a brave young woman caught up in Nazi-occupied Budapest when most of her family finds refuge in Sweden. Gordon’s search for Eva is the search for connection and meaning. She traces Eva’s footsteps and meets up with her in Israel. Gordon’s story of mending broken fences within her immediate family, such as visiting her eighty-seven-year-old father in a California facility, while touching and meaningful for her, pales in comparison to the story of Eva.

Part memoir, part scholarly treatment, *Because of Eva* includes an extensive bibliography and end notes. Gordon takes readers along the path of her discovery. Genealogical sleuths may gain inspiration for their own journeys. Readers interested in divorce and family repair may gain inspiration of one woman’s mission to understand the gaps in her family and family knowledge to fill the voids in her own life.

Barbara Krasner, former member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Somerset, New Jersey

**Gromova, Alina & Felix Heinert and Sebastian Voigt (Eds.). *Jewish and Non-Jewish Spaces in the Urban Context*. Berlin: Neofelis Verlag GmbH, 2015. 302 pp. \$42 (9783943414448).**

This collection of studies provides an important window for the English-speaking reader onto the world of Judaic scholarship being produced today in Germany and Poland. Sharing their use of the critical terminology of urban studies, the articles in the volume discuss Jewish modes of living – mostly in cities, mostly in Central and Eastern Europe, and mostly from the nineteenth century onwards. There are outliers – studies of rural communities, of Algerian spaces, and of slightly earlier periods – but in general the anthology remains quite focused. Some of the studies delve into primary sources, and here Maria Cieślą’s article on small towns of the Radziwiłł estates in Poland-Lithuania stands out as particularly significant. Others are more theoretical, considering long-standing scholarly debates in the light of urban studies. Several chapters are devoted to contemporary Jewish presence, real imagined or simulated, in European cities. As a whole, they reframe scholarly understandings of ghetto and shtetl, and to some degree, of Jewish Europe.

Pinchas Roth, Bar Ilan University



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**Kaplan, Lawrence (Ed.). *Maimonides: Between Philosophy and Halakhah: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's Lectures on the Guide of the Perplexed*. Brooklyn and Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2016. 256 pp. \$28.95. (9789655242034).**

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik – rabbi, halakhist, and theologian – writes a great deal about Maimonides. His Talmudic lectures, more often than not, revolve around Maimonides' Code of law, and his theological writings cite Maimonides' philosophical and halakhic writings constantly. At times, Soloveitchik offers Maimonides as background, at times he interprets Maimonides, and quite often he disagrees with him.

But how did Soloveitchik understand his medieval predecessor? Given the disputes among traditional commentaries and modern scholars over the correct reading of Maimonides' philosophy, who was the Maimonides with whom Soloveitchik conversed and argued?

This important volume offers the first opportunity to directly address those questions. In 1950-51, Soloveitchik offered a course on Maimonides' philosophy at Yeshiva University's Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. While there are no recordings of these lectures, Rabbi Gerald (Yaakov) Homnick did take extensive notes, and in many cases these are nearly transcriptions. Long-time scholar of both Maimonides and Soloveitchik, Lawrence Kaplan, annotated those notes, prepared them for publication, and offered a learned introduction. This is not exactly an essay by Soloveitchik on Maimonides, but given the nature of student notes, it is the closest we can come.

Contrary to much of the scholarly consensus, Maimonides as read by Soloveitchik, does not view knowledge and cognition of God as the highest human perfection. Instead, the perfect human is one who translates that knowledge of God into ethics. More, there are surprising hints of mysticism and even pantheism in Soloveitchik's reading of Maimonides.

Future scholarship will have to ask how Soloveitchik's reading of Maimonides influenced his own theology, and how that reading relates to other interpretations of Maimonides offered by rabbis and academic scholars. Still, this volume takes its place as among the most important works of Soloveitchik published since his death.

Yoel Finkelman, *Judaica Curator, National Library of Israel*

**Katz, Ethan B. *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015. 465 pp. \$35.00. (9780674088689).**

In this masterful piece of scholarship, Ethan Katz analyses the relationships between the Jews and Muslims who have taken refuge in France. His analysis encompasses the period of the French colonization of Algeria and also its aftermath. Recent accounts would lead one to believe that these relationships have always involved a great deal of tension, if not animosity. Katz asserts however, that this perception is illusory and that the relationship is far more complex and multifaceted.

Sifting through archives, newspapers, and interviews, Katz explores the lives and experiences of the ordinary people. He strives to understand how perceptions and interactions between the two groups were impacted by immigration to France and that nation's changing political environment. Katz notes that the relationship between Muslims and Jews had remained relatively static in Algeria for many centuries. Once in France however, the two groups were thrown together – two minorities in a French melting pot. We see how common culinary, musical, and even clothing traditions were shared by the two groups.

Nevertheless, the new environment also brought to the fore common and divergent political attitudes. Katz asserts that the Jews had initially collaborated in the French colonial experiment, but as Europe moved further and further to the right, the French government promoted racism and anti-Semitism for the purpose of maintaining their hierarchical vision within France itself. As the Arab-Israeli conflict continued, the French moved back and forth, playing one group off against the other. In France, tensions between the two ethnic-religious minorities intensified, while animosity towards both of them increased. Indeed, according to Katz, the multiethnic and multi-religious atmosphere that once allowed for public displays of difference in colonial France has been all but suppressed in France's contemporary society.

An eye-opening work, with extensive notes, bibliography, and index, this work is an indispensable look into the impact of colonialism and Jewish-Muslim relations.

Randall C. Belinfante – *Director of the Library--American Sephardi Federation*

**Kilcher, Andreas & Gabriella Safran (Eds.). *Writing Jewish Culture: Paradoxes in Ethnography*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. 411 pp. \$35.00. (9780253019622).**

This is a collection of articles about Jewish ethnography. It does not cover the results and findings of the ethnographic research, but rather the practice and theory of ethnography itself – meta-ethnography. It surveys the field from its beginnings in the nineteenth century up through the interwar period when YIVO did its important work. The articles focus on the Ashkenazic world only and the scope is comprehensive, discussing many works that are not widely known or that are not thought of as ethnographic. These ideas include looking at Moyshe Kulbak's "Vilne", Feuchtwanger's *Jud Süß*, and Vorobeichic's photographs as ethnographic works. The book includes translations of two critical YIVO ethnographic documents, *What is Jewish Ethnography?* and *Research Your Shtetl!* These are primarily academic and theoretical articles. The historical settings of the ethnographies in question serves mainly as background for the analysis of the theory behind the ethnographies under discussion and their effect on Ashkenazic culture. Recommended for academic libraries, but any collection specializing in this subject should also hold Itzik Gottesman's *Defining the Yiddish Nation*.

Beth Dwoskin, *Proquest (Retired), Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation  
Ann Arbor, MI*

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LABOR MOVEMENT:  
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**Las, Nelly & Ruth Morris. *Jewish Voices in Feminism: Transnational Perspectives*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015. 261 pp. \$55.00. (9780803277045).**

This work is a revised and updated translation of *Voix juives dans le féminisme: Résonances françaises et anglo-américaines* (2011) and is a title in the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism's *Studies in Antisemitism* series. Dr. Las' approach to the topic is "to observe what happens when today's feminist activism and Jewish dilemmas meet and intersect against a comparative background of France and the United States." The book focuses on and mostly quotes voices from second wave feminism (1960's-1990), although there are some later voices. The sections on French feminism appear to quote feminist philosophers (some Jewish), while the sections on U.S. feminism seem to quote Jewish activists, perhaps because Dr. Las observes Jewish feminists in the U.S. as being more successful in uniting and strengthening their Jewish and feminist identities and have more political and societal acceptance than their French counterparts. The French ideal of universalism and public neutrality also informs the context of feminists who are Jewish in France—the author needed to conduct several personal interviews to obtain information for her chapter *Being Jewish and Feminist in France*.

While this book was not what I was expecting from the title, the individual chapters are interesting albeit not overly integrated. By examining Jewish issues (religion, Holocaust memory, antisemitism and Zionism) and feminist responses (Jewish and non-Jewish), the author covers a wide range of history and thought. Dr. Las is not making any kind of argument in this work, but "rather than giving replies, we have asked questions." Recommended for academic libraries for their women's studies, philosophy or Judaic studies collections.

*Suzanne Smailes, Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH*

**Laufer, Nathan.** *Rendezvous with God; Revealing the Meaning of the Jewish Holidays and their Mysterious Rituals.* Maggid Press, 2016. 310 pp. \$27.95. (9781592644551).

In this insightful book, Laufer presents a cohesive and coherent message about the Jewish holidays, their meaning, rituals and liturgy; sacred time and sacred space, and the Jewish people's initial and ongoing relationship with God.

The author contends that each of the major biblical Jewish holidays (Passover, Shavuot, Rosh ha-Shana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret), their biblical themes, and subsequent developments, allowed the celebrant to re-experience the very events they are meant to celebrate. This re-experience is "reenacted through liturgy, readings and rituals of the revelational event that the holiday commemorates." Each year, by celebrating the Jewish holidays, the people of Israel could relive their first "honeymoon" year with God as a nation, and focus on these core foundational Jewish concepts.

Chapters 1-5 explore each of the major Jewish holidays as the author focuses on the specific aspect of the divine revelation pertaining to each holiday and how the rituals, liturgy and biblical readings give expression to that event. Chapter 6 focuses on the Mishkan and how its sacred space reinforces the sacred times of the holidays. Chapter 7 focuses on the Shabbat and its expression of sacred time. Chapter 8 discusses the post-biblical holidays of Purim and Chanukah and the modern holidays of Yom ha-Shoah, Yom ha-Zikaron, Yom ha-'Atsmaut, and Yom Yerushalayim. Chapter 9 wraps up the entire book by explaining how the themes of the holiday as articulated in the book could enrich our experience of the Jewish holidays and help us relive "our rendezvous with God."

The book is clear and accessible and will be of great interest to the beginner and expert alike. It is a profound work that will enhance not only one's understanding of the Jewish holidays but also one's experience of them.

*David Tesler, Yonkers, NY*

**Levitan, Chana.** *That's Why I Married You: How to Dance with Personality Differences.* Jerusalem; New York: Gefen Publishing House, 2016. 197 pp. \$12.95. (97896522908287).

The observation that many couples have "Personality differences" is not profound, but what remains unrecognized is how many people are blind to the kinds of differences that attract and then pull apart relationships. This book was written based on the author's research and more than 25 years as a family therapist. During her research Levitan discovered that a difference that attracted the couple during courtship may become a source of tension and frustration when married. Levitan helps the readers see their spouse and the world from another perspective. Marriage is not based on thinking alike but rather thinking together and working as a team. Teamwork requires respect for each other and an understanding that your differences are the opportunities to build stronger relationships. This book continues the sound advice and information from the author's first book, *I Only Want to Get Married Once: Dating : Secrets for Getting It Right the First Time.*

While the author is an observant Jew, this is not a Jewish themed book. It has Jewish values, but the only Jewish reference is in a footnotes. I highly recommend this book to singles, couples, and marriage therapists; it will be suitable for most libraries.

*Daniel D. Stuhlman, Temple Sholom Library, Chicago, IL*

**Lichtenstein, Tatjana.** *Zionists in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Minority Nationalism and the Politics of Belonging.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. 473 pp. \$50.00. (9780253018670).

This scholarly work focuses on the role Zionists played in the shaping of national identity in interwar Czechoslovakia. Beginning with an overview of Austro-Hungary, the author argues how the Jews—divided by language, economics, region, and observance—coalesced into a dubious ethnic group that would receive minority recognition. Activists worked with the Czech government, from its inception in 1918, to secure a Jewish voice in order to present Czechoslovakia to the world as a true "melting pot," advanced, cosmopolitan, and democratic. Efforts stemmed in part from a reaction to historical

Jewish powerlessness, which would presumably be abolished through a combination of ethnic pride and Czech patriotism. Jews were encouraged to acculturate, and speak Czech instead of German or Yiddish. Youth clubs, such as Maccabi, further promoted the farmer-warrior-athletic ideal.

Yet this attempt at hybrid identity failed and only resulted in conflict. The Zionist-Hebrew schools that replaced the traditional *cheder* mostly prepared students for either assimilation or Aliyah. Confused youth drifted toward leftist or secular movements; rural, pious Jews were further marginalized. In short, the author surmises, the regional Jews never became cohesive and respectable enough, like the Slovaks, to be a political force, yet remained distinctive enough to suffer persecution. This paradox became more tragic following the annexation of Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany, in 1938, and the fate of many Zionists.

Well researched, with maps and footnotes, this book underlines the dilemma of diversity. Recommended for college libraries with Jewish/European Studies.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

**Light, Richard A. *Jewish Rites of Death: Stories of Beauty and Transformation*. Santa Fe, NM: Terra Nova Books, 2016. 142 pp. \$23.95. (9781938288555).**

Richard A. Light has focused his life's work on teaching spiritual development and studying and practicing meditation. He graduated from the University of Colorado and spent time studying in a yeshiva in Jerusalem and in the rabbinic program at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. He is actively involved in *taharah* (preparing Jewish bodies for burial) and has been the President of a local Chevrah Kadisha for the last eighteen years. Light has also authored *Final Kindness: Honoring K'Rovei Yisrael: Preparations for Burial of non-Jews Who Are Part of the Jewish Community*, *To Midwife a Soul: Guidelines for Performing Tahara*, and *Exploring the Soul of Taharah* with Avivah Erlick.

This book is mostly a collection of short essays by a variety of authors organized by chapters including: Aging & diminishment; accompanying the dying; accompanying the dead, mourning and grief; *taharah* experiences; practical considerations—planning for death and when death occurs; a five-page glossary of Hebrew terms, and an index.

*Jewish Rites of Death* is not a 'how-to' manual but more of a guide to Jewish spiritual living with some beautiful photographs and some moving poems. Light has brought together some thought-provoking essays by a variety of very different authors. The most interesting and unique content focuses on the *taharah* experience. All in all, this book takes a different approach to the topic of Jewish rites of death and is a worthwhile addition to individuals and institutions who have large Jewish collections.

