ajl

Association of Jewish Libraries
NEWSLETTER

November/December 2010 Volume XXX, No. 2

Israel Launches Literary Drive for Preschoolers

The Israeli Ministry of Education is investing $500,000 in a program, adapted from the United States, that will provide 44,000 underserved Israeli children, ages three to five, with free books every month during the school year. The program is based on The PJ Library®, a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation that provides free books and CDs with Jewish content to children throughout the United States and Canada. The foundation has adapted the program for Israeli children, using appropriate books in Hebrew. Together, the two programs will now serve more than 100,000 children and their families across North America and Israel.

The Israeli version of the program, known as "Sifriyat Pijama (Pajama Library in Hebrew), began distributing books to 3,000 Israeli children through preschools last year. In the 2010-2011 academic year, the Israeli Ministry will invest heavily in books for the program with matching funding coming from the Massachusetts-based Harold Grinspoon Foundation and other donors. As a result, Sifriyat Pijama is set to grow nearly 15-fold. There are approximately 160,000 to 180,000 Hebrew-speaking Israeli children in state schools. The program's expansion will enable about 25 percent of this target audience to receive the books, according to Galina Vromen, Sifriyat Pijama director.

"Sifriyat Pijama is aligned with the Israeli government's priorities of promoting early education literacy and teaching Jewish values that transcend religion," Vromen says. "The books teach children about giving to others, the importance of seeking peace and showing gratitude. These are universal values." In addition to giving the books to children, Sifriyat Pijama provides guides to parents that explain Judaism's take on these values and offers activities and discussion topics for parents and teachers. Another reason for the Israeli Ministry of Education's investment in the books is its focus on programs that highlight 100 years since Hebrew was revitalized from a previously biblical language to a modern living language. "Sifriyat Pijama fit perfectly into the mix," Vromen says.

The PJ Library was founded in 2005 in the model of Imagination Library, a program developed by Dolly Parton to increase literacy among financially disadvantaged youth. In North America, The PJ Library partners with federations and Jewish community centers to provide books to the homes of Jewish children without consideration of financial need. The idea of The PJ Library is to engage children and their families in the Jewish culture and traditions by providing books and CDs as gifts sent directly to their homes.

Sifriyat Pijama is different in that the books are being distributed through the schools and will go to children whose families have reduced or restricted financial means. The program in Israel combines the goals of The PJ Library and The Imagination Library. "It is exciting for us to see that the Israeli Ministry of Education finds the Sifriyat Pijama program worthy of such a large investment," says Joanna S. Ballantine, executive director of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

For more information about the PJ Library, visit its Web site at www.pjlibrary.org.

Library Accreditation

Amalia Warshenbrot and Leah Moskovits

Attention School, Synagogue and Community Center Libraries Has your library received accreditation from AJL? This year's deadline for applying is January 15, 2011. The Accreditation Committee invites you to apply for accreditation. The Association of Jewish Libraries Synagogue, School and Center Division (SSC) offers a certificate of accreditation to libraries that qualify. Accreditation is encouraged to help libraries achieve a high professional level in accordance with the SSC guidelines. It's an effective way to show your institution that your achievements deserve its support. Guidance and mentoring are available for libraries applying for accreditation. Please refer to the AJL website for detailed information and application forms (www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/accreditation/accreditation.htm).

AJL Scholarship Fund

Sarah Barnard

You have an opportunity to help support a library student and at the same time promote Judaica librarianship by making donations to the AJL Scholarship Fund. Each year AJL awards scholarships of $1000 to two talented library science students who show an interest in pursuing a career in Judaica librarianship.

Donating to the fund is a meaningful way to recognize simchas, honor the memory of a loved one, or wish someone a speedy recovery. Please remember to include the addresses of the family of those honored or remembered so that we can notify the appropriate individuals. Send your donation to Sarah M. Barnard, Hebrew Union College-Klau Library, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220. A thank you note is sent to each donor.

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General Membership Meeting Minutes

Seattle, Washington, Wednesday, July 7, 2010

President Susan Dubin called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and gave a d'var Torah. The minutes of the July 8, 2009 general membership meeting were approved as amended. Laurel Wolfson installed the new board. Incoming president Jim Rosenbloom thanked Susan for her years of service, and thanked Toby Harris, Janet Heineck, and Rita Frischer for a wonderful convention, which attracted 189 attendees. Jim announced that council reports would be posted on the password-protected area of the AJL website. He solicited ideas for improving the association's relationship with new members and suggested that whenever council or board members travel, they try to meet with the local chapter. Jim would like to foster greater cooperation between Israeli, European and American librarians. Collaboration with Judaica Europeana is being discussed.

Conventions. The 2011 convention will be held in Montreal and the 2012 meeting will be in Los Angeles. The board will be looking at ways to reduce convention costs. A straw poll was conducted regarding a suggestion to change the convention schedule. The results: Sunday-Wednesday: 19; Monday-Thursday: 14; neutral: 16.

Committees. Tina Weiss is the new chair of the Technology Committee, Uri Kolodney is incoming Newsletter editor, and Barbara Beitz will chair the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee. Chairs were also appointed for the Library Certification Committee. Kathe Pinchuck and the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee were commended for their successful blog tour. The Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award Committee received a total of 13 manuscripts this year. Accredited libraries received certificates at the Monday award luncheon. A committee was established to create information literacy standards for SSC libraries. Diane Romm spearheaded the creation of the AJL Wiki and encouraged more members to participate in its development. The Web Development Committee identified a design company, MTG, to overhaul the AJL website.

Finances. Treasurer Sheryl Stahl announced that the 2010-11 budget had not yet been finalized; a provisional budget was passed and the final budget should be available after the midwinter meeting. AJL has spent down the surplus it had run for several years. Laurel Wolfson will be the convention treasurer next year; Sheryl Stahl will remain as AJL treasurer. The AJL council would like to change the budget year from July1-June 30 to October 1-September 30, to help track convention expenses. The change requires an amendment to the bylaws, and will be voted upon next year.

ALA affiliation. AJL is now an official affiliate of the American Library Association. ALA liaison Elliot Gertel attended the JIC meeting at the ALA midwinter meeting and spoke to other affiliates about AJL. Ellen Zyroff, Susan Dubin, and Heidi Estrin created an AJL page on the ALA website. Elliot suggested that AJL also create an informational brochure for use at future ALA conventions, hold an AJL program at ALA, and sponsor Shabbat hospitality.

New business. Rachel Leket-Mor suggested that AJL conduct an electronic demographic survey of its members. Gift cards would encourage participation. AJL will offer an essay competition for students with a monetary award.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Elana Gensler

Chapter Chatter

Toby Rossner

News from the Chapter Relations Committee

Submitted by Judy Greenblatt

It was wonderful to meet so many people at the convention and to have such good attendance at the Chapter Relations meeting. We used this meeting as an opportunity to get to know one another and to brainstorm ways of making the committee more effective, and drawing people into chapters and national AJL.

Jewish Libraries of the Southwest

Submitted by Chavah Carp

The Jewish Libraries of the Southwest gathered on a beautiful Sukkot morning. We discussed our plans and goals for our respective libraries. The local Reform congregation is heading up a special reading program. Once it is finalized, (and I receive permission) I will send out a blurb on it. In the meantime, they are very enthusiastic and they were happy to have our members make suggestions about their project. Whenever anyone is inspired it is wonderfully contagious. We continue to discuss the need for networking our libraries as well as software choices for cataloging and circulation. Budget constraints are always an issue around that discussion. We will meet again in early winter and hope to continue to attract new members.

Editor's suggestion: Check with your Jewish Federation(s) to see if grant money might be available for creating a union catalog and setting up a chapter electronic discussion list.

Ontario Chapter

Submitted by Steven Bergson

During the Labor Day weekend the Ontario Chapter co-sponsored a rousing session at the biannual Ashkenaz Festival—a dramatic reading of The Kugel Valley Klezmer Band (authored by Joan Betty Stuchner). AJL member and author Anne Dublin read the story while the pages from the picture book were projected on an onstage screen. Musicians Sruli & Lisa and Lorie Wolf played during the performance; they even got the audience dancing!

Capital Area Chapter (AJL-CAC)

Submitted by Naomi Morse

Our first meeting for this new year was held on October 31. We reported on the Seattle Convention, watched the video that the LC staff prepared for the occasion, and discussed books with Jewish content—pro and con. High tea was served.

South Florida Chapter (SFAJL)

From the Minutes of the September, 201 chapter meeting

The September 21 meeting of SFAJL was held at Temple Dor Dorim in Weston. Dor Dorim's Rabbi Norman Lipson greeted us warmly, and we enjoyed a very lovely lunch. Our guest speaker, author Ellen Brazer, spoke about her novel *Clouds Across the Sun*, an engaging story of a Nazi attempt to infiltrate societies throughout the world. The 2010 Sydney Taylor Award Books were on display for our perusal. Heidi Estrin gave a full report on the Seattle Convention. It is hoped that a greater number of South Floridians will participate in the 2011 Montreal Convention. We discussed the pros and cons of bringing ebooks into the library, and our respective views on e-readers. While no absolute conclusions were reached, we all accept that they are here to stay.

In response to much online discussion addressing the dwindling membership of our national organization, Heidi asked "Are you a member of National AJL? If yes, why; if no, why not? Attendees who answered in the affirmative said that the newsletter is wonderful, helpful, connective, etc.; they support Judaica librarianship—a good and important cause/activity; it is a marvelous tool for networking; when they travel, they can locate a synagogue/Jewish library via the membership directory. Those who are not national members cited as reasons the lack of institutional support (workplace won't help pay dues), retirement from actively working in the field, and the cost of dues (there should be a special price for retirees).

Southern California Chapter (AJLSC)

Submitted by Judy Cohn

The AJLSC chapter held a very successful general meeting on October 4 that featured the entertaining guest speaker, Seth Front, who spoke on "A Culinary History of Jews in America" based on the "Astrological Signs of the Delicatessen." This 45-minute interactive lecture used over one hundred images to tell the history of the Jewish deli in America, from its origins on the Lower East Side at the turn of the 20th century, its adaptation to American tastes, its assimilation into mainstream American culture, and finally to the challenges for survival facing delis in the 21st century. Lisa Silverman, vice-president for programs, shared cookbooks, deli books, food books, and a related bibliography. Sarah Sagal, a new librarian, hosted the meeting at Yeshiva University of Los Angeles Girl's School. Many new community members attended.

Long Island Chapter (LI-AJL)

Submitted by Wendy A. Marx

Our annual opening meeting was held at Enjoy-a-Book Jewish Book Store. Many new titles were highlighted by Shimon, the proprietor. Books from the AJL conference session "Everything I Need to Know I Learned from a Jewish Book" were discussed as well. Our members agreed that *New Year at the Pier* by April Halprin Wayland, *When I First Held You*, by Mirik Snir, and *Max Said Yes: The Woodstock Story* by Abigail Yasgur were "must haves." Another "must have" recommended was the AJL publication *Quest for the Best.* Our chapter owns a copy that will be circulated among our members.

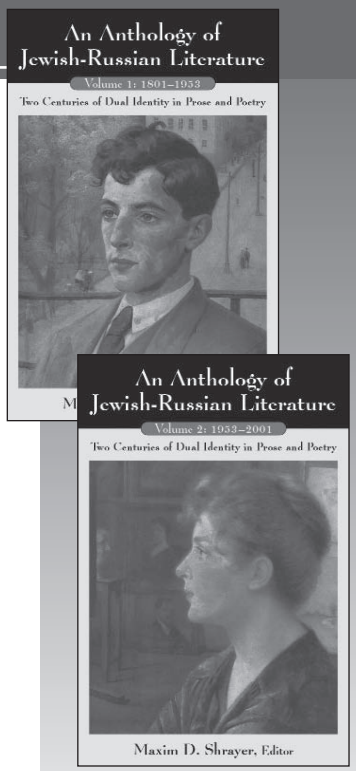
We look forward to our author talk and book signing meeting with Linda Frank, author of *After the Auction*, a tale of adventure and intrigue that offers a glimpse into the world of the Judaica and art looted by the Nazis. For further details on the book, go to www.lindafrankbooks.com.

San Antonio Chapter

Submitted by Marlene Reynolds

The San Antonio Chapter visited Harry Mazal's unique Holocaust library, located in our community. This internationally-used collection is mainly based on Holocaust deniers' books. Harry has been collecting and organizing his collection for a

A National Jewish Book Award Winner



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number of years. The library began in his home; he keeps building rooms to contain it.

New York Metropolital Area (AJL-NYMA)
Submitted by Rita Lifton
NYMA's kickoff event for the academic year was the 2010 Fall Conference, held at the Center for Jewish History in New York City on October 18. The program included two presentations—Spinning Straw into Gold: A Twenty-First Century Library Transformation (Sheila Beck, Devin Mckay, both of Queensborough Community College); and Foundation to the Future: Construction of the North Instructional Building and Library at Bronx Community College (Davis Koenigstein, Bronx Community College). Currently in the planning stage are the cataloging, reference, and school workshops.

Greater Cleveland Chapter
Submitted by Andrea Davidson
We congratulate Linda Silver on the publication of her second book, *Best Jewish Books for Children: A JPS Guide*. Published by the Jewish Publication Society, it is a must purchase for librarians, teachers, students, and everyone associated with Jewish children's books. We are looking forward to hearing Linda speak about her book at an upcoming meeting.
Sean Martin continues as the chapter president. New Steering Committee members were elected: Gerry Powers, vice-president; Heather Lenson, treasurer; Ilka Gordon, corresponding secretary; Andrea Davidson, recording secretary; Aimee Lurie, social networking and membership chair.

At a March strategy meeting we decided to focus our energies on four meetings a year and to plan our our chapter's incursion into social networking. For our October meeting we attended a "Facebook 101" workshop presented at the Beachwood Branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library. Aimee Lurie arranged this program to help us learn more about using social networking to promote our libraries, stay in touch with our colleagues, and follow the events of the day. Aimee has created a wonderful chapter blog http://greaterclevelandjewishlibraries.wordpress.com/ and established a Twitter account for us: http:/twitter.com/AJLGCC. We invite everyone to check these out.

In December, we will celebrate Jewish Book Month with our annual tea. Our speaker will be Abraham Socher, editor of the new *Jewish Review of Books*.

Judaica Librarians' Group (Israel)
Submitted by Yaakov Aronson
The theme of the November 3 meeting of the Judaica Librarians' Group was rare books. The program included presentations on how to define a rare book, what makes an incunabule an incunabule, and identifying unknown authors of books in Ladino, and closed with a panel discussion on "is a rare book collection important in the era of digitization?" Lecturers were from the National Library of Israel, Bar Ilan University, David Yellin Academic College of Education, and the Ben Zvi Institute.

Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

Edited by Linda Silver

In The Spotlight

Deutsch, Barry. *Hereville: How Mirka Got Her Sword*. New York: Abrams/Amulet, 2010. 144 pp. $15.95. ISBN: 978-0-8109-8411-6. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 4–8.

Eleven-year-old Mirka has more on her mind than learning the "womanly arts" that her stepmother, Fruma, insists she acquire; she would like to slay a dragon. To fight a dragon, you need a sword and Mirka's quest for a sword is the focus of this standout graphic novel. The bizarre adventure begins when Mirka stumbles upon a magical house in the woods in her Orthodox town, Hereville, where she sees a woman float through the air. Eager to show it to her siblings, she convinces them to return to the house on their way home from school. While there, they discover grapes "as big as baseballs" growing in the yard of the house. Even though her sister, Gittel, or as Mirka calls her, "Little Miss Frum," urges her not to try a grape because it would be stealing, Mirka can't resist taking one. This innocent swipe sets off a kooky series of events that include a revenge-seeking pig and a knit-off with a troll.

Hereville: How Mirka Got Her Sword is spirited, witty, and above all else, fun. Mirka is a clever, headstrong, and imaginative heroine who will appeal to a wide audience. Teens who feel like they don't fit in will have no trouble relating to her attempts to balance what is best for her family with her desire to fight dragons. Grounded in her religious beliefs, she is willing to put her fantasies aside to celebrate Shabbos. Although she desperately would like to ask Fruma how to kill a troll, she waits until the end of Shabbos because "troll-killing was not a Shabbos thing. Once the candles were lit, she would no more have asked about it than she would have deliberately sneezed on the khale." The illustrations in the proof used for this review were in black and white (the published version will be in color) and they strike the perfect balance of showing a realistic Orthodox community, while creating the backdrop for a fairytale. Highly recommended for all libraries.

Aimee Lurie, Agnon School, Cleveland, OH

Dublin, Anne. *The Orphan Rescue*. Illus. by Qin Leng. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2010. $8.95. 124 pp. ISBN: 978-1-897187-81-4 Pbk. Gr. 3–6.

