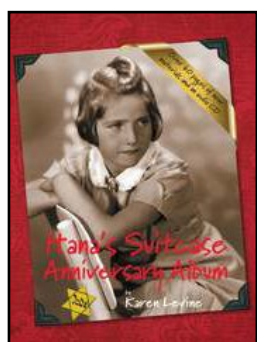


In The Spotlight



Levine, Karen. *Hana's Suitcase: Anniversary Album*. (Holocaust Remembrance series). Toronto: Second Story Press, 2012. 174 pp. \$24.99. (9781926920368). Ages 9 and up.

Hana's Suitcase received unanimous approval from the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee in 2002. When the award was presented to Karen Levine at the AJL Conference in Toronto the following year, AJL members had the added privilege of hearing from Hana's brother George; the event brought tears to most attendee's eyes.

Ten years (and over thirty printings) later, an expanded version of the book has been re-issued. The original text is still here. It includes Hana's life in Moravia, her fate during the Shoah, her life in Terezin, and her death at the age of thirteen at Auschwitz.

Alternating with Hana's biography, the book tells of her rediscovery by Fumiko Ishioka, director of the Tokyo Holocaust Center and its Children's Section. The original story ends with the arrival of George Brady, Hana's brother, and his welcome to the Tokyo museum.

Following the 2004 Afterword, the *Anniversary Album* contains 65 pages of additional material. It includes new statements by Karen Levine, Fumiko Ishioka and George Brady; memories by survivors who knew Hana and George as children; covers of 34 international editions; information about the documentary movie and play based on Hana's life; and a wealth of photos, stories, and poems by children (primarily in Canada but also in the U.S.) who have been moved by the book. Together, they testify to Karen Levine's powerful telling, and its emotional resonance across generations and around the world.

Hana's Suitcase is a "Must Have" purchase for every Judaica library from small synagogues to seminaries and large universities. If you don't have it, buy this new version. If you do already own it, the additional information here will increase its power for every reader. As a testament to what books can still do in the digital age, the investment is well worth it.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

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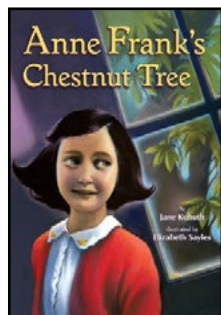
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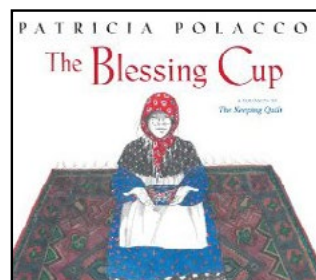


Kohuth, Jane. *Anne Frank's Chestnut Tree*. Illus. by Elizabeth Sayles. New York: Random House, 2013. 48 pp. \$12.99. (9780449812556). Pbk. Gr. 1-3

This illustrated retelling of Anne Frank's story for early readers, although part of the Step-Into-Reading series, does not read like a "leveled" reader at all. It tells Anne Frank's story quietly and movingly, exactly as it ought to be told to young children. All of the elements are there: Anne's life before the war, the move into hiding, life in the Secret Annex, Anne's dreams and hopes for the future, the brave and kind non-Jews who helped the family, Anne's tragic end, and the hopeful lessons we can learn for the future. It takes a confident and talented pen to achieve all this in beautifully written language within the parameters of the format with the necessary short sentences and

limited vocabulary, making this quite an impressive feat. There are other equally fine books about Anne Frank for young readers but what makes this one unique is the marriage of the leveled reading approach with the quality of the storytelling. The art is quietly effective and perfectly in tune with the subject matter and language. A short note at the end includes the suggestion to learn more about Anne Frank online by visiting the Anne Frank House site and provides the web address.

*Michal Hoschander Malen, North Shore Hebrew Academy Library, Great Neck, NY;
Jewish Book World, Children and YA Editor*



Polacco, Patricia. *The Blessing Cup*. Illus. by the author. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013. 48 pp. \$17.99. (9781442450479) HC. \$12.99. (9781442450486) eBook. Reviewed from an ARC. Pre-K-3.

In this prequel to *The Keeping Quilt*, a china teacup, part of a set given as a wedding gift, becomes the special possession that serves as a physical reminder of God's favors and as a symbol of the love inherent in a close family. When the czar orders all the Jews to leave Russia, Anna, Polacco's great-grandmother, and her family set out for the long journey to America. Some of the few belongings they pack are her father's sewing machine, his *tallis*, their menorah, a shofar, holy books, and the china

tea set. Along the way, Anna's father is stricken with pneumonia. The family is taken in by a widowed doctor who helps them complete their journey once Anna's father recovers his health. By selling a Persian rug, the doctor funds the purchase of the family's traveling papers and tickets. To acknowledge his generosity, Anna's mother and father give him the tea set, keeping only one cup which becomes a cherished heirloom passed down through the generations. Polacco's illustrations are done using pencil and acetone markers. Anna's familiar red babushka, the appliqué quilt, the Persian rug, and the china tea set add vibrant splashes of color to the black-and-white drawings. No Judaic children's book collection would be complete unless Polacco's *The Blessing Cup* figured prominently on the shelves, for like *The Keeping Quilt*, it is destined to become a classic.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

EDITOR'S NOTE:

In this issue of *AJL Reviews*, we've included reviews of a number of children's and YA books that lack significant Jewish content. In her article, "What Is and What Isn't a Jewish Book?" (*AJL Newsletter*, May/June 2007, reprinted on [page 15](#) of this issue), Linda R. Silver states that "the characteristics... [of a Jewish book] are Jewish time, Jewish setting, Jewish characters, Jewish theme, and/or an intention on the author or teller's part that the meaning has Jewish resonance." Because of the scanty Jewish content of *Michael at the Invasion of France*, *Sacred*, *Shadow on the Mountain*, and *Bad Girls: Sirens, Jezebels, Murderesses, Thieves & Other Female Villains* as well as the almost non-existent Jewish content of *The Extra*, we would not describe these books as "Jewish."

Why then do we include detailed reviews of books with little or no Jewish content? Although a book can often be praiseworthy, even award-winning, our mandate is to evaluate Jewish books for Judaica collections. We believe that *AJL Reviews* should help AJL members from across the diverse spectrum of schools, synagogues, and community centers choose books for their children and YA collections. Therefore, we've included reviews of books that may or may not qualify as "Jewish enough" in order to provide information to librarians as they select books for their collections. We'll continue to do this as a service to our readers as space and time permit.

Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN & RACHEL KAMIN

BIBLE STORIES

Morse, Benjamin. *The Oldest Bedtime Story Ever.* Illus. by author. New York: Orson & Co, 2012. 231 pp. \$16.99. (9780985813505). Grades 4–8.

Striking illustrations and edgy text deliver the sweeping saga of the Jews from our Bible and beyond. The book is formatted like a coffee table volume rather than a picture book. The content and its handling are certainly for older readers despite few words on the page. The vocabulary is strong (Exodus defined as the “historic liberation from slavery”), relationships are mature (Delilah is Samson’s “lover”), actions are weighed (Cain acts “even worse than his parents”), context is provided (Abraham did not have to sacrifice his son as many gods (then) demanded their people do), the art is blatant (pregnant Leah and Rachel in designer maternity clothes), suggestive (Red Sea parting illustration is God’s heart!), or thought provoking (a seven-line rainbow, no blue, three purples). The consistent black background assists the presentation for older children, although fingerprints will show.

The amount of information that darts through 70 pages (plus seven of notes) is staggering. The excellent layout and choice of words make this book digestible and exciting. Despite the many cruel, fierce acts of God and man in the *Tanach*, the author constantly insists on God’s love for Israel, His Jewish people, His world, and the current reader. The book is not all work: a board game gets Jews through 40 years in the wilderness. The author includes well known (plagues) and little known (Gideon’s fleece trial) biblical events. This book continues past Daniel to the Romans, the Talmud, and history. It stresses the vibrant, continuing story of the Jewish people by ending “to be continued”. Thoughtful words grab attention as well as explain. Sophisticated art—mobile, offbeat, tactile, and enticing—supports the text. This new bible summary is wonderful: biblically/historically chronological, smart, short, clear, clever and meaningful: highly recommended for all libraries.

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

BIOGRAPHY

Yolen, Jane and Heidi E.Y. Stemple. *Bad Girls: Sirens, Jezebels, Murderesses, Thieves & Other Female Villains.* Illus. by Rebecca Guay. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2013. 172 pp. \$18.95. (9781580891851) HC. \$9.99. (9781607345855) eBook. Ages 10–13.

What do a witch, a pirate, a gangster moll, an ax-wielder, and a gun-toting sharpshooter have in common? Does notoriety spring from acts committed or from bad publicity? Yolen and Stemple, the mother/daughter writing team of numerous children’s books, attempt to answer these questions in *Bad Girls*. In short, pithy chapters, they examine the lives of 26 women including Cleopatra, Elisabeth Bathory, Typhoid Mary, Mata Hari, and Bonnie Parker. The only biblical women mentioned are Delilah, Jezebel, and Salome. A full-page comic panel ends each chapter and features the authors debating the pros and cons of each woman’s level of “badness” in ethical and historical contexts. Guay’s illustrations and comic panels are done in ink and brush on Bristol paper with digital color. The book includes a bibliography and an index. Due to the lack of Jewish content, *Bad Girls* is better suited in a public library collection rather than a Judaic one.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

[Editor’s note: For another example of Yolen and Stemple’s collaboration, see the review of *Jewish Fairy Tale Feasts: a Literary Cookbook* in the May/June 2013 issue of *AJL Reviews*.]



FICTION – MIDDLE GRADES

Moriarty, Chris. *The Watcher in the Shadows*. Illus. Mark Edward Geyer. Boston: Harcourt, 2013. 326 pp., \$16.99. (9780547466323). Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 5–8.

In the sequel to *The Inquisitor's Apprentice*, the team of Sacha Kessler, a thirteen-year-old Jewish boy from the Lower East Side tenements, Lily Astral, a society girl, and Inquisitor Wolf continue to fight magical crime in 1920s New York City. The story opens with the death by an electrical accident of the “Klezmer King”, Naftali Asher. Sam Schlotsky, Asher’s assistant, is the main suspect because Asher yells his name as he dies. Sam is also the brother of Sacha’s sister’s boyfriend, Moishe Schlotsky. Moishe and Sacha’s sister are active in organizing a labor strike against Pentacle Shirtwaist Factory which is owned by J. P. Morgaunt. Morgaunt is the Wall Street Wizard who called up a *dybbuk* of Sacha in *The Inquisitor's Apprentice*. The team realized that if the public heard that Moishe’s brother was involved in a magical crime it would be seen as a labor union conspiracy. Eventually, the crime leads to J. P. Morgaunt who practices black magic to turn people into “Scabbalists” so they can produce large amounts of garments to undermine striking workers.

This novel is part Sherlock Holmes’ detective mystery and part fantasy. Moriarty poses corrupt magic as a social commentary about moguls who take advantage of poor immigrant workers in the 1920s. J. P. Morgaunt is obviously based on the financier J.P. Morgan. A true taste of the Lower East Side is conveyed through Yiddish phrases (for which a glossary is provided) and descriptions of overcrowded tenement apartments. Characters such as Meyer Minsky, the Jewish gangster whom Sacha cannot help but idolize, as well Sacha’s playboy Uncle Mordechai are flawed yet still appealing. This book is highly recommended for all libraries.

Heather Lenson, Librarian at the JECC's Ratner Media & Technology Center, Cleveland, OH

Spektor, Zev. *The Churva Plot*. (Adventures of a Lifetime). Brooklyn, NY: Judaica Press, 2012. 285 pp. \$19.95. (9781607630876). Gr. 5–8.

This mystery, set in the period of the Ottoman Empire in Jerusalem, gives an interesting exposure to a period not well covered for children this age, in the second book of a trilogy rumors abound that someone is plotting to destroy the beautiful Churva Synagogue during its construction. It is the task of several eleven- and twelve-year-old yeshiva boys to locate who is behind the plot, and work with their rabbi and Avraham’s uncle to undo the plan. But this is no easy task! The book travels from town to town and from suspect to suspect as they attempt to identify the plotters.

While the history is interesting and the historical setting is fascinating, the dialogue is often ponderous and not realistic, as the young boys talk between themselves and their yeshiva cohorts. The book should have been edited, as the story goes on for far too long. The action, and there is much of it, stops periodically as one or more of the boys studies a portion of Torah or commentary. Use of Hebrew names of the cities they travel through and the abundance of Hebrew terms will be excessive for the reader without familiarity with Hebrew terms and expressions. However, a four-page glossary of Hebrew terms has been provided at the end of the book.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

Walfish, Miriam. *Liba's Palace*. Jewish Girls Around the World. New York: Judaica Press, 2012. 176 pp. \$17.95. (9781607630838) Gr. 4–7.

–. *Liba's Letters*. Jewish Girls Around the World. New York: Judaica Press, 2012. 168 pp. \$17.95. (9781607631026) Gr. 4–7.

–. *Liba and the Feather Thief*. Jewish Girls Around the World. New York: Judaica Press, 2013. 175 pp. \$17.95 (9781607631200) Gr. 4–7.

In 1910, Liba Miller and her family move from Lithuania to South Africa to take over the running of a hotel. Whether she needs to adjust her expectations to match the reality of her new home, make friends at her new school, write letters to her best friend back in Lithuania, or help solve a mystery that is perplexing the local police, Liba approaches every new adventure with good humor. The Miller family’s hotel is populated with an interesting cast of characters, who demonstrate good *middot* (character traits) and drop Hebrew and Yiddish words and snippets of Jewish text into their conversations. With the exception of Liba, the characters are mostly one- or two-dimensional, but the series is fun reading nonetheless. Each book includes a glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish terms, and *Liba's Palace* also includes a recipe for the mushroom barley soup discussed in the book. Recommended primarily for libraries serving Orthodox patrons.

Marci Lavine Bloch, D&R International, Silver Spring, MD and past member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

FICTION – TEEN

Arnold, Elana K. *Sacred*. New York: Delacorte, 2012. 368 pp. \$17.99. (9780385742115) Pbk. Gr. 10 and up.

In Elana K. Arnold's new young adult book, *Sacred*, fantasy slides into the real world so smoothly that the reader barely questions it. Even Avalon, the setting of the story and the main town of Santa Catalina, a pristine island 22 miles southwest of Los Angeles, is a grittier version of its Camelot reference. There's sexual assault, death, dysfunctional families, anorexia and self-mutilation. Yet, fantasy there is. In chapter two, we meet a mysterious boy with flashing green eyes who inexplicably stops our narrator, sixteen-year-old Scarlett, in her tracks. She can't understand what he wants or how he found her in the heart of the island, on an isolated horse trail. He only offers his name: Will Cohen. As the story unfolds, we learn about Will's gift and how Scarlett is changing it, maybe for the worse.

This paranormal romance is a great read: you want this young love to work, but are the risks worth it? Each scene brings more conflict and obstacles until the end, with its clever and satisfying resolution. However, the Jewish content is negligible. Aside from his last name, that Will is Jewish doesn't come up at first except when his high school rivals use it against him. Scarlett doesn't meet Will's father, a rabbi, until the middle of the story, when he explains Kaballah and gives Scarlett a guide to the *Sephirot* to help her understand his son's powers. The concept of *Ruach HaKodesh* that Scarlett reads seems as watered down as the extremely abbreviated *Birkat Hamazon* the Cohens recite after their meals. I worry that Will and Scarlett could end up at the Kaballah Center, wearing red-thread bracelets, listening to lectures attended by Madonna, becoming earnest but faux-mystics. I also worry that Will is dating a non-Jewish girl, that is, Scarlett. No one seems to acknowledge or address that. Shouldn't Rabbi Cohen at least make mention of the fact? Is this a fun, fascinating, well-written book? Absolutely. Is it an appropriate addition to a Jewish school library? I'm not so sure.