Nathan Rosen, New York, NY

**מחזור קורן לסוכות *The Koren Succot Mahzor*. Hebrew/English edition. Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2015. 1465 pp. \$34.95. (9789653016590).**

Sukkot, or Feast of the Tabernacles, is among the most complicated Jewish holiday liturgy to navigate. Known as the "Season of Rejoicing," there are so many rituals attached to this multi-day festival that a good guide is required. *Koren's Mahzor for Sukkot* meets this need by providing a beautiful and clear resource for use during the entire holiday. It begins with an erudite introduction to the holiday, its season, and related themes, by the highly articulate and thoughtful former chief Rabbi of the UK, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. The liturgy is clearly organized (Evening prayers, First and second holiday days, Intermediate days, Intermediate Sabbath, Hoshana Raba, Shemini Atzeret, Simchat Torah, and conclusion of festival) and all prayers and prayer instructions are translated into elegant and readable English on pages opposite the Hebrew text. The *Mahzor* also includes the Mishnaic Tractate of Sukkah with translation, and a helpful guide to the laws of Sukkot for the eight-day observance in Israel and for the nine-day festival for those outside of Israel. The new *Koren Mahzor Sukkot* is a welcome addition to the Jewish library and Synagogue shelf, and it is recommended for use by both novice and expert alike.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

**Matlins, Stuart M. (Eds.). *The Jewish Book of Grief & Healing: A Spiritual Companion for Mourning*. Jewish Lights: Woodstock, VT; 2016. 157 pp. \$16.95. (9781580238526).**

Stuart M. Matlins is widely recognized as a leader in the spiritual transformation of Judaism in our time. He is the recipient of the American Jewish Distinguished Service Award and the founder, editor-in-chief, and publisher of Jewish Lights Publishing. He is the editor of several anthologies, including the best-selling *How to Be a Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook* and *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook: A Guide to Understanding, Exploring & Living a Spiritual Life*.

This book is a collection of fifty-two short essays by an extremely wide variety of different authors organized by chapters including: Jewish Mourning; Broken Open; Crying Out; Releasing Yourself; Courage in the Darkness, and Restoring your Soul. The collection brings together gems which were previously published in other Jewish Lights Publishing books. This book breaks no new ground; it is not a manual or guideBook to the law or tradition, nor does it provide any consistent viewpoint. However, many of the individual essays provide enlightenment and insight, as well as comfort to those in mourning. While this book is not a must-buy for most libraries, it might be a useful addition to those that want to cover all their bases and make sure that they have everything of significance.

*Nathan Rosen, New York, NY*

**Meir, Jonatan. *Literary Hasidism: The Life and Works of Michael Levi Rodkinson*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016. 257 pp. \$59.95. (9780815634591).**

Michael Levi Rodkinson was a highly influential 19th century Hebrew author and publisher, extremely controversial during his lifetime. Distrusted by *maskilim* due to his Hasidic background and hagiographic works, the Orthodox community was equally wary of his advocacy for religious reform and attacks on his personal morals were ubiquitous. Yet his zeal for writing and publishing made him a figure difficult to ignore.

Previously, Rodkinson's image in Jewish history has been one crafted by his many detractors. (One cannot help but wonder how these fiery attacks would have played out in the age of social media.) This biography, newly translated into English from the 2012 Hebrew original, is an effort to take an objective look at the life and work of a contentious figure whose influence on both Hasidic and Maskilic literature has been considerable. Recommended for academic libraries.

*Daniel Scheide, FAU*

**Metnic, Alan. *Captured in Memory: Photographs and Thoughts on Poland*. Providence, RI: Ten Trees Design Group, 2016. 157 pp. \$60.00. (9780692327609).**

The author, a creative photographer whose works have been the subject of numerous gallery displays, presents in book form his impressions of Poland and the Czech Republic during the period 2004 to 2011, following an initial visit to the Auschwitz death camp. The work includes not only photographs with accompanying moving commentary, but also poems in English and Polish. This effort is meant to be the first of a trilogy focusing on the locale where the bulk of the pre-War Eastern European Jewish population found itself, before they were decimated by the Nazis. Specific subjects covered include a pictorial display of German-established death camps in Poland; the Polish village of Slawatycze; various tombstones; Terezin, and other related material that caught Metnick's interest. This book will appeal to a very narrow audience, most likely those who appreciate art work and students of the Holocaust.

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





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**Nelson, Cary.** *Dreams Deferred: A Concise Guide to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict & the Movement to Boycott Israel.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016. 396 pp. \$30.00. (9780253025173).

This book is encyclopedic in scope. Its contents are arranged alphabetically by topic; for example, “Academic Boycotts” is the first chapter and “Zionism as philosophy and practice” is the last. Each chapter is short (between 4-14 pp.) with a list of related topical chapters appearing at the end of each one. Nelson calls his book “...a concise, accessible guide to the key terms and issues at stake.” Additionally, he makes clear that while the scope of the book is very broad, unlike an encyclopedia, which aims for no biases, “The book’s contributors are unequivocally opposed to the effort to boycott and eliminate the state of Israel, and it supports a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” Nelson further states that he is not seeking political conformity in the essays even though he and the book take a very dim view of BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) and those that consider Zionism to be an illegitimate movement. But rather, he presents a range of opinions among the authors ‘from left of center to right of center’. Within those boundaries, there is still room for considerable diversity of opinion as these essays demonstrate. Some essays are better than others but, overall, they are of excellent quality. Many are written by Nelson himself; many others are written by recognized experts in the field.

One minor problem is the method of referencing which works well for the eBook but not for the hard copy. This minor problem notwithstanding, I highly recommend *Dreams Deferred* for all academic and high school libraries, as well as for larger synagogue collections.

*Marion M. Stein, retired librarian*

**Palatnik, Lori & Yaakov Palatnik.** *Remember my Soul: What to Do in Memory of a Loved One; A Path of Reflection and Inspiration for Shiva, the Stages of Jewish Mourning and Beyond.* New York: K’hal Publishing & Afikim Foundation, 2016. 246 pp. \$24.99. (9781602040144).

Wife and husband team provide a philosophical view to the Jewish rites regarding dying and mourning. Yaakov Palatnik studied at Aish Jerusalem (“Aish ha-Torah”, an international orthodox organization and yeshiva) for ten years, received rabbinic ordination, worked for Aish Toronto and Aish Denver, and was the founding rabbi of The Village Shul in Toronto.

Lori Palatnik was the Founding Director of The Jewish Women’s Renaissance Project, an international initiative that brings thousands of women to Israel each year from around the world. She is a much sought-after international speaker, and has authored a number of books, including *Friday Night and Beyond*, *Remember My Soul*, *Gossip*, and *Turn Your Husband into Your Soul Mate*.

In the chapter “Guided Journey,” the authors provide a day-by-day approach for the first thirty days, with tools such as a saying for each day, some insights for various stages of grief, and space to record memories of the person who died. In the chapter on “Questions,” the authors discuss the ten most commonly asked questions about burial, Shiva and mourning, the ten most commonly asked questions about death, and the ten most commonly asked questions about the afterlife. The Chapter on “Reflections” is a collection of twenty-three personal memories from a wide variety of people who lost a loved one.

This book is recommended for those who have read enough already about traditional rites and have a basic understanding of Jewish mourning and instead would enjoy a different approach to thinking about death and loss of loved ones.

*Nathan Rosen, New York, NY*

**Popkin, Ruth Shamir.** *Jewish Identity, The Challenge of Peoplehood Today.* Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2015. 336 pp. \$14.69. (9789652296719).

This book, based on the author’s doctoral dissertation (2010), “examines the evolution of Jewish identity in the modern era up to and including the surge of Jewish national and post-national sentiments in Israel and the Diaspora”. The scope is broad, covering a range of topics and issues relating to Jewish identity in Israel and the United States. The author, an immigration lawyer, active in civic and cultural

affairs in both Israel and the United States, was born in Poland, raised in Israel, studied there and in the United States. *Jewish Identity* is her third book.

The work is divided into twenty short chapters, some of which don't appear to fit together. It is not a complete, in-depth, detailed, or scholarly treatment of this complex subject. However, extensive footnotes are supplied in a section at the end of the book, along with an index of subjects and places, and an index of names. The book is useful as an introduction to the topic, highlighting controversial issues, which would make it appropriate for high school students and the educated public. The inclusion of illustrations would have enhanced the book's value and interest.

*Susan Freiband, Retired Library Educator and Volunteer Temple Librarian, Arlington, Virginia*

**Rubin, Richard R. *Jewish in America: Living George Washington's Promise*. Purchase, NY: Park International Publishing, 2016. 262 pp. \$21.95. (9780997891003)**

Over the course of the past half century, many different histories of American Jewry have been published. What makes this book different is the perspective of the author, Richard Rubin. Born during the era when Jews were just becoming integrated into American society, Rubin is able to speak to the transition of Jews from outsiders to an integral part of American society. He discusses the "relief from external hostility, which freed American Jews to a great extent from extreme self-consciousness," which allowed Jews to integrate into general society. Rubin also observes how there are two unique characteristics that allowed Jews to become productive members of American society: the particular governmental structure in the United States and political actions of its leaders, and the enormous scale and diversity of the immigrant population.

*Jewish in America: Living George Washington's Promise* is clearly well researched, and discusses the Jewish experience from the time of George Washington until the modern day. Each chapter is preceded by an introduction relating the particular topic to Rubin's life. Despite this personal approach, the book has an academic apparatus such as an introduction, appendix, detailed notes, a postscript, and index, which lends it certain credibility. This book is recommended for academic, public and school libraries, but it may not be appropriate for a synagogue library as it advocates a more secular life-style.

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

**Sagi, Avi. *Prayer After the Death of God, a Phenomenological Study of Hebrew Literature*. Academic Studies Press, 2016. 300 pp. \$89.00 (9781618115034).**

In *Prayer After the Death of God*, Avi Sagi traces the self-reflection of secular Hebrew writers who implicitly discuss the meaning of prayer in their world view. In the book, Sagi discusses how Jewish philosophers such as Franz Rosenzweig (Prayer as parallel to prophecy), Yeshayahu Leibowitz (prayer as command) and Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Prayer as dialogue with God) expounded theories of prayer that ultimately disappointed him and left him wanting. None of these thinkers "explained the practice of prayer as it is concretized in everyday life, and all left the riddle of prayer unresolved."

According to the author, prayer is a primordial phenomenon in people's lives, whether they use traditional liturgy, poetry, literature or music. But the question raised in the book is whether God is—or must be—the subject of prayer? Put differently, is faith even necessary?

Chapter 1 focuses on why the author chose secular Hebrew literature to examine this question? Sagi answers that question by asserting that these secular Hebrew writers contend with the death of God and a human centered universe in an almost religious or traditional language. Chapter 2 discusses the "death of God" and what it means to pray in its aftermath. Chapters 3-6 provide a detailed analysis of secular Hebrew literature. The author proposes a phenomenologically based theory of prayer in his final chapter.

This book is highly technical and is only recommended to the reader with an academic interest in prayer, philosophy and Hebrew literature—and preferably all three. It is not recommended, nor is it written, for the casual, nonacademic reader regardless of his or her interest in these topics.

*David Tesler, Yonkers, NY*

**Schreiber, Simeon.** *From Mourning to Morning: A Comprehensive Guide to Mourning, Grieving, and Bereavement with Special Emphasis on the Shiva Call.* New York: Urim Publications, 2016. 100 pp. \$19.95. (9789655242614).

In spite of its long title, *From Mourning to Morning* ... is one of the shortest books on this topic. Rabbi Schreiber (Yeshiva University and the Health Care Institute) is extremely well qualified to write on this topic as a long-time Chaplain for hospitals and independent agencies, providing support for those in emotional distress. The loss of his father more than fifteen years earlier was so memorable that it provided the catalyst for him, and he went on to publish *A Caring Presence: Bringing the Gift of Hope, Comfort, and Courage*, an in-depth guide to the etiquette of visiting the sick and the Mount Sinai Medical Center Prayer Book, a collection of prayers and meditation.

Schreiber's practical guidance stems from a lifetime of counseling people confronting death and what comes next. He does not focus on the halachic aspects of mourning, but on common-sense practices. He provides sensitive, practical, and spiritual advice. His section titled, "Do's and Don'ts of a Proper Shiva Call," for example, is very useful as it provides seventeen guidelines and six suggestions for meaningful topics to help mourners talk about their loss. The book includes many great nuggets of insights, such as his twenty-four sentence "After Loss Credo." While this book is not a replacement for any of the basic manuals about Jewish mourning, it is useful for all of us who will make Shiva calls. The book contains many insights that would be useful for everyone to do a better job of providing comfort to mourners.

*Nathan Rosen, New York, NY*

**Schwartz, Richard H. with Yonassan Gershom and Shmuly Yaklowitz.** *Who Stole My Religion? Revitalizing Judaism and Applying Jewish Values to Help Heal our Imperiled Planet.* Jerusalem; New York: Ktav; Urim Publications, 2016. 302 pp. \$28.95. (9789655242348).

Dr. Schwartz presents compelling arguments to show that traditional Jewish teachings should be used to inspire a passion for social justice, moral sensitivity, and a strong feeling for ethics and improving the world. Schwartz earned his PhD in civil engineering and most of his Jewish knowledge stems from reading and lectures. The book tries to be very contemporary, but given current affairs, I doubt it will stand the test of time. While the book is a useful sourcebook, full of references and quotes, some of the sources are very one-sided. Despite the fact that the author is a member of a modern Orthodox synagogue, this work will probably appeal to less religiously observant people. This book is a suitable addition for all libraries.

*Daniel D. Stuhlman, Temple Sholom Library, Chicago, IL*

**Segal, Raz.** *Genocide in the Carpathians: War, Social Breakdown, and Mass Violence, 1914-1945.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016. 211 pp. \$65.00. (9780804796668).

Drawing on an array of primary and secondary sources in Hungarian, Yiddish, Hebrew, German and English, this book presents the history of the Subcarpathian Rus' area (Transcarpathian region of Ukraine) from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until immediately after World War II.

This area was situated in the northeastern corner of the Hungarian Kingdom until World War I. Eventually the territory became part of interwar Czechoslovakia. Then, the Wehrmacht invaded this zone, followed by the Soviets in 1944, and in 1945 it turned into a part of Soviet Ukraine.

With the longing to establish a "Greater Hungary" with a Magyar majority, the inhabitants from the Subcarpathian Rus' experienced widespread violence, deportations, mass killings, and genocide.

Segal's book is an important contribution to the history of the Holocaust and genocide, as this geographical area is not included in most books on the subject. This book is recommended for academic libraries.

*Sonia Smith, McGill University, Montreal, Canada*

**Shaland, Irene.** *The Dao of Being Jewish and Other Stories, Seeking Jewish Narrative All Over the World.* CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016. 248 pp. \$15.95. (9781522977957).