The setting is Sosnowiec, Poland, in the 1930s during the Great Depression. Twelve-year-old Miriam and her seven-year-old brother, David, are orphans who are cared for by their grandparents, who, like many people, have trouble putting food on the table. When their situation becomes desperate, Miriam is forced to quit school to take a job she hates in a smelly kosher butcher shop and, worse yet, David is sent to an orphanage. On the surface, the Jewish orphanage is benign but underneath, its director cruelly sells some of the children to an unscrupulous factory owner who uses them as forced labor doing dangerous, even lethal, work. The tightly-constructed plot concerns Miriam's attempts, always adventurous and eventually successful, to rescue David and restore him to his family. In pacing, characterization, and the realization of a moving theme, *The Orphan Rescue* is a sterling example of how meaningful subjects may be distilled into stories that appeal to middle-grade children, arousing their interest, their empathy, and their social consciousness. In an afterword, the author draws an analogy between the story and the exploitation of many children in the world today, who are forced by poverty into work for which they are far too young. This message never impinges upon the story but it adds contemporary resonance. The author is best known for her nonfiction, such as the Sydney Taylor honor book, *Bobbie Rosenfeld, the Olympian Who Could Do Anything* (Second Story, 2004) and her more recent *Dynamic Women Dancers* (Second Story, 2009) among others, but in this work of fiction, she shows a talent for accessible storytelling that is reminiscent of her earlier work of historical fiction, *Written On the Wind* (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2001). Both novels are based on Dublin's family and out of true events and specific historic periods comes wider and more timeless meaning. Highly recommended for grades 3–6.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Friesner, Esther. *Threads and Flames*. New York: Viking, 2010. 304 pp. $17.99. ISBN: 978-0-670-01245-9. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 5–8.

In this novel for young teens, the time is 1910 and thirteen-year-old Raisa has just traveled alone from a small Polish town to New York City. Her harrowing journey from Bremerhaven to Hoboken is replete with interesting people, some of whose lives later intersect with hers. Raisa expects to meet up with her older sister, who has preceded her to America, but when she arrives in New York her sister has disappeared. She must now, on her own, find somewhere to live and somewhere to work, and learn English. Eventually she finds a home with a kind landlady and friendly family. After a succession of dead-end jobs as a seamstress, Raisa's friends teach her enough of the basics of using a sewing machine for her to be offered a better job at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. She combats her lack of English language competence by attending classes regularly, all the while never ceasing to look for her sister. The horror of the devastating fire at the factory, with its loss of life and its impact on the lives of many immigrant families, is described so that it is almost palpable to the reader. Historical details about people and places add to the realistic feel of the text. This is both an immigration novel and a beautifully written coming-of-age story, filled with Jewish content. Highly recommended for readers from ages 10–14.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood NJ

Orlev, Uri. *The Song of the Whales*. Trans. by Hillel Halkin. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2010. 108 pp. $16.00. ISBN: 978-0-547-25752-5. Gr. 4–6.

No matter how serious the subject or profound the theme, the acclaimed Israeli writer Uri Orlev writes with disarming lucidity.

In this small story, dedicated to "those who are not afraid of small distortions of reality," Michael doesn't know it but his parents' decision to move to Jerusalem will open up a magical world for him. The nine-year-old doesn't like sports, TV, or video games so he isn't very popular in school. His hobbies are collecting gemstones and old keys and building boats that were "less models of boats than ideas of boats." His friends are old men who sell rough gems, collect junk, and repair old books. In Jerusalem, he discovers that his grandfather is a kindred spirit. As the story progresses, Michael's imagination soars and he becomes a kind of sorcerer's apprentice to Grandpa, who has the ability to draw Michael into his dreams. They travel about Jerusalem, sometimes in the real world and sometimes, through slight distortions of reality, into other times, places, and lives. In the sea, they hear the singing of whales. People bring their dreams to them to be sweetened. Some of the dreams are scary, like the one in which Michael and his parents are trapped in a restaurant where all of the diners are fish and sea creatures who are preparing to eat them! Under grandpa's influence, Michael becomes more outgoing and a sharp observer of human foibles. As Grandpa's death grows nearer, the dreams they share grow less adventurous and more like memories. Convinced that Michael has "the gift," Grandpa gives him the key that will allow him to become a dream master and then dies content. As in many children's books, *The Song of the Whales* portrays a special bond between a boy and his grandfather. It is unusual, perhaps unique, in its celebration of imagination and in giving both characters enough of it to let them experience those slight distortions of reality that transcend the ordinary and take them into magical realms. Children have more imaginative powers than adults often realize and they will find in this small, limpidly-written story an affirmation or perhaps an expansion of their own dreams. Highly recommended.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Reinhardt, Dana. *The Things a Brother Knows*. New York: Random House, 2010. 256 pp. $16.99. ISBN: 978-0-375-84455-3. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 9–Adult.

The psyche of America has been scarred and shaped by war. *The Things a Brother Knows* helps us understand the effects of war on one family. The "star" older brother, Boaz, leaves home to become a Marine in some unnamed war in some desert land (Iraq?). Told from the point of view of Levi, his younger brother, we gradually learn how each member of the family copes while Boaz is away and how they react when he returns after three long years. Boaz's return is not a real coming-home; he stays alone in his room most of the time—brooding, planning, crying, listening to the static on the radio. Finally, Boaz sets out on a journey, walking all the way. Levi doesn't know where Boaz is going, but is determined to follow him. During their journey, the threads of the plot are gradually woven together.

The adult characters are shown in a respectful way, not as caricatures, as is so often the case in young adult fiction. Dov, the grandfather, and Abba both grew up on a kibbutz in Israel and served in the army. The family moved to the U.S. because Abba wanted to "raise his children in a melting pot. In the land of opportunity. In a country that wasn't constantly defending its very right to exist." As grim as this story may seem, it is interlaced with deft touches of wry humor: "Zim and Pearl [Levi's staunch friends] have a little healthy competition going on about who's my better friend, a ridiculous sort of contest when you consider the prize." Reinhardt uses apt images and powerful language. Sentences are varied—long or short, lyrical or choppy—depending on the emotion being conveyed. With its poignant themes of "tikkun olam" and of loyalty—to family, friends, and country—*The Things a Brother Knows* is highly recommended.

Anne Dublin, Toronto, Canada

Schwartz, Howard. *Gathering Sparks*. Illus. by Kristina Swarner. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2010. 20 pp. $16.99. 978-1-59643-280-2. Preschool–Kdg.

As they look at the night sky, a child asks his grandfather where all the stars came from. Grandfather's answer is that "before people were created, God sent vessels carrying light sailing across the sky, which broke into sparks." He tells his grandson that the stars are part of these sparks, and "now it is the job of the human race to perform acts of loving kindness to gather those sparks of light and return them to their proper place," giving the boy such age-appropriate examples as planting a tree, helping his baby sister, and being kind to animals, as causing sparks to rise up and help form a peaceful world. A note at the end of the book explains the concept of the Jewish tradition of *tikkun olam*: that for every good deed we do, a little bit of the world will be repaired. Since God in this book is not designated as the God of any specific religion, *Gathering Sparks* can be used to communicate this message with those from every background.

The book is gorgeously designed. Kristina Swarner's luminous, full-page mixed-media illustrations glow in muted colors, accenting the dreamy quality of Howard Schwartz's poetic text, which is based on a 16th-century Jewish teaching about repairing the world. The award-winning author and illustrator have each written and illustrated many children's books and collaborated on *Before You Were Born* (Roaring Book Press, 2005). Meant for ages 3–6, this beautiful book is perfect for parents, grandparents, and teachers to read with their children and students, and is highly recommended for all ages.

Andrea Davidson, The Temple-Tifereth Israel, Beachwood, OH

Sklar, Tanya. *Islamic-Jewish Relations Before 1947.* World of Islam Series. Philadelphia: Mason Crest, 2010. 64 pp. $22.95. ISBN: 978-1-4222-1361-2. Gr. 8–12.

Here is another fine offering from Mason Crest, an imprint that brings academic names and institutions to its projects, giving them the refreshing qualities of authority and accuracy. This title refers to Islamic-Jewish relations but much of it applies to the status of religious minorities in general under Islam. The narrative moves from Islam's beginnings in seventh-century Arabia into the vast lands conquered in the ensuing centuries—Spain, Persia, Turkey, North Africa, Iraq. Here, a student can read an honest and realistic portrayal of dhimmi status, which Islamic law accords certain non-Muslims. Dhimmis were mainly Jews and Christians—people who were granted some degree of religious freedom, but at the price of a subservient status under Islamic rule.

Sklar, who holds a B.A. in international relations and counterterrorism, illustrates the pattern of Jewish life under Islam: a period of tolerance followed by resentment that the relaxed en-

forcement of restrictions against non-Muslims has led to what is perceived as unseemly success and status for minorities, followed by backlash against those minorities. The backlash may consist of mild persecution, forced conversion, or worse. Examples given include the killing of the Jewish community of Granada in 1066, the forced conversion of Persian Jews of Mashad in 1839, the beheading of hundreds of Arabian Jews in Muhammad's own time. The life of the Cordoba-born Jewish scholar known as Maimonides is shown to be emblematic of the vagaries of Jewish life under Islam. The picture of life for religious minorities under Islam is no simplistic, rose-colored tale that children's books sometimes present. Sklar also addresses the modern movements of pan-Arab nationalism and the return to Islamism, and their effects on the local Jewish minority. Drawbacks to this volume are the absence of pronunciation guides in its glossary, the dreadful cover art featuring a straggly-bearded ultra-Orthodox Jew paired with a Hollywood handsome, kufi-wearing Muslim, and one factual error regarding Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, in which the text suggests that he was the work's interpreter rather than its author. Any school where Middle East history or world religion is in the curriculum would do well to stock this book.

Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

Werlin, Nancy. *Extraordinary*. New York: Dial Books, 2010. 392 pp. $17.99. ISBN: 978-0-8037-3372-5. Gr. 8–11.

Phoebe Rothschild and Mallory Tolliver meet at the beginning of seventh grade, and they become friends almost immediately. What the reader knows (but Phoebe does not) is that Mallory is not human; she is fey, sent from Faerie to cultivate a relationship with Phoebe so she can lure her into fulfilling a centuries-old bargain made by her ancestor, the Jewish financier Mayer Rothschild. Only by convincing Phoebe that there is nothing special about her—that she is absolutely ordinary—can Mallory save Faerie. The reader learns through a series of conversations between Mallory and the Faerie Queen that are interspersed throughout the novel that this task is taking longer than expected. When the Queen loses patience with Mallory, Ryland is sent to pose as Mallory's brother to finish the job. Ryland's coldhearted determination to save his people at Phoebe's expense helps him fulfill his mission, though when Phoebe gets to Faerie, she realizes that she is not ordinary at all.

Some behaviors and conversations unlikely for high school students are minor missteps in Werlin's otherwise compelling and evocative prose. Readers may cringe at the way the fey use Phoebe as their pawn, though the parallels to real high school may also induce discomfort. Mallory is intermittently a sympathetic character, and her repeated requests to the Faerie Queen for more time demonstrate her reluctance to be unkind to Phoebe. Ryland's treatment of Phoebe, however, is almost painful to read, so skillfully does he manipulate her emotions and self-confidence. Phoebe's 11th-hour realization that she is a remarkable young woman serves as a not-too-subtle reminder to readers that everyone has a contribution to make in the world. Some discussion of the physical aspects of Phoebe and Ryland's relationship make this book appropriate mainly for readers of high school-age and above. An author's note provides information about her sources and gives suggestions for further reading about the Rothschild family. Highly recommended for school and public libraries, especially where fantasy books are popular with young adult readers.

Marci Lavine Bloch, Silver Spring, MD

Editor's note: See the following website for a discussion guide to *Extraordinary*: http://us.penguingroup.com/static/images/yr/pdf/tl-guide-extraordinary.pdf.

HANUKKAH

Berlin, Bill and Susan Isakoff Berlin. *The Kvetch Who Stole Hanukkah*. Illus. by Peter Welling. Gretna, LA: Pelican, 2010. 32 pp. $16.99. ISBN: 978-1-58980-798-3. Gr. 2–4.

Now and then, that other December holiday inspires a picture book about Hanukkah. Remember Leslea Newman's *Runaway Dreidel* (Holt, 2002), that begins with the familiar refrain "Twas the first night of Chanukah and on the fifth floor, There was holiday hustling and bustling galore"? Well, here is another one, inspired by the Grinch with possibly a trace of Scrooge. In the town of Oyville (the reviewer is not making this up), lives a kvetch with a grumpy face and a high, shrill voice who doesn't like Hanukkah at all. After explaining what a "kvetch" is, the narrative tries to describe why he (and other kvetches as well) might be that way before it meanders on with the story, too much of which is spent speculating about the kvetch's mental state instead of focusing on the action. After he steals all of the town's menorahs and piles them up on top of a hill, the elderly, white-haired, sour-faced kvetch is approached by some children who tell him that the lesson of the Maccabee's victory is one of hope, not pessimism. Again, the psychologizing intrudes on the plot as the children chime, "Perhaps you're afraid to see things so bright…Maybe you'd rather see things as bleak / Because somewhere inside, you feel frightened and weak." Predictably but unconvincingly, the kvetch instantly repents, the menorahs all start to glow, and on the final page, the now-smiling kvetch, wearing a kippah, lights the Hanukkiyah in a picture that is captioned, "Another great miracle has happened here!" Busy cartoon-like illustrations with some humorous details abound, showing the kvetch dreaming of some nightmarish Hanukkah candles and an Oyville whose residents all have those blank, rather creepy, googly eyes that seem to be so popular in picture book illustration just now. Whatever children will make of this peculiar addition to the Hanukkah book shelf, it is a safe bet that they won't encounter many other stories like it and a sure thing that in the kvetch department, Meshka still holds the lead. An additional purchase for grades 2–4.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Dalrymple, Jan. *The Story of Hanukkah Howie*. Illus. by Bob Dalrymple. Seattle, WA: Peanut Butter Publishing, 2010. 40 pp. $18.00. ISBN: 978-1-59849-108-1. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 1–3.

Weird is the word for this illustrated verse story. A baby named Howie is born in May and in December two spikes of hair appear on his head, one in the middle and the other over one ear. Each night after that for a total of eight nights another spike appears. At a party on night eight, the tight cap his embarrassed mother has put on Howie's head pops off and someone notices that his hair looks just like the menorah on the mantle. When Hanukkah is over, the spikes disappear and Howie is back to normal—until the next Hanukkah. As he grows older, Howie is very concerned about his "strange hair" but nothing helps. Flash forward to when Howie is in college and delivering holiday gifts to earn tuition money. As he makes a delivery, he is pushed by a dog and falls into a house minus his hair-concealing cap, "feeling like such a fool." But the family welcomes him and a little boy yells, "He's here!… It's Hanukkah Howie like grandpa Mel said." The absent Grandpa Mel predicted that "You're a guy that would give lots of Hanukkah stuff / But until you were ready it was going to be tough. / So you needed the help of guys like Grandpa Mel / And he took on the job and he did it quite well." Just who Grandpa Mel is, how he got into the plot, and what job he took on is never explained but Howie's bag of gifts "kept on filling with all kinds of stuff." When he leaves, Howie reminds the family to remember this Hanukkah night and the hope it brings. What hope he may mean—for lots of gifts, for Grandpa Mel to make an appearance?—also remains unclarified but as Howie drives off in his van, "vanishing with simply a wave of his hand…" the reader feels that Christmas, not Hanukkah, is in the air. The four-line rhyming verses that tell the story are often forced and the color illustrations that face each page of text neither add nor detract from an ineptly conceived story that has almost nothing to do with Hanukkah. Not recommended.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

***Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel*. Illus. by Amy Cartwright. New York: Price Stern Sloan, 2010. 10 pp. $7.99. ISBN: 978-0-8431-9899-7. Board book. Preschool.**

The familiar children's Hanukkah song appears in a book once again, this time geared to the very youngest. Cardboard covers and heavy stock pages show smiley-faced moppets crafting dreidels out of clay and then playing with them. On the last page there is a surprise: a pop-up scene with a dreidel that actually spins. The pastel illustrations are pleasing to the eye, with simple lines and Hanukkah symbols scattered about the pages. It is a winsome supplement to the Hanukkah collection and especially nice for a gift.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Edwards, Michelle. *The Hanukkah Trike*. Illus. by Kathryn Mitter. Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman, 2010. Unpaged. $15.99. ISBN: 978-0-8075-3126-6. Preschool–Kdg.

Gabi Greenberg enjoys the holiday of Hanukkah: lighting the menorah, eating delicious latkes, and playing the dreidel game. She is overjoyed to receive a new tricycle, which she names Hanukkah. When she falls off as she is learning to ride, she hurts her hand and knees. Her mother kisses her "owies" better, and then together they clean off her trike, as the Maccabees cleaned up the Temple. Gabi gathers her courage to try again, and this time successfully learns to ride, being brave as the Maccabees were in the Hanukkah story. Michelle Edwards won the Jewish Book Award for her first picture book, the wonderful *Chicken Man*, and here, as in that title, she makes her point without being too didactic. This brief picture book explains the story of Hanukkah to young children and illustrates customs appropriate for their age, at a level they can understand. Kathryn Mitter, illustrator of *First Rain* (Albert Whitman, 2010), has painted cheerful, brightly colored full-page illustrations that warmly portray the happy family and work well with the simple text. The binding stitching is weak and will have to be reinforced. Recommended for ages 3–5.