Charna Gross, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA

Bavati, Robyn. *Dancing in the Dark*. Woodbury, MN: Flux, 2013. (Originally published by Penguin Books, Australia, 2010). 321 pp. \$9.99. (978090738734774). Gr. 8-12.

Yehudit (Ditty) Cohen comes from a large Orthodox family. She is often called upon to do housework or babysit, and there are very few "kosher" outlets, often because her parents cannot imagine wasting time on things like entertainment or recreation. When she and her friend Sara discover a television set in Sara's mother's closet, a new world opens up to them, and Ditty is enchanted by ballet. She sneaks books home from the public library and practices ballet positions in the bathroom. She uses her babysitting money to pay for lessons and ballet clothes, and her cousin Linda loans her money as well. Sara covers for Ditty's time away from home. As the lessons progress, it is obvious that Ditty has natural talent, but she feels constant guilt for deceiving her parents. Soon she is questioning the customs of her community, desecrating the Sabbath to take the tram to Saturday ballet lessons, eating non-kosher food, and dancing with a male partner. Her parents are outraged when they discover the extent of Ditty's subterfuge, and her father forbids her from performing. Deeply torn, Ditty walks out of the house, never to return, and pursues her dream of becoming a ballerina.

Bavati has crafted a fast-paced novel that accurately depicts the often austere and restrictive lifestyle of Orthodoxy. Although Ditty defies her parents, she is a complex, likable character with whom many will identify. There is a strong sense of place as Ditty travels through neighborhoods in Melbourne, Australia. The secondary characters are well developed. As Ditty progresses further with her lessons, there is a growing and palpable tension as to whether she will be found out. The book explores the universal theme of following your own dreams versus conforming to parents' expectations. A glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish words and phrases is included. It is suggested that your Jewish library purchase two copies of this book: adults will enjoy *Dancing in the Dark* as much as the YA age group for which it is intended. This book is very highly recommended for all libraries and will provide many points of discussion for a book club.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel



Levy, Yael. *Brooklyn Love*. Avon, MA: Crimson Romance, 2012. 264 pp. \$14.95. (9781440556555). Pbk. (Kindle eBook: \$3.82). Gr. 10 and up.

Men with beards, *peyos* and *tzitzit*, women buttoned up to the chin, pushing quad strollers: who are these people? Yael Levy's *Brooklyn Love* gives us an insider's view of the lives of three Orthodox girls from an unnamed neighborhood in Brooklyn. The first scene begins with a shrieking bride, as Rachel, Hinda and Leah enter the wedding hall not to enjoy the ceremony but to "show a ballroom full of guests [their] availability for marriage". We follow them as they strive to please their families by netting the right catch and still forge their own adult identities. We hear them in their own voices, each one compelling.

Rachel bookends the story for us. An art student at the Fashion Institute of Technology in Manhattan, like the author, she's perhaps the best-drawn character. Levy's rendering of the campus, the classes, the smell of oil paint as well as the struggle to straddle the art world and the Orthodox community is spot on. No less engaging are Hinda and Leah as they face their own dilemmas: Should Leah marry a doctor or be a doctor? Should Hinda stick to her guns or follow her heart? The reader laughs and cries with them all as they find their way.

As an Orthodox mother who has lived in Brooklyn, I found the author's decision not to identify with any particular Orthodox group in Brooklyn double-edged. Crown Heights, Williamsburg, Flatbush, Midtown and Borough Park, to name a few, are home to large Orthodox enclaves, each with their own customs. Characterizing Brooklyn as a sole entity, as in "Brooklyn was afraid of any change", doesn't do justice to the immense borough. Further, the *roman à clef* aspect was distracting, as this reader tried to guess where the young women lived.

However, as Rachel's mother might say, "That should be your worst problem." The intertwined stories flow, the writing is lovely, and this book will be valued by older teen readers and their mothers. The supermarket test is worth the price of the book alone! *Yasher koach* to Levy!

Charna Gross, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA

Marcus, Jerry. *Shoshana's Song*. Chicago: Brittany, 2013. 270 pp. \$19.00. (9780941394086). Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 10 and up.

This is a very disappointing read about a teenager raised in a strictly Orthodox Jewish home who questions her assigned path in life while embracing her traditions. The writing is abysmally poor and the narrative, which changes from first person to third person at whim, is in the pedantic and flowery style of an elderly gentleman and does not relate in any meaningful way to a young audience, or even to a contemporary adult audience. *Shoshana's Song* appears to be self-published (Brittany Publications has published seven books and five are authored by Jerry Marcus) and there is absolutely no sign of any editorial control. The author also seems to be using his bully pulpit to spew out his personal grudges against some practices in Jewish society, such as the fundraising tactics of yeshivas. Not recommended.

Joyce Levine, North Shore Hebrew Academy H.S., Great Neck, NY; AJL VP for Publications

Polikoff, Barbara Garland. *Her Mother's Secret*. Forest Park, IL: Allium Press of Chicago, 2012. 170 pp. \$14.99. (9780983193876) Pbk. Gr.10-12.

Set in the immigrant neighborhood of Chicago in the 1890s, fifteen-year-old Sarah Goldman feels like a misfit in her family. Her older sister, Fanny, is treated like the princess; her younger brother, Sammy, the prince. *Her Mother's Secret* is peopled with characters filled with thwarted desires and unfulfilled ambitions. Sarah feels unwanted and unloved by her mother, but not until the end of this historical novel does she discover the reason for her mother's coldness. Sarah gradually finds her own way and gains confidence in herself through the love of her father, her friendship with Bianca, her romance with Charley, but most of all through her growing ability as an artist.

The teeming tenements and smelly streets provide the backdrop for the story, as does Hull House Settlement House and the World's Columbian Exposition. We see how people in the neighborhood — Jews, Italians, Greeks — struggle with hunger, poverty, disease, and death. Still further back, as if hidden behind a curtain, the author gives us glimpses of the world of the Russian *shtetl*: the pogroms and oppression inflicted upon the Jews; their yearning to emigrate to America; the secrets and guilt they harbor as they make their way to the "Golden Land".

Her Mother's Secret lacks a steady pace and emotional resonance in places. However, young people who have an interest in art will find a connection to Sarah's aspirations. Back matter, which includes an historical note and essay, enlarges our understanding of the author's motivation for writing this book. An excellent companion guide, available on the publisher's website, includes discussion questions, photographs, "read-alikes", and other resources that would enrich the study of this book in the high school classroom.

Anne Dublin, author of *Stealing Time* (Dundurn, spring 2014), Toronto, Canada

HOLOCAUST & WORLD WAR II

Bari, Ellen. *The Tattered Prayerbook*. Illus. by Avi Katz. East Stroudsburg, PA: Gihon River Press, 2013. 32 pp. \$18.95. (9780981990682). Gr 4–8.

In a simple story, Ellen Bari has written a good book as an introduction to the Holocaust and a tale for the commemoration of *Kristallnacht*. The illustrations are done in a muted palette with line drawings that convey the emotion in the story.

Ruthie goes to visit her grandparents and finds a box of mementoes marked “Germany”. When looking through the box, Ruthie finds an old, burnt prayer book and asks her grandmother about it. She is told that the prayer book is her father’s and that she should ask him. Ruthie’s father had never shared his past with his daughter. Like many Holocaust survivors, he chose to bury the past and move on with his life. Ruthie’s questions, however, are cathartic. He finally tells her about his boyhood in Germany, the bullying he endured as a Jewish boy, and his rescue of the prayer book from the flames of *Kristallnacht*. The prayer book comforts him as he experiences the horrors of persecution and strengthens him as he makes his way to a new life in America. Although this book does not shirk from conveying the fears of the young boy, it does not go into graphic detail, and so is acceptable to share with fourth graders and up. Recommended purchase for most synagogues and schools.

Susan Dubin, Off-the-Shelf Library Services, Henderson, NV

Calkhoven, Laurie. *Michael at the Invasion of France 1943*. New York: Dial Books, 2012. 231 pp. \$16.99. (9780803737242). Grades 4–8.

An exciting adventure book for boys shines as excellent historical fiction at the same time that it makes us sigh about its minimal Jewish content. Yes, this is a World War II/Holocaust book. No, Jews here are not the refugees hiding or the subject of the daring-do rescues. Well plotted, well written, with realistic teen male heroes, role models, and sound motives, the novel delivers the past with accuracy, fear and drama at a breathless pace.

Michael (not Jewish) lives with his American mother in Paris; his French father is in London with de Gaulle. His soldier brother has been picked up by the Nazis from their apartment. Michael blames himself; he knows his brother is his father’s favorite. To gain his father’s approval, to right the wrong against his brother, Michael becomes involved with the Resistance. Each of Michael’s assignments is exciting and moving. For example, he hides a neighboring Jewish child for the day and then helps her escape at the train station. Michael and his friends also help downed Allied pilots escape over the mountains to Spain. Recommended for all day schools and religious schools with mainstream collections.

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

Gratz, Alan. *Prisoner B-3087: Based on the true story by Ruth and Jack Gruener*. New York: Scholastic, 2013. 260 pp. \$16.99. (9780545459013). Gr. 5–8.

Jack Gruener’s life story might be one of the most powerful survivor’s sagas for middle grade readers. In this fictionalized biography, novelist Alan Gratz recounts it in language appropriate for middle-school students. The story begins in Krakow, just before World War II. We meet Jack and his family, and feel their dread as Poland prepares for the Nazi invasion. We understand the terror as the region’s Jews are forced into the ghetto, and are then put under greater and greater stress as the months pass. Jack’s discovery of a hiding place on the apartment building’s roof buys him and his family some time, but eventually he is taken in a raid and is deported. The remainder of the book is a series of vignettes, as Jack is moved first to Plaszow, then the Wieliczka salt mine, Trzebinia, Birkenau, Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, and finally Dachau. We learn something about the conditions in each place, the people he encounters (including the notorious Amon Goeth), and the work and living conditions there. Jack also movingly describes two death marches, as the end of the war approaches. By the time he is rescued by the U.S. Army, we comprehend the skill, courage, and luck necessary to survive under such murderous circumstances.

There are numerous Shoah books available for this age group, but few of them give as much of a “You Are There” sense as this one does. Using the voice of Jack Gruener, Alan Gratz takes the reader on a powerful journey. Without becoming overly graphic, the book makes its point. While this will not replace the masterpieces of juvenile Holocaust fiction, its gritty qualities and forceful prose make it a worthwhile addition for synagogues and schools.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Huh, Christopher. *Keeping My Hope*. Self-published (available at Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com), 2013. 169 pp. \$10.95. (9781479348831) Pbk. Ages 12 and up.

This graphic novel portrays a Jewish grandfather from Lomza relating his Holocaust experiences to his grandchildren. The author, a young teen from Maryland, was motivated to create the book after learning about the Holocaust in his middle school. Not only is his ethnicity surprising (he is a second-generation Korean-American) but his unique talent both for writing and illustrating the story is quite remarkable and inspiring.

One of the book's great strengths is how Huh uses both dialog and drawing to convey the grandfather's childhood and wartime experiences in a very contemporary tone. In fact, the transition from present-day to scenes from the past is startlingly seamless and makes it almost hard to differentiate between the time periods. The aura of modernity will make the reader identify much more with the victims of the Holocaust instead of picturing them as relics of an ancient past.

Huh did extensive research about the Jews of Poland, the ghettos, concentration camps, uprisings, death marches, and liberation. While he spares no gruesome detail (in fact, the horrific brutality portrayed makes this book entirely unsuitable for younger children), his art and dialog are deceptively innocent. For example, an old man being threatened by a Nazi holds up a hand and says, "Please don't hit!" and a Jew yells "Ow!" when he gets shot. But this is not a "children's book" by any means. Not only does Huh demonstrate subtlety, creating characters like a German who defies the Nazis and a Jew who betrays his fellow prisoners, but the depth of feeling he demonstrates is as mature as any adult's.

My only regret is that the story ends so abruptly, with his American Jewish family blithely going back to their barbecue and mundane squabbles. We never find out exactly how the grandfather made it to the U.S., but we do know that he never thought he'd survive to have another family. This book is highly recommended for synagogues, middle schools and high schools. It's destined to be a classic.

Joyce Levine, North Shore Hebrew Academy H.S., Great Neck, NY and AJL VP-Publications

Lasky, Kathryn. *The Extra*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2013. 314 pp. \$16.99. (9780763639723). Pbk. Reviewed from ARC. Gr. 10-12.

Fifteen-year-old Lilian (Lilo) Friwald leads a quiet, ordinary life with her parents in Vienna. However, one day in early autumn 1940, their lives are shattered when they are rounded up along with other Gypsies and thrown into prison. In this historical novel, Lasky tells the story of Lilo's descent, along with her family and friends, into Nazi hell. Although some events are similar to Holocaust stories—hunger, roll calls, humiliation, disease, and of course death—*The Extra* focuses on the unique way the Gypsies were abused during World War II. For example, many of the women, and even young girls, were forcibly sterilized. This novel is different in other ways: Lilo is chosen to be an extra in *Tiefland*, a dramatic feature film being made by German actor and director, Leni Riefenstahl. During her years of incarceration and hiding, Lilo manages to survive because of her skill at riding and needlework. But fear is her constant companion: of hunger, cold, betrayal, captivity, losing the people she loves. Her courage, determination, and resourcefulness help her withstand her ordeal until she can finally grasp a shred of hope at the end.

Award-winning author Lasky (*The Night Journey*) creates the outer world of the film set and the camps and Lilo's inner world through realistic dialogue and evocative imagery. She weaves various *leitmotifs* through the book: Hansel and Gretel, *matroyshka* dolls, the gingerbread man (from the children's story), and the raft in *Huckleberry Finn*. Unfortunately, several internal inconsistencies mar what would otherwise be an effective telling of a little-known chapter about World War II. Lasky's note at the end defends why she "altered dates of small details", provides biographical information about Leni Riefenstahl, and explains more about the Gypsies, or Romani people. *The Extra* has no Jewish content and is therefore recommended only to secular public libraries.

*Anne Dublin, author of *Stealing Time* (Dundurn, spring 2014), Toronto, Canada*

Preus, Margi. *Shadow on the Mountain*. New York: Amulet, 2012. 284 pp. \$16.95. (9781419704246) Pbk. Reviewed from an advance reading copy. Gr. 6-10.

On April 9, 1940, Nazi Germany invaded Norway, a neutral country of only three million people. In this historical novel, Newbery honoree Margi Preus tells the varying stories of Norwegian teenagers during five long years of hunger, intimidation, torture, deportation, and murder. Some people, like the protagonist, Espen, choose to work for the Resistance; others, like Aksel, his former schoolmate, become infatuated with Nazi doctrines and

advance up the Gestapo hierarchy; still others, like Espen's best friend Kjell, are not sure where they stand. Preus paints the large cast of characters with distinct brushstrokes, exploring their motivation: Why did Espen continue his activities in spite of the danger to himself and his family? Why did Aksel betray his countrymen and go over to the side of the enemy? There are no easy answers. Changing points of view might have created confusion for the reader. However, each chapter begins with a heading that tells who the character is and when the action takes place. And what a lot of action there is in this adventure/spy/survival thriller! Preus continually ramps up the suspense as Espen begins by delivering newspapers for the Resistance, ends up carrying radio parts and coded messages, and must finally escape to Sweden.