This is a collection of travel narratives, focusing on Jewish communities in ten countries and three continents. The author is an internationally published art and travel writer. It is based on her interviews during visits to known and little known Jewish communities in Austria, the Czech Republic, India, China, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Sicily, Sardinia, Africa, and the Soviet Union. Each chapter is accompanied by a series of black and white photographs (well labeled), most taken by the author's husband and travel partner. They enhance and enrich the value of the narrative. There is a lot of historical information and detail included, which makes the book a useful travel guide for learning about Jewish communities in many parts of the world. It is an interesting, valuable addition to Judaica collections in high school, public and academic libraries, with a broad potential audience.

*Susan Freiband, Retired Library Educator and Volunteer Temple Librarian, Arlington, Virginia*

**Shapira, Elana.** *Style and Seduction: Jewish Patrons, Architecture, and Design in Fin de Siecle Vienna.* Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2016. 314 pp. \$40.00. (9781611689211).

This book examines the contribution of Jewish patrons to Viennese art and architecture from 1860 until World War I, and the Jews' subtle yet conspicuous influence on the stylistic development. Through her study of contemporary works and their contributors, the author aims to construct "the cultural meaning and relevance of buildings" financed by Jews and which she feels became, directly or indirectly, vehicles of Jewish expression.

This roughly half-century span is divided chronologically according to the four major movements (Historicists, Secessionists, Modernists, and Avant-Gardists) and covers the flourishing cosmopolitan climate of Vienna. The substantial population of Jews—and those of Jewish descent—was a catalyst behind the city's modernity, in particular the Jewish dandy, who frequented the cafes and theatres. Through collaboration with gentile artists the bourgeoisie sought "to claim authority as producers of general Austrian culture," yet assert themselves in a meaningful fashion. Facades and interiors contained statues or paintings of biblical figures (many erotically charged) and Judaic allusions. Yet the shared spaces with pagan symbolism reveal a certain contradiction. Many of these patrons, who later converted or intermarried, had clearly straddled two worlds.

The book, replete with photos and reproductions, presupposes familiarity with the artistic scene; an explanation of each movement might have been helpful. Nevertheless, there are detailed biographies of prominent figures, and a glimpse into a dazzling but vanished society. Recommended for academic libraries with Jewish or European art history collections.

*Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY*

**Shenker, Noah.** *Reframing Holocaust Testimony.* Stanford, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. 248 pp. \$30.00. (9780253017130).

In the late 1970s, Holocaust scholarship saw the development of an interest in survivor testimonies for both teaching and commemorating the Holocaust. The United States Holocaust Commission was formed; the mini-series "Holocaust" aired; and the first efforts to collect survivor testimonies were organized. Now, almost forty years later, thousands of interviews have been recorded, and we are starting to see the beginning of the "post-survivor era." Noah Shenker, a lecturer at the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University (ACJC), casts a critical eye on three major collections of Holocaust survivor testimonies: The Fortunoff Archive at Yale University; the collections of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM); and Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation.

Shenker examines the aims, scope, and methodologies of each archive. He describes the protocols for preparing survivors to give testimony, and for recording each interview. Each archive is distinct in

its approach. The Fortunoff Archive aimed to create raw, unmediated testimonies, while the USHMM focuses on testimonies as they relate to the permanent exhibition. The Shoah Foundation uses a three-stage framework to shape the testimonies, something Shenker sees as cinematic in its approach. Although each archive is careful to preserve the authenticity and integrity of the testimonies, Shenker finds that they do not have a full understanding of how they as archivists influence the testimonies. Details such as the questions posed by the interviewer, the camera technique, the positioning of the subject before the camera, and the use of zoom can help to frame testimonies. The author examines one interview from each institution in detail.

Shenker concludes with reflections on the future uses of Holocaust testimonies. This is an essential book for academic collections and will be especially valuable to museums, archives, and educational centers.

*Joy Kingsolver, Shel Silverstein Archives, Chicago, Illinois*

**Sher, Rabbi Jeremy D. *Growth through Governance: What every Jewish Nonprofit Leader Needs to Know*. Jacksonville, FL. Mazo Publishers, 2016. 326 pp. \$22.95. (9781936778072).**

*Growth through Governance* examines institutional life from the top down. Each chapter starts out with a “Shiur”, a quotation from the Bible, Talmud, or Zohar. The volume itself begins with “Strategic Issues,” discussing the difference between strategy and tactics. It continues through the responsibilities of Boards, the role of documents, and the leadership and management of various aspects of organizations. There are sections on such topics as running effective meetings, financial issues, how to organize projects, and “process management” (the need for documentation and the use of metrics). Rabbi Sher’s underlying premise is that Jewish texts can be a doorway to understanding how to govern and lead. He employs stories from our sources to illustrate the points he wants to make. The narration is conversational rather than authoritative, and many of the examples come from everyday situations, rather than from corporate life.

Rabbi Sher has written a short textbook attempting to cover a wide range of topics and issues. It is designed for use in Jewish institutions. It may be of particular value for young synagogue leaders who have no previous experience working in Board settings. It is recommended primarily for libraries serving synagogues and schools, where an introduction to Jewish leadership is needed.

*Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

**Shilo, Margalit: *Girls of Liberty: The Struggle for Suffrage in Mandatory Palestine*. Waltham, MA. Brandeis University Press, 2016. 200 pp. \$40.00. (9781611688863). Also available as an eBook.**

Margalit Shilo, professor in the Land of Israel Studies Department at Bar-Ilan University, offers a well-researched and comprehensive exploration of a suffragette organization within the Zionist movement, created to ensure full participation of women in shaping the future of a homeland for the Jews, following the Balfour Declaration.

Embedding the story in Israeli historiography, the book follows the creation of a political party by feminist Zionists, and their struggle to participate in the election of an assembly representing the Jewish community in Palestine. The platform of the Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights (1917-1936) included three main issues: a commitment to women’s equality in all areas of public and private life, banning child marriages, and resistance to Rabbinical attempts to have exclusive jurisdiction over inheritance law.

Shilo’s extensive research, based on a wealth of archival materials and publications, documents a history of discrimination against women in the public life of the Yishuv, women who had to contend their marginalization in secular society, as well as with the monopoly of the Rabbinate over family life.

A relatively thin volume (144 pages), the book contains a rich bibliography and detailed notes. It is highly recommended for academic libraries collecting in the areas of early Yishuv history, Jewish suffrage and feminism and political Zionism.

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

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**Silverman, Susan.** *Casting Lots: Creating a Family in a Beautiful Broken World.* Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2016. 233 pp. \$24.99. (9780306824616).

Susan Silverman was born into a family to whom the worst had happened. Her parents had gone on a cruise which her mother had won on a game show, leaving Susan with one set of grandparents and her infant brother Jeffrey with the other set. When her parents returned from the vacation, they learned that Jeffrey had slipped between the bars of his crib and died. Never a well-matched couple, this tragedy put even more strain on their marriage. Growing up, Silverman suffered from severe anxiety as her parents separated, reconciled, and finally divorced and married other partners.

As an adult, the anxiety remained while she created a life with husband Yosef Abramowitz. They built their family through birth and adoption. Silverman describes the process of choosing a country from which to adopt a child and how they welcomed their youngest into the family. She talks about her decision to become a rabbi and her relationships with her sisters and extended family. Recommended for synagogue libraries.

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

**Skibell, Joseph.** *Six Memos from the Last Millennium: A Novelist Reads the Talmud.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. 2016. 240 pp. \$24.95. (9781477307342).

There is a long tradition of analyzing Talmud through the lives of the great sages. In this short book, novelist Joseph Skibell examines several of the leading Rabbis and unpacks their statements and lives. The author intersperses a wide variety of scenes in which they appear, and personal thoughts on the topics at hand. Each section begins by recounting a well-known tale from the Talmud. His subjects include the relationship between Rabbi Yochanan and Resh Lakish; the cave of Shimon bar Yochai; Achnai's oven; and the story of the four rabbis in the *Pardes* (garden). Skibell first discusses the particulars of the text in detail. He then expands his discussion to include commentary on the individuals, as well as other Talmudic and biblical stories that can connect to it. The result is a wide-ranging examination of the power of Aggadah, and the role story-telling has played in Jewish history.

*Six Memos* is recommended for academic libraries, where a knowledge of rabbinic texts is expected. It may also be of use in synagogues with knowledgeable study groups.

*Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

**Stavans, Ilan.** *הגדה העולם החדש The New World Haggadah.* Art by Gloria Abella Ballen. Santa Fe, NM: Gaon Books, 2016. 84 pp. \$18.00. (9781935604440).

Ilan Stavans, the celebrated Mexican-American essayist, author, and commentator, has created a multicultural and multilingual Haggadah reflecting his own multiple cultural identities (his Mexican family originally hailed from Poland). In this *New World Haggadah*, he includes readings and poems that many participants will find familiar (Emma Lazarus or Yehuda Halevi, for example), but also includes important Sephardic voices that many North American Jewish communities may find unfamiliar (such as Isaac Aboab da Fonseca, who in 1642 became the first congregational rabbi in the Americas). A good portion of the poems included are written by Stavans himself. All non-English readings are translated into English.

The illustrations are very well done and colorful. However, I had a difficult time reading some of the print (white font was particularly hard for me, as was blue font on a blue background), especially on glossy paper. The majority of the Hebrew is not transliterated (with the exception of the Four Questions), so guests and leader will need to be able to read Hebrew comfortably. There are minimal instructions for the leader, but certainly enough for someone familiar with the seder ritual to easily lead the service. Nevertheless, Stavans has "reconfigured the liturgy to be more embracing, inserting voices seeking freedom through renewal;" as such, this is a bare-bones liturgical Haggadah.

Recommended for all synagogue libraries seeking to add to the diversity of their haggadot collections.

*Suzanne Smailes, Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH*



**Stopniki, Amy.** *Kosher Taste*. New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2016. 304 pp. \$29.99. (9781680250329).

This collection of recipes showcases the author's culinary process which places a strong emphasis on planning, preparing, and plating. Arranged in typical cookbook fashion, this cookbook offers the usual sections: soups, sides, meat, and desserts; and the ingredients are all common and easily obtained. The pages themselves are stark white with clear black text, which allows for focus in cooking. This is balanced out and enhanced by the photographs of the finished, plated food. The photography and food styling is very well done: readers will enjoy leafing through this book. In the back section, a helpful *Pesach* index helps cooks substitute ingredients acceptable for Passover. An easy fit for Jewish cookbook collections and recommended for Jewish libraries.

*Debbie Feder, Director, Learning Commons, Ida Crown Jewish Academy, Chicago, IL*

**Sugarman, Martin.** *Jewish Participation in the Fire Service in the Second World War: Last Voices*. London; Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2016. 408 pp. \$74.95. (9781910383070).

Written by Martin Sugarman, archivist at the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women (AJEX) Military Museum, this volume is packed with facts from archival records, newspaper reports, card files and AJEX records, interviews and testimonies. It records the heroic and dangerous deeds of the men and women who volunteered as telephonists; drivers who navigated around debris and blocked roads to get to fires; and firemen who manned the hoses while bombs were falling, gas mains were exploding and walls were caving in as the Germans attacked England during World War II. The Germans especially targeted docks and industrial zones with bombs, later missiles, then incendiaries dropped by balloons to which they later added explosive devices. Working 48 hours on, 24 hours off, the fire brigades rescued many, including American and British pilots who crashed on the coast while returning from raids on the Continent. The firemen experienced lack of sleep; working in cold, wet clothes; an inability to draw water from the Thames when the tide was out; acrid smoke; and the necessity of working amidst rats, flour, rubber balls, oil—whatever was exploding or burning depending on what kind of factory it was. At first the Jewish volunteers were resented for not having joined the Army, and some experienced overt antisemitism. Eventually, they were accepted and respected, earning many medals and awards.

While this volume contains much valuable information about a subject little known but important to the history of the Jews in Great Britain, it represents raw archival research and notes rather than a readable, coherent story. Composed of individual tales and anecdotes, some several pages long—in alphabetical order of the names of the servicemen—some only a paragraph or a list, it is not a history of the Fire Brigade. That inability to put the individual testimonies into context detracts from the story of how the Fire Brigade rose to this extraordinary challenge. Nevertheless, it stands as a monument to the Jewish contribution to the war effort on the home front.

*Marlene Schiffman, Gottesman Library, Yeshiva University*

**Vajda, Frank.** *Saved to Remember: Raoul Wallenberg, Budapest 1944 and After*. Clayton, Australia: Monash University Publishing, 2016. 160 pp. \$34.95. (9781925377088).

Many books have been written about Raoul Wallenberg (1912-1947?), the Swedish hero of the Holocaust. The uniqueness of *Saved to Remember* is that it is written from the perspective of someone who was rescued by Wallenberg; in this case, the Hungarian-born author, Frank Vajda who escaped the Holocaust thanks to Wallenberg's interventions in 1944.

In the first part of the book "Just a survivor," Vajda tells his life story: his family and friends, his education, his experiences during the war, through to present day and his prestigious medical career in Australia. In the second part, "Raoul Wallenberg ... as I remember," Vajda presents his adult life story: how he became active in trying to save Wallenberg from Russian captivity, and how he worked later to preserve Wallenberg's memory. Multiple black and white private photographs support and

authenticate both parts. There are no notes, index or bibliography.

*Saved to Remember: Raoul Wallenberg, Budapest 1944 and After* is a book that moves the reader. It inspires a greater appreciation for a single person's capacity to impact the future. It causes one to understand in a profound and personal way that Raoul Wallenberg not only saved the author's life, he saved the lives of an ever-growing community of descendants of survivors. Reading about the life and sacrifices of Raoul Wallenberg through the lens of Frank Vajda will make one thankful and even humble that such human beings exist. The book is an excellent addition to a public and school library.

Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

**Warburg, A. Yehudah (Ronnie).** *Rabbinic Authority: The Vision and the Reality; Beit Din Decision in English. Volume 2.* Jerusalem; New York: Urim Publications, 2016. 367 pp. \$28.95. (9789655242133).

While most books on Jewish law in English deal with ritual laws, this second book in Warburg's groundbreaking series on Rabbinic authority is one of the few books to address civil law issues. It has case examples of broker's responsibility, divorce, inheritance, and real estate transactions. Every day we are confronted with ritual questions and practices. Jewish civil law issues discussed in this book, while an important part of our society, may never personally touch most people's lives. Rabbi Warburg discussions and listing of sources help us understand the issues and how *halakha* (Jewish law) interacts with civil law and the decisions of the Jewish court. The process of making a decision as outlined here will be more important for the reader, than the short final decrees.

