

Judaic Treasures at the University of Toronto

BARRY DOV WALFISH, JUDAICA SPECIALIST, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARIES

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With all the attention the Dead Sea Scrolls are getting at the Royal Ontario Museum these days, it may be an appropriate time to remind the Jewish community of the wonders that are with us every day, specifically the treasures that sit in their midst at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. In pride of place is the Friedberg Collection.

In the late 1990s, Albert Friedberg and his wife, Nancy, donated an extraordinary collection of rare books and manuscripts

to the Fisher Library, and while there was a fair bit of publicity about it at the time, this collection remains one of Toronto's best kept secrets. Manuscripts are the preservers of the intellectual heritage of the Middle Ages, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Despite the ravages of time, and the extremely precarious position of the Jews in many medieval communities, some 80,000 Hebrew



The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library is home to the University of Toronto's special collections.

manuscripts have survived. The major Hebrew manuscript collections in the world are in Israel (at the National Library), Europe (at Oxford University, the British Library, the Vatican Library, Parma, Italy, and many other places), and the United States (at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, the Library of Congress, and Yeshiva University). Until the Friedbergs' donation, there were no significant collections in Canada, so they quite literally put us on the map in this regard. While the collection is small (about 40 manuscripts, 40 genizah fragments and about 240 printed books), it is of outstanding quality.

From the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls until the next literary witnesses to have survived, there is a gap of some 800 years, until the early 10th century. We are fortunate to have some of these early witnesses in our collection.

One of these is a 10th-century copy of Halachot Pesukot by Yehudai Gaon, an important early halachic compendium, in extraordinary condition. We also have a copy of a Pentateuch written in very large letters in several hands, the earliest sections of which date from the late 10th century. Of the other biblical manuscripts, the most significant is a complete Bible from Toledo, Spain, dated 1307, written by Joseph ibn Merwas, a scribe renowned for his calligraphic skills and scribal accuracy. The latter two items are part of the ROM's Dead Sea Scrolls exhibition.

The crowning jewel of the Friedberg collection is a manuscript of the Zohar, the major work of Jewish mysticism. Attributed by tradition to the tanna Simeon bar Yohai of the second century, modern scholarship has determined that it's the work of Moses de León and his circle from the late 13th century. Despite its preeminence, very few manuscripts of this work exist.

The Friedberg collection includes a copy of the Zohar that has been dated to the beginning of the 15th century and contains the majority of the text of this mystical masterpiece. There exist only two manuscripts earlier than this one, and both are fragmentary. This manuscript is the fullest extant and is indispensable for scholars editing this text and studying the history of its transmission.

But this is not all. An inscription on the first page of this text by a certain Nathan ben Judah Noah states that Elijah the Prophet instructed Amira to study it day and night. Amira is the epithet used to refer to Shabtai Zvi, the mystical messianic pretender of the 17th century. It goes on to say that Amira passed it on to his student Abraham Michael Cardoso, who, on his deathbed bequeathed it to the author of the colophon, the doctor Nathan Noah. This is certainly an extraordinary testimony, one that locates this volume at the centre of one of the most tempestuous periods of Jewish history and in the hands of one of Judaism's most controversial figures.

Also of great historical significance is a commemorative album presented to Montefiore, the prominent Jewish leader and philanthropist, on his 100th



The decorative cover of a commemorative album presented to Moses Montefiore in 1884.

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President's Message

SUSAN DUBIN

This week we read B'reshit in synagogue, and, indeed, it does feel as if we are at the start of a new cycle. Although we have faced many challenges in our libraries in the past year, we are hoping that this new year will be one of peace and growth and that the hard times will fade away.

In a recent post on a library electronic list, Stephen Krashen cited the various studies that have been conducted that show the importance of libraries to education. He wrote, "Research shows that children become better readers by doing more self-selected reading (Krashen, 2004), and the library is a major source of books for children. The powerful role of the library has been confirmed in studies showing that library quality (number of books available or books per student) is related to reading achievement at the state level (Lance, 1994), national level (McQuillan, 1998), and international level (Elley, 1992; Krashen, Lee and McQuillan, 2008), even when researchers control for the effects of poverty."

It is the responsibility of each of us to become a library advocate. At the 2008 convention in Cleveland, AJL presented a powerful CEU class on library advocacy given by Joanne Roukens. Her presentation is available online at www.hrlc.org/valuing_libs/vl-pwrpt-pt.2.ppt. ALA also has some excellent material to help with library advocacy.

Speaking of presentations, many of the sessions given at the convention are available on the AJL Web site on the Proceedings and Podcast pages. Thanks to Nancy Sack for mounting them on the Web site, to Heidi Estrin for preparing the podcasts, and to Leah Moskovits for compiling and formatting the presentation materials. Do take time to check them out.

The association is starting to move ahead with some more of the initiatives proposed at the convention. We will be hiring a consultant to re-vamp our Web site. The company we hire will work with our Technology Committee to make AJL's web presence even more useful to our membership and to provide our knowledge of Judaic resources to the wider public.

On November 5, AJL sponsored a workshop in Israel, thanks to the work of Ya'akov Aronson. Sessions were recorded and will be available as podcasts in the near future. See p. 28 for more information. This workshop heralded AJL's new beginning of cooperation and sharing with our fellow librarians in Israel. We are hoping to re-start an AJL chapter there.

Speaking of AJL chapters, we have a new co-chair of the Chapter Relations Committee. Joining Irene Seff this year is Enid Sperber. Enid is the library director at Temple Israel of Hollywood. She is an active AJL member who comes to conventions regularly.

Please join us in building our organization. Volunteer to serve on a committee. Think about becoming a member of our council. Active participation in a professional organization not only gives you recognition, it also gives your library recognition. Library boards and funders like that!

AJL Scholarship Fund

ELLEN SHARE

The great rabbi and sage Maimonides listed eight levels of charity. The highest level is to prepare a person for gainful employment. You have the unique opportunity to encourage a library student and, at the same time, promote Judaica librarianship by making donations to the AJL Scholarship Fund.

The AJL Scholarship Fund awards \$1,000 cash scholarships to talented library science students with an interest in pursuing a career in Judaica librarianship. For each donation to the fund, an acknowledgment card is sent to the appropriate person. It is a very meaningful way to recognize simchas, remember loved ones, and send wishes for a speedy recovery. Your donation will always be appreciated! Send your contributions now! Please remember to include the addresses of the family of those honored or remembered so that we can send notifications.

Please complete the form below and send it, along with your donation, to Sarah M. Barnard, Serials Librarian, Hebrew Union College-Klau Library, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220. Recent donors to the Scholarship Fund are from:

- Zachary Baker
- Dr. Leonard Gold

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Doris Orenstein Fund

YELENA LUCKERT

Recent donations to the fund are:

- In memory of Ilene Wieselthier's mother, Aleeza, by the AJL Capital Area Chapter
- In memory of Irving Korbkin, Gail Shirazi's father, by the AJL Capital Area Chapter
- In memory of Irving Korbkin, Gail Shirazi's father, by Amalia Warshenbrot
- In honor of Heidi Lerner, by Roger S. Kohn
- In honor of Heather Lenson, by Roger S. Kohn
- In honor of Susan and Marc Dubin's 40th wedding anniversary, by Ronda and Fred Rose
- In honor of Susan and Marc Dubin on the occasion of renewing their wedding vows, by Ellen Gilbert Cole.
- By Leo (Lee) Wixman, who donated generously out of the goodness of his heart

Delights Await You in July

TOBY HARRIS

Recently, a small group from the local Seattle conference planning committee toured the Fairmont Olympic Hotel, site of the 45th annual conference next summer. What an incredible place it is! Here's what awaits you: old Seattle elegant decor, a lovely Spanish ballroom where we'll have our meals; spacious, gracious exhibit space; hospitality and charm in every room!

The hotel is located in downtown Seattle, right across the street from the Seattle Public Library, designed by world famous Dutch architect, Rem Koolhaas. Of course, you'll be able to tour this contemporary, high-tech 2004 creation and might even attend a hands-on social technology session in the computer lab, the Boeing Technology Training Center.

In addition to the many opportunities for professional growth, you might also experience a little Sephardic culture. Sephardic Jews are 14% of the Jewish population in Seattle, the third largest in the United States.

Book Lust series author, NPR personality, and shushing action figure librarian Nancy Pearl, will our keynote speaker. Start checking the fares and making plans for Seattle in the summer! And if you're thinking of submitting a session proposal, now's the time—by December 1. Check out the call for papers on page 19 for details.

Happy Jewish Book Month

Many thanks go to the Greater Cleveland Chapter of AJL for its annual list of books in honor of Jewish Book Month. The compilation is an invaluable service to us all. Be sure to check it out on the AJL home page., www.jewishlibraries.org

Please send the newsletter (llibylib@aol.com) details of unusual book month celebrations sponsored by your library.

Publishing News

A reprint of *The House on the Roof: A Sukkot Story*, written by David A. Adler and illustrated by Marilyn Hirsh, is available in paperback from Holiday House. The price is \$7.95 and the ISBN is 978-0-8234-2232-6.

A new edition of *A Chanukah Story for Night Number Three*, by Dina Rosenfeld, with new illustrations by Vasilisa and Vitaliy Romanenko, has been published by Hachai. The price is \$12.95 and the ISBN is 978-1-92962-854-4.

UT's Judaica Treasures

Continued from page 1

birthday in 1884 by the Hovevei Zion societies of eastern Europe. It includes 1,560 signatures of rabbis and dignitaries of Jewish communities from all over eastern Europe, as well as Montefiore's signature. It's written on vellum and sumptuously decorated and hand bound by a binder in Warsaw, who added his own dedication in three languages.

The Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) Society was a precursor to the Zionist movement, and many of its members later became prominent leaders within that movement. This album provides important historical data for the history of this organization, as well as for the makeup of the leadership of the major Jewish communities in eastern Europe. A few other highlights worth mentioning are an elegant copy of the *Sefer Mordechai*, the important Ashkenazi halachic compendium by the 13th-century's Rabbi Mordechai ben Hillel; a beautifully decorated copy of *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* by Moses of Coucy; an equally attractive copy of *Kitsur Mordechai*, an abridged version of *Sefer Mordechai* by Samuel Schlettstadt, and a copy of *Shibbolei Haleket*, the important Italian halachic code by Zedekiah ben Abraham Anau (13th century), which seems to have been produced during the author's lifetime.

Worthy of note are some Mishnah fragments that probably date from the 11th century and have Babylonian vocalization, which fell into disuse shortly thereafter, and a large section of Talmud Masechet Shabbat from the 11th century, which could very well have been saved from a fire. The Talmud, especially, suffered from the ravages of time, so every surviving fragment is precious. We also have a significant collection of late medieval Ashkenazi liturgical manuscripts, including one with some very playful illuminations.

Genizah fragments also make up part of the collection, which includes a small sample of some 35 items on a variety of topics. The entire Cairo Genizah is being digitized by a team of scholars supported by Friedberg, and the Toronto fragments are a small part of this important scholarly enterprise. These fragments have been preserved in beautiful sealed mylar encasings, themselves works of art.

Aside from the manuscripts, the collection also includes many important examples of early printed works, including close to 30 incunabula; an outstanding collection of Constantinople imprints, comprising close to three-quarters of the Hebrew books printed there before 1540; several early rabbinic Bibles; a very

early edition of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*; and a significant collection of early printed Haggadot.

The entire collection has been catalogued and the records can be accessed through the University of Toronto Library's online catalogue (www.library.utoronto.ca).

While the Friedberg Collection is our most prized possession, there are other significant Judaica collections at the Fisher Library. The Friedberg Collection is complemented by the Price Collection of Rabbinics, which has more than 3,000 volumes of printed works covering the entire gamut of rabbinic scholarship. This collection once belonged to Rabbi Abraham Price, a prominent leader of Toronto's Orthodox community in the mid-20th century, who was a scholar, bibliophile, halachic decisor and author of several important works on Jewish law. The collection includes works printed between the 15th and 20th centuries.

The Schneid Collection of Twentieth-Century Jewish Art contains material gathered by Otto Schneid, artist and art historian, in preparation for writing a monograph on this topic. The archive includes German and Hebrew versions of Schneid's monograph, copies of his other articles and books, Schneid's correspondence with artists, autobiographies of these artists, reproductions of the artwork of some 160 artists, art books and pre-World War II exhibition catalogues, plus Schneid's correspondence with world leaders and important figures on questions pertaining to human survival.

The Druck Collection of Kibbutz and Secular Haggadot includes close to 400 kibbutz and secular Haggadot, as well as Passover-related ephemera, dating from the mid-1930s to the 1990s. Most of this material

was produced in-house by kibbutzim, youth movements and army units for use at seder celebrations. One of the largest of its kind in the world, this collection documents how various Zionist, socialist, and secular groups and movements created new liturgies to satisfy their own spiritual needs.

Finally, we recently acquired the archive of Toronto ethnomusicologist and folklorist Naomi Bell, which contains an extensive collection of Yiddish and Hebrew folksongs, including sheet music and recordings, all classified by theme. This is an important resource for anyone interested in Jewish folk music.

It's important to note that all of these collections (with the exception of the kibbutz Haggadot) were donated by members of Toronto's Jewish community.

Judaica collections such as those found in the Fisher Library are invaluable resources for teaching and research in Jewish studies. They complement and add depth to the extensive Judaica holdings in U of T's Robarts Library. The Toronto Jewish community should be proud that such a significant collection of Judaica and Hebraica exists in its midst. It's my hope that more members will make use of this collection and help it grow by contributing to the library so that we can build on this excellent resource and make it even richer and stronger.



Page from a Sefer Torah from Spain, 1188.

Chapter Chatter

TOBY ROSSNER

News from the Chapter Relations Team

Enid Sperber, chapter relations co-chair: The Chapter Relations Committee is pleased to congratulate our team member and good friend Amalia Warshenbrot on being honored on October 17 by Charlotte's Temple Beth El, where she is a long-time dedicated member. She was recognized for her two decades of service as a Judaic librarian to the Charlotte community. We know how profoundly Amalia is committed to our profession and to AJL and we are so pleased that she received this acknowledgement. The AJL Chapter Relations Committee joined in the celebration by presenting Amalia with a beautiful certificate in honor of her years of service to our association.

With the holidays behind us, chapters are beginning to roll out their programming for the year. The Chapter Relations Committee has been inquiring about possible assistance we can offer to keep individual chapters vital and involved. I encourage you to share your Jewish Book Month programs and activities in the next issue of the *AJL Newsletter*. Be sure to keep us informed of any changes in your chapter's leadership, including the name of the member who submits reports to "Chapter Chatter." Let us know if any of your members are being honored, and be sure to contact us with inquiries. We are here to help.

Compiler's note: There are now chapters representatives throughout the country who can give your chapter help—perhaps even make a personal visit to your city. Our committee members are Irene Seff—Southwest (Irene@the seffs.net), Enid Sperber—California (enidkentsperber@gmail.com), Sylvia Firschein—Florida (shfirsch@aol.com), Judy Greenblatt—New England (Judygreenb@aol.com), Amalia Warshenbrot—North and South Carolina (amaliaima@att.net), and Toby Rossner, "Chapter Chatter" editor (tobyross@cox.net).

Chapter Representative Amalia Warshenbrot: I have begun collecting information on synagogue libraries in North and South Carolina. I have discovered from those synagogues that I've contacted so far that the Carolinas are not different from other areas, where a high percentage of synagogues with membership of fewer than four hundred families have libraries run by volunteers working twice a week. There is generally no budget, nor is there a plan for collection development. Books are donated by members who "needed shelf space at home" or who "moved grandma to a nursing home." The books are not cataloged. All the synagogues that I've contacted so far have a religious school. Many have a preschool. Most of these volunteer librarians are familiar with AJL; many are members.

A nice exception is Beth Meyer Synagogue in Raleigh, North Carolina. Its volunteer, Rita Gerber, has an updated card catalog using the *Weine* system. The library has received a generous donation as an endowment. Plans are to expand the space as part of a new school building. When the building opens, Rita intends to purchase software for cataloging, but still does not anticipate a budget to purchase needed books.

We all know that libraries are in competition with e-books and the Internet. Nevertheless, my goal is to help these libraries raise funds to purchase books for their religious schools, teaching aids for the faculty, and software for cataloging the collection. This is a long-term plan, but I am optimistic because the library where I worked for twenty years started out exactly like those mentioned above. In those twenty years, the library grew from 800 volumes to over 17,000.

The AJL Chapter Relations Committee sent a certificate to me in honor of my leadership in AJL, my two decades of library service to the community of Charlotte, and my commitment to the field of Judaica librarianship. Rabbi Judy Schindler of Temple Beth El presented the certificate to me in a service on October 17, where I was honored for my dedication as the director of the



Amalia Warshenbrot receives an AJL certificate from Rabbi Judy Schindler at a ceremony in her honor on October 17 at Temple Beth El, in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Levine-Sklut Library and in gratitude for all that I did for the Charlotte Jewish Community. I thank the committee members for their kindness and good wishes.

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Submitted by Rabbi Chavah Carp

Eight individuals from the Albuquerque, New Mexico area met on October 19 at the Solomon Schechter Day School, guests of Rabbi Chava Carp, director of Jewish studies. In addition to the Day School Library, we represented Jewish collections at Hillel, Jewish Community Center, and two of the local synagogues. Staff from the Jewish Federation of New Mexico PJ Library Program also joined us.

We talked about the strengths of our respective Jewish libraries and how we might help each other. Irene Seff, AJL Chapter Relations co-chair, talked about the many resources available from AJL, including the annual convention, HaSafran, Web site links, Mentoring Program, and much more. We agreed to meet again in January.

Northwest Chapter

Submitted by Toby Harris

The Northwest Chapter received a hand-painted fabric banner and showcased it at the recent Seattle Bookfest. This event was a revival of a former very popular book festival here. We shared an exhibit table with editor and writer Wendy Marcus of Beth Am Press. Beth Am Press publishes *Drash*, a Northwest Jewish literary journal and *Polyglot*, some of Wendy's short stories. Wendy joined our chapter and has been helping us out with publicity. On our side of the table, we gave out complimentary copies of *The Night of the Burning*, by Linda Press Wulf; spread the word of our existence and of the 2010 convention with large color postcards; provided a peek at many AJL publications; and enjoyed shmoozing with our many table visitors. We were such a great combo that we may be doing it again at the upcoming Vancouver (BC) Jewish Book Festival.

We've had some productive meetings, mostly focused on the big event next summer: the AJL 45th Annual Convention! Ten or so of us have been putting our heads together in preparation for hosting. Anyone who lives in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, British Columbia or even Alaska is welcome to join our chapter. We have many ideas brewing for bringing colleagues together in this very wide geographic area.

Montreal Chapter

Submitted by Janice Rosen

The Montreal Chapter's November 20 meeting was held at the Jewish General Hospital and featured a presentation, "Harvesting the Fruits of History: A User's guide to Displaying, Digitizing, and Creating an Online Database for an Historical Collection," by Linda Lei and Shiri Alon. They spoke about their digitization of the Jewish General Hospital historical archives and how this material is now being mounted on the Web. Attendees enjoyed the hospital's historical exhibit "The Jewish General Hospital at 75: A Retrospective." This program had great appeal to local librarians interested in the elements involved in making a collection available through the Web.

Our chapter is pleased to be hosting the 2011 AJL National Convention and is already hard at work on the details.

Capital Area Chapter (AJL-CAC)

Submitted by Yelena Luckert

AJL-CAC's first meeting of the 2009/2010 year took place on October 28 at Georgetown University. Robert J. Lieber, professor in the Department of Government and in the School of Foreign Service, gave a paper called *Obama, Israel, and the Middle East* on the American-Israeli relationship since President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took office. Following the talk our members visited Georgetown's Kampelman Collection of Jewish Ethics and the University's Bioethics Library, where they chose duplicate materials from the Kampelman Collection that Georgetown made available to AJL librarians.

San Diego/Tijuana Chapter

Submitted by Sherry Berlin

The San Diego/Tijuana Chapter annual meeting took place on November 11 during the San Diego Jewish Book Fair. Elections were held for new officers. The group attended the lecture by

Abigail Pogrebin, who spoke about her book, *One and the Same: My Life as an Identical Twin and What I've Learned About Everyone's Struggle to Be Singular*.

Houston Chapter

Submitted by Lisa Klein

The Houston Chapter of the AJL, coordinated by our Bureau of Jewish Education, is preparing for our community book fair in November at the Jewish Community Center. Our librarians will create wish lists, in the hope that their institution's members and families will purchase the listed books to donate to their library. We also will be volunteering during the book fair and will wear "Ask the Experts" buttons to offer help to shoppers in selecting books.

Florida West Coast Chapter

Submitted by Sylvia Firschein

AJL Florida West Coast held its first meeting in this New Year 5770 in October. Our meetings always include a round-table discussion that we call "Pride, Progress, and Problems." What am I proud of in my library? What projects and programs am I working on? What problems do I need to solve? Lots of "kudos" and helpful suggestions evolve from this discussion.

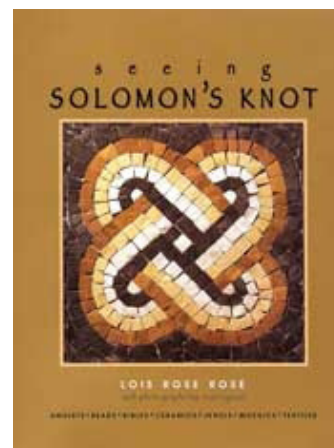
One of our member libraries inherited the *Jewish Heritage Video Collection* and decided to share it with the entire Jewish community. Each attendee received two catalogs—a short one with films listed by category, and a longer one with films (and longer descriptions) listed alphabetically. We were asked to publicize the collection to our library communities and to Jewish groups.

Southern California Chapter (AJLSC)

Submitted by Lisa Silverman

AJLSC met at the home of Lois Rose, artist and collector extraordinaire, who spoke to us about her fascinating research into the history and origins of the design form known as Solomon's knot. She has written an intriguing art book entitled *Seeing Solomon's Knot*. Lois is also quite the poet, and has included numerous creative poems that amuse and intrigue the reader. We learned about this ancient circular interlocking symbol which many cultures saw as divine, how the Hebrew Scriptures refer to the knot, and why it may be named after Solomon.

Our chapter has developed two annotated book lists (one for adults; one for children and teens)—all published within the last eighteen months) for Jewish Book Month. We have printed the lists and placed them in our local public libraries and also in all the Jewish institutions of our members. We took the format of the list from the one the Cleveland Chapter has been using for a number of years, and we also have posted the bibliography on our Web site



www.ajlsc.org. We thank our members Ellen Cole, Lisa Silverman, Barbara Goelman, and Joel Tuchman, for their work on this project, and AJLSC for funding it. It is an important contribution that we can make to our large Southern California community.

Long Island Chapter (LI-AJL)

Submitted by Wendy A. Marx

The Long Island Chapter is committed to “less is more,” a strategy learned at the Chicago AJL Convention. We have planned fewer programs for this year, but more that enhance the knowledge and skills of our members, especially those who are in synagogue libraries. Our October meeting was led by Wendy Marx, who presented *Library 101—Freshman Seminar*, based on the course that was presented at the AJL Convention in Chicago. Using handouts on planning needs assessments for the present and future, automation systems, policy statements, donors’ bill of rights, and AJL’s SSC Standards of Excellence, the program was most successful. Of course, using the AJL Web site and joining National AJL were duly encouraged.

We also instituted a book swap, exchanging duplicates and books that are no longer needed. Question: What do we do with those books that are left after the “swap”? Where can we send them? When synagogues merge or disband their libraries is there a way to make use of entire collections? Please contact Wendy (XMARXTS@aol.com) if you or someone you know can make use of either singles or full libraries.

New York Metropolitan Area (AJL-NYMA)

Submitted by Tina Weiss and Rita Lifton

AJL-NYMA’s 2009 fall conference was held October 19 at the Mendel Gottesman Library of Yeshiva University and offered an in-depth look at the popular databases the Bar-Ilan Responsa Project, and Otzar HaHochma. Rabbi Moshe Schapiro, reference librarian, and Pearl Berger, dean of libraries at Yeshiva, were the presenters. Rabbi Schapiro guided the audience through a tour of the well-known Bar-Ilan Responsa Project. While often used in its CD-Rom version, participants learned about the capabilities of the online version and its pros and cons. Rabbi Schapiro also demonstrated the new online trial version of the Otzar HaHochma database, which contains over 40,000 complete works, ranging from classical rabbinic works to periodicals and contemporary books. Otzar haHochma’s search capabilities and scope were presented, and participants were able to view PDF images of the information sought. Pearl discussed many of the administrative issues pertaining to the programs, specifically noting technological standards and institutional needs, as well as cost and usage demand. Participants walked away from the session with an understanding of the scope of each program and potential uses within the wide-ranging library community. Upcoming NYMA programs, currently in the planning stage, include reference, school and cataloging workshops, and the 2010 spring conference.

Although “Chapter Chatter” focuses on positive experiences, the NYMA Chapter cannot help but reflect on the impact of the current recession on the librarians and libraries in our area. Librarians in both academic and school settings have lost jobs or had their hours cut, and libraries are open fewer hours in order

to conserve resources and to be able to continue functioning. Perhaps no one event brought these harsh realities home than the closing of the 92nd Street Y Bittenweiser Library. As reported in our *NYMA News*, 92nd Street Y patrons were not notified until very late, even those who held library cards. Despite protests, the library closed on July 31 and its 30,000 book collection was dispersed either to other locations in the building or given away to other libraries. The area that the library occupied has been turned into office space. To read more the closing, or to add your voice, see the Facebook page: www.facebook.com/n/?group.php&gid=c84cfaG3c2fd566Gac48fcG6.

Israel Chapter

Submitted by Ya’akov Aronson

AJL held a regional conference in Israel at Bar Ilan University on November 5. On the program were four speakers: Shmuel Har Noy, Aaron Demsky, Elhanan Adler, and Moshe Rosenfeld. A summary of the day’s events appears in this issue of the newsletter on page 28.

Greater Cleveland Chapter

Submitted by Sean Martin

Greater Cleveland members have participated in recent events that have strengthened their knowledge in two areas: Yiddish culture and the craft of bookbinding. Esther Hexter, an educator from the Akron area, spoke on the development of a book club which focused on the reading of Yiddish stories in translation, most of them written by women writers. Noting the publication of a recent anthology of Yiddish women writers in Canada, Esther discussed differing attitudes toward Yiddish in Canada and the United States. She also told the story of the book club’s formation and explained how the interests of its members determined reading selections. She emphasized the accessibility of short stories for such groups and fostering an interest in otherwise little-known works of literature.

Chapter members also had the pleasure of touring Strong Bindery, run by Ellen Strong, in a workshop located in Loganberry Books, an independent bookstore in Shaker Heights. Strong repairs and binds books of all kinds for both individuals and institutions. A hand bookbinder with decades of experience, she demonstrated the tools of her craft and shared techniques of paper conservation. She also talked about her use of modern technology to help preserve treasured books. Strong Bindery and Loganberry Books are terrific resources for the local bibliophile. This program inspired Julian Gordon to talk about his volunteer work rescuing books after the Jewish Theological Seminary library fire in the 1960s.

Compiler’s note: I am delighted to include “Chapter Chatter” articles from new or newly revived chapters—Albuquerque and Israel—and to have news from Montreal. I congratulate our Chapter Relations Committee co-chairs, Irene Seff and Enid Sperber, and also former co-chair Roz Reisner, on their hard work on behalf of the AJL chapters—a vital element of our wonderful organization!



Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN

In The Spotlight

Ehrmann, Rav Naftali. *Greater than Gold and Silver.* Adapted and illus. by Chedvah Rubin. New York: Feldheim, 2009. 53pp. \$17.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-453-1. Grades 2-5.

The mitzvah of owning a perfect etrog inspires a story told in short, gorgeously illustrated chapters. In a sumptuous sukkah, Opa and Oma Kirschshtainer welcome their family and guests. Prompted by one of his grandsons, Opa explains his habit of buying several etrogim for each Sukkot, always looking for the most beautiful. He tells of a village in Hungary where a poor peddler named Reb Itzik lived with his family. Reb Itzik saves all year to buy an etrog and even when he and his wife are offered a great deal of money for the one he has bought, they both refuse to part with it. Knowing how much they need the money and moved by their piety, one of the would-be buyers presents them with ten guildens. It is that gift, given in honor of their mitzvah, that returns the story to the present because it brings them prosperity: Opa Kirschshtainer is Reb Itzik and Oma is his steadfast wife, now living "in wealth and honor." The story is told smoothly, with suspense maintained until the climax and the implicit question of "What would you do?" waiting to be answered by readers. The lush full-color illustrations express both action and character, while also emphasizing the contrast between past and present, between the poor shtetl and the lush sukkah. A note describes the life and career of the author, Rav Naftali Ehrmann (1839-1918), and a glossary explains the many Hebrew and Yiddish words scattered throughout the text. Recommended for all Jewish libraries and readers.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Hoberman, Mary Ann. *Strawberry Hill.* Illus. by Wendy Anderson Halperin. New York: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2009. 230pp. \$15.99. ISBN: 978-0-316-04136-2. Grades 3-5.

Girls who are eight to eleven will enjoy this nostalgic novel set during the Great Depression. When ten-year-old Allie Sherman's family moves to Stamford, Connecticut, where her father has found a job, Allie is disappointed not to see strawberries growing on their new street, Strawberry Hill. To her joy, she finds a small farm at the end of her street, complete with apple trees, cows, and a lamb, and by the book's end in the spring, actual blooming strawberries!

The story describes how Allie copes with attending fourth grade in a new school and with making new friends. Hoberman does a very good job developing characters, especially in portraying Allie's warm relationship with her supportive parents and younger brother. Allie's mother is shown handling an anti-Semitic incident with the heroine's classmate. Hoberman illustrates the Jewish value of helping others when Allie assists Mimi, who has been held back in school, to improve her reading skills. Another bond develops between Allie and a boy in her class, who

gives her a cherished aggie marble for good luck. By the story's end, Allie has figured out what makes a true friendship.

This is Hoberman's first novel, after over 50 years of writing picture books and poetry. She succeeds in portraying an era in which children enjoyed dolls and paper dolls, jumped rope, and played hopscotch, rather than being entertained by computers and video games. Wendy Anderson Halperin's expressive, charming illustrations complement the text. Highly recommended.

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

Kacer, Kathy, and Sharon E. McKay. *Whispers from the Ghettos.* Toronto: Puffin Canada, 2009. 162pp. \$13.99 CAD. ISBN: 978-0-14-331251-2. Pbk. Available only through Penguin Group (Canada) and Amazon or Indigo of Canada. Grades 6-10.

Holocaust-era ghettos swallowed up an entire generation of Jews, taking them from already lessened lives under Nazi domination to which they had just begun to accommodate, to something much worse: an enclosed area of increasingly evil demands including lack of living space, food, heat, medicine, and often—life. Adolescents displayed the daring and strength to sneak out and bring back necessities to their families. These children went from comfortable pre-Nazi lives filled with plans for the future, friends, parties, and education to an existence surrounded by barriers bridged only by enemies and death, from which they could view the normal life outside. Yet even in the ghettos, Jews smuggled in books and held various theater and dramatic performances.

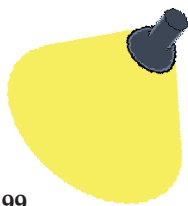
Many years later, some of the youth who survived began to write their stories or tell them to interviewers or co-authors. These twelve invaluable testimonies describe their narrators' hardships, shock, terror, and bravery. A few stories show how luck or a particular talent helped to ameliorate the child's life, as in "The Whistler," but most are just heartrending. I have been immersed in Holocaust literature for the past 14 years, and I found this to be one of the most moving and painful collections of testimony and tales of ghetto life that I have ever read. The fact that these are all original testimonies, not merely adapted from longer works, makes this title an important addition to the Holocaust library. Included are a glossary and acknowledgements.

Marcia Posner, Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, NY

Editor's note: *Whispers from the Ghettos* is the first of a three-part series co-authored by Kacer and McKay. See also *Whispers from the Camps* and *Whispers in Hiding*.

Ofanansky, Allison. *Sukkot Treasure Hunt.* Photographs by Eliyahu Alpern. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 32pp. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-0822587637. Reviewed from an ARC. Grades 1-5.

After they build their sukkah, a girl and her parents search in the hills and valleys of the Galilee for the four species used on Sukkot. The family soon sees a hyrax (rock rabbit) and shortly afterwards, they find myrtle, willow, and palm, as well as some



other plants and animals native to the region. On their way back to town, they meet a friend who has an etrog (citron) tree in his backyard, and the girl picks a “big knobby” one. The family takes the bus home and later celebrates the holiday by eating in the sukkah and using the species. There is a note about Sukkot and some fun facts about the animals and plants mentioned in the book. The team that showed how olive oil is pressed for Hanukkah in *Harvest of Light* (Kar-Ben, 2008) has created another book that can be used on many levels. It’s a holiday book about Sukkot, an introduction to the plants and animals of Israel, a family story, and a story about hunting for treasure. The clear color photographs highlight the beauty of Israel, and young readers can see the way each species grows. The book can be read as a story, or used for instruction in the classroom. It is most appropriate for those aged six through ten. Highly recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Peretz, I.L. *Even Higher: A Rosh Hashanah Story*. Adapted by Eric A. Kimmel. Illus. by Jill Weber. New York: Holiday House, 2009. 32pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-8234-2020-9. Grades 1-3.

Humorous art and peppy dialog take a Rosh Hashanah classic from sanctimony to delight. Award-winning author Eric Kimmel adapts the I.L. Peretz tale and instantly communicates ideas, culture, characters, and morals to picture book readers without losing the lesson or the sense of great fun. Where does the revered rabbi of the Nemirov shtetl go? Everyone argues for a different answer: the townsfolk know their rabbi goes to heaven to save them; the Litvak (wonderfully defined) does not believe the townsfolk; the revered rabbi himself relishes acting the peasant; and the old lady revives to dance. The plot follows the Litvak as he investigates and discovers that compassion and kind deeds, not miracles, save the world. Green teams will kvell when the rabbi chops firewood from trees already felled by wind.

Kimmel’s text is as direct and smart as Barbara Cohen’s 1987 version, but the art here creates a much more lighthearted story. Both Cohen and Kimmel are closer to Peretz than Richard Ungar’s 2007 version where Ungar swaps the Litvak for a dull little boy whose point of view makes for a plodding tale. The layout of this new volume is fresh and compelling. The text appears in different frames and at different angles. The age-appropriate art is mobile, colorful and hilarious while delivering time and place. Everyone’s emotions are on the page; they glue the reader to the argument and the mystery. This is a delicious holiday volume and a timeless tale of values. Highly recommended for picture book readers.

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

Reid, Barbara. *Fox Walked Alone*. Author is illustrator. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman, 2009. 32pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-8075-2548-7. Grades K-3.

A mysterious sense of “Hey! What’s up?” adds edge to this imaginative retelling of the start of the Noah’s Ark journey. The warm picture book is personality driven by Fox who walks alone to find out where everyone else is going. Every other creature moves in pairs and knows the goal. Fox’s ignorance and confusion are underlined by a Greek chorus of two ravens. Readers follow Fox as he moves from crazy to clever, self-serving to rescuer, solo

to duo. The text is well-done rhyme: the meter is (thank you) not singsong and many couplets are smart. The mobile art is unusual and excellent while realistic in shape and color. The author/artist formed animals and scenes in plasticine, then pressed the illustrations on boards which her husband photographed. The end result is stunning and arresting, especially the view of the deserted, ancient, walled city of mud. The story engages young readers. It assumes they know the biblical story of Noah and can recall which animals (slyly spotlighted here) are the major characters from Tanach. The plot’s tension is stronger than most stories for our youngest readers, and creates a dynamic, refreshing read. This standout volume by the author/illustrator of another version of the story, *Two By Two*, is highly recommended for the picture book crowd.

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

Tal, Eve. *Cursing Columbus*. El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos Press, 2009. 246pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-1-933693-59-0. Reviewed from an uncorrected proof. Grades 7-9.

Cursing Columbus is a realistic and somewhat poignant retelling of the Jewish immigrant story, following one family from a shtetl in Eastern Europe to New York’s Lower East Side. Separated from loved ones left behind, the family finds that the streets of America are not lined with gold. This beautifully written sequel to *Double Crossing* follows Raizel and her father, who have come ahead of the rest of their family, as they chart a path in their new home. Raizel immediately starts school, which she finds stimulating and rewarding. Her father perceives that he must learn English to fit in and succeed in business. He also makes the very difficult decision to give up his beloved religious observances.

After three years of struggles, the rest of the family finally comes to America. The change in roles for the newcomers is disastrous. Mama cannot understand a Jewish life without observance, nor why her daughter considers education to be so important and dares to dream of becoming a teacher. More important, she cannot understand why her almost thirteen-year-old son, Lemmel, cannot successfully find his place in the new lifestyle. Conflicts arise between siblings and the parental generation, and Lemmel eventually opts out of the family. The pressures of the street and the world of crime and prostitution rear their ugly heads. This is both a coming-of-age story and excellent historical fiction, with fully-developed characters. The narrative is told in the dual voices of Raizel and Lemmel, and the novel is suffused with Jewish content. Highly recommended.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

BIBLE

Fischer, Chuck. *In the Beginning: The Art of Genesis*. Text by Curtis Flowers. Paper Engineering by Bruce Foster. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008. 12pp. \$35.00. ISBN: 978-0-316-11842-2. All ages.

In the Beginning is a work of consummate art, craft, and ingenuity. To describe it as a “pop-up” book would be an understatement. Noah’s ark leaps off the page; the tower of Babel soars to

the sky; Jacob's ladder ascends to heaven's giddy heights. Fischer also illustrates the stories of The Creation, Adam and Eve, and Joseph in Egypt. Each spectacular illustration is accompanied by foldout, mini-booklets that retell the story or add commentary about it. For example, "Noah's Ark" is accompanied by booklets that explain such elements as the covenant with Noah, and the symbolism of the dove and the olive branch. Each illustration emulates a different style of art. "Jacob's Dream" looks like an ornate stained-glass window replete with angels who have halos and wings; "Joseph in Egypt" is filled with Egyptian symbols and hieroglyphics.

Problems are evident in this rendition of Genesis. *In the Beginning* is not a book for children, as much as they may be intrigued and delighted by its movement and engineering. Small children will inevitably destroy the delicate workings of this book; older children will probably want to read the Bible story that goes with the illustration, but each story is written in densely-packed text tucked away in a mini-booklet. Furthermore, the many nude figures in the art reproductions will probably make many teachers (and parents) blush and turn the pages over as quickly as possible. Second, this book reflects a non-Jewish perspective, as exemplified in the numerous reproductions of art from medieval and Renaissance time periods, the profusion of figures with halos around their heads, the repeated mention of "original sin", and the illustrations of God and foreign gods like Osiris. Finally, the author does not indicate the sources of his material—neither the art work nor the biblical text nor the commentaries. In a book like this, the credits should extend beyond thanking friends and colleagues. As gorgeous as this book is, this reviewer does not recommend it for a Jewish library, whether in a school, synagogue, or community center. It would certainly have a place in a special collection about book illustration or biblical art.

Anne Dublin, Toronto, Ontario

BIOGRAPHY

Krull, Kathleen. *Giants of Science: Albert Einstein.* Illus. by Boris Kulikov. *Giants of Science Series.* New York: Viking, 2009. 128pp. \$15.99. ISBN: 978-0-670-06332-1. Pbk. Reviewed from an ARC. Grades 6–8.

Albert Einstein is the fourth in this series by Kathleen Krull. This nonfiction book traces Einstein's life from his childhood through his adult celebrity. Chapters discuss Einstein's problems in school, his two marriages, his difficulty finding a job, his escape from Hitler's Germany, his scientific theories, and his distant relationship with his sons. Einstein is not presented as an idealized genius, but as a man who had faults and problems during his life. The book deals with Einstein's Judaism by saying that even though Einstein never attended synagogue, he felt that being a Jew was an important part of his identity. Also mentioned are Einstein's confrontation with anti-Semitism and his flight from Nazism. Boris Kulikov's comic pen-and-ink illustrations detract from the serious subject of the book. *Albert Einstein* is recommended for all synagogue and school libraries because it mentions Einstein's difficulties caused by anti-Semitism and devotes more than one sentence to the fact that he was Jewish.

Sources listed are Web sites and books for adult and young adult readers. There is no index.

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

FICTION

Ehrenberg, Pamela. *Tillmon County Fire.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books, 2009. 188pp. \$9.00. ISBN: 978-0-80828-5345-5. Pbk. Grades 9–12.

Arson is committed as an act of hate in a sleepy town on the Pennsylvania and West Virginia border. The chapters rotate among the characters' viewpoints as they reveal how they are interconnected by the fire. Aiden is a troubled child who lives with his abusive and alcoholic father. He gets "saved" and becomes a fanatical Christian. In order to "save" Tillmon County, Aiden plans to burn down the house of Rob, an openly gay teenager. Ben has sexual relations with Rob, whose house was burnt down on the night they were supposed to spend together. He is not ready to "come out" to his mother and the public. Ben's father left the family to find God after he became an Orthodox Jew. As he copes with this loss and struggles to accept his sexuality, Ben finds comfort attending services at a neighboring town's synagogue. That is the extent of the Jewish here. Contrary to Ben's insecurity, Rob is comfortable with his sexuality. He came to Tillmon County from New York City; his confidence in his own skin draws attention from others in the small town. Other characters include Jeremy, an awkward and shy marching band member, whom Aiden befriends and who becomes an accomplice to the arson. Jeremy's mentally challenged twin brother, Albert, ends up committing the act of arson without understanding how horrific it is. This narrative realistically portrays teen angst and the limited opportunities of small town life. Like Ehrenberg's other book *Ethan Suspended*, there are Jewish characters in the story, but the Jewish content plays a small role. Not recommended for Jewish libraries.

Heather Lenson, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH

Greene, Jacqueline Dembar. *The Secret Shofar of Barcelona.* Illus. by Doug Chayka. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben Publishing, 2009. 32pp. \$17.95 HC ISBN 978-0-8225-9915-9; \$7.95 Pbk. ISBN 978-0-8225-9944-9. Reviewed from an ARC. Grades K–3.

Jacqueline Dembar Greene, the award-winning author of more than 30 children's works, taps into her Sephardic ancestral roots in her latest book. Symphony conductor Don Fernando, a Converso in Barcelona during the Spanish Inquisition, must pretend to be a Catholic while secretly practicing his Jewish faith. He composes an original symphony to perform before the Spanish nobility and Inquisition judges during a festival celebrating the colonies in the New World. Many of the instruments used will be native to the colonies, such as rattles made out of gourds and deer toes. Fernando and his son, Rafael, conspire to pass off the shofar as another native instrument and blow it "in plain sight" during the concert, which will coincide with the Jewish New Year.

Keeping in mind the innocent youthfulness of its intended audience, the book has a happy, albeit slightly unbelievable, fairy-tale ending. The righteous prevail—in a small but symbolically

profound way—during this dark time in Jewish history. The story could serve as a springboard for parents and educators to discuss some of the book's main themes: faith, pride in one's beliefs, and standing up to those who wish to suppress religious freedom. Doug Chayka's oil-on-canvas illustrations are done in rich earth tones with broad strokes, and will appeal to the young reader and artist alike. This book would be an excellent addition to any library's Rosh Hashanah picture book collection.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

Kidd, Ronald. *The Year of the Bomb*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009. 208pp. \$5.99. ISBN: 978-1-4169-9625-5. Pbk. Grades 7-12.

Paul and his friends are thrilled that the newest horror movie, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, is being filmed in their town of Sierra Madre, California. While on the set, the boys discover an undercover F.B.I. agent posing as an actor. He is there to investigate because Hollywood is under suspicion for communist activity. The agent tips the boys off about a local man, Professor Richard Feynman, who worked on the Manhattan Project and is always under investigation about his relations with the Russians. After all, it is 1955, and everyone fears the Russians and the atomic bomb. From then on, the boys decide to do their own investigation and spy on Feynman. After Feynman discovers the boys spying on him, he tries to convince them not to take everything at face value. He challenges the boys to question what they are being told in school and by other authorities about the negatives of communism and other issues. Paul realizes that "pod people" or zombies walking around lifeless are really a metaphor for people not feeling and believing things told to them without questioning the logic. At home, Paul's father is distant and secretive about his job at a factory building planes to carry the atomic bomb; he blocks out the world by staring at the television. Paul goes to horror movies and enjoys going to his friends' homes where there is more action and emotions. Kidd does a good job of re-creating the fear and paranoia of the time. However, the novel assumes that readers have prior knowledge of J. Edgar Hoover's and Senator Joseph McCarthy's roles in the anti-Communist hysteria. The author's notes give helpful biographical information about Richard Feynman and Don Siegal. There are assumed Jewish characters in the story, such as the movie director Don Siegal, Paul's friend Oz Feldman, and Richard Feynman. There is no mention of Judaism in this book; it is unsuitable for a Jewish library.

Heather Lenson, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH

Peacock, Shane. *Vanishing Girl: The Boy Sherlock Holmes, His 3rd Case*. Toronto: Tundra Books, 2009. 260pp. \$19.95. ISBN 978-0-88776-852-1. Reviewed from an ARC. Ages 10-14.

In *Eye of the Crow* and *Death in the Air*, Peacock gave us a back story for Sherlock Holmes, inventing a tragic and impoverished childhood that led the boy to hone his natural detective abilities. The author also made Sherlock half-Jewish, reinforcing his outsider status. Like the second volume, this third story refers to Sherlock as a "half-Jew" a few times, but contains no other Jewish content. It is an enjoyable story with a cleverly conceived mystery, narrated in the present tense with a breathtaking cliffhanger at every turn. The case revolves around the kidnapping of a wealthy

young lady and a race to save the eyesight of a destitute orphan boy. Recommended for secular collections and for Judaic libraries that have the first two books in the series.

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

Rosen, Chaya. *The Chaverim Boys Choir Live! Southfield, MI: Targum Press, 2009. 214pp. \$15.99. ISBN: 978-1-568-71-496-7. Grades 5-8.*

The Chaverim Boys Choir is famous for its music and impressive showmanship. Onstage, the choir is a unified group, but the choir is made up of 25 boys, each with his own challenges. In this volume, the first in a planned series, Chaya Rosen presents the stories of 13 of the boys. While the choir's activities provide a framework for the boys' chapters, the book reads more like a series of connected vignettes than a novel. The boys are all from Orthodox families, and observance of mitzvot is a given. They face a wide variety of problems, including too much responsibility at home, stage fright, jealous siblings, and the death of a beloved grandparent. In each chapter, the youth learns that he can cope with anything when he has the support of family, friends, and the choir director, combined with his trust in Hashem. Recommended, especially for fans of boys choirs or those looking for a "kosher" novel featuring lots of male characters.

Marci Lavine Bloch, Silver Spring, MD

HOLIDAYS

Fisman, Karen. *An Adventure in Latkaland: A Hanukkah Story*. Illus. by Thomas McAteer. JoRa Books (www.jorabooks.com), 2009. 64pp. \$13.50. ISBN: 978-0-9812650-0-1. Grades 2-4.

A fast-paced fantasy plot and an easy chapter format will appeal to children who have outgrown picture book stories about the evil spirits who make trouble during Hanukkah, such as Kimmel's *Herschel and the Hanukkah Goblins* and Zigazak!: *A Magical Hanukkah Night* and Melmed's *Moishe's Miracle*. In ten short chapters, each illustrated with at least one full-page color picture, two kids named Jacob and Sarah travel to Latkaland to help the potato-digging, latka-frying Lunchkins chase away some really awful goblins who are stealing the potatoes. Armed like the Maccabees, the Lunchkins rout out the far greater force of "nasty, slime-green goblins with pointed ears and hideous faces," while Jacob and Sarah return to the real world, ready for new adventures. Along with the enjoyment of a light-hearted story, readers will also absorb a little Hanukkah lore.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Glaser, Linda. *Hoppy Hanukkah*. Illus. by Daniel Howarth. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman, 2009. Unpagged. \$15.99. ISBN: 978-0-8075-3378-9. Preschool-grade 1.

In Linda Glaser's new book, two young rabbits learn about Hanukkah through latkes, candle lighting, and other festivities with their parents and grandparents. The text is short and reads aloud nicely. First grade students generally liked the story and pictures, although a few pointed out it was too babyish for them. Some of their favorite parts were when the children lit the candles and when Simon, the boy bunny's ears flopped in excitement.

Fourth grade students thought it was a good introduction to Hanukkah for little kids, but might have been better told with people instead of rabbits. A few thought the illustrations of the rabbits, especially the grandfather rabbit, might be scary for some young kids, however, the first graders thought they were just fine. Overall, this is a pleasant story with cute, but not overly remarkable pictures.

Aimee Lurie, Agnon School, Beachwood, OH

McCue, Lisa. *Happy Hanukkah, Corduroy*. New York: Viking, 2009. Unpaged. \$5.99. ISBN: 978-0-670-01127-8. Board book. Preschool.

Corduroy in a kippa—I cannot stop kvelling! Who knew he was Jewish? Corduroy decorates for Hanukkah, lights a menorah, shares latkes and presents with friends, plays dreidel, and sings songs at a party with a group of toy friends. This adorable board book will delight toddlers, even those who have yet to discover this iconic character of children's literature. Lisa McCue's illustrations are very true to Don Freeman's book, but have a slightly more modern feel than the original 1968 version. Simple text and charming illustrations make this a perfect introduction to Hanukkah for very young children. A must for libraries serving preschool children.

Aimee Lurie, Agnon School, Cleveland, OH

Sefer so Good Ad

Patz, Naomi. *The Jewish Holiday Treasure Trail*. Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 2009. 128pp. \$11.95. ISBN: 978-0-87441-833-0. Grades 2-5.

There's an element of goofy science fiction in this quasi-workbook/activity book that teaches facts about 12 Jewish holidays, including Shabbat. Daniel and his Israeli cousin, Rivkah, are transported to ancient times by a "Virtual Plasma Interface" where they discuss the holidays with the prophet Elijah. Each chapter includes didactic information about the holiday, a folktale or Talmud story, a riddle, an invitation to apply a sticker to a treasure trail, questions, and activities for a reader/student to complete. These later components make this book more a classroom resource than a book to read for pleasure. In a library, the workbook aspects may create a problem for multiple users. The lively assortment of illustrations includes graphics, photos, and colorful cartoon-like pictures, including a female rabbi and a non-white child. While key words stand out in bold and are available in Hebrew along with their transliterated version, there is no glossary. At the end of the book, just before the page of stickers for the treasure trail, there is a "Jewish Holidays Certificate of Achievement," meant to be signed by a school official.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

HOLOCAUST

Heuvel, Eric. *A Family Secret*. Trans. by Lorraine T. Miller. Amsterdam: Anne Frank House in cooperation with the Resistance Museum of Friesland, 2009 (First American edition). 62pp. \$18.99. ISBN 978-0-374-32271-7. Grades 5-9.

Heuvel, Eric. *The Search*. Trans. by Lorraine T. Miller. Amsterdam: Anne Frank House in cooperation with the Jewish Historical Museum of Amsterdam, 2009 (First American edition). 61pp. \$9.99. ISBN 978-0-374-46455-4. Pbk. Grades 5-9.

Originally published in Dutch in 2007, *A Family Secret* and its sequel, *The Search*, tell overlapping stories of ordinary people during World War II. Meant to educate, rather than entertain, these two books have been translated into German, Hungarian, Polish, and English. According to a *New York Times* article (February 27, 2008), *A Family Secret* was distributed to 200,000 schoolchildren in the Netherlands, and *The Search* was being tested in middle school classrooms in two cities in Germany, a country that is still grappling with how to teach this particular history lesson to a new generation of children. The Anne Frank house produced both books by assembling a team of experts to ensure historical accuracy.

A Family Secret tells the story of Jeroen, a teenage boy, who is looking through his grandmother's attic for items to sell at a yard sale. After he comes across scrapbooks and other artifacts, his grandmother Helena tells him about her experiences as a young girl in Amsterdam during the German occupation. Her best friend was Esther, a Jewish girl whose family fled from Germany to the Netherlands, hoping for safety from the Nazis. Helena's father was a policeman, and in order to save his job and his family, he was forced to work for the Nazis and help round up the Jews. When Esther's family was sent to a concentration camp, Helena feared the worst, and assumed that Esther had died along

with her parents. Years later, a chance meeting between Jeroen and Esther during a Memorial Day ceremony allows the boy to reunite his grandmother and her long-lost friend.

The Search picks up shortly after the friends are reunited, and this time Esther is the narrator. She describes how she went into hiding to elude capture by the Nazis after her parents were taken to a concentration camp. After the war, she immigrates to the United States. Decades later, with the help of her grandson, she tracks down an old family friend who is able to tell her the details of her parents' last days in the concentration camp.

Dutch artist Eric Heuvel uses pastel colors and a clear line style that has been compared to Tintin comics. The text is simplified for a younger audience. War is not glamorized in any way; neither the Nazis nor the victims are personalized. Absent are the piles of corpses found in most history textbooks; gone also, though, is the emotion that a reader would find in Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* or Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. Because of the lack of violence, these two books would provide a good introduction to the topic for children as young as fifth grade. Middle school teachers of reluctant or weak readers would also find these books useful. Recommended for synagogue and school libraries, but only as a supplement to *Anne Frank* and other notable Holocaust books.

Wendy Wasman, *The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland, OH*

Jennings, Jerry L., and Sol and Goldie Finkelstein with Joseph S. Finkelstein. *I Choose Life: Two Linked Stories of Holocaust Survival and Rebirth*. Xlibris, 2009. 142pp. \$N/A. ISBN: 978-1-4415-0305-3 Pbk. Teens and adults.

Many survivors' children, the Second Generation, are left to wrestle with what their parents experienced. Joe Finkelstein learned about his family's experiences in bits, over many years. Here, his parents' stories are told individually until after they meet and marry in a DP camp in Stuttgart. Both Sol and Goldie are remarkable people, maintaining courage and conviction that they would survive. An SS guard gives Joe's maternal grandfather a choice between which of his two daughters would be put on the train to a labor camp. Goldie volunteers to go while her sister remains behind with their parents. She is the only one of her family to survive. Sol, his brother, and father are sent to Mauthausen. A daring young man, Sol maneuvers himself into a better position and becomes more able to withstand the fiendish practices of the Nazi guards. He later loses his father in a march.

More challenges face Joe's parents in America. HIAS helps but certainly not in a place they would envision living in the future nor in a job Sol would want. Fortunately, these sophisticated former Europeans find themselves in Vineland, New Jersey, where they become chicken farmers and the nucleus of a small Jewish community. This is a lively, well-written account made particularly so because Joe's parents' wartime records became available in 2007, enabling him to travel to Poland and learn the details about his grandfather, Jacob Finkelstein's, death in a hospital after liberation.

Marcia Posner, *Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County*



Kors, Eva Mozes, and Lisa Rojany Buccieri. *Surviving the Angel of Death: The Story of a Mengele Twin in Auschwitz*. Terre Haute, IN: Tanglewood, 2009. 120pp. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-1-933718-28-6. Reviewed from an ARC. Grades 7-12.

This is the third book the author has written about her experiences as a twin in Auschwitz where she and her sister, Miriam, were subjected to Mengele's sadistic experiments, but also benefited somewhat from certain privileges accorded to these children. Here, the story of the twins is told in more detail, albeit in print larger than is typical for the 12+ age level, its intended audience. One learns about life in Auschwitz where, despite the twins' privileges, they are still underfed. The difference is that if they are caught stealing potatoes, the only punishment they receive is a scolding, not death. Being a twin in Auschwitz is terrifying to the girls. Experiments are performed at least three times a week. Mysterious injections and sometimes surgery are the norm. Some details of the experiments are given here, as they were not in the earlier books. When either twin would become ill, the other would cling to her from love and perhaps, knowledge. Miriam is expected to die after she is given a poisonous injection, but she survives, to the amazement and perhaps disappointment of the doctors and nurses.

The twins are ultimately freed by Soviet soldiers and eventually go to Israel where they live in a children's village. Eva later marries an American tourist and moves to the U.S. The surprise ending in this book is Miriam's widely publicized decision, many years later, to forgive Mengele! Only then, she said, would she be free. Many of us couldn't agree with her, but after all, she is the one who suffered. Miriam founded CANDLES in 1984, and more recently started the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center at Indiana State University. A gripping, honest, and painful book.

Marcia Posner, *Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, NY*

Metselaar, Menno and Ruud van der Rol. *Anne Frank: Her Life in Words and Pictures*. Trans. by Arnold J. Pomerans. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2009. 215pp. \$19.99. ISBN: 978-1-59643-546-9. Grades 5-12.

This handsome keepsake was first published in the Netherlands by the Anne Frank House in 2004 under the title *The Story of Anne Frank*. A history of the family from Germany to Bergen-Belsen and Otto Frank's and their helpers' histories in the post-war period, this work draws on material from the archives of the Anne Frank House. It concludes with the history of the preserved Annex and the production of the play. The text contains material from adult books, but in a format that readers from age 11 and up can understand. The narrative is mainly in regular (roman) print, while quotes from letters are in italics; Anne's thoughts, reprinted from the *Diary*, are in larger bold print. The book introduces the testimony of Rosa de Winter, the roommate of the female Franks in Westerbork and in Bergen-Belsen. Outstanding photographs of the family—before and after Anne's birth, the German period prior to their immigrating to the Netherlands, their happy times in the Netherlands, and best of all, Westerbork—make this book a worthwhile addition to the library.

Marcia W. Posner, *Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, NY*

Rene, Alice. *Becoming Alice: A Memoir.* iUniverse, 2008. 273pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-60528-021-9. Grade 9–adult.

All of the qualities good literature needs in order to invite the reader into the story are found in this memoir. To read it is to be at Alice's side from early childhood to college age, to witness the deterioration of her family's life in Austria, to worry about her mother's perilous health, to cringe at the tyranny and despotic temper of her physician father, and to want to comfort Fredi, her long-suffering older brother, a lad who could never be comfortable with himself or his life. Few memoirs have as much depth and clarity of portrayal, description of the times, and ability to communicate to the reader. Ilse (later called Alice) is a playful, active little girl when the action begins. She is definitely her father's favorite, while her mother and brother are the targets of his ill temper. When a man of his nature is frustrated, he becomes dangerous. The father flees to Memel, Riga to try to get visas for the family to go to Shanghai. They finally reach Shanghai, where Alice meets a girl who would become her lifelong friend.

After the war, the family moves to Oregon. Papa doesn't let up on poor Fredi and Mama, and he turns down every job that HIAS offers him. He doesn't have a valid physician's license in the U.S., and refuses to accept anything that affronts his dignity. Both parents are very class-conscious. Mama finally asserts herself, becoming the dominant one in the family. She accepts HIAS's offer to buy them a little grocery store and learns how to be a grocer, while Papa keeps the books. Ilse changes her name to Alice and tries to become an American girl. For a long time, she is the only Jew in her school. She is also prone to serious illnesses that entail a long convalescence. Alice begins to date someone of whom her parents approve but later she has the courage to break off this relationship. As the book ends, Ilse/Alice demonstrates that she is more than a match for her father. After suffering two years in the sorority-laden UCLA, she defies him, choosing Berkeley. In Berkeley's liberal atmosphere, she is able to discard the strictures of her childhood and to truly become Alice. This is an excellent book for teens and adults.

Marcia Posner, Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, NY

Robson, David. *Auschwitz.* Lucent World History Series. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale/Lucent Books, 2009. 104pp. \$32.45. ISBN: 978-1-4205-0131-5. Grades 9–12.

This school research resource fully describes the Auschwitz death camp and its historical underpinnings in horrific detail. Supplemental information includes a timeline, citations, glossary, index, print and web bibliography, and historic photographs. *Auschwitz* has the elements of a fair Holocaust account, for it recognizes the responsibility of ordinary German citizens as well as local informants in Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine. The author states that anti-Semitism corresponded with the rise of Christianity. He underscores that Nazi officials had high academic credentials. He points out the impossibility of escape and, at the same time, recognizes resistance efforts. He mentions the problem of Holocaust denial and notes the peristence of anti-Semitism. While the author appears to have no special Holocaust expertise, the book is well written and supported by individual survivor accounts and primary source documents.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Ruelle, Karen Gray, and Deborah Durland DeSaix. *The Grand Mosque of Paris: A Story of How Muslims Rescued Jews during the Holocaust.* New York: Holiday House, 2009. 40pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-8234-2159. Reviewed from an ARC. Grades 3–6.

If only Muslims and Jews today could enjoy a relationship like the one described here! Of course, neither Islam nor Judaism is monolithic, nor are eras the same. But there were times throughout history when Muslims and Jews got along, even when Muslims saved Jews. Just as in the recent contretemps in the Balkans, descendants of each repaid and partook of the favor. Beautifully narrated, this book tells the story of how Jewish families escaping Allied air raids find respite and shelter in a North African Kabyle mosque in the heart of Paris. (The Kabyles are Berbers from Kabylia, high in the forbidding mountains of Algeria.)

The mosque is a placid place of gardens and pools, but it also contains medical facilities and schools—a true community center. It is a palace from a fairy-tale, but with hundreds of miles of tunnels snaking beneath the surface. It is a place where Arabs and Jews call one another “brother.” It is to this haven that some of the Jews of Paris, threatened, jailed, and deported by the Nazis, flee. The mosque has its imam, its spiritual leader; but it also has its rector, Si Benghabrit, the most powerful Muslim in France, whom the French government regards as the spokesman for the entire Muslim community. All through the war, he shelters many Jews and Resisters from the Nazis.

This is a marvelous story, with exquisite illustrations in shades of blue, gray, maize, and gold. Don't miss it. Bibliography, references, glossary.

Marcia W. Posner, Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, NY

Thor, Annika. *A Faraway Island.* New York: Delacorte Press, 2009. Trans. from the Swedish by Linda Schenck. 248pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-385-73617-6, 978-0385-90590-9. Reviewed from an ARC. Grades 5–8.

In 1939, two Jewish sisters—twelve-year-old Stephanie and eight-year-old Nellie—are sent from Nazi-occupied Vienna to refuge on an island off the coast of Sweden. Their parents hope to escape to Amsterdam and tell the girls that their sojourn in Sweden will last only six months. Once in Amsterdam, they hope to get visas so the family can immigrate to the United States. As the older sister, Stephanie is expected to care for Nellie. However, Nellie has an easier time adjusting to life on the island as she gets placed with a kinder foster family, makes friends more easily, and learns Swedish more quickly than Stephanie. Stephanie encounters nasty peers and a cold foster mother who puts her to work in the house. Both foster mothers try to convert the girls to Christianity, which conveys to readers the motivations of some Swedish foster families.

This is the first of a four-novel series about the sisters' life on the island. The story is written in the third person from Stephanie's point of view. She is scared about what is happening to her family in Nazi-occupied Vienna. Still, she has the concerns of any twelve-year-old girl trying to adjust to a new life far from home. The narrative might have been more effective written in the first person. In the “Author's Notes,” Annika Thor explains that she feels only Holocaust survivors can recount these experiences in the first person. She also provides historical background about

the 500 children brought to refuge in Sweden from Berlin, Hamburg, Vienna and Prague.

Heather Lenson, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH

Willis, Laurie, ed. *The Holocaust. Social Issues Firsthand Series.* Farmington Hills, MI: Gale/Greenhaven Press, 2009. 143pp. \$30.85. ISBN: 978-0-73774-255-8. Grades 9-12.

First-hand Holocaust testimonials are more likely than most approaches to reach into a teenager's psyche and activate a deep, emotional response to the unimaginable horrors experienced by real individuals. Direct, unadulterated, and well-written, these excerpts from previously published books and articles deliver on the introduction's promise of diverse points of view. They are accounts by smugglers, spies, forgers, other camp inmates and survivors, a righteous gentile, a member of the Hitler Youth, an interpreter at the Nuremberg trials, and children of survivors. Writings about ghettos, concentration camps, liberation, and the aftereffects of the Holocaust are covered. A summary at the beginning of each entry allows the reader to pick and choose specific chapters to read. A list of organizations to contact for further information is provided, as are a bibliography and index.

Unfortunately, the chapter "Lessons to be learned from the Holocaust" by Anthony Lipmann draws an unwarranted equivalence between Nazi persecution of Jews and Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. The author, the British son of Jewish Holocaust survivors, who was baptized at age six and remains an Anglican, calls for an end to hate and refers to Jenin and "the building of walls and bulldozing of villages" with no context whatsoever. He demands that Jews "prevent Israel from adopting the mantle of oppressor" and "speak out against Israel's policies in the occupied territories." He also distastefully comments that, because Jews (including himself) are paranoid and see the Holocaust everywhere, we are "not a fun lot." This point of view appears to be included under the rubric of debate and diversity fostered by this "Social Issues Firsthand" series. It is not acceptable to present the Holocaust as an "issue" subject to debate and political discussion, and it is regrettable that the Lipmann chapter ruins an otherwise useful book.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

JUDAISM

Levy, Leah Braunstein. *The Waiting Wall.* Illus. by Avi Katz. New York: Hachai, 2009. Unpaged. \$12.95. ISBN: 978-1-929628-49-0. Grades 1-4.

The premise of this book, told from the point of view of a young boy and girl visiting the Western Wall for the first time, is that the "Kosel" in Jerusalem is waiting for the Messiah to come, and that each of us has the potential to bring this about through prayer and kindness. The illustrations are really lovely and the brief story—a kind of meditation on the Wall—is especially but not exclusively appropriate for children from observant families. All the characters are dressed in an Orthodox manner; men and women are shown in traditional gender-segregated roles. There is a brief glossary of Hebrew terms.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Rosinsky, Natalie M. *Judaism.* World Religions Series. Mankato, MN: Compass Point Books. 2010. 48pp. \$27.99. ISBN: 978-0-75654-240-5. Ages 9-12.

Natalie M. Rosinsky, an award-winning author, has made her mark in the publishing world with over 100 titles. Her topics cover science, Native Americans, religion, and the Vietnam War. This Compass Point Book has clearly added a dimension to the many books about Judaism for young readers. *Judaism* is written as a chapter book with colorful, glossy pages. A Table of Contents, Timeline, Glossary, and Further Reference page engage the reader who has not yet studied Judaism. The chapters do not always relate historical events in chronological order; however, most of their content is easily understood. The opening chapter, "Flights to Freedom," tells the story of the Ethiopian Jews who were flown to Israel in 1991. While this chapter could have been incorporated into a later chapter on the Diaspora, it does provide a provocative beginning, one that will take the reader on a trip through Jewish history, customs, and literature.

Rosinsky's book contains maps, historical photographs, and artistic renderings of biblical and historical accounts. In contrast to other juvenile books about Judaism, such as the DK Publishers 2003 edition, Rosinsky's book lacks detail due to its brevity. In the last chapter, titled "Judaism Today," the author lumps together many different topics, such as all Jewish denominations, U.S. Jews' relationship to Israel, the Arab-Israeli conflict, intermarriage, and the Jewish calendar. Each of these topics could have been an individual chapter. Recommended for elementary and middle school libraries or public libraries.

Tammy Gerson, Congregation Children of Israel, Athens, GA

LEGENDS AND FOLKLORE

Waldman, Debby. *Clever Rachel.* Illus. by Cindy Revell. Custer, WA: Orca, 2009. Unpaged. \$19.95. ISBN: 978-1-55469-081-7. Grades 1-3.

"No girl could be smarter than I am," thinks Jacob when he hears about clever Rachel. He tries to stump her with some riddles but Rachel has been riddling since she was a baby. When a young woman needing some help with answering riddles bursts into Rachel's house, Jacob takes over but he can't answer her riddles. Rachel thinks, "He's gotten himself into this... he can get himself out." As the minutes tick by and the young woman grows more anxious, Jacob remembers that the rabbi has always told his students that two heads are better than one. So he admits that Rachel is the better riddler and together they solve the young woman's riddles, upon which her marriage depends. When the next person beset with riddle-anxiety seeks help, Rachel and Jacob have learned to work together.

This familiar folktale is usually retold with a feminist theme, but Waldman's post-feminist version replaces gender competition with cooperation. Her sprightly writing plus Revell's colorful acrylic illustrations in a neo-folk art style recall their earlier collaboration on *A Sack Full of Feathers*. This story abounds in riddles, so it should be fun to read aloud. Enthusiastically recommended.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Watts, Irene. *Clay Man: The Golem of Prague*. Illus. by Kathryn E. Shoemaker. Plattsburgh, NY: Tundra, 2009. 83pp. \$14.96. ISBN: 978-0-88776-880-4. Reviewed from an ARC. Grades 4–6.

Clay Man: The Golem of Prague is a retelling of the story of the Jews of Prague and the rabbi who made a golem to protect them. Several picture-book versions of this legend have been written by Beverly Brodsky, David Wisniewski, and Mark Podwal among others. They are good introductions to the legend, made memorable by excellent illustrations. For the older reader who can handle more text, this is a fine version. The reader is brought into the ghetto in a way that a short picture book is strained to do. The characters are developed more fully. The point of view is that of a boy, the rabbi's son, who is around the age of the intended reader. The side plot, which concerns his trying to live up to his older brother's reputation, is universal. The short chapters and intermittent illustrations target the book for the elementary grades and add to the accessibility of the story for children who have advanced beyond the picture book stage but may still be too young to handle Barbara Rogasky's retelling with its foreshadowing of the Holocaust. The illustrations add to the tone and feel of the story by giving young readers an idea of what the sixteenth-century Prague ghetto might have looked like. Irene Watts and Kathryn Shoemaker collaborated on the graphic novel version of *Good-Bye Marianne*, and Watts is the author of several notable books of Jewish content for children.

Debbie Feder, Ida Crown Jewish Academy, Chicago, IL

while the representations of the grandfather and the associations and memories of him are more intangible. The book is an excellent resource for both parents and children struggling with discussions of death, for it shows parents how to respond to their children's questions, and it helps children articulate their thoughts and concerns. Recommended for school and synagogue libraries.

Deborah Abecassis, Cote Saint Luc, Quebec, Canada

Snir, Mirik. *When I First Held You: A Lullaby from Israel*. Illus. by Eleyor Snir. Translated from Hebrew by Mary Jane Shubow. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 32pp. \$9.95. ISBN 978-0-76135-098-9. Reviewed from an ARC. Preschool.

Mirik Snir is the successful author of many Hebrew children's books. *When I First Held You* is her first book published directly in English. According to the publishers, there is no Hebrew version available. One wishes that this had been a dual-language book, increasing its usefulness and its Jewish content.

Although the book is subtitled *A Lullaby from Israel*, it includes no music. Instead, this is a 13-line spoken poem telling a newborn of the wonders that surrounded his/her birth. It features a simple (aa, bb) rhyming pattern:

Mountains bowed down,
Rivers ran 'round.
Trees were drumming,
Flowers strumming,
Grasses humming.

LIFE CYCLE

Abraham, Michelle Shapiro. *Where is Grandpa Dennis?* Illus. by Janice Fried. New York: URJ Press, 2009. 32pp. \$13.95. ISBN: 978-0-8074-1083-7. Ages 4–8.

Where is Grandpa Dennis? is an ongoing, gentle conversation between mother and daughter about death. As the daughter narrates, the reader learns that Grandpa Dennis was her mother's father, and he died when her mother was in high school. The daughter relates the stories and comments her mother makes about Grandpa Dennis—what he was like, how the daughter is similar to him, what he used to say. The reader sees the daughter watching her mother's reactions to his memory and trying to understand who this man so important to her mother is, and most significantly, where he is now. "Grandpa Dennis is dead, my mom said, you know that. I know, I said, but where is he?" Through talking to her daughter, the mother explains the Jewish customs of placing a rock on the gravestone when visiting the cemetery and lighting a *yahrzeit* candle. Several times in response to her daughter's, "So where is Grandpa Dennis *really*?" she turns the question back to her daughter and asks for her opinion. They discuss the idea that Grandpa Dennis feels at once very close, watching over them, and very far away—the concept of a soul and its relation to God. Ultimately, though, the mother's answer to "Where is Grandpa Dennis?" is "I'm not really sure. Everyone has ideas, but no one knows for sure."

The illustrations support the sense and emotion of the text, depicting the mother and daughter and their home concretely,

Comicbook Siddur Ad

This pattern continues throughout the book, creating a rhythm that this reviewer found monotonous. Because one must naturally pause in turning each page, the vocal rest further emphasizes the sing-song quality of the verse. The paintings that illustrate the book are stylized full-page images of nature and animals, featuring large areas of rich, muted colors in unusual combinations and patterns. The title page and last page show a pretty young mother before and after the happy birth.

At the end of the book there is space for the newborn's photo, and lines where parents may write the date and time of their child's birth. On the endpaper there is a quote in Hebrew and English from Rabbi Nachman of Breslov: "The day you were born was the day God decided that the world could not exist without you." This is the only Jewish element in the book, but it is powerful. *When I First Held You* might serve as a new baby book gift. It is appropriate for one- to three-year-olds, and parents. An optional purchase for Jewish nursery schools and kindergartens.

Naomi Morse, Silver Spring, MD

VALUES

Black, Joe. *Boker Tov! Good Morning!* Illus. by Rick Brown. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 24pp. \$8.95. ISBN: 978-0-7613-3950-2. Includes an audio CD. Preschool.

"Boker tov" means "good morning" in Hebrew. *Boker Tov* is a lovely preschool story with an accompanying CD sung by Rabbi Joe Black on guitar. The story, written in rhyme, is in easy readable print for emergent readers. This sweet story shows children from all ethnic backgrounds waking up and greeting the day with smiles on their faces. The author shows children with positive spirits, thanking God for food, the earth, the sunshine and the surprise of each new morning. The story illustrates daily morning routines that preschoolers can easily relate to. The children come from all ethnic backgrounds, doing all sorts of things like brushing their teeth, eating breakfast, getting dressed, and going to school. The brightly-colored, acrylic illustrations depict children going to school and being with friends. This is not an educational resource for teachers, but it is a wonderful read-along story with a very catchy tune that is easy to hum along to. While *Boker Tov* does not introduce morning prayers, it does try to express a positive attitude about starting new each day and being thankful. Rabbi Joe Black is a congregational rabbi, singer, and songwriter. This is a great book to have in a Jewish preschool.

Lisa Katz, Lefferts Jewish Community Library, San Rafael, CA

Brooks, Jeremy. *Let There Be Peace: Prayers from Around the World.* Illus. by Jude Daly. London: Frances Lincoln, 2009. Unpagged. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-84507-530-9. Grades K-5.

The Reverend Jeremy Brooks is an English vicar and Jude Daly is an award-winning illustrator whom Jewish librarians may remember as the illustrator of *To Everything There Is a Season*. The prayers they have selected and decorated come from around the world, from religious traditions as diverse as Native American to England's Lindisfarne Christian Community, from one written several thousand years ago by Lao-Tzu, the founder of Taoism, to several written during the Bosnian conflict of the 1990s. None

of the prayers are sourced and their origins as stated are sometimes vague, such as "Traditional prayer, Africa." Religious and ethnic diversity is the selection principle, demonstrating Brooks's contention in the Introduction that "we all pray for peace." Those interested in books of Jewish content will want to know if this attractive collection has any and the answer is, barely. Not a single prayer from the great body of Jewish literature on peace is included. The only prayer of specifically Jewish content is one said, with dubious accuracy, to have been "found beside the body of a Jewish child in a German concentration camp" in 1945. It asks for forgiveness for the Nazi murderers and is matched by a striking full-page illustration of a child crouched behind a barbed wire fence, guarded by a soldier. The only other Jewish reference appears in a couple of pictures of a Muslim girl and a Jewish boy who seem to be friends. Despite the appeal of the subject and the attractiveness of the format, this is a book that Judaic librarians can reject without feeling the least little twinge of PC-inspired angst.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

These titles, reviewed in the Adult Readers section, may also be of interest to teenagers:

BOOKS

Feiler, Bruce. *America's Prophet: Moses and The American Story.* New York: William Morrow, 2009

Ibn Ezra, Abraham. *The Sabbath Epistle of Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (Iggeret haShabbat).* Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav, 2009

Lipman, Dov Moshe. *Time-Out: Sports Stories as a Game Plan for Spiritual Success.* Jerusalem: Devora, 2008

VIDEO

From Life to Life: Death and Mourning in the Jewish Tradition/Jewish Death and Mourning. Clarksburg, NJ: Alden films, 2008

Book of Life Podcasts

Be sure to tune in to Heidi Estrin's Book of Life podcasts at jewishbooks.blogspot.com/. She will soon be posting her recent interview with Lisa Silverman, talking about the authors who attended this year's Jewish Book Network meeting, and who will be touring during Jewish Book Month.

Mark Your Calendars for the 2010 AJL Convention

July 4 - 7

Seattle, Washington



Learn, share, meet authors,
connect with colleagues.

Dodge salmon, sample fresh
fruit, go up in the Space Needle,
see Mt. Rainier.

Take the local Jewish history
tour, visit the renowned Seattle Public Library.

Experience the elegance of the
Fairmont Olympic Hotel in downtown
Seattle.

Enjoy the keynote address by book
maven, NPR personality, and model
for the shushing librarian doll,
Nancy Pearl!



Call for Papers and Proposals

AJL is soliciting proposals for workshops, panel discussions or presentations on any aspect of Judaic librarianship or scholarship 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 collections, cataloging and classification, digital and electronic sources, technology, and local Jewish history. A special focus this year will be on advocacy, technology and sustainability.

Submissions should include:

- Author's name, address, affiliation, telephone number, fax number & email
- Brief author biography
- Title of presentation
- Summary of proposal
- Specific technology equipment or access needed

All submissions must be received by December 1, 2009. They may be submitted electronically to ajlseattle@gmail.com or mailed to: Toby Harris, c/o Temple Beth Am, 2632 NE 80th St, Seattle, WA 98115.

Proposals will be reviewed by the Program Planning Group composed of national and local AJL convention committee members. Notification will be made in January of 2010.

Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee Membership

KATHE PINCHUCK

The Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee has appointed three new members, whose four-year terms will begin in January 2010. The committee benefits from the diverse membership of AJL, and with the unique talents and experience of the incoming members, we are confident that the high standards of the committee will continue.

Debbie Feder is the director of the Library Resource Center at Ida Crown Jewish Academy in Chicago. An active member of the Chicago AJL Chapter, Debbie holds a bachelor of arts in elementary education, and she earned her MLS from Dominican University. Debbie, who has also worked at the Skokie Public Library, is a lover of children's literature, first enthralled by the *All-of-a-Kind-Family* series.

Aimee Lurie comes to the committee with experience in a variety of Jewish libraries, including the Temple-Tifereth Israel, the Fairmount Temple, and the Agnon School, as well as in public libraries. Aimee has reviewed books for the *AJL Newsletter* and *VOYA*. She writes, "reviewing books is every librarian's professional responsibility, and it has always played a critical role in my personal professional development. Not only does it play an invaluable role in collection development, I have found it is the best way to keep your finger on the pulse of publishing trends."

Aimee is active in the Cleveland chapter of AJL and holds a bachelor of arts in English from Ohio State University and an MLS from Kent State University.

Nancy Silverrod is a librarian at San Francisco Public Library. Nancy graduated *summa cum laude* from Eastern Michigan University and earned her MILS at the University of Michigan. Nancy states that, "My reading over the years led me to a deeper connection and involvement with Judaism, and the opportunity to recommend high quality books to interested readers is one of the things I most enjoy about my work."

Freelance writer Barbara Bietz, of Oak Park, California, will assume the chairmanship. She is the author of *Like a Maccabee* (Yaldah Publishing, 2006), and her work has appeared in numerous publications. Barbara is a frequent reviewer for *Jewish Book World* and the *AJL Newsletter*.

The 2010-2011 Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee will also include Debbie Colodny, Rita Soltan, Kathe Pinchuck (past chair), and Rachel Kamin (compiler). Heidi Estrin will assist the committee as AJL public relations liaison.

Tremendous *harkaras hatov* (appreciation) to Susan Berson and Kathy Bloomfield, who have served their four-year terms on the committee with distinction.

Host-a-Jewish-Book-Author.com Moves to the Center for Jewish Culture and Creativity

Host-a-Jewish-Book-Author.com, a free Web source of information on authors of Jewish-themed books worldwide, has been acquired by the Center for Jewish Culture and Creativity. Launched in late 2007 by AJL member and literary agent Anna Olswanger, it was selected as one of the "101 Best Websites for Writers for 2009" by *Writers Digest* magazine.

"I have wanted to take this site to the next level for some time," Olswanger commented. "Joining with the Center for Jewish Culture and Creativity lets us combine the proverbial *strength with strength*." The president of the Center, Bob Goldfarb, added, "This great resource helps us continue our historic commitment to creative artists, with technology that makes it possible for us to serve them better."

Host-a-Jewish-Book-Author.com is searchable by name, location, and genre. Each listing includes the participating author's city, book titles, lecture topics, areas of travel, and contact information. Also available are links to author interviews and podcasts. The site is designed to make it easy for bookstores, libraries, and

other organizations to arrange programs with authors, especially around the Jewish holidays.

Over 75 authors are participating in the Host a Jewish Book Author site, including Maggie Anton, Ron Arons, Haggai Carmon, Poopa Dweck, Michelle Edwards, Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins, Barbara Kessel, Sarah Lamstein, Gregory Levey, Anna Levine, Sonia Levitin, Bob Morris, Rosalind Reisner, Rabbi Dennis Ross, Sylvia Rouss, Arthur Schwartz, Steve Sheinkin, and Yale Strom.

The Center for Jewish Culture and Creativity envisions making all participating authors "Center Artists" of the CJCC. It is also interested in adapting the software to launch similar services for visual artists, filmmakers, playwrights, and musicians.

The CJCC undertakes projects that address Jewish identity and Jewish community through the medium of arts and culture. "The acquisition of www.Host-a-Jewish-Book-Author.com will contribute to the growth of the organization and its existing Website www.jewishcreativity.org," noted Goldfarb.

Reviews of Titles for Adults

EDITED BY MERRILY F. HART AND DANIEL SCHEIDE

NONFICTION

Agushewitz, Reuven. *Principles of Philosophy*. Translated from the Yiddish by Mark Steiner. New York: Michael Scharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press, 2008. 196 p. \$25.00 (ISBN 978-1-60280-024-3).

Rabbi Reuven Agushewitz (1897-1950) published three philosophical works in Yiddish: *Ancient Greek Philosophy* (1935), *Principles of Philosophy* (1942), and *Faith and Heresy* (1948). Mark Steiner, professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, translated the third volume into English in 2006, and now presents the second volume. Both Steiner and Princeton University professor Harry Frankfurt claim that, in spite of Agushewitz's classical view of philosophy, he made original contributions to the debate concerning free will.

Principles of Philosophy is written in a dialogue format. It has four main chapters: What is Philosophy?; The Influence of Unity; The Influence of Diversity; and Progress. The book includes a preface by Norman Lamm, a translator's introduction, a general index and a specialized index of biblical and rabbinic sources.

Agushewitz directs his book towards the general public. Considering this, one must speculate about the uniqueness of the Jewish community that demands such a book in Yiddish. Agushewitz expresses his ideas clearly. Marc Steiner's translation is eloquent. He includes important Yiddish terms, transliterated in parentheses, throughout the text. In this way the flavor of the original book is well preserved, especially for Yiddish speakers.

Principles of Philosophy is an interesting addition to the philosophy collection in synagogue and academic Jewish libraries.

Nira Glily Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Aiken, Lisa. *The Baal Teshuva Survival Guide*. Beverly Hills, CA: Rossi Publications, 2009. 413 p. \$21.99 (ISBN 978-0-97796-293-8).

Psychologist Lisa Aiken provides extensive advice for *baalei teshuva*, assimilated Jews who are exploring and embracing Orthodox Judaism. Chapters are divided by topics pertinent to the "returnee" and cover everything from personal motivations, e.g., desire for the moral and spiritual life, to practical concerns, e.g., choosing a suitable synagogue, yeshiva, or community. There are also valuable tips for traditional-style dating, working in the outside world, child-rearing, and dealing with non-observant and non-Jewish family members.

The author, herself a *baalat teshuva*, is unwaveringly supportive of Orthodoxy while acknowledging its diversity, from the modern to the Hasidic, and the choices according to individual needs and personality types. While a Torah lifestyle can be highly therapeutic, she warns of using it as an escape from responsibility or serious problems, and of being misled by untrained or insensitive rabbis. She is also aware of the uncomfortable situations so many newcomers encounter. There are anecdotes about

confounding secular friends and parents with rituals, along with ways to finesse friction.

Appendices list programs, resources, and yeshivot, and offer an interesting history of the *baal teshuva* movement. More vigorous editing might have been helpful in some spots. Nevertheless, *The Baal Teshuva Survival Guide* is highly rewarding. It is not only timely, given the mass trend of religious return and revival, but long overdue. Recommended for adult Jewish libraries; indispensable for outreach professionals.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

Branch, Robin Gallaher. *Jeroboam's Wife: The Enduring Contribution of the Old Testament's Least Known Women*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009. 270 p. \$16.95 (ISBN 978-1-56563-745-0).

The book's title immediately reveals that this is a work of feminist biblical scholarship. The book analyzes the roles of seven different women in the Bible, yet the author's methods would be equally applicable to minor male biblical characters. The author reaches four conclusions: the characters studied shed light on the nature of specific major male characters; these insights contribute to the development of the plot; said plot furthers the theological and political development of Israel; and the limited information about the characters is still sufficient to allow us to know the character.

Personally, I was impressed by the acuity of the analyses. Study of the Bible is rendered difficult by the paucity of sources and Branch knows how to use these sources to their fullest extent. The author's asides enrich. I certainly did not know that Abigail, David's wife, was allotted 153 words in one speech and that this is the longest speech by a woman in the Bible. This book is a good piece of feminist criticism but the male reader can also learn a lot from the author. I didn't understand why the book is named after Jeroboam's wife. To my mind, the most significant character in the book was Rizpah and she was the only woman allotted two chapters. If I had written the book, I would have paid the most attention to Abigail, who didn't even deserve a full chapter. This stimulating book is most certainly meant to be controversial. Go ahead and enjoy it!

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Bridge, Steven L. *Getting the Old Testament: What it Meant to Them, What it Means to Us*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009. 227 p. \$14.95 (ISBN 978-1-59856-045-9).

The author's aim is to make the Bible relevant for the modern reader. Five chapters discuss the Torah (the Pentateuch), and three chapters each are devoted to the Prophets and the Hagiographa. This book was written for members of every faith and could be highly useful for a reader who has not studied the Bible in depth.

Most Orthodox Jews and fundamentalist Christians, however, will find the book problematic, although it bears the Catholic *nihil obstat*. The author accepts the "documentary hypothesis" (that the Pentateuch was redacted from a number of different sources

at a fairly late date) unconditionally and uses it extensively. While the book is entertaining and well written, its usefulness is limited by the author's assumptions. I was sorry that the author did not use a more neutral approach, thereby making the very important things that he has to say appropriate for a much wider circle of readers.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Diner, Hasia R. *We Remember With Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945-1962*. New York: New York University Press, 2009. 527 p. \$29.95 (ISBN 978-0-8147-1993-0).

Only a seasoned, mature, and brilliant scholar such as Professor Diner could take it upon herself to challenge long-accepted beliefs maintained by an entire school of historians who preceded her. They had agreed that, in the years immediately following the cataclysmic events of World War II, the Jews of the United States lived a "conspiracy of silence" on the subject of the Holocaust. According to those scholars, the Eichmann trial and then the Six-Day War, which threatened the very existence of the State of Israel, resulted in a huge change in the attitudes of American Jewry.

In seven years of research Diner collected 24 file cabinets full of evidence to the contrary. She states that "all who have participated in this discussion, from whatever political position, have erred grievously. They have built their arguments on a thin base of evidence, gleaned from few or no sources. Their descriptions hardly reflected the breadth and complexity of postwar American Jewry."

With these scathing words Diner goes to battle and presents a plethora of evidence to the contrary in order to put to rest the myth of "the collective amnesia." She describes the many American Jewish organizations and individuals that acted to memorialize and publicize the events of the Holocaust and to assist survivors who came to the United States. But she also explains why and how the myth developed. Hasia Diner's work is a very important, critical addition to the massive output of Holocaust research. Any library with a significant collection on the subject should include this book.

Michlean L. Amir, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC

Feiler, Bruce. *America's Prophet: Moses and The American Story*. New York: William Morrow, 2009. 368 p. \$26.99 (ISBN 978-0-06057-488-8).

According to the book jacket, "The Exodus story is America's story and Moses is our real founding father." This is the author's theme. Beginning with the Pilgrims, the author describes the Sabbath services and emphasizes the importance of the Bible to the colonials. The new Americans compared the difficulties faced by the Israelites to their voyage to the New World. Even their laws and rules of conduct came from Deuteronomy, and the supreme law was the Ten Commandments. The Liberty Bell has an inscription from Leviticus, and Moses has been referenced by preachers, politicians, and historical figures ever since. This enjoyable book should be in all our libraries, and could be used as a text for students of Jewish American history.

Lee Wixman, Boynton Beach. FL

Galchinsky, Michael. *Jews and Human Rights: Dancing at Three Weddings*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008. 255 p. \$29.95 (ISBN 978-0-7425-5267-8).

Since World War II, Jews, working alone or through NGOs (non-governmental organizations) have been active in the international human rights movement. While many books have been written on the biblical and rabbinic context for Jewish involvement in social action, Galchinsky focuses instead on sociological and political motives. In particular, he examines the interplay of three different ideals that have influenced Jewish activism: international human rights, Jewish nationalism, and domestic pluralism.

Galchinsky presents three case studies of how these ideals enhanced or conflicted with one another when American Jews addressed freeing Soviet Jews, responding to non-Jewish genocides, and reacting to Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. In the latter part of the book, the author looks at Israeli Jews' views of human rights in Israel and Israel's participation in international human rights treaties. The book includes extensive notes, bibliography, and index. Recommended for academic libraries.

Sheryl Stahl, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, CA

Hellner-Eshed, Melila. *A River Flows from Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*. Translated from the Hebrew by Nathan Wolski. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009. 469 p. \$60.00 (ISBN 978-0-80475-939-7).

This is a scholarly, clearly-written and engaging book on the Zohar, "the jewel in the crown of Jewish mystical literature." The Zohar is a mystical commentary on the Torah, ascribed to a rabbi of the second century, Shimon bar Yochai (Rashbi). Written in Aramaic, it was first publicized in Spain in the 13th century, by Moses de Leon.

Hellner-Eshed's book is divided into four parts, each dealing successively with the heroes of the Zohar. *A River Flows from Eden* is almost didactic but it is written with much poetic sensitivity. The translation has shortened the text of the Hebrew original, at least in one instance, in the "Overview of Zohar Research." The English text combines exposition of facts with hypotheses and inferences, all supported by translated quotes from the Zohar.

Most chapters begin with an introduction. For example in the chapter on the Companions, the author studies in detail every term used in the Zohar to describe them. She then discusses the role of the Companions in the literary composition of the Zohar and their importance to understanding whether or not the Zohar is really the product of a group of Spanish Jewish mystics. The author is well grounded in the current scholarship in and outside of Israel, presenting the research of Moshe Idel, Yehuda Liebes, Arthur Green, Daniel C. Matt, Ronit Meroz, Haviva Pedaya, and Elliot R. Wolfson. This review does not do justice to the richness of the footnotes, especially the references to literary authors—H.N. Bialik, Michal Govrin, Itzik Manger, Dahlia Ravikovitch, and Zelda—and to mystical experience in other traditions. The book contains a bibliography and indexes: one of names and book titles, the second of subjects and terms, the third of works quoted. Highly recommended to all interested individuals and a required purchase for all academic libraries, despite its hefty price.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD

Hirsch, Sherre. *We Plan, God Laughs: What to Do When Life Hits You Over the Head.* New York: Doubleday, 2008. 180 p. \$12.99 (ISBN 978-0-38552-362-2).

It happens to all of us: as much as we dream of and plan how we want our lives to turn out at each stage, there will always be something getting in the way. Using an outline of ten steps, Rabbi Hirsch advises, can help to change one's way of thinking of these life goals from a perspective of "it's the end of the world if things don't go my way" to one of faith in God, finding His presence in everything, and the knowledge that He will guide each of us on the right path. These suggestions include being flexible in expectations while still being true to oneself, holding oneself in as high esteem as God does, and taking charge of life instead of living passively. Hirsch's blend of modern wit combined with examples from the Torah and practical Judaism make this book hard to put down. Recommended for all types of Jewish libraries.

Shoshana Hurwitz, Hurwitz Indexing, Ma'ale Adumim, Israel

Horovitz, Ahron. *Jerusalem: Footsteps Through Time.* Jerusalem, Israel: Feldheim Publishers, 2009. 333p. (ISBN: 978-1-59826-251-3).

This paperback edition of Mr. Horovitz's book is a newly revised and expanded version of his 2009 full-format book of the same title. It contains 10 Torah study tours of the Old City. The author details the connections between the physical city and the sacred texts that relate to it. The book is fascinating reading but it is not a useful guidebook. It lacks adequate maps and a subject index, and it is quite heavy, having been printed on glossy paper. It is recommended as a supplementary selection for public, synagogue, and upper school libraries.

Marion Stein, Abraham Joshua Heschel High School, New York, NY

Ibn Ezra, Abraham. *The Sabbath Epistle of Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (Iggeret haShabbat).* Translated and annotated by Mordechai S. Goodman. Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav, 2009. 84, [2], 49 p. \$39.50 (ISBN 978-1-60280-111-0).

In this open letter, Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) offers a defense of the traditional view that the Sabbath begins with dusk on Friday evening and ends on Saturday evening. He writes in response to the interpretation that the days of Genesis 1 begin with day-break and end the next morning. Ibn Ezra's work consists of three main parts, the first expounding the mathematics of the year, the second of the month, and the third of the day, concluding with an exegesis of the relevant verses in Genesis.

The Sabbath Epistle will appeal to a variety of readers. Those interested in classical biblical commentary will find much food for thought. Mathematicians will be delighted with Ibn Ezra's discussion of the calendar and of Goodman's thorough explanation of his various proofs. Students of the Jewish Middle Ages will find in Ibn Ezra's *Epistle* a chance to better understand a figure who was at one and the same time immersed in and open to the best scholarship of his age, and also a pious Jew and lover of the Sabbath.

Goodman's edition includes the complete Hebrew text, based on both printed editions and manuscripts, a translation, and prefaces. The Hebrew text includes footnotes focusing on other relevant works of Ibn Ezra, while the English translation includes

many explanatory notes. I highly recommend this edition of Ibn Ezra's *Sabbath Epistle* for all advanced collections, as well as selectively for high schools. The scholarship is excellent and the book is well laid out and moderately priced.

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

Isaac, Frederick. *Jews of Oakland and Berkeley.* San Francisco, CA: Arcadia Press (Images of America), 2009. 177 p. \$21.99 (ISBN 978-0-73857-033-4).

The cities of Oakland and Berkeley often end up in the shadow of glamorous San Francisco. Both have lively Jewish communities dating back to the 1860s. Fred Isaac, archivist at Oakland's Temple Sinai, the oldest synagogue in the East Bay, has created a photographic history of the communities in these two cities. Oakland's community is older. Its members purchased land for Home of Eternity Cemetery in 1865 and founded First Hebrew Congregation in 1870. Berkeley's community developed a bit later, as Jew moved north to the home of the University of California. Using archival photographs from the Western Jewish History Center at the Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley, Mr. Isaac shows readers how the communities grew. He also tells the story of the early leaders and the institutions they formed. The book continues into the present with information about new synagogue buildings, kosher restaurants and food stores, and community leaders. Robert Alter, Michael Chabon, and Marcia Falk are a few of the illustrious members of this community. An index would have been helpful, but the book is still a useful addition to local history collections in academic, public, and synagogue libraries.

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

Küng, Hans and Walter Homolka. *How to Do Good and Avoid Evil: A Global Ethic from the Sources of Judaism.* Translated by John Bowden. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2009. 202 p. \$19.99 (ISBN 978-1-59473-255-3).

In 1993, Hans Küng, a Roman Catholic priest, presented a "Declaration toward a Global Ethic" to the Parliament of the World's Religions. This Declaration laid out six responsibilities for people of all religions: no new global order without a new global ethic; every human being must be treated humanely; commitment to a culture of nonviolence and respect for life; commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order; commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life in truthfulness; and commitment to a culture of equal rights and a partnership between men and women.

In this book, Küng and Rabbi Homolka connect each of these responsibilities to a Jewish principle or "core ethic." There is a chapter for each core ethic, which begins with an essay by a Jewish scholar including Abraham J. Heschel, Leo Baeck, and Judith Plaskow. Each essay is followed by a section of primary sources with selections from the Tanakh, Talmud and other rabbinic writing, as well as excerpts from modern Jewish scholars. The book ends with a copy of the Declaration with an introduction.

The authors' lofty goal is to encourage dialogue among religious groups in order to construct the foundation necessary to creating a better world. The book is written with both Jews and Christians in mind. Küng and Homolka want to show Christians

that there are principles within Judaism that Christians can relate to and to show Jews that Judaism can have universal messages and appeal. While this volume probably does not contain any new Jewish material, the framework would make it useful for communities or patrons doing outreach to the non-Jewish community. Recommended for academic libraries and for synagogue/community libraries interested in interfaith dialogue.

Sheryl Stahl, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, CA

Lehman, David. *A Fine Romance: Jewish Songwriters, American Songs.* New York: Nextbook; Schocken (Jewish Encounters), 2009. 249 p. \$22.00 (ISBN 978-0-8052-4250-8).

This is the twelfth book in the *Jewish Encounters* series, a collaboration between Schocken and Nextbook. David Lehman is neither a musician nor a historian, but a poet. This book is thus a very personal take on a phenomenon that has already received exhaustive coverage—the fact that most of the primary composers of the 20th century American standards songbook before the rock-and-roll era were Jewish. Lehman writes engagingly of his New York childhood and of a “dream synagogue” where Jerome Kern and Harold Arlen are his adopted uncles. The book is full of anecdotes culled from the many authoritative volumes on the subject and dutifully footnoted, although there is no bibliography or index.

The theme is the Jewishness of the composers—the Jewish presence in their music and in their lives and whether they embraced or rejected Judaism. Aficionados of the music love to discuss such things, but youngsters and newcomers who haven’t heard the songs are not likely to appreciate Lehman’s analyses. This book is recommended for libraries that are buying the entire *Jewish Encounters* series, and for those building in-depth collections of Jewish music history and criticism.

Beth Dwoskin, Proquest, Ann Arbor, MI

Lipman, Dov Moshe. *Time-Out: Sports Stories as a Game Plan for Spiritual Success.* Jerusalem: Devora, 2008. 175 p. \$16.95 (ISBN 978-1-93268-796-5).

This book is one of several recent releases on the relationship between Jews and sports. Like many secular books that link famous people or fictional characters (Lincoln, Attila the Hun, Winnie the Pooh, etc.) to rules for life and management, it ties events and people in the sports world to Jewish ethical teachings. Each of Lipman’s 30 chapters begins by telling a story about a person or a team. The stories—many of which are quite famous—come from a cross-section of sports, including baseball, basketball, football, hockey, boxing, and soccer. Only a few of the characters are Jewish. The author links the sporting event to Jewish ethical teachings in the Torah, Talmud, or other writings. Some of the lessons validate the decisions in the stories, while other discussions examine why the athletes made the wrong decision. The overall sense is not of condemnation, but exploration of important issues and recognition of Jewish opportunities in all aspects of life. The book ends with an essay by Joshua Schwager, who played football at Penn State but is now living an observant Jewish life.

Despite its apparent frivolity, *Time Out* is not a trivial book. It can, in fact, have value in a wide variety of settings. It can certainly be used by day schools; the conversational style is ap-

propriate for middle school and above. Both students and rabbis can use the examples in sermons, and it can be read by adults for fun and Jewish learning purposes. Regrettably, only a few women athletes are profiled in the book.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Litvak, Meir and Esther Webman. *From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. 435 p. \$30.00 (ISBN 978-0-23170-074-0).

In this study, Meir Litvak and Esther Webman, both of Tel-Aviv University, examine the political, ideological, scholarly, and popular Arab responses to the Holocaust. The book includes four historical case studies (reluctantly involved “bystanders,” 1945-1948; the reparations agreement between West Germany and Israel, 1951-1953; the Eichmann affair, 1961-1962; and the Catholic Church and the Holocaust) as well as specific themes (Holocaust denial, justification of the Holocaust, equating Zionism to Nazism, the alleged Nazi-Zionist cooperation, perceptions of Nazi Germany, the Palestinian Catastrophe [*Nakbah*] versus the Holocaust, and the new Arab discourse on the Holocaust). The study is based on extensive Western and Israeli archival sources; the media (mostly Arab); books and articles in Arabic, Hebrew and Western languages; and Web sites.

The authors’ analysis is provided within the broader historical context, with special reference to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian problem, and Western involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. The study shows the connection between Arab attitudes to the Holocaust and world and regional affairs and in particular to developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is an important contribution to studies on perceptions of the Holocaust as well as on Arab views of the Holocaust, Zionism, and Israel.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton NJ

Loewe, Yehuda. *The Lion Cub of Prague: Thought, Kabbala, Hashkafa from Gur Arye; The Maharal of Prague; Genesis.* Translated and compiled by Moshe David Kuhr. New York: Devora Publishing, 2008. 224 p. \$24.95. (ISBN-978-1-934440-12-4).

The selections in this volume are designed to serve as “nuclei for divrei Torah at the Shabbos table.” So says Rabbi Abraham Twerski, whose approbation appears at the beginning of the book. Kuhr has selected a group of passages from the first two chapters of Genesis as his subject. He quotes the Torah text, then the Rashi and then the Gur Arye on the Rashi. Some of the explanations are clear. Others are very complex if not confusing. Readers would benefit from a strong background in rabbinics. This publication is timely as we are celebrating the 400th anniversary of the Yahrzeit of The Maharal of Prague this year. In fact, a special exhibit now on view at the Jewish Museum in Prague is devoted to him and the Golem. This book may be useful in large synagogue libraries.

Marion Stein, Abraham Joshua Heschel High School, New York, NY



Doll Shop Downstairs Ad

Mendelsohn, Ezra, ed. *Jews and the Sporting Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (Studies in Contemporary Jewry, Vol. XXIII), 2008. 289 p. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-0-19538-291-4).

Ezra Mendelsohn jokes in the preface that readers may think “that the editors ... are now reduced to scraping the very bottom of the barrel” in choosing sports for their 23rd annual volume of essays. In fact, the volume has a full range of articles on both well-known and arcane topics.

The nine academic articles in the symposium span a wide range of topics. The first, by Sander L. Gilman, discusses the role of baseball in the integration of Jewish immigrants to America. Jeffrey Gurock’s essay analyzes the publicity surrounding the American tour of an Austrian soccer team in 1926. Tamir Sorek’s “Why did Beit Shean let Betar win?” uses a controversial soccer match to explore the ethnic issues behind sports affiliation in Israel. The book also includes two review essays, and reviews of recent scholarly books. Notable here are Jonathan Sarna’s *American Judaism* and Hasia Diner’s *Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000*, both reviewed by Lloyd P. Gartner. *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* is an important annual publication and is recommended for academic collections.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Rackman, Emanuel. *A Modern Orthodox Life: Sermons and Columns of Rabbi Emanuel Rackman*. Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav, 2008. 308 p. \$ 25.00 (ISBN 978-1-60280-023-6).

A Modern Orthodox Life is a compilation of 13 sermons and 62 columns written by Rabbi Emanuel Rackman (1910-2008). Rabbi Rackman’s illustrious career included serving as chancellor of Bar Ilan University, rabbi of the Fifth Avenue Synagogue in New York, provost of Yeshiva University, and associate editor of *Tradition*, a journal published by the Rabbinical Council of America. The varied and interesting topics of the sermons, dating from 1950 to 1963, include “Judaism as a Social Religion,” “Days of Awe,” “Selflessness” and “The Sin of Habit.” Each sermon is about five pages long and discusses issues that are still relevant today. The reader can learn much from Rabbi Rackman’s well-written, insightful columns (1971-1997), whose themes include “Jews Racists?,” “A Step Toward Bridging the Religious-Secular Gap” and “Retirement: The Ages-old Dilemma.” A comprehensive index is included. *A Modern Orthodox Life* is recommended for synagogue libraries of all denominations, because of Rabbi Rackman’s eloquent discussions of important Jewish themes and values.

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

Robinson, Thomas A. *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways: Early Jewish-Christian Relations*. Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers, 2009. 285 p. \$27.95 (ISBN 978-1-59856-323-8).

The author has produced a well-researched work on the relations between Jews and Christians in Antioch in the first century. The first of the six chapters describes first-century Antioch as a major metropolis with a significant Jewish minority. The second chapter discusses the attraction of gentiles to Judaism due to its custom of strong community ties. The third chapter covers some issues affecting both Jews and Christians, such as taxation of Jews after the revolt of 66-73 C.E. and the rise of gnosticism among

Christians. The fourth chapter exposes the anti-Jewish sentiment that existed in Antioch dating back to the Maccabean revolt. The fifth chapter explores the letters written by Ignatius of Antioch promoting Christian unity, and the last chapter delineates research on the clear distinction between Jews and Christians as religious communities. Students of the history of this era should find this a valuable resource. The book concentrates heavily on Christian history, and would find a good home in a research library that collects in this subject. It is not recommended for congregation or school libraries.

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

Roth, Jeff. *Jewish Meditation Practices for Everyday Life: Awakening Your Heart, Connecting with God*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2009. 209 p. \$18.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-397-2).

“This is a book about waking up ... This is a book about our own happiness and the happiness of all other beings ... I found meditation to be the most direct path to the mystical component of spiritual experience that I had been seeking ... I began practicing meditation ... Working with the practices described in this book allowed me to deepen my own understanding through direct experience of what the Jewish mystics were teaching.” Author Jeff Roth is the co-founder of Elat Chayyim in Accord, New York (now the Elat Chayyim Center for Jewish Spirituality at the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center, in Falls Village, Connecticut), where he served as executive director and spiritual director for thirteen years. He has written a very readable book, blending personal anecdotes and easy-to-follow exercises. In “Beginning a Practice,” Roth distinguishes between concentration practice and awareness practice and gives four exercises and techniques. In “Embracing the Divine,” Roth describes what he means by the word “God,” drawing on early Jewish thought, traditional texts, and later kabbalistic and Hasidic concepts. His ideas are also influenced by his exposure to secular life, to other spiritual traditions, and to scientific explorations of the nature of the universe. The author presents diagrams he first learned from Lawrence Kushner. Discussing “Prayer and Meditation,” Roth offers twelve phrases with which to meditate. Throughout the book, Roth refers to the wisdom he learned from his teachers, most prominently from Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Sylvia Boorstein. For the interested individual, the well-funded synagogue library, and the comprehensive college library.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.

Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman, and Netanel Miles-Yepez. *A Heart Afire: Stories and Teachings of the Early Hasidic Masters*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2009. 406 p. \$45 (ISBN 978-0-8276-0884-9).

For those whose spiritual paths have led them to Hasidism, this volume will be a welcome resource. While it can be read on its own, it properly stands as the second part of the editors’ *Wrapped in a Holy Flame*, published in 2003. *Wrapped in a Holy Flame* presents annotated selections from the collected teachings of individual Hasidic masters; *A Heart Afire* offers the reader tales with comment about the lives of the first Hasidic leaders.

The publisher distinguishes clearly between the tales themselves and the editors’ comments by assigning a roman typeface to the stories and a bold cursive typeface to the comments. Ac-

cording to the preface, most of the reminiscences belong to Reb Zalman while the commentary is “fairly evenly distributed” between the two. This is a venerable application of the medium and works well in drawing the reader into dialogue with the text. The editors’ purpose is to help us find ourselves in these stories and to apply them to our own lives.

I heartily recommend *A Heart Afire* both to longtime readers of Reb Zalman and to new seekers. The material assumes a basic understanding of Judaism and of Jewish history, but reads easily and is appropriate to all levels and backgrounds. JPS is to be commended for presenting this book in neat and affordable dress.

Daniel J. Rettberg, *Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, OH*

Shapiro, Rami. *Recovery—The Sacred Art: The Twelve Steps as Spiritual Practice.* Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2009. 200 p. \$16.99. (ISBN 978-1-59473-259-1).

Rabbi Rami Shapiro is one of the leading proponents of spirituality from a Jewish perspective. Like Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, his desire is to expand the awareness of religious techniques and to apply them in other contexts. In this book from SkyLight Paths, the non-Jewish branch of Jewish Lights, he applies his sensitivity and training to the Twelve Step Program.

Shapiro draws on a wide range of ethical and spiritual teachings, including Zen, Hindu, Christian and Jewish sources from around the world and across the ages. In broadening our perspective, the author brings us to realize that addiction is not limited to those suffering from particular destructive activities, like drugs and alcohol. Rather, as he says in the introduction: we all need to “quit playing God.” Chapter 13, “First Step, Last Step” reviews the story of Job, whose faith is tested. In the end though, Job surrenders to the reality that he cannot know the answer to “Why?” When we reach that point, Rabbi Shapiro says, we too can be healed.

Recovery is not meant to be a Jewish book, though there are numerous references to Jewish thinkers. Its intent is to link spiritual teachings to the search for wholeness and *refuah*. Because it has appeal to a wide variety of readers looking for help, it would belong in synagogue libraries, and it could be useful to rabbis.

Fred Isaac, *Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

Wiesel, Elie. *Rashi.* Translated from the French by Catherine Temerson. New York: Nextbook; Schocken (Jewish Encounters), 2009. 128 p. \$22.00 (ISBN 978-0-80524-254-6).

The newest volume of the Jewish Encounters Book Series is a short work by the distinguished writer Elie Wiesel on Rabbi Solomon ben Yitzhak, known as Rashi. Mr. Wiesel, who is a descendent of Rashi, is able to combine facts and legends (which are indicated as such) about the life of the famous French biblical and talmudic commentator. He places Rashi’s life in a historical context and helps the reader understand the period of the First Crusade.

Mr. Wiesel spends much time analyzing some of Rashi’s biblical commentaries on Genesis as a means of revealing his genius. I clearly remember a teacher asking my class—“Why does Rashi ask this question?” In fact, Rashi gives us the answers before we even know to ask the questions. Mr. Wiesel mentions, but does not devote much space to the commentaries, so important to the study of the Talmud that they are printed alongside the

text parallel to Tosafot, the commentaries of Rashi’s sons-in-law and grandsons. He briefly mentions Rashi’s halakhic responsa as well as his position as leader of the Jewish communities of France and Northern Europe. A chronology and a glossary are included, but an index is lacking. References to other works on Rashi are cited both in the text and on a page of “Suggested further reading.”

This book is a worthy addition to the material available on Rashi. It is recommended for both public and synagogue libraries. Students doing research may find it a useful introduction to the man and his oeuvre.

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

Wolfson, Ron. *The Seven Questions You’re Asked in Heaven: Reviewing & Renewing Your Life on Earth.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2009. 152 p. \$16.99 (ISBN 978-158023-407-8).

Dr. Ron Wolfson has written another life-affirming manual for living a prayerful life. This user-friendly and easy-to-read book uses a balance of anecdotal stories, modern scholarship, and wisdom of the ages to present a way to live on this planet today. Asking such questions as “Were you honest” and “Did you have hope in your heart,” Wolfson lays the foundation for answering them by taking immediate action in your life. I highly recommend this book for every Jewish home bookshelf and for the religious bookshelf in non-Jewish homes too.

Leya Booth, *Genius Office Services, Encino, CA*

FICTION

Budman, Mark. *My Life at First Try: A Novel.* Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2008. 218 p. \$24 (ISBN 978-1-582-43400-1).

This is the life story of Alex. Born in Siberia in 1950, he grows up in Russia and, after his marriage, emigrates to the United States. The narrative consists of a series of still-life episodes at different stages in the hero/anti-hero’s life. The scenes are reminiscent of photographs in an album and each one is marked with the date and the author’s age.

There is a wry humor in the book: “I’m happy just because I have fingers to type, eyes to see a monitor and the mouth to complain to tech support.” In his acknowledgments, the author explains that this is not the story of his life as it happened, but represents “a typical man of my background and generation.” This is a pleasant book. Don’t take it seriously, just enjoy it.

Chaim Seymour, *Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

Cameron, Michelle. *The Fruit of Her Hands: The Story of Shira of Ashkenaz.* New York: Pocket Books, 2009. 436 p. \$25.00. (ISBN 978-1-43911-822-1).

Rabbi Meir ben Baruch (1215-1293), known as the Maharam of Rothenberg, was a leading authority on Talmud and Jewish law. What would life have been like for his wife? This first-person narrative describes the life of the fictional Shira, daughter of a noted rabbi, who finds her *bashert* (destined partner) in Meir. She recounts her life growing up in France, her marriage to Rabbi Meir, and her duties as a mother and the wife of the head of a

yeshiva. The superstitions of the period, particularly surrounding childbirth, play a prominent role, as do debates over laws and relationships with non-Jews. Events of Jewish history and outbreaks of anti-Semitism are woven into the story. Nicholas Donin, a Jew who became a Franciscan monk, is interested in Shira and causes friction in her marriage. Rabbi Meir is held for ransom. He refuses to let the Jewish community set a precedent by ransoming him, and he dies in jail.

For the most part, the story of Shira is an enjoyable read. Notably missing is the figure of Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel (the ROSH), who visited Rabbi Meir in jail and wrote down his teachings, as is the fact that Rabbi Meir's body was held for ransom for 14 years until a rich Jew paid for the honor of being buried next to him. Some passages read like a romance novel, and one senses an abiding love and respect between Shira and her husband. Shira's interest in learning is highlighted as markedly different from most women, who were content with housework and gossip. Some of the narrative is drawn out, and the book is reminiscent of the *Rashi's Daughters* series (by Maggie Anton). Shira is a well-developed likeable character, and there is a strong sense of place and time. Synagogue and community center librarians will want this one on the shelf.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Ditfurth, Christian von. *A Paragon of Virtue*. Translated by Helen Atkins. New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2008. 333 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-59264-220-5).

Translated from German, this novel tells the story of a prominent business man whose family is being murdered one by one. The reader is introduced to the victim and the murderer at the same time; the question is not "whodunnit?" but rather how will the heroes catch the villain before his next murder? From the beginning, it is obvious that the murders are revenge for something in the businessman's past. The senior police investigator is aided by his friend, who is an historian specializing in Nazi history. In accordance with the demands of the genre, it is understood that the amateur will be more successful than the professional. The book is a well-written detective novel with convincing characters. Its interest for the Jewish reader lies in the Holocaust material and the attitude of today's Germans to the unpleasant aspects of their history.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Kellerman, Faye. *Blindman's Bluff*. New York: William Morrow, 2009. 400 p. \$25.99 (ISBN 978-0-06170-232-7).

About twenty years ago I wrote my first review for this publication. I reviewed *Sacred and Profane*, Faye Kellerman's second book featuring Rina Lazarus and Peter Decker. Now Peter Decker is a lieutenant in charge of a homicide department. He is awakened at 3 AM. The exclusive Coyote Ranch, home of Guy Kaffey, a billionaire developer, has been invaded, and he and his wife and several employees gunned down. Kaffey is well known for his philanthropy, as he has donated millions to many worthy causes. Peter and his team learn that Kaffey hired many delinquents, taking them out of the slums that breed crime gangs. The search takes the team all over Los Angeles, Southern California, and even into Mexico. This book is a real "grabber"—400 pages, and hard to put down.

I have read and reviewed most of Faye Kellerman's books, and I think this is her masterpiece.

Lee Wixman, Boynton Beach, FL

Rothstein, Gidon. *Cassandra Misreads the Book of Samuel: (And Other Untold Tales of the Prophets)*. Charleston, SC: Booksurge, 2008. 238 p. \$15.99 (ISBN 978-1-43920-825-0).

The stories of the Hebrew Bible are so familiar that their impact on us can be dulled. Gidon Rothstein, an Orthodox rabbi with a doctorate in history, places biblical tales into new contexts, and approaches them from unexpected angles in his new collection of short stories. The title story is told from the perspective of Cassandra, the prophetess of Greek mythology, as she tries to puzzle out her visions of Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel. By viewing the narrative through the eyes of an outsider, we are treated to new insights into Tanakh and human nature, some subtle, some quite dramatic. Unfortunately, Rabbi Rothstein's skills as a writer are not up to the ambitious task he has given himself, particularly in the area of dialogue. The strength of his ideas, however, will keep you thinking about these stories long after you have set the book down.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

SOUND RECORDINGS

Fruchter, Yoshie. *Pitom*. New York: Tzadik, 2008. 1 compact disc. (58 Min.) \$16.98. TZ8128.

Guitarist Yoshie Fruchter refers to his music as "Punkassjew-jazz," though this might not convey the full impact of *Pitom*, his first release. His rhythm section gives a strong rock foundation while violinist Jeremy Brown evokes not only the klezmer tradition, but the 1970s jazz-rock fusion of the Mahavishnu Orchestra. While the tunes show a clear fusion influence and the improvisations tend to be more hard rock oriented, there is little of the musical self-indulgence associated with those genres. The only disappointment here is that bassist Shanir Blumenkrantz, one of the treasures of the current downtown New York scene, isn't given a chance to shine. For the rock fans in your library.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Schiffman, Lawrence H. *The Hebrew Bible*. Boulder, Colo.: Recorded Books, 2008. 7 compact discs (7 hours, 36 min.) \$98.75. (ISBN 978-1-4361-0589-7).

Another gem in Recorded Books' Modern Scholar series. As with his lectures on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Schiffman gives us a survey of current ideas in biblical scholarship. When his own views diverge from those in the larger academic world, he is careful to point this out. Schiffman's presentation is absorbing and will surely inspire listeners to return to the library to pursue these ideas further. While many approaching the Bible from a traditional point of view may not agree with all of the ideas presented here, Schiffman's work may be a better primer than Kugel or Brettler for those encountering academic biblical scholarship for the first time. A good introduction to modern biblical criticism for the wary (and everyone else as well).

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Warshauer, Meira. *Streams in the Desert*. Albany, NY: Albany Records, 2007. 1 compact disc (67 min.) \$17.99 TROY973.

Many of composer Meira Warshauer's compositions have their basis in the Jewish tradition. *Streams in the Desert* showcases three of these works for chorus and orchestra in stunning performances. *Shacharit* is a setting of portions of the traditional morning liturgy in Hebrew and English. The orchestral work *Like Streams in the Desert*, inspired by Psalm 126, was commissioned to honor the 50th anniversary of the state of Israel. Melodies from different Diaspora traditions express a yearning to return to Zion. *Ahavah*, which sets portions of the Shema, dramatizes this prayer, evoking the structure of the original text. Warshauer's text-painting is clever and her orchestration inventive. Her musical language is neo-Romantic, but not regressive, reminiscent of the later, more conservative work of Krzysztof Penderecki. Essential for libraries collecting orchestral music drawing upon Jewish sources.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

VIDEOS

Oppenheimer, Amy Beth. *Faces of Israel: A Discussion about Marriage, State & Religion in the Jewish Homeland*. DVD. 75 min. 2009. \$25.00 review copy; \$400.00 institutional copy.

Faces of Israel, a documentary created by Amy Beth Oppenheimer as part of her undergraduate studies abroad, consists of a diverse group of talking heads discussing marriage. The format appears to be interviews although the questions discussed are not revealed to the audience which makes the answers somewhat confusing. The interviewees include Yona Metzger, the chief Ashkenazi Rabbi of Israel, Hanan Alexander, chairman of the Conservative Rabbinical Seminary's Executive Board, Aviad Orbach, a gay student, and Yuval Sherlow, founder of Tzohar a religious-secular outreach organization. Although the film claims to be impartial it is definitely biased. Ms. Oppenheimer's message is the need for religious pluralism in Israel, civil marriage, and an alternative to the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate. *Faces of Israel* is not recommended, because it is too long, boring and biased.

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

From Life to Life: Death and Mourning in the Jewish Tradition/Jewish Death and Mourning. DVD. 49 min. Clarksburg, NJ: Alden films, 2008 (segments produced in 1969 and 1979). \$49.95.

The DVD begins slowly. We see a teenager sitting in a rabbi's study while the rabbi talks to him about death. The rabbi appears to be unprepared for the conversation: his speech is halting and punctuated with many "uhs." The scene then changes to the chilling, white, intimidating room where the Hevrah Kadishah (sacred burial society) prepares a body for a Jewish burial. A detailed description of washing and dressing a body is given alternately by a man and a woman. Laws pertaining to the funeral and mourning are described in answers to questions by the mourning teenager and a young man standing in a cemetery with the rabbi. Although it appears that the purpose of this DVD

is to explain to a young person what happens before and after a Jewish Orthodox funeral, it is not appropriate for teenagers. The teen mourner needs a personal conversation, not a DVD during such a difficult time. The second 19 minute segment takes place in Rabbi Maurice Lamm's study. Rabbi Lamm, the author of the definitive book on Orthodox laws and customs of death and mourning (*The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*) discusses, among other important issues, proper decorum during a shiva visit. Although parts of the program were very interesting, especially the detailed description of the Hevrah Kadisha's preparations, this reviewer cannot think of an audience who would be interested in watching this DVD.

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

Israeli Librarians' Meeting

YA'AKOV ARONSON

Over fifty librarians from 14 institutions gathered at Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan, Israel, in November, for the first study day of the rejuvenated Judaica Librarians' Group, sponsored by AJL. Geographically the institutions ranged from Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu in the Beit Shean Valley to Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva. Types of institutions represented were the National Library, universities, teachers' colleges, research institutes, yeshivot, high schools, and private firms.

The core of the day's activities was a series of four lectures presented by academics and librarians. Opening the day was a lecture on the cultural significance of Jewish names given by Aaron Demsky of the Jewish History Department of Bar Ilan. He stressed that Jewish names have often reflected knowledge of sources indicating that the Jews were a literate people. One interesting example he mentioned was the name Moshe Mordechai. At first glance there doesn't seem to be any intrinsic relationship between the two historical figures separated by so many years. But such is not the case according to Professor Demsky's research. Moshe was born (and died) on the 7th day of the Hebrew month Adar. His brit milah was eight days later on the 15th day of the month which is Purim, thus the combination of the names.

Two presentations dealt with the new National Library of Israel (NLI). Shmuel Har Noy, director general of NLI, talked about the challenges facing the reorganized National Library of Israel. By law, the former Jewish National and University Library is now independent independent, giving it much more freedom of operation. Part of the arrangement will see Yad haNadiv, the Rothschild charitable foundation, underwriting a new building for NLI. The proposed site is opposite the Knesset. Shmuel outlined plans that will better enable the library to fulfill its national functions.

Elhanan Adler, deputy director of the library for information technology, spoke about ten years of digitization projects at the National Library, all of which were completed under his direction. The materials digitized include manuscripts, recordings, maps, newspapers, Ketubot, posters, and archival material. Elhanan emphasized that NLI decided to undertake projects in

many fields, to gain experience in different techniques. A unique aspect of the NLI program is that many of the items digitized are held by other institutions throughout the world. All of the Talmud manuscripts in the project, for example, are held by institutions other than NLI.

The final lecture of the day entitled Hebrew Discoveries in Christian Depositories was given by Moshe Rosenfeld. One of Moshe's activities is searching worldwide for objects of Jewish importance, be they books or artifacts. His latest project is seeking Hebrew materials in monasteries around the world and he presented a fascinating description of his experiences.

Included in the program was a brief memorial to Dr. Sara Fraenkel, for many years the curator of the Rare Book and Manuscript Collection at Bar Ilan. Dr. Fraenkel passed away at the end of October and Shlomo Rothenberg, retired chairman of the Hebrew Cataloging and Classification Department at Bar Ilan gave a brief summary of her career, highlighting the significant contribution she made to the Hebrew rare book and manuscript field worldwide. Seven librarians from five institutions volunteered for a Steering Committee to oversee future activities of the group. Shmuel Har Noy pledged the complete support of the National Library and extended an invitation to hold the next meeting there.

Have You Heard?

LIBBY K. WHITE



Congratulations to AJL's Rosalind Reisner. Roz's new book *Read On...Life Stories: Reading Lists for Every Taste* has been published by Libraries Unlimited. This guide to the memoir genre includes 450 annotated items, many by Jewish authors. Among the categories are memoirs appropriate for book discussion groups.

In addition to his career in librarianship and work on AJL conventions, Fred Isaac has recently authored another book. His *Jews of Oakland and Berkeley* (Arcadia Press) is reviewed in this issue.

Nathan (Nachman) Snyder, former Judaica bibliographer for the Perry-Castaneda Library at the University of Texas, Austin, died on October 25. His Judaica collection will form the basis for the Nathan Snyder Library at the Shusterman Center for Jewish Studies at UT.

Ruth Brin, a children's book writer, poet, librettist, and author of liturgy for Reconstructionist, Reform, and Conservative prayer books, died on September 30 at age 88. Brin, a native of St. Paul, Minnesota, graduated from Vassar and received a master's degree in American studies from the University of Minnesota. She was an activist in Jewish communal affairs and in the Civil Rights Movement.

William Safire died on September 27, 2009 at age 79. Safire was known as a novelist, presidential speechwriter, journalist, and English language maven for the *New York Times*. An article in the *Forward* by David Kusnet described Safire as possessed by a "public passion for language."

In a post to Hasafran, Zachary Baker paid tribute to author Esther Hautzig, who died on November 1 at age 79:

"Esther wrote a number of books for children and young adults, notably *The Endless Steppe*, *A Gift for Mama*, and *Remember Who You Are*. These books and others drew upon her childhood years in Vilna and her wartime experiences as a Jewish refugee in Siberia.

"Esther was passionate about libraries. As a little girl in Vilna she often visited the Jewish children's library, which was where she first met Dina Abramowicz, the future head librarian of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City. Esther also volunteered for many years at the Donnell Branch of the New York Public Library.

"She was a gregarious individual who "collected" people. Her Hanukkah parties were legendary, bringing together disparate personalities from the Great White Way, Publisher's Row, the New York Public Library, Anshe Chesed Synagogue, and West End Avenue. The holiday spread was so lavish that one almost felt like saying kaddish over the oversized salmon, procured at Citarella's. And in the music room, adjoining the living room, her husband Walter Hautzig, a superb concert pianist, might be heard playing a piece by Schubert or Chopin.

"Esther was especially devoted to the cultural legacy of her native Vilna. She was involved with the Nusakh Vilne organization and maintained close ties with the small Jewish community of that city after her visit there in 1993. She was an enthusiast in the very best sense of the word and all who knew her—either in person or through her writings—will greatly miss her."

YIVO has awarded the 2009 Jan Karski and Pola Nirenska Prize to Professor Aleksander Skotnicki of Krakow. The prize recognizes authors of published works documenting Polish-Jewish relations and Jewish contributions to Polish culture. The prize was endowed by Professor Karski, envoy of the Polish Government-in-Exile during the Second World War, and bears his name and that of his wife. This year's winner, head of the Hematology Department and Clinic at the Jagiellonian University's Collegium Medicum, has written on the life and fate of Krakow and Polish Jewry.

A Safe Haven: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel by Allis Radosh and Ronald Radosh (HarperCollins) has been chosen as its 2009 Gold Medal recipient by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Aviva Astrinsky has informed AJL of the establishment of a Center for Yiddish Studies at Ben Gurion University in the Negev. David Roskies of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City will head the center, dividing his year between the United States and Israel. JTS and Ben Gurion will collaborate on courses, programming, conferences, and developing a cadre of Yiddish scholars. Announcement of the joint operation was made in the fall 2009 *Impact* of the American Association of Ben Gurion.

Veronica Belling, of Cape Town, recently posted to Hasafran a remarkable story about some unusual visitors to her library. Read the entire account on the AJL Web site at www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/resources/news/monkey_business.html.

Treasurer's Annual Report and Budget

SHERYL STAHL

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An Israeli Author Speaks

PNINA MOED KASS

The Shelf Life of a Writer

Let me tell you why, even though I'm a writer, I hang out with librarians. As a matter of fact I try to ingratiate myself with librarians, and if there's one thing I never do with fellow writers it's ingratiate myself with them. Here's a short episode that backs up my claim.

On one of my book tours I was asked to speak at a NYC library, near Fordham Road in the Bronx. I was afraid I'd be late so consequently I got to the library way too early. Early and horrible. Not the library, the weather. It was a dreary, bleached-of-light winter day. The wind battered me without mercy. And horrible because the library was sealed and gated closed. No coffee shops or diners visible. Soot layering my face, cold freezing my hands. I located a button labeled "Janitor." I pressed it with a very rude insistence but no choice, I was freezing. Finally, someone came down the stairs, peered through the iron bar gate and asked me for identification. "Writer," I stuttered.

As illogical as my answer was, I was admitted into the warmth of the upstairs library, all the books looking like little folded blankets. I stuck my clumsy woolen gloves in my coat pocket and sat down in front of the bank of computers. Joy! I would happily spend the next hour doing my email. No, I wouldn't do that because I didn't know the password. I stared dumbly at the screen. A whole hour until the librarian would arrive. The janitor was beginning to eye me with suspicion, a silent unrelenting stare. That was when I spotted, in an L-shaped alcove, the carts of unshelved books. For the next forty minutes or so, like a mouse alphabetizing cheese samples, I shelved all the books, every single one of them.

The librarian arrived at nine, exactly when she was supposed to. She was openly startled to see me. I explained that I had worried that the subway connections wouldn't get me to the Bronx on time. She made me a cup of coffee and excused herself, saying she would start to shelve the books, well, as many as she could until the high school classes arrived. "I did them already," I said.

But I'm not a librarian, although that and working in an ice cream store were the two dreams I had as a kid. No, I'm a writer.



And more than that, I'm a freelance writer. I can tell you that being a peddler of words is very tough going (both here in Israel and the U.S.). And now that the printed page is disappearing... I used to seek the companionship of other writers and there are a few I've met at conferences whom I respect for their intellectuality and their obstinate persistence at pursuing their writing, sometimes getting published, sometimes not.

But generally, in my "outside" life I don't run into writers.

Writing is not a group activity, it is singular and lonely and that's it if you write in Hebrew or you write in English - I write in both. You need a thick hide to ward off disappointment and rejection. It's a profession that requires a lot of self-discipline and motivation. On the other hand, what has always attracted me to librarians, as opposed to writers, is quite simply their love of books and their insane desire to transmit that passion to every possible reader in sight, be it a child or an adult. And it's their buzz of book excitement that gets me every time. Though I am admittedly a writer and have been for many years, I come away from writers' conferences with the impression that writers are just balloons of ego, loving their words but no one else's.

I come from a family that struggled financially, a refugee family, a family whose second language was English. The memory of my neighborhood library, the smell of the books and wooden floors, the library card in my pocket, and knowing that I could enter as many times as I wanted for as long as I wanted—that memory is an intrinsic part of me. I was always welcome. It was my second home. The librarian leaning over the counter and smiling at me, sometimes handing me a book she had put away for me, and later, nodding approvingly at the books she checked out for me. Every time I approach shelves of books, there's a reflex sight sensation of myself as a kid, excited, curious, a daredevil reader. In Israel, whenever I do a story hour in a library, that memory rush comes back to me with such overwhelming immediacy that it never fails to stop me, for a moment, at the front door. Librarians, wherever I meet them, whatever language they speak, give me the courage to be a writer. They are pure word people. Who else should a writer meet?

Writers close the door and sit down with their imaginations. Librarians open the door and invite us to the imagination on their shelves.

To every librarian I've ever met: *Hazak, Hazak, v'n'thazek.*