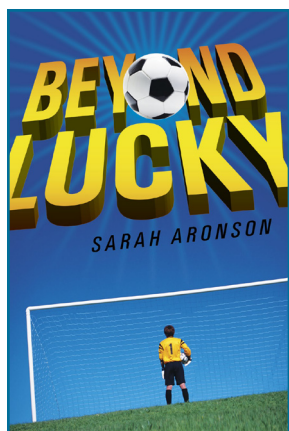


In The Spotlight

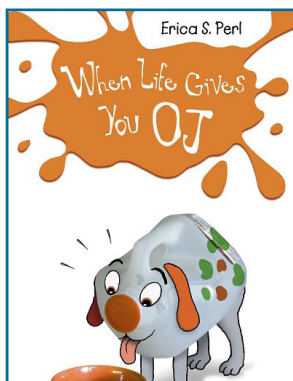


Aronson, Sarah. *Beyond Lucky*. New York: Dial Books, 2011. 250 pp. \$16.95. (9780803735200). Gr. 6-8.

Ari Fish just *knows* that his routines bring him luck on the soccer field, and when he gets a trading card of local soccer hero Wayne Timcoe, things can only get better. And they do, for a while. But when his Timcoe card is stolen, his best friend and the new girl on the team, with whom Ari has a tentative new friendship, accuse each other. To make matters worse, his older brother's job as a forest fire smokejumper seems to be getting more and more dangerous as fires rage in California. Stress over his upcoming Bar Mitzvah compounds the pressure Ari faces as he tries to figure out who his real friends are, find his Timcoe card, and keep his head in the game.

Aronson keeps the plot moving along fast enough to hold readers' attention, and her keen ear for dialogue makes Ari and his friends sound like real kids. Readers will identify with Ari's challenges negotiating some of the difficulties of the middle school years, and his ability to talk with his parents and his rabbi about some of his questions might encourage readers to do the same. Ari Fish is a likable character, and middle grade readers will eagerly await Aronson's next book. Highly recommended for public and school libraries.

Marci Lavine Bloch, D&R International, Silver Spring, MD.



Perl, Erica S. *When Life Gives You O.J.* New York: Knopf, 2011. 198 pp. \$15.99. (9780375859243). Gr. 3 - 5

Well-written, funny and mighty clever, Erica Perl's new book for middle grade readers is an excellent example of how seamlessly a modern Jewish family can be incorporated into what is really a mainstream depiction of small-town American life. After her grandmother's death, 10-year-old Zelly Fried and her family move from Brooklyn to Burlington, Vermont and she feels a bit out of place. Her grandfather, an opinionated ex-judge known as Ace, lives in the converted basement, spouts numerous Yiddishisms, obnoxious jokes, and Chelm stories (always conveyed in capital letters, for maximum effect), and generally thwarts young Zelly's fervent desire to just fit in. She thinks of him as "a big, overflowing pile of Brussels sprouts" when all she wants is pizza. Zelly desperately wants a dog and her parents are against the idea. Ace comes up with a plan: pretend an old orange juice jug is a dog and show your parents how responsible you can be by taking it everywhere. The cute illustration of the dog on the cover is enough to attract any animal loving 3rd grader to this hilarious book. When Zelly eventually meets Jeremy, a more observant Jewish boy who has moved into the neighborhood, her struggles to feel secure about her own identity become more pronounced. This may be the first novel in history to use the

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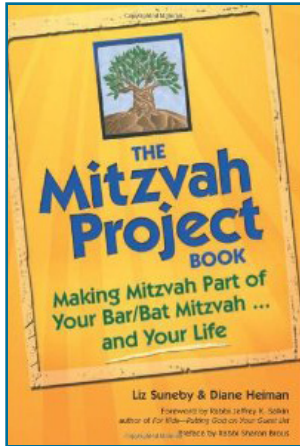
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word “goyim” and “creemee” (the Vermont word for soft-serve ice cream) within the same book. (The majority of Ace’s statements are quite funny: “It’s a proven fact: Jews can’t make fudge. The Goyim, they know how to make fudge.”) The author states that she hopes readers will identify with Zelly, a kid who “wants to feel secure with her friends without losing her identity, to take pride in her cultural heritage, and to value what makes her family special.” A real winner with loads of Jewish content and a positive message. A fun Yiddish glossary is included.

Lisa Silverman, Library Director, Sinai Temple Library, Los Angeles



Suneby, Liz and Diane Heiman. *The Mitzvah Project Book*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2011. 190 pp. \$16.99. (9781580234580). Gr. 6 – High School.

Many families, day schools, and Hebrew schools expect Bar and Bat Mitzvahs to include a community service project – a mitzvah project – in their marking of the milestone. Liz Suneby and Diane Heiman have compiled an extensive sourcebook to guide preteens (and their parents and teachers) in identifying appropriate, meaningful projects. They include ideas spanning a wide range of interests, with a focus on *doing* something, though fundraising for important causes gets space, too. Even if a reader doesn’t find a specific project that appeals, this vast assortment is bound to inspire creative mitzvah project ideas. The authors helpfully include a glossary and a bibliography for further reading. Though the focus is on Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, this book is an excellent resource for any library serving preteens or teens (Jewish or not) who value community service. Highly recommended. 6th grade-high school .

Marci Lavine Bloch, D&R International, Silver Spring, MD.



Austin, TX – November 2011

Dear Readers,

I would again like to thank all our reviewers and co-editors for their excellent work. I would also like to take this opportunity and encourage our members, near and far, to contribute to the *AJL News* and *AJL Reviews*. You are most welcome to send me your contributions any time; be it an article, a review, or a report that would highlight your own library – all are welcome! If you would like to join our reviewers group, please have a look at the appropriate page on the AJL website under ‘[publications](#)’. I would especially like to encourage our ‘international’ members to send their contributions; although most of AJL activities are taking place within North America, it is important that members outside of this continent are heard!

With best wishes,
Uri Kolodney
Editor-in-chief

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Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN & LINDA SILVER

***Editor's Note: This section of AJL Reviews for Children and Teens is the last to be co-edited by Linda Silver. Starting with the Feb/March 2012 AJL Reviews for Children and Teens, Rachel Kamin will replace Linda as co-editor and will work in collaboration with Anne Dublin. I thank Linda for many years of hard work and dedication to our readership and welcome Rachel onboard.

BEHAVIOR AND VALUES

Binder, Mark. *Stories for Peace: Resolving Conflicts, Handling Bullies.* Providence, RI: Lights Publications, 2011. 116 pp. \$14.95. (978098247074911) Pbk. Gr. 4-6.

With the first entry, "The Bully and the Shrimp," this collection of short stories focusing on the themes of peace and conflict resolution starts out strong but quickly deteriorates. Additional stories adapted from the Zen ("The Two Monks and the Gross Slimy Monster") and from Buddhist teachings ("Divide and Conquer") will be difficult for kids to relate to and connect with; other entries such as "Listen to the Child" feature an adult narrator and read more like the essays found in parenting magazines. The collection also contains an instructive piece about effective storytelling and an essay about conflict, centering, and harmony that includes lengthy, distracting footnotes. The appended cyber bullying tips are so over-simplified that they are pointless and the "Ten Practice for a Peaceful Life" are too abstract ("Learn to speak powerfully," "Move from your center with intent," "Release the tension in your body") to be helpful. Binder, who has authored several collections of Chelm stories, includes one here, but overall the book lacks significant Jewish content to be deemed appropriate for Jewish libraries, and lacks a clear focus and purpose to be deemed necessary for most other collections.

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

Bleich, Leia. *My Fish Flew Away!* Illus. by C.B. Berger. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2011. 46 pp. \$12.99. (9781598267181). Preschool – Kdg.

A little boy gets angry when his siblings play with his toys. At bedtime, he wishes that Hashem "had made the world upside down." When he wakes up the next morning, the sky is colored with polka dots and stripes, he pours *negel vasser* (ritual hand washing upon awakening) on his feet, and it is freezing cold in the summer. His father is sitting in his wagon blowing bubbles, his mother is playing with his blocks, and other strange things are happening. His pet fish flies out of its cage (hence the title). He wakes up, realizes it was a dream, and thanks Hashem for making a perfect world. In one of the few books from an Orthodox publisher that portrays children showing less than model behavior, the silliness detracts from the obvious message that the way God created the world is the way it works best. With no glossary to explain terms like *negel vasser*, *Modeh Ani* and *Shema*, the book's appeal will probably be limited to Orthodox readers. Within that subset, the inane changes, which don't address the boy's main "beef" of sharing toys, (getting another wagon and more blocks) limit its appeal to five year olds who enjoy silliness. *Labels for Laibel* (Hachai, 1990) handles the subject more successfully.

Kathe Pinchuck, Clifton, NJ.

Fajnland, Leibel. *Big, Small, or Just One Wall.* Illus. by Tova Leff. New York: Hachai, 2011. 24 pp. \$12.95. (971929628599). Preschool – Gr. 2.

Leibel Fajnland has asked an intriguing question: "Does it make a difference where we pray?" He answers it in rhyming language suitable for small children, but the point is important for everyone. The book presents "The Great Shul Fair," where a family sees fifteen synagogue facades. They include the Monsey bus that commutes to New York every day; Beis Yisroel in Auckland, New Zealand; and the Rashi shul in Worms, Germany. "Some shuls are big, and some, very small. And look at this shul; it's a giant stone wall" – indicating the Kotel in Jerusalem. Not only are there lots of exteriors; they can be found all over the world; "Shuls in New Zealand and in the Ukraine, in Eretz Yisroel, Morocco and Spain! In Dallas, in Denver, and in Chevy Chase, in cities and countries all over the place!" But despite their different appearances, every shul has the same things inside: an ark and Torahs, a *Ner Tamid* (eternal light), and people praying together.

This colorful Hachai volume has two important messages; the universal value of respect for the many places Jews live today, and the ways – from the elaborate to the very plain – they have chosen to build synagogues. The second,

more specific message is the hope for the Messiah (very pointed at the end) and the building of the Third Temple.

The volume is both appropriately colorful and serious in turn. It should be considered for synagogue libraries as an introduction to the international Jewish community, and the wide variety of synagogue structures that exist. The concluding focus on the Messianic age may dissuade some libraries, however.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Schonfeld, Rifka. *My Friend the Bully*. Illustrated by Yael Judowitz. New York: Feldheim, 2011. 29 pp. \$15.45. ISBN: 9781583303344. Gr. 2-5.

Young Pinny cannot understand why Yossi, his so-called friend from early childhood, belittles and intimidates him constantly. Eventually Yossi's behavior deteriorates to bullying for random acts--bringing a smelly tuna fish sandwich to school, challenging Pinny for talking to other kids, and tripping him. Both boys and their friends are Orthodox boys living normal lives. When Pinny's bewilderment turns into active fear he handles it by telling his parents that he has stomach aches and needs to stay home from school. Fortunately his sensitive mother urges him to share the truth, and she and his father advise him appropriately on how to react, and ultimately involve the school.

This is not a book that children will pick up on their own; rather it is directed at parents and educators who are working to help bullied children or bullies themselves. Two pages of facts about bullying, tips for parents, and tips and schools and teachers, follow the text. This is not a very attractive book, and the colorful illustrations are mediocre, but it is a useful addition since this topic is so important in schools today. The author has been an educator for many years and specializes in giving social skills workshops for schools. Recommended for use in elementary schools, particularly from grades two through five.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

BIBLE

Lehman-Wilzig, Tami. *Green Bible Stories for Children*. Illus. by Durga Yael Bernhard. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2011. 48 pp. \$17.95. (9780761351351). Kdg. - Gr.3.

Lehman-Wilzig puts a decidedly eco-friendly spin on the familiar tales of Noah, Joshua, Abraham, Joseph and others in this entertaining and enlightening book geared toward helping young readers grasp concepts about protecting and preserving our planet. Whether or not adults will fully embrace her "green" interpretations of these stories or the idea that the Bible "planted the seeds of environmental concern," children will find much to enjoy and ponder from the loose retellings, written in a breezy and often whimsical style. Noah and the Flood becomes a story of biodiversity and preservation of the species; Abraham's wanderings a parable about sustainable herding; Joshua's defense of the people of Gibeon a lesson in the power of the sun; the building of the Tabernacle an example of reducing, recycling and reusing. Some attempts to shoehorn an eco-friendly message into these stories work better than others. The biggest stretch comes in the story of Joshua bringing down the walls of Jericho. Interpreting it as a tale about noise pollution, as the author does, is like saying the Garden of Eden is a cautionary story about choosing your produce wisely. The book also gives biblical examples of urban planning, keeping the environment clean, being kind to animals, and counting the blessings of nature. Relevant and easy-to-do activities and experiments follow each short story. Attractive, full-color paintings complement each page.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

BIOGRAPHY

Spielman, Gloria. *Marcel Marceau: Master of Mime*. Illus. by Manon Gauthier. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2011. 32pp. \$7.95. (9780761339625). Pbk. Ages 8-11.

Sometimes a biography comes along that has a fascinating subject but falls flat on its face. Such a book is *Marcel Marceau: Master of Mime*. The writing and illustrations in this book are geared for a younger audience than recommended by the publisher. However, the subject matter (World War II, the Holocaust, and the French Resistance) is more appropriate for older children. This large-format illustrated biography omits many basic facts. For example, when was Marcel Marceau (né Mangel) born? Why did he change his name? Why did he choose mime as his mode of artistic expression? Most importantly, why is Marcel Marceau's life significant to today's child? Aside from the fact that his father was a kosher butcher and eventually sent to Auschwitz,

we learn little about Marceau's Jewish identity. We find out that Marceau worked in the French Resistance by forging documents and helping children escape from France to Switzerland. These activities epitomize the Jewish value of saving a life. But we learn nothing else about Marceau's Jewish identity and how it influenced his life and art.

Gauthier's pencil and watercolor illustrations present various perspectives and complement the text. However, a jarring inaccuracy is evident in one of the illustrations — American soldiers are wearing French-style army caps. Furthermore, stuck at the end of the book is a collage of photographs of Marcel Marceau as Bip, his well-known character. It would have been far better to have integrated these photos throughout the text. Also, in a modern biography, we expect some documentation. The author does not tell us the primary or secondary sources she used. Nor does she list websites, DVDs, or videos where we can see Marcel Marceau perform. Nor does she explain words like "Free French Army" or "liaison". A biography should encourage us to learn more about the subject. This one leaves us high and dry. *Marcel Marceau: Master of Mime* is a disappointing portrayal of an admirable life.

Anne Dublin, author of *The Orphan Rescue*, Toronto, Canada

FICTION

Moriarty, Chris. *The Inquisitor's Apprentice*. New York: Harcourt Children's Books, 2011. 352 pp. \$16.99. (9780547581354). Reviewed from an advance reading copy. Gr. 4-6.

In this alternate-history fantasy world, magic is real and is regulated by the Inquisitors, a branch of the police. When Sacha Kessler, a nice Jewish boy on the Lower East Side, discovers that he can see magic as it occurs, he is drafted to be the apprentice of star Inquisitor Maximillian Wolf. Thus begins his involvement with the ruthlessly powerful J.P. Morgaunt, who wants to stamp out magic in order to sell more machinery. The action-packed narrative includes appearances by reimagined versions of Edison, Houdini, and Teddy Roosevelt, along with a slew of colorful characters like the mysterious kung fu mistress Shen and the wisecracking Coney Island peep show performer Rosie DiMaggio (aka Little Cairo). The convoluted but exciting plot includes warm family scenes in the tenements, baseball with rival gangs, attempted murder, and the summoning of a dybbuk. Humor and mystery are strong; character development less so. Real Jewish history is represented by Sacha's politically revolutionary uncle, his storefront rabbi grandfather, a fairly realistic depiction of tenement life, anti-Semitism in the general population, and the folklore of dybbuks. Old-fashioned black and white line art by Mark Geyer (illustrator of Stephen King's *The Green Mile*) suits the setting but may not appeal to modern children. The story's conclusion makes it clear that a sequel is in the works. Jewish middle grade books of humor and fantasy are rare, making this book a must-have for Jewish libraries despite its weaknesses.

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

Glickman, Susan. *Bernadette in the Doghouse*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2011. 117 pp. \$8.95. (9781897187920) Pbk. Gr. 2-5.

What makes someone your best friend? In this sequel to *Bernadette and the Lunch Bunch*, a group of smart, clever third-grade girls try to figure it out. Bernadette and her friends have a great time playing together, doing projects, sharing Christmas and Hanukkah traditions, and organizing fun themed lunches. But when Jasmine, who used to live nearby, comes back to visit, Bernadette wants to spend all their time catching up, and her other friends feel left out. Now Bernadette is in the doghouse, and not just because she desperately wants a puppy. Susan Glickman presents a cast of likable, believable characters who discover together what it means to be a friend. Jewish content is minimal — the girls gather at Bernadette's house to eat Bubbe's latkes — but the important message makes this book a valuable addition to most collections serving chapter book readers. Highly recommended for grades 2-5.

Marci Lavine Bloch, D&R International, Silver Spring, MD



Jakubowicz, M. *All Eyes on Mindy Eisen*. New York: Feldheim, 2011. 135 pp. \$14.99 (9781598267297). Gr. 5-8.

Seventh grader Mindy Eisen's life is pretty good. She has a comfortable home, lots of beautiful clothes, and few worries – unlike her friend whose father just lost his job. Mindy likes being the center of attention, and she is pleased to be captain of her grade's color war team at Bais Devorah. Then things start to go wrong: her parents seem preoccupied, some of the color war money is stolen, and the Eisens' house is broken into. To make matters worse, then Mindy's father is laid off, too. Mindy not only leads her color war team to victory, but she solves the mystery of the theft and the break-in.

The plot of *All Eyes on Mindy Eisen* has so much going on that none of the subplots gets enough attention to be fully flushed out, and the characters are flat. The thief turns out to be the non-Jewish home health aide caring for a neighbor, and the Jewish characters are either flawless or have minor character flaws that are seemingly easily corrected by book's end. Job loss is an important issue in the current difficult economic climate, but the shallow way it is handled here will not do much to help a reader whose family may be experiencing it (except for not going away to camp, Mindy's life doesn't appear to change, and her friend's father has a new job before the book ends).

Marci Lavine Bloch, D & R International, Silver Spring, MD

Robbins, Trina. *Lily Renee, Escape Artist: From Holocaust Survivor to Comic Book Pioneer*. Illus. by Anne Timmons and Mo Oh. Minneapolis, MN: Graphic Universe (a Division of Lerner), 2011. 95 pp. \$7.95. (9780761381143). Pbk. Gr.5-8.

A graphic novel based on the life of Lily Renee Wilhelm, one of the first women comic book artists. The novel starts out showing Lily's privileged life in Vienna as the daughter to wealthy, Jewish parents. After the Nazis invaded in 1938, Lily's parents feared for the future of the Jewish people in Vienna. So, they sent her on *Kindertransport* (Children's Transport) to live with a family in England. Eventually, Lily was sent on a ship to America to be reunited with her parents. Lily lived with her parents in New York City, where she became a famous cartoon artist, known for creating women heroes who were spies that defeated the Nazis.

The story is very detailed, with side bars of explanations of the events and dialogues taking place in the graphic novel's cells. The end has a section titled "More About Lily's Story." It features a German to English glossary. Also, there are descriptions of historical events, places and expressions mentioned in the story. An album with photographs of Lily Renee Wilhelm's privileged childhood in Vienna, her later teenage years in New York City and a modern day photograph are included., Recommended for all libraries.

Heather Lenson, Librarian of the Ratner Media & Technology Center, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH.

Traube, Shaindy. *Passing the Test*. New York: Feldheim, 2011. 277 pp. \$24.99 (9781598264937) High School.

Miriam is severely burned in a kitchen accident, and is left badly scarred. She refuses to see her friends and won't leave the house. She convinces her parents to let her leave Israel and go to boarding school in England, where she won't have to see anyone who knew her before. On the way to her new school, she meets a woman who tells her a long story about people needing to fulfill the mission that Hashem gives each of us; Miriam often recalls this story as she adapts to life at her new school. She helps another student who is struggling, and finds the courage to return home to her family and her old life. The message that each of us has a mission we need to carry out to the best of our abilities is driven home repeatedly. The characters come to sudden realizations, rather than having ideas come on them gradually, and with the possible exception of Miriam, none are fully developed enough for the reader to feel that she understands them. The important question of why Miriam's parents don't insist that she see friends, leave her house, or speak to a trusted friend, rabbi, or counselor is not addressed at all. For girls yeshiva high school libraries.

Marci Lavine Bloch. D&R International, Silver Spring, MD



FOLKLORE

Davis, Aubrey. *Kishka for Koppel*. Illus. by Sheldon Cohen. Custer, WA: Orca, 2011. 32p. \$19.95. (9781554692996). Reviewed from advanced reading copy.

Kishka for Koppel is modeled after the English folktale, "The Three Wishes," first collected by folklorist Joseph Jacobs in his 1894 collection, *More English Fairy Tales*. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Jacobs#Folklore). Variations on this tale of three foolish wishes exist in many folktale traditions. In *Kishka for Koppel*, the Sydney Taylor award winning author Aubrey Davis has attempted to make it into a Jewish story. He does this by inserting Yiddish words and expressions and inverting word order in a parody of the speech of a fictionalized Jewish couple. "All right, already" and "You can take me to the movies, maybe" may strike some adults as funny, but children from 4 – 8 probably will not find it so. Similarly, a throwaway reference to Sophie Tucker's song, "My Yiddishe Mama" will likely be lost on anyone under 10. The sound of Yiddish is also played for laughs bordering on ridicule. Is the word *kishka*, or the food *kishka*, really that funny? This tasty dish, made out of inexpensive ingredients that once were available to thrifty Jewish housewives, is unfamiliar to most of today's children. As for the old fashioned metal meat grinder, it too is as outmoded as thrift. Few of today's children have ever seen one such as Koppel finds in the trash. For this reviewer the death blow to this story are Yetta's words to Koppel when he gets the kishka he wished for: "YOU HAD ANY WISH IN THE WORLD AND YOU WISHED FOR STUFFED SHEEP GUTS?" This seems gratuitously shrill and tasteless. While there always is a place for the adult co-reader in children's books, this one seems to play mainly to adults, with a loud Borsht Belt tone. Despite colorful, folkloric design, the illustrations confirm the sense that Koppel and Yetta are caricatures. The advanced reading copy had no information about the medium used by the illustrator. Aubrey Davis is the deservedly celebrated author of several well loved children's books based on folktales. Among the best are *Bone Button Borsht* and *Bagels for Benny*. Unfortunately, *Kishka for Koppel* is a disappointment. The Jewish message that one should be satisfied with what one has is overwhelmed by the strident tone of this telling. Sadly, it is not recommended for children.

Naomi Morse, Silver Spring, MD.

Stuchner, Joan Betty. *Can Hens Give Milk?* Illus. by Joe Weissmann. Custer, WA: Orca, 2011. 32 pp. \$19.95. (9781554693191). Ages 5-8.

Not many people can create a truly humorous, original Chelm story. Stuchner hits that delicious aha moment of illogical logic in this playful new picture book. Shlomo and Rivka have five children, twelve hens, and one rooster on their small farm in Chelm. Rivka wishes they also had a cow. That night Shlomo wakes from a dream about a cow. When six-year-old Tova confirms that cows give milk because they eat grass, Shlomo decides to feed grass to their hens, so that they will produce both eggs and milk. The Chelmites' attempts to get the hens to do this and the hens' noisy resistance to accepting grass pellets or to sitting on bowls are colorfully captured. Big spread and smaller detail acrylic paintings fill every page with action. In true Chelm tradition, the rabbi wisely concludes that the hens cannot give milk because they do not have udders. In a sweeter than traditional Chelm ending, he offers to trade one of his goats for six of their hens. The goat gives milk and the hens lay eggs until one morning, Shlomo wonders if he can get a really big egg by feeding grain to the goat. A satisfying treat.

Sharon Elswit, Head Librarian at Claremont Preparatory School in NYC and author of *The East Asian Story Finder*, is currently working on a second edition of *The Jewish Story Finder*.

HOLIDAYS

Cohen, Deborah Bodin. *Engineer Ari and the Hanukkah Mishap*. Illus. by Shahar Kober. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2011. (32)p. \$17.95. (9780761351450). Kdg. – Gr. 2.

All Aboard! for Engineer Ari's third ride on his historic Israeli train. This time Ari's problem threatens his Hanukkah celebration with his fellow engineers; it also brings him into contact with Israel's Bedouins. Readers learn holiday customs and biblical history traveling with Ari near Jerusalem plus they experience a beneficial interaction of Arab and Jew. Having purchased his holiday necessities, Ari walks back to the train station eager to reach Jaffa to celebrate. He passes children the age of targeted readers who explain Hanukkah to him. Driving the train, dreaming of the coming festivities, Ari does not see a camel on the tracks; his sudden stop saves the animal, derails the caboose and tosses his special holiday goodies. The Bedouin camel owner sends his son to

Jaffa for help, and then helps an apologetic Ari to retrieve his things. Ari discovers he is stalled near historic Modi'in; he finds an ancient coin. While waiting for help Ari and the Bedouin share an impromptu Hanukkah celebration in the Arab's tent. The picture book ends on the recurring Hanukkah note of miracle, this time stressing discoveries, especially friendship, more than scant oil. Author and illustrator bring a new adventure with old friends. The usual warm, fact-packed historical note ends the fiction. Charming art, a familiar holiday in an Israeli setting, warm characters and kind story shore up the mild plot. Train buffs, transportation besotted tots and general readers will enjoy this new Ari: recommend for grades K to 2.

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

Kimmel, Eric A. *Joseph and the Sabbath Fish*. Illus. by Martina Peluso. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/ Lerner, 2011. 32 pp. \$17.95. (9780761359081). Kdg.- Gr. 3.

"What we give to the Sabbath is repaid a thousandfold." This message of honoring the Sabbath and the rewards of selfless giving resonate throughout the delightfully told and richly illustrated *Joseph and the Sabbath Fish*. While not cited in the book, the story finds its roots in a brief Talmudic passage. Other children's authors, most notably the late Marilyn Hirsh, have successfully put their own stamp on this often-told tale. Kimmel's latest take on the righteous Joseph and the hat-swallowing fish is no less engaging. In the city of Tiberias long ago, a man named Joseph honored the Sabbath like no other, setting his table with the finest wines, challah beyond compare, the sweetest fish, and perfumed lamp oil pressed from the ripest olives. Most importantly, Joseph opened his door so everyone could partake in the celebration, whether rich or poor. His neighbor Judah, while also setting a fine table, did not share Joseph's giving spirit, warning his friend that "You will be left with nothing." As Judah predicted, Joseph's wealth diminished, but his generous nature did not, as he still invited all to join him on the Sabbath. Returning Joseph's kindness, his guests were the ones who brought the challah, wine, fish and now ordinary lamp oil, "but the joy around the table was the same." A strange dream about Joseph commandeering his wealth leads a paranoid Judah to flee Tiberias by boat and exchange all his riches for a single ruby, which he sews into his hat – a ruby that miraculously ends up in Joseph's hands from the belly of a Sabbath fish. As Judah eventually learns the true meaning of charity, so will young readers who will feast upon the moral of this clearly written and heartwarming tale. Lovely paintings breathe folksy charm into this winning picture book.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

Korngold, Jamie. *Sadie's Sukkah Breakfast*. Illus. by Julie Fortenberry. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2011. 24 pp. \$7.95. (9781897187814) Pbk. Preschool-Kdg.

On a beautiful fall morning, Sadie and her little brother, Ori, wake up early, too excited to sleep. It is the first day of Sukkot and they can't wait to see if their sukkah decorations lasted the night. As they slip outside their house to take a closer look at their intact paper chains, popcorn strings and fruit mosaics, they decide to eat breakfast in the sukkah. They come up against two obstacles: first, the food tray is too heavy for them to carry, and second, where can they find the requisite Sukkot guests at dawn? Their solutions model cooperation and inventiveness for young readers. The repetitions, "Sadie got the cereal/Ori got the spoons/Ori got the bowls/Sadie got the milk" would make for a fun read-along. Fortenberry's watercolor illustrations, reminiscent of Denise Fleming's with their combination of sharp details and gaussian blurs, invite the reader to explore them many times over. Although not mentioning the *Ushpizin* (divine guests) when looking for Sukkot guests seems like a lost opportunity, and not having honey to dip the challah in makes the meal seem incomplete, the final scene of the young siblings giving thanks for their food and their friends ends the story on a satisfying note indeed.

Charna Gross, MLIS, School Librarian at Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA.

Meltzer, Amy. *The Shabbat Princess*. Illus. by Martha Aviles. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2011. 32 pp. \$7.95. (9780761351061). Pbk. Preschool -Kdg.

As Rosie watches her mother prepare for Shabbat, she asks why her mother takes such care in setting the table. Her mother replies that she is welcoming the Sabbath Queen. Since Rosie prefers princesses over queens, she decides to dress as the Sabbath Princess which makes the story feel a little far-fetched. As Rosie begs for a moat and Fairy Godmother, the text strays away from Shabbat. It gets back on track when Rosie encourages her parents to turn the Shabbat table into a royal banquet by using their best candlesticks and polishing the Kiddush

cup. This story does a poor job of explaining the significance of Shabbat and why we welcome the Sabbath queen. However, young girls who love princesses will be drawn to it. The illustrations are soft with pastel shades. Rosie's round face and button nose make her look healthy and sweet. Recommended as an additional buy for libraries that serve preschool-age children.

Heather Lenson, Librarian at the Ratner Media & Technology Center, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland Heights, OH

Ofansky, Allison. *What's The Buzz? Honey for a Sweet New Year*. Minneapolis, MN: Kar Ben/Lerner. 32p. \$15.95. (9780761356400). Preschool – Gr. 2.

Appealing photographs of an Israeli bee farm create an interesting glimpse of how honey is made. Children visiting the farm observe a farmer in a protective suit use smoke to keep the bees away, see the hives and honeycombs, participate in processing honey, and learn about queen bees. In addition to teaching about honey production, the book illustrates a positive Jewish value, visiting the sick. One of the children buys honey for a classmate unable to attend the field trip. The next day, she gathers apples and brings them to her ill friend and wishes her a sweet new year and hopes she feels better. The book concludes with a list of fun facts about Israel, bees, and the history of apples being grown in Israel. Recommended for all libraries that serve children in preschool through second grade.

Aimee Lurie, Agnon School, Beachwood, OH

Silverman, Erica. *The Hanukkah Hop*. Illus. by Steven D'Amico. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011. Unpaged. \$12.99. (9781442406049). Recommended for kindergarten – grade 3.

Erica Silverman is the author of some excellent children's books including: *Liberty's Voice: the Story of Emma Lazarus*; *When the Chickens Went on Strike*; *Sholom's Treasure: How Sholom Aleichem Became a Writer*, etc. While her latest title, *The Hanukkah Hop*, is festive and upbeat; it celebrates a 1950s hop more than the festival of Hanukkah. The first half of *The Hanukkah Hop* mentions Hanukkah symbols and customs and makes a short reference to the story of the Maccabees. The remainder of the book focuses on the hop and loses the Hanukkah content. The illustrations create an atmosphere of high energy and movement with pages devoted to party-goers dancing as a klezmer band performs. The party-goers are a culturally and age diverse group of family and friends. At the end of the hop, the illustrations are very comical when they portray the tired party-goers and the klezmer players resting with their bellies hanging out. The text rhymes and features the repeating lyric "Biddy-biddy bim-bom bop.at our Hanukkah Hop." The rhyming appears to make the book geared for younger children. Yet, the story is too long for preschoolers. The glossary at the beginning of the book is a useful feature. The title is recommended to all libraries, because it is too fun to be missing from Hanukkah collections.

Heather Lenson, Librarian, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH

HOLOCAUST

Smith, C.V. *Nettie Parker's Backyard*. Lakewood, CA : Avid Readers Publishing Group, 2011. 175p. \$9.95. pbk. \$2.99 e-bk. (9781612860329). Gr. 5 to 8.

The dramatic story of war and Holocaust arrive through the flashback memories of a handicapped black woman in this historical fiction which relieves tension with mystery and supernatural signs. South Carolina born Nettie Parker goes to London to study nursing, becomes crippled by one of the Blitz bombs, and spends the war caring for eight Jewish children from various European countries who arrive in England on *Kindertransports*. The story frame is a school report of a 21st century child; Nettie, in her 90's, has vivid recall thanks to her family penchant for long lives. The children in the plot's *Kindertransport* vary in age. They have different emotional responses to the pain of separation from parents and the fear of Nazis finding them again in England. Jewish identity is strong despite their exile through celebration of holidays and a Bar Mitzvah of one of the boys. Anti-Semitism is portrayed as unacceptable, the issue enveloped in tolerance for all despite race, religion or physical



defect. Nettie and the children show great courage facing the horrors of war in a strange place far from home. They comfort each other and grow. In addition to the Jewish plot, there is a love story between Nettie and her Tuskegee airman. Nettie, who believes mystical signs led her to the children in 1940, begins receiving stone statues in 2010 for her American garden. By the end, reader and Nettie deduce the lovely, but bittersweet, answer to this puzzle. The novel delivers one aspect of the Holocaust obliquely. As a gentle introduction to this harsh topic it is recommended for middle school readers.

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

Thomson, Ruth. *Terezin: Voices from the Holocaust*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2011. 64pp. \$18.99. (9780763649630). Gr. 7-12.