The book has many footnotes; some extending over a greater space than the main text. There is no comprehensive bibliography and it takes a good understanding of legal literature to be able to navigate the sources. This, and the lack of an index, will make it difficult for a librarian to help a reader locating the citations. Nevertheless, this book is highly recommended for academic libraries and other libraries with patrons interested in understanding modern Jewish law.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Temple Sholom Library, Chicago, IL

**Wolski, Nathan (Ed.).** *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition, Volume 10.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016. 637 pp. \$75.52. (9780804788045).

*Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on the Torah, the earliest text of the Zoharic corpus, offers a lengthy (NeoPlatonic) philosophical allegory of the patriarchal narratives, proto-kabbalistic Midrash, as well as homilies and narratives of stories about the "Masters of Mishnah." The text is bilingual: the philosophical allegories are in Hebrew while the proto-kabbalistic midrashic parts are rendered in the characteristic Aramaic of the Zohar. As Nathan Wolski, Liberman Family lecturer in Jewish Studies at the Australian Center for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University, points out, this bilingualism is often "lost in translation." Nevertheless, in this 10<sup>th</sup> volume of the superb Pritzker series, Wolski's attempt at penetrating and bringing clarity to such an impenetrable, esoteric, and obscure text is truly excellent and to be commended. His work builds on that of Dr. Jonatan Benarroch, who combined the recension manuscripts of the Zohar, preparing variants which enabled Wolski to establish a critical text upon which to base this new and much-needed translation. Recommended very highly for all libraries.

David B Levy, Touro College, NYC

[Editor's note: see also above for David Levy's review on the 11<sup>th</sup> volume of *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition* edited and translated by Joel Hecker]



**Yechezkel, Ishayek. *To Your Health: The Torah Way to a Healthy Life in Modern Times*. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2016. 335 pp. \$14.99. (97896590292321).**

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (Rambam) once asserted, “A healthy and perfect body is part of the path of serving and knowing God” (*Hilhot Deot*, Chapter 4). To this end, the author has compiled advice from the Torah, Talmud, and other Jewish sources (including the Rambam) on living a healthy life. The “principle that ‘the health or weakness of the body depends mainly on digestion’ (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, siman 32) underlies this entire book,” and the longest chapter deals with digestion, starting with the importance of chewing and detailing the other stages in the process. The author reviews of the dangers of eating sugar, salt and white flour. He shares what noted rabbis have said about overeating, and advocates the benefits of drinking lots of water as well as discussing the dangers of smoking.

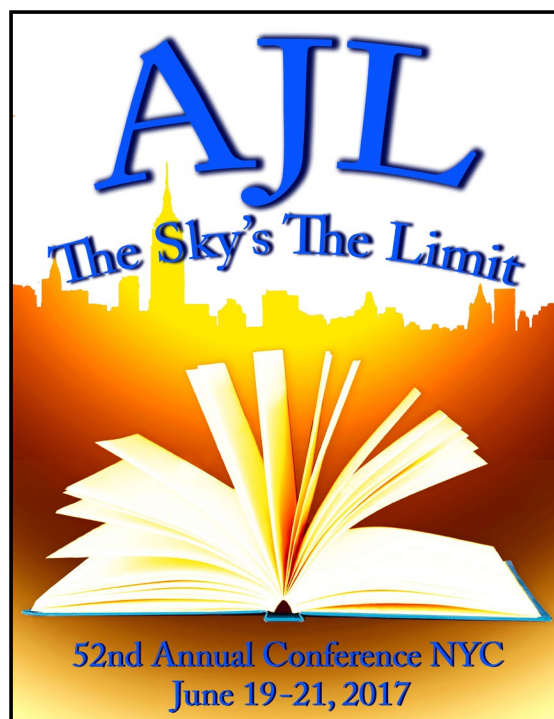
For thirty-eight years, Rabbi Ishayek was the right-hand man of Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach, zt”l (Ponovezh), and dealt with the Rosh Yeshiva’s medical care. Originally published in Hebrew as *Chaim Bri'im K'Halachah* and also available in Yiddish, the content is targeted to Orthodox readers who are more likely to consult a noted rabbi or designated “expert” than heed the advice of a conventional medical practitioner, and these books are very popular in Israel. From a historical perspective, it is interesting to see where modern medicine conforms to the sages’ advice. The frequent “researchers found,” with no reference to a study or an article where it appeared (nor the date of publication), detracts from the author’s authority. Readers would have been better served with a glossary defining terms like “fibrocartilaginous discs” and “greenhouse effect,” an appendix listing the suggested exercises and “The Paula Method,” and a list of recipes, rather than a large section of “Selected Letters from Readers.” The advice is sometimes contradictory (“Drink a half a fluid ounce per day for every pound of body weight;” “Those who constantly sip fluids are diluting their saliva, which can cause health problems.”). *Take Two Tablets: Medicine from the Bible* (White River Press, 2016) is a better choice for those interested in the confluence of Torah and health.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel

**Zornberg, Avivah Gottlieb. *Moses: A Human Life*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016. 240 pp. \$25.00. (9780300209624).**

Moses is a towering figure in Jewish culture. His origins as a Jewish boy rescued by an Egyptian princess and raised in the palace with his birth mother as wet nurse, stand at the root of his conflicted life. Noted Bible scholar Avivah Zornberg explores the contradictions and flaws that make Moses a metaphor for humanity. Using psychology, psychoanalysis, and literature, she creates a portrait of a man torn by a dual identity that leaves him unable to communicate effectively with his people while speaking easily with God. This inability to speak with his people leads them to idolatry and discontent and he reacts with anger. As a result, God forbids him to enter the Promised Land despite all of the hard work that he has done. He is a tragic hero who writes his autobiography in Deuteronomy, where he is finally able to reach out to the people, communicating his hopes and fears. Anyone interested in Torah study will find a great deal to ponder in this slim volume.

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



## Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

**Agnon, S. Y. *In Mr. Lublin's Store*. Translated and with a foreword by Glenda Abramson. New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2016. 281 pp. \$24.95. (9781592644582).**

We English readers are very fortunate to finally get access to S.Y. Agnon's final, posthumous novel in English translation. The book was assembled by his daughter Emunah Agnon Yaron after his death. This edition contains Agnon's daughter's article on how she assembled her father's book, and includes an insightful foreword by translator Glenda Abramson. We are also treated to an afterword by renowned Israeli author Haim Be'er, exploring the role of the novel in Agnon's canon. The cherry on the cake are the illustrated annotations by series editor Jeffrey Saks referencing the many sources in biblical and rabbinical literature Agnon drew on.

The novel *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, is set in Leipzig during World War I, and offers a reflective commentary on exile and Zionism, assimilation and faith, Germans and Jews. While on his way to buy what he needs for the Sabbath, the protagonist comes across his friend, Mr. Lublin. As a favor, he minds his store while the owner attends a meeting and with nothing much to do, he lets his imagination wander. It is through these thoughts and recollections that the story takes place. This 13th volume in the S.Y. Agnon Library is highly recommended for all libraries.

*Sonia Smith, McGill University, Montreal, Canada*

**Barenblatt, Rachel. *Open my Lips, Prayers and Poems*. Teaneck, New Jersey: Ben Yehuda Press, 2016. 89 pp. \$14.95. (9781934730485).**

Rabbi Rachel Barenblatt's latest poetry collection includes prayers that double as poems, and poems that double as psalms, covering the cycle of the Jewish year. They are grouped into seven sections: daily prayer, Elul and the Days of Awe, Sukkot through Simchat Torah, Pesach to Shavuot, Grieving the Broken World, Psalms, and Shabbat. The poems, mostly short, are moving, powerful and capture the interest of the reader. The author is a well-known figure in the Jewish world, who blogs as The Velveteen Rabbi, and serves as co-chair of ALEPH, Alliance for Jewish Renewal. She has published three other books of poetry, as well as several chapbooks. Her poems have appeared in a wide variety of magazines and anthologies. The book includes a glossary of Hebrew terms. It is recommended for all types of Jewish libraries and collections.

*Susan Freiband, Retired Library Educator and Volunteer Temple Librarian, Arlington, VA*

**Pinsker, Shachar (Ed.). *Women's Hebrew Poetry on American Shores: Poems by Anne Kleiman and Annabelle Farmelant*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2016. 223 pp. \$34.95. (9780814341360).**

*Women's Hebrew Poetry on American Shores* is a bilingual anthology of poems written by Anne Kleiman and Annabelle (Chana) Farmelant, mid twentieth century (1930's-1960's) women poets, who are mostly unknown to today's audience. The women were native English speakers, who lived in the United States. Their intensive Hebrew language education made Hebrew "my language" (quote by Farmelant). Each poem is written in modern Hebrew. Some poems are influenced by the Bible, the Prophets and prayer. In this volume, the poems are printed in Hebrew on one page with an excellent English translation (by Adriana X. Jacobs and Yosefa Raz) on the facing page. This format makes the poetry accessible to both Hebrew scholars and patrons who may or may not read Hebrew. Pinsker includes a short biography of each poet as well as extensive notes on the sources of the poems and articles written about the poems. The wide range of themes includes solitude, anonymity, the Holocaust, the United States, the world, sensuality, prophets, and prayer. Some poems are modeled after other poets' works such as Bialik, Sappho, Byron, and Dylan Thomas. Many of the poems are short, but express intense feelings. For example: mourners in the poignant poem by Kleiman, *Yizkor/In Memoriam*, are "wrapped in prayer shawls of fire, and murmur a mute Kaddish." Highly recommended for all libraries for the poetry, women's studies, and Hebrew literature collections.

*Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH*

**Rabb, Jonathan. *Among the Living*. New York: Other Press, 2016. 303 pp. \$26.95. (9781590518038).**

This is a moving, multilayered novel about a Holocaust survivor who returns from the War to live with his only remaining relatives in Savannah, Georgia. The story begins in late summer, 1947. Through the experience of Yitzhak Goldah, the reader learns about the complex relationships between whites and blacks living in the South in the late 40's. In addition, the divisions among the Jewish community, between Reform and Conservative Jews, are an important part of the story. It captures the reader's interest, is moving, and thought provoking. Jonathan Rabb is the author of five novels, which have received critical acclaim. He has taught at Columbia and New York Universities, as well as the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y. He is currently professor in the writing department at the Savannah College of Art and Design. *Among the Living* is an excellent addition to fiction collections in Jewish public libraries, community centers, high schools, colleges and universities.

*Susan Freiband, Retired Library Educator and Volunteer Temple Librarian, Arlington, VA*

**Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg and Schram, Peninnah. *Jewish Stories of Love and Marriage: Folktales, Legends, & Letters*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 278 pp. \$36.00. (9781442238985).**

Jewish tradition is replete with tales of love and marriage, and the authors/editors have grouped these in four categories. "Biblical and Rabbinic Stories" include the matriarchs and patriarchs, Solomon's wives, the Song of Songs, and Ruth. The story from the Talmud about blessing a tree upon which the authors base their own wedding blessings shows their talents. The "Folktales of Love" were repetitive with beautiful women, men who bought things at outrageous prices, and a clever turn of events. "The Iron Necklace," found in both Arab and Jewish oral traditions, tells how a bride wore the keys to the Cave of the Patriarchs (Cave of Machpelah, known by Muslims as the Sanctuary of Abraham) for her wedding. "Love Letters" included the censored correspondence of Alfred Dreyfus and Lucie Hadamard, as well as the rather steamy words of love from Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise (founder of Hebrew Union College) to his second wife, Selma. "Contemporary Love Stories" include Sasso's story of meeting her husband in rabbinical school and Debbie Holinstadt's parent's story, which is touching in its simplicity. This section also includes stories of same-sex couples and a "micrographic love story," with pictures created with verses of prayer. The end matter includes advice for "Writing Your Own Love Story," a glossary, a list of books referred to in source notes, and a detailed index.

Sasso, the first woman ordained as a Reconstructionist rabbi, served as a congregational rabbi and is the author of many noteworthy children's books. Schram is an internationally renowned storyteller and a professor emerita of speech and drama. For authors and editors with such stellar credentials, there were only a few stories that stood out. For libraries that collect short stories or storytelling resources.

*Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*

**Semel, Nava. *Isra-Isle: A Novel*. Translated by Jessica Cohen. Simsbury, CT: Mandel Vilar Press, 2016. 244 pp. \$16.95. (9781942134190).**

Nava Semel is an Israeli writer, a daughter of Holocaust survivors, who has made a name for herself with a number of well-reviewed books for young readers as well as for adults such as *Becoming Gershona*, *The Rat Laughed* (which became an excellent chamber opera composed by Ella Mulch-Sheriff), and *Flying Lessons*. She received prizes for the books, but unfortunately not all of her writing has been translated into English which is quite a loss for the readers unable to access them. I was quite taken by *Rosh Akum* ("Screwed on backwards"), another one of her Holocaust themed books that is set in Italy where she spent some time researching for the book.

Now we have a new book in translation, *Isra-Isle*, a complex look at the Grand Island, NY. plan for a Jewish homeland on Native American territory. It goes back to 1825 when the island was purchased by Mordecai Manuel Noah from the Indian tribe that owned it to be a place for Jews to escape from persecution. The story intertwines Indian lore with Jewish history, and includes the author's interesting take on the Zionist narrative. In addition, it connects African-American issues to the mystery story in which an Israeli man, a descendant of the original Noah, inherits the island. When he arrives in the United

States in order to reclaim it, he promptly disappears. And finally, Semel imagines the island as a modern Jewish city-state ruled by a female governor who has ambitions to become president of the United States.

The book is a very interesting read as one thinks about the various possibilities that could have resulted in a completely different history had a few events evolved not the way they actually did. One has to pay attention to the voices of the book's characters in order to follow the many changing scenes. It would be a very good book for a literary discussion group.

*Michlean Lowy Amir, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

**Yishai-Levi, Sarit. *The Beauty Queen of Jerusalem: A Novel*. Translated by Anthony Burris. Thomas Dunne Books, 2016. 384 pp. \$25.99. (9781250078162).**

Gabriela Siton and her mother, Luna, have a troubled relationship. When Luna becomes ill, Gabriela tries to reconnect and learn about her family's history. The book attempts to tell the family story, shifting through time from the early part of the twentieth century to the 1970s. There are many tales of woe from numerous women dissatisfied with husbands and children, but unfortunately the readers do not get to know any of these characters well as, for the most part, they are not well developed and do not invite warm feelings. This is the story of a Sephardic family in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and the author sprinkles Ladino and Arabic expressions throughout the story to create atmosphere. It does offer a glimpse of life in this community and those who want to learn about the history of Jerusalem and the Sephardic community may find something of interest here.