Andrea Davidson, The Temple-Tifereth Israel, Cleveland, OH

***Hanukkah*. Kansas City, MO: Accord Publishing, 2010. 12 pp. $9.99. ISBN: 978-0-7407-9799-6. Board book. Preschool.**

Instead of an author or illustrator, this novelty book has a creative team. It uses a technology called "animotion" to simulate movement in framed images. On the right sides of the double-page spreads are animated windows of a menorah with flickering candles, gelt dropping into a bowl, a spinning dreidel, latkes being flipped, and a scroll saying "Happy Hanukkah." Facing each animated window is one sentence about the image in the window while on the last double-page spread are some brief facts about Hanukkah, such as when it starts each year. The heavy pages, bright colors, simple text, and animated images are all appealing as a very simple introduction to some Hanukkah symbols. Very young children—especially those too young to understand the meaning or history of Hanukkah—will be entranced.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Jennings, Sharon. *A Chanukah Noel: A True Story*. Illus. by Gillian Newland. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2010. 24 pp. $15.95. ISBN: 978-1-897187-74-6. Kdg.–Gr. 4.

Charlotte moves with her Mommy and Daddy to a small town in France. It is difficult for her to adjust to a new language, new school, and new friends. At Christmas time she wants to celebrate Christmas in her home, but her parents refuse, because they are Jewish. Charlotte

consoles herself with, "At school, at least, I was part of the Christmas fun." She convinces her parents to buy all the trappings of Christmas and give them to Collette, a poor classmate, whose parents cannot afford to celebrate Christmas. "And then, the miracle!" Collette's family invites Charlotte's family to share in their Christmas celebration. The two fathers put up the tree, which the two families decorate. Charlotte's "heart was filled with joy, all the joy of Christmas and Chanukah."

A Chanukah Noel is inappropriate for Jewish children. It mentions Chanukah only briefly. It takes the position that it is okay for Jewish people to celebrate Christmas and long for Christmas even while lighting the menorah. Gillian Newland's illustrations are dark and potentially frightening. A repeated pattern of dreidels on the end papers shows incorrect Hebrew letters. Not recommended.

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

Melmed, Laura Krauss. *Eight Winter Nights: A Family Hanukkah Book*. Illus. by Elisabeth Schlossberg. San Francisco: Chronicle, 2010. 28 pp. $16.99. ISBN: 978-0-8118-5552-5. Kdg.–Gr. 2.

Grandparents, parents, kids, babies, and pets all celebrate Hanukkah is this handsomely illustrated story. Activities and symbols associated with the eight days of observance are divided into short blocks of verse that explore polishing the menorahs, lighting candles on each night, singing, dancing, welcoming guests, playing dreidel, enjoying latkes, opening presents, and giving tzedakah. The pencil and pastel artwork in deep shades of rust, green, and blue glows with warmth and family togetherness as it depicts the eight days of celebration inside a cozy home. Appended notes give brief historical information and describe some Hanukkah traditions. While this is far less original than the author's delightful story, *Moishe's Miracle* (Chronicle, 2005), it is still a pleasant addition to the year's Hanukkah books and appropriate for all libraries.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

FICTION

Gelbwasser, Margie. *Inconvenient*. Woodbury, MN: Flux, 2010. 305 pp. $9.95. ISBN: 978-0-9387-2148-4. Pbk. Gr. 9–12.

Alyssa is 15 years old, the only child of Russian Jewish parents who emigrated to the U.S. when she was very young. While her sexy best friend, Lana, tries to shed her Russian heritage, Alyssa accepts it as an integral part of her family life, including her inherited culture's love of eating and drinking. When her mother's drinking becomes more than social, when it becomes a constant in their lives, when Alyssa spends much of her time at home cleaning up after her mother and covering for her, she suffers an anguish that will be palpable to readers, whether or not they have ever experienced alcoholism first-hand. As mom drinks, apologizes, promises to stop, joins AA, and falls off the wagon again and again, dad pretends it's not a problem but merely an inconvenience. Faced with the loss of once-caring parents, Alyssa becomes not only sadder but more alienated from them, feeling a sense of loneliness and betrayal that not even her best friend can dispel. Woven into a wrenching portrayal of parental alcoholism are Alyssa's experiences in high school. As she watches Lana exploit her body as a way of becoming accepted by kids she admires, she begins a romance with a boy—a fellow member of the school track team—that is almost as stressful as the situation at home. Alyssa's relationship with Keith, a much nicer boy than most of the others who appear in the story, could be a comfort to her if he only let her know where she stood with him. Their sexual encounters, which stop just before actual intercourse, are intense but only temporarily satisfying, as Keith holds back from a fuller commitment and Alyssa is filled with self-doubt. Written with deep feeling, fully developed characters, a riveting plot, and an authentic depiction of the speech and interests of many contemporary teenagers, *Inconvenient* concludes realistically—with some hope but no happy ending. Alyssa is a memorable character who changes in the course of the novel and readers will empathize with her. The Jewish content is slight and there are aspects of the novel—the smutty dialogue, the teenage characters' absorption with sex, and the useless parents and teachers—that may make it unacceptable to some adults. That would be a shame because it is an authentic and powerful probing of personal and family issues. Recommended.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Katz, Susan B. *Tyler's Hill*. New York: Strategic Book Publishing, 2009. 156 pp. $23.25. ISBN: 978-1-60860-172-1. Gr. 5–8.

Sandy Lowenthal is an eleven-year-old Jewish girl who lives in a middle class suburb of Detroit during the mid-1960s. To her dismay, the woods and pond of her cherished Tyler Hill are being demolished to make room for a new housing development. The worst part for Sandy—that she has no control over the changes—serves as a metaphor for the life-altering situations she encounters in the story. Begrudgingly, Sandy befriends Lynn, a girl who lives in the new housing development, and soon discovers that Beth's mother suffers from terminal illness. Sandy swears to secrecy about Beth's mother without hesitance, because Sandy has secrets in her house as well: her mother converted from Judaism to become a Jehovah's Witness. She spends most of her time knocking on people's doors trying "to spread the Word of Jehovah." Sandy's mother will not attend any celebrations that she views as pagan, including her own son's bar mitzvah. Sandy is embarrassed by her mother's behavior and frustrated with her mother's lack of involvement in her children's lives. Her best friend Lynn has affectionate parents. They are Holocaust survivors and treasure their daughter. When Beth's mother passes away, Sandy is sad for Beth but cannot help feeling envious of her for the relationship she had with her mother. This makes Sandy resent her own mother even more. Beth tells her, "At least, your mother is still living." One day, when Sandy witnesses her

mother performing a kind act for a neighbor, she realizes that her mother does many kind things. Sandy pledges to work on her relationship with her mother.

The story is moving, yet it is apparent that Susan Katz is inexperienced in writing children's novels. She spends too much time describing each character's physical appearance—hair color, eye color, height and weight—which comes off as shallow. The author uses the inappropriate term "Jewish accent," when referring Lynn's parents' Eastern European or *Yiddish* accent. Still, the title is recommended for Jewish libraries as an addition to collections dealing with death and mourning. It includes good details of *shiva,* the Jewish mourning observance.

Heather Lenson, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH

Krieger, Evelyn. *One Is Not a Lonely Number.* Sharon, MA: YM Books, 2010. 449 pp. $15.85. ISBN: 978-0-9841624-2-0. Pbk. Gr. 5–8.

One school year in the life of 13-year-old Talia is explored in this long novel for preteen girls. The only child of affluent, high-achieving and observant parents, Talia has many privileges but like most adolescents, she still has her share of complaints. She's an "only" in a community where large families are the rule. Her parents' practice of hachnasat orchim (welcoming guests) means that their Shabbats are always crowded with strangers. There's a classmate who isn't very nice to her. Most annoying to her is the presence of a young woman whom her parents have invited to live with them. Gabrielle, whom Talia calls Gabbers because she talks so much, is a newly religious Jew, a ditzy former professional ballet dancer who eventually is hired by Talia's school to direct a big musical event. These plot elements are just a few of many in a story that seems intended to show the everyday-ness along with the wholesomeness of American Orthodox Jewish life. Although their lives are lived within a totally Orthodox environment, Talia and her friends are typical enough of their age group that non-Orthodox readers will identify with them. Moreover, there is very little Hebrew used and discussions of religious belief and practice are kept to a minimum so few challenges are presented to readers unfamiliar with Orthodox Judaism. The girls in this story may daven, belong to Shabbat clubs, and bless their food before eating, but they also like shopping, pizza, gossip, and fun. Talia herself is a math whiz whose intellectual achievements provide a balance to some of her more girly concerns. A positive tone pervades the story, whose natural dialog and ease of reading may offset the disadvantage of its length. Recommended.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Oron, Judie. *Cry of the Giraffe: Based on a True Story.* Toronto: Annick Press, 2010. 208 pp. $21.95. ISBN: 978-1-55451-272-0. Gr. 9–12.

In the last decades of the 20th century, nearly 120,000 Ethiopian Jews escaped persecution in their homeland and immigrated to Israel. *Cry of the Giraffe* tells one girl's story about her part in this contemporary exodus. Worn down by the restrictions on Jews and fearful of the growing anti-Semitism in her village, 13-year-old Wuditu and her extended family flee Ethiopia to a Sudanese refugee camp. While waiting their turn to be smuggled to Israel, Wuditu becomes separated from her family and is forced back into Ethiopia. During her two-year-long ordeal to survive by any means necessary in her war-torn country, she experiences the elements of all parents' worst nightmare for their children—hunger, rape, prostitution, abortion, and slavery. Only the thought of being reunited with her family in Israel gives Wuditu hope and keeps her going. Through it all, she remembers her mother's words, "Even when [the giraffe's] sad or frightened, she holds her head up and she doesn't cry—not even when life seems too hard to bear." Relief finally comes when Judie Oron, a journalist working with the *Jerusalem Post*, risks her own life to rescue Wuditu and take her safely to Israel. Writing in straightforward prose, Oron unfolds Wuditu's harrowing story with a journalist's eye for memorable details and unforgettable situations. Although the suggested readership age for this book is 14 years old and above, parents and librarians may have reservations about letting their younger patrons read the raw and unadorned accounts of Wuditu's anguish, especially the chapter in which she ends her unwanted pregnancy. The book includes a map, family tree, and glossary of Amharic and Ethiopian terms.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel, Akron, OH

FOLKLORE

Kimmel, Eric A. *Joha Makes a Wish: A Middle Eastern Tale.* Illus. by Omar Rayyan. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2010. 40 pp. $17.99. ISBN: 978-0-7614-5599-8. Gr. 2–4.

A folktale from Yemen called "The Answered Prayer," from a collection of Yemenite tales of the same title by Sharlya Gold

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and Mishael Maswari Caspi (JPS, 2004) is one of the kernels from which this hybrid grows. Onto it have been grafted traditions about the Middle Eastern/Sephardic folk character, Joha, and an Iraqi setting. None of Jewish roots of the "The Answered Prayer" is preserved and in place of the bittersweet tone of the original, which shows the oppressed Jews of Yemen using their faith in God to survive in a hostile land, is the humor implicit in a character who is part trickster and part schlemiel. Joha is on his way to Baghdad when he finds a magic stick that grants wishes. Except when he wishes for new sandals, his old ones disappear instead. When he angrily wishes that the stick would go away, it sticks to his hand. When he wishes he had a donkey like the little one following the sultan's guard to carry him on his dusty journey, the ferocious guards make Joha carry the donkey instead! When the Sultan orders him to wish away a wart, Joha's troubles continue until he learns that he's been holding the stick upside down. With this new knowledge, Joha returns and cures the huge cluster of warts that has grown on the Sultan's nose but his magic stick is confiscated by the Sultan, who rewards him with—a donkey! Together, with Joha riding the donkey this time, they agree that it isn't necessary to tell the Sultan the right way to hold the stick. To complement the fluid narrative, amusingly exaggerated watercolor illustrations dance across each page, adding more verve and a distinct Middle Eastern flavor to a well-told story. Most libraries will want a copy but the lack of explicit Jewish content makes it an optional purchase.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

HOLIDAYS

Snyder, Laurel. *Baxter: The Pig Who Wanted to Be Kosher.* Illus. by David Goldin. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press, 2010. 32 pp. $15.99. ISBN: 978-1-58246-315-5. Preschool–Gr. 2.

If spiders and bears can enjoy Shabbat, why not a pig? In this charming picture book, Baxter, a pig, learns the difference between being dinner and being a dinner guest. One of several Jewish people he meets at a bus stop tells him that he can't be part of Shabbat dinner because he isn't kosher. Yet earlier at this same bus stop, Baxter has heard about Shabbat and wants to see the "candles gleam and glow and dance while our sweetest voices lift in song" so he tries to become kosher by pigging out on pickles and challah. When that doesn't work, he "acquire(s) a handy set of horns" and "cultivate(s) a taste for clover" in hopes of becoming a cow. Still no luck! Returning to the oracular bus-stop, he is approached by a kindly rabbi who explains that while a pig can never be kosher to eat, he doesn't have to be kosher to be a guest because it's a mitzvah to welcome strangers. So Baxter, after all his efforts, gets to enjoy the candles, the singing, and especially the food! The comical illustrations that accompany this lively and off-beat story are a combination of cartoon drawings and digitally enhanced photographs of Jewish food and symbols. Despite the loss of expression that results from the trite cartoon convention of putting big, blank, googly eyes on all of the characters, they reflect and add to a story whose welcoming theme will enchant little children even if they aren't sure about the meaning of kosher.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

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ISRAEL

Lieberman, Leanne. *The Book of Trees*. Victoria, BC, Canada: Orca, 2010. 243 pp. ISBN 978-1-55469-265-I Pbk. Reviewed from ARC. Gr. 8–12.

The Book of Trees is an innocuous sounding title disguising some heavy-handed Israel bashing. Mia Quinn, a minimally Jewish, free-living, high school graduate from Toronto, has accepted an invitation from her new (religious) friend, Aviva, to accompany her to Israel to study at an Orthodox yeshiva for girls during the summer. If this sounds like mixing oil and water, it is. Mia is a guitar-playing, folk-singing, sexually-experienced young woman, pitted against the "boringly dressed" (read modestly dressed) girls of the yeshiva. She never returns the hospitality and concern of her roommate, Aviva, and scorns her because she has led a sheltered life. Mia's models are a single mom she calls Sheila, a peace activist who is "at some women's retreat, dancing naked and making pottery" and a guitar-playing, seldom seen, dad. Conveniently, for the advancement of the plot, there are no responsible adults in the book. Mia escapes from the yeshiva periodically and runs around Jerusalem alone, in the process meeting a guitar-playing, Palestinian-sympathizing American, to whom she is attracted and with whom—no surprise—she has sex. No teacher, rabbi or head of school is aware of Mia's indiscretions; she can leave the yeshiva and skip classes with impunity. A culminating moment for Mia has her buying a book entitled *Nakba*, about the displacement of Arabs from Israel in 1948. This is the turning point in her full commitment to the Palestinians. The attacks, wars, atrocities, years of the intifada, and many suicide bombings by Arabs or Palestinians against Israel get no mention.

Mia actually witnesses the number 18 bus being blown up in Jerusalem. She sees people explode and disappear. She was supposed to have been on the bus, but, miraculously for her, was waylaid by her boyfriend, Andrew. She and Andrew run away as fast as they can, never looking back. No context is given for the suicide bombing. Who perpetrated bus attack, who executed it, and who perished in it, are not mentioned. Could the author be referring obliquely or unconsciously to the actual suicide bombings of two no. 18 buses that occurred in Jerusalem in 1996?

The author goes on to point to what Mia considers grave injustices committed by Israel. The trees of the title are the saplings of a JNF forest planted to memorialize Israeli soldiers who had

died there during the 1948 War of Independence. Mia imagines an Arab village there, and in that moment, decides that the trees of this JNF forest are unbearably offensive. She is also horrified by the sight of Israeli soldiers carrying their rifles in the street and on the buses, and she stops breathing when the butt of one's rifle accidentally touches her.

The publisher's website includes the following description of The *Book of Trees:* "When Mia goes to Israel, she gets a crash course in the history of the Jews in Palestine and starts to question her Zionist aspirations." This description is untrue. Mia has no Zionist aspirations and she learns neither Jewish nor Israeli history, nor the history of the Palestinians. *The Book of Trees* is so rife with omissions and bias, as to be irresponsible. It is an anti-Israel book, an anti-Jewish one, and perhaps even an anti-Palestinian one. How so? By fomenting anger and political division, both sides are driven further apart, making the possibility of solution ever more remote. Sadly, anti-Israel views are a threatening presence worldwide. It is especially disappointing when attempts to delegitimize Israel come from authors with Jewish surnames. That this highly politicizing book addresses teens as young as twelve is of concern. One may forgive Mia for being credulous and naïve. She is young, uninformed, and inexperienced. But the book's targeted readers are even younger than she and their lack of knowledge about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is exploited by the author, whose animus toward Israel is apparent and whose purpose in writing the book is hard to fathom. *The Book of Trees* is not recommended.

Naomi Morse, Silver Spring, MD

JEWISH VALUES

Deutsch, Tehilla. *Benny the Big Shot*. Illus. by Vitaliy Romanenko. New York: Feldheim, 2010. 25 pp. $12.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-468-5. Kdg.–Gr. 2.

Benny the Big Shot, written in rhyme, teaches about *kinah* (jealously). Tzvi is jealous of Benny, a new boy in school who is very bright and able to answer correctly all the rebbi's questions on the *parshah*. One day the rebbi announces that the boy who gets the highest score on the Chumash test will win two free tickets to the best amusement park. Tzvi studies Rashi with all of his might, but to his dismay, Benny wins the contest. Tzvi is upset and jealous, until Benny offers to take him along to the amusement park. Then, predictably, Tzvi realizes that each boy is special and has his own talent. The story is appropriate for ages 5-8. The brightly colored illustrations enhance the text and provide the setting—a religious boys' classroom. The children pictured wear black kipot and tsitsit. Although a glossary is included, *Benny the Big Shot* is recommended for libraries whose patrons are familiar with the Hebrew words.

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

Frankel, Pessie, and Yocheved Leah Perkal. *Mrs. Honig's Cakes 4: Summer Stories*. Illus. by Tova Katz. Jerusalem: Hamodia Publishing, 2010. 238 pp. $19.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-582-8. Gr. 4–7.

Mrs. Honig always has an interesting anecdote and a related dessert to share with her visitors: Dini, a third-grader; Shiffy, her sister who is in fifth grade, and Esty, the sisters' cousin, who is also in fifth grade. In forty stories, three of which have appeared in previous volumes, readers will learn about the escapades that many children, including the main characters, enjoy during their summer vacations. Each vignette begins with a conversation between the girls and Mrs. Honig, which reminds her of a story that starts "Once upon a time…" After the story, there is another short conversation, and a discussion of the dessert. The topics run the gamut from sibling rivalry, making new friends, and doing good deeds (*mitzvot*), to different camp activities. Black-and-white illustrations accompany several of the stories.

These stories appeared in weekly installments in *Hamodia* (The Daily Newspaper of Torah Jewry), and the Orthodox bent is evident. Each story has a moral or lesson to teach and ends happily. Characters have names like Zalmi and Kreindy, and most of the stories center around life in bungalow colonies in the Catskill Mountains of New York. Contrary to what one might expect, there are no recipes. The stories do not follow a chronological order, so adjacent chapters have the girls at sleep-away camp, then day camp, then in the city. This treacle might be more enjoyable as a weekly column than the sugar overload of a book. It is appropriate for readers aged nine through twelve, and an optional purchase for Orthodox libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, MTS, Clifton, NJ

Goetz, Bracha. *Remarkable Park*. Illustrated by Patti Argoff. New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2010. 27 pp. $12. 99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-495-1. Preschool–Gr. 3.

A girl and boy walk through the park and learn from the animals and trees. The birds wake up early and sing their thanks to God. A tree shows how to treat a guest—by giving fruit and a spot to rest. All the animals are imbued with unique traits, and as the children explore the park, they note the animals and relate their special qualities to knowing and thanking God. As they walk through the park to the zoo, they encounter deer, a cow, an eagle, a leopard, frogs, parrots, a dog, and an owl. The book demonstrates that by appreciating nature one can appreciate and come closer to God. Cute, colorful illustrations accompany the text.

Although the book is clearly intended for the Orthodox—the boy is wearing a *kippa* and God is referred to as "Hashem"—the simple rhyming text carries a message for all readers. The text wanders from its theme of how nature "talks" to us as it describes the appearance or behavior of some of the animals, and the mix of animals the children encounter is contrived to teach the lesson, but the book returns to its focus with the conclusion that "Hashem made this world to talk to us, just like an open book!" This is a solid choice for all Jewish libraries, to be shared with readers ages four through eight.

Kathe Pinchuck, MTS, Clifton, NJ

Krohn, Genendel. *The Miracle of the Golden Dove and Other Stories*. Illus. by Tova Katz. New York: Feldheim, 2010. 55 pp. $15.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-523-1. Gr. 3–5.

Genendel Krohn is a prolific collector of Talmudic stories and other midrashim, which she then skillfully edits for children. This volume, part of the Timeless Tales from the Lives of Our Sages series, contains fifteen stories featuring many of the most

illustrious rabbis in both famous and lesser-known legends. The first tale, which is about Mar Ukva and his wife (from Ketubot 76b), explores the importance of *tzedakah*, and the value of *kavannah* (proper intentions) while doing the right thing. The book contains several stories in which the rabbis themselves learn from each other and from unexpected sources and people. The sources (which are cited at the top of every section) include Talmud (Ketubot, Sanhedrin, Makkot and other tractates), midrash, as well as the Maharsha and other great medieval sages. The full-page illustrations that accompany the text are well drawn, and descriptive of the circumstances of the tales. The moral conclusions are direct enough for young children to understand, and contain subtleties that could interest older children and even some adults. These stories are a wonderful way to introduce Genendel Krohn's work to libraries and schools. This and other collections by the author should be considered by all types of synagogue and school libraries. A glossary is included.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Simhaee, Rebeka. *Sara Finds a Mitzva*. Illus. by Michael Weber. New York: Hachai, 2010. $10.95. 26 pp. ISBN: 978-1-929628-46-9. Preschool.

Another of Hachai's sweet stories conveying central concepts of Judaism to preschoolers. Sara performs a mitzvah when she finds a lost toy and becomes a sleuth in order to return it to the child who lost it. Helped by her kindly bubbe, she overcomes her own fondness for the little white duck and follows clues that lead through her Orthodox urban neighborhood, from Gold's candy store to Shula's dress shop to Aaron's kosher bakery and finally to a toy shop where a birthday party is in progress. Among all the little girls and their mothers at the party, Sara picks out the one who lost the duck, returns it to her, and "feels the happiness of her mitzva bubbling up inside her." And as a reward for her mitzvah, Bubbe gives Sara a little white duck of her own. The simple but enthusiastic story is paired with detailed, cross-hatched illustrations showing the stores, their stock, their customers, and the clues that Sara follows. It is recommended for libraries serving preschoolers, whether or not they are Orthodox.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

HOLOCAUST

Unterman, Phoebe Eloise. *Through Eva's Eyes*. Kansas City, KS: Landmark House, 2009. 21 pp. $17.00. ISBN: 978-0-9822874-0-8. Order information available at www.throughevaseyesonline.com. Gr. 4–6.

The author/illustrator was 13 when she began working on this book, which was a 2006 Gold Award Winner of the Kids-In-Print Contest for Students. It is based on her grandmother's experiences during the Holocaust and, through a blend of simple text, attractive color illustrations, and a lack of frightening details, is appropriate for children as young as 10. In it they will follow Eva from the time she is six years old and just hearing rumors about war to when she is twelve and liberated from Theresienstadt. During those years of what should have been her childhood, she was herded into the Lodz Ghetto, transported in a box car, forced into slave labor, and imprisoned in several concentration camps, including Auschwitz. Amazingly, her family stays together and throughout Eva's narrative, her faith in her parents and their comforting presence is a steady refrain. The horrors that they experienced are summarized rather than described as when she says: "They made us take cold showers. We all stood in shock. Most women were crying, but Mama told me not to worry, that hair always grew back." Eva's story ends with an epilogue that tells of her family's life in Germany after the war, Eva's eventual marriage to an American soldier, and life in the United States.

The book's format is especially apt for a personal narrative. It is designed to look like an album, with each of Unterman's expressive illustrations bordered as though it were a photograph. Below each illustration is a block of text that looks like it was typewritten, not typeset. The naiveté that these elements convey is in excellent accord with the content, which never loses its childlike focus. Unlike so many illustrated books about the Holocaust, *Eva's Story* is well-suited for reading by younger children because of its sustained child's point of view and its author's facility in revealing just the right amount of detail about Eva's experiences. Recommended for all libraries.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Editor's note: Landmark House is no longer in business so orders should be placed through the website given above.

The title *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Sara Houghteling (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), reviewed in the Adult Readers section, may also be of interest to teenagers:

Safranim's Blog

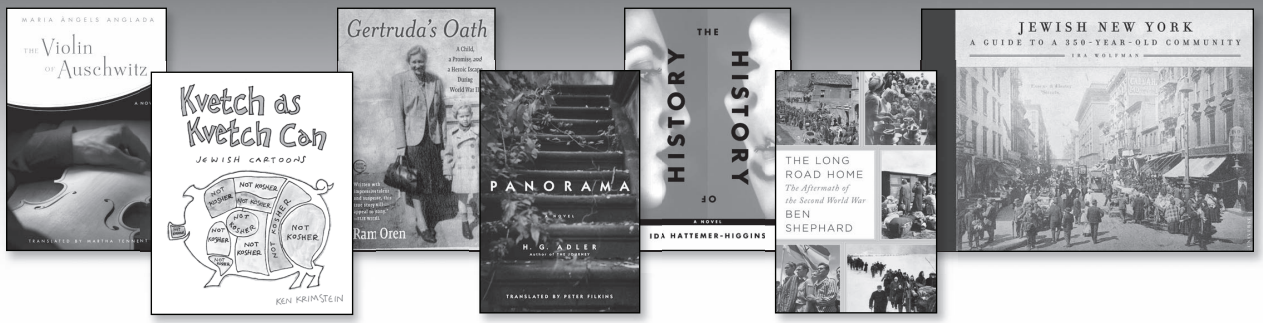
Ya'akov Aronson

The fifth issue of the Judaica Librarians' Group (Israel) online *alon* has just appeared (http://tinyurl.com/2uj3dyy). Below is a list of the articles, grouped around the subject rare books, the theme of a recent study day.

- A virtual visit to the library of Professor Gershom Scholem by Professor Zeev Gris, chairman of the Department of Jewish Thought at Ben Gurion University
- The benefits and disadvantages of the digital age by Aharon Bejell, director of the Yeshivat Har Etzion library
- Toward a new definition of a "rare book" by Natan Shifriss
- Yiddish works included in the online database of the National Library of Poland by Haim Levy, chairman of the Judaica Librarians' Group (Israel) and Yiddish cataloger at the National Library of Israel

Books of Jewish Interest

from Random House, Inc.



Maria Àngels Anglada;
Translated by Martha Tennent

The Violion of Auschwitz: A Novel

The conditions at Auschwitz are inhuman and Daniel, a Jewish violin maker from Crakow, manages to survive this living hell working as a carpenter. When the camp commander, a classical music lover, discovers Daniel's special skills, he decides to put him to the test: Daniel must make a violin that plays to perfection, knowing all too well what his punishment is likely to be if he fails.

978-0-553-80778-3 | $20.00/$23.00C
Bantam | HC | E

Ken Krimstein

Kvetch As Kvetch Can

For lovers of Seinfeldian humor and for readers—Jewish and not— who have bought of *Yiddish with Dick and Jane*, this witty collection from a *New Yorker* cartoonist offers a jaded but loving look at the hilarious trials, tribulations, and traditions of the therapeutically inclined, smoked-fish loving, baseball-statistic-obsessed people.

978-0-307-58888-3 | $12.99/$14.99C
Clarkson Potter | TR

Ram Oren;
Translation by Barbara Harshav

Gertruda's Oath: A Child, a Promise, and a Heroic Escape During World War II

Now in paperback, an inspiring story of one woman's undying devotion and one boy's heartwrenching journey to safety in one of history's darkest nightmares.

978-0-385-52719-4 | $14.99/$16.99C
Doubleday Religion | TR

H. G. Adler; Translated by Peter Filkins;
Afterword by Peter Demetz

Panorama: A Novel

For readers of W. G. Sebald and Franz Kafka, *Panorama* is the first English translation of another masterpiece of Holocaust fiction by the rediscovered H. G. Adler, author of *The Journey*.

978-1-4000-6851-7 | $26.00/$30.00C
Random House | HC | January

Ida Hattemer-Higgins

The History of History:
A Novel of Berlin

2002. A young woman named Margaret stumbles from the forest outside Berlin — hands dirty, clothes torn. She can remember nothing. Her descent into madness resonates more and more clamorously with two suppressed tragedies of Berlin's darkest hour. A harrowing and provocative debut novel that tells a tale of obsessive love, family ruptures, and a nation's grief.

978-0-307-27277-5 | $25.95/$29.00C | Knopf
HC | January | E

Boleslaw Prus

The Doll

As a classic of Polish literature, this novel takes in the 19th century and looks ahead to questions of empire, revolution, and anti-Semitism, while focusing on its Dickensian cast of characters. As the novel opens in Warsaw in 1878, our hero, Wokulski, having risen to riches, now seeks the respect of the aristocracy and, in particular, the love of the cold and scheming Izabela Lecka.

978-1-59017-383-1 | $18.95/$21.50C
New York Review Books | TR | February

Ben Shephard

The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War

A radical reassessment of the aftermath of WWII. Newly formed relief organizations were confronted by an entire continent of starving and uprooted individuals. More than twenty million "Displaced Persons" constituted a refugee crisis and the implications of the Holocaust were just beginning to be realized. The epic story of how millions redefined the notion of home.

978-1-4000-4068-1 | $35.00/NCR | Knopf | HC
February | E

Ira Wolfman

Jewish New York: A Guide to a 350-Year-Old Community

Now at a reduced price, this beautifully illustrated guide celebrates Jewish life in New York City from the seventeenth century to the present through a selection of photographs, memorabilia, souvenirs, manuscripts, postcards, maps, and much more.

978-0-7893-2245-6 | $9.95/$10.95C | Universe
HC | February

Imre Kertesz; translated by Tim Wilkinson

Fiasco

At long last, the new translation of the "missing" book in Kertesz's Nobel-ensnaring trilogy of autobiographical novels, which includes *Fatelessness* and *Kaddish for a Child Not Born*, published by Knopf. This one is essential for any serious collection of Holocaust literature.

978-1-935554-29-5 | $19.95/$22.95C |
Melville House | TR | March

Deborah E. Lipstadt

The Eichmann Trial

The award-winning historian gives us an overview of the trial that has become a touchstone for cases in which victims of genocide confront its perpetrators. The trial offers a legal, moral, and political framework for coming to terms with unfathomable evil.

978-0-8052-4260-7 | $23.95/$26.95C
Schocken/NextBook | HC | March | E

Anthony David and Jon Marcus

The Volunteers: The Mavericks, Mercenaries, and Idealists Who Built Israel's Air Force

With elements of *Operation Mincemeat* and *Charlie Wilson's War*, *The Volunteers* is a breathtaking epic that tells the story of how one of history's forgotten visionaries—with his shadowy, cocky international band of operators—built the deadliest air force in the world.

978-0-553-80761-5 | $28.00/$33.00C
Bantam | HC | April | E

Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole

Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Geniza

The story of the recovery from a Cairo geniza (a repository for worn-out texts) of the most vital cache of Hebrew manuscripts ever discovered — letters and poems, wills and marriage contracts, prescriptions, prayers, rabbinic responsa, amulets, receipts — documents that shed profound light on nine hundred years of Jewish life.

978-0-8052-4258-4 | $26.95/$31.00C
Schocken/NextBook | HC | April | E

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Reviews of Titles for Adults

Edited by Merrily F. Hart and Daniel Scheide

FICTION & POETRY

Borman, Leonard. *Our Jewish Robot Future: A Novel About The Garden Of Eden And The Cyborgian Transformation Of The Human Race*. Minneapolis, MN: Scarletta Press, 2010. 280 p. $14.95 (ISBN 978-0-98244-581-9).

Do you remember the Terminator movies? An evil cyborg from the future comes back in time with the mission to kill the woman who would become the mother of the leader of the human resistance movement. In a twist on that theme, Borman creates a Jewish robot of the future who travels back in time to tell Alex and Margarita Haralson that they must convince their adult children to start reproducing in order for their many-times-great-grandchildren to ultimately develop the robots that would travel into space and preserve Judaism.

Some centuries into the future, the Haralsons' descendants, appalled at the state of humanity and the state of the planet, transfer their personalities into robots and blast off into space. The robots settle on a planet with a Garden of Eden complete with a serpent, Adam and Eve, and early humanoid inhabitants. A spiritual crisis afflicts the robots so they decide to return to Earth to kidnap Alex and bring him to the planet to confront the serpent, discover the unwritten 11th commandment, and determine the exact nature of the forbidden fruit. After Alex returns to earth, he affects the people around him by enhancing some of their senses, including his wife's sense of smell and the rabbi's hearing. Numerous complications, many quite humorous, arise from this.

I'm not sure how the space-time continuum can survive all the convoluted plots twists, but the Haralsons are feisty, likeable characters. The style is light and conversational and the work contains some sexually explicit passages. Recommended for large (adult) fiction collections only.

Sheryl Stahl, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles, CA

Frank, Thaisa. *Heidegger's Glasses: A Novel*. Beverly Hills, CA: Phoenix Books, 2010. 335 p. $22.95 (ISBN 978-1-60747-726-6). Reviewed from ARC.

The setting for this historical novel is the Holocaust but in place of facts there is sheer fantasy. The author has hijacked familiar names, places, and events for no other purpose than to be provocative. For Jewish readers, the Final Solution is not a subject for entertainment and *Heidegger's Glasses* will give the wrong impression to naïve readers interested in the Holocaust.

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger became a member of the Nazi Party in 1933; he never resigned from the party or denounced it. Despite the title, he and his glasses play a minimal role in the novel. Heidegger's Jewish friend, Asher Englehardt, is pure fiction. The Nazis used many strategies to hide their genocide; one of them was known as *Briefaktion* (Operation Mail). The novel is set in an underground mine converted by the Nazis into the headquarters for multilingual prisoners who are forced to answer letters sent to deceased victims. Scattered throughout the book are snapshots of short letters, in various languages and in English translation. The plot is complicated by the supernatural, mystical inclinations of the Nazi hierarchy and connections with the Thule Society. In the uncorrected proof, some of the "letters" are written in Hebrew characters that read from left to right, and the English translation does not always correspond to the Hebrew text. *Heidegger's Glasses* trivializes the Holocaust and is not recommended.

Nira Glily Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Grossman, David. *To the End of the Land*. Translated by Jessica Cohen. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. 583 p. $27.95 (ISBN 978-0-30759-297-2).

Award-winning Israeli author David Grossman has written an epic novel that makes a powerful statement about war. Ora, a woman eagerly awaiting the return of her son, Ofer, from military service, is devastated when he decides to re-enlist. Worried that he will not return, she decides to take a hike along the Israel trail in the Galilee, leaving her cell phone at home so that the "notifiers" cannot bring her bad news. Recently separated from her husband, Ilan, she decides to ask Avram, an old friend and former lover, to accompany her. As they walk, Ora fills Avram in on her life since they last met. She, Avram, and Ilan were in the army together and Avram has never recovered from his experience as a POW in Egypt. Ora tells Avram about her experience as a mother and about Ofer, who is his biological son. This is a big book, at times too big. Ora talks incessantly and it seems strange that Avram puts up with it. Readers will find that it is indeed a long hike, but it is an honest and poignant statement from a great author who lost a son during the 2006 Lebanon War.

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

Houghteling, Sara. *Pictures at an Exhibition*. New York: Vintage Books, 2009. 243 p. $15.00 (ISBN 978-0-30738-630-4).

This debut novel is the story of an art dealer and his family, living in Paris during the Second World War. The son of the famous and successful owner of the Berenzon Gallery searches for his father's priceless art collection, which vanished during the war while the family was in hiding. The author has included several important historical figures in the story and her careful research is evident. This engrossing, well-written novel is recommended for fiction collections in Jewish public libraries, community centers, colleges, and high schools.

Susan Freiband, Puerto Rico

Mahgerefteh, Michal. *In My Bustan: Poems*. Norfolk, VA: Poetica Pub. Co., 2009. 77 p. $13.00 (ISBN 978-1-61539-247-6).

This is a very personal collection of the poetic memories of a contemporary Israeli woman who now lives in Virginia. She writes with emotion about her childhood in Israel and her beloved Moroccan mother, left behind to die of cancer. She also explores her experience of Jewish mysticism and prayer in a Renewal framework, riffing on Psalms, most successfully in

"Mizmor l'David: Collage of Psalms to Elohai." She also reinterprets Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" as a mystical, Middle-Eastern pastoral. Better editing might have caught some of the errors in English usage—"enwrapped," "sweet to my plate," instead of palate. The book includes a glossary of transliterations from Arabic, Yiddish, and Hebrew, such as "Ha-Aaron" for the Holy Ark.

Overall, there's not a lot of depth to these poems—the reader is likely to be mildly diverted rather than profoundly moved. The imagery is not tremendously clear or startling, and the versification is prosaic. For comprehensive collections of modern Jewish poetry.

Beth Dwoskin, Proquest, Ann Arbor, MI

Rave, Ligia. *Hanah's Paradise*. Translated from the Spanish. Philadelphia: New Door Books, 2009. 316 p. $14.95 (ISBN 978-0-97886-363-0).

This is the story of the Ravayah family, whose members are scattered throughout the world, but have a center in Israel called Hanah's Paradise. There the firstborn of the different branches meet and there is an archive that tells the stories of the family members. The place is seen through the eyes of Salomeia, who arrives from Romania. A number of chapters are devoted to earlier periods, but most of the book tells the stories of the last three generations—the grandparents, Rafael and Adah, who lived in Palestine, two of their children stranded in Europe in the 1930s, and Salomeia, of our generation. The narrative contains many exciting passages and paints an authentic picture of life under communism; however the novel has two weaknesses. First, the author does not always resist the temptation to teach us about Jewish history or the Israel-Arab conflict. Second, the surprise ending is not at all effective. This is an enjoyable very Jewish novel with no pretensions to greatness.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

NONFICTION

Adelman, Rachel. *The Return of the Repressed: Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha*. Leiden: Brill, 2009. 352 pp. $179.00 (ISBN 978-9-00417-049-0).

This book is a study of Midrash Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer (PRE), which was found in the eighth century. PRE is different from other classical midrashic literature; it contains unique segments that are preserved from the Second Temple period. These segments were excluded from the rabbinic cannon, while preserved in the Pseudepigrapha. The first part of the book, "Genre: Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer as Narrative," is an excellent introduction to the study of midrashic literature. Adelman presents a comprehensive and remarkable discussion of midrashic genres, and characterizes PRE as "narrative midrash (*midrash sippuri*)." In the second part of the book, "The Personification of Evil," the author deals with some theological questions that emerge from PRE, such as the origin of evil and the myth of the *nephilim*, the fallen angels. In the third part, "Myth and Praxis in Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer," Adelman engages with some customs and rituals in PRE, including havdalah, women in the festival of the Rosh Hodesh, and the tradition of the chair of the prophet Elijah at *brit milah* (ritual circumcision). The last part is a literary analysis of chapter 10 of PRE, which deals with the narrative of the biblical figure of Jonah. This is very important work for anyone seriously interested in midrashic literature. For scholars who are familiar with the study of midrash, it is enjoyable and engaging.

Yoram Bitton, Columbia University, New York, NY

Arad, Yitzhak. *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press/Yad Vashem. 2009. 700 p. $45.00 (ISBN 978-0-80322-059-1).

This massive book is unquestionably the most comprehensive ever on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union. Everything about this era and this part of the world is examined, using the plethora of familiar and newly released archival sources. Unlike many Holocaust narratives that focus narrowly on the war years, this study begins with broad historical background on the Jews in Russia, including the Tsarist regime and the Pale (the region restricting Jewish settlement), the shtetl world of the Orthodox, the influence of the *maskilim* (westernized Jews), and the Communist regime. This adds a far greater dimension to the Final Solution, which, given the centuries of tragedy and terror, seems like a natural dénouement. The writing is fluid and detailed. Charts and footnotes cover ghettos, camps, killing fields, Einsatzgruppen (roving SS units), partisans, Jews in hiding, and non-Jews who sheltered them. Chapter sections are arranged chronologically, from invasion to liberation, and all the Soviet regions are discussed: Russia, Byelorussia, the Baltic states, Ukraine, and borderlands such as the Crimea. This book is a supreme achievement and an essential work for all Holocaust libraries.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

Avner, Yehuda. *The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership*. New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2010. 715 p. $29.95. (ISBN 978-1-59264-278-6).

Israeli leadership and public policy within the parliamentary system is directed in large part by the majority political party, which ultimately focuses on its leader, the prime minister. It is the Israeli prime minister who becomes the point of attention when either glory or sanction is laid on the country. The author, Yehuda Avner, is an Englishman who made aliyah in 1947. Only three years later, he entered the Israeli diplomatic service and rose to the level of ambassador. Avner also served as a speech writer and an English-language secretary to a series of prime ministers from Levi Eshkol to Golda Meir. He was a personal advisor to prime ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Menachem Begin. Part one of this massive work centers on the early years and the underground efforts of Begin and the Irgun, which fought the British and opponents within the Zionist movement. Part two deals with the political system under the direction of Eshkol, Meir, and Rabin. Part three is, essentially, a tribute to Begin and his vision and policies. With his personal notes and access to the each of these Israeli leaders, and the finely honed pen that can be expected from a British writer, Avner presents a wealth of substance in a most pleasing manner. Anyone interested in the early years of Israel and the national crises since would do well to examine Avner's memoir and to integrate his narrative with other sources.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Ben-Ur, Aviva. ***Sephardic Jews in America: A Diasporic History.*** **New York: New York University Press, 2009. 319 p. $35.00 (ISBN 978-0-81479-982-6).**

This study of Eastern Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews in the U.S., i.e., Jews who immigrated from the Middle East and North Africa since the late-19th century, is a "history from the margins" of a "minority within a minority" (about four percent of American Jews). The author considers immigration, ethnicity, and identity, using Sephardic Hebrew as a test case of impact. The Sephardic accent was accepted in teaching Hebrew, mostly due to a similar Zionist trend in Palestine, but quite often the Ashkenazi accent remained in religious rituals. Next she examines the relations of these immigrants with three groups, starting with veteran western Sephardim, who regarded themselves as sophisticated wealthy nobility, compared to the poor and primitive newcomers. The second group is the majority Ashkenazim, who had a hard time believing in the existence of Jews who did not know Yiddish and followed different customs; this caused problems in the initial immigration process and with occupation, socialization, and leadership. Last are gentile Hispanics, with whom immigrants had some economic and cultural ties, but often rejected close personal contacts. The research is based on extensive use of English and Ladino media, interviews, and studies, and includes some hundred pages of notes, but no bibliography. It is an important work, showing what a marginal group and its outside relations can teach us.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

Bieringer, Reimund, ed. ***The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature.*** **Leiden: Brill, 2010. 544 p. $241.00 (ISBN 978-9-00417-588-4).**

This volume consists of 16 articles grouped according to five themes. The introduction describes the use of rabbinic literature in Christian scriptures and their earliest commentaries. The section on methodology contains a social profile of the Pharisees and essays on the development of the Talmud, the editing and dating of rabbinic texts, and form criticism. Papers on Jewish law, Sabbath laws, and customs associated with purity and divorce are included in a chapter on halakhah. The Semitic influence on Christian scriptures, a comparison of Adam with Jesus, and parallels between Jewish scriptures and the synoptic gospels are discussed in the section on midrash. The final section contains papers on the targums and Jewish mysticism. There is a lengthy bibliography and indexes of persons and ancient sources. The high price of this volume and its advanced scholarship make this title suitable primarily for academic libraries.

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

Brill, Alan. ***Judaism and Other Religions: Models of Understanding.*** **New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010. 275 p. $85.00 (ISBN 978-0-23062-226-5).**

An important book both in terms of scholarship and vision, *Judaism and Other Religions* surveys Judaism's wide-ranging attitude toward other faiths as well as non-Jews in general. The book, however, is not merely an academic exercise. Brill recognizes the difficulties in many traditional sources (some of them extremely disturbing) that conflict with the ethics and reality of 21st-century Judaism. Rather than sweep these passages under the rug, Brill outlines strategies for Jews who want to remain true to traditional sources while interacting with the other 99.75% of the world. Brill's writing is concise and clear. Despite the hefty price tag, this book belongs in all Jewish libraries.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Cohen, Hillel. ***Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and Israeli Arabs, 1948-1967.*** **Translated by Haim Watzman. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010. 272 p. $27.50 (ISBN 978-0-52025-767-2).**

Hillel Cohen, an expert on the relations between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs, focuses in this study on the relations between the Israeli authorities and Israeli Arabs during the period from the creation of the state of Israel until the Six Day War (1948-1967). The study is based primarily on declassified top-secret documents of the Israeli police and prime minister's office; excluded are the classified files of the General Security Service and of the IDF. The book includes a bibliography, detailed notes, illustrations, and an index. Cohen starts with an examination of the rise of the collaborator class, exploring how the authorities forced their will on individuals by economic and administrative means and how collaborators and their community benefited at times from their actions. Another important topic is the role of the Communist Party, which was the main channel for national expression among Israeli Arabs during this period, despite the authorities' attempts to create pro-government Arab parties. Cohen examines the Arabs' point of view regarding border infiltration, namely, the wish of refugees to return to their villages, work their fields, and unite with their families. He shows that mandatory military service for the Druze population was not easily accepted by all Druze leaders and community members, contrary to the official Israeli narrative. This is a very important study, scholarly yet accessible to all levels of readers. It is full of revelations about the past that can help in understanding future developments between the state and its Arab citizens.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

Crawford, Dorothy Lamb. ***A Windfall of Musicians: Hitler's Émigrés and Exiles in Southern California.*** **New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 318 p. $35.00 (ISBN 978-0-30012-734-8).**

During the years of Hitler's power in Germany, the Nazi obsession with ridding concert music of any potential influence of Jews caused many musicians and composers to flee. Those musicians who made their way to southern California—most, but not all of them Jewish—created a large concentration of extraordinary talent in one place that was to have a remarkable impact on American music. This book is an in-depth look at the unintended consequences of that migration: the long-lasting changes to popular, film, and concert music. With a sharp lens, Dorothy Crawford focuses on the lives, livelihoods, and circumstances that these émigrés were forced to deal with. It is fascinating study of concert life in Los Angeles, the inner workings of studio film music production, and the influence of the studio system on the direction of the American film soundscapes. Primarily concerned with composers, the book also touches on conductors and performers. The list includes some of the biggest names in music such as Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Erich Korngold, and conductor Otto Klemperer. The

lives and works of Ernst Toch, Hans Eisler, Franz Waxman, Eric Zeisl, Ernst Krenek, Eugene Zador and Ingolf Dahl are among the others explored in this dramatic, yet fully researched story. Recommended for academic and public libraries.

Judith S. Pinnolis, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA

Davis, Adam, ed. ***Hearing the Call across Traditions: Readings on Faith and Service.*** **Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2009. 337 p. $29.99 (ISBN 971-1-59473-264-5).**

This is a collection of short readings from different religious and faith traditions, including Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Taoist. It is a co-production of the Project on Civic Reflection, the Illinois Humanities Council and the Interfaith Youth Core. The provocative and interesting readings include sacred texts, poems, stories, fables, essays, sermons, memoirs, and speeches that focus on the connections between service and faith. They are organized thematically into three parts: why do I do service, whom do I serve, and how do I serve. The anthology is aimed at a wide range of readers, including faith-based, learning-based and service-based communities. There is a useful introduction, and three appendices, which describe the Interfaith Youth Core Model, present discussion questions, and group the readings by faith tradition and genre. The book helps readers gain appreciation and respect for different religious and philosophical traditions. It is highly recommended for academic, school, special, and public libraries.

Susan Freiband, Puerto Rico

Dishi, Gad. ***Jacob's Family Dynamics: Climbing the Rungs of the Ladder.*** **New York: Devora Publishing, 2010. 232 p. $18.95 (ISBN 978-1-93606-808-1).**

Gad Dishi, an Orthodox rabbi and teacher as well as a practicing attorney living in Israel, provides fresh insights into the biblical story of Jacob. There is something new and interesting for the reader with little background as well as for the scholar. The author's thorough analysis of the biblical text demonstrates that much of what we have always believed is based on assumptions. He urges the reader to go back to the source and to draw conclusions on that basis. The book is unfortunately marred by grammatical and stylistic errors, but is recommended for synagogue and university libraries.

Susanne M. Batzdorff, Santa Rosa, CA

Fagenblat, Michael. ***A Covenant of Creatures: Levinas's Philosophy of Judaism.*** **Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press (Cultural Memory in the Present), 2010. 281 p. $24.95 (ISBN 978-0-80476-870-2).**

Emanuel Levinas was one of the notable thinkers of the 20th century. While pursuing general philosophy, Levinas continued his Jewish education and Jewish ritual observance. He vigorously denied any connection between his philosophical theories (especially in regard to ethics) and Judaism. In *A Covenant of Creatures*, Michael Fagenblat follows Levinas's life and work in relation to other contemporary philosophers. The author contends that the only way to understand Levinas's ideas is to appreciate the influence of Levinas's Jewish heritage. The book deals in depth with the philosophy of Judaism, ethics, and the Other. Of special relevance to current events is the chapter "The Ambivalence of Fraternity: Ethical Political Theology." Here Fagenblat presents Levinas's attitude towards Zionism, Israel, and the Palestinians. The book includes notes, bibliography, and index. It belongs in academic collections of philosophy and Jewish studies.

Nira Glily Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Fraenkel, Carlos, ed. ***Traditions of Maimonideanism.*** **Leiden: Brill, 2009. 358 p. $178.00 (ISBN 978-9-00417-333-0).**

This collection of fourteen revised papers from a 2004 conference in London deals with Maimonides' thought and influence. Three of the papers are on what are probably the least discussed of his writings, those on medicine. Perhaps the essay of most general interest is "Maimonides' Disputed Legacy," by Menachem Kellner, in which the author persuasively argues that Maimonides was a largely (though not entirely) unsuccessful religious reformer. Perhaps the most unexpected essay is Naftali Loewenthal's "The Image of Maimonides in Habad Hasidism," because one hardly thinks of their conceptual universes as congruent. For comprehensive or specialized collections.

Shmuel Ben-Gad, George Washington University, Washington, DC

Fraser, T. G. ***Chaim Weizmann: The Zionist Dream: The Peace Conferences of 1919-23 and Their Aftermath.*** **London: Haus Publishing (Makers of the Modern World), 2009. 204 p. $19.95 (ISBN 978-1-90579-167-5).**

This marvelously crafted and ingeniously-organized biography of one of the early Zionist leaders and advocates is written in beautiful British English by T.G. Fraser, a respected emeritus historian from the University of Ulster. Fraser's narrative of Weizmann's life and work notes his successes in engaging with European diplomats before, during, and after the Paris Peace Conference, persuading British Prime Minister Arthur Balfour to issue his famous declaration, working for the establishment of Israel, and becoming Hebrew University's first president. Fraser's account also describes the enmity that David Ben-Gurion and Louis Brandeis had for Weitzmann, showing that the Zionist movement was not without considerable internal conflict. Using a collection of anecdotes taken from a variety of archival sources, official documents, and memorials, the author provides the background to the political Zionist enterprise and the basis for its success in ensuring that the Jewish people would have a permanent homeland in ancient Palestine. He also covers what was, perhaps, even more important, the San Remo Conference and resulting treaty cementing Weizmann's legacy. Given its affordable price and depth of information, this book is a real value.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Fudeman, Kirsten A. ***Vernacular Voices: Language and Identity in Medieval French Jewish Communities.*** **Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. 254 p. (ISBN 978-0-81224-250-8).**

Anyone who has learned to read Rashi's commentaries knows there are several hurdles—first, the script and then, the Hebrew. But even advanced students usually throw up their hands when they come to the le'azim, the Old French words in Hebrew letters that Rashi hoped would help his readers understand. Today, it takes an academic expert in Old French with a firm command of Hebrew to make sense of the le'azim. As a professor of me-

dieval French, Kirsten Fudeman has those qualifications. But *Vernacular Voices* aims to do much more than simply translate the Old French words in Hebrew texts into a modern language. Fudeman's primary field is linguistics and here she explores the ways in which medieval French Jews used their languages, French and Hebrew, to construct their identities. The tools of sociolinguistics, in combination with various historical approaches, allow Fudeman to throw fresh light on some well known texts, and to present manuscripts that have remained unpublished or neglected until now. This book, meticulously researched and well written, is vital to anyone interested in the place of medieval Jewry in Europe.

Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Glazer, Miriyam. *Psalms of the Jewish Liturgy: A Guide to Their Beauty, Power, and Meaning*. New York: Aviv Press, 2009. 260 p. $17.05 (ISBN 978-0-916219-41-3).

Glazer writes that her summer vacation of kayaking and sailing near southern California's Channel Islands and hiking the summit of Anacapa recalled for her the Psalms' attesting to the beauty, awesomeness, and wonder of Hashem's creation. Informed by the scholarship of her teacher, David Lieber, Glazer's translation is a lyrical, accessible English rendering of Psalms, attuned to the American experience and ear. Recommended with some caution for non-Hebrew readers of Psalms. Other translations of Tehillim, such as those by Aryeh Kaplan, Artscroll, Judaica Press, may better serve the popular reader.

Dr. David B. Levy, Touro College, Brooklyn, NY

Goldberg, Rick, ed. *Judaism in Biological Perspective: Biblical Lore and Judaic Practices*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers (Studies in Comparative Social Science), 2009. 248 p. $89.00 (ISBN 978-1-59451-563-7).

If you're looking for yet another text on science vs. religion, this is not the book for you! Rick Goldberg, principal of Binah Yitzrit Foundation of Austin, Texas, has brought together respected Judaic scholars and biological psychologists and anthropologists, to analyze, from a Darwinian perspective, why Jews do what we do. Everything from the stories we read in our Chumash to the rituals and halakhah we follow today is regarded through the lens of Darwinian theory. I particularly enjoyed the last essay, Richard Sosis's "Why are Synagogue Services so Long? An Evolutionary Examination of Jewish Ritual Signals." I highly recommend this text for academic collections of Jewish studies, historical biblical studies, and the social sciences, in general. Most synagogue libraries would do best to pass on it. The book includes an extensive bibliography at the end of each chapter and an index.

Rachel M. Minkin, Congregation Kehillat Israel, Lansing Community College, Lansing, MI

Goldsmith, Emanuel S., ed. *Yiddish Literature in America: 1870-2000*. Translated by Barnett Zumoff. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2009. 380 p. $39.50 (ISBN 978-1-60280-133-2).

This volume contains English translations of about 25% of the original 1300-page, oversized, two-volume Yiddish anthology, *Di Yidishe Literature in Amerike, 1870-2000* (1999-2002), with poetry and prose by 81 authors, from the well-known to the somewhat obscure. A short author biography precedes each entry. Many works are available in English for the first time, although there is some overlap with earlier translations of better-known writers. Those familiar with the original poems will notice that major liberties were taken for the sake of rhyme. This collection should inspire interest and scholarship in the field of translation as well as in Yiddish and American literature.

Unfortunately, the lack of indexing diminishes this valuable book's accessibility, particularly for readers who are unfamiliar with Yiddish literature. Entries are arranged by author, without a discernible alphabetic, chronological, or thematic subsequence. There is no index of the authors or their works, no bibliography, and no footnotes. Recommended for libraries specializing in Yiddish and American literature and American Jewry.

Amanda (Miryem-Khaye) Seigel, New York Public Library, New York, NY

Green, Arthur. *Radical Judaism: Rethinking God and Tradition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. 197 p. $26.00 (ISBN 978-0-30015-232-6).

Arthur Green's *Radical Judaism* is just what it says: Judaism returned to its roots. Green is steeped in the classical sources of Jewish and especially kabbalistic tradition, and his writing is informed by the insights of scientists and secular thinkers. For anyone who has followed his career and read his books, little between these covers will come as a surprise. Green is a Jew who wants very much to be traditional but who cannot find himself within the parameters of a traditional Jewish theology. He fully accepts evolution and a kabbalistic concept of God that sees the Almighty more as Process than as personal being, and yet he talks about God in ways that may make us think that he has an ongoing personal dialogue with the Divinity.

What draws me most to Green is his ability to be both radically traditional and radically creative as he approaches the modern world. He characterizes himself as a seeker and directs himself to seekers of all persuasions. That having been said, one can in no way doubt his commitment to being part of the Jewish people. This book is profound and challenging, and yet written in a language that anyone with a basic undergraduate education should be able to understand. I highly recommend it to all libraries frequented by religious seekers. Kudos to author and publisher for producing a book that is in every sense worthy of its topic and audience.

Daniel J. Rettberg, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Cincinnati, OH

Gunneweg, Jan, Annemie Adriaens & Joris Dik, eds. *Holistic Qumran: Trans-disciplinary Research of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Leiden: Brill (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, 87), 2010. 210 p. $132.00. (ISBN 978-9-00418-152-6).

Based on the proceedings of a conference held at Leiden University in 2008, this volume contains fifteen papers on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran community. The editors call the collection "trans-disciplinary research," because most of the contributors are physical and social scientists, and not from the humanities. The goal of the book is to examine the familiar issues using scientific technologies. For example, the age of the scrolls and the Qumran society is investigated by using radiocarbon dating, x-ray and infrared microscopy, synchrotron-based micro-

tomography, etc. Despite the use of techniques that may be unfamiliar to humanists, the articles tend to be readable and accessible. These new approaches shed light on traditional questions and unresolved controversies in Dead Sea Scroll research.

Yoram Bitton, Columbia University, New York, NY

Hackett, Jo Ann. *A Basic Introduction to Biblical Hebrew, with CD*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010. 302 p. $39.95 (ISBN-978-1-59856-028-2).

This Hebrew grammar, accompanied by a CD of vocalization exercises, left me wondering whether its intended audience is Christian seminary students. The author uses technical terms that are unusual in Jewish settings where biblical Hebrew is taught. I question the value of a pronunciation CD made by non-native Hebrew speakers with American accents, and the wisdom of using nonsense syllables as pronunciation exercises. Ms. Hackett has clearly put a lot of thought into this grammar but I do not know of a Jewish setting where her book would belong. A university or public library is a better place for it.

Marion M. Stein, New York, NY

Hary, Benjamin H. *Translating Religion: Linguistic Analysis of Judeo-Arabic Sacred Texts from Egypt*. Leiden: Brill (Études sur le Judaïsme Médiéval, t. 38), 2009. 360 p. $205.00 (ISBN 978-9-00417-382-8).

Benjamin Hary, who specializes in linguistics with special reference to Judeo-Arabic, focuses here on the Egyptian Judeo-Arabic translations of Hebrew and Aramaic sacred texts. This study, which includes notes, diagrams, a rich bibliography, and an index, is based on the Cairo Collection of over a hundred documents in the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in Jerusalem. In this book Hary explores the theoretical issues concerning these translations, known as šarh (pl. šur□h), by examining 18th- and 19th-century manuscripts. His aim is to show what this translation tradition might have been like and to shed light on the linguistic peculiarities of the genre. The study opens with an examination of Jewish languages (referred to as religiolects, that is, language varieties used by a religious community) in general and Judeo-Arabic in particular. Hary then considers the tension between the translator's desire to keep the translation literal yet make it understandable. He describes the mechanisms that Jewish translators in Egypt employed to address this problem, and examines elements of spoken Egyptian Judeo-Arabic that are reflected in these translations. This is a pioneering work of great importance to the study of Judeo-Arabic and religiolects in general. Several parts of this study are accessible to the general reader interested in cultural history and Middle Eastern Judaism, yet the work is highly specialized and will be much more useful to expert linguists, especially to those focusing on medieval Judeo-Arabic.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton NJ

Heilman, Samuel and Menachem Friedman. *The Rebbe: The Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. 343 p. $29.95 (ISBN 978-0-69113-888-6).

This is a very good, accessible, non-hagiographic biography of the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe. The authors supplement written sources with personal interviews (though none with Schneerson himself). They engage in some speculation but mostly do not go beyond where the evidence takes them, even though it leaves the reader wishing we knew more about Schneerson's attitudes before he fled to the U.S. and about the life and character of his wife, who kept a certain distance from Hasidism. While the book does a good job of placing Schneerson—and the hothouse messianism that characterized his later years—in the context of Chabad's history, an overview of Chabad theology would have been helpful. Highly recommended for collections of twentieth-century Jewish history.

Shmuel Ben-Gad, George Washington University, Washington, DC

Hoffman, Lawrence A., ed. *Who by Fire, Who by Water: Un'taneh Tokef*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights (Prayers of Awe), 2010. 253 p. $24.95 (ISBN 978-1-58023-424-5).

"Un'taneh Tokef" is a *piyyut* (Jewish liturgical poem) that forms part of the prayers on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It occupies approximately a page in the standard *mahzor*. My first reaction was surprise when I received a whole book on the piyyut. Even after reading the book, I did not feel that the book-length treatment was appropriate.

The book offers a translation and a commentary. It is followed by some forty short essays by prominent Jewish figures, which are divided into four sections. The first section is the moral side, since the poem is far from politically correct according to today's standards. This is followed by a section about translation of the message of the poem into modern form. The last two sections tackle the poem itself and its ideas.

The editor explains his purpose in opening the floor for discussion, "what to do with a poem whose theology we may have trouble living with…" One of the contributors expresses it even more strongly: "I just cannot believe in a God who decides who will live and who will die." I found the book disappointing. There is far too much duplication of ideas and the material in the book could have been cut into a long article. The discussion format was not appropriate. After reading the book, I am not sure which was of more interest, the treatment of "Unta'neh Tokef" or the picture of non-Orthodox Jewish theology that arises from the discussion.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Ibn Ezra, Abraham. *The Book of the World: A Parallel Hebrew-English Critical Edition of the Two Versions of the Text*. Edited, translated, and annotated by Shlomo Sela. Leiden: Brill (Études sur le Judaïsme Médiéval, t. 39), 2010. 353 p. $147.00 (ISBN 978-9-00417-914-1).

Abraham ibn Ezra has become, with Rashi, one of the two best known Jewish biblical commentators. More than that, he has become the transmitter of a certain type of Sephardic scholarship. For Ibn Ezra, astrology was part of the larger science of astronomy. It was the accepted way of understanding the world around him.

Shlomo Sela, the editor of *The Book of the World*, has provided us with a carefully constructed bilingual edition based on a study of a variety of manuscripts, together with scholarly prefaces, multiple glossaries of terms in Hebrew, Latin, and English, and an index. He has also included shorter medieval astrological

texts, which help to clarify the main text's meaning and larger purpose. For those not schooled in astrology and its history, I suggest studying these shorter selections together with Sela's prefaces before attempting *The Book of the World*.

Learning astrology "at the feet" of a master such as Ibn Ezra is important, first for a better appreciation of the lives and times of medieval Jews. Second, it is important if we wish to understand how many in the past understood the Bible. Third, astrological references appear in all sorts of Jewish texts from a wide variety of periods. For us today astrology may not be part of our lives or Jewish commitments, but that was certainly not the case for our ancestors. I heartily recommend this book for inclusion in all academic and in some congregational libraries.

Daniel J. Rettberg, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Cincinnati, OH

Idel, Moshe. *Old Worlds, New Mirrors: On Jewish Mysticism and Twentieth-Century Thought.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press (Jewish Culture and Contexts Series), 2010. 323 p. $59.95 (ISBN 978-0-8122-4130-3).

Jewish mysticism and the study of kabbalah have become popular universal subjects of exploration during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Jewish thinkers have contributed extensively to the development of European and Western philosophy. Some of them (e.g., Arnaldo Momigliano and Eric Voegelin) emphasized the Jewish experience and others (Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin, Gershom Scholem, Hans Jonas, Emanuel Levinas) wanted to incorporate and assimilate Judaism with eastern and central European cultures.

In *Old Worlds, New Mirrors*, Moshe Idel compares the two approaches in an organized, objective fashion. The book includes extensive lists of abbreviations and sources, notes, and an index. Searching for spiritual guidance in a complex modern world, *Old Worlds, New Mirrors* is a timely book. Laypersons, academicians, Jews, and non-Jews, will find a clearer route for understanding their heritage. A welcome addition to academic, public, Jewish, and synagogue libraries.

Nira Glily Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Kabakov, Miryam, ed. *Keep Your Wives Away from Them: Orthodox Women, Unorthodox Desires: An Anthology.* Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2010. 169 p. $16.95. (ISBN 978-1-55643-879-0).

In the wake of Rabbi Steven Greenberg's *Wrestling with God and Men*, much has been written about gay men who are committed to living Orthodox Jewish lives, but who struggle to find a place in the Orthodox community. In this anthology, lesbians and transsexuals describe their efforts to find a place as well. As in many anthologies, the length, depth, and tone of the entries vary greatly. Two of the essays in this collection are scholarly with extensive citations; one addresses rabbinic responses to female homosexuality, and the other is about gender identity in rabbinic literature. One author remarks ruefully that it is both comforting and insulting to have so little mention of lesbians in the Bible and rabbinic literature.

The bulk of the essays are more personal statements about the women's efforts to reconcile the various parts of their identities and their need for finding community and family acceptance. Some of the essays are narrative while others are written in more poetic free forms. The volume includes a glossary of Jewish terms and an annotated list of Jewish LGBT resources. Recommended.

Sheryl Stahl, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles, CA

Medofff, Rafael, ed. *Rav Chesed: Essays in Honor of Rabbi Dr. Haskel Lookstein.* Jersey City: Ktav, 2009. 2 v. $79.50. (ISBN 978-1-60280-115-8).

A wide-ranging collection of essays honoring communal leader, rabbi, and educator Haskel Lookstein. The list of contributors to these volumes, colleagues and former students of Rabbi Lookstein, reads like a Who's Who of contemporary Jewish educators and thinkers. Topics range from biblical exegesis to American- and world-Jewish history, education, and relations between Orthodox and other Jews. While primarily of interest to modern Orthodox institutions, this collection should not be overlooked by academic libraries.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Mundill, Robin R. *The King's Jews: Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England.* London: Continuum, 2010. 240 p. $34.95 (ISBN 978-1-8425-186-2).

The Jewish community of medieval England existed from some time after the Norman conquest of 1066 until the swift and brutal expulsion in 1290. The history of this community can be recovered partially from a range of artifacts, including passages in rabbinic literature, archeological finds, and thousands of financial records kept by various archives. These artifacts have been combed for information over the past century by antiquarians, rabbis and the occasional serious historian. Their many discussions have been diffuse and often wildly speculative. *The King's Jews* is an attempt to bring all those strands together for a new retelling of the history of medieval Anglo-Jewry. The book deals with all the different aspects of Jewish life in medieval England, from the question of when Jews first landed on English soil to the intricacies of Jewish ritual baths (*mikva'ot*). But the author is at his best unraveling the complicated financial dealings of Jewish businessmen in the Middle Ages. As he explains, some of the financial arrangements described in the starrs and chirographs from those times laid the groundwork for modern-day speculators. Up-to-date on recent scholarship and written in laymen's language, Mundill's book is a good introduction for anyone interested in this little-understood Jewish community.

Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Nathan, Joan. *Quiches, Kugels and Couscous: My Search for Jewish Cooking in France.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. 416 p. $40.00. (ISBN 978-0-307-26759-7).

Joan Nathan's latest book offers a culinary and historical tour of France, spanning nearly 1000 years. Each of the two hundred recipes is accompanied by the story of how it was selected for inclusion. These stories take the reader through country homes and restaurants in Alsace and apartments, bakeries, and restaurants in Paris, and describe twentieth-century Jewish life before WWII, how Jews survived during the War and modern life. The Alsatian recipes make use of goose, duck, and their rendered fats as cooking oils, and because of politics and proximity show the influence of German cooking. Recipes from Paris and other

parts of France demonstrate that French Jews eat almost the same foods as their compatriots with exceptions due to kashrut and the influence of Polish and Eastern European Jews. The influx of Algerian and Moroccan immigrants is leaving its mark on French cuisine and the recipes include both traditional North African recipes and fusion dishes.

Ms. Nathan extensively researched French cookbooks to discover dishes described by rabbis and sages, including Rashi, and to demonstrate that the Jews were so integrated into French society that their recipes are found in classic French cookbooks. Each story is as enjoyable as the recipe it complements. The recipe for Purim doughnuts (beignets de Carnaval) is accompanied by an account of Marcel Proust as a boy reading an Esther play by Racine with his mother and the memories it provided him. This cookbook is as valuable for the lovingly compiled recipes with their clear instructions and symbols identifying them as dairy, meat or pareve as it is for the picture it paints of Jewish culinary France in both large and small strokes.

Sharon Benamou, University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

Newman, Louis E. ***Repentance: The Meaning & Practice of Teshuvah.*** **Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2010. 224 p. $24.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-426-9).**

In *Repentance*, Louis E. Newman, professor of religious studies at Carleton, first discusses the nature of sin and the sinner's need to take responsibility for his actions. In the remainder of the book, he uses Talmudic, midrashic and biblical quotes, plus references from both classical and modern thinkers (Jewish and secular), to analyze what is involved in sincere teshuvah from an ethical, psychological, and spiritual perspective. Short essays support his ideas and make the book easy to read. Some of Newman's points are new and others will be recognizable to anyone who is familiar with the concept of teshuvah. Recommended as a basic text on teshuvah.

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

Prager, Yossi, ed. ***Toward a Renewed Ethic of Jewish Philanthropy.*** **New York: The Michael Scharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press (Orthodox Forum), 2010. 343 p. $35.00 (ISBN 978-1-60280-137-0).**

The essays in the book are based on the proceedings of a conference held under the auspices of Yeshiva University, and represent the thinking of major Orthodox American figures. The key questions are: how much do American Orthodox Jews donate, and to what sort of charities do they contribute—how much of the money is given within the community, and how much to non-Orthodox charities (including the local federations) and to non-denominational charities.

The essays include sociological, halachic, and historical treatments together with personal opinions. I especially enjoyed the opinion piece by Barry Shrage, which left me with the feeling that a community that counts him as one of his members is very fortunate. The essays are of high quality and the book makes a real contribution to the study of contemporary American Jewry.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Rogovoy, Seth. ***Bob Dylan: Prophet, Mystic, Poet.*** **New York: Scribner, 2009. 324 p. $26.00 (ISBN 978-1-41655-915-3).**

The common wisdom about Bob Dylan is that he has always downplayed his Jewish roots. Seth Rogovoy seeks to set the records straight, analyzing both the singer-songwriter's history and lyrics, and connecting them to the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition. At times, Rogovoy seems to be stretching, in particular his attempts to explain away Dylan's Christian period in the early 1980s. Ironically, this book was published just before Bob Dylan's latest album, a collection of classic Christmas songs. This book could also serve well as an introduction to Judaism for Dylan fans. An entertaining read for Dylan fans and neophytes alike, it is recommended for public and synagogue libraries.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Rubenstein, Jeffrey L. ***Stories of the Babylonian Talmud.*** **Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. 316 p. $55.00 (ISBN 978-0-8018-9449-7).**

Everyone likes stories, and a good academic reading of a story should make it even more enjoyable. Jeffrey Rubenstein has already established himself as one of the best readers of Talmudic stories. Besides enriching our understanding with sensitive and exciting readings of many episodes in the Talmud, he has put extensive effort into adapting the tools of Talmudic philology (especially the methods of Professor Shamma Friedman) to the special case of narrative. His main claim, the buttressing of which is one of the aims of *Stories of the Babylonian Talmud*, is that many of the elaborate stories in the Babylonian Talmud were created by the Stammaim. This shadowy group of rabbis, whose very existence is unattested outside of academic hypotheses, is now given credit for redacting wide swaths of the Talmud as we know it. They reworked and redacted the legal traditions of their predecessors, the Amoraim, often changing them beyond recognition. Rubenstein claims they did the same for many of the narrative parts of the Talmud, the aggadah. His close readings and comparative analyses reveal the techniques used by the Stammaim to create their stories. *Stories of the Babylonian Talmud* is an important and readable resource for students of the Talmud at all levels.

Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Ruderman, David B. ***Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History.*** **Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010. 336 p. $35.00 (ISBN 978-0-69114-464-1).**

David Ruderman, professor of Jewish history at the University of Pennsylvania, provides a masterful synthesis of the vast scholarship of the past 30 years "to describe … the larger patterns of cultural formation affecting early modern Jewry as a whole." Ruderman proposes five key elements and devotes a chapter to each. First is mobility, as hundreds of thousands of Jews left Spain and Portugal for the Ottoman Empire and Italy, and later the North Atlantic, while there was a mass migration of Ashkenazi Jews from Germany and France into Eastern Europe. Second is a heightened sense of communal cohesion that revealed the rising power of lay oligarchies, which began to exercise more power over rabbis. The printing press led to a knowledge explosion, a growing interest in Jewish books by Christian readers, an expanded curriculum of Jewish learning, and the entrance of

Jewish elites into universities. For Ruderman, the printing of the *Shulhan Arukh* illustrates how the book became the final word over the oral teachings of the rabbis. This helped undermine rabbinic authority, as did the spread of kabbalah and the heresies of Sabbatai Tzvi and Jacob Frank. Ruderman proposes that Orthodox Judaism was born in opposition to such movements, as rabbis self-consciously began to unite in order to buttress their own authority and clamp down on innovation. Last, there was a blurring of religious identities among groups such as conversos, Sabbateans, converts to Christianity, and Christian Hebraists. This book is an important addition to any university library.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA

Sacks, Jonathan. *Future Tense: Jews, Judaism and Israel in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Schocken, 2009. 292 p. $26.95. (ISBN 978-0-8052-4269-0).

Chief Rabbi of Great Britain Jonathan Sacks is one of the important voices in contemporary Jewish thought. In *Future Tense*, he turns his attention to the present and future of Judaism, in particular Zionism and anti-Semitism. Sacks makes the case that pessimism about the role of Jews in the world is ultimately a self-fulfilling prophecy. He frequently looks to the United States as a model of how the state of Israel should infuse religious themes into the public sphere without intruding on issues of religion and state. Sacks maintains that Jewish identity and culture must be religiously based for it to survive. Recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Schay, Eva Mayer. *Of Exile and Music: A Twentieth Century Life*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2010. 220 p. $22.95 (ISBN 978-1-55753-541-2).

Eva Mayer Schay spent most of her life in exile. In 1933 she and her parents left Hitler's Germany to live on the island of Mallorca, but during the Spanish Civil War they were repatriated to Germany. Her father was arrested and given the choice of a German concentration camp or Mussolini's Italy. Fortunately, a relative soon sponsored their immigration to South Africa. Schay received her initial musical training from other German-Jewish immigrants in Johannesburg and had a promising career as a violinist, but her opposition to apartheid led her to immigrate to England in 1961. She played for the English National Opera until her retirement in 1998.

Schay's story joins the many other accounts of Jews who escaped German persecution and overcame other obstacles to establish themselves in new lands. The information it provides could be helpful to those doing research on musicians who immigrated to South Africa and England. However, the author's tendency to include excessive details about concerts she attended, people she met, and her living accommodations may cause some readers to lose interest before getting to the more compelling concluding chapters. The book may be useful in research libraries with deep collections in the area of twentieth-century Jewish immigrant stories, but it is not recommended for general reading.

Paul A. Miller, American Jewish University, Bel Air, CA

Schiffman, Lawrence H. *Qumran and Jerusalem: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of Judaism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010. 483 p. $35.00 (ISBN 978-0-80284-976-2).

Lawrence Schiffman is one of the first and most prolific Jewish scholars in the field of Qumran studies. One of his major contributions has been in shifting the expectations of modern readers of these ancient scrolls from a Christian perspective to a Jewish one. Some of the first scholars reading the scrolls hoped to find descriptions of Christianity at the time of its inception. Now, the scholarly consensus is that the group or groups that wrote the scrolls were Jewish sects from the Second Temple period. It is also now recognized that in order to understand Qumran fully, one must understand Jewish law as found in the Mishnah and Talmud. Schiffman was one of the first to insist upon this point, and his studies on Qumran law remain essential tools. *Qumran and Jerusalem* collects 25 of his essays, written over the past 20 years. They have been adapted to minimize repetition and to make them more accessible to a lay audience. Many of the chapters present a bird's eye view of the significance of the Scrolls in a Jewish context, while others consider specific aspects of Qumranic law. They provide access for a wide range of readers into the depths of Qumran.

Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Segal, Miryam. *A New Sound in Hebrew Poetry: Poetics, Politics, Accent*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press (Jewish Literature and Culture), 2010. $34.95 (ISBN 978-0-253-35243-9).

The author examines the role of the terminal stress, part of what we think of as Sephardic-accented Hebrew, as opposed to the Ashkenazic penultimate stress that was standard in Europe and America before the state of Israel was born. This is a novel and refreshing examination of Israeli history through language and poetry. By scrutinizing the literary and pedagogical responses to both the use of Hebrew in general, and to the terminal stress accent in particular, Segal reveals nuances of Zionist ideology in Europe as well as in the developing state. She examines the adoption of the terminal stress, its effect on Hebrew poetry, the responses of various pedagogues and poets, and especially the use of the modern Hebrew accent in the poetry of women such as Rahel Bluvshtain, Elisheva Bihovski, Ester Rab, and Malkah Shekhtman. The book contains a number of poems printed in Hebrew with translation and commentary, including gems such as Jabotinsky's translation of Poe's "The Raven." This work is meticulous and thorough, with copious footnotes as well as a 10-page bibliography and an index. This essential book is highly recommended for academic collections, especially those focusing on Hebrew language and literature.

Beth Dwoskin, Proquest, Ann Arbor, MI

Shabi, Rachel. *We Look Like the Enemy: The Hidden Story of Israel's Jews from Arab Lands*. New York: Walker & Company, 2008. 265 p. $25.00 (ISBN 978-0-8027-1572-2).

Shabi, born in Israel to Iraqi-Israeli parents, is an English journalist who returned to Israel as an adult. She investigates the disparity in social class and economic opportunity between Ashkenazi or European and Mizrahi or Middle Eastern Jews. She argues that the Ashkenazi Jews who started the Zionist

movement and dreamed of creating a Jewish homeland only considered a European Jewish population. After the creation of Israel in 1948, Jews from Arab countries began to emigrate en masse. The Ashkenazim who governed Israel viewed the "Arab Jews" with suspicion and treated them as second class citizens.

The chapters focus on circumstances in which the Mizrahim received different treatment from Ashkenazim. These include their settlement in development towns rather in than large cities such as Tel Aviv and Haifa, the educational system in those towns, revisionist histories of the immigration of these populations, and their stereotyping in textbooks. Mizrahim were denigrated for their pronunciation of Hebrew, for the prevalence of Arabic spoken within their communities. and for their music, which retained the sounds from their native countries. The fact that the Mizrahim, as Arab Jews, looked and sounded like Arabs was in conflict with the vision of the ruling class of Israel as a European rather than Middle Eastern country.

Shabi represents a little-heard viewpoint in the field of Israeli history. Each chapter is focused and well researched, and presents her impressions and observations along with the voices of those she interviewed.

Sharon Benamou, University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

Shachar, Nathan. *The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics from the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009.* Brighton, Portland, Toronto: Sussex Academic Press, 2010. 206 p. $34.95 (ISBN-978-1-84519-345-4).

This brief historical account of the Gaza Strip will provide more than enough background for readers, especially those not particularly familiar with Middle East politics, to understand the current conflict. The author, a Buenos Aires-based journalist for a Swedish newspaper, begins his narrative with the period of the Egyptians, ancient Hebrews, and Philistines, progressing through the Greeks, Persians and Romans. The early Christians, the Arabs and the Crusaders are followed by succeeding invasions by the Tartars, Mongols, and the Mamluks. Modern history of the area is dated from the period of the Ottoman Turks, who were removed by the British after World War I. All this leads up to the contemporary period and the establishment of Israel and its continued difficulties with the Palestinians and the Egyptians, both of whom will share leadership of the Strip. Several chapters deal with Israeli-Palestinian relations, primarily the Palestinian attacks on Israeli citizens. This is an exemplary source on the Gaza Srip that can be read in a single sitting to get up to speed in understanding its current control by Hamas and its terrorist implications.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Sperber, Daniel. *On Changes in Jewish Liturgy: Options and Limitations.* Jerusalem, New York: Urim Publications, 2010. 221 p. $25.95 (ISBN 978-965-524-040-5).

Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber is an expert on Jewish customs and liturgy, serves as a congregational rabbi in Israel. This book is based on a lecture delivered at a congress of The Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance in 2007. In the early 20th century, ultra-Orthodox men were educated in hederim and yeshivot, but women attended secular schools. In 1917, Beth Yaakov was set up to offer a Jewish education for girls. Today, the modern Orthodox have gone even further and set up parallel institutions to yeshivot for women. A natural result is that highly educated Orthodox Jewish women may find it hard to accept certain parts of the liturgy.

The author asked a "simple" question. Can the liturgy be changed to enhance the experience of prayer for women, while retaining the Orthodox framework? Most of the book is devoted to demonstrating that liturgy is far from static. Sperber does not find it difficult to prove his point, and the discussion is fascinating. The author concludes with some examples of changes to the liturgy that have been introduced for women. His intention is not to recommend changes, but to demonstrate that the liturgy can be changed and to emphasize what is consonant with halakhah and what is not. A very stimulating book!

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Tawil, Hayim, and Bernard Schneider. *Crown of Aleppo: The Mystery of the Oldest Hebrew Bible Codex.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2010. $45.00 (ISBN 978-0-8276-0895-5).

Scholars and Bible geeks everywhere have long been enamored with the Aleppo Codex, or Keter, the oldest Hebrew Bible in existence. Its thousand-year journey from Israel to Cairo to Syria and return to Israel is a dramatic one. *Crown of Aleppo* makes the story of the Keter a fascinating tale for any reader. Tawil and Schneider provide a rich historical context for the Codex, detailing the controversies and highlighting the features that make it so important. Copious photographs and maps help to make this story come alive. Recommended for all libraries.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Telushkin, Joseph. *Hillel: If Not Now, When?* New York: Random House (Jewish Encounters), 2010. 246 p. $24.00 (ISBN 978-0-8052-4281-2).

Hillel: If Not Now, When? is a biography of the great Talmudic sage and leader, Rabbi Hillel. As Rabbi Telushkin states in his introduction, we do not have much biographical information about Hillel and his family; who Rabbi Hillel was and what he believed must be deduced from the many stories about him in the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds. A large section of the book is devoted to the religious differences between Rabbi Hillel's academy, Beit Hillel (The House of Hillel), and those of his opposite, Beit Shamai. The book includes notes, a glossary, three appendices, and a bibliography. Although it is a scholarly book, it is written in a style that any general reader can understand and enjoy. Recommended for all libraries.

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

Valler, Shulamit. *Massekhet Sukkah: Text, Translation & Commentary.* Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck (A Feminist Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud), 2009. 224 p. $157.50 (ISBN 978-3-16150-121-0).

This commentary is part of an important series for understanding the attitude of the rabbis toward women and gender philosophy in rabbinic literature. Professor Valler, head of the Department of Jewish Studies at Haifa University, has written extensively on women's issues in the rabbinic period. In this book,

she distinguishes between sources from the Tannaic period and the Amoraic period and sources that originate from Palestine and Babylonia.

The first part of the book is a feminist commentary on the Mishnah and the second is on the Talmud. The commentary includes an intensive study of the sources on women and gender. Some of the topics in the tractate that Vellar examines, are directly connected to Sukkot, such as women's obligation to dwell in the Sukkah and to take the arba minim (the four species), and women in the simhat bet ha-shoevah (the water drawing ceremony). Other topics include the daughter of Abraham and hakhnasat kallah (the bridal canopy). This readable book, by a great Talmudic scholar, is important for understanding gender in rabbinic literature.

Yoram Bitton, Columbia University, New York, NY

Weisberg, Dvora E. *Levirate Marriage and the Family in Ancient Judaism*. Waltham MA: Brandeis University Press, 2009. 276 p. $50.00 (ISBN 978-1-58465-781-10).

From Menachem Elon's classic article on levirate marriage in the Encyclopedia Judaica (1971) to Adele Berlin's recent paper, "Legal fiction: Levirate cum land redemption in Ruth" (Journal of Ancient Judaism, 2010), Jewish feminists and cultural historians have examined the meaning of marriage and family in classical Judaism, as revealed in the rabbinic treatment of the biblical law of levirate marriage. Weisberg, on the faculty at HUC-JIR, uses levirate marriage as a lens through which to examine the status of women and attitudes towards marriage, sexuality, and reproduction in the early Jewish periods. The topic becomes a focal point for an analysis of the family unit, extended family, and gender roles within the evolving institution of marriage. Weisberg shows that the rabbis overturned the Bible's preference for levirate marriage, favoring the needs of the widow over the claims of her deceased husband's brother. She also suggests rabbinic preferences for the nuclear over the extended family social unit.

This is a well written, scholarly work that keeps academic jargon to a minimum. The book draws on rabbinic sources but it also incorporates insights from comparative anthropologists and sociologists. It is recommended for all academic and Jewish libraries.

Dr. David B. Levy, Touro College, Brooklyn, NY

Wengeroff, Pauline. *Memoirs of a Grandmother: Scenes from the Cultural History of the Jews of Russia in the Nineteenth Century, Volume One*. Translated with an introduction, notes and commentary by Shulamit S. Magnus. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture), 2010. 364 p. $55.00 (ISBN 978-0-8047-6879-5).

Born in 1833 to a wealthy Jewish family in Russia, Wengeroff wrote her memoirs toward the end of the 19th century. In lavish detail she describes the life and times of the Jewish upper-middle-class family, with particularly loving, but at times critical attention to her own family dynamics. The observances of the holidays, especially the high holy days, Passover, and Purim are described. The author reflects upon the status of women and the changing mores with the advent of Haskalah (the Enlightenment) and its impact on parents and children in her family. This edition is unabridged and enhanced by more than one hundred pages of notes and a lengthy bibliography. A second volume is in preparation. Highly recommended as a scholarly but also a highly readable account by an articulate, intelligent woman.

Susanne M. Batzdorff, Santa Rosa, CA

SOUND RECORDINGS

Fields, Irving. *More Bagels & Bongos*. New York: Roman Midnight Music, 2009. 1 compact disc. $18.00.

In 1960, pianist Irving Fields and his trio (bass, drums and bongos) released their second album of Latin/Jewish fusion. Like the earlier *Bagels & Bongos*, this second LP offered instrumental versions of Yiddish folksongs played in the upbeat Latin style that was sweeping the nation. From "Mama's Mambo" (Oi Mamma Bin Ich Farliebt) to the "Hora Merengue," Fields combined the two styles with such success that he later went on to create a series of "Bongos" albums fusing the Latin style with various other ethnic musical traditions. This remastered 2009 CD of *More Bagels & Bongos* was reissued under the "creative advisement" of 94-year-old Fields. While it does have that "old recording" sound, the twelve tracks make delightful easy listening with a cocktailparty ambience. Fans of Yiddish music will recognize old favorites despite their new format, while the uninitiated will simply enjoy the quick rhythms and plaintive melodies. Track titles are listed in English with transliterated Yiddish names where appropriate. New cover art depicting Irving holding a giant bagel is entertaining, but lacks the retro charm of the original cover. Along with the CD reissue of *Bagels & Bongos* (Reboot Stereophonic, 2005), this album will appeal both to music historians and to the general listening public. For a modern update along the same lines, try the Klezmer Company Orchestra's modern Jewish/Latin fusion album *Beyond the Tribes* (KCO, 2008).

Heidi Estrin, Congregation B'nai Israel of Boca Raton, FL

***Judeo-Caribbean Currents: Music of the Mikvé Israel-Emanuel Synagogue in Curaçao*. Jerusalem: The Center for Research on Dutch Jewry; Jewish Music Research Centre; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2009. 1 compact disc. $19.99.**

This CD is part of the series, Anthology of Music Traditions in Israel. It consists of 28 cuts of vocal music that was discovered in the archives of Mikvé Israel-Emanuel in Curaçao, the oldest synagogue in the Western Hemisphere. The singer, Gideon Zelermyer, who assisted in sorting and selecting the material for the CD, has a light, nimble, lovely voice, and the piano accompaniment by Raymond Goldstein is restrained but sprightly. The accompanying booklet by Edwin Seroussi—40 pages in English, with a corresponding section in Hebrew—explains that in the nineteenth century, the influence of Reform Judaism caused a schism at Mikvé Israel, and lead to the establishment of a new, Reform synagogue, Emanuel, with its own Lewandowski- and Sulzer-influenced melodies. In the twentieth century, as the Curaçao Jewish community shrank, the two synagogues merged, along with their music. Almost all the cuts are from the liturgy, and aside from the Sephardic standard, "Bendigamos," they are suggestive of the music of nineteenth-century central European Reform Judaism and of western art music in general. This CD

belongs in academic music collections or comprehensive collections of historical Jewish music.

Beth Dwoskin, Proquest, Ann Arbor, MI

Klezmer Klub. *Whitechapel/Vaytshepl, Mayn Vaytshepl.* Klub Records, 2009. 1 compact disc. $16.00.

This album by the longtime British group, Klezmer Klub, is distinguished by fascinating and obscure gems of London Yiddish history. On the title track "Whitechapel (Vaytshepl, mayn vaytshepl)," Chaim Tauber's historical lyrics transform the tune "Dos Keshenever Shtikele" into a lively and poignant description of the city's Eastern European Jewish neighborhood, interspersed with a brief reggae-infused, English description of the area today. Rhymes and songs from street life such as "My home in Morgan Street," "Old Solomon Levy," and "Victoria Park" are delightfully colorful and humorous, with great sing-along choruses. "Di nayem Hashivenyu Nazad" aptly employs English to complement the Yiddish text in describing the struggles of a recent immigrant. "Dray Schvester" is Morris Winchevsky's tragic tale of impoverished sisters in Leicester Square. The music is played in appropriately danceable and singable tempos, highlighting the considerable talents of each band member, with beautiful arrangements including backup vocals, harmonies and lively street sounds. The instrumental tunes are mostly traditional selections, featuring Julia Doyle, Gabriel Ellenberg, Keith Moore, Jon Petter, and guest artist Guy Schalom. Singer Vivi Lachs uses her refreshingly clear and natural voice in a Polish-Yiddish dialect to effectively interpret the varied emotions of these songs. The album is a great choice for newcomers to klezmer and Yiddish song and for seasoned enthusiasts. Recommended for library collections of Yiddish song, klezmer, and British Jewish music.

Amanda (Miryem-Khaye) Seigel, New York Public Library, New York, NY

Walker, Mordechai, Shlomo Walker and Pesach Walker. *Open Eyes*. Pey Dalid, 2009. Dancing Yid Productions, 2009. 1 compact disc. $15.00.

Taking their name from the Hebrew number for Psalm 84 ("For the Conductor, upon the Gittit"), three brothers front a group that plays an eclectic mix of rock, reggae, and American folk. Shlomo Carlebach and Rebbe Nachman of Breslov are both strong influences, with repetition of single verses from Scripture and the use of music "in our path to come close to God." This makes for a unique fusion of music and lyrics. "Spiritual War" combines a reggae beat with the refrain of "in this war, we are the children," a metaphor that doesn't quite make sense. "Song of Freedom" starts with a klezmer feel, but quickly transitions to a Latin-sounding, brassy, and danceable piece. Another reggae song, "Open Eyes," is to be included on a Haiti Benefit CD. "I Believe in Miracles" starts with a spoken declaration, then repeats the title. These songs are not overtly Jewish. "Asher Bara," "Pada (He redeemed in peace)," and "Hodu (Give Thanks)" reflect the Carlebach/Breslov influence, with repeating words and musical phrases, as well as long solos. "B'shaym Hashem" is taken from the liturgy recited before retiring at night. Not quite a lullaby, the acoustic, folksy sound is a mellow one for quiet time. "Unite," featuring a rap by Y-Love, speaks of the Messiah and the return to Zion. Pey Dalid's is far from typical Jewish music. Not quite sing-a-long, not quite "listening music," it may take a few plays to appreciate the vibe.

Kathe Pinchuck, MTS, Clifton, NJ

VIDEOS

Böhm, Gabriela. *The Longing: The Forgotten Jews of South America*. DVD. 75 min. New York: Filmakers Library, 2007. Sale (DVD) $295; (VHS) $295; classroom rental (VHS) $85.

This award-winning documentary presents the struggles of a group of people in South America who claim to be the descendants of Jews forcibly converted to Catholicism by the Spanish Inquisition. Wishing to return to their ancestral religion, they are confronted with isolation and a lack of support from the local Jewish community. Located in Ecuador and Colombia, a group of five people—a doctor and his wife, a microbiologist, and a mother and daughter—decide to contact and request help from a Brazilian-American rabbi from Kansas City, Missouri.

After spending two years learning about Judaism, the group is ready to go ahead with the conversion. As part of the beth din process, the rabbi requires the collaboration of two members of the Jewish community; his request is met with strong resistance, but after some delays, a rabbinical court is formed. Following the conversion procedures, including the mikveh immersion and a personal interview, the five are finally accepted into the Jewish nation. But as the author reflects, the lives of these new converts continue in limbo, as they try to live as Jews without the full support or true acceptance of the community. An excellent film that could be used for group discussions at synagogues and community centers. Recommended for all academic libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

Nicolas Wadimoff and Clothilde Warin. *Israel-Palestine, Two Peoples, Two States for One Peace…* DVD, VHS. 52 min. New York: Filmakers Library, 2009. Sale (DVD) $295; (VHS) $295; classroom rental (VHS) $85.00.

This is a documentary of what has become known as "The Geneva Initiative" or "The Geneva Accord," an unofficial attempt to reach a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict by two sets of Israeli and Palestinian negotiators. The Israeli team was headed by Dr. Yossi Beilin, a former Israeli minister and politician, while the Palestinian delegation was led by Yasser Abed Rabbo, a former Palestinian Authority minister. The process takes its name from the initial venue. Talks employing Swiss mediators follow in London and Ramallah, with topics including territory, security, prisoners, Jerusalem, and refugees. The talks go on for two years and result in a signed agreement in December 2003, but neither side is completely satisfied. The production sets out "Palestine" as the "twice promised land" and concludes with an overly long scene of the Israeli security wall as an ominous implied message. On a positive note, it takes the viewer inside real diplomatic negotiations. While the sentiments were not necessarily official, they did reflect the dynamics of "a clash of narratives."

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Books Received

These titles will not be reviewed in the AJL Newsletter *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 are donated to libraries.*

Amirav, Moshe. Jerusalem *Syndrome: The Palestinian-Israeli Battle for the Holy City*. Brighton: Sussex University Press, 2009.

Arkel, Dik van. *The Drawing of the Mark of Cain: A Socio-Historical Analysis of the Growth of Anti-Jewish Stereotypes*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009.

Berkovits, Eliezer. *Not in Heaven: The Nature and Function of Jewish Law*. New York: Shalem Press, 2010.

Berman, Rochel U. *Oceans Apart: A Guide to Maintaining Family Ties at a Distance*. Jersey City: KTAV, 2010.

Braham, Randolph L. & Julia Bock. *The Holocaust in Hungary: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography, 2000-2007*. New York: Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, 2008.

Brinker, Nancy G., with Joni Rodgers. *Promise Me: How a Sister's Love Launched the Global Movement to End Breast Cancer*. New York: Crown Archetype, 2010.

Century, Douglas. *Barney Ross: The Life of a Jewish Fighter*. New York: Nextbook, 2009.

Clorfene, Chaim, and Yakov Rogalsky. *The Path of the Righteous Gentile: an Introduction to the Seven Laws of Noah*. Southfield, Mich.: Targum Press, 1987.

Cogan, Mordechai. *The Raging Torrent: Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Ancient Israel*. Jerusalem: Carta, 2008.

Daghani, Arnold. Arnold *Daghani's Memories of Mikhailowka: The Illustrated Diary of a Slave Labour Camp Survivor*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2009.

David, Esther. *Shalom India Housing Society*. New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2009.

De Lange, Nicholas. *An Introduction to Judaism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Eleff, Zev. *Living From Convention to Convention: A History of the NCSY, 1954-1980*. Jersey City: Ktav, 2009.

Goffman, Ethan, and Daniel Morris, eds. *The New York Public Intellectuals and Beyond: Exploring Liberal Humanism, Jewish Identity and the American Protest Tradition*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2009.

Goldman, Shalom. *Zeal for Zion: Christians, Jews & the Idea of the Promised Land*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Hagbi, Yaniv. *Language, Absence, Play: Judaism and Superstructuralism in the Poetics on S.Y. Agnon*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009.

Haley, Ilana. *The Rocky Hill: Stories and Poems*. [S.l.]: Xlibris, 2010.

Lebrecht, Norman. *The Game of Opposites: A Novel*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009.

Lederer, Ilene Winn. *Between Heaven & Earth: An Illuminated Torah Commentary*. San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2009.

Lowenstein, Steven Stark. *First Father: Abraham: The Psychology and Culture of a Spiritual Revolutionary*. Seattle: Libertary Editions, 2010, c1994.

Lustbader, Eric van. *Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Deception*. New York Vision, 2010.

Lustbader, Eric van. *Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Objective*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2010.

McNally, Brendan. *Germania*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008.

Miriam, Rivka. *These Mountains: Selected Poems of Rivka Miraim*. New Milford, Conn.: Toby Press, 2009.

Oliner, Samuel, and Kathleen Lee. *Who Shall Live: The Wilhelm Bachner Story*. Chicago: Academy Chicago Press, 1996.

Reisman, Arnold. *An Ambassador and a Mensch: The Story of a Turkish Diplomat in Vichy France*. [S.l.: s.n.], 2010.

Reisman, Arnold. *Shoah: Turkey, the US and the UK*. [S.l.]: Booksurge, 2009.

Rodness, Larry. *Today I Am a Man*. Honolulu: Savant Books, 2009.

Rosner, Elizabeth. *Blue Nude*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2006.

Sidur Sha'ar Zahav. San Francisco: Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, 2009.

Smith, Mark S. *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 2010, c2008.

Taubes, Jacob. *Occidental Eschatology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Tilley, Virginia. *The One-State Solution: A Breakthrough for Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Deadlock*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

Weinrib, Laura M., ed. *Nitzotz: The Spark of Resistance in Kovno Ghetto & Dachau-Kaufering Concentration Camp*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009.

Zollo, Burt. *Prisoners: A Jewish Guard in a Nazi POW Camp*. Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2003.

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Call for Papers, 2011 Convention, Montréal, Québec

The Association of Jewish Libraries will hold its 46th Annual Convention at the Marriott Chateau Champlain in Montreal, Quebec, June 19-22, 2011. Librarians, archivists, scholars, educators, authors and others will meet to share their interest in Judaica librarianship and related topics.

AJL is soliciting proposals for papers and presentations on aspects of Judaica librarianship as it pertains to libraries, archives, museums, schools, synagogues and related institutions. Past topics have included literature and other resources, collection management, programming, reader advisory services, special and rare collections, cataloging and classification, digital and electronic resources, technology and local Jewish history. A special focus this year will be the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Montreal Jewish community.

Submissions should include the presenter's name, address, affiliation, telephone and email contacts; brief biography; title of proposed presentation; summary of proposal; and specific technology or equipment requirements, if any. All submissions must be received by December 31, 2010. Please submit proposals by e-mail to ajlconvention@gmail.com or mail to Marsha Lustigman, Bialik Library, 6500 Kildare Rd., Cote St. Luc, QC, Canada, H4W 3B8. Proposals will be reviewed by the Program Planning Committee, which is composed of national and local AJL members. Notification will be made in January, 2011.

Dear Readers,

During the last week of October, the AJL Council voted on a proposal to change the publication format of the newsletter from print to digital and to split the news and the reviews into two separate (electronic) publications.

Both changes were approved. The main reason for the change is obviously financial. By moving to digital, we will save the print and mailing costs. In addition, publishing online will allow for easy indexing and better "searchability." Once the final product is in electronic form, and indexed appropriately by public search engines while residing on the AJL website, it will be much more accessible and "findable." Publishing online will increase our professional visibility and will allow for a live environment with direct links to bibliographic records of the books reviewed, to other useful resources, or from ads to the advertisers' external content. Another important factor is the immediacy with which the information will be posted, delivered, and presented to the reader. The separation of the newsletter into two publications will allow for better use and re-purposing of the content; it will also allow us more flexibility in posting current information in a timely manner.

Understandably, some of you are or will be reluctant to embrace this change. Some readers are used to getting a tangible, printed publication in the mail and prefer to read it as such. Others might think that from a professional standpoint, an electronic publication is lesser than a printed one. I understand that this decision might be difficult for some of us. I would like to make it clear that we will make sure that those few readers who do not have Internet access will still receive a copy of the newsletter.

While I'm writing this, the technicalities are still under discussion. Our goal is to send out the first electronic newsletter in January or February 2011. I would like to see the digital version published six times a year with more book reviews and some new sections; some ideas that were brought up include reviewing books and audiovisual materials that are originally in Hebrew. We might also publish some reviews in Hebrew, as a way to engage our Israeli colleagues in our work.

I encourage you to send me your comments and suggestions by e-mail at kolodney@austin.utexas.edu or to the mail address above.

Sincerely,

Uri Kolodney
General Editor