Shadow on the Mountain gives us a strong sense of place through sensory details of snow, ice, sun, air, water, fog, and rain; Norse mythology about trolls, *draugs* (water creatures), and gods; black humor. Jewish content takes a minor role but is well integrated. Preus shows sensitivity to issues such as anti-Semitism, Nazi propaganda, and deportations. The book includes a prologue, pronunciation guide, a code breaker, instructions for making invisible ink, a timeline, and a bibliography. In the final published version, two detailed maps and archival photographs provide further insight into this little-known chapter of World War II history. For a Jewish historical novel about spies during World War II, see Kathy Kacer's *The Night Spies* (Second Story Press, 2003) or Carol Matas' *Lisa* (Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987). Highly recommended for public libraries and Jewish libraries with an extensive young adult Holocaust collection.

Anne Dublin, author of *Stealing Time* (Dundurn, spring 2014), Toronto, Canada

Weiss, Helga. *Helga's Diary: A young girl's account of life in a concentration camp*. Transl. by Neil Bermel. New York: W.W. Norton, 2013. 248 pp. \$24.95. (9780393077971). Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 10-Adults.

Helga Weiss still lives in Prague, Czech Republic, in the same house where she was born in 1929. Her personal diary was written from 1938 to 1945 and was edited by her in 1945 and in 2012. *Helga's Diary* contains family and historical photographs, her own drawings, and two rough basic maps: one of Helga's journey, and one of Terezin. Helga the survivor graduated from the Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague. She married, has a son and a daughter, and one granddaughter who focuses on Jewish music. Helga's own career, as a painter and art teacher, shifts from the Holocaust to Israel and mainly to humanity.

Helga's Diary is an important addition to Holocaust documentation. It is an amazing fact that Helga was able to edit and publish her authentic, preserved notes. The story is from a different time and place. However, one feels that it is being told in a very direct way. Neil Bermel includes his interview with Helga from December 1, 2011. In it, the 90-year-old Helga recalls what happened to her and her mother after the war, how they found a place to live, and how she got her diary notes back. The book opens with an introduction by Francine Prose, and ends with a translator's note, a glossary, and illustration credits. *Helga's Diary* is a very worthwhile addition to the Holocaust personal witness collection of reading material for Jewish high schools, synagogues, and public libraries.

Nira G. Wolfe, Independent researcher, Highland Park, IL

ISRAEL

Raz, Rachel. *ABC Israel*. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2012. 32 pp. \$8.95. (9781467708579). Pbk. Ages 2-6.

ABC Israel is a beautifully photographed alphabet book about Israel. Each letter of the alphabet is illustrated by a full-page color photo depicting Israel's beauty. For example, the letter *y* shows a field carpeted with yellow wild flowers in bloom. *U* stands for "up", an aerial view of Haifa's rooftops taken from the Baha'i Gardens. An added feature is an index which consists of a short paragraph describing an interesting fact about each location of the photographs. Recommended for Jewish libraries.

Ilka Gordon, Librarian, Aaron Garber Library, Cleveland, OH



JEWISH LIFE & VALUES

Mayer, Pamela. *Don't Sneeze at the Wedding.* Illus. by Martha Sevilés. Minneapolis : Kar-Ben, 2012. 32 pp. \$17.95. (9781467704281). Gr. K-2.

This happy tale about a sweet young girl participating in her aunt's wedding manages to deliver Jewish marriage customs in a subtle way. The tension over "the sneeze" — can flower girl Anna get through the ceremony without sneezing? — is the picture book's foreground. Its background holds the symbols and customs of a Jewish wedding. The well-handled interplay of foreground/background delivers the message while entertaining with lighthearted fun. How many ways can you stop a sneeze? This slim book offers six, including one from the rabbi. Does Anna make it? Tots will learn about this life cycle event before they find out. Wedding details include *ketubah*, *chuppah*, wine, rings, seven blessings, and breaking glass. The illustrations add to the text: dominated by pink, the wedding party theme, and colors that complement it. Pleasant characters in traditional roles — hairdresser, florist, photographer as well as rabbi, bride, and nervous relatives — move gracefully with highly expressive faces through the well thought-out, well-formatted book. This fiction is fun, informative, and nothing to sneeze at.

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

Rouss, Sylvia. *A World of Blessings: Inspirational Stories for Jewish Children.* Illus. by Greg Cohen. Los Angeles: Apples and Honey Press, 2013. \$16.00. 27 pp. (9781427695710). Pbk. Gr.3-5.

Rouss writes about Jewish lifecycle events such as a bar mitzvah, a wedding, remembering the life of a loved one, and the greatest teaching of all — *pikuach nefesh* (to save a life from danger). These five stories are fictionalized versions of true events. Surprisingly however, the author omits one event of the Jewish life cycle — birth. In addition, several grammatical and punctuation errors mar the text. This reviewer noticed a grammatical error in the Spanish: *muchos gracias* (much thanks); a missing period after a description of the "Rabbis and Firefighters" story. If the reader can look beyond these minor problems, most of the stories are valuable for children — Jewish and non-Jewish alike. The illustrations in the book look like computer-generated art. Some pages lack illustrations and have only text. This text-heavy design might not appeal to some children. Caution to readers: Some stories contain themes that may be painful for younger children who might not have had personal experiences with death, cancer, and physical disasters. Although the *World of Blessings* is a break from her usual work, Rouss does a much better job with her popular *Sammy the Spider* series.

Ben Pastcan, Librarian, Shalom School, Sacramento, California

Weber, Ilse. *Mendel Rosenbusch: Tales for Jewish Children.* Transl. by Ruth and Hans Fisher. Illus. by P. John Burden. New York/Charlottetown: Banim & Bannigan, 2012. 70 pp. \$23.95. (9781933480046). Pre-K and up.

Mendel Rosenbusch is a wise old man who can render himself invisible with the help of a magic shekel. The eleven stories in this beautifully illustrated volume demonstrate Jewish values, especially charity, with a little help from Mendel. The first tells how Mendel gained his special powers. The remaining ten stories include: "Rivke Bakes Challah", "An Angel Visits Rebekka", "Auntie Hanni's Birthday", "The Bar Mitzvah Watch", "Ruth and Gerson", "Uri the Rascal", "Baruch the Benefactor", "Simche the Liar", "Abi the Water-Shy Lad", and "Resele and Telese." All have an old-world feel to them and the translators have stayed true to the original tone. Once read, their characters and plots have a tendency to stick with the reader and demand repeated readings.

I first met Hans and Ruth Fisher at their home in New Jersey in 2010. After I interviewed Hans as a survivor of the doomed voyage of the MS *St. Louis* of 1939, he handed me a small book, *Mendel Rosenbusch: Tales for Jewish Children*, a book that he and his wife had translated into English. The Fishers loved the original German *Geschichten für Jüdische Kinder* (published in 1929 by Czech children's author Ilse Herlinger Weber) when they were children growing up in Breslau, Germany (now Wrocław, Poland). We can be grateful to the Fishers for making Mendel Rosenbusch stories accessible to today's children.

Back matter includes a glossary of Yiddish and Hebrew words, an afterword explaining how the Fishers came upon this beloved book of their youth, and a brief biography of Ilse Weber and her tragic fate during the Holocaust. She died in Auschwitz. There is also a page of background information on the translators, the artist, and the designer. This book can be a new classic for today's children. The stories lend themselves to librarian and teacher use at story hour, parent use at bedtime, and a child reading alone. Any libraries that hold *The Wise Men of Chelm* should add *Mendel Rosenbusch* to their collections. Recommended for all libraries.

Barbara Krasner, Member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, NJ

PICTURE BOOKS

Kay, Devora. *The Sleep Sheep Book*. Illus. by Rochel Vand. Chess Press, distributed by Feldheim, (Nanuet, NY), 2013. 20 pp. \$11.99. (9781467546409). Ages 2-5.

In this instructive story, five-year-old Sara prepares for bed amid concerns that she will be unable to fall asleep. Bubby helps by saying *Shema* with her, kissing the *mezuzah* with her, and then tells a story about naming sheep to help Sara nod off. Bubby advises Sara to name each sheep and wish them a “Good sleep sheep”. As Sara follows her grandma’s instructions, her eyes become heavy. The story, told in simple language, is filled with the feeling of love between several generations.

Jewish content is subtle, mostly introduced through the use of three Yiddish words which are starred in the text and defined at the end of the book. Also following the story is a suggested “Parental guide to children’s bedtime routines”, written by a social worker, though the pointers are rather obvious and may not be helpful. Sweet pastel illustrations accompany the text effectively and set the bedtime tone. Grey and white clouds illustrate the endpapers. The book is published by Chess Press – Children’s Self Help Empowerment Society – and distributed by Feldheim.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

Perlov, Betty Rosenberg. *Rivka Takes a Bow*. Illus. by Cosei Kawa. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2013. 32 pp. \$17.95. (9780761381273). Gr. K-3.

Things Yiddish are of high interest these days. All sorts of twenty-somethings are off on immersion retreats or taking academic courses or even interning at the Yiddish Book Center. Who knew? Now we are treated to an unusually illustrated children’s book about the era of Second Avenue Yiddish Theater and the result is as delightfully entertaining as a Molly Picon musical show. The astonishing fact about this picture book is that the author is Betty Rosenberg Perlov, a child star of Yiddish radio, who is now 96 years old. She grew up with both parents working in the Yiddish theater scene and her memories infuse the story line of a young girl who occasionally follows her parents to their work. She depicts those important images of childhood in early twentieth century New York City – noisy subways, dark tunnels, and a stop at the Automat. She also lovingly describes the rituals of actors putting on their costumes and makeup, especially the scene of the actresses in their dressing room in front of a long shelf with mirrors and light bulbs. (Powder and rouge is applied with rabbits’ feet!) When Rivka wanders a bit too far backstage during a performance, she eventually gets her own minute of fame and realizes where her future will lead her. The graceful, pastel illustrations feature comically elongated figures and unusual perspectives (sometimes the reader is looking down from above, sometimes from below) that occasionally seem to float characters in mid-air – reminiscent of Eugene Yelchin’s illustrations for *The Rooster Prince of Breslov*. This appealing story will attract children interested in the world of the theater, especially the “behind the scenes” look at how performances are staged. It is not particularly filled with Jewish content *per se*, but it seems that now is the right time to publish a picture book that extols the vibrant history of the Yiddish theater.

Lisa Silverman, Sinai Temple Blumenthal Library, Los Angeles, CA

SHABBAT & HOLIDAYS

Akselrad, January and Jennifer Jo Young. *Matzah and Miracles: A Passover Musical and Chapter Book*. Illus. by Peter Palagonia. Cold Spring, NY: See the Wish, 2012. 88 pp. + CD. \$15.00. (9780982213483). Gr. 2-5.

Bubbe says, “It is not enough just to tell the story of Passover.... Each person must experience it.” And so the theme of this book is carried out. Reminiscent of *The Rugrats Passover*, this story also has two bored children going back in time to experience the Exodus as it happened. A very readable chapter book accompanies the musical script and CD in this retelling of the Passover story. Although there are no surprises as Bubbe retells the story, children may find the characters and simple text engaging. The musical is unique in its multimedia way to tell the story. An optional purchase for most synagogues and schools.

Susan Dubin, Off-the-Shelf Library Services, Henderson, NV



Balsey, Tilda. *Eight is Great*. Illus. by Hideko Takahashi. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2013. 12 pp. \$5.95. (9780761366232). Board Book. Preschool.

Book reviewers need not be so exacting in regards to simple board books about Hanukkah, and this one is written with a clever “count to eight” angle that makes it educational in more ways than one. However, it is hard to overlook the issue of the final illustration, which throws the narrative out of whack and actually would annoy both the child and parent reading the book. The text focuses on the number eight (nights, candles, places at the table, latkes on the platter, pieces of *gelt*, etc.) and is successful as both a counting book and a depiction of proper rituals for the holiday of Hanukkah. A child will be busily counting each of these things until the last page, when we are encouraged to “remember heroes long before us” and the illustrator depicts a huge image of ancient Judeans in front of the Temple and its gold menorah. This menorah is not a *hanukkiah* of course, and it has only seven (very large!) candles, although the candelabra in the home (much smaller) has the regular eight branches and the *shamash*. There is no reason for an illustration to create confusion for any reader, especially a child who is learning to count to eight or his parent who may not be able to explain why the giant historically accurate menorah suddenly looks so “wrong.”

Lisa Silverman, Sinai Temple Blumenthal Library, Los Angeles, CA

Heifetz, Mitch & Michael Toben. *HaKol BaSeder*. (Interactive kit with CD). Jerusalem & New York: Gefen, 2013. Mixed Media. \$39.95. (9789652295002). All ages.

In colloquial Hebrew, “*ha-kol be-seder*” means “everything is all right.” This kit has reinterpreted the phrase to mean “everything in the *seder*.” It is both a cute re-framing of the phrase and an insight into the creators’ project.

The new version comes as a set. The first piece is the *Haggadah* itself. The text is complete and fairly standard; the perspective is Modern Orthodox (there is a letter of endorsement from Rabbi Sacks at the front), but it has been shorn of extraneous verbiage. The illustrations have been taken from a medieval *haggadah*. There are also several introductory pages explaining the issues. The revolutionary element is an activity book that provides numerous questions and projects for participants. Some are specifically for children, including craft projects. Others are intended to engage various ages (children, teens, and adults) in discussion and debate around the table; there are questions about the parts of the *seder*, as well as larger topics that can engage everyone in the conversation. The activities are cross-referenced in the margins of the *haggadah* for easy access. The package includes a CD containing copy-able text, instructions, and diagrams for many of the projects. Finally, there are several copies of the *birkat* for distribution, and a corkscrew to open the wine.

In 2012, the *New American Haggadah* by Jonathan Foer and Nathan Englander provided a wonderful new way to present Passover and reinvigorate its meaning for the twenty-first century. This new collection, using text, games, projects, and additional intriguing questions should give yet another new set of meanings for future years’ gatherings. While it is not meant for “quickie” preparation, *HaKol BaSeder* should be in every library, from small synagogue collections to seminaries and universities, as well as for people who wish to create their own family traditions.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Jules, Jacqueline. *What a Way to Start a New Year! A Rosh Hashanah Story*. Illus. by Judy Stead. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2013. Unpaginated. \$7.95. (9780761381174). Pbk. K-2.

At the time of Rosh Hashanah, Harry and Dina’s family has just moved to a new city. Their parents are too busy with the move to prepare any of the holiday foods, such as honey cake and brisket. Harry and Dina miss celebrating Rosh Hashanah with their old neighbors. Their mom is about to drive the kids to their former neighbor’s home, but mishaps keep occurring which prevent the family from traveling. With each mishap, the line “What a way to start a New Year!” is repeated. Finally, the family gets invited to the synagogue and home of their father’s coworker. The story ends with Dina’s statement, “What a wonderful way to start a New Year!” Children of interfaith families will be able to relate to this story because the father is not Jewish. The story is also relatable to children whose families may participate in Jewish holiday customs, mostly through traditional foods, but are less observant or unaffiliated with a synagogue. This is a good supplementary story about Rosh Hashanah because it is more about celebrating the holiday than about providing background information. Jacqueline Jules conveys the meaningfulness of the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim*, welcoming guests, to the family’s celebration throughout the story. Judy Stead’s illustrations using brightly colored oil paints create

a lively setting. Mixed media create textures in the background that add depth to the illustrations. This book is recommended for all libraries.