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

**Zelitch, Simone. *Judenstaat: A Novel*. New York: Tor Books, 2016. 317 pp. \$25.00. (9780765382962)**

In this alternative history, Zelitch establishes a Jewish State in the Saxony region of Germany in 1948. Her protagonist, Judit Klemmer, is a widow and an historian at the National Museum who collects and catalogs old movies. In honor of the Judenstaat's fortieth anniversary, Judit works on creating a movie about the establishment of the state.

Judit is surrounded by uneasy relationships. Tensions in the Judenstaat occur between the Jews and non-Jewish Saxons; between the secular and ultra-religious Jews; and between the idealists and the pragmatists; and even between the living and the ghosts of the dead. As Judit does her research, she uncovers secrets about the founding fathers as well as about her husband's murder.

Fans of Chabon's *Yiddish Policemen's Union* will enjoy this mystery set in a re-imagined Jewish homeland. Recommended for larger collections.

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

## Reviews of Multimedia

**Fischler, Steven and Joel Sucher. *Dressing America: Tales from the garment district*. Cinema Guild, 2011. 57 min. \$350.00. (DVD)**

This short documentary about the garment district in Manhattan provides an interesting introduction to the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American garment industry. The focus of the film is on the manufacturing and selling of garments in the early to mid-20th century. The flashy, artsy side of fashion history receives a lot of attention, and the manufacturing production side is often overlooked. Here we meet several families who have roots in this industry, and they are all proud to have been and still be a part of it. It seems that almost everyone involved in the making of *Dressing America* is of Jewish heritage, and the film emphasizes the Manhattan garment industry's Jewish immigrant roots. The camerawork, editing, and inserted clips are well done, and the film delivers a warm family feeling. At just about an hour in length, this film may be good for modern Jewish history students or synagogue groups that enjoy documentaries; it is also recommended for Jewish libraries.

*Debbie Feder, Director, Learning Commons, Ida Crown Jewish Academy, Chicago, IL*

**Jordan, Juliet. *Miriam: Home Delivery*. Cinema Guild, 2016. 81 min. \$350.00. (DVD)**

Miriam Schwarzschild is a registered nurse midwife who does home deliveries in New York City. Julia Jordan, the director of this film, followed her as she made rounds to care for her patients and deliver their children. She works in many communities, including Orthodox Jewish communities. The Orthodox accept her even though she is “not a good Jew” because her mother had a non-Orthodox conversion. She understands their culture. The film presents Miriam and the women for whom she cares with respect, chronicling their anxieties and questions as they prepare to give birth. Miriam provides support, warmth, and honest answers. She braves Superstorm Sandy to go from Brooklyn to Manhattan for a delivery and helps an Orthodox woman through a difficult labor in a home with no heat in the aftermath of the same storm. Although the film is about childbirth and midwifery, it may interest women’s groups and parents considering home birth.

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

**Pushkin Klezmer Band. *Klezmer Über Alles! Oriente Musik (Danzone)*, 2015. Produced by Mitya Gerasimov. Mixing and mastering by Igor Prigorovsky. 40 min. \$13.89. (CD). Also available in MP3 format.**

Describing themselves as “a Jewish wedding party orchestra from Kiev” may be a disservice to a band that uses traditional klezmer instruments (clarinet, brass, accordion) to create an eclectic sound. “Ne Zhiritsia Hloptsi” (Don’t Be Sad Guys) kicks off the party with some classic passages from Jewish wedding songs, but with the drums and trombone driving the rhythm, the sound is new wave and funky. Mitya Gerasimov’s clarinet stands out in “Ternovka,” and “Tsibeles” (Onions) which start with the melodic whine and soon switch to some jazz improvisation from the keyboards and guitar before switching back to clarinet. “Bros!” is reminiscent of Yiddish theater songs from the 1920s and is an “Odessa song” – a genre known for ribald, irreverent humor and gory murder ballads, drawn from the underworld. “Trombone Taksim” features Oleksiy “Sayid” Sagitov, proving that his instrument is there for more than background accompaniment. Swing style “Hotsa Mama” is bursting with energetic “chiri biri bums” and accordion from Shevket Zmorka, and the lively “Monastyrishke” and “Limonchiki” keep the festive mood going. “Kiev Bulgar” is a jazzy instrumental that will listeners snapping their fingers. “Trisker” is a perfect song for the “second round” of wedding dancing, and “Yamchi Ramchi” finishes the CD with another jazzy song.

Kudos for the mixing and mastering: the instruments are nicely balanced and there is a more mellow vibe than the brassiness of some klezmer music. It would have been nice to have more detailed liner notes about the songs and the Ukrainian lyrics translated into English. Definitely a “party album,” it is recommended for libraries with large music collections and fans of Klezmer.

*Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*

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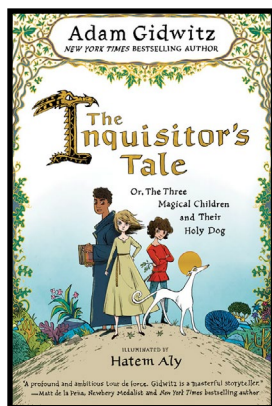
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# Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY RACHEL KAMIN & CHAVA PINCHUK

## In The Spotlight



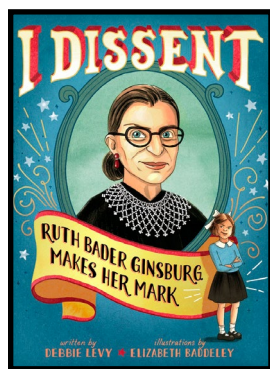
**Gidwitz, Adam.** *The Inquisitor's Tale, or, The Three Magical Children and Their Holy Dog.* Illus. by Hatem Aly. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2016. 384 pp. \$17.99. (9780525426165). Gr. 5-8. Review based on ARC.

Gidwitz, author of the Grimm Trilogy, blends historical facts, legends, and his unique gift for spinning enthralling tales. Set in medieval France, the narrator prompts travelers gathered for the night at the Holy Cross-Roads Inn to relay their knowledge about three children, Jeanne, William, and Jacob. This peasant girl, young monk, and Jewish boy were branded as false saints by King Louis for practicing acts of divination, feats of exceptional strength, and hard-to-explain healings. Added to the young trio's rap sheet is the fact they tried to thwart the burning of 20,000 Talmuds in the center of Paris, sanc-

tioned by the royal family. With tongues loosened by liberal cups of ale, a lispng jongleur, a Scottish chronicler, a drunken friar, an all-knowing nun and others tell what they know about the wanted children. The combined results are stories detailing the pagan worship of a greyhound, the dishonorable deeds of wayward knights, the "flesh and bone" conquering of Foul Fiends in the Forest of Malesherbes, the curing of a flatulent dragon, and the origin of a giant monk nicknamed "Red, Fat and Wicked." *The Inquisitor's Tale* is in turns rollicking, poignant, and sobering; in short, storytelling at its best. The book includes a detailed author's note and an annotated bibliography.

*Allison Marks, co-author of The Art Lesson: A Shavuot Story*

[Editor's Note: *The Inquisitor's Tale* is the 2017 Sydney Taylor Book Award Winner for Older Readers and a Finalist for the 2016 National Jewish Book Award for Children's Literature]



**Levy, Debbie.** *I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark.* Illus. by Elizabeth Baddeley. New York: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2016. 40 pp. \$17.99. (9781481465595). Gr. K-3.

This lovely picture book biography of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg traces early influences shaping Ruth's values and passions – her father, a Russian Jewish coat maker, her mother, taking her on weekly library visits and teaching her that women could be anything, and driving trips. She never forgot how she felt reading a hotel sign, "No dogs or Jews allowed!" The text covers her high school, college and, law school years, as well as her marriage, and the birth of her two children. Difficulties are not ignored: her

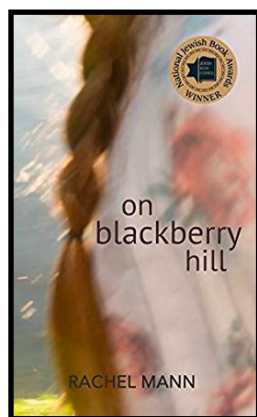
mother's death the day before her high school graduation, the arduous search for a job after law school when nobody would take a chance on a woman, a Jew, or a mother. Ruth's career as a lawyer fighting for equal treatment for everyone, and her path from law professor to court of appeals judge and, eventually, to becoming the second female justice on the Supreme Court and, the first Jewish woman, are all described succinctly and appropriately for the audience. The Supreme Court process of majority and minority decisions is explained, and Ginsburg's iconic lace collars (jabots) are discussed, picturing the jabot she wears when she dissents, and the one worn when she concurs for agreeing.



Baddeley's illustrations are colorful, often larger than life portrayals of classmates and judges, with a whimsical look. Large, bold, capital letters highlight her trademark ways of making a difference – protest, object, dissent, disagree, resist, disapprove. Back matter includes photographs, more detailed biographical information, explanations of some of her most noteworthy cases, a selected bibliography including audio resources, and quotation sources.

*Debbie Colodny, Cook Memorial Public Library District, Libertyville, IL. Former owner Sefer, So Good, and former member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee.*

[Editor's Note: *I Dissent* is the 2017 Sydney Taylor Book Award Winner for Younger Readers and the 2016 National Jewish Book Award Winner for Children's Literature]



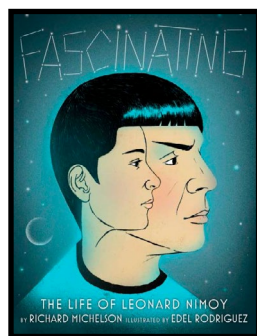
**Mann, Rachel. *On Blackberry Hill*. CreateSpace, 2016. 198 pp. \$11.99. (9781535262910). Gr. 6-8.**

Because of her widowed father's impending jazz tour in Japan, fourteen-year-old Reena Halpern is sent to a Jewish sleepaway camp the summer before high school. Accustomed to urban life, going to the country feels more like an enforced exile than a vacation. As the weeks unfold, Reena learns to adapt to a world filled with prayers, *talleisim* and tefillin, and learns more about her Jewish heritage. However, the real bonus turns out to be uncovering clues about her deceased mother, Naomi, who attended the same camp years earlier. Graffiti carved under the bleachers, a signed dining hall mural, and a conversation with the camp's assistant director give Reena insight into the personality of a mother known only in mythologized family stories.

Told in alternating chapters from Reena and Naomi's points of view, this coming-of-age story shows how the past can parallel the present. It turns out the mother and daughter share many similarities, such as an attraction to guitar-strumming musicians, a love for swimming, the tendency to run away when life gets tough, and the acceptance of advice from a mysterious stranger with heavenly ties. Mann's book explores the knotty relationships between family members in a realistic way without resorting to a sentimental, neatly-tied-up Hallmark ending.

*Allison Marks, co-author of *The Art Lesson: A Shavuot Story**

[Editor's Note: *On Blackberry Hill* is the 2016 National Jewish Book Award Winner for Young Adults]



**Michelson, Richard. *Fascinating: The Life of Leonard Nimoy*. Illus. by Edel Rodriguez. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, 2016. 32 pp. \$17.99. (9781101933305). Gr. K-3.**

'Fascinating' is an apt description of this beautiful picture book biography of the famous actor. From one of "Lenny's" first stage appearances at age 8 to his iconic role as Mr. Spock in the TV series "Star Trek," Michelson traces Nimoy's trajectory to becoming "one of the world's most recognized, beloved, and honored personalities."

With the meticulous research that has garnered Michelson Sydney Taylor recognition (*As Good as Anybody* -- 2009 Sydney Taylor Award Winner; *A is for Abraham* -- 2009 Sydney Taylor Honor Book; etc.), Nimoy's early years growing up as the son of poor Jewish Russian immigrants who tried to dissuade him from acting are described in story form. Nimoy loved to sing and act, and he did everything he could to pursue his chosen career. Eventually his persistence paid off. Gene Roddenberry, a producer who was writing a new science-fiction

TV show called Star Trek, asked him to play the part of a very logical, alien science officer named Spock. Nimoy brought his and his parents' feelings of being an outsider to his role. He drew upon his Jewish upbringing, using the ancient hand position for the priestly blessing to form his planet Vulcan salute, "Live long and prosper."

Richly colored in the muted blue palette of Spock's uniform with complimentary brown tones that give an historic feel, Rodriguez's illustrations fill full and double page spreads, enhancing the story of Nimoy's difficult climb to stardom. The back matter includes a detailed history of Nimoy's and Star Trek's many awards and accomplishments, and outlines Nimoy's various publications that include two biographies and several photographic volumes, as well as describing his museum exhibits. An author's note tells of the professional relationship between Michelson and Nimoy that grew into a deep friendship.

*Debbie Colodny, Cook Memorial Public Library District, Libertyville, IL. Former owner Sefer, So Good, and member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee.*

[Editor's Note: *Fascinating* is a 2017 Sydney Taylor Honor Book for Younger Readers]

## BIBLE STORIES AND MIDRASH

**Laff, Becky. *Joseph the Dreamer*. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2017. 48 pp. \$17.99 (9781467778459) HC; \$7.99 (9781467778503) PBK. Gr. 1-4.**

What happens when a spoiled brat is partially responsible for his own awful fate? Young readers will discover one result through the popularity of graphic novels, which entice them to a bible story where the main characters in the retelling are animals rather than the original people. Author/illustrator Becky Laff employs giant rabbits (Jews) and cats (Egyptians) to deliver the action. The art is mobile and dramatic; the faces reflect emotions that promote the scene. Sibling rivalry, jealousy, anger, fear and love come through as the panels increasingly speed the pace of the story rushing toward its moving climax. While the book does a good job of storytelling by using vibrant panels and text blocks in different shapes and sizes, and it clearly states that it is "adapted from Genesis," the plot motivation veers far away from Tanach. Young readers chronologically follow Joseph's adventures; from his father's love and special gift, his brother's hatred and nasty plan, his slavery, his difficulties working for Potiphar where the wife's advances are handled in an age appropriate way, his imprisonment, his release via his dream interpretations, his success as Visor/Advisor to Pharaoh, and thanks to the famine, his reunion with his brothers in Egypt, and eventually with Jacob, his father. Joseph is successfully promoted as a dreamer as well as an interpreter of dreams.

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

[Editor's Note: Another book with the same title was published by EKS in 2007 that focuses on learning the biblical Hebrew.]

**Rubabshi, Leah Chana. *Who Is the King? A Midrashic Tale on the Power of the Tongue*. Illus. by Yael Pushkin. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2016. 32 pp. \$12.99. (9781680252675). Gr. 1-4.**

When the King of Persia falls ill, the only remedy is lion's milk, something very hard to obtain. One man volunteers to get it and he brings 10 goats with him to the jungle. Each day he plies the lioness with the goats, until he wins her over and gets close enough to get the milk and put it in a jar. That night he has a dream where his body parts are arguing: the legs claim the credit for this dangerous mission because they took the man where he needed to go. The hands argue that they grabbed the milk, so they deserve the credit. The heart, full of courage, says the success was due to him. Finally, the tongue says

he is the master, and that he will prove it. When the man awakes and brings the milk to the palace, he presents the milk and says, "I traveled the jungle and went very far to bring you dog's milk which I put in this jar." The enraged king sentences him to death. As he awaits his execution in jail, the man again dreams of his body parts fighting, but this time they agree the tongue is most important. The man comes before the king and begs for mercy, asserting that it is indeed lion's milk. The king drinks it and is cured. "He let the man go/ all his limbs screamed 'Hooray!' and they all learned the lesson to watch what we say."

Rubabshi's talent for rhyme takes the story from the Midrash (*Midrash Shocher Tov*, Chapter 39) based on Proverbs (18:21) and creates a relatable story that teaches that "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Some of the scarier parts -- dealing with a lioness and being thrown in jail -- are tempered by Pushkin's colorful and expressive illustrations. The dream scenes are particularly clever. Great for story time, and a good way to learn an important lesson.

*Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*

## FICTION - MIDDLE GRADE

**Fisher, Debbie Reed.** *This is NOT the Abby Show.* New York: Delacorte Press, 2016. 314pp. \$16.99. (9780553536348). HC. Gr. 5-8.

A hilarious, fast-paced, roller coaster ride of a novel explores the difficulties of life with ADHD as experienced by Abby Green, a talented, intelligent, headstrong, Jewish girl. Abby's ADHD causes her to act impulsively and speak out unthinkingly. All she cares about is saying, "Good-bye Palm Middle School, hello Camp Star Lake for the Performing Arts..." for the summer. However, when her parents discover that she has failed English, Drama Camp is off, and summer school is on. Convinced that only "weirdo's" go to summer school, Abby soon discovers a different reality. Classmates she never spoke to are now sitting with her in class. Unlike Mr. Finsecker, the teacher who flunked her, Tony, the summer school English teacher, wants her to succeed. And succeed she does. With the help of an innovative therapist, her parents, her grandparents, her teacher and a new group of tolerant, way-cool friends, Abby discovers ways to curtail her over-reaction and try new things. While doing a stand-up comedy routine at an open-mike night for teens, she realizes that her greatest flaws are also her biggest assets—she is an instant success. It IS the Abby Show.

Written as a first person narrative, Abby will have the reader anticipating her next disaster, cheering her subsequent success, feeling frustrated by her thoughtlessness, loving her tender apologies, and ultimately laughing at the self-deprecating humor she discovers is her best survival skill. While the Jewish content of this charming story is minimal, mostly consisting of Abby's brother's bar mitzvah preparations, some Yiddish phrases from her grandparents and a few references to doing a mitzvah, Jewish middle readers will certainly see themselves in its pages.

*Kathy Bloomfield, AJL President-SSC and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC.*

**Robinson, Sharon.** *The Hero Two Doors Down: A Story of Friendship Between a Boy and a Baseball Legend.* New York: Scholastic Press, 2016. 208 pp. \$16.99 (9780545804516) HC; \$16.99 (9780545804530) eBook. Gr. 4-7. Reviewed from ARC.

After his father's death, Stephen Satlow rummages through a box of boyhood memorabilia. When he uncovers a ticket stub from the Brooklyn Dodgers 1948 home opener, it triggers memories of being an eight-year-old boy growing up in Brooklyn and of his close friendship with Jackie Robinson, the African-American baseball player who lived two doors down in his all-Jewish neighborhood. Stephen, a die-hard Dodgers fan, idolizes Jackie, his favorite player, and under his hero's calming influence, he learns about self-control and how to curb his impulsive nature. The relationship also comes with special perks such as meeting other Dodger players, receiving a signed ball after batting practice, and having his

entire class attend a baseball game. During the holiday season, not realizing the Satlows are Jewish, the Robinson family gives them a Christmas tree and ornaments. After an awkward moment, the greenery is accepted because it was “a gift given out of friendship.” Robinson told this particular story previously in her picture book, *Jackie’s Gift* (Viking, 2010). Told from the perspective of young Satlow, *The Hero Two Doors Down* is an intimate story with huge, and vitally important, themes of acceptance and brotherhood while giving young readers a lesson in American race relations. Sharon Robinson has done a splendid job sharing the legacy of her father’s struggles, courage, and grace. The Epilogue and the Afterword tell of the enduring friendship between the Satlow and Robinson families and illustrate Jackie’s powerful words: “A life is not important except for the impact it has on other lives.”

*Allison Marks, co-author of The Art Lesson: A Shavuot Story*

**Stein, Tammar. *The Six-Day Hero*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Kar-Ben Publishing, 2017. 256 pp. \$16.99. (9781512458718) Gr. 4-7. Reviewed from ARC.**

In the spring of 1967, twelve year-old Motti and his family live in Jerusalem. Although the book begins with confidence in Israel’s security, Motti’s father and older brother are soon called to defend their country against aggression from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Motti, too, must shift quickly into survival mode, keeping a close eye on his younger brother, Beni, and his mother and remain brave despite the horrific attacks on his hometown. Readers are supplied with abundant context for this period in history without weighing down the force and pacing of Motti’s compelling story. Additionally, this title does not gloss over the realities of war, but it nevertheless ends on a nuanced, hopeful note for Motti and for Israel.

The strongest elements in *The Six-Day Hero* are its characters and their development. Motti shows real growth and understanding, changing quickly from a reckless, borderline antagonistic child, to a thoughtful, supportive brother and friend. The conversations between neighbors and strangers, and the shifting, conflicting political views of a nation at the brink of war, feel particularly realistic. Motti’s elderly neighbor and Holocaust survivor, Mrs. Friedburg, is one of the most poignant voices in the story; cynical and negative before the War, she is the steadiest and most comforting presence during its ugliest, scariest moments. Educators and librarians alike will breathe a sigh of relief to see Jewish historical fiction for children that is not about the Holocaust. Thankfully, that is not the novel’s only merit, as readers will be attracted to the honest, endearing characters living a moment in Israel’s past that deserves to be revisited.

*Alex Quay, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles*

## FICTION – TEEN

**Littman, Sarah Darer. *In Case You Missed It*. New York: Scholastic, 2016. 320 pp. \$17.99 (9780545904377) HC; \$9.95 (9781338129427) PBK; \$9.98 eBook. Gr. 8-12.**

Samantha Wallach is a typical teenager. She stresses about her SAT score, her AP exams, and getting her driver’s license, lies to her parents about attending a rock concert with her two besties, and hopes that her super-cute crush, Jamie, asks her to the Junior Prom. But everything falls apart when the international bank that her Dad runs is attacked by hackers and everything in the Wallach family’s private cloud, including all of their e-mails, texts, photos, and Sammy’s online journal, are made public. Sammy’s friends, infuriated over what she wrote about them in her journal ditch her; Jamie asks someone else to prom; and Sammy seems to be the last person on earth to find out that her mother has breast cancer. Sammy learns to take responsibility for her mistakes, discovers who her true friends are – and learns to be a better friend and a better daughter– and has a magical, although unexpected, Prom experience after all. Sammy’s Jewish identity is alluded to with mentions of Chanukah presents and the Shema (which Sammy recites in the local cemetery: “I know it’s not the right prayer . . . but I want to show respect, and it’s the thought that counts, right?”) along with a small sprinkling of Yiddish words

like *chutzpah*, *l'chaim*, and *oy gevalt*. However, the Jewish content is insignificant and seems to have no impact on the story. Sarah Darer Littman is the author of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Winner, *Confessions of a Closet Catholic* (Dutton, 2005) and the Sydney Taylor Honor Award Winner, *Life, After* (Scholastic, 2010). While this is an enjoyable read about the pitfalls of social media and how difficult it is to control your digital life along with your actual life, only synagogue and day school collections that include her other books (*Want to Go Private*, *Backlash*, *Purge*, *Charmed*, *I'm Sure*, and *Fairest of Them All*) will find this a necessary purchase.

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

## FOLKTALES

**Azar, François.** *Bewitched by Solika and other Judeo-Spanish tales / La novya endulkera I otras konsejikas djudeo-espanyolas.* Illus. by Petros Bouloubasis. English translation and adaptation by Vanessa Pfister-Mesavage. Paris: Lior éditions, 2016. 67 pp. \$20.00. (9782954806259). Gr. 5 and up.

The format of this large picture book is deceptive -- most of the stories would not be appropriate for young children. Azar has selected 10 stories that were made available through the research of Matilda Koén-Sarano, the preeminent folklorist and collector of Judeo-Spanish tales who interviewed many native informants. All had been previously published in various works by Koén-Sarano, though other versions are noted as well. The text is presented in two columns: English on the left and Judeo-Spanish on the right. Magnificent full-page illustrations accompany the stories, one illustration for each facing page. Evocative and surrealistic in style, many of the pictures reflect the caustic, ironic or even macabre nature of the tales. The title story is bizarre, frightening and entirely unsuitable for children. Other stories are more benign. The English translation seems somewhat clumsy in its attempt to render the Ladino text accurately.

In an appendix, Azar discusses the aesthetics of folklore in general and places Judeo-Spanish folktales in their historical context. He then identifies various themes that run through these tales. For more comprehensive anthologies and analyses of Judeo-Spanish folktales in English, see *Folktales of the Jews* by Dan Ben-Amos and Dov Noy (Jewish Publication Society, 2006) and the following books by Matilda Koén-Sarano: *King Solomon and the Golden Fish: Tales from the Sephardic Tradition* (Wayne State University Press, 2004) and *Tales of Joha, the Jewish Trickster* (Jewish Publication Society, 2003).

Joyce Levine, North Shore Hebrew Academy H.S. (retired) and former AJL Publications Chair, North Woodmere, NY

## HOLOCAUST AND WORLD WAR II

**Bornstein, Michael and Debbie Bornstein Holinstat.** *Survivors Club: The True Story of a Very Young Prisoner of Auschwitz.* New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2016, 352 pp. \$16.99. (9780374305710). Gr. 5-9. Reviewed from ARC.

Upon Soviet liberation, children prisoners of Auschwitz were requested by the soldiers to show their branded inmate numbers. One of those children captured on Soviet film was four-year-old Michael Bornstein. *Survivors Club* is his account of the Nazi occupation of his Polish village of Żarki in 1939, his family's strategies for survival during that occupation, their eventual removal to Auschwitz in 1944, his survival and that of his mother, grandmother, cousins, aunts, and uncles.

Relying on such a young child's memories can be problematic, especially when addressing such traumatic experiences. However, Bornstein notes his attempts to fill in the gaps with information gained from other survivors from his village. He relates his story directly to the reader as if all were gathered around the fireplace, explaining foreign terms and practices, and simultaneously using the voice of innocence and the voice of experience that with a deft hand applies dramatic tension. The

reunion with his beloved Mamishu, his mother, is poignant. The book does not sugarcoat methods of Nazi violence; a variety of violent methods of execution during the occupation and at Auschwitz that became experiences of everyday life are mentioned as a matter of course.

Photos and an epilogue of his family's who's-who round out the narrative. Other formats available include a CD and a downloadable audio version. Bornstein's story is one of continual faith in the eye of adversity, even in the postwar period. Keep the tissues nearby.

*Barbara Krasner, former member of Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Somerset, New Jersey*

**Boyne, John. *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. Illus. by Oliver Jeffers. New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006 Tenth Anniversary Reissue with 2016 introduction, 335 pp. \$18.99. (9780399559310). Gr. 4 and up.**

This international bestseller is now reissued for its tenth anniversary and has lost no appeal over the past decade. Nine-year-old naïve Bruno, the son of the newly installed Auschwitz commandant, moves with his family to a house outside the camp. Not likely to play with his older sister, Gretel, the Hopeless Case, he goes exploring along the barbed wire fence one day and meets Shmuel, a Jewish boy from Cracow who shares Bruno's exact birthday. They meet nearly every day, each boy on his respective side of the fence and talk. But when Shmuel's father disappears and Bruno is about to move back to Berlin, Bruno dons a pair of striped pajamas and slips under the fence for his biggest adventure yet, albeit short-lived.

Boyne calls this a fable and he meets the challenge of that tone exactly. The illustrations so masterfully drawn by Oliver Jeffers augment the narrative and punctuate the differences between the two sides of the fence. Part of the honesty of Boyne's craft, though, is due to seeing the world through a small boy's eyes, from Out-With (Auschwitz) to the Fury (Führer). For those not already familiar with this heart-wrenching story, the book is a must-read among not just children's Holocaust titles but also among children's literature in general.

*Barbara Krasner, former member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Somerset, New Jersey*

**Cohen-Scali, Sarah. *Max*. Translated by Penny Hueston. New York: Neal Porter/Roaring Brook Press, 2017, 432 pp. \$19.99. (9781626720718) Gr. 10 and up. Reviewed from ARC.**

A voice from the womb emerges. He anxiously awaits his birth date, which coincides with that of the Führer. He is the first product of the *Lebensborn* program, the deliberate mating of carefully selected Aryans and he is a gift to Hitler, who attends his name-giving ceremony. While this woman who calls herself his mother refers to him as Max, he is given the name Konrad von Kebnersol. Konrad is gifted and treated specially as Baptized by the Führer himself. With his angel face and platinum curls, he is used as a decoy for the kidnapping of blond, blue-eyed Polish children. He meets his match in arrogance when Lucjan, renamed Lukas, is brought to the school where Konrad serves as role model. Lucjan eventually confesses he is Jewish, his father and brother dead from the Lodz Ghetto and his mother in Treblinka. Despite Konrad's loathing for family, he is drawn to Lukas and the two become brothers when they enter the elite Napola School in Potsdam. Lukas has his own resistance strategies, including murder, which makes Konrad question his Nazi ideological indoctrination. The two leave the school together and eke out a life in the rubble of Berlin with tragic consequence.

Cohen-Scali methodically lays out a landscape that demonstrates the rise and fall of the Third Reich through Konrad and Lukas, from the pomp and circumstance of the Führer's visit to the *Lebensborn* home to the crumbling of Berlin. The first-person narration is unorthodox, full of attitude, and directed to the reader as if a confession. He is, in fact, bearing witness, as he promised Lukas. One plot point involving a photo is contrived but a means to an end, since that photo figures prominently into the narrative's conclusion. The story is unforgettable; the characters rise along their own paths and transform as a result of their relationship. Despite its heft readers will not be able to put it down.