Many wonderful books have come in surprising packages. Notable among them are Shoah-related volumes in large format, which we usually associate with children's literature. Many of them, however, are appropriate by adults as well. Ruth Thomson's *Terezin* is the latest entry in this category. It tells the story of the Holocaust in a series of coordinated images and quotations from survivors of the camp, and short comments by the author/editor. The book begins with a two-page introduction and a short reminder of the Nazis. The remainder recounts the lives of the inmates, from their deportation to their lives in the village/ghetto/camp. It includes significant information on the culture the victims created for themselves, and an extended (10-page) discussion of the "beautification" of the town for the Red Cross visit in the spring of 1944. The tale continues with the Nazis attempt to destroy all evidence of the camp's true meaning, and the Death March of the prisoners in early 1945. The back contains a useful timeline, a glossary, and a short list of sources.

This volume is a trove of valuable visual information that can be used in adult education as well as teen classes. The statements by survivors, powerful in themselves, are even more striking when seen alongside photographs, drawings by adults and children, and documents (the map made for the Red Cross, a vaccination card, photos of the buildings as they are today). For many years children have seen *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, a collection of works by young students of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis. This important book will extend public knowledge of Terezin. It should be part of synagogue libraries, and might be added to academic collections.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

EDITOR'S NOTE

These titles, reviewed in the adult readers section, may also be of interest to teenagers.

Rosenberg, Moshe. *Morality for Muggles: Ethics in the Bible and the World of Harry Potter*.

Bush, Lawrence and Richard Codor. *Babushkin's Catalogue of Jewish Inventions*.

Reviews of Titles for Adults

EDITED BY MERRILY F. HART AND DANIEL SCHEIDE

NONFICTION

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Rev. ed.). New York: Basic Books, 2011. 253 pp. \$16.99 (9780465022557). Also available as an e-book.

The Art of Biblical Narrative was published in 1981 with 195 pages. The publisher changed the layout and now the book has 253 pages. "All in all, however, this revised version remains basically the same book as the one that appeared in 1981, but ... it is now tighter and more precise." Alter "corrected a few minor inaccuracies and added an occasional nuance or amplification to statements made in the original version" and somewhat toned down "some of his argument with Biblical source-criticism." The main argument of the book remains that the Hebrew Bible displays a distinctive literary artistry and Alter shows some of its techniques: type scene which he studies with the various encounters at the well found in the Hebrew Bible; the use of dialogue and the "divergent repetition" of

sentences; the techniques of repetition of leading words; and how characters are fleshed out, what is left unsaid about the motives, the attitudes, and the moral nature of major characters. Ultimately, Alter demonstrates how the moral-psychological axis and the theological-historical one intersect. *The Art of Biblical Narrative* is a very engaging book, a pleasure to read, but it is not a textbook; it lacks extensive scholarly footnotes. It is a brilliant overview by someone who once described himself as “incorrigibly [a] literary outsider” to biblical scholarship.

Roger S. Kohn, *Independent scholar, Silver Spring, MD*

Amanat, Mehrdad. *Jewish Identities in Iran: Resistance and Conversion to Islam and the Baha'i Faith.* London & New York: I.B. Tauris (Library of Modern Religion), 2011. 279 pp. \$92. (9781845118914).

In this study, Amanat examines the conversion of Jews in Iran during the 19th and early 20th centuries to Islam and especially to the Baha'i faith. Its main importance is in the use of hitherto mostly unpublished memoirs from Baha'is of Jewish origin, shedding light on life in Iran during this period, especially among Jews and the emerging Baha'i community and the reasons for Jews to convert to this persecuted community. The book begins by exploring Jewish presence in pre-Islamic Iran and Jewish conversion to Islam during the Safavid and early Qajar periods as a background to the main topic of the book: Jewish response to the Baha'i faith. Amanat studies several cases of conversion in various districts of Iran before examining in detail the memoirs of three converts of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. He believes that although Islam was the state's religion and converts could expect numerous benefits, they were in fact in most cases still viewed as “New Muslims” for generations and could not really integrate in the Shi'i Muslim society of Iran. The Baha'i, on the other hand, did not discriminate against converts based on previous religion and Iranian Jews believed Baha'i could provide them with a path to modernity within the local society, in contrast to missionary societies which tried to westernize them. In addition to data on the Baha'i community and the personalities involved, the memoirs are also important for information on Jewish life in Iran, Jewish-Muslim relations, and social, economic and cultural developments. This is an important contribution on a scarcely studied subject, based on extensive primary documentation.

Rachel Simon, *Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ*

Bar, S., D. Kahn and J.J. Shirley, editors. *Egypt, Canaan and Israel: History, Imperialism, Ideology and Literature.* Leiden: Brill (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East), 2011. 370 pp. \$176. (9789004194939).

The book is a product of a conference about interconnections between Egypt and Canaan held at the University of Haifa in 2009. It includes only 15 of the presentations, and covers topics such as archaeology, biblical studies, history, poetry, and comparative literature. Each article includes an extensive bibliography on the subject. The index in the back is all inclusive.

A glance through the introduction (that indicates that there were more presentations and no less fascinating) may give the impression that this is a very specialized and ultra-academic volume, but that notion disappears when one looks at some of the themes offered: Joseph, David and Goliath, military campaigns, commerce, and the way they are illustrated by artifacts from the various geographies & time periods. Highly recommended for academic libraries.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, *Director, The Frances-Henry Library, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles*

Ben-Bassat, Yuval & Eyal Ginio, editors. *Late Ottoman Palestine: The Period of Young Turk Rule.* London & New York: I.B. Tauris (Library of Ottoman Studies), 2011. 310 pp. \$99. (9781848856318)

In the thirteen chapters which are included in this book, authors of various backgrounds examine several aspects of life in Ottoman Palestine during 1908-1918. Following an introductory chapter by the editors, the collection is divided into four parts: Citizenship, election and social change; The ‘Civilizing Mission’ and center-periphery relationships; Intellectual responses; and Inter- and intra-communal relationships. The studies are based on diverse primary sources, mostly in Arabic, Turkish and Hebrew, including official documents, correspondence, memoirs, and periodicals. Political, ideological, cultural, social and economic topics are dealt with in depth, at times from different and even opposing points of view. Thus, two chapters deal with issues related to citizenship and elections, several chapters examine various aspects of the Young Turk rule in Palestine based on Arab and Jewish sources and other chapters deal with Zionism and Arab-Jewish relations. Among the chapters dealing with non-Muslims, there is one on the Baha'is in Palestine and their leader's contacts with senior personnel of the Committee on Union and Progress (CUP). This is an important contribution to the study

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of Palestine during the last years of Ottoman rule in the region, dealing in depth with the various components of the population which are not often dealt with in one volume, using extensive and diverse primary sources.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ

Bos, Gerrit, et. al. *Medical Synonym Lists from Medieval Provence: Shem Tov ben Isaac of Tortosa, Sefer ha-Shimmush, Book 29. Part 1: Edition and Commentary of List 1. Leiden: Brill, 2011. \$225. 542 pp. (9789004167643). (Hebrew – Arabic – Romance/Latin)*

Shem Tov ben Isaac was a Jewish doctor from northern Spain. Over the course of the 13th century, he spent time in Southern France, and while there, in 1254, he translated an important medical treatise from Arabic into Hebrew. Translating medical terminology into Hebrew required a large measure of innovation, since the language of the Torah lacked a wide vocabulary in technical areas. Shem Tov provided two lists in his translation, with the Hebrew terms he was using and their equivalents in the original Arabic, and often in the vernacular as well. The first of those lists, defining herbs, body parts and conditions, is published in this volume. The bulk of the volume, edited by specialist in a number of fields, is a critical edition of that list in Hebrew, translated into English and followed by analysis of the Hebrew term and its cognates. Since Shem Tov came from a Catalan-speaking area and composed his translation in an Occitan region, the editors are unsure which of the two closely related vernacular dialects is reflected in Shem Tov's list. Both languages are rarely represented in Hebrew manuscripts, so the value of the list for linguists is significant. *Medical Synonym Lists* is obviously important for students of medieval medicine. For those with more general interest in medieval Jewish culture, it is a fascinating, though technical, document.

Pinchas Roth, graduate student in the Talmud Department at Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Boteach, Shmuley. *Renewal: A Guide to the Values-Filled Life. New York: Basic Books, 2010. 220 pp. \$22. (9780465020454). Also available as an e-book.*

Over the past 20 years, Shmuley Boteach has become a major figure in the Jewish world, and a guide to Jewish living for the secular community. In this short book he attempts to summarize his (and Judaism's) primary teachings. While it is directed primarily toward a general audience, its message should be of interest to American Jews as well.

Each of the volume's twenty-two short chapters focuses on a specific topic. They include: "Destiny," "Marriage," "Suffering is not redemptive" "Smashing Idols," and "Respect for Women." While the concepts inevitably overlap, the author conscientiously focuses on each of them in turn. He utilizes stories from history, scripture (including Torah, Talmud and Midrash) literature, and instances from his own life to illustrate the greatness of Judaism. Without demeaning the ideas propounded by other religions or by secular society, his intent is to demonstrate that Jewish beliefs and an adherence to its precepts – including both those elaborated in prayer and the mitzvot – lead to a life of joy, honor and fulfillment. Though there are several references to the Lubavitcher Rebbe and Hasidism, this is not a Chabad book.

The result appears to be an introduction to Judaism through life, rather than liturgy or structured adherence. The book might be constructively used as advanced readings for conversion; the writing style is not heavy, and the book covers a wide array of topics. It might be considered, along with Kushner's *To Life!* for someone interested in exploring Jewish ideas prior to committing to a formal course leading to conversion. While there are no startlingly new insights, its mixture of insight, commitment and joy would make it a useful, though not required, addition to a synagogue library.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Bronner, Leila Leah. *Journey to Heaven: Exploring Jewish Views of the Afterlife. Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2011. 206 pp. \$25.95 (9789655240474).*

If you were ever curious about what Jewish tradition says about the afterlife, this book is for you. Bronner does an excellent job of providing a historical view of the widely diverse views of traditional Jewish commentators. She starts with the few biblical and post-biblical references to the afterlife and provides an easy to read translation and a historical context. The book continues to look at the Mishnah, Talmud references to the afterlife and then moves on to Medieval Jewish philosophers, Kabbalah and to modernity. She writes clearly with the right level of explanation.

Bronner concludes that Jewish tradition has many answers regarding the belief in the afterlife. She concludes that overall because the idea of the afterlife is so confusing there is reluctance to talk about it. But there are a variety of views, ranging from afterlife as a way to encourage moral behavior, as a psychological crutch, or as a way to escape the cruelties of this world. Bronner ends with the realization that the promise of the World to come is our affirmation that our God is the God of life.

Nathan Aaron Rosen, New York, NY

Bush, Lawrence and Richard Codor. *Babushkin's Catalogue of Jewish Inventions*. Accord, NY : Loose Line Productions, 2011. 75 pp. \$9.95 (9780979921827).

In today's techno-savvy world, it seems there is a device or "app" for anything and everything. Since technology can be applied to Jewish living, we have seen a variety of popular and not-so-popular gadgets enter the market – from programmable ovens with a 72-hour "sabbath" setting to idaven.com's iphone siddur. Playing upon this gadget trend, the authors offer us a plethora of funny examples of fictional products for the modern Jewish consumer. The humor ranges from the ridiculous (live gefilte fish) to the stereotypical (Yenta, the Jewish GPS), from Tanakh-based (Vashti's Secret) to clever puns (Judyism, Yiddishkite) to the slightly offensive (Jihad Ejection Suit, Loving Chaim Yankl). Codor's whimsical cartoonish illustrations are a welcome accompaniment to the sparse descriptions, providing the visual punch lines and demonstrating how these would work with an economy of line that keeps the entries from being too dense. There's a faux glossary at the end of the book.

As a librarian, I'm compelled to point out that the "Transliteration Specs" are actually "Translation Specs." However, I'm just as compelled to point out that the book covers of the non-existent "Babushkin's Goldene Book Series" are cute. I would buy a copy of Curious George Goes to Shul if it was ever printed.

Recommended for the adult or teen humor section of public, synagogue, and school libraries.

Steven M. Bergson, MLIS, Jewish Comics Blog, <http://jewishcomics.blogspot.com>

Colorni, Angelo. *Israel for Beginners: A Field Guide for Encountering the Israelis in Their Natural Habitat*. Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2011. 146 pp. \$16.95 (9789652294838). Also available as an e-book.

The author made aliyah from Italy, and he uses his personal experience to highlight the challenges of non-natives as they negotiate life in the Holy Land. Starting with the Hebrew language, Colorni discusses some of the more colorful idioms and interesting words. He moves on to Israel: The People, (Part 2) where he focuses on manners, smoking, driving, and other sources of his frustration. There are many aspects of the Israeli Lifestyle (Part 3) that cause consternation, particularly bureaucracy and politics. The fourth part is a discussion of the land and the major cities. The final part finds some positive aspects of Israel – the cooperation of diverse groups, the love of the land, and the spontaneity and practicality of Israelis. Several black and white illustrations are dispersed throughout the text.

Colorni's observations are made with a light heart and tongue in cheek. There are many puns and plays on words throughout the text, such as when describing the art of eating sunflower seeds and spewing out the seeds, an activity common to Israelis and parrots, which, when mastered, will indicate one has turned into a real Israeli, "or into a parrot, of which he has now become the spitting image." For those who enjoy word play, some of them are very clever. For those who don't, they can be irritating and detract from the argument being made. Most people who have been to Israel or dealt with Israelis will not need this field guide; they will have experienced it first-hand. For those who have not, it would be hoped that it is taken to be humorous and not offensive. An optional purchase for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Clifton, NJ; Secretary, School Synagogue and Centers Division. AJL; Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, AJL

Davidson, Herbert A. *Maimonides the Rationalist*. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011. \$64.50 (9781904113584).

This collection of nine technical essays argues that Maimonides was sincerely committed to both Rabbinic Judaism and Greek philosophy, though not as well read in the latter as many think. He thus advocated a rationalistic interpretation of Judaism, one that he thought recovered ancient elements of the religion that had been lost over the centuries. Davidson also thinks that the moral teachings of Maimonides became more ascetic over time. The essays range from those dealing with broad subjects, such as Maimonides' views on metaphysical

knowledge, to those that are narrowly focused, such as one on a sentence in *Guide for the Perplexed*. The author's close analysis is impressive. For large academic collections of Jewish philosophy.

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

Emden, Jacob. *Megilat Sefer: The Autobiography of Rabbi Jacob Emden*. Translated by S.B. Leperer and M.H. Wise. Baltimore: publisheryoursefer.com, 2011. 357 pp. \$55 (78612590028).

This is an excellent translation of the unique autobiography *Megilat Sefer*, of Rabbi Jacob Emden (1697-1776), who wrote over 50 books including *Responsa* and a commentary on the Siddur. Rabbi Emden follows in the footsteps of several famous rabbis who also wrote autobiographies, including Hayyim Vital, Leon Modena and Yosef Karo. Rabbi Emden bares his soul and covers a wide range of topics including his own genealogy, belief in providence, reference to historical events like *Tach veTat* (the 1648 attacks on Jews), and the rise of hasidic leaders like the Baal Shem Tov. He discusses the appearance of important Rabbinical works such as the *Responsa* of the Chacham Tzvi and Rabbi Shabbtei HaCohen's *Sifsei Cohen on Tur Yore Deah* and *Choshen Mishpat*. Rabbi Emden also relates events of his family such as provisions for dowries, intrigue surrounding the Rabbinate, regional and world politics of the day, and instances of martyrdom (*Kiddush Hashem*). The autobiography opens with a poem of theological substance peppered with biblical and rabbinic allusions expressing deep faith in G-d. This book includes footnotes, bibliography, images of various editions of *Megilat Sefer*, photos and illustrations, a glossary, and biographical notes. Recommended for all libraries

Dr. David B Levy, Touro College, New York

Feldman, Emanuel and Joel B. Wolowelsky, editors. *The Conversion Crisis: A Continuing Discussion*. Jersey City, NJ: Ktav/ The Rabbinical Council of America, 2011. 112 pp. \$24.95 (9781602801615).

The prevailing assumption is that conversion to Judaism is a religious act carried out by people who want to practice the Jewish religion. However, today, conversion is seen as a possible solution to intermarriage and as a means of acquiring Israeli citizenship. There are cases where Orthodox rabbis have to rule how to treat people who want to become Jewish but have no intention of accepting the precepts of the Jewish religion.

In this collection, we see three approaches to the problem. The first approach is that only people who are interested in becoming Orthodox Jews should be converted. The second approach is not to ask too many inconvenient questions and the third approach is to accept the converts who are not interested in becoming religious since their marrying a Jewish partner or settling in the State of Israel implies a commitment to the Jewish people. An interesting and original approach is to refuse to convert the parents, but to convert the children as minors when they are not required and are not able to make a commitment with regard to the observance of the Jewish religion.