Heather Lenson, Director of the (JECC) Jewish Education Center of Cleveland's Libraries, Cleveland, OH

Korngold, Jamie. *Sadie's Almost Marvelous Menorah*. Illus. by Julie Fortenberry. Minneapolis : Kar-Ben, 2012. 24 pp. \$17.95. (9780761364931). Gr. PreK-1.

Charming Sadie is back in another holiday adventure, this one more a mishap, saved by her mom. The accident puts a fresh spin on the "menorah made and lost" plot. Sadie attends Jewish parochial day school. It is Hanukah; craft project is making menorahs. Sadie prefers candle lighting to dreidel spinning, latke eating, or blessing chanting; she is overjoyed. Working diligently, she molds her clay and paints it pink with blue squiggles. When Mom picks her up, Sadie runs to show her, trips, and falls. The menorah flies, landing in pieces. Tearful Sadie stumbles upon the unbroken *shamash* as they exit. Mom decides this is perfect to light all their family menorahs; she names it "Sadie's Super Shamash". At home, Dad helps her insert a candle into her *shamash*, then light the menorahs for grandparents, parents, and (returning character) brother, Ori. A family tradition is born. Sadie retains her sweet innocence introduced in the first two books by the Korngold/Fortenberry team (*Sadie's Sukkah Breakfast* and *Sadie and the Big Mountain*). This picture book delivers key holiday symbols and customs at home without mentioning the historical background behind the celebration. "Less" works in this case, considering the targeted age group. Young children will relate to the holiday activities, school project, realistic accident, sad Sadie, and heroic mom. Warm art supports the warm story with mobile characters and strong, jewel-toned colors. Recommended for all libraries.

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

Kushner, Elisabeth. *The Purim Superhero*. Illus. by Mike Byrne. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2013. 32 pp. \$17.95 HC, \$7.95. Pbk. (9780761390626). Pre-K-3.

Picture books serve many purposes in the lives of young children as they embark on the sublime road to literacy. Developing a sense of story, enjoying the interplay of text and pictures, and bonding with parents and caregivers over a good book are just a few of the pleasures children glean from this important genre. Within the body of picture book literature, it is important that there be characters, situations and stories with which children can identify. And just as America moves toward the acceptance of diversity in society, so too does the Jewish community reflect the varied households that compose the fabric of the American Jewish people.

The Purim Superhero is the story of Nate, a young Hebrew school student, who lives at home with two dads, Abba and Daddy, and an older sister, Miri. The boys at Hebrew school decide that everyone should be a superhero for Purim. But Nate loves aliens and would rather wear an alien costume. What should he do? The pull of peer pressure is strong as Nate makes his decision with help from his Abba who says that "not all boys have to be the same thing". Nate asks his Abba if he ever just wants to be like everyone else, and Abba wisely connects identity to the Purim story. "Queen Esther saved the Jews because she didn't hide who she was. She told King Ahasuerus she was Jewish, and that her people were in danger." Daddy adds that "A hero is someone brave and strong, on the outside or on the inside."

Nate makes up his mind and the whole family works together to create his costume. He joins the dress-up parade at the synagogue on Purim as a "Super Alien." Rabbi Joanie gives Nate the prize for Most Original costume. The boys in Nate's class love his alien suit and decide that "Next Purim, let's be whatever we want." The illustrations by Mike Byrne are colorful and inviting. Nate and his classmates wear *kippot* at Hebrew school, and Nate and his two dads wear *kippot* at the dinner table.

The message of *The Purim Superhero* is clear without being didactic. Parents and teachers will find much to discuss in this important book. Recommended for those home, school, and synagogue libraries where its theme will be welcome.

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



Rouss, Sylvia A. and Shannan Rouss. *A Watermelon in the Sukkah*. Illus. by Ann Iosa. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2013. 24pp. \$17.95 HC, \$7.95 PB, \$6.95 eBook. (9780761381198). PreK-2.

Everyone in Miss Sharon's class is asked to bring their favorite fruit to hang in the school sukkah. Children bring in the usual varieties – apples, bananas, pears, tangerines, grapes, pomegranates, and oranges – except for Michael, who rolls a watermelon into the classroom. To her credit, Miss Sharon tries every which way to hang the watermelon in the sukkah. String, tape, and rubber bands can't do the job. But when the class goes to the playground for recess, Michael gets an idea. With Miss Sharon's help, he fashions a watermelon swing out of leftover fabric from the walls of the sukkah. He and his classmates use hooks to attach each corner of the cloth to the sukkah. Success! The watermelon joins the other fruits in decorating the sukkah. Everyone is overjoyed. There is a fun twist at the end when Michael announces that he is going to bring his second favorite fruit to school tomorrow – a pumpkin!

Sylvia Rouss, the author of the Sammy Spider series, once again strikes just the right chord for the preschool and early elementary set. The illustrations by Ann Iosa are colorful and inviting. An inquisitive squirrel inhabits the two-page outdoor spreads. Rouss' daughter Shannan is co-author. *A Watermelon in the Sukkah* will make a fine addition to any family, school or synagogue collection of stories on this wonderful, child-friendly holiday.

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

Steiner, N. *On This Night*. Illus. by Wendy Edelson. Brooklyn, NY: Hachai, 2013. 32 pp. \$10.95. (9781929628513). Ages 2-5.

Simple *aa/bb/cc* rhyme schemes recount the order of the Pesach *seder* in this picture book for children. The rhyming words used are predictable: bite/night, sweet/eat, door/more, which may appeal to the very young. Double-page, full color paintings by Wendy Edelson show an extended Jewish family observing the holiday. The Hebrew word that is illustrated is large and legible on each page. The men and boys wear *kipot*, *tzitzit*, black hats, and the men wear beards. The women and girls are modestly and colorfully dressed. There is an abundance of color, food, and smiles. Each glossy page of this 32-page book is laminated, in expectation that this book will be used for many *sedarim*. A substantial extended family of mother, father, eight children, grandma and grandpa, are gathered around the table. The book is recommended for Jewish school and home libraries. Orthodox schools and congregations will be especially interested.

Naomi Morse, Silver Spring, MD

MULTIMEDIA

***The Last Flight of Petr Ginz*. DVD. Directed by Sandy Dickson and Churchill Roberts. Animation by Cory Godbey. New York: First Run Features, 2013. Color. 68 minutes. \$24.95. (ASIN: B00AZ43C1A). Gr. 7-12.**

This DVD begins with Israeli astronaut, Ilan Ramon, in the cockpit of the space shuttle Columbia before liftoff. Ramon carried a pencil sketch, "Moon Landscape", drawn by sixteen-year-old Petr Ginz. By the time Petr was fourteen, he had written five novels. He wrote them in the style of Jules Verne and illustrated them with his own paintings. Petr began writing his diary when the Nazis marched into Prague. A mischling (half-Jewish and half-Christian), Petr was nevertheless sent to Theresienstadt on November 23, 1941. While there, Petr became the editor of the boys' newsletter, *Vedem*. By the time he was sixteen, he had produced more than 170 drawings and paintings, as well as written numerous short stories. His potential was snuffed out in Auschwitz in 1944.

The Last Flight of Petr Ginz combines animation and actual images, and is narrated alternately by Petr's sister, Eva, and a narrator. Eva's descriptions of Petr introduce each of the animated segments in this DVD.

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

[Editor's note: This DVD was an official selection at several film festivals, including Toronto, Berlin, and Zagreb, and won an award at the Jerusalem Film Festival 2012. For more about Petr Ginz, see: www.petrginz.com. A free, full-color study guide, produced by The Holocaust and United Nations Outreach Programme, contains readings, discussion questions, and classroom activity ideas for middle and high school students: http://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/2012/educational_petrginz.shtml.]

WHAT IS – AND WHAT ISN'T – A JEWISH BOOK?

By LINDA R. SILVER

Co-Editor, Book Reviews for Children and Teens

Originally published in May/June 2007 issue of *AJL Newsletter*

The AJL Newsletter reviews books of Jewish content but because what that means is less clear than it used to be the question needs to be revisited. Dov Noy, the director of the Israeli Folk Archives and Nina Jaffe, a Sydney Taylor Award winning author, have both described the characteristics of a folktale Jewish and that description has been extended to all of the books for children and teens reviewed in the AJL Newsletter. The characteristics are, very simply, Jewish time, Jewish setting, Jewish characters, Jewish theme, and/or an assumption on the author or teller's part that the meaning will have particular resonance with Jews. The Jewish books for children and teens reviewed in the Newsletter need not have all of these characteristics but they must have some of them. Once reviewers establish that a review book meets at least some of these criteria, they then are asked to evaluate it not only in general literary terms but also by taking into consideration such issues as reputable scholarship, age-appropriateness, authenticity, depth of Jewish content, positive value or focus, and sensitivity to Jewish concerns. (See "Excellence in Jewish Children's Literature: A Guide for Book Selectors, Reviewers, and Award Judges" on the AJL website.)

Two past Sydney Taylor award winners for younger children provide good examples of how these descriptive and evaluative criteria are applied. The word "Jewish" is never used in either Esther Hershenhorn's *Chicken Soup by Heart* or Aubrey Davis's *Bagels for Benny*. But in the latter, the Jewish content is obvious by virtue of the setting –the Holy Ark of the synagogue where Benny leaves his offerings to God - and in the theme, which is that in doing mitzvot or good deeds, we thank God by helping to repair the world. It could never be mistaken for anything but a Jewish book, even though its message also resonates with readers who are not Jewish (as most outstanding Jewish books do.)

The Jewish content of *Chicken Soup by Heart* is less obvious. There are no characters who are identified as Jewish, nothing about the apartment setting that implies a Jewish place, and no reference to Jewish time, such as a holiday or life cycle event. A hint is given by the name of the elderly woman, Mrs. Gittel, for whom a little boy makes chicken soup when she is sick, just as she makes it for him when he is sick. The stories he remembers about Mrs. Gittel as he adds ingredients to the soup have Jewish resonance, however, as does Mrs. Gittel's speech, which is Yiddish inflected. Moreover, the theme of caring for the sick conveys an important Jewish value. There is little doubt that both of these picture books have strong, albeit varying degrees, of Jewish content.

A growing trend in books from secular publishers, especially those for teens, is to merely identify or, even more merely, to suggest that a character is Jewish and nothing more. In *Notes from a Midnight Driver*, a 2007 Sydney Taylor notable book for teens, the only hint that one of the characters is Jewish is that he spouts Yiddish. The possibility that he is Jewish is irrelevant to the book's plot or meaning – any ethnic group with some distinctive speech pattern would do. There are no expressly Jewish values in the book, either; it is a cute, wholesome, but Jewishly-neutral story. Much the same can be said of another new teen novel called *Brand X: The Boyfriend Account*. In it, the reader is told that the main character is Jewish but that is the sum total of the Jewish content. No aspect of the setting, plot, point of view, or theme has any Jewish resonance; it too, is Jewishly neutral. Both of these novels will be enjoyed by teenage readers but by only the loosest definition of the term "Jewish content" could they be considered to be part of Jewish literature. We may regard this incidental Jewishness as a sign of Jews' acceptance into the mainstream of society - the ascendancy of the melting pot model over the one of cultural pluralism – but in the melting pot, the differences that define us as a people disappear. In both practical and philosophical terms, should the Jewish review media review books whose Jewish content is non-existent?

This question pertains as well to books on subjects that are important to Jews but that in and of themselves have no Jewish content. Peace is such a subject. There have been several recent children's books that promote the blessings of peace in a completely universalistic manner. With perhaps one or two exceptions, no religion is opposed to peace. But despite the fact that Judaism cherishes peace, that alone does not make a book "Jewish." As reviewers and book selectors, it is important for us to preserve the integrity of a genuinely Jewish literature by making these distinctions.

Interview with Timothy D. Lytton

SUBMITTED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE

Timothy D. Lytton is the Albert and Angela Farone Distinguished Professor of Law at Albany Law School and author of *Kosher: Private Regulation in the Age of Industrial Food*, recently published by Harvard University Press. Co-editor Daniel Scheide interviewed him by email in April 2013 – the interview is printed below. For an interview with the author and more about the book, [click here](#).

What got you interested in the business of kashrut supervision?

I am interested in private alternatives to government regulation, especially in the areas of food safety and nutrition labeling. As a general matter, private regulation in the food industry has been a great disappointment. The most notorious examples are private food safety audits and industry-sponsored nutrition labeling schemes. Behind most major food-poisoning outbreaks is some private auditing firm that gave the food producer a phony five-star rating. And when nutritional rating schemes give high marks to sugary cereals and full-fat ice cream, you have to wonder.

As a kosher-observant Orthodox Jew, I realized that kosher certification offers a 2000 year old example of private food certification. My initial suspicion was that kosher certification was full of price gouging and unnecessary, super-stringent standards. As I began to get into my research, however, I found that, although fraud and corruption were widespread a century ago in kosher meat production, today's kosher system is highly reliable. My book tells the story of how, within the span of a century, kosher certification became the one of the most reliable systems of private certification in the food industry, indeed, perhaps in any industry.

As I read your book over Passover, it occurred to me that, like the Haggadah, your story of kashrut supervision in the U.S. begins with disgrace and ends with praise. What was the state of kosher supervision before World War II and what changed?

From the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s kosher meat production was plagued by rampant fraud. In 1925, the New York City Department of Markets estimated that 40% of the meat sold as kosher in the city was treyf. Trade associations and consumer groups estimated that the figure was closer to 50 to 65%. Kosher poultry distribution in the city was dominated by gangsters who engaged in price-fixing, racketeering, and even murder-for-hire. Bernard Baff, a poultry retailer who testified against a corrupt trade association of poultry distributors, was gunned down in broad daylight in 1914 in Manhattan's Washington Market by unknown assailants in one of the most notorious murders of the decade. (As it turns out, responsibility lay not with the trade association, but with 100 fellow retailers who resented Baff's dominance in the retail trade, which he achieved by taking over distribution after the trade association was out of the way.) Every reform effort during this 100-year period was undermined by rabbinic rivalry and corruption. And the problem was even too big for government regulators, who lacked the resources to put an end to fraud and corruption.

The emergence of a market for kosher-certified industrially prepared and packaged foods in the mid-1900s changed the economics of kosher certification. Kosher certification was an inexpensive way for industrial food companies to market their products to kosher consumers. The level of rabbinic supervision required by Jewish law for the production of foods like cereal is much lower than that for meat. An initial inspection of the processing plant and periodic follow-up visits are sufficient for industrial certification, in contrast to meat production, which requires paying for the services of a ritual slaughterer and constant on-site rabbinic supervision of slaughtering and butchering. Moreover, the cost of industrial supervision can be spread across tens or hundreds of thousands of unit sales, and any increase in unit cost is likely to be made up by increased sales to kosher consumers, meaning that the company need not increase the price of the product in most cases. All this makes kosher certification a highly attractive marketing strategy for food companies. It also reduces the incentive for fraud, since there is little or no price differential between non-kosher and kosher-certified industrial food products.