*Barbara Krasner, former member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Somerset, New Jersey*

**Mazzeo, Tilar J. *Irena's Children: Young Readers Edition; A True Story of Courage*. Adapted by Mary Cronk Farrell. Illus. by Shana Torok. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016. 272 pp. \$17.99. (9781481449915) HC; (9781481449939) eBook. Gr. 7-12.**

*Irena's Children* begins with a heart-stopping scene when four-year-old Piotr, who has just escaped from the Warsaw ghetto through the sewers, is met on the "Aryan" side by a woman. Piotr follows the woman who, in fact, is Irena Sendler. We learn how Irena, through a network of co-workers, friends, and ever-widening contacts, directs the cell of an underground resistance movement that rescues babies and children – even some adults – from the Warsaw ghetto. Not only does she save them, but she finds foster homes, orphanages, and convents where they can be hidden from Nazis and anti-Semitic Poles. At great risk to herself and her fellow conspirators, she compiles a list of the children's real names as well as their Aryan names. By the end of the war, Irena has rescued approximately 2,500 children from certain death. For her acts of bravery and selflessness, Yad Vashem named her "Righteous Among the Nations" in 1965.

Through skilful sensory details, Mazzeo leads the young reader to imagine what life was like in occupied Warsaw during World War II. However, some of the events are difficult to follow as they jump from place to place, from person to person, with little connection. Most glaring of all are numerous proofreading errors, including spelling and omissions. These problems are significant and make for a jarring read.

This version differs from the one for adults in several ways. Firstly, Irena's early life is treated chronologically in the adult version, but mostly through flashbacks in this version. Secondly, Irena's troubled marriage with Mietek, as well as her longstanding love affair with her Jewish boyfriend, Adam Celnikier, are glossed over. Thirdly, the torture that Irena suffers at the hands of the Gestapo is softened somewhat in this version. Lastly, photos are interspersed throughout here, but placed in the middle of the adult version. This edition includes endnotes and an adaptor's note, but lacks maps, a glossary, a timeline, and an index. For books about Sendler's life for younger readers, see Susan Goldman Rubin's excellent *Irena Sendler and the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Holiday House, 2011) as well as *Jar of Hope* by Jennifer Roy (Capstone, 2015) and *Irena's Jars of Secrets* by Marcia Vaughan (Lee & Low, 2011).

*Anne Dublin, co-author of *Odyssey Through Hell: Escape from the Warsaw Ghetto* (2014) and *44 Hours or Strike!* (2015), Toronto, Canada*

[Editor's Note: *Irena's Children* is a 2017 Sydney Taylor Notable Book for Older Readers]

**Spradlin, Michael. *The Enemy Above*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2016. 232 pp. \$16.99. (9780545857826). Gr. 5-8.**

A little known piece of Holocaust history instigates a thriller for middle school readers with short chapters where snappy action alternates between hunter and hunted. The hunted sections in this fiction are based on truth: they are from the memoirs of people actually involved, recounted in *The Secret of the Priest's Grotto* (Kar-Ben, 2007). The hunter is a fictional Nazi officer always using his brains, his experiences and his ambitions; he is a hard foe to outwit. Although the hunted are hiding in caves for over a year, most of the action takes place above ground; the recounting of life down below is minimal once the story picks up steam. The trajectory of the Nazi success and downfall at the hands of their once Russian allies underlies the exciting plot with its driving motivations set in the Ukraine. As in so many World War II stories, catching Jews takes precedence over the Germans' major effort of winning the fight. The focus on the brave 12-year-old Jewish protagonist vis-à-vis the ruthless Nazi officer personalizes the story from each one's angle as the hunt advances often on a minute-by-minute basis and the hunted become hunter. From the tense opening in 1942 through almost three years of war, readers will be riveted by a well-written and well-paced page turner.

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

## JEWISH LIFE & VALUES

**Biniashvili, Freidele Galya Soban.** *There's a Reason Why! A Dan L'kaf Zechus Story.* Illus. by Glenn Zimmer. Brooklyn, NY: Hachai Publishing, 2016. 30 pp. \$12.95. (9781929628902). Gr. Preschool-1.

*Dan l'kaf zechus* (judging on the side of merit) is a central Jewish tenet that encourages us to judge our fellow man favorably, particularly when we don't know all the facts behind the other person's actions. Based upon a Gemara in Shabbos (Daf 127; Amud 2), it is not too early to inculcate this concept in young children and never too late for adults to be reminded, as well. This rhyming story opens with a boy feeling ditched by his friend Shua who runs out the door after davening without saying goodbye. All their usual shared behaviors are turned upside down when Shua doesn't show up for school, meet to play in the park or respond to a phone call. Rather than feeling upset, the young protagonist consciously decides to judge his friend "*l'kaf zechus*." It turns out Shua had good reasons for his absence. He is relieved that his friend is not angry with him because he has great news (hint: pink and blue balloons are involved!).

Aimed at lap sit and story time children, the story is told in rhyming couplets. After a few readings, children will delightedly finish each line. "'You can't imagine,' Shua said, 'how glad I am to hear/That you were *dan l'kaf zechus*.' He smiled from ear to ear. And now that everything was explained, finally – I knew, Shua had reasons for all he did, and very good ones, too!" The illustrations are muted but evocative. All the male characters are shown with *yarmulkes* and *tzitzis*. The pages are laminated for extended use.

*Rena Citrin, Library Media Specialist, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago*

**Blau, Sara.** *Glad to Be Me.* Illus. by Len Ebert. Brooklyn, NY: Hachai, 2016. 16 pp. \$10.95. (9781929628889.) Gr. Preschool-K.

Understanding how the world works and one's place in it is one of the major tasks of childhood. Blau appeals to the sensibility of young children as they explore pretend play: bouncing like a ball, moving hands like rain drops, bending like trees in the wind and flapping "like birds up high,/ Soaring, flying, in the sky!" But our brother and sister protagonists soon learn that only people have special responsibilities: "Most of all, I'm glad to be/Just the way Hashem made me!/For only people learn and do/The mitzvah Hashem wants us to!"

The delightful full color illustrations are engaging. The children and families portrayed are religiously observant with all girls and women in skirts, and all males wearing *yarmulkes*. Printed on laminated paper, this slim volume is sure to become a family and preschool favorite. Extension activities are included on the inside back cover that will help children understand that although all things – animate and inanimate – have a place within Hashem's creation, only people have *mitzvot*.

*Rena Citrin, Library Media Specialist, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago*

**Kochin, Rochelle.** *The Little Esrog.* Illus. by Janice Hechter. Brooklyn, NY: Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, 2016. 32 pp. \$14.95. (9780826600448). Gr. K-4.

"If only I were bigger," thinks a child, "everyone would see how much I have to contribute." Like the young child, the little *esrog* (etrog, citron) is small and easily ignored. Author Rochelle Kochin personifies the *esrogim* that are on their way to Sislotch, a small village of Jews eagerly awaiting the arrival of the '*arba minim*' (*lulav, haddasim, aravos, and esrogim*) just before Succos. The big, fragrant *esrogim* boast of their beauty: "I'm so big and beautiful. I'm sure every Jew in Sislotch will want a beautiful *esrog* like me to fulfill the mitzvah. And I smell so good, too. They'll probably fight over me." They taunt the little *esrog* and tell him, "who would want you for the mitzvah?...they'll make you into jam. And not much jam at that." However, a serious mistake is made, and the little *esrog* finds itself



in the right place at the right time. In ignorance, a replacement wagon driver mistakenly removes the *pitom* (tip) from each of the beautiful *esrogim* rendering them 'posul' -- unusable for the mitzvah. Luckily, he overlooks the little *esrog* at the bottom of the box. The townspeople are in despair until Rivka, a young girl, discovers the little *esrog*. They joyously line up to say the *bracha* (blessing) over the little *esrog* and its partners. And the big, beautiful *esrogim* are made into jam. Lots of jam.

The illustrations by Janice Hechter show expressive faces and lively *esrogim* in the context of a 19th century European *shtetl*, with a muted palette of browns and grays helping to highlight the hopeful yellow of the little *esrog*. Although the story takes place among strictly observant Jews, the message of the smallest among us having an important place in our communities -- even saving the day -- is universal.

*Rena Citrin, Library Media Specialist, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago*

**Rouss, Sylvia A. *Sammy Spider's First Bar Mitzvah*. (Sammy Spider Series). Illus. by Katherine Janus Kahn. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2016. 32 pp. \$17.99 (9781467789318) HC; \$7.99 (9781467794121) PBK. Reviewed from ARC. Gr. Preschool-3.**

In Sylvia Rouss' latest addition to her series about the curious spider living in the Shapiro family's home, Sammy inadvertently finds his way to the synagogue where cousin Ben is celebrating becoming a bar mitzvah. Kahn's colorful collage illustrations depict the Shabbat morning service including donning a tallit, taking the Torah scroll from the Ark, reading from the Torah, and showering the bar mitzvah boy with candies to wish him "a sweet life filled with Torah and good deeds." As usual, Sammy gets into a bit of trouble, having climbed into the candy bowl only to be scooped up and thrown at Ben. Everything ends well as Josh Shapiro happens to pick up the very piece of candy Sammy is clinging to and puts it - and the frightened spider - into his pocket before later heading home. Except for *Bubbe's Belated Bat Mitzvah* (Kar-Ben, 2014), no books for young children on this subject have been published in nearly a decade. With a paragraph explaining the rite of bar/bat mitzvah at the end, this picture book is a solid addition to any library's life cycle event section.

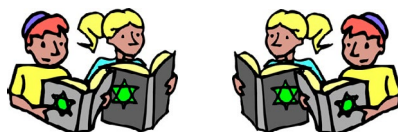
*Marcie Eskin, Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah, Wilmette, IL*

## PASSOVER

**Bower, Gary. *The Hurry-Up Exit from Egypt*. Illus. by Barbara Chotiner. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Kids, 2017. 32 pp. \$14.99. (9781496417459). Gr. Preschool- 1.**

Part of "The Faith that God Built" series from Christian publisher Tyndale Kids, *The Hurry-Up Exit from Egypt* uses a cumulative rhyme structure (similar to *The House that Jack Built*) to tell the story of the Israelites' escape from Egypt. Starting with "This is the exit from Egypt" and including "King Pharaoh's frightening forces," "the sea that made them all cry," "old Moses raising his rod and parting the waves by the power of God," and "these are the chariots, hot on their heels." With muted browns and deep blues and reds, the textured, collage-like illustrations vibrantly depict the panic of the Israelites, the menacing Egyptian forces, and the "eye-popping sight" of the splitting of the Red Sea. The text concludes: "This is The Book that tells of the day God stopped their pursuers and swept them away." The illustration shows an open book with blank pages - most likely meant to be a Bible but Jewish readers could also interpret it as the Haggadah. The final page includes a note, "For the whole story, see Exodus 12-14." For readers already familiar with the Exodus narrative, this focus on the flight from Egypt will be a welcome addition for most collections.

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



**Goldin, Barbara Diamond.** *The Passover Cowboy*. Illus. by Gina Capaldi. Springfield, NJ: Apples and Honey Press, 2017. 32 pp. \$17.95. (9781681155272). Gr. Preschool-3.

Jacob and his family are adjusting to the many differences between their life in Russia where their neighborhood had “one house right next to the other,” where everyone celebrated Passover, and their new life in Argentina, where there are great expanses of land, where Jacob’s father works in the cornfields, where there are no Jewish families close by. While Jacob is nostalgic for the comforts of his old home, he is trying hard to adapt to his new lifestyle, dreaming of having his own lasso and special cowboy clothing, and riding his horse well enough to be in a rodeo someday. He’s also trying to make a new friend, Benito, an Argentinian boy whom Jacob hopefully invites to his family’s Passover seder. The meaning of Passover and its various customs are explained within the narrative, and when Benito and his family end up joining the festivities, Benito also shares the similarity between the Argentinian people’s struggle for freedom and the Jews’ struggle for freedom celebrated at Passover. A “Note for Families” includes historical details about the Jewish migration to Argentina during this time period and the Argentinian fight for independence from Spain, and provides further information about Passover. The exploration of Jewish history in the late 1800s, enhanced by authentic, artistic illustrations and the portrayal of the struggles of immigration, make this a wonderful addition to libraries, as well as a good conversation starter for families.

*Martha McMahon, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles*

**Isaacs, Ron and and Karen Rostoker-Gruber.** *The Family and Frog! Haggadah*. Illus. by Jackie Urbanovic. Springfield, New Jersey: Behrman House, 2017. 56 pp. \$7.95. (9780874419375). PBK. Gr. K-5.

This lighthearted version of the haggadah is charming, on-target and downright funny! For older children, there is a narrative which tells the story of the Exodus and explains the symbolism behind various seder elements. Breakout boxes offer serious thinking questions such as “What do you think would be the worst thing about being a slave?” The cartoon-like frog seems to jump out at you from every page with speech balloons saying silly things like “Blech! That was a locust!” and “I hope there’s a fly in my soup!” Besides the frog, each page is graced with full-color reproductions of carefully chosen works of art and ritual objects from medieval through modern times. Some new traditions are introduced, as well as a few games. It opens from left to right, like a Hebrew book, but it’s mostly in English. Hebrew text, with English transliteration, is provided for the blessings, the Four Questions, the names of the Ten Plagues, a section of the Grace after Meals, and some songs. Though not providing the full text of the haggadah, this book is designed to keep children both well informed and amply entertained. It is sure to be a crowd-pleaser and in Frog’s words, “toadily awesome,” for the younger set at family seders.

*Joyce Levine, North Shore Hebrew Academy H.S. (retired) and former AJL Publications Chair,  
North Woodmere, NY*

**Leopold-Strauss, Linda.** *A Different Kind of Passover*. Illus. by Jeremy Tugeau. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2017. 32 pp. \$17.99 (9781512400977) HC; \$7.99 (9781512401028) PBK; \$6.99 (9781512427233) eBook. Gr. Preschool-3.

The issue of aging grandparents is realistically addressed in a sweet depiction of a family’s Passover traditions. Jessie is looking forward to celebrating Passover with her family at her grandparents’ house with all of the annual rituals she is accustomed to, but this year Jessie’s grandfather has just returned home from a stay in the hospital and she is disappointed the holiday will not be the same. Some things remain unchanged, like “the good smells coming from the kitchen”, but Jessie’s bedridden grandfather is unable to greet her at the door with open arms as he always does, and he certainly won’t be able to lead the seder. Although there is a general sense of sadness and tension within the household, Jessie

is persistent in her efforts to have her grandfather involved in the celebration. Ultimately, she finds a way to include him and make this different kind of seder a special one. While there isn't anything dazzling about this book, Jessie's strong feelings for her family, her appreciation for tradition, and her deep respect for her grandfather, along with the comfort she finds in seeing that change can be okay, are important sentiments that are explored genuinely and effectively.

*Martha McMahon, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles*

**Ofanansky, Allison. *How It's Made: Matzah. (How It's Made Series). Photos by Eliyahu Alpern. Springfield, NJ: Apples & Honey Press, 2017. 32 pp. \$15.95. (978168775241). Gr. K-3.***

For young readers, teachers, and parents looking for a hands-on exploration of the traditions of Passover comes the latest book in the *How It's Made* series from Apples & Honey Press. It looks into the process of making matzah for Passover, both in small artisanal batches and in larger factories. The photographs provide an engaging and inclusive look into preparations for Pesach featuring Jews of a variety of ages and races participating in the holiday. As the book progresses, the focus broadens to include other aspects of the Pesach seder, like the matzah cover, afikomen, and the seder plate and its contents. Included with the informational text are a few discussion prompts focusing on understanding symbolism and customs of the holiday and a variety of do-it-yourself activities, from matzah and charoset recipes to homemade seder plates and cups for Elijah. The activities use materials that are accessible and inexpensive, which should appeal to both parents and teachers.

While the text is easy to follow, at times it is perhaps a bit too simplistic. This is particularly evident in the directions for activities, where effort could have been made to explain the goal or intended design of the end product and give clarity to the young readers following along. This title would readily be used for holiday-based instruction at Jewish schools and could be recommended to adults looking for family-friendly Passover activities or even offered in communities with a strong DIY culture.

*Alex Quay, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA*

**Silberg, Rabbi Francis Barry. *The Story of Passover. Illus. by Stephanie McFetridge Britt. Worthy Kids/Ideals, 2017. \$6.99. (9780824916527). Board Book. Preschool.***

"The Hebrew people lived long ago in Egypt. They lived in peace until a wicked Pharaoh made them slaves." This text heavy board book continues the story with the burning bush and the ten plagues (including the slaying of the first born). The narrative concludes with: "The Hebrews had lived in Egypt 430 years. After the Lord's passing over, they were free to worship Him. The happy children of Israel followed Moses into the wilderness." There is no mention of the splitting of the Red Sea. The cartoon illustrations are adequate though uninspiring and the overly detailed, sophisticated text is not suitable for the typical board book audience. This edition, published by a Christian publishing house, is identical to the 2002 version published by Candy Cane Press and similar to *The Story of Chanukah*, also by Rabbi Francis Barry Silberg (Candy Cane Press, 2002).

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

**Silva, Shanna. *Passover Scavenger Hunt. Illus. by Miki Sakamoto. Minneapolis : Kar-Ben, 2017. 24pp. \$17.99 (9781467789370) HC; \$7.99 (9781467794220) PBK; \$6.99 eBook. Gr. K-2. Reviewed from galley.***

With a clever twist, this slim picture book uses the hiding of the *afikomen* to deliver the symbols on the Passover Seder plate. The device of a scavenger hunt directed by a protagonist the age of readers wraps fun and games around the holiday explanation banishing tedium with fast paced action. The story jump starts when young Rachel decides her Great Uncle Harry does a terrible job hiding the piece of matzah. She takes over; decides where it should go, how it should be found. Each clue focuses on one symbol, building from the *karpas*, egg, shank bone, *charoset*, and *maror* with homemade puzzle pieces that fit together to create the entire plate, under which is, you guessed it, the *afikomen*! The

clues are written in rhymes reflecting the age of the children. The illustrations reveal happy cousins totally involved in the hunt while pleased adults look on. The holiday spirit bringing an extended family together in joy and in meaning comes across through the faces, active art and vibrant color scheme. Uncle Harry is a terrific foil; he plays his part to perfection. You may want to invite him to your next seder!

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

## PICTURE BOOKS

**Miller, Leah.** *The Beis HaMikdash: The Holy Temple.* Illus. by Irina Bulgaru. Chicago, Illinois: Toldotainu Press, 2016. \$22.29. (9781684197330). Gr. 3-5.

Much can be learned about the both the first and second periods of the *Beis HaMikdash* (Holy Temple) in this colorfully illustrated book. It also describes the buildings themselves and the tasks of the Kohanim and Leviim who served there. Connections are made from some of the practices of the time to some of the rituals seen in the synagogues of today. It is aimed at a traditional audience and the word “miraculously” is used repeatedly. Although the *Beis HaMikdash* had areas for women, that is not acknowledged here: the only woman to appear on these pages is an incarnation of Rachel Imenu, the Matriarch who pleads for mercy for her descendants during times of trouble. There is also a picture with women carrying fruit on their heads after the harvest, approaching the Temple before the holiday of Shavuot.

The history of the two destructions, the significance of *Tisha B’Av*, and the longing of the Jews to rebuild and renew are all addressed with feeling, as is the traditional understanding of the role of the Jews’ own behavior toward one another as a factor in the destruction and in the age-old hope for rebuilding and redemption. The message of treating all Jews kindly rings loud and clear. The full-page illustrations in a soft color palette, while not unusual or creative, clearly help to explicate the text and increase understanding of the concepts.

*Michal Hoschander Malen, North Shore Hebrew Academy Library,  
Great Neck, NY (retired) and the Jewish Book Council.*

## SHABBAT AND HOLIDAYS

**Barash, Chris.** *Is It Sukkot Yet?* Illus. by Alessandra Psacharopulo. Chicago: Albert Whitman & Company, 2016. 32 pp. \$16.99. (9780807533888). HC. Gr. Preschool-2.

**Barash, Chris.** *Is It Purim Yet?* Illus. by Alessandra Psacharopulo. Chicago: Albert Whitman & Company, 2017. 32 pp. \$16.99. (9780807533918). HC. Gr. Preschool-2.

In simple, lilting rhyme, two beautiful picture books describe all the signs to look for to know when a special holiday is near. “When leaves are all turning bright orange and red/ And it’s time for the rakes to come out of the shed...When the tool box comes out and the hammers bang hard/ As we put up the hut that will stand in our yard...Sukkot is on its way.” “When we pack special baskets with goodies to eat/ As holiday gifts for our friends down the street...When from Aunt Clara’s bag a noisemaker appears/ And that *grogger’s* so loud our pup covers her ears...When the synagogue fills with a big, happy crowd...Purim is on its way...”. The books end with all the celebrations of the holiday: Lulav and *etrogim*, sleeping in the sukkah for Sukkot. Wearing costumes, booing Haman for Purim. The text is clear and accessible, and the illustrations are painted digitally. Using soft colors, all the preparations, fun and rituals of each holiday are handsomely displayed. As with *Is It Hanukkah Yet?* and *Is It Passover Yet?* (both published 2015), this is a lovely way to introduce young children and their families to two more important Jewish holidays.

*Kathy Bloomfield, AJL President-SSC and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC.*

**Cuyler, Margery. *Purim Chicken*. Illus. by Puy Pinillos. Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman, 2017. 32 pp. \$16.99. (9780807533819). Gr. Preschool- 1.**

The farm animals are putting on a Purim Play. Quack will star as Queen Esther, Moo will be Mordecai, Neigh is Ahasuerus, Baa is Vashti, and Cock-a-Doodle-Do is Haman. Little Cluck the chicken desperately wants to play Queen Esther – she already knows all of the lines – but she settles for a part in the audience with Honk, Hoot, and Bleat. She takes her job of drowning out Haman’s name very seriously and practices her clucking to make sure she is as loud as she can be. On the day before Purim something “udderly terrible” happens: Quack has “flown the coop”! The duck is nowhere to be found until Cluck discovers the footprints of a fox. Will Cluck be brave like Queen Esther to save her friend from becoming Duck Soup? Will the show go on? The playful, expressive, multi-dimensional and textured illustrations perfectly complement the pun-filled text. The Purim connection is very slight. Groggers and hamantaschen are mentioned and the Purim characters are only briefly introduced. However, young children already familiar with the holiday will delight in the animal antics and celebrate the happy ending. Surprisingly similar to *Barnyard Purim* (Kar-Ben, 2012), where a duck playing Queen Esther must also be saved from a fox, this will certainly be a welcome addition for Jewish preschool classrooms and libraries.

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

**Herman, Michael. *Under the Sabbath Lamp*. Illus. by Alida Massari. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2017. 30 pp. \$17.99. (9781512408416). Gr. Preschool-3.**

Using a beloved family artifact as the hook of the story, Herman deftly communicates the warmth, camaraderie and continuity of Shabbat. We meet the modern looking, middle aged couple, Olivia and Izzy, who enjoy their neighbors’ Shabbat hospitality week after week. With homemade lemon bars and cherry cordial in hand, they arrive in time to witness the lighting of the Shabbat candles before the festive meal and singing of Shabbat songs. Soon Olivia and Izzy decide it is time to reciprocate. They invite all of the neighbors to their home on a Friday night. Little Sadie Silverman is the first to notice that there are no Shabbat candles in sight. “We don’t light Shabbat candles,” Olivia answered. There were gasps all around. Then Izzy and Olivia raised their heads and gazed up at the ceiling. So did everybody else. Staring back at them was a shiny brass chandelier. It was shaped like a star and had no light bulbs. “Our Sabbath lamp,” Izzy announced. The story of the oil burning Sabbath lamp, is the story of Izzy’s family’s immigration to America. Each family member arrives with a different part of this special lamp in hand. Not until the whole family is reunited, is the lamp whole and used once again to welcome Shabbat. *Under the Sabbath Lamp* can also be used as an introductory mentor text to any middle grade study of artifacts and Jewish identity. The folk art inspired illustrations are beautiful and evocative.

*Rena Citrin, Library Media Specialist, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago*

**Marshall, Linda Elovitz. *Talia and the Haman-tushies*. Illus. by Francesca Assirelli. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2017. 32 pp. \$17.99. (9781512408256). Gr. Preschool-2.**

In early spring, little Talia visits her grandma, just in time to make *hamantaschen* for Purim. But Talia thinks grandma says “Hamen-tushies” and wonders what kind of cookie they’ll make, vowing never to eat something that sounds so yucky. As they mix and roll the dough, cut and fill the circles (with not only jam and poppy seeds, but also chocolate kisses, pieces of candy bars, and peanut butter) and shape the cookies into triangular pockets and bake them, grandma tells the story of Purim. When they’re done, Talia asks why such wonderful smelling cookies are called such a yucky sounding name as “Hamen-tushies.” Grandma corrects her misunderstanding and explains that *taschen* means ‘pockets’ in Yiddish. Talia happily gives them a try.

The Purim story grandma tells, printed in bold font to distinguish it from her dialogue with Talia, is the typically sanitized version in which Esther is chosen to be the king’s wife from among the many

young women who appear before him. She is characterized as “a Jewish girl who was brave, smart, and beautiful.” No mention of Vashti, gallows, plots to kill Jews, or other elements from the *megillah* text that would frighten the young audience for which it’s intended. The only reference to a negative part of the text is when Talia wonders why Mordechai won’t bow down to Haman and grandma explains, “Mordechai would not bow down to another person because he knew all people were created equally and that no one person was better than another.” Assirelli’s lush illustrations fill full, double page spreads, carrying the Purim story and the baking process along, together with rich tones of purple, teal, gold, and pink. The recipe for “Haman-tushies” is a fitting ending to this playful, yet informative addition to Talia’s continuing misunderstandings of words associated with the Jewish holidays begun in *Talia and the Rude Vegetables* (Kar-Ben, 2011) and *Talia and the Very Yum Kippur* (Kar-Ben, 2015).

Debbie Colodny, Cook Memorial Public Library District, Libertyville, IL. Former owner *Sefer, So Good*, and former member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee.

**Tuchman, Mark. *Hanukkah with Uncle Reuben: Not Santa-- But Not Bad*. Self-published, 2016. 36 pp. \$17.99 (9780997894820) HC; \$8.99 (9780997894813) PBK. Gr. 3-6.**

Tuchman tackles the issue of the “December Dilemma” for children and narrates an unlikely story with amusing rhymes heavily laden with Jewish *shtick*. The cartoony illustrations add to the fun. Kids learn how Uncle Reuben brings toys to kids on Hanukkah, but lives on the Lower East Side-- unlike North Pole Santa. Real Santa also has “reindeer that cross every nation,” while “Reuben believes in public transportation” (“Why keep reindeer all year to use just once?”). And although Santa goes down the chimney with toys in a sack, “Reuben uses the door—Hey, he’s got a bad back.” (“You want I should climb down the chimney like a thief and ruin my good suit?”). Tuchman does not recommend that Jewish children combine the Chanukah and Christmas holiday traditions even though it would be fun to imagine. He ends his little book with the line, “Now some Jewish children may prefer old Saint Nick—Well, I’m sorry you guys, but you don’t get to pick.”

Lisa Silverman, Burton Sperber Jewish Community Library at American Jewish University, Los Angeles

## FEBRUARY/MARCH 2017 - BOOKS RECEIVED

These titles will not be reviewed in AJL Reviews for reasons of space, scope, or date of publication. They are listed here as a courtesy to the publishers and a service to AJL readers. The materials themselves were donated to libraries.

Chalamish, Mordechai. *Noach and the Flood*. Feldheim, 2015.

Davidowitz, Stacy. *Camp Rolling Hills*. Abrams/ Amulet, 2016.

Davidowitz, Stacy. *Camp Rolling Hills: Crossing Over*. Abrams/ Amulet, 2016.

Freeman, Judy. *L’Dor vador: A Keepsake Coloring Book*. Kar-Ben Publishing, 2016.

Goldlist, Marcia. *Enjoying the Book of Ruth: The Bible in Rhyme*. Self-Published, 2015.

Harshman, Marc. *One Big Family*. Eerdmans, 2016.

Hurvitz, Nattan and Aharon Yosef Hoffman. *Book of Amazing Facts and Feats 4: The Creator’s World and All That Fills It*. Feldheim, 2015.

Ignatow, Amy. *The Mighty Odds*. Abrams, 2016.

Kaufman, Sashi. *Wired Man and Other Freaks of Nature*. Lerner/ Carolrhoda Lab, 2016.

Kennon, Caroline. *Anne Frank in Her Own Words*. Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2014.

Moss, Miriam. *Girl on a Plane*. Harcourt, 2016.

Ruderman, Zalman. *Mission Impossible*. BSD Publishers, 2015.

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AJL Reviews  
February/March 2017  
Volume VII, No. 1  
ISSN 2160-0910

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