This interesting and well-written collection, mainly reprinted from the modern Orthodox periodical *Tradition*, represents prominent contemporary Jewish thinkers. The added material is disappointing. The convert's point of view is represented by an extract by Abraham Carmel, which unfortunately is far too short. The final section of the book is a book review with the authors' response, which cannot do justice to a book which we have not read. The section should have been re-organized and re-written. I think that this book is a must for anybody who takes an interest in the future of the Jewish people.

Chaim Seymour, Director, Cataloging and Classification Department, Wurzweiler Library, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Feldman, Yael S. *Glory and Agony: Isaac's Sacrifice and National Narrative*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011. 421 pp. \$60. (9780804759021).

The text of Genesis 22: 1-19 is among the most difficult to understand passages in the Bible and ubiquitous in Jewish literature. Not a single verse is without questions and conundrums. It might even be said that no two readers will understand the text in exactly the same way. The historiography of *Akedat Yitzhak* is nothing short of endless. Known as *Akedat Yitzhak* in the Jewish tradition, it became known as the Sacrifice of Isaac in Christian traditions and *Dhabih* in Arabic where the son is often identified as Ishmael.

Despite this vast historiography, Yael Feldman's contribution is significant. *Glory and Agony* presents and interprets Modern Hebrew literature of the trope of *Akedat Yitzhak* in the Palestine and the State of Israel of the twentieth century (1904-1995). Feldman also encourages her readers to be familiar with the path-breaking monograph of Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial*, covering the vast range of midrashic literature on *Akedat Yitzhak*.

During the course of her essay, Feldman analyses the work of Modern Hebrew authors including S.Y. Agnon, Natan Alterman, Yehuda Amichai, H.N. Bialik, Y.H. Brenner, Haim Gouri, Michal Govrin, Uri Zvi Greenberg, David Grossman, Shulamit Hareven, Berl Katznelson, Yitzhak Laor, Hanoch Levin, Amos Oz, Moshe Shamir, and A.B. Yehoshua among many other. Feldman also places her text in the contexts of Ancient Greek Literature (Laius and Oedipus) and Christian martyrs beginning with Jesus.

Readers with access to Hebrew will derive the most from this thoroughly engaging text. Everyone will learn much from a careful reading. Recommended for academic libraries.

Paul Howard Hamburg, Librarian for the Judaica Collection, University of California, Berkeley, CA

Fine, Steven, editor. *The Temple of Jerusalem: From Moses to the Messiah; In Honor of Professor Louis H. Feldman*. Leiden: Brill (Brill Reference Library of Judaism), 2011. 405 pp. \$199. (9789004192539).

Professor Louis Feldman is one of the leading experts on the Jews during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. This book is based on a conference in his honor. Although it is impossible to produce a summary for such a collection, there are some definite themes. The actual structure of the Second Temple is examined in several articles, but the “imagined temple” is the subject of several others. “Notes on the Virtual Reconstruction of the Herodian Period Temple and Courtyards” and “Envisioning the Sanctuaries of Israel – The Academic and Creative Process of Archaeological Model Making” are examples of scholars trying to imagine how the Temple looked by using the most up to date scholarly tools. Imagining the Temple as part of a current political and cultural agenda is reflected in such articles as “Jerusalem Rebuilt: The Temple in the Fin-de-siecle Zionist Imagination” and “Avi-Yonah’s Model of Second Temple Jerusalem and the Development of Israeli Visual Culture.” The role that the Temple and its destruction play in the historical Jewish memory and how other religions have viewed Jerusalem are but two of the other subjects covered in this volume. The articles are consistently of high quality. This book is highly recommended for any academic collection in Jewish studies.

Jim Rosenbloom, Judaica Librarian, Brandeis University; President, Association of Jewish Libraries.

Gafni, Chanan. *‘Peshutah shel Mishnah’: Iyunim be-Heker Sifrut Hazal ba-Et ha-Hadashah* (*‘The Mishnah’s Plain Sense’: A Study of Modern Talmudic Scholarship*). Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2011(in Hebrew). 398 pp. 88 shekels.

An old joke, so old as to be incomprehensible today, describes the radical *Maskil* (advocate of the Jewish Enlightenment) resting from his revolutionary vigors on Saturday. His greatest pleasure comes after a satisfying meal, when he leans his chair back, lights up a cigar, and immerses himself in learning a page of Gemara. It is a perplexing image – if the *Maskil* is so fired up about Enlightenment and progressive ideas, why would he spend his leisure time learning Talmud? In fact, in the Jewish Enlightenment in the 19th century, the Mishnah and the Talmud were not only symbols of traditionalism. They were a battleground. *Maskilim* of all colors, from radical reformers to moderately open-minded rabbis, engaged in Talmudic exegesis. A central question in this enterprise was the degree to which the Mishnah was open to independent interpretation, untrammelled by the way in which it was understood by the Babylonian Talmud. This question echoed the earlier rebellion of Protestants against Catholic biblical exegesis, but also cut to the core of the attempt to create a modern, liberated Judaism.

Chanan Gafni explores the question of *Maskilic* Mishnah interpretation in different communal contexts, since the situation in Germany was very different from that in Lithuania or in Italy or in Galicia. His elegantly written book balances historical analysis with biographical sensitivity, and the examples of Mishnah interpretation offered by the various characters in the book bring home the deep learning and the originality (and sometimes the quirkiness) of 19th century Jewish intellectuals. This book on the Mishnah provides important context for critical Rabbinics scholars, and a vital part of the picture for students of modern Jewish history.

Pinchas Roth, graduate student in the Talmud Department at Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Ginsberg, Benjamin. *Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag During Radical Reconstruction*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 219 p. \$50.(9780801894640). Also available as an e-book.

In this biography of a largely forgotten figure, Franklin Moses Jr. (1838-1906) is re-examined and somewhat restored to glory. As the “robber governor” of South Carolina during Reconstruction, Moses was maligned by for seemingly corrupt practices. Yet the author argues that Moses was progressive, if not prescient, for his inclusion of freedmen within the post-Civil War South.

Although technically not Jewish—Moses was the son of a Jewish lawyer and a Methodist woman—his Jewish ancestry is viewed as relevant for its influence on later life and decisions. An early chapter is devoted to a history of the Jews in the South—their role as middlemen and professionals within a largely agrarian society, and their involvement in the Civil War and Reconstruction. Moses' Semitic blood, which conferred marginal status within antebellum plantation society, possibly inspired his post-war vision of a culture radically different from the one in which he was raised. Although he had supported secessionism, reflecting, perhaps, a desire for acceptance from the Southern aristocracy, he allied himself after the war with the Northern-backed Republican Party and won the gubernatorial election with the help of the newly freed and enfranchised slaves. Moses spent his time in office launching social programs, integrating state institutions, and enabling many Blacks attain formal education. Although later defeated by the reemerging white power, and dying in obscurity and disgrace, Moses had sown the seeds for future Black-Jewish coalitions and the Civil Rights movement.

Excellent researched and written, Moses of Carolina belongs in any college library with American history or Civil War/Reconstruction collections or a secular American-Jewish history collection.

Hallie Cantor, Acquisitions, Hedi Steinberg Library, Stern College for Women, Yeshiva University, New York

Grafton, Anthony and Joanna Weinberg with Alastair Hamilton. "I have always Loved the Holy Tongue:" Isaac Casaubon, the Jews and a Forgotten Chapter in Renaissance Scholarship. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011. 380 pp. \$35. (9780674048409).

As the Judaica Librarian at a major research library, I am often asked – Why continue to collect rare books now that, more and more, these books are being digitized and are made available either for free or at a relatively low cost? This book, "I Have always Loved the Holy Tongue," gives one of the best responses I have ever heard to this challenge.

In addition to their prodigious scholarship, Grafton and Weinberg have used many of the books from Casaubon's personal library. Interestingly, we learn that Casaubon's Hebrew library contained important texts such as Elijah Levita's *Grammatica Hebraica* and *ha-Tishbi* as well Azariah de Rossi's *Meor Enayim* but lacked a *Biblia Rabbinica* – an early edition of the *Mekorot Gedolot* based on the Masoretic text of the Tanakh. The library also contained few Talmudic or Midrashic texts and no volumes of Kabbalah.

Casaubon was a meticulous annotator and scribbler. His library thus contains unique exemplars of any text with each volume filled with his marginalia and "chicken scratches." Many examples of Casaubon's annotations are reproduced and show just how much we can learn from them. Casaubon's library represents a unique collection of sixteenth-century Hebraic and Jewish Studies of a Christian Classicist who was also a Christian Hebraist.

Paul Howard Hamburg, Librarian for the Judaica Collection, University of California, Berkeley, CA

Grossmark, Tziona. *Travel Narratives in Rabbinic Literature: Voyages to Imaginary Realms*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010. 253 pp. \$109. (139780773437937).

Grossmark's excellent, well organized collection and thoughtful analysis of 21 Jewish travelogues, travel tales, and travel folk tales uses interdisciplinary tools to compare them with the inter-cultural literature of journeys. She casts a wide net, yet gives appropriate attention to details and expertly draws on a varied terminology and knowledge not only of Hebrew and Aramaic but Latin and Greek. Trade routes of the ancient world, including roads around the Mediterranean basin, were busy with traffic during the Roman and Byzantine periods.

Grossmark's book uniquely demonstrates the existence of Jewish travelogues in Tannaitic and Amoraic literature from as early as the first century, thereby showing that Jewish travelogues precede the Christian travelogues of the fourth century and later. Grossmark looks afresh at travelers' tales found in *Masekhet Baba Batra* regarding Rab Hanna within the context of travels of the *nehutei*, i.e. rabbis who journeyed between Eretz Yisrael and Babylonia, using the methodologies of folklore, Rabbinics, and parallels in other traditions.

Includes bibliographical references & index. Recommended for all libraries.

David B Levy, Touro College, New York



Hartman, David. *The God Who Hates Lies: Confronting and Rethinking Jewish Tradition*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2011. 192 pp. \$24.99 (9781580234559). Also available as an e-book.

Hartman draws his title from his final chapter, which describes the dilemma of an Israeli with an adopted child, who had to lie to the Rabbinic Court about his own level of Jewish observance in order to convert the child to Judaism. The book as a whole is critical of the "Orthodox establishment," but that is not its main thrust. Hartman's main theme is his proposal of a different way of looking at *halakhah* (Jewish law). He sees it as a way of enriching God-consciousness and as something that can be viewed as a means of education so that a person, especially one new to *halakhah*, can take a gradual approach, adopting more and more as he becomes comfortable with it. The book describes several cases where the author has bent commonly accepted *halakhah* in order to prevent emotional suffering of the people involved.

For a reader whose point of view is Orthodox, the book is beyond radical, possibly scandalous. For readers who are Conservative or at the extreme left wing of Orthodoxy, it might make a lot of sense. The question must be raised as to whom the book is addressed and who will be the readers. The book belongs in a serious collection on Jewish religious thought and would find readers in Conservative synagogue libraries. The author was a pupil of Rav Soloveitchik, whom he greatly admires, but with whom he also differed. The style is conversational and accessible with notes, a bibliography and an index.

Sarah M. Barnard, Serials Librarian, Hebrew Union College Klau Library, Cincinnati, OH

Hersh, June. *The Kosher Carnivore: The Ultimate Meat and Poultry Cookbook*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011. 208 pp. \$27.99 (9780312699420). Also available as an e-book. Reviewed from an uncorrected advance proof.

To paraphrase the Talmud (Pesachim 109a), "there is no happiness without meat and wine." Hersh includes an array of recipes that include both. After a brief introduction about kashrut and the experts she consulted about meat, cooking, wine, and spices, Hersh describes different cooking methods and different ways to bring out flavor with marinades and rubs. The recipes are arranged by type of meat, and include such diverse pleasures as Korean Ribs, Pretzel-crust Chicken, and Classic Brisket. To complete the menu, there are sections with soup and stock; good carbs, which are mostly potatoes or rice; and "Dough," with directions for homemade egg noodles and dumplings. There are five vegetable recipes, and a short section of dressings.

The strength of the book is the notes included with most recipes. The author tells you what you need to know about buying cuts of meat, and often suggests alternates, which can be either less or more expensive. Her "Side notes" suggest sides that will complement the dish, and she lets you know the total prep time, including marinating, preheating, etc. The recipes, with the exception of "The Best Burger," include many ingredients, often minced or chopped, and multiples steps for each recipe. Many carnivores prefer more simple fare (a slab of meat and some fries), but the cookbook will be well used by those with a mature palette, a love of cooking and an ample food budget. This one is an excellent choice for those libraries that collect cookbooks, and a strong optional purchase for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Clifton, NJ; Secretary, School Synagogue and Centers Division. AJL; Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, AJL

Hoffman, Lawrence A. editor. *Who by Fire, who by Water: Un'taneh Tokef*. Woodstock, VT : Jewish Lights (Prayers of Awe), 2010. 253 p. \$24.95 (9781580234245).

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

The book offers a translation and a commentary. It is followed by some forty short essays by prominent Jewish figures, mostly non-Orthodox. The essays are divided into four sections. The first section is the moral side, since the poem is far from politically correct according to today's standards. Many of the writers, accustomed to a post-modern approach, find it difficult to accept a King (God) who restricts their activity and their moral choices. This is followed by a section about translation of the message of the poem into modern form. The last two sections tackle the poem itself and its ideas.

The editor explains his purpose in opening the floor for discussion, "what to do with a poem whose theology we may have trouble living with..." One of the contributors expresses it even more strongly: "I just cannot

believe in a God who decides who will live and who will die." I found the book disappointing. There is far too much duplication of ideas and the material in the book could have been edited into a long article. The discussion format is not effective. After reading the book, I am not sure what was of more interest, the treatment of "Unta'neh Tokef" or the picture of non-Orthodox Jewish theology which arises from the discussion.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Ingber, Judith Brin. *Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press (Raphael Patai Series in Jewish Folklore and Anthropology), 2011. 504 pp. \$34.95 (9780814333303).

Who knew that the little movements Jews make during the Silent Devotion or the large procession around the sanctuary with the Torah scrolls are a part of Jewish dance?

This book, a collection of 19 articles by 18 contributors, covers many aspects of Jewish dance, from its origins to modern Israeli dancing. *Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance* covers Israeli folk dancing, as would be expected, and Jewish influences on secular stage and ballet professional dance as well. Many of the articles had been previously published, so the information may not be new to those who follow scholarly works on dance. There is also an extensive bibliography and glossary. Together these works make up a coffee table book that is both informative and lovely to look at. In fact, the only negative comment I have to make on this book is the format itself. If the editor's intent was to make a coffee table book that is attractive to look at, then it is a shame that pictures that were originally in color were not reproduced here in color. The pictures that were originally in black in white tend to be dramatic and professionally photographed. However, the main problem with this format is that the book is too wide and too heavy for the spine height. At only 23 cm. in height, the spine cannot support the 29 cm. wide pages and after one reader used the book the spine is loose. This volume, with its insightful information, will need to be carefully shelved. That said, I think the book has a place in large synagogue libraries and academic institutions with theater arts or ethnology departments.

Jackie Ben-Efraim, Special Collections Librarian, Ostrow Library, American Jewish University, Los Angeles

Jelen, Sheila E., Michael P. Kramer and L. Scott Lerner, editors. *A cXyfb>Yk Jg` jhmUi fYg jbmfgWjcbgUbX Vci bXUfjYg*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press (Jewish Culture and Contexts), 2011. 368 pp. \$59.95 (- 780812242720).

This excellent collection of essays is the product of yearlong project which took place at Penn University's Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies. The key question of what is Jewish literature and who is a Jewish writer are difficult to tackle or define as, unlike other national literatures, this one does not share a common language, nor is it defined by one geographical location. Therefore the collection of essays at hand is not simply eclectic, but is an encompassing and highlighting representation of the great rich scope that is Jewish literature.

And what a rich collection it is! From the Berlin Salons to the Russian poetry chapter; visiting social identity through French and Ladino; Yiddish literature and folk is observed through I.L. Peretz's work, Sholem Aleikhem's *Kasrielivke Kleine Mentshelekh*, the American chapter of Yiddish female poets, Celia Dropkin, Fradl Shtok and Berta Kling, and the crossroads between Hebrew and Yiddish as reflected in the equally-powerful bilingual writing of Y.H. Brenner. Israeli literature is touched on in rereading Nathan Alterman's "Seventh Column" poetry, while American literature is looked at through the writing of Eisig Silberschlag and Laurence Roth's memoir, *Unpacking My Father's Bookstore*. Anita Norich unfolds the paradigms of modern Jewish literary history, while Michael Kramer discusses the art of assimilation among several other literary studies and observations.

The introduction and essays of this wonderful collection not only take us on a journey through the many faces, lives and times of Jewish literature, but the list of amazing scholars promises it to be a journey of superb academic quality. I heartily recommend this book to both academic libraries holding considerable Judaica collections, as well as congregational libraries where member might seek further knowledge about the literatures of their people.

Noa Wahrman, Jewish Studies Collection Manager, Wells Library, Indiana University Bloomington, IN

Kahn, Yoel. *The Three Blessings: Boundaries, Censorship, and Identity in Jewish Liturgy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 224 pp. \$45.95 (9780195373295). Also available as an e-book.

"... Who made me an Israelite; ... Who did not make me a woman; ... Who did not make me a boor..." These words are in our liturgy, but their journey there was not a smooth one and their place there has not been secure. In this book, Rabbi Kahn traces these formulations back to Hellenistic times where several variations

had been popular aphorisms. Versions that appeared in early Rabbinic literature changed in both wording and usage over time and in different places. Originally the three blessings were to be said as one woke up in the morning. Later they were attached to the 100 blessings and placed in the formal prayer services. Censors and changing sensibilities also affected the exact wording of the blessings so that numerous variations appear in print and manuscript prayer books.

Scholars will appreciate the copious notes and bibliography; while lay-people may enjoy this mix of history, liturgy, Jewish-Christian relations, censorship, with a sprinkling of gender and class studies. Highly recommended.

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

Kallus, Menachem, editor. *The Pillar of Prayer: Teachings of Contemplative Guidance in Prayer, sacred Study and the Spiritual Life from the Ba'al Shem Tov and his Circle.* Translated and annotated by Menachem Kallus. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae (Spiritual Affinities; 1), 2011. 275, 67 pp. \$24.95 (9781891785795).

This work is a collection of the teachings, focusing on prayer, of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of Hassidism, and his followers. The approach is mystical. The work itself provides the reader with an English translation. Copious notes include both explanations and bibliographical references. Rabbi Kallus has appended the original Hebrew texts at the end of the volume. The texts themselves are for specialists or for Kabbalah enthusiasts. Other people will find them very hard going. However it is an impressive volume.

Chaim Seymour, Director, Cataloging and Classification Department, Wurzeiler Library, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Kaplan, Debra. *Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg.* Stanford CA: Stanford University Press (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture), 2011. 254 pp. \$60. (9780804774420). Also available as an e-book.

The Jewish community of Strasbourg was expelled in 1390, and Jews were not permitted to live in the city until the French Revolution. Instead of residing in the city, Jews scattered throughout the countryside, living in tiny enclaves of Jewish families in villages throughout Alsace. Debra Kaplan explores the lives they lived in rural Alsace, the complicated but persistent ways in which Jews continued to be present in Strasbourg itself, and the place they occupied in a city that was navigating the complicated religious waters of the Reformation. Deploying local archival documents and Hebrew manuscripts with equal skill, Kaplan paints a detailed picture of how Jews and Christians lived in early modern Strasbourg and of the intertwined intellectual and religious lives they led. Kaplan's writing is concise and accessible, making this a model study of Jewish-Christian relations in medieval and early modern Europe.

Pinchas Roth, graduate student in the Talmud Department at Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Kirschenbaum, Lévana with Lisa R. Young. *The Whole Foods Kosher Kitchen.* Skyhorse Publishing, 2011. 314 pp. \$14.95 (9781616082925). Also available as an e-book.

Lévana Kirschenbaum, a restaurateur and cooking teacher, teams with dietician Lisa Young to show people how to lose weight, save on grocery bills, and still eat delicious kosher food. The book begins with nutrition and health tips and continues with recipes using whole grains and natural and organic foods. Many are vegetarian and/or gluten-free or gluten-free adaptable. There are also a good number that are kosher for Pesach. Among the delectable recipes are Moroccan lentil soup, summer rolls with Thai dipping sauce, salmon in pomegranate sweet-and-sour sauce, and chocolate espresso mousse. Cooking from this book will help anyone who wants good, healthy kosher food enjoy a good meal.

Barbara M. Bibel, Reference Librarian/Consumer Health Information Specialist, Oakland Public Library, Oakland, CA; Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA

Korngold, Jamie S. *The God Upgrade: Finding Your 21st-Century Spirituality in Judaism's 5,000-Year-Old Tradition.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2011. 143 pp. \$15.99 (9781580234436). Also available as an e-book.

Known as the Adventure Rabbi, Ms. Korngold "has found that the spirituality of the wilderness awakens Judaism." In her latest book, she discusses her philosophy of faith and prayer. She does not believe that God "hears" prayers, much less "answers" them. Korngold identifies with Spinoza, who was excommunicated for his rejection of a providential God. The chapters deal with different concepts of a deity and ideas about the afterlife, prayer, and the Torah. Maimonides and Buber also influence her conclusions. The book includes an

excellent appendix of "36 Large and Small Ways to Make Judaism Relevant and Meaningful in Your Life," as well as a bibliography and suggestions for further reading. Ms. Korngold's argument fails for three main reasons: she uses terms interchangeably and does not clearly define religion, faith, spirituality, Judaism, or God. These concepts exist independently of one another. The very things she argues against: blind faith, rote recitation, standard rituals, are what she advises as an upgrade. She empathizes with a bar mitzvah boy who does not want to say blessings, and repeatedly asserts that she does not believe in a God that interacts with the world, but she suggests saying the blessing over bread, which thanks God for bringing forth sustenance from the earth, at every meal.

She does make one valid point: we must look to create our own concept, and use all the resources at hand (nature, prayer, rituals, spiritual practices) to do so. A more appropriate title may have been "The You Upgrade," as a more mature view of God brings increased spirituality and appreciation of the world. This book is appropriate for Reform, Reconstructionist and Renewal oriented patrons.

Kathe Pinchuck, Clifton, NJ; Secretary, School Synagogue and Centers Division. AJL; Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, AJL

Lamm, Norman. *Festivals of Faith: Reflections on the Jewish Holidays*. Edited by David Shatz. New York: RIETS Yeshiva University Press. 2011. 346 pp. \$27.50 (9781602801745).

Festivals of Faith is a compilation of sermons Rabbi Norman Lamm, chancellor of Yeshiva University, delivered from the pulpit of The Jewish Center, a vibrant Orthodox synagogue in Manhattan, where Rabbi Lamm served as spiritual leader for twenty-five years. The sermons cover all the festive Jewish holidays plus Yom Hashoah and Tisha Be-Av. Each eloquently written sermon, approximately five pages long, is inspiring and intellectually stimulating. The editors added textual references to the body of each sermon. In addition, a comprehensive index of biblical and rabbinic sources can be found at the end of the book. Highly recommended for synagogue libraries. *Festivals of Faith* is an excellent resource for congregants and rabbis searching for an eloquent and scholarly concept to bring to their congregations. The sermons are easy to grasp and relevant to all strands of Judaism.

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

Levy, Richard N., editor. *On Wings of Awe: A Fully Transliterated Machzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur* (Rev. ed.). Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2011. 564 pp. \$24.95 (9781602801318).

This is the revised edition of *On Wings of Awe* published in 1987 by B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations. This Reform *machzor* is intended to be used in Hillel groups, although other congregations may also be using it. The new edition has English transliterations parallel to the Hebrew prayers and uses inclusive language, e.g., "Our God and God of our ancestors." The first edition did have some inclusiveness; however, the parentheses have been removed from both the Hebrew prayers and English translations making it more truly inclusive, e.g., "God of our fathers and mothers" not "God of our fathers (and mothers)." Alternative words are also provided for some traditionally theological sticking points. In the Amidah, for example, *metim* (*ha kol*) is used, so that God can give life to either the dead (*metim*) or to everyone (*ha kol*).

A major change from the first edition (besides transliteration) is the elimination of the Musaf Amidah. Rabbi Levy also revised some translations of prayers and included new readings and new piyutim alongside the traditional medieval ones. This *machzor* includes the Torah portion readings (Hebrew and English) for each day, but does not provide transliteration for them. There are questions for reflection on the Torah readings and after the Avodah service. The typeset is clear and easy to read (and more attractive to me than the first edition's) and each section of the service is clearly marked. Recommended for libraries that collect *machzorim* or for libraries on campuses with a Hillel.

Suzanne Smailes, Head of Technical Services, Wittenberg University Library, Springfield, OH



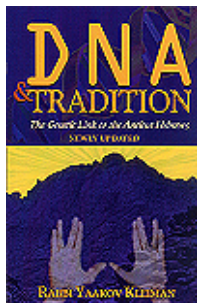
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Winner "Body of Work" Award of Association of Jewish Libraries

DNA & Tradition

by Rabbi Yaakov Kleiman

This book describes how DNA research has confirmed many of the traditions of Judaism. The best known is the so-called Cohanic gene which almost all men have who claim to be of the priestly class. Another important discovery through DNA is that today's Jews are closely related to one another and descended from Semites, that is, people from the Middle East. Other chapters discuss the genetic and biblical Matriarchs, the Lost Tribes and (3) discuss the history of the Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews of the Middle East and Mediterranean communities. 6" x 9" 210 pp. softcover \$15.00



History of the Jews in Russia and Poland

by Simon Dubnow

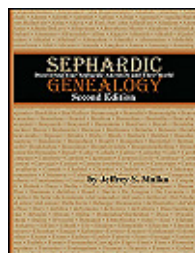
This is one of the great histories of the Jews of Eastern Europe. Originally published in 1918 in three volumes, Avotaynu has republished it as a single 600-page volume. It details the history of the Jews of Eastern Europe from their earliest presence in Greek times to about 1910. Discussed are the Khazars, Crusades, rise of Polish Jewry, Cossack rebellion of 1648, rise of Hasidism, false Messiahs, creation of the Pale of Settlement, Jewish life under the laws created by the czars, and the pogroms of the turn of the 20th century. 7" x 10" 618 pages softcover \$39.50



Sephardic Genealogy

by Jeffrey S. Malka

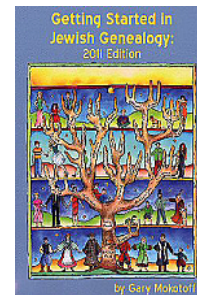
Winner "Best Judaica Reference Book" (2002) of Association of Jewish Libraries. This guide explains how to trace Sephardic ancestry through archives as ancient as 12th-century Spanish notarial records or as recent as today's country repositories. Taking us on a journey traversing environments as diverse as the Amazon Basin or the Ottoman Empire, the author discusses Sephardic history, their various diasporas and where to find their records. The origins of Sephardic surnames and clues derived from their origins and meanings are clearly explained, and an extensive bibliography is provided for additional study. 7" x 10" 390 pp. hardcover \$45.00



Getting Started in Jewish Genealogy

by Gary Mokotoff

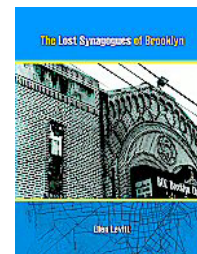
This is a getting started guide meant to convince the reader that tracing one's Jewish ancestry can be done. The resources described are primarily on the Internet. It explains in detail such resources as JewishGen, Morse One-Step site, Family Search, Ancestry.com and many more. It alerts the readers to what types of documents of their ancestors will aid in their research—such records as birth, marriage, death, immigration, census and naturalization records. Special focus is given to two problems often uttered by neophyte Jewish genealogists: (1) My name was changed at Ellis Island and (2) I do not know the town my family came from in the Old Country. 7" x 10" 96 pp. softcover \$14.50



The Lost Synagogues of Brooklyn

by Ellen Levitt

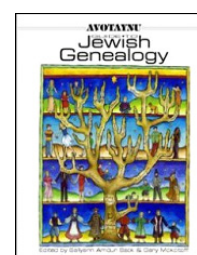
Jewish life in Brownsville, East New York, Flatbush-East Flatbush, Bedford-Stuyvesant and other nearby areas of Brooklyn through the 1950s was a lively, rich and varied environment. During the next few decades it dissipated greatly. As Jews moved to other areas, they left behind their synagogues. This book is a photographic essay of these *ex-shuls*, what happened to them, and how they appear today. Many became churches whose facades still have Jewish symbols. 8½" x 11" 196 pp. softcover \$26.00



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Magness, Jodi. *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011. 335 pp. \$25. (9780802865588).

Jodi Magness' goal in this book was to correlate archaeological and literary evidence that illustrated everyday Jewish life in the late Second Temple period, 100 B.C.E.-100 C.E. Her intention had been to limit the scope to purity laws, but she broadened her focus, probably to appeal to a broader range of readers. I have, at best, an amateur interest in archaeology, yet I found the book quite fascinating and the documentation is more than sufficient to satisfy the scholarly reader. In addition to the extensive notes there is a full bibliography and several indexes.

Purity laws and the archaeological evidence for them take up a major portion of the book. It is amazing to see what one can learn from pots, combined with passages from the Bible, Rabbinic and Dead Sea documents, as well as Josephus and Roman authors. Magness noted that different groups interpreted the purity laws differently, the Qumran community being the strictest. She also discussed clothing, dining customs, toilet practices, burial customs, and several other aspects of daily life, but all of them involved purity.

Near the end of the book is a section on the burial of Jesus. The discussion of the ossuary discovered in a rock-cut tomb in 1996 that has an inscription that referred to a man named Jesus and his family was interesting. Magness concluded that it was unlikely that the man was Jesus of the Christian Bible and gave several reasons related to the social and economic position of the family and the fact that the names were common in that period.

This book is a must for academic collections that include archaeological material, and would be an interesting addition to general Judaica collections.

Sarah M. Barnard, Serials Librarian, Hebrew Union College Klau Library, Cincinnati, OH

Naor, Bezalel. *The Limit of Intellectual Freedom: The letters of Rav Kook.* Spring Valley, NY: Orot, 2011. 395 pp. \$29.95 (9780976471431).

Does traditional Judaism allow its believers intellectual freedom? Are Jews bound by tradition or can they embrace new ideas? R. Avraham Yitzchak Kook explored the limits of intellectual freedom in a number of letters, translated here with extensive commentary by R. Bezalel Naor. As presented by Naor, Kook holds that the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds represent differing positions on this issue, living in separate spiritual worlds. The rabbis of the Yerushalmi, being in Israel, closer to the period of prophecy "enabled halachic conclusions to be reached intuitively, without protracted deliberation," while for the Bavli theological debates can never be conclusively decided.

These differences are traced in various controversies in Jewish ideas through the Geonic, medieval, and modern periods with one major issue, the authority of aggadic literature. Kook asserts that some Geonim and Rishonim (especially Maimonides) sided with the liberal Bavli while others followed the restrictive Yerushalmi. Naor, through extensive appendices, extends Kook's division down to the modern period with the Vilna Gaon among others siding with the Yerushalmi while Shneur Zalman of Liady, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, sided with the Bavli.

This is a rather difficult book, with the core of the book consisting of an essay of 40 pages long based on a lecture that Naor presented at a conference on Jewish spirituality held in Toronto in 2007. The essay includes translations of three of Kook's letters. The remainder of the book consists of sources presented in 22 appendixes, and 510 footnotes covering 200 pages. Much of Naor's argument is presented in these appendixes and footnotes, which show a vast breadth of knowledge of rabbinics, Kabbalah and modern academic studies, but also go off on all sorts of tangents.

In the end it's hard to tell from this book which position Kook held on the tension between theological conformity and freedom. It seems that he felt that living in Israel it was possible to revive an Israeli approach close to the Yerushalmi based on the prophetic spirit of the land. The difficulties of presentation and format make this suitable only for specialized academic libraries.

Harvey Sukenic, Library Director, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA

Ochs, Juliana. *Security & Suspicion: An Ethnography of Everyday Life in Israel.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. 201 pp. \$47.50 (9780812242911).

An ethnographic study, based on fieldwork in Israel during the second Intifada, the book describes behaviors and attitudes relating to the ways Israeli Jews experience the inevitable heightened sense of threat, and the ensuing security measures, in everyday life.

Following one of the clearest bipartisan definitions of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians in the

introduction, the book proceeds to describe and analyze how security has become a part of Israeli culture. From the genealogy of Israeli security, to its projections in city life, and from dealing with a concept such as *pahad* (fear) and its affect on corporeal politics, to the conversations with Israelis, the book offers cohesive anecdotal (and illustrated) testimonies to the impact this conflict has had on Israeli society.

Highly recommended for academic libraries collecting in the area of Israeli society, as well as to readers who want to gain a deeper understanding of one of the major forces that shape life and politics in Israel.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Director, The Frances-Henry Library, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles

Portier-Young, Anatheia E. *Apocalypse against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011. 462 pp. \$50. (9780802865984).

As a teacher of a class on Literatures of Resistance as Creative Responses to Oppression, I could barely wait to read the book and familiarize myself with one of the aspects I do not cover: that of theologies of resistance. Covering the second century BCE when a period of intense persecution of the people of Judea began under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the author offers a detailed and well analyzed background of historical events and personalities, as well as a thorough discussion of the concept of theology (or theologies) of resistance. These discussions comprise the first two parts of the book, and include detailed descriptions of the Hellenistic brutal rule of Judea, aimed at eradicating Jewish religious practices.

The third and last part of the book offers analyses of the book of Daniel, the Apocalypse of Weeks, and the Book of Dreams as texts aimed at offering people hope and renewing their faith in their Covenant with God. These chapters support the author's argument that the first Jewish apocalyptic writings have indeed emerged as a creative theological response to despotic rule. In addition to a general conclusion at the end of the book, each of the ten chapters offers its own conclusion. The book includes an extensive bibliography as well as three indices, and detailed footnotes.

Recommended for academic libraries collecting in the areas of Enochic literature, Jewish Apocalypticism, Second Century Judaism and Jewish Theology.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Director, The Frances-Henry Library, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles

Ravvin, Norman and Sherry Simon, editors. *Failure's Opposite: Listening to A. M. Klein*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011. 267 pp. \$95. cloth; \$29.95 pbk. (9780773538320; 9780773538627).

Abraham Moses Klein (1909-1972) was the first of a quartet of notable Jewish writers to emerge from Montreal between 1940 and 1965. Two of them – the novelist Mordecai Richler and the poet and singer Leonard Cohen – achieved world renown; the other two – the poets Irving Layton and Klein himself – are less well known outside of Canada. Today, Klein is best remembered for his collection of poems, *The Rocking Chair*, which won the Governor General's Award in 1948, and *The Second Scroll*, a short novel that came out in 1951. The former work celebrates Klein's hometown and province, in a self-consciously Latinate style; the latter, written under the combined spells of James Joyce and the Pentateuch, is a pioneering example of Holocaust fiction. Klein cast a long shadow due to his roles as literary exemplar, editor of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, and publicist for Samuel Bronfman's Seagram Company. His final two decades were marked by an enigmatic silence, evidently set off by a clinical depression. Richler, in his penultimate novel *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, drew extensively from Klein's biography for the character of L. M. Berger. The essays examine Klein's legacy within the Canadian literary canon, in relation to Yiddish and Hebrew traditions, and in juxtaposition to other Montreal Jewish writers. Overall, they offer valuable insights into an important but neglected author. The best essays warrant the addition of this book to research collections. Given the high cost of the cloth edition, librarians are advised to seek out the paperback.

Zachary M. Baker, Assistant University Librarian, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, CA

Reichner, Elyashiv. *By Faith Alone: the Story of Rabbi Yehuda Amital*. Translated by Elli Fischer. Jerusalem: Maggid Books, 2011. 377 pp. \$29.95 (9781592641925).

Rabbi Amital was born in Hungary in 1924. He survived the Holocaust and emigrated to Israel. After the Six Day War in 1967, he founded a Har Etzion Yeshiva in Alon Shvut and served as head for forty years, educating many young men. Although his yeshiva was not within the pre-1967 borders, his political stance could be defined as centrist or left of center. At a time when most of the religious Zionist tended to be right wing, he expressed

another point of view with considerable courage. After Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated, he served as a minister without portfolio within the Peres' government hoping to heal the schisms between different ideological groups in Israel. He was a man who did not hesitate to espouse unpopular views but was respected by those who disagreed with him.

I recommend this book whole-heartedly. Rabbi Amital was an important and courageous figure who was primarily an educator and played his part in Israel's history.

Chaim Seymour, Director, Cataloging and Classification Department, Wurzweiler Library, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Rips, Nancy. *High Holiday Stories; Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur Thoughts on Family, Faith and Food.* Hollywood, FL: Frederick Fell Publishers, 2010. 192 pp. \$16.95 (9780883911914).

This small, attractive book with its bright, colorful book jacket is a collection of brief quotes from biblical and other sources and personal recollections of the high holy days by various notables as well as friends and acquaintances of the author. The entries range from profound gems of wisdom to trite and shallow remarks.

This reviewer does not believe that it is an appropriate book for libraries; rather it is very suitable as a gift item at the time of the High Holy Days, to be picked up, perhaps read aloud to friends or family, children or adults. Spelling errors such as the name of Elie Wiesel (spelled Weisel) might have been eliminated by more careful editing. Not recommended as a library purchase.

Susanne M. Batzdorff, Librarian, retired, Celia Gurevitch Library, Congregation Beth Ami, Santa Rosa, CA

Roitman, Jessica Vance. *The Same but Different? Inter-cultural Trade and the Sephardim, 1595-1640.* Leiden: Brill (Brill's Series in Jewish Studies), 2011. 328 pp. \$168. (9789004202764).

Does a network work best if it is tight-knit, or if it is loose and allows strangers in? This question has occupied economists, and *The Same but Different* attempts to answer it based on the example of Sephardic merchants trading in Amsterdam. Previous scholars have pointed to the far-flung network of family relatives and fellow Jews utilized by these merchants in the 17th century as the key to their financial success. Roitman's claim is that, in fact, Sephardic merchants worked with a much wider array of business partners than previously noticed. She points to the complex identity of these merchants – belonging to a Jewish ethnic group that was defined by its having been converted to Christianity (in Spain and Portugal) – as a factor in facilitating inter-cultural exchange. The book focuses on three case studies, of merchants from Antwerp, Brazil and Amsterdam, all from Portuguese Jewish roots. The analysis of their trading strategies in light of their identities is of interest to historians of early modern Judaism, as well as economic historians.

Pinchas Roth, graduate student in the Talmud Department at Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Rosenberg, Moshe. *Morality for Muggles: Ethics in the Bible and the World of Harry Potter.* Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2011. 117 pp. \$12.95 (9781602801837). Reviewed from an uncorrected advance proof.

Mapping the ethical landscape of all of the Harry Potter books, Rabbi Rosenberg, who is also a Judaic Studies educator, offers ideas to other educators about the potential of this body of children's literature to teach ethical concerns from a Jewish perspective. The book is divided into five parts, four of which contain ethical issues such as: the individual, relationships, society, and what really matters. The fifth chapter offers some outcomes of his own experience with children in the form of short essays written by his students about lessons learned from intertwining Harry Potter and *The Ethics of the Fathers*. May be useful to educators, parents and teachers in Jewish schools.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Director, The Frances-Henry Library, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles

Sagi, Avi. *To Be a Jew: Joseph Chayim Brenner as a Jewish Existentialist.* London: Continuum (Robert & Arlene Kogod Library of Judaic Studies), 2011. \$120. cloth; \$34.95 pbk (978144195838; 9781441109736).

This study of Brenner (1881-1921), a major Hebrew literary figure, focusses on his analysis of the nature of Jewish identity. Mr. Sagi is convinced that Brenner, though extremely secular, was committed to the continuation of the Jewish people and that Brenner's analysis of Jewish identity was based upon existentialist philosophy. The author argues that Brenner defined Jewish identity as a combination of genealogy and commitment. Mr. Sagi discusses Brenner's attitude towards the Hebrew language and its consistency, or lack of it, with his views on Jewish identity. As the book progresses, it contrasts Brenner to another secularist, Ahad Ha-Am, who conceived

Jewish identity (quite differently from Brenner) in historical/ cultural terms. The book sometimes takes debatable positions but they are always well-argued. An important addition to literary criticism collections.

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

Schnapper, Dominique, Chantal Bordes-Benayoun and Freddy Raphael. *Jewish Citizenship in France: The Temptation of Being Among One's Own*. Translated by Catherine Temerson. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2010. 141 pp. \$49.95 (9781412814744).

The English translation of *Condition Juive en France* published in 2009 is a short book presenting the results of a survey of French Jewish activists and a "representative sample of the total Jewish population" conducted in three cities, Paris, Toulouse, and Strasbourg, between 2004 and 2006. The survey confirms trends already established: strong Jewish participation in national and local elections, rejection of political extremism, and relative estrangement from the Left. French Jews increasingly define themselves as religious Jews even if several aspects of their ethnic communities are also emphasized. The authors conclude that French Jews are becoming more insular at the same time that they attract more attention from politicians and national media. Because of its price and its limited scope, only recommended for large University collections.

Roger S. Kohn, Independent scholar, Silver Spring, MD

Schweid, Eliezer. *A History of Modern Jewish Religious Philosophy, Volume 1: The Period of the Enlightenment*. Translated by Leonard Levin. Leiden: Brill, 2011. 361 pp. \$176. (9789004207332).

One of the most prolific and highly regarded scholars in the world of modern Jewish thought is Eliezer Schweid, emeritus professor of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This book is the first of a projected multi-volume series on modern Jewish thought, a sub-set of Jewish studies which was largely pioneered by scholars who were instrumental in developing a new mindset and vocabulary through which the writings of the Jewish past might be critically re-examined and freshly understood. Hebrew was viewed as sacred and pristine. It was hardly capable of entering and analyzing fields which might be shared by non-Jews. Schweid provides the reader with a broad picture of the pre-modern background of modern Jewish thought.

It should be noted that the pioneers of modern Jewish thought were thoroughly reinterpreting a past which was solidly grounded in the vocabulary and modality of Jewish law. The initial steps from the intellectual cosmos nurtured by the ghetto were precarious ones and often threatened ostracism in some form or other. Schweid connects the way in which early nineteenth century idealistic philosophers (such as Friedrich W. Schelling) would blend their thought with both kabbalistic notions and biblical myths. It was through carefully reading medieval Jewish thinkers such as Moses Maimonides and pioneering freethinking Jews (such as Spinoza) that Hebrew literature developed a secular vocabulary and a capacity for engaging the challenges of modernity.

Schweid introduces the reader to many writers and thinkers who pioneered a new approach toward Jewish law and lore: Mordecai Gumpel Halevi Schnaber (1741-1797), Saul Ascher (1767-1822) and others. This is a work which should be in every university and seminary library. It has an extensive bibliography and thorough index.

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

Simonsohn, Shlomo. *Between Scylla and Charybdis: The Jews in Sicily*. Leiden: Brill (Brill's Series in Jewish Studies), 2011. 778 pp. \$292.00 cloth; \$75.00 pbk. (97890004192454; 9789004196049). Also available as an e-book.

Between Scylla and Charybdis is a comprehensive summary and conclusion to the author's previous 18 volumes of documents detailing the history of the Jews of Sicily from their earliest appearance on the island in 383 C.E., up to and following their expulsion at the end of the 15th Century. As Simonsohn makes clear, the Sicilian Jews of the early period left very few documents with which to illuminate their lives, even after the discovery of an additional 150 documents in the Cairo Geniza at the end of the nineteenth century. It is not until we reach the last 210 years of the Jewish presence in Sicily, under the rule of Aragonese-Spanish conquerors, that the available documentation increases substantially. Even then, the records deal almost exclusively with the interactions between the Jews and the ruling authorities, and delve little into the internal dealings (literary, ritual, etc.) among the Jews themselves. One is struck by the fact that the Jews of Sicily lived in relatively peaceful *convivenza* (cohabitation) with the majority population for nearly 1000 years. Once the Aragonese-Spanish conquerors seized control of the island however, the Jews were subjected to pressure from several directions. Looking for protection from the sovereigns of Sicily, the Jews hoped that their previous rulers would emerge transcendent,

a hope that was dashed with the expulsion from the island in 1492.

This final volume of Simonsohn's series provides readers with an excellent opportunity to obtain the gist of the scholarship in the previous volumes. Replete with tables detailing commodity prices, wages and salaries, marriage contracts, and demographics this work is an extremely informative and very readable description of the interaction between Jews and non-Jews in a not-so-closed society in the Middle Ages.

Randall C. Belinfante, Librarian/Archivist, American Sephardi Federation, New York

Spero, Rabbi Yechiel. *Rav Gifter: The Vision, Fire, and Impact of an American-born Gadol*. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2011. 414 pp. \$21.95 (9781422610978).

Prolific inspirational storyteller Rabbi Yechiel Spero (*Touched by a Story, Touched by a Prayer, Touched by the Seder*) has written a loving tribute to Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, Rosh Yeshivah of Telz Yeshiva in Cleveland, Ohio. The first half of the book is a full biography. It begins with Rav Gifter's birth in Portsmouth, Virginia, his childhood in Baltimore, Maryland, his life changing experience in Telz Yeshivah in Lithuania, his marriage, his years of teaching and his death. The second half of the book consists of excerpts of Rav Gifter's speeches, his philosophy, ideas and his teachings all told through anecdotes gleaned from his many students and others who knew him. Almost every page includes photographs of Rabbi Gifter, his family, his students, his teachers and prominent rabbis of his generation. Some of Rabbi Gifter's remarks are in Yiddish which the author translates. The book includes an extensive glossary of Yiddish terms, an index and a family tree. Highly recommended for libraries that collect the Mesorah Publications biography series. Recommended for synagogue and Jewish school libraries that want a glimpse of the Yeshivah world.

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

Steinberg, Ellen F. and Prost, Jack H. *From the Jewish Heartland: Two Centuries of Midwest Foodways*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011. 207 pp. \$32.95 (9780252036200).

The authors, who did extensive research using several archives, personal interviews, and old cookbooks, examine the "cultural, social, and economic practices relating to the production and consumption of food – the state, shape, change, and evolution of Midwestern Jewish cuisine through time." After a brief history of different immigrant groups and their journeys westward, they describe their analysis of cookbooks for recipes and ingredients, the functions of the Jewish peddler (selling goods and bringing news), and the Settlement House schools that taught women to cook "American food." There were several Jewish farming communities in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Original recipes are included in the text verbatim, and they highlight differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardi cooks and each cook's personal abbreviations. Reworked recipes (to try at home) are included in the appendix, and the back matter includes a detailed index, an extensive bibliography, and the chapter notes.

More than just a look at old recipes, this scholarly endeavor provides a fascinating slice of American history, describing the factors changed the way people ate: the availability of ingredients (depending on weather, infestation, or cost) could affect an area for several seasons, and ingredients that were new to immigrants, like corn and bananas, were slowly incorporated into the daily menu. This book is highly recommended for libraries whose patrons enjoy reading about cooking, especially those in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Pair with *Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South* (2005) for another regional perspective.

Kathe Pinchuck, Clifton, NJ; Secretary, School Synagogue and Centers Division. AJL; Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, AJL

Tilles, Daniel and Salvatore Garau, editors. *Fascism and the Jews: Italy and Britain*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010. 219 pp. \$79.95 (9780853038641).

This interesting collection of papers from a 2008 scholarly conference at the Italian Cultural Institute in London discusses the development of fascist anti-Semitism and Jewish responses to it. In Italy, fascism came to power and established a one-party state which served as a model and inspiration to many. In Britain it was always a fairly marginal movement. Both Italian fascism and the British Union of Fascists eschewed anti-Semitism early on but eventually officially embraced it. Two of the essays deal with individuals (the poet Ezra Pound and the Arab nationalist Captain Robert Gordon-Canning) while the others are more wide-ranging. One particularly

interesting theme is the role, if any, of Nazism in Italian and British fascism's descent into antisemitism. For larger academic collections.

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

Weitzman, Steven. *Solomon: The Lure of Wisdom*. New Haven, Yale University Press (Jewish Lives), 2011. 197 pp. \$25. (9780300137187). Also available as an e-book.

Weitzman draws from traditional and contemporary sources to explain the enigmatic biblical figure, Solomon. The author describes the Solomon found in the text of the Bible, midrash, commentaries, popular culture, and his own view and understanding of Solomon in light of current studies in psychology and history.

Solomon is remembered for the construction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Weitzman writes, "Building and wisdom are closely associated in the Bible and ancient Near Eastern literature." The author explains that the Temple was inspired by the wisdom that Solomon received from God. Wisdom is a trait associated with Solomon. In a famous story, Solomon devises a test to reveal who was the true mother of a newborn baby. People have been intrigued by this story, and Solomon's approach has even influenced contemporary judges. For the scholar reading the book, there are no annotations or footnotes.

This fascinating and informative book will be of interest to both Jewish and Christian readers. Weitzman refers to biblical writing known as The Wisdom of Solomon which are part of the Catholic and Orthodox Christian canon. Includes bibliography and index. Recommended for synagogue libraries and for those interested in Bible studies.

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

Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

In The Spotlight

Goldberg, Leah. *With this Night*. Translated from Hebrew and introduced by Annie Kantar. Austin, TX: The Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 2011. 120 pp. \$16. (9780292726475).

Goldberg, Leah. *And This is the Light*. Translated from Hebrew by Barbara Harshav, with an introduction and afterward by Nili Scharf Gold. New York: The Toby Press, 2011. 222 pp. \$24.95 (9781592642298). Also available as an e-book.

May 29th 2011 marked the centennial of the poet Leah Goldberg. Though she herself passed away in 1970 at the premature age of 59, her would-be 100th birthday was largely celebrated by many literary and cultural events in and outside Israel. The author of numerous poetry collections, children's books, plays, literary essays and translations from some eight languages, she is unquestionably one of the greatest poets in the Hebrew language. Amongst the celebratory events two new translations of her work have been published. One is by Annie Kantar, of her poetry collection *With this Night*. The other – of the only novel she published during her lifetime – *And This is the Light*, by Barbara Harshav.

When first published in 1946, *And This is the Light* impressed neither the readers nor the writers' community in Palestine. Its very European nature, explicit sexuality, the painful subject of mental illness and general Diaspora themes were not welcome in pre-state Palestine, at a time where every writer saw themselves as a Zionist, building and establishing the *Yishuv* (settlement) in the would-be Jewish state. The freedom, or *chutzpah*, of this particular writer to touch on personal subjects at a time of general national recruitment was scrutinized with a raised eyebrow by the highly male-dominated literati community in

Palestine. Goldberg's struggle to be a recognized "author" as opposed to "a maiden dabbling in poetry writer" (her words) became thus even more acute, given her striving for recognition despite the feminine and autobiographically-exposed novel. The themes of her own father's mental decline, which led to his being institutionalized and her mother's divorce from him, their struggle to maintain their own dignity and sanity against the backdrop of this 1930s taboo background, and her own unrequited love (or, later in her life, loves) find echoes in this exceedingly personal novel. The very choice of the heroine's name, Nora, after Ibsen's *The Dolls' House*, points to a troubled member of an extremely dysfunctional family. Goldberg's Nora, though attempting a symbolic father-murder by vehemently declaring herself an orphan to a fellow traveler on the train, falls in love with an older friend of her father's, basically his counterpart (in what becomes the novel's main theme). This love is doomed from the start, as is Nora's relationship with her sick father.

Observing this novel from the distance of half a century it is clear that Goldberg opposed the prevalent attitude of the new *sabra* (native-born Israelis), creating itself from nowhere, thus erasing its *Galut* (exile) past. Known for her "two homelands" agenda, she believed the past not only cannot be erased, but is essential to the human and, in this case, national psyche of rebuilding yourself as a new kind of Jew in an old-new homeland. This novel is a living proof to her loyalty to her own personal beliefs.

Harshav's translation is poetic and subtle and does great justice to the original, despite the more modern nature of the language. It is an important addition to Goldberg's international legacy in making it accessible to a wider readers' audience. A blissful translation work for a novel highly deserving a rediscovery.

As opposed to this early novel, Goldberg's poetry collection, *With this Night*, was published in 1964, six years before the poet's death, when Goldberg's unquestionable status had long since been established. First thing to be noticed is her departure from traditional poetry paradigms of careful meter and rhyming styles, into a modernist, freer style, so strikingly different from her early classical, rigid prosody. And yet, despite this new modernism, Goldberg remains loyal to her agenda of remembering the past and using it as a layer in building the new on the basis of its predecessor. The first poem is called *With this Night*, which deals with the here and now. It is, however, immediately followed by a second poem called *Tel Aviv, 1935* (the year of Goldberg's aliyah to Palestine): "The travelers' bags moved through the streets / and the language of the foreign land / was thrust like the cold blade of a knife / into the hot desert wind." "More geography than biography" is how she testified for her disparate existence between those vast snowy woodsy foreign landscapes and her homeland of choice, the new state, barren, eclectic Palestine-cum-Israel. Maybe more than earlier poetry collections the juxtaposition of those stark opposing landscapes reaches the epitome of peacemaking. It's not yet the somber finality of death-at-the-door as in the last collection *She'erit ha-hayim* (The Remain of Life) but more an observation of her life so far. She will forever be that same constant traveler relentlessly and endlessly struggling to reach a comforting balance between her various homelands, landscapes and troubled existence. In the poem *Journey without a Name* she sums this ambivalence up: "Where am I? How could I ever explain where? / my eyes are reflected in no window ... / though the rain keeps falling my hands are dry / and here I am, all of me / in a strange city / in the heart of a vast homeland of strangeness."

Annie Kantar's translation to my mind is beautiful and linguistically loyal to the original, yet at times fails to convey the harsh, desolate, almost violent imagery of the Hebrew original. This disadvantage, however, is balanced by the importance of this collection's translation into English for the first time. As is the case with the novel, we should be grateful for this effort to bring Goldberg's later poetry to a much larger audience of readers.

Leah Goldberg never fully compromised anything, despite a high personal and professional price she paid throughout her short yet incredibly prolific life.

Noa Wahrman, Jewish Studies Librarian and Bibliographer, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN



LITERATURE: FICTION, FOLKTALES AND MEMOIR

Albahari, David. *Leeches*. Translated by Ellen Elias-Bursac. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011. 320 pp. \$24. (9780151015023). Also available as an e-book.

Translated from the Serbian, *Leeches* tells the story of a young man in Zemun, Serbia in the late 1990's. He is a columnist for a local paper and finds himself drawn into and obsessed with a mystery surrounding a woman he sees in the park one day. Shortly after he sees this woman, he is given a strange manuscript. It changes each time he attempts to read it and contains little pieces of Kabbala and stories of the history of the Zemun and Belgrade Jewish communities. As he is trying to make sense of the manuscript, he is saddened to learn about the antisemitism that is both part of the history of his city and a present reality. Things heat up so much that eventually there is a murder. The plot was a little slow at first, but picked up as the book progressed and the setting was wonderfully woven into the story. There are no chapter breaks and the lyrical sections are fun to read. This book is recommended.

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

Appanah, Nathacha. *The Last Brother*. Translated by Geoffrey Strachan. Minneapolis: GrayWolf Press, 2010. 164 pp. \$14. (9978155975753).

Tropical Mauritius, known mainly as a lovely vacation spot today, may seem an unlikely setting for a tale of a young Czech orphan during World War II, but only because readers are unaware of a little-known bit of history. The reader is probably unaware that approximately over 1500 men, women and children were deported from Palestine in 1940 and ended up waiting out the war in a prison camp on the distant island of Mauritius, off the coast of Africa, and 127 of them died there.

In this elegiac novel, Raj, an aged Mauritian near death, looks back, through the veil of memory, on a brief period in his life, when his brutal father was a guard at Beau-Bassin Prison, and he found golden-haired, blue-eyed David to fill the void left by the death of his brothers. Raj's endearing young voice takes the reader into his impoverished life, first in the cane fields, then in the jungle near the prison. The reader is convinced by the narrator that, in this insular island, little is known of the war raging half a world away or of the people known as Jews. The boys brief relationship echoes throughout Raj's life, although the reader is offered only tantalizing glimpses of the life that follow the events of 1945. Although the father is too much of a cardboard villain to be convincing, the sketchiness of other characters fit very well with the style of storytelling.

The author is a French-Mauritian of Indian descent who portrays the beauty and suffering on the island. For the actual history of this period read Genevieve Pitot's *The Mauritian Shekel* (2000). Highly recommended for fiction collections.

Merrily Hart, Ann Arbor MI; Librarian, Siegal College, Cleveland, OH (retired)

Ben-Amos, Dan, editor. *Folktales of the Jews, Volume 3: Tales from Arab Lands*. Translated by Jacqueline Teitelbaum. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2011. 844 pp. \$75. (9780827608719).

This is the third volume in a fascinating assemblage of Jewish folktales, this one featuring tales from Jews of Arab lands. The 60 stories included are derived from the massive collection of more than 20,000 tales held by the Israel Folktales Archives at the University of Haifa. Dan Ben-Amos has brought together some 47 narrators, who immigrated to Israel from Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. In his introduction, Ben-Amos notes that these storytellers were keenly aware of their second class *dhimmi* status, and that a number of the stories reflect the tension between the Jews and their Arab neighbors. Indeed, to combat the tension, three mechanisms were employed: delving into Jewish tradition, drawing on Islamic traditions, and presenting explicitly confrontational narratives, in which the Jews and Arabs confront each other, and the Jewish hero emerges triumphant. The tales range in character from serious tales with blood libel scenarios to more humorous tales. Each and every tale is accompanied by elaborate commentary which describes its cultural, historical and literary background including the motifs behind the stories. In addition to extensive notes, the work includes a large bibliography of nearly 150 pages and illustrations. This book is one that will appeal to both the academician and to the casual reader.

Randall C. Belinfante, Librarian/Archivist, American Sephardi Federation, New York

Berghash, Rachel. *Half the House: My Life in and Out of Jerusalem.* Sante Fe: Sunstone Press, 224 pp. \$19.95 (978086534809). Reviewed from an uncorrected advance proof.

Jerusalem is an ever-changing city and one that captures the imagination for its beauty and history. This book describes seven decades in the life of the people and the city. Starting in the 1940s, the streets were not crowded with tourist haunts and the place was without high rise condominiums. Arabs and Jews mingled, largely free of animosity and the fear that exists today. While the homes were not lavish, the foods, colors, architecture, and people made a lasting impression on the author as only Jerusalem can. By her poetic descriptions, the author, a poet herself, transports you to another time in the history of the most beautiful city in the world. She interweaves her own journey in this memoir: being raised Orthodox in Jerusalem, serving in the Israeli army, training as a musician, coming to America, marrying and raising two sons in New York, seeing her parents grow old, and working as a social worker and teacher. She describes her intellectual growth, expanding spirituality, and the role of Judaism in her spiritual path.

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

Bezmozgis, David. *The Free World.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011. 356 pp. \$26. cloth; \$15. pbk. (9780374281403; 9781250002518). Also available as an e-book.

This novel portrays an unusual subject—the experiences of a family of Soviet Jewish émigrés from Riga navigating their way through the refugee emigration system in Italy in the late 1970s. The novel paints a steady, effective picture of the bleak, tawdry atmosphere of Ladispoli, the town where most of the émigrés lived, and the complicated steps they must take to find a place other than Israel that will take them, since so many of them lacked a Jewish background and had no interest in Zionism. Except for the father, Samuil, the members of the family are not so much characters as representations of the different types of émigrés who dealt with this ambiguous and dispiriting process, each in their own way. Samuil, born in 1913, is old enough to remember authentic Jewish civilization before the Russian invasion of Latvia and the German invasion that followed soon after, and his own heroic performance in the war and subsequent elevation in the Communist Party. His recollections of rich Jewish culture and monumental suffering and bravery during the war years contrast starkly with the petty difficulties and small ambitions of his children. The other noteworthy character is Lyova, who, having lived in Israel and then left it, can no longer claim refugee status. Though suffused with cynicism and bitterness, this book does a persuasive job of describing the background of Soviet Jews in Israel and America, their problems and their possibilities. Recommended for current fiction collections.

Beth Dwoskin, Catalog Librarian, Proquest; Chair, Library Committee, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

Dreifus, Erika. *Quiet Americans.* Boston: Last Light Studio Books, 2011. 162 pp. \$13.95 (9780982708422). Also available as an e-book.

In this collection of short stories about German Jews who escaped from Europe, and their descendants, the reader senses the author's urgent need to get the history of her family into print, though perhaps fictionalized to some extent. The settings move from Germany and pre-war Europe to post-war and modern New York. The stories feel like family histories, the stories the author grew up with and remembered as the child of German Jewish survivors. There is no real characterization. All the characters function as representatives of the German Jewish experience, rather than as human beings in their own right, so they are somewhat interchangeable. The unique events in the lives of the survivors are the main concern of this book. In one story, a couple finally consents to go back to Munich, only to arrive in time for the 1972 Olympic massacre. In another, the same couple gives birth to a son on an American army base where the husband is stationed, only to have German prisoners of war arrive for the *bris*. The last story in the book has a truly surprising ending. The writing style is simple, unadorned, and mostly straight narrative. The only exception is the story, "Matrilineal Descent," set in the early twentieth century, perhaps distant enough to require more imagination from the storyteller. The author overuses the ugly past perfect tense, which so distances the reader from the story. An optional purchase for collections specializing in the Holocaust or the German Jewish experience.

Beth Dwoskin, Catalog Librarian, Proquest; Chair, Library Committee, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI



Frank, Rina. *Every House Needs a Balcony*. Translated by Ora Cummings. New York: HarperCollins, 2010. 327 pp. \$24.99 cloth; \$15.99 pbk. (9780061714238; 978-0061714245). Also available as an e-book.

Vividly evoking life in the early years of the state of Israel, eight-year-old Rina relates episodes from her life with mother, father and sister in an apartment in the poorest part of Haifa. Squeezed into one room of a small apartment filled with family, the girls' view of the world and contact with the larger community is on the balcony. Interspersed with these stories is a narrative of Rina's later courtship and marriage to a wealthy Spanish Jew, their life in Barcelona and Israel, and the birth of their child. As the reader follows the arc of Rina's adult relationships, the sketches of her youth provide not only the sounds, smells and feel of Haifa, but supply the reader with clues as to how she became this adult. The deprivation in the early years provides a stark contrast to the luxury of her husband's family in Barcelona. The intimate crowded existence in the first person memories contrast with the sterility of relationships in her married life where the husband remains "he" or "the man" and is never even named.

Although this Israeli best-seller will not satisfy readers who need more action and plot, it is a great addition to collections of Jewish and/or Israeli fiction, especially for readers who wish to learn more about life in the early days of the state.

Merrily Hart, Ann Arbor MI; Librarian, Siegal College, Cleveland, OH (retired)

Gavron, Assaf. *Almost Dead*. Translated by Assaf Gavron and James Lever. New York: Harper Perennial, 2010. 236 pp. \$14.99 (9780061984044). Also available as an e-book.

Almost Dead, the latest by Israeli writer Assaf Gavron to be published in the United States, centers on an unlucky man. Eitan Enoch, or "Croc," has survived three suicide bombing attempts becoming both a celebrity and a target. To Israelis, he's a symbol of their survival; to some Palestinians, he's a symbol of frustration. Meanwhile, he's crumbling under the weight of his trauma and his celebrity. Gavron tells the story from the alternating perspectives of Croc and Fahmi Sabih, a bomber who lies in a coma, and slowly and inexorably, the two men come together for the finale. The dual perspective means that Gavron explores the conflict from two points of view. Gavron's writing is excellent and the book is a taut, well-paced thriller. His newest title, *Hydromania*, has yet to be published in the US. There is little to no Jewish religious content in *Almost Dead*. An entertaining read about modern Israeli society, it would be a fine optional purchase for public libraries, secular-leaning Jewish libraries (and an edgy choice for bookclubs) but would probably not fit well in other kinds of Jewish collections.

Marie Cloutier, Cambridge, MA

Goliger, Gabriella. *Girl Unwrapped: A Novel*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010. 335 pp. (9781551523750).

The Goldblatts are Holocaust survivors who settled in Montreal. Their dearest wish for their only child, Toni, is to have a secure life, which they didn't, with marriage and children in a lovely safe suburban home. Unfortunately Toni, a tom-boy from early childhood, cannot relate to their image of the ideal life.

The issue comes to head when as a teen, she makes a drunken confession of her love for one of the female counselors at a Jewish summer camp. Her mother, who associated lesbians with Nazi prison guards, is shocked and dismayed. It seems that no matter which way Toni turns, she gets the message that homosexuality is a perversion. Toni decides to suppress her lesbian yearnings and immerse herself into her studies. Graduating high school at the time of the Six Day War, Toni decides to try to find a place for herself in Israel. But, as is usually the case, Toni's issues follow her. Disillusioned by life in Israel, Toni returns to Canada when her father dies and eventually makes peace with her sexuality and with her mother.

The setting of the pre-sexual revolution Montreal adds interest to this coming-of-age/coming-out novel. Recommended for larger literature collections.

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

Greenstein, Mindy. *The House on Crash Corner: And Other Unavoidable Calamities*. New York: Greenpoint Press, 2011. 195 pp. \$20. (9780975976098). Also available as an e-book. Reviewed from an uncorrected advance proof.

In this collection of autobiographical essays, Greenstein leads the reader through the many stages of her life. Growing up in Brooklyn as the child of Holocaust survivors, the author grew up speaking Yiddish and eating *kishkehs*. She learned to deal with the family's financial problems which were exacerbated by her parents' gambling problem. Her journey continues as the mother of two boys and then as a clinical psychologist. Greenstein's career

takes her to such diverse places as a prison, as a chaplain, and the oncology ward of a hospital. The book circles back to her parents as she tries to reconstruct the family history and her parents' Holocaust experience.

The essays are written in a conversational tone with warmth, humor and an eye for the absurd. A few essays had this reviewer chuckling out loud. While the career focused essays are secular, the family centered entries have plenty of Jewish content. Recommended.

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

Kalechofsky, Roberta. *Four Women from Ravensbruck: 5 Stories from the Shoa*. Marblehead, MA, Micah Publications, 2011. 147 pp. \$18. (9780916288570).

These strong, powerful and arresting stories present the range of tragedy, terror and horror of the Holocaust. They provide insight into the perpetrators as well as the victims of the Shoah. The author, an independent publisher and well known speaker and lecturer, has written seven works of fiction, a monograph on George Orwell, poetry and two collections of essays. Micah Publications, which she founded in 1975, is a recognized source for Jewish vegetarian books. She has received several literary fellowships and honors. This book is an important addition to Holocaust fiction in Judaica collections, and recommended for academic, public and synagogue libraries.

Susan Freiband, Retired Library Educator, Arlington, Virginia

Moss, Lisa Braver. *The Measure of His Grief: A Novel*. Notim Press, 2010. 344 pp. \$14.95 (9781453720257).

Sandy Waldman, a Jewish physician, is sitting *shiva* for his father in Berkeley, when he feels a strange pain in his penis. When he can find no medical explanation, he decides that the problem is circumcision and becomes an obsessive crusader against *brit milah*. He even tries to undo his own milah. His new activism costs him his marriage, leads to estrangement with his daughter, and destroys his career. It does, ironically, lead him back to Torah study as he searches religious texts to understand the tradition better. He has an adult Bar Mitzvah, at which he reads parashah Korach, which deals with one of Judaism's fiercest rebels. The author of this book is an activist in the circumcision debate, but she treats the issue with respect and even a touch of humor. A discussion with an Orthodox mohel, a feminist woman rabbi who still considers the ritual important, a liberal cantor, and a "conscientious objector" (a Jewish woman searching for a brit without the milah) is very civil, probably more civil than many real-life debates on the subject. This book will lead to interesting discussions at book group meetings. It is a good addition to collections for public libraries and liberal synagogues.

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

Pick, Alison. *Far to Go*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2010. 312, 16 pp. \$38.75 cloth; \$14.99 (9780755379415; 9780062034625). Also available as an e-book.

This Holocaust novel has only one serious flaw—it is narrated in the first person both by a woman in Czechoslovakia in the years before the war, and by her daughter in the present. The story within the story doesn't work because the two narrators are not given equal attention by the author. The present-day daughter, Lisa, interrupts the story of her mother, Marta, at various points before finally revealing her identity. The interruptions are not smooth, and Lisa's role is not clear to the reader until the end. The author has chosen Marta to reveal the story of Czech Jews who share some biography with her own extended family. Marta is the nanny for Pepik, the only child of wealthy, assimilated Jews living in Sudetenland. Alison Pick does a beautiful job with the familiar theme of the gentile servant who finds love and acceptance in the Jewish family. She also paints a believable portrait of the German-speaking Jewish couple—Pavel, the fiercely patriotic husband who weeps more for the fate of Czechoslovakia than for the Jews, and Annaliese, the beautiful wife who guesses the truth well before he does. When Pavel finally faces facts, the family manages to put Pepik on a Kindertransport, and his story ends the war-time period of the book.

The book includes a biography and interview with Alison Pick. Winner of the 2010 Canadian Jewish Book Award for fiction and long-listed for the Man Booker Prize, this book is recommended for Holocaust and general fiction collections.

Beth Dwoskin, Catalog Librarian, Proquest; Chair, Library Committee, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI



Pollack, Eileen. *Breaking and Entering*. Tribeca, NY: Four Way Books, 2012. 386 pp. \$18.95 (9781935536123).

When a client of Louise's husband Richard commits suicide, the couple is plunged into a dark period. In an attempt to recover both professionally and maritally, they move to a small town in Michigan, just before the Oklahoma City bombing. In some ways, this move seems like it might bring this family together, but in other ways they are as far apart as ever. Can Louise and Richard figure out how to fight their personal demons and come together as a family again? There are many issues facing these characters and the way they deal with them is both complex and interesting. Pollack takes on many controversial and emotional issues in this novel about which readers are sure to have strong opinions, including intermarriage, cheating, and racism. The writing is very good and makes the book an easy read. This book could be really great for book club discussions. Readers will care for this family and root for them to succeed. This book is recommended for Jewish libraries and public libraries.

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

Seliktar, Galit and Seliktar, Gilad. *Farm 54*. Spain/England: Ponent Mon/Fanfare, 2011. 136 pp. \$25. (9781908007001).

Short stories using prose tend to be rather limited in scope. Lacking the length of novels, the author usually has to make a choice between either developing the plot or developing the characters. When short story writers choose to use a graphic format, the artist can sometimes find ways to convey additional details and information or can visually condense a paragraph's worth of description into a single panel. A picture can be worth a thousand words, but not necessarily.

Although the three dark semi-autobiographical stories contained in the Seliktars' graphic novel are a compelling and worthwhile read, I found myself wanting to know the missing details and feeling a bit cheated by the unanswered questions.

As is typical for Israeli graphic works, the first two stories seem to be universal stories, without any specifically Jewish or Israeli content. The first story shows a parallel between the physical pain of Noga (the protagonist) and the tragic death of her baby brother. The second story deals with the burial of a dead dog, accidentally killed by Noga's mother. The third story is Israel-specific, in that it deals with Noga's military service and her passive participation in the demolition of a Palestinian home (for reasons unknown).

The stories were first published in Israeli literary magazines by Galit Seliktar, then adapted into a graphic novel by the author's brother Gilad. The supplementary material following the three stories is as interesting as the stories themselves with photos, sketches, and additional details about the real life incidents which inspired the short stories. Gilad also explains how he adapted the short prose stories to the comics format.

Although I found this book to be problematic, I would recommend it - with reservations - for the adult graphic novel section of academic and public libraries.

Steven M. Bergson, MLIS, Jewish Comics Blog, <http://jewishcomics.blogspot.com>

***Editor's note: this title was published in Hebrew in 2009 by ha-Ozen ha-shelishit (Tel Aviv), titled "*Meshek 54*."

Unger, David. *The Price of Escape*. New York: Akashic Books, 2011. 218 pp. \$15.95 (9781936070923).

Samuel Berkow, a thirty-seven year old Jewish man from an upper middle class business family in Hamburg, manages to escape from Nazi Germany and travel to his cousin in Guatemala City. He takes a tramp steamer to Puerto Barrios, a squalid port town full of unsavory characters and unexpected dangers, and is quickly ensnared in the underbelly of the town. The novel explores his feelings of displacement, dissolution, anguish and despair at the situation he finds himself in. How he manages to escape and move toward starting a new life is the focus of powerful and compelling read, although the ending is very abrupt and leaves the reader dangling. The book is a useful addition to fiction collections in Jewish academic, public, community center, temple and synagogue libraries, because of its historical setting and perspective on the plight of those fleeing Nazi Germany in the early years of the Holocaust. The author, born in Guatemala City, now living in Brooklyn, is considered one of Guatemala's major living writers.

Susan Freiband, Retired Library Educator, Arlington, Virginia





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SOUND RECORDINGS

Almog, Shantel & Oz. *Kosher Nostra: Jewish Gangsters Greatest Hits*. Germany: Essay Recordings, 2011. 1 compact disc, \$22.98.

Kosher Nostra is a nostalgic mix of songs popular in the 1920s and 1930s, the era of Jewish gangsters such as Meyer Lansky, Bugsy Siegel and Dutch Schultz, hence the title. Genres included are jazz, swing, Yiddish and pop. Popular singers such as Connie Francis, Molly Picon, Tom Jones and the Barry sisters sing songs in Yiddish, such as "My Yiddish Mamme," "Bei Mir Bist du Schon," and "O Mein Papa." Chubby Checker sings "Misirlou" and the Solomon Schwartz orchestra plays "Hava Nagila." The sound quality is excellent. Recommended for libraries that collect Jewish music.

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

Joel Rubin/Uri Caine Duo. *Azoy Tsu Tsveyt*. New York: Tzadik, 2011. 1 compact disc (53:25 minutes) \$16.

This disc's title is a rather cryptic Yiddish for something like "Cosi fan due/So plays the duo," with a nod to Mozart and Da Ponte. Well, this duo is amazing. Joel Rubin is both an academic musicologist at the University of Virginia, as well as one of the leading clarinetists active in the Klezmer music today. His partner on this recording is Uri Caine, both a spectacular jazz pianist and a partner of many musicians in the spectrum of Jewish music including Frank London, John Zorn, Eric Friedlander and others. This is Joel Rubin's first recording on the Tzadik label in the Radical Jewish Culture series. Uri Caine told me that they were expecting to record a clarinet and piano duo, but when they arrived at the studio the didn't find a piano. Instead they used a Fender Rhodes and Hammond organ keyboards. The sonorities take some getting used to at the outset but are quickly replaced by amazement as the timbres are so perfect in accompanying the clarinet and as a solo jazz/klezmer instrument. This recording will appeal to aficionados of klezmer, jazz and the avant-garde. The eight tracks explore a wide range of traditional klezmer tunes and Hasidic nigunim all performed with exceptional verve and virtuosity. Highly recommended for libraries building a collection of klezmer music.

Paul Howard Hamburg, Librarian for the Judaica Collection, University of California, Berkeley, CA

Kaufmann, Serge. *Ima ou la Mère Dépossédée*. France: Buda Musique, 2009. 1 compact disc (60 minutes). \$15.25 (Collection Patrimoines musicaux des juifs de France No.8) 860175.

Serge Kaufmann composed for radio, film and stage until 1989 when he turned his focus to writing music that would enable him to explore his Jewish heritage. Born to a Swiss Protestant mother and a Russian/Polish father in Switzerland, Kaufmann was moved by the image of a boy, who would have been his contemporary, facing a firing squad in the Warsaw ghetto. The image made clear to him that his own luck of living in Switzerland saved his life. The CD contains four of Kaufmann's Jewish themed works: "Suite Yiddish," "Memorah," "Neshama," and "Ima ou la Mere Deposedee." Ima is a half hour dramatic cantata for mezzo-soprano, chorus, narrator and instrumental ensemble. This work manifests Kaufmann's response to the image of the little boy and deals with a mother who comforts her son on the train to the concentration camp and her anguish as they are separated upon arrival. His musical style is post-romantic, often free form and rhapsodic. He employs known markers for Jewish art music in his other three works: the prominent use of cello, either as a solo instrument or as a member of an ensemble as an emblem of the human voice, and the Mi sheberach cantorial mode (Dorian with a raised fourth) in the "Yiddish Suite."

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

Kol Nidre: Huit Visions/Eight Visions. *Musical Heritage of the Jews of France, No. 9*. France : Buda Musique, 2011. Produced by the Fondation du Judaïsme Français (F.J.F). \$15.46. 860202.

This fascinating recording, produced as part of the series "Musical Heritage of the Jews of France," was launched to present Jewish cultural knowledge to the widely diverse Jewish communities of France. Showcasing the musical works of living composers along with a few more traditional settings, such as the Samuel David's liturgical rendering, or the Max Bruch setting of 1880, this compilation strives to examine this centuries old enigmatic text for Yom Kippur though its pervasive Ashkenazi melody. The Kol Nidre melody became so

ingrained in the Jewish psyche that even occasional rabbinic attempts to rid it from worship had no effect; Kol Nidre and its ancient melody remain a central focus of Yom Kippur ritual. The liner notes, written by Hervé Roten, a musicologist from the University of Paris, provide a history of the Kol Nidre along with several hypotheses about origins of the melody. The selections include several pieces by contemporary French composers in a variety of styles and forces: Nicolas Bacri (Kol Nidrei Sonata, for violin solo); Graciane Finzi (Crépuscule du Kol Nidré, for cello solo); Jean-François Zygel (Kol Nidré from Chants Hébraïques, for cello and piano); and Serge Kaufmann (Kol Nidré, for choir, clarinet, string quartet, base and piano). Included in the compilation are John Zorn (Kol Nidre, for string quartet) and Israel's Itai Daniel (Kol Nidrei, for tenor, choir, clarinet and string quartet). To the credit of the producers, all the various arrangements and compositions are remarkably good in performance and as examples of contemporary music.

Judith S. Pinnolis, RIS Humanities Librarian, Goldfarb Library, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA

Laitman, Lori. *Vedem; Fathers (revised)*. American Classics series. S.l.: Naxos, 2011. 1 hour, \$12.00 (Naxos catalogue number: 8.559685).

The boys in "Home One" building in Terezin's camp created a secret weekly publication entitled Vedem, meaning "In the lead" in Czech. It was a work of survival, resistance, and creativity. Only fifteen boys survived the camp, and six remain alive today. One of the boys, Sidney Taussig, buried 800 pages of the manuscript while imprisoned, and returned after the war with his father to successfully retrieve them.

Commissioned by Music of Remembrance (<http://www.musicofremembrance.org/>), composer Lori Laitman and librettist David Mason have created a choral piece that incorporates poems, stories, and fragments of essays from the manuscript. Opening with "Hear My Story Now," with a musical theme that repeats throughout the piece to remind us to listen, stories in adult voice and boys' (sung by the Northwest Boychoir, Seattle area), tell of missing home and their response to confinement and brutal conditions. The last song reminds us to "Remember us, remember us. We were no different than you." The second piece, "Fathers," uses the poems of Anne Ranasinghe and David Vogel. It is a sequel to Laitman's "Daughters" (premiered in 1998). Both poets' fathers were murdered by the Nazis. These songs speak to the loss and separation from their fathers, closing with "Don't Cry," a poem that counterbalances Vedem's "Remember us."

Laitman's music is contemporary classical; the singers have an operatic style. The recording is clear and the recording artists professional. The accompanying booklet contains all the words of the libretto, the boy's name who wrote the "Vedem" piece, and program notes.

Recommended for all libraries that collect contemporary music.

Suzanne Smailes, Head of Technical Services, Wittenberg University Library, Springfield, OH

The London Klezmer Quartet. LKQ. London: Jeremy Cox at Big Box Studios, 2010. (www.londonklezmerquartet.com) 1 compact disc (43:57 minutes) \$12.97. 736211411853

This debut CD of the LKQ (London Klezmer Quartet) contains twelve pieces of *Simhah* (celebration) music. The four musicians of the quartet are: Ilana Cravitz, violin; Susi Evans, Clarinet; Carol Isaacs, accordion & piano; and Francesca Ter-Berg, cello. The musicians convey their tremendous affection for the sound and emotions nurtured by klezmer music. This CD succeeds in conveying the unique musical style and elevates the listener emotionally and spiritually. LKQ is a nice addition to any traditional collection of klezmer music, be it at home, at the synagogue, or at any interested library.

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

Mazal. *Axerico en Selanik*. New York,: Tzadik, 2011. 1 compact disc (60 minutes). \$13.95. TZ8160.

Recordings of Ladino songs typically aim to perform the music in the context in which it was created. The performance may include period instrumental accompaniment. Mazal's CD is part of the Radical Jewish culture series from John Zorn's publishing house Tzadik, and this gives the first clue that this is not the usual Ladino recording. The group Mazal is the musical project of Emmanuelle Rouvray (vocals and percussion) and Thomas Baudriller (programming, sampler, bass, double-bass, mandolin). Rouvray hauntingly sings Ladino melodies collected throughout Europe that were originally passed down from mother to daughter. The songs are set to sampled sounds, electronic dance beats and sounds of everyday life, such as the voices of children and a typewriter in the footsteps of such bands as the Art of Noise. Mazal's techniques are restrained compared to

earlier groups. The result is a sound that challenges the listener to struggle with the questions: what is Jewish music; how are we to listen to music of the past; and can it be modernized to become relevant as something more than a museum piece.

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

VIDEO

***Between Berlin and Jerusalem: Jewish Problems -- German Problems.* Clarksburg, NJ: Alden Films 2011. 126 Minutes, DVD \$ 24.95 (9781877684234).**

Between Berlin and Jerusalem is a recording of a 2004 Hebrew conference of The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. The three participating lecturers are Professor Angelika Timm, David Witzhum, and Professor Robert Wistrich. Concluding the session is a short period of questions and answers. The forum is conducted by Professor Doron Mendels.

The contemporary situation of growing Anti-Semitism in Germany, Europe, Israel, and the rest of the world is a very important subject. The speakers of the forum present the sad 2004 picture which is interesting though dated in 2011.

This DVD functionality is very poor. The symposium was structured by specific lecturers and has no index or possibility to skip, or see and listen easily to selected sections.

The sound and video quality of the DVD are absolutely unacceptable. The meeting was conducted in Hebrew with simultaneous translation into English. The DVD does not provide user choice that separates the Hebrew from the English. Both languages are at the same sound level which makes listening very tedious. The presence of the second language is distracting and unclear both to English or Hebrew listeners.

A better solution to buying this DVD, with the noted deficiencies, is to access the entire conference, in the language of choice, for free, on the web-site of The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. (<http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/conferences.html>)

In conclusion, this DVD is not recommended for purchase by libraries or individuals.

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Don't Forget to Read AJL News

The November/December 2011 edition of AJL News is chock full of information!

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- Plenary speaker information for the 2012 AJL Convention in sunny Los Angeles
- Call for Papers for the 2012 Convention
- Chapter Chatter - news from all over!

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