Another source of reform was the emergence of private kosher certification agencies, starting with the Orthodox Union (OU) in the 1950s and several other major certifiers, such as OK Kosher, Kof-K, and Star-K in the late 1960s. Prior to this time, pulpit rabbis seeking to supplement inadequate congregational salaries were paid directly by companies for their certification, which was often indicated simply by a generic “K” on the package. Kosher certification agencies instituted management controls and professional training to reduce mistakes and misconduct. Local rabbis with little oversight or expertise were replaced by sophisticated bureaucracies that produced a new breed of kosher professionals.

Like many industries during the twentieth century, kosher certification underwent a process of bureaucratization and professionalization, which improved accountability and expertise.

The thesis of your work is that the success of kashrut supervisory agencies should be viewed as a model of private third-party certification. How do you measure that success and what other consumers could benefit from this approach?

As in many areas of regulation, comprehensive performance data does not exist. Nevertheless, there are several indications that the industrial kosher certification system is highly reliable. For example, of the half-million products that the OU – the nation’s largest kosher agency – certifies each year, its legal department investigates only about five hundred cases of questionable use of its kosher symbol, and it takes action in only fifty of those cases. These low rates of mislabeling are consistent with New York State’s Kosher Law Enforcement Division records revealing that, between 2005 and 2010, the agency conducted more than thirty-seven hundred inspections of nearly nine hundred industrial kosher food production facilities but found only four violations of the state’s kosher fraud law. Moreover, when mistakes are discovered, private kosher certification agencies routinely issue consumer alerts and product recalls, at significant cost to themselves and their food-company clients.

The success of kosher certification has implications for other areas where private certification has the potential to improve regulatory outcomes. Unfortunately, private certification in these other areas is often unreliable. For example, as I mentioned earlier, private food safety audits have not performed well. Market competition among auditors sometimes leads them to lower their standards in order to reduce the cost of their services and ease the demands that they place on their clients. The result is a race to the bottom. The key to reliable private certification is harnessing the market demand for certification without succumbing to competitive pressures to cut corners. And this is precisely what the kosher certification system has achieved. My book attempts to identify the key ingredients to kosher certification’s success so that they can be harnessed to enhance the performance of other forms of private certification.

It occurred to me after reading the book that you don’t have much discussion on how kashrut is dealt with outside the U.S. Is there anything to be learned from other countries?

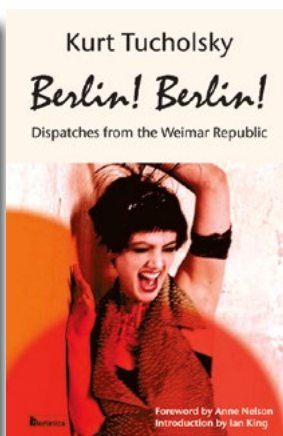
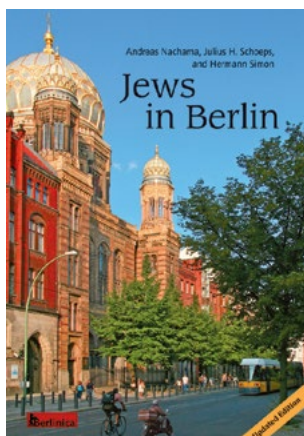
My claim in the book is that we can learn useful lessons for improving private certification from the success of the American industrial kosher certification system. The success of this system is highly contextual – I don’t claim that it would work everywhere or that it is superior to other models of kosher certification in other places. I am sure that much could be learned from a comparison of kosher certification in the U.S. and kosher certification in other countries – especially Israel, where the state plays a central role – but such a comparison isn’t necessary for the claims that I make in my book.

I would guess that these are the 2 questions you get the most often after writing this book, but I’m going to ask them anyway: 1) Why does toilet cleaner have a hekhsher and 2) What’s the deal with Triangle-K?

Toilet cleaner, since it is neither a food nor does it come into contact with food – is not subject to the laws of kashrus and does not require certification. Some companies desire certification for such products because they believe that consumers view kosher certification as a sign of quality, and some agencies will provide such certification. Other products that normally don’t require certification, however, such as aluminum foil or bottled water, may, in some circumstances require certification. Thus, aluminum foil can be produced with non-kosher oils, and some bottled water is pasteurized on equipment that is also used to pasteurize milk, so agencies will often provide certification to assure consumers that nothing in the production of these products runs afoul of kosher standards.

Triangle-K is one of the largest kosher certification agencies. Rabbi Aryeh Ralbag, who directs the agency, is, by all accounts, a learned and devout man. Triangle-K has a highly visible retail presence on supermarket shelves – in many markets, it is second only to the OU. At the same time, Triangle-K also has a reputation for less stringent standards in some areas, most notably in its certification of Hebrew National meats, which are not glatt kosher. (Glatt, which originated as a stringency practiced exclusively by a subset of Hungarian Jews, is today the industry standard for kosher beef in America.) As a result, many of the leading kosher certification agencies do not accept Triangle-K-certified ingredients. This makes Triangle-K's profile in the ingredient market much smaller than its profile in the retail market. In addition, many Orthodox Jews will not rely on Triangle-K certification. Attitudes about reliability – of Triangle-K and other agencies – vary considerably in different communities. As the CEO of one leading agency told me, “kashrus is all about ne’emunus [trustworthiness]” and, as another said, “In this business, your reputation is everything.”

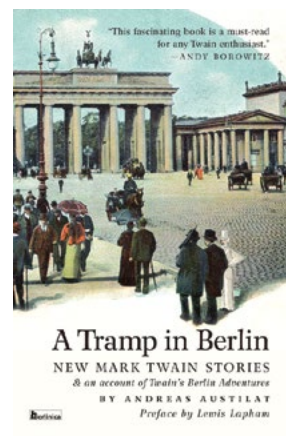
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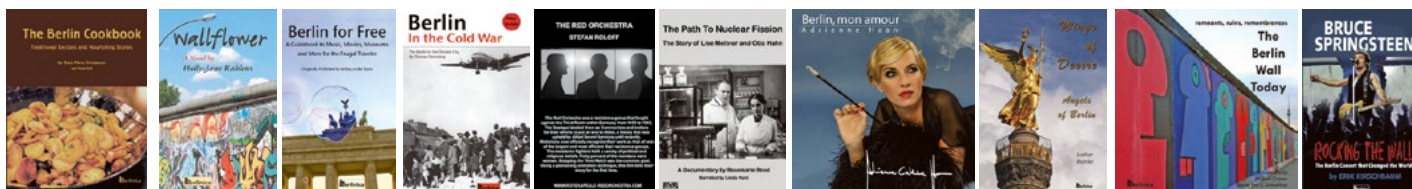
Jews in Berlin, by ANDREAS NACHAMA, JULIUS SCHOEPS, AND HERMANN SIMON is a richly illustrated book about 750 years of Jewish history, the dark years of the Holocaust, and how Jewish life is flourishing again in Berlin.

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Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND REBECCA JEFFERSON

Abrams, Elliott. *Tested By Zion: The Bush Administration and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (A Council on Foreign Relations Book). New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 288 pp. \$30.00. (9781107031197).

Abrams is a long-time government servant working in both the executive and legislative branches and with both political parties. Presently, he is a senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. While working in the White House for President George W. Bush as a high level National Security Council officer, Abrams was intimately involved with U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East. He is knowledgeable, therefore, about the intricate policy motives and decisions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from 2001 to 2009. Focus is brought to the events of 9/11 and what followed immediately thereafter with the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, dealing with the Palestinian leadership (most prominently Yasser Arafat) and various Israeli leaders. Abrams' central thesis is that while popular opinion remains critical of the Bush policy toward the region, in point of fact, as laid out, the president was actively involved in an attempt to reduce the level of violence between Israel and the Palestinians. It was also during the Bush tenure that Abrams had to deal with the embarrassment of a Hamas electoral victory in the face of American efforts to work against it, the Israeli incursion into Lebanon and Gaza, and the efforts of the PLO to create some kind of a central authority. It is these shattering regional outbursts that serve as the background to Abrams' unique vantage point, and this access to real time information serves as a contributing bonus to the book. This book is a necessary addition to collections with audiences particularly interested in US foreign policy toward the Middle East and US-Israeli relations.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Baader, Benjamin Maria, ed. *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender and History*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012. 242 pp. \$28.00. (9780002068).

This scholarly, wide-ranging collection of essays describes a variety of German-Jewish males at different periods in history, from the 17th century to the present. Anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jewish men as effeminate weaklings are discussed and contrasted with numerous examples of men behaving in aggressive, macho ways.

In the mid-19th century, Rabbis Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfurt and Rabbi Adolf Jellinek of Vienna were two influential thinkers who preached in favor of a more feminine, gentle demeanor on the part of Jewish men, as they believed this to be a Jewish principle. The ideal for non-macho, family-oriented Jewish men prevailed during this period. Yet another essay deals with standards of demeanor and training for *Mohelim* and *Shochetim*. Non-Jews often viewed these men as dirty, bloodthirsty, and sexually deviant. As a result, Jews were eager to show representatives of these trades to be clean, upstanding persons, well trained in their professions and above reproach in character. We get a rare glimpse of the code of dueling as observed by German fraternities, both gentile and Jewish. One essay is devoted to ambiguous sexuality, hermaphrodites, gays, and transsexuals in the 19th century. The chapter on the Modern Hebrew handshake and the ideal of "muscle Judaism" in Israel presents a stark contrast to the above-mentioned Jewish (and anti-Semitic) stereotype. The volume concludes with a study of German-Jewish immigrants to New York between 1933 and 1945 and how men adapted to their change in status.

These essays vary widely in style, from the academic to the more popular, but in general this book would appeal to scholarly readers. The very specialized nature of the material makes this book suitable for large, academic libraries.

Susanne M. Batzdorff, Librarian, Retired, Celia Gurevitch Library, Santa Rosa, CA.

Band, Debra. *Arise! Arise! Deborah, Ruth and Hannah*. Illuminations and commentary by Debra Band; literary commentary by Arnold J. Band; foreword by Adele Berlin. USA: Honeybee in the Garden, 2012. 191 pp. (9780985799601).

In this latest volume of illuminated Biblical texts, Band focuses on three Biblical women, Deborah, Ruth and Hannah. Each section begins with an introduction by Band, which describes how she personally connected with the text. Next is a literary commentary by Arnold Band which examines the structure and historicity of the text. The commentary is followed by the texts in Hebrew and English on facing pages; each with different full color illustrations. Each section concludes with a discussion of the art together with descriptions of the text, the *midrashim*, commentaries, and the archeological evidence that provided the sources of inspiration for Band's illustrations. The artwork is beautiful and the description of Debra Band's process and inspiration is fascinating. Highly recommended.

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

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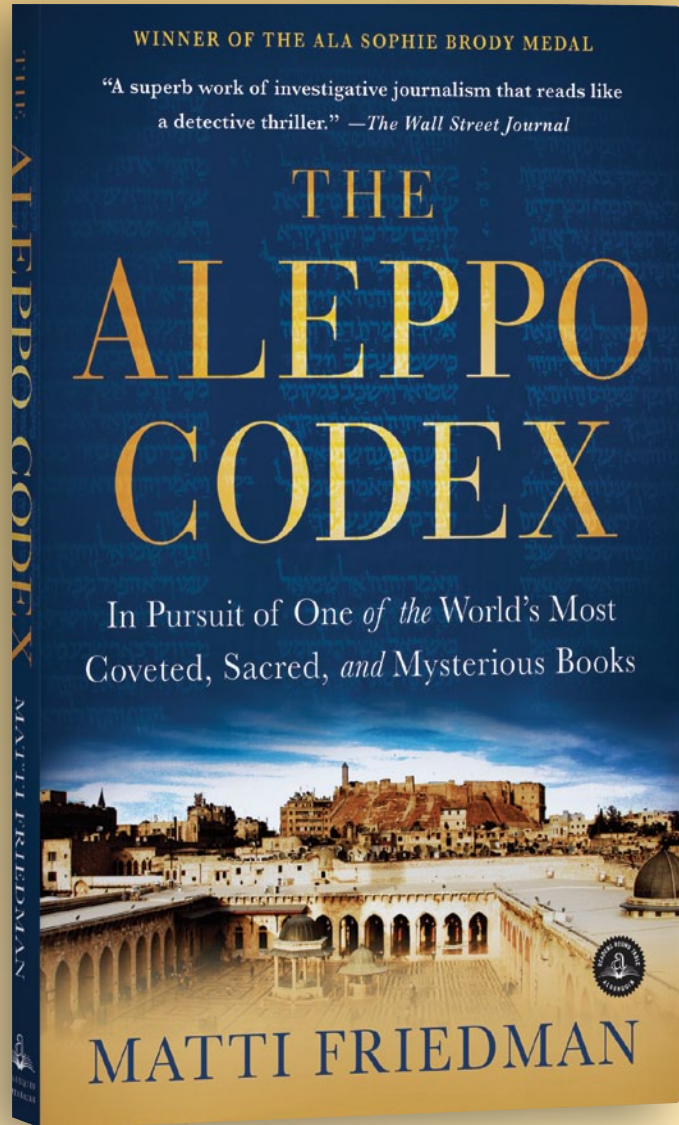
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 **ALGONQUIN BOOKS**

Beinfeld, Solon and Harry Bochner, editors-in-chief. *Comprehensive Yiddish-English Dictionary = Arumnemik Yiddish-English verterbukh*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. 704 pp. (9780253009838). Also available as an eBook.

Based on the Yiddish-French Dictionary compiled by Yitskhok Niborski, Bernard Vaisbrot, and Simon Neuberg (Paris: Bibliothèque Medem, 2002), the *Comprehensive Yiddish-English Dictionary* brings to English-speakers a vast lexical corpus. The User's Guide alone is quite extensive and covers a wide range of concepts, from the basics (the Yiddish alphabet) to detailed explanations on the content of each entry (e.g. symbols separating prefixes or suffixes from the stem); orthography, pronunciation, and accentuation; and a list of Yiddish abbreviations that appear in the dictionary. The heart of any dictionary is, of course, the entries themselves, and these are extremely rich. Each entry includes the part of speech (noun, verb, adverb, etc.). Nouns include the definite article (indicating gender) and the plural form. Verbs include the past participle form and, in many cases, the correct preposition that the verb takes. The definitions are precise and when necessary, often provide a full context (e.g. *Litvak*, *ha-yom*, etc.) for the reader. The overall design of the dictionary is quite appealing, with attractive fonts and a clear page lay-out. This is no small accomplishment for a reference work that will be consulted regularly over the years.

The product of many years of painstaking research and scholarly collaboration and distinguished both by profound linguistic erudition (Yiddish, French, English, to name but a few) and overall accessibility, this dictionary is a truly monumental achievement in the field of Yiddish lexicography. Yiddish readers of all levels will benefit greatly from having this extraordinary reference resource available to them. Highly recommended for academic, school, and synagogue libraries.

Yermiyahu Ahron Taub, www.yataub.net, Washington, DC

Bernhardt, Jeff, ed. *On Sacred Ground: Jewish and Christian Clergy Reflect on Transformative Passages from the Five Books of Moses*. New York: Blackbird Books, 2012. 222 pp. \$15.95. (9781610530187).

The editor, Bernhardt, has compiled numerous reflections on the Torah, arranged according to the order of the books. In the Introduction, he acknowledges the many clergy who have contributed to the volume and describes the common theme as recognizing the presence of the Almighty among us. While the reflections touch on many aspects of this divine presence, the section on Genesis focuses on the creative relationship between humanity and the Almighty, Exodus focuses on the liberating relationship between humanity and the Almighty, Leviticus focuses on mutual human relationships, Numbers on love of the Almighty by obeying the Torah, and Deuteronomy focuses on various themes of the Torah. The volume ends with a brief glossary of terms, mostly Hebrew, and a list of contributors. This collection seems to have something for everyone and is therefore recommended for congregational or school libraries.

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

Bitton, Yosef. *Awesome Creation: a Study of the First Three Verses of the Torah*. Jerusalem, New York: Gefen, 2013. xvi, 226 pp. \$26.95. (9789652295569).

This whole book is devoted to a discussion of the first three verses of the Bible. The author interprets the verses using modern scientific theory, claiming that they are mainly devoted to the water cycle and the task of vegetation. The water cycle deals with evaporation of sea water, formation of clouds and rain. This cycle serves two purposes, firstly it creates the weather and a comfortable temperature for life; secondly, it provides for the formation of fresh water. The plants serve as food and through photosynthesis provide oxygen for the world.

The author demonstrates considerable knowledge of modern science, but he also cites many medieval and modern commentators, revealing himself to be a very learned man. Most of the commentators cited are standard; however, the prominence given to Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, a less quoted authority from Amsterdam and London in the seventeenth century, was surprising. All in all I found the book interesting and stimulating, and would recommend it to readers of a philosophical bent.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel



Boteach, Shmuley. *The Modern Guide to Judaism.* New York; London: Overlook Duckworth, 2012. 206 pp. \$14.95. (9781590207031).

The Modern Guide to Judaism is a useful guide for Jews all over the world. It serves those Jews who already explore and discuss identity issues in contemporary times, and it can open the eyes of Jews who know nothing about their heritage.

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach analyzes around twelve important subjects with an open and direct viewpoint. He is an Orthodox Rabbi who sees clearly the vast humanity around him. With notes interspaced within the text, he discusses "Judaism: A State of the Art Program for Human Potential," as well as "The Jewish Nation," "The Future of the Diaspora," "God," "Sabbath," "Women," and "Religion in Action." These pave the way for his "eighteen cardinal tenets" of the Jewish faith that serve as "Cornerstones of Civilization."

The book has an index and a short list of references. It was first published in 1999 under the title: "An Intelligent Person's Guide to Judaism." This book is a worthy addition to Judaic collections in Jewish high schools, synagogues, public and academic libraries. It is to be hoped that it will be translated into Hebrew so that it can also benefit the Israeli public.

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

Botticini, Maristella Eckstein, Zvi. *The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70-1492.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. 323 pp. \$39.50. (9780691144870).

This interesting well-documented study in social economic history attempts to answer why Jews from the time of the destruction of the Second Temple to 1492 were transformed from a largely illiterate agrarian people in the Land of Israel to a mobile cosmopolitan group of urbanites across the globe. It asks if legal strictures or discriminatory measures limiting the economic activities of the Jews throughout history explain Jewish occupational structure. Did the Jews perhaps invest in mobile human "literacy" rather than physical capital because of their situation as a persecuted minority? How and why did Jewish educational norms of basic literacy give Jews a "competitive economic advantage," leading to "profitable returns" that made Jewish education an "asset" in commerce? The authors reject the assumption that anti-Jewish persecution was the main cause of change driving Jewish behaviors, population fluctuations, migration, and historical trends. Recommended for all libraries.

David B Levy, Touro College

Brian, Denis. *The Elected and the Chosen: Why American Presidents Have Supported Jews and Israel: From George Washington to Barack Obama.* Jerusalem and Springfield, NJ: Gefen Publishing House, 2012. 415 pp. \$24.95. (9789652295989).

A nicely compiled set of brief biographies of all American presidents from George Washington to Barrack Obama is presented in a popularly written style. The added bonus is the inclusion of the historical connections the presidents have had with American Jews and later Israel. Each biography includes an account of the early life of each of our national leaders along with their respective religious upbringing and adherence. Brian, a well published author, includes not only well known facts about the personage, but also information that has been unavailable to the general public and found in unpublished sources. This brief but succinct compendium is a marvelous read for anyone interested in the connection between American and Jewish-American history. It could also be a unique bar/bat mitzvah gift, for a youngster prone to study.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Brown, Erica. *Leadership in the Wilderness: Authority and Anarchy in the Book of Numbers.* Jerusalem: Maggid Books, an imprint of Koren Publishers Jerusalem Ltd., 2013. 241 pp. \$24.95. (9781592643424).

The fourth book of the Torah, *Bamidbar* or Numbers, documents a people in transition. As the Israelites begin their journey across the Sinai, they are counted, given more laws, and counted again. There are physical and spiritual tests, as well as challenges to Moses' leadership. Brown studies the interaction between the wilderness, the leader and the followers. Her book is divided into three sections: the first, "Transition and Uncertainty" looks at the initial chapters of Numbers and discusses the organization of the Israelites as they traveled, the Nazarite as "leadership gadfly," as well as food during the trip. Part two, "The Breakdown of Authority," includes discussions pertinent to *parshiot Shelach, Korach* and *Balak*, where Moses' leadership and the loyalty of his followers come into

question. In the third part, "Reestablishing Trust," Moses' leadership is reaffirmed, but the mantle of leadership is passed to Joshua. Brown uses classic commentary and midrash, as well as modern management theory to show how hard it was for Moshe to manage his "stiff-necked" group. Their experiences are a valuable lesson for the reader: "Discover yourself in the wilderness of a future you know not. Go outside to go inside. Grow where the wild things are. Learn from that which almost kills you. Leave the past and discover God."

Dr. Brown has studied leadership using both biblical textual analysis and business models before. Her *Inspired Jewish Leadership: Practical Approaches to Building Strong Communities* (Jewish Lights, 2008) explores Jewish leadership through "ancient models of Jewish leadership, contemporary professional business literature, and Jewish texts." As this is not a typical "*parsha* book" that discusses each section in order, an index and a bibliography of sources would have been helpful to those who learn the weekly portion. Otherwise, it is a clear, thoughtful book that shows the trials of nature and the tribulations of being a leader, and it recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Cooper, Alanna E. *Bukharan Jews and the Dynamics of Global Judaism*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012, xxiv, 305 pp. \$30 (9780253006509)

Cooper, an anthropologist and cultural historian, became interested in Bukharan Jews while teaching Central Asian immigrant children in New York in the early 1990s. Since then, she has lived with and studied Central Asian Jews in their countries of origin as well as in the USA and Israel, and she has examined archival sources, reports, and studies about them. While the book starts in the early 1990s, subsequent parts deal chronologically with the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. By examining memories and written reports from different periods, origins, and points of view, Cooper tries to understand the development of the various components of Jews known nowadays as Bukharan Jews. Among the topics which are of special interest to Cooper are the struggle between local and outside powers, whether individuals or organizations, over the character of the communities, and how diasporas in Jerusalem and later in the USA change over time and shape developments in Central Asia, as well as shape each other. Based on a wealth of different kinds of source materials and together with the challenging questions she raises, Cooper produces a broad and interesting picture of a lesser-studied and understood group of Jews, which despite a common name are becoming distinguished units based on location, the length of time they have been living there and outside influences.

Rachel Simon. Princeton University. Princeton, NJ

Diamond, James A. and Aaron W. Hughes, eds. *Encountering the Medieval in Modern Jewish Thought*. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 335 pp. \$171.00. (9789004233508). Also available as an eBook.

How does "medieval" signify when invoked by modern philosophers such as Rav Kook, Buber, Scholem, Agnon, the Brisker Rav, Rav J.B. Soloveitchik, Leo Strauss, and Levinas? Why has "the medieval" been reconstituted and engaged in various ways by modern thinkers who have striven to understand, construct, and contest it?

Strauss sought to marshal a return to the medieval enlightenment of Maimonides and Gersonides which he argued was superior to the modern Enlightenment of Mendelsohn, Krochmal, and Rosenzweig. Strauss did not believe that medieval thought was outdated based on its Aristotelian cosmology, but rather urged that we must learn not "about" medieval thinkers but "from" them.

Scholem thought Rav Kook to be the last of the great Jewish mystics extending back to the medieval ages. Diamond brilliantly shows how Rav Kook as a modern Zionist engaged Maimonides, reinventing a *pusek* or allusion Rambam makes, in Rav Kook's own Kabbalistic register. He amplifies Rav Kook's limitless *Ahavas HaShem*, greater than *hakol* (everything), *ha-tov* (the good), *hamahut* (His essence), *hahavayah* (being) and gives rise to the *nistar* (hidden) *alma di-yehuda* (world of unification).

K. Green shows how Agnon's language echoes the hidden depths, resonances, and multiple layers of Jewish history containing the secrets of Jewish mysticism. In stories like "*Ve-Hayah He-Akov Le-Mishor*" (the Crooked shall be made straight), "*Agadat ha-Sofer*" (Tale of a Scribe), "*Hakhnasat Kalah*" (Bridal Canopy), "*Ad Heinah*" (To this day), "*Orei-akh Natah La-Lune*" (A Guest for the Night), "*Tmol Shilshom*" (Only Yesterday), "*Sipur Pashut*" (A Simple Story), Agnon expresses, preserves, and advances a medieval wisdom speaking in a modern idiom. Scholem understood from Agnon how Jewish language is not the product of history but shaper of history containing a *Zeitgeist*.

Dolgopolski shows that the Brisker Rav, the father of the analytical approach, and his grandson Rav J.B. Soloveitchik, influenced by Hermann Cohenian Kantianism, continue a *masorah* (tradition) of interpreters of Rambam's thought in a mode of existentialism. Recommended for students of Jewish thought, history, and philosophy.

David B Levy, Touro College

Foer, Franklin and Marc Tracy. *Jewish Jocks: An Unorthodox Hall of Fame*. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, 2012. 285 pp. \$26.99. (9781455516131).

When people think of Jewish athletes, they tend to think of the obvious ones: Sandy Koufax, Hank Greenberg, and Mark Spitz, but this book explores the less obvious ones as well. These include Arnold Rothstein, the man accused of fixing the 1918 World Series; Red Auerbach, the mastermind behind 16 NBA championships, and Red Holzman, a celebrated sports coach. *Jewish Jocks* is a collection of profiles of different Jewish athletes, from medieval times until today written by a collection of writers with personal connections to the subjects, be it a familial one, or just a fascination with the character. Each writer attempts to give an in-depth and clear picture of the man or woman being portrayed. Many of the subjects are people who made significant strides in their respective fields, either breaking the "glass ceiling" for women, or defying anti-Semitic stereotypes, but some are just ordinary athletes who happen to be Jewish. The editors attempt to give a clear picture of what it means to be a Jew in sports, even the ones that many wish weren't—the nefarious, the low-lives, and the criminals. A well-written collection of essays, this book is a timely sports biography that appeals to a niche audience of sports fans and Jewish historians. This book is recommended for Jewish high schools or synagogue libraries. While written on an academic level, this book is not recommended for an academic library due to its lack of a proper bibliography or index.

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



Children of Israel

By Alethea Gold & Luca Zordan
HC / 191pp / ISBN 9789652296238 / \$36

This amazing coffee table book contains many inspirational stories that are not widely known, and that show so movingly that peace is possible. The personalities of the children shine through in their photos as well as in the accompanying quotes, which range from poignant to hilarious.

Built upon their successful works: *Children of China* (2008) & *Children of Africa – South African Edition* (2010).

The Elected and the Chosen

By Denis Brian
Preface by Professor Alan M. Dershowitz
PB / 415pp / ISBN 9789652295989 / \$24.95

Based on once-secret documents and little-known diaries, *The Elected and the Chosen* discloses, for the first time, the close ties that have bound American presidents and the Jews from the dawn of American history.

"It is a must read for all who care about maintaining a crucial alliance so important to both the United States and to Israel."

— Excerpt from Dershowitz's preface

A Bit of Wit, A World of Wisdom Penetrating Thoughts that Open the Heart and Stir the Soul Through Humor

By Yehoshua Kurland
PB / 162pp / ISBN 9789652296153 / \$18.95

This collection of over fifty essays by master educator Yehoshua Kurland is a unique combination of laughter and lessons, of humor and heartfelt advice. Each of these easy-to-read, self-help oriented essays covers topics like change, freedom, peace, internal struggle, and our relationships with others and with God.

Debunking the Bull For Seekers of Another Tack

By Sarah Honig
PB / 247pp / ISBN 9789652296078 / \$19.95

This is an anthology of Another Tack columns which originally saw light on the weekend pages of the *Jerusalem Post*, where they had been a regular weekly feature since 1999.

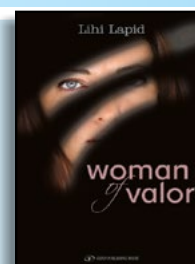
"This superb collection of articles from the incomparable Sarah Honig is called 'Debunking the Bull,' and what a delightful debunking it is... when you've read it, you will realize that you have been in the hands of a polemicist without equal in Israel or the world."

— Bret Stephens, winner 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary, Foreign Affairs Columnist, *The Wall Street Journal*

Daily Life in Biblical Times

By Liora Ravid
PB / 467pp / ISBN 9789652296092 / \$19.95

Dr. Liora Ravid follows in the footsteps of the biblical heroes, examining their stories based on the social and legal reality of their time. The book reconstructs the historical journey of Abraham and his family from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan – the birthplace of David, the judges, the prophets, and Jesus.



Woman of Valor

By Lihi Lapid
HC / 202pp / ISBN 9789652296405 / \$18

For weeks *Woman of Valor* topped Israel's best-seller lists, conquering hearts. In trenchant and colorful prose, Lihi Lapid tells a story about finding the strength to gather up the pieces and learn to smile again.

"Lapid questions beliefs about a woman's role in modern society, probes stereotypes and examines the lies parents tell their daughters. Through her own story, and that of others, she tells a tale of everyday battles a woman goes through."

— *Jerusalem Post*

Lapid has been writing a weekly newspaper column for ten years. She has written three best-selling novels. She lives with her husband, Yair Lapid, and their two children in Tel Aviv.



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Gefen, it's not just good wine



Friedlander, Saul. *Franz Kafka: the Poet of Shame and Guilt.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013. x, 181 pp. \$25.00 (9780300136616). Reviewed from an uncorrected ARC.

Friedlander, a historian of the Holocaust who has chosen to engage in a literary journey into the life and work of his compatriot (both Kafka and Friedlander were born in Prague), combines Kafka's personal diaries and existing scholarship to offer a "biographical essay" describing the deeply personal roots of Kafka's fiction.

Using his vast knowledge and familiarity with Czech and Jewish-German intellectual history, Friedlander analyzes Kafka's themes of shame, guilt, family and the human body as they are present in his diaries and evident in his fiction. Kafka's search for meaning, which emerges as Friedlander's unique contribution to the world of Kafkaesque analysis, serves as a mirror for Friedlander's own quest. Highly recommended for academic libraries collecting in the areas of Western intellectual history, European Jewish literature, and of course, Kafka.

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

Goldberg, Rabbi Edwin. *Saying No and Letting Go.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013. 164 pp. \$16.99. (9781580236706).

The motto of American society for the past few years, as exemplified in the popular media, has been "simplify." In this book, Rabbi Goldberg gives a Jewish spin on the message, and provides some ideas on how to go about the task.

Not surprisingly, the volume begins with Shabbat, which Heschel famously called "a sanctuary in time." From there the author covers a number of other important contemporary issues: finding and keeping love, doing small kindnesses, dealing with resentment and other problems that all of us face and which sometimes overwhelm us. Throughout the book, Goldberg retells stories from the Bible, the Talmud, and a wide range of other sources, including personal incidents. Some of the surprises include his use of Isaac Bashevis Singer's stories, and the child-raising books of Wendy Mogel.

Saying No and Letting Go seems like a book for personal use rather than a vital library addition. While the stories are all appropriate, their relevance seems a stretch at times. It may very well help people get through tough times, in which case, they may be as likely to keep it as return it! This book may also be of use to clergy and therapists who can pass it on to those might derive the most benefit from it. While there's nothing wrong here, it is recommended as an optional purchase.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA.

Goldman, Kay. *Dressing Modern Maternity : the Frankfurt Sisters of Dallas and the Page Boy Label.* Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2013. Reviewed from an ARC.

In the late 1930s, three Jewish sisters, Elsie, Edna, and Louise Frankfurt of Dallas, Texas, founded a line of stylish clothing for pregnant women. Their company, Page Boy Maternity Corporation, thrived for decades before being bought out by Mothers Work in 1994. Goldman skillfully combines the history of the clothing and fashion industry, the changing perception of pregnant women, with the history of the company and biographical details of the three women. The book has a generous number of illustrations.

The women were remarkable in many ways. They ran a successful company when few women were involved in business at all. They did their own designs and even patented their design for maternity wear that expanded as the woman did. Because of their fashion sense, they connected with many high profile women in the United States. Due to the limited Jewish material, this is recommended for large collections and those with local interest only.

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

Golinkin, David. *The Status of Women in Jewish Law: Responsa.* Jerusalem: The Center for Women in Jewish Law at the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 2012. 413 pp. \$25.00. (9789657105696).

This is a timely and comprehensive examination of a critical subject. Golinkin writes from a Conservative Jewish perspective, and openly identifies himself as an advocate of women's involvement in traditional male activities. By way of introduction, he thoroughly examines the history of women's participation in the synagogue, beginning in nineteenth century Europe and in Baghdad. He lays out "nine approaches to the status of women in Jewish law in the twentieth century." The 15 responsa cover *tefillin* (phylacteries), singing, *minyan*, the *imahot* (matriarchs), *barukh shepatarani* (Bar Mitzvah blessing), *aliyot* (Jewish immigration to Israel), *megillah* reading and verses honoring Esther, *mohalot* (ritual circumcisers), funerals, mourner's *kaddish*, marriage, *poskot* (decisions)

of Jewish law), *mehitzah* (synagogue partition), and ordination. Each responsum is heavily footnoted and has its own, separate bibliography, and the book overall has its own bibliography, subject index, and glossary. Sources range from contemporary back to the very first Talmudic commentators. It's hard to imagine that any interpretation was left unexplored in this vital work. The writing is clear but the subject is dense and the reader who is unfamiliar with Talmudic methods will find it challenging. Ten of the responsa were first published in Hebrew in 2001 and were not fully updated when they were translated. The book contains some minor printing and editing errors. Nevertheless, this book is highly recommended for collections of Jewish law or feminism.

Beth Dwoskin, Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

Grunhaus, Naomi. *The Challenge of Received Tradition: Dilemmas of Interpretation in Radak's Biblical Commentaries.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 258 pp. \$74.00. (9780199854808).

Rabbi David Kimhi (known by his acronym Radak) lived ca. 1160 to 1235 in Provence. This was the period in which the use of *peshat* in understanding the Bible developed. *Peshat* analysis of the text is based on literal meaning, context, and sometimes a rationalist approach toward Judaism. The traditional *derash*, which is found in Rabbinic literature, often involves interpretations which might not be obvious from the text, and might sometimes even contradict it. Rashi is often cited as steeped in *derash*, whereas Abraham ibn Ezra is seen as a champion of *peshat*.

This book adds to a growing body of sophisticated research which shows how some of the commentators of this period practiced a blended use of these two methodologies. Grunhaus studies how Radak, who is usually considered a champion of *peshat*, uses both *peshat* and *derash* in a "dual explanation" of the text. She calls this a "polarized construct" and shows that Radak respects the traditional understanding of the text when he thinks that it is based on a handed down tradition. She analyzes in great detail why Radak does or does not include a *derash* explanation along with the *peshat*, and explains why he prefers one over the other, or feels that both are equally valuable in understanding the text.

Grunhaus uses hundreds of examples to paint a clear and detailed picture of Radak's understanding of the Biblical text. It is easy to get lost among the many examples, but reading this book is a fine opportunity to study Radak's subtle understanding of the value of both *peshat* and *derash*. Recommended for academic collections in Bible or Medieval Jewish culture.

Jim Rosenbloom, Brandeis University and Past President of AJL

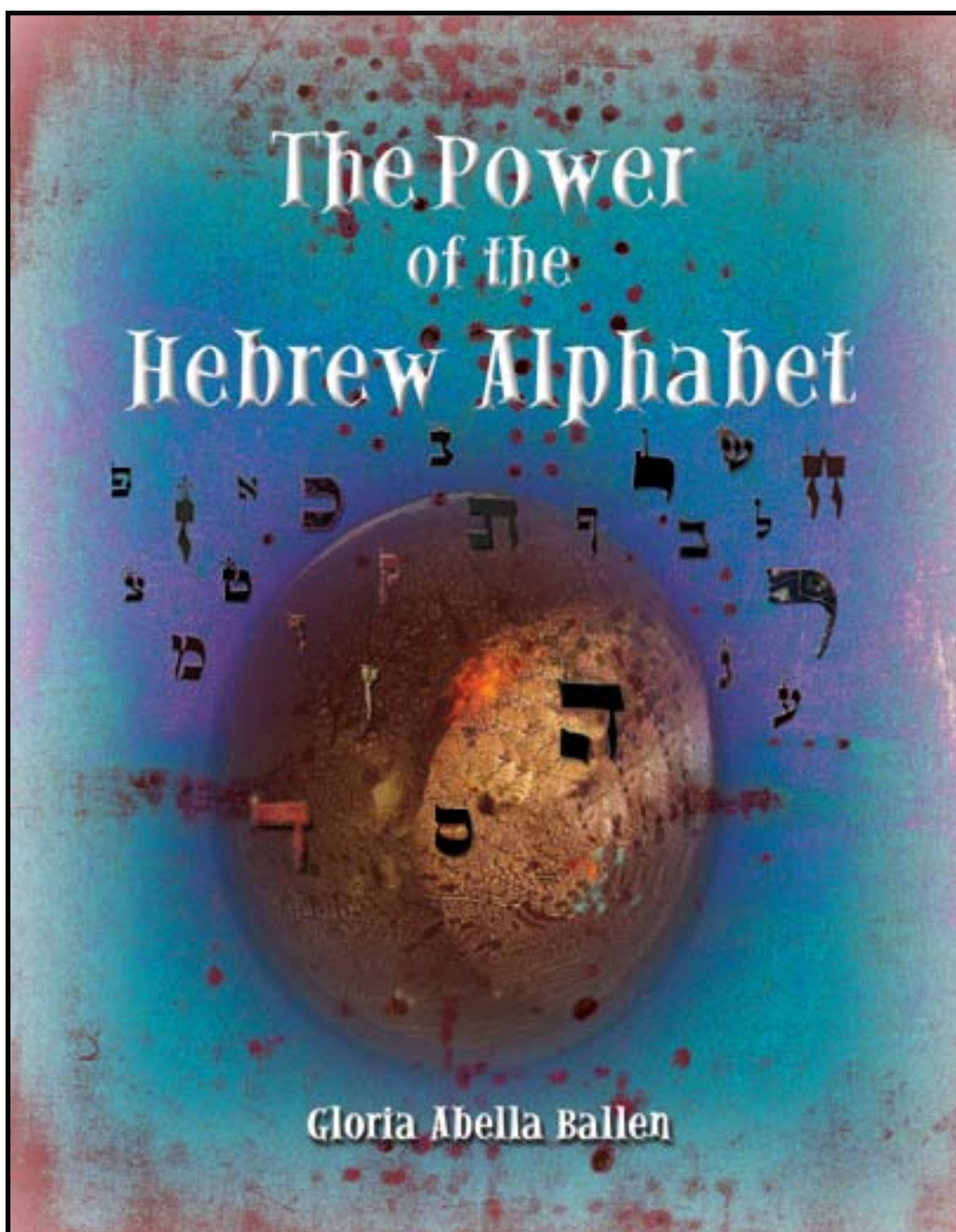
Hakak, Yohai. *Young Men in Israeli Haredi Yeshiva Education. The Scholars' Enclave in Unrest (Jewish Identities in a Changing World; 19).* Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012. 189 pp. \$133.00. (9789004234697).

An Israeli sociologist examines Lithuanian-style yeshivas and finds growing conflict between traditional values of scholarship and an unhappiness with rigidity and/or lack of aptitude. The *Haredim* (ultra-Orthodox) in Israel—initially a marginal group who, in the desire to rebuild after the Holocaust, encouraged men to stay in *kollel*, regardless of intellectual ability—have over the years re-emerged, more assertive, but with a sizeable minority frustrated over the few options available outside of yeshiva and the superhuman expectations of learning and conduct.

Challenges to the yeshiva world, such as growing mediocrity within and modernity outside, have pushed many yeshivas toward greater elitism, condemning any deviation and setting even higher standards. Excerpts from classic and contemporary *Haredi* literature, such as ethical works and biographies of rabbis, reveal the mindset of those who have tried to guard their flock by promoting a stark contrast between the pure, refined Torah scholar and the depraved secularist. Ironically, the result is further tension: young men unable to live up to this pious, aesthetic ideal may wish to leave but risk communal sanctions. The author's conversations with rabbis and "at risk" professionals who have addressed the crisis or challenged authority reveal some Western practices being integrated (i.e. sports, psychology, nurturance); nowadays many *baalei teshuvah* have been allowed to retain some of their former lifestyles. The overall impression is that of a cloistered world slowly recognizing diversity and the need for alternatives.

This book, based on several years' fieldwork with faculty and students, is generally respectful of their religious culture. It could have been better edited; there were numerous typos. Nevertheless, the author does a fine job presenting the dynamics of a vibrant and changing force in Israeli society, while questioning the status quo. For academic libraries with Jewish studies collections.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY



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ISBN: 9781935604259 Cloth. 240 pages. Full color. \$72.00

Harris, Maurice D. *Moses: A Stranger Among us.* Eugene, OR: Cascade books, 2012. xxv, 137 pp. \$19.00. (9781610974073). Also available as an eBook.

The author, a Reconstructionist rabbi, is showing us a Moses who is an outsider-insider. While born of Jewish slaves, he is reared by an Egyptian princess in royal opulence. His status as an outsider gives him a unique perspective and enables him to become an outstanding leader to guide a slave people to freedom. But through Harris's skilled analysis, Moses becomes much more. His multi-faceted personality and the many angles from which he can be viewed are ably described in this book. Of particular interest is Harris's interpretation of the meaning of Moses' punishment at the end of his life and the way he deals with the "texts of cruelty" in the Torah. He urges the reader to use his own judgment to discern when such a passage is clearly not the voice of a compassionate God. The fact that Moses married a Midianite leads Harris to an excursus on the positive aspects of intermarriage. It is also noteworthy how Moses is later cast as "Moses" in quotation marks: the sum total of the manifold ways in which he can be and has been seen throughout history and by scholars and rabbis through the ages.

This is a depiction of Moses that does not fear to tread on dangerous ground, departing from a literal image and revealing a man who is flawed and yet whose flaws contribute to his greatness and his unique suitability for the role for which he was chosen. Though the book is written in a simple style, the complex character of its hero is subtly drawn. After finishing this book, the reader is likely never to see Moses in the same way again. Highly recommended.

Susanne M. Batzdorff, Librarian, retired,

Celia Gurevitch Jewish Community Library of Congregation Beth Ami, Santa Rosa, CA.

Haskell, Ellen Davina. *Suckling at My Mother's Breasts: The Image of a Nursing God in Jewish Mysticism.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012. 193 pp. \$75.00. (9781438443812). Also available as an eBook.

This monograph is devoted to a single metaphor used in Jewish religious writing, the description of divine blessing bestowed upon humans through the image of a mother nursing her child. Haskell traces the roots of this metaphor to rabbinic literature, where it is used to describe the human transmission of Torah and wisdom, and suggests that the early Kabbalists adapted the image to their own theosophical needs. This adaptation is intertwined with the rise of the *Shekhinah* as a distinctly feminine Godhead. The book consists mostly of readings of texts from the early *Kabbalah* of Isaac the Blind and Ezra of Girona, and from the *Zohar*. Haskell's presentation, contextualization and translation of these dense texts ensures the value of her work, which maintains a clear focus and transparent vocabulary throughout. The last chapter considers the larger social and religious context of Christianity as a possible but not exclusive influence on the development of nursing imagery in medieval *Kabbalah*.

Pinchas Roth, post-doctoral fellow, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Hattin, Rabbi Michael. *Passages: Text and Transformation in the Parasha.* Jerusalem; New York: Urim Publications, 2012. 384pp. \$29.95. (9789655241198).

"For as his name is, so is he" (1 Samuel 25:25): *Passages* follows meticulously the fifty-four weekly biblical *parashot*. Rabbi Michael Hattin presents his summary of the various texts by naming each *parasha* with a new descriptive title. He then leads the reader to a deeper and more profound understanding of the *parasha*. What is particularly notable is that the reader can beneficially implement what he learns from this book into his daily life.

Rabbi Hattin describes his technique clearly in his introduction. Each *parasha* starts with a synopsis, followed by the discussion of important topics and concludes with suggestions for further study. An outline of a specific *parasha* will illustrate Hattin's method: 1. "Vayera" (Genesis 18:1-22:24); Avimelech's Pledge: synopsis; The Theme of the Parasha and the Episode of the Akeda; The visit of Avimelech; The Elements of the Encounter; The Interpretation of the Rashbam; The Theme of Covenant; God's Pledge to Avraham; Reevaluating the Episode of the Akeda; For Further Study. A list of "The Rishonim: 11th - 16th Centuries" concludes the volume.

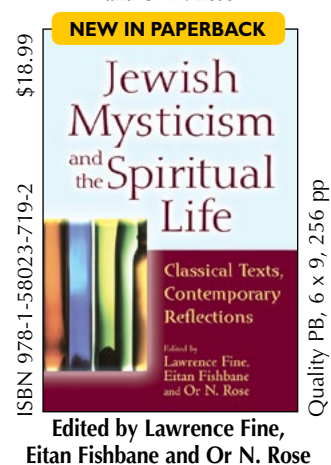
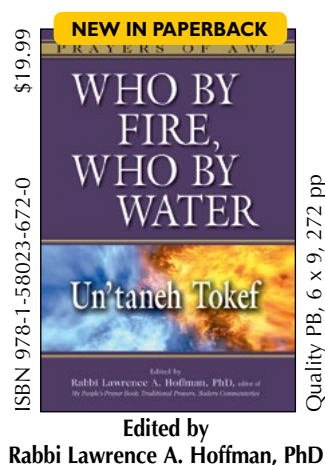
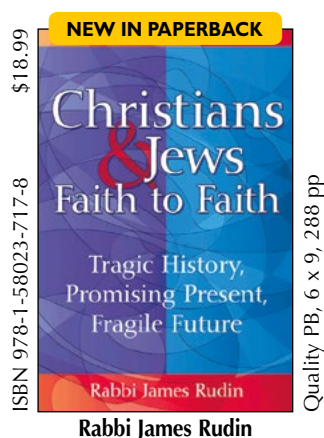
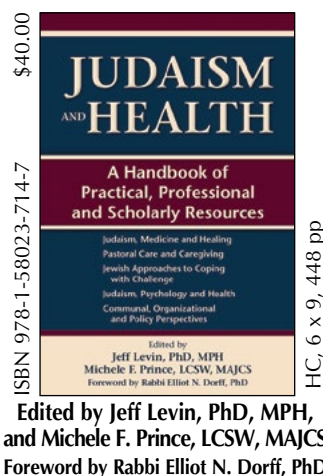
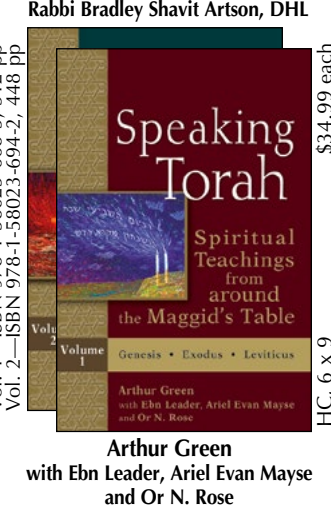
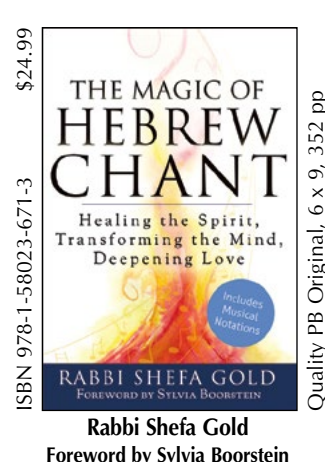
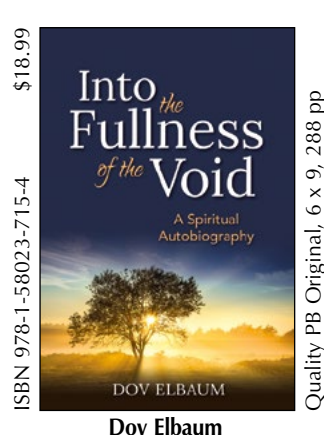
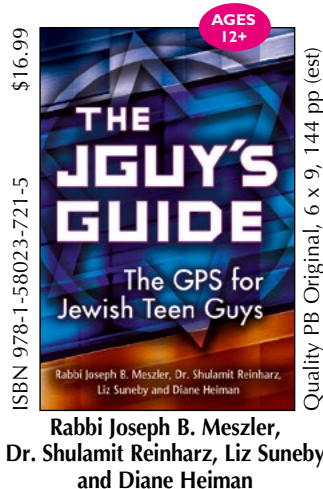
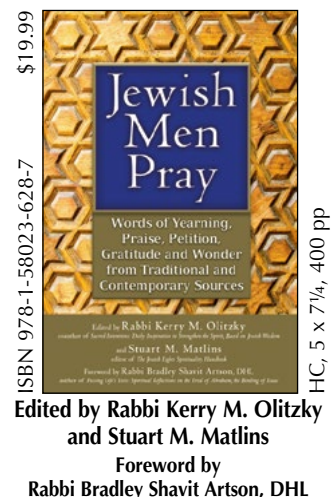
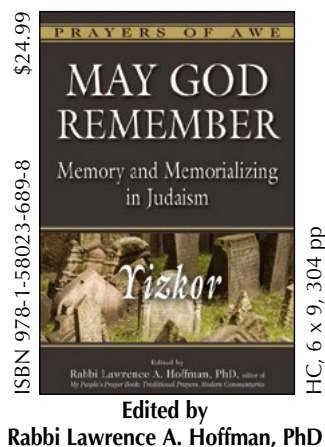
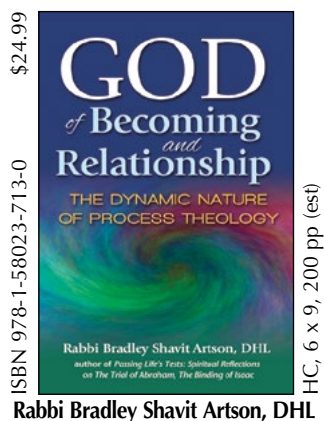
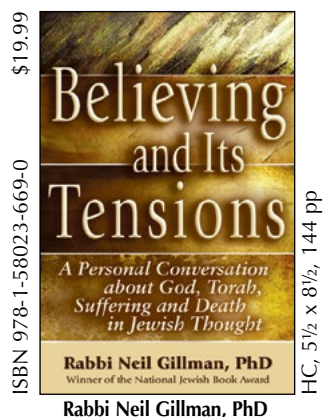
Passages utilizes a unique format of typesetting: the print is smaller than usual and thus a vast treasure of information is supplied in a condensed layout. This excellent reference work should be placed in an easily and accessible location since it will be referred to frequently. It is appropriate for any Jewish home, Jewish high schools, public and academic libraries, as well as advanced academic institutions.

Nira G. Wolfe, Independent researcher, Highland Park, IL;

Head Librarian Hebrew Theological College (retired), Skokie, IL.



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Helfgot, Nathaniel. *Mikra and Meaning: Studies in Bible and its Interpretation*. New Milford, CT: Maggid Books, 2012. 241 pp. \$29.95. (9781613290019).

This book is a compilation of essays by Rabbi Helfgot that appeared previously in various publications. These essays are brought together as part of a series dedicated to the study of Tanach in Orthodox Yeshivot. The first essay is not strictly on a topic in Tanach but rather in the methodology to be used in its study in the Yeshiva setting. It justifies the study of Tanach as supplying a foundation from which to study other sacred texts such as Gemorrah and Halacha. As Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein states in his Forward: "this book is, admittedly, not every *ben Torah's* cup of tea, and not just in light of conventional reservations regarding *de gustibus*. A measure of knowledge, sensitivity, and sophistication – and above all, discretion and discrimination rooted in commitment – is requisite in order to extract from these studies that which they have to offer ..."

That being said, the audience for this book is potentially large, including Yeshiva students on both the upper high school level as well as the college level and their teachers. A wide range of topics are covered in this book, and it is probably not meant to be read from cover to cover but rather selections from it could be used in conjunction with specific Torah and Tanach subjects being studied. As stated often by Rabbi Helfgot, a literary approach to the texts is the main focus of these essays.

Some of the orthographical choices are questionable: firstly, why are the Hebrew texts given in Romanized form? The audience for this book is clearly a knowledgeable one and Hebrew characters would have been easier for the reader. Secondly, why are some quotes attributed in full and others not? There is an inconsistency here that is not as professional as it should be.

This book does not contain a bibliography nor does it have an index. It does have a list of the sources for the various essays. It would have been advantageous to have had a full bibliography so that students could refer to the outside texts more easily if they so desired. This book is recommended for Yeshiva libraries as a supplemental text and for some synagogue libraries.

Marion M. Stein, retired librarian

Heller, Marvin J. *Further Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book*. Leiden: Brill, 2013. 491 pp. \$228.00. (9789004234611). Also available as an eBook.

Marvin Heller's books about early Hebrew printing have won prizes and brought wider awareness to the history of the Jewish book. This volume collects almost two dozen articles he has published, many in fairly obscure journals, about different aspects of Hebrew printing before the 18th century. Often, all the information about Hebrew printed books is what is found on the title pages, and Heller pays close attention to artistic borders and printers' devices. Two chapters are much more biographical, delving into the complex life of Michael Rodkinson, a 19th century printer and the editor of the first English translation of the Babylonian Talmud. One chapter, first published in the volume *Printing the Talmud* published by Yeshiva University Museum, discusses the earliest printings of the Talmud, the topic to which Heller devoted his first and best known book. The connections that Heller finds between books are sometimes unexpected – he discusses unrelated books with identical titles, books with fewer than sixteen pages, similar themes in different illustrations. *Further Studies* touches on issues that are of interest to social and intellectual historians, though its primary contribution is to the somewhat neglected field of Hebrew bibliography.

Pinchas Roth, post-doctoral fellow, Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

Hurwitz, Yitzhak Shimon. *Wisdom of the Jews: Using Rationality and Practicality to Make Sense of Life*. Jerusalem: Devora Publishing, 2012. 174 pp. \$18.95. (9781934440995).

A ten-step approach is offered to prove that Judaism is "a rational system of thought that makes sense and, as such, is really not just a religion. It is a mental and intellectual engagement with life." A chapter is dedicated to each step, which poses questions and leaves space for the reader to posit for himself. Answers to the questions are explained, and at the end of each chapter short readings from Jewish sources are included. Step Ten, based on Hurwitz's *Self beyond Self* (Feldheim, 1994), provides the most fodder for thought as human emotion and behavior are analyzed.

A flow chart in one of the appendices provides a graphic depiction of how the questions and steps logically follow one another, progressing from the origins of the Universe to the purpose of the Universe, to earning benefit by doing infinite-like acts, which are, obviously, defined by the Infinite Being. Through direct and all-

encompassing communication from the Infinite Being, humans have received a means to go “beyond self” by doing acts defined by the Infinite Being. These acts can be categorized as intellectual, emotional and instinctual (the Threefold Key). Five appendices contain additional information about the process and the scientific proofs discussed in the text.

Rabbi Hurwitz, a beloved teacher at *Aish HaTorah* in Jerusalem presents what has become known as “Aish Discovery” a seminar which “draws audiences into a fascinating and rigorously intellectual means of testing the rational basis for belief in Judaism.” Missing from this discussion is the reconciliation of children dying and natural disasters with the premise of a loving and beneficent Infinite Being, or why those who profess to be religious break the law. One would hope that more scientific research on the Universe has been done since the pre-2000 sources quoted. An optional purchase best suited to outreach centers or libraries that collect materials on the intersection of science and religion.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Iceland, Reuben. *From Our Springtime: Literary Memoirs and Portraits of Yiddish New York.* Translated by Gerald Marcus. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press (Judaic Traditions in Literature, Music, and Art), 2013. 236 pp. \$9.95. (9780815633037).

Reuben Iceland was one of the leaders of *Die Yunge*, a literary movement that was centered in New York at the turn of the twentieth century. *Die Yunge* wanted to purify Yiddish and make it a literary language with a stature equal to that of other western languages. They attempted to write modernist poetry in place of the political material that was popular at the time. In this memoir, Iceland reminisces about his closest associates, the poets Zishe Landau, Mani Leib, Moshe Leib Halpern, and Anna Margolin. He gives a few specimens of their poetry, but often refers to it critically without giving examples of his references. He also paints intimate portraits of the lives of young, impoverished idealogues with an ardent focus on poetry as an essential pursuit in life, and their fervent dedication against the background of turn-of-the-century New York with its freedoms and hardships. Gerald Marcus gives the reader a clear, compelling translation of a passionate man surrounded by talents perhaps greater than his, who treated all his fellow poets like family. Iceland’s description of Anna Margolin’s life and work is especially important. The book includes an index and a separate section of brief biographies of major figures mentioned in the text. This memoir is a significant source for research on Yiddish literature in America. Highly recommended for collections focused on Yiddish.

Beth Dwoskin, Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

Kalman, Jason. *Hebrew Union College and the Dead Sea Scrolls.* Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College; Jewish Institute of Religion, c2012. 134 pp. \$12.95. (9780615703466).

Between the discovery of the scrolls in 1947 and the dissolution of the monopoly of Dead Sea Scroll scholarship in 1993, scholars from HUC-JIR played a large role in the study of the scrolls and their publication. This occurred despite a difference of opinion among the faculty as to their importance. Dr. Samuel Sandmel thought the scrolls had little to teach us about the history of the Biblical text, while Dr. Ben-Zion Wacholder worked on the publication of texts from security negatives. This book is a carefully documented history of the drama behind the scholarship. What I found most fascinating is that I was close to some of these events yet I never knew it until reading this book. Many of the people in this book I knew by reputation or met in person, including the librarians of the HUC-JIR Library, were involved with the study and preservation of the scrolls.

The challenge in reading this book is the 593 endnotes. I found myself looking up references to learn more. I wish that the publisher had used footnotes so that the reader would not need to flip so many pages. The editor could have divided the book into chapters to make it visually easier to read. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to read a fascinating story behind Dead Sea Scroll scholarship. This book is for personal, synagogue, high school and academic libraries.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Malcolm X College Library and University of Illinois--Chicago, Chicago Library, Chicago, IL

Kaufman, David E. *Jewhooing the Sixties: America Celebrity and Jewish Identity.* Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012. 340 pp. \$40.00. (9781611683141).

The idea of a Jewish celebrity is a relatively modern concept. The first people given this nomenclature were famous only in the last hundred years. Yet much has been written about Jewish celebrities in America. One such book is *Jewhooing the Sixties* by David E. Kaufman. Kaufman attempts to define the concept of Jewish celebrity by using four distinct personalities who all became famous in the early 1960s, a time of great change and upheaval in

America. The four celebrities chosen: Sandy Koufax, Lenny Bruce, Bob Dylan, and Barbara Streisand, are famous not in spite of their Judaism, but possibly because of it. These four are commonly compared to John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Elvis, and Marilyn Monroe, four great personalities of early 1960's America because of their "archetypal fame and cultural influence." Koufax, Bruce, Dylan, and Streisand, are four celebrated individuals who made an impact on American life and worked to reshape the image of an American Jew. Kaufman attempts to explain a concept called "Jewhooing" following a celebrity consciousness among Jews, but at times, due to his verbosity, he confuses the reader about what he is trying to say. His introduction is long-winded, and possibly tangential to the purpose of the book, and draws the reader away from his original premise. While he dedicates four individual chapters to each of his celebrities, Kaufman overall does not give a very clear picture of their Jewish celebrity. Due to its long-windedness and detailed portrayal, this book is recommended for academic libraries only, with the caveat that even academics may have a difficult time with the author's premise.

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

Kressel, Neil J. "The Sons of Pigs and Apes": Muslim Antisemitism and the Conspiracy of Silence. Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2012. XII, 269 pp. \$29.95. (9781597977020).

Kressel, a social psychologist, examines the rise of Muslim anti-Semitism, its characteristics, origins, and the reactions to it which allow it to continue and thrive, despite the fact that worldwide anti-Semitism is decreasing. His goal is to show how dangerous this development is, how and why it is quite ignored in the West, and how it might endanger the West. Kressel examines in detail how the antiracist community in the West ignores and plays down Muslim anti-Semitism, and why it is wrong to minimize its danger. He also describes how Islam treats non-Muslim monotheists, especially Jews, what parts of the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* say about Jews and how these texts currently serve the base for Muslim anti-Semitism, which in modern times incorporated elements from Christian anti-Semitism. Kressel makes it clear that in many cases, hatred of Israel and Zionism is a cover for anti-Semitism. He surveys the rise of Muslim anti-Semitism relative to the change in status of the Jews from small minority groups spread in the Muslim world, lacking political power and ambitions, to an independent Jewish state which repeatedly overcame Muslim attempts to extinguish it. Kressel concludes with suggestions on how to fight Muslim anti-Semitism. This book examines in a clear and well organized way a very important issue, though it could use more examples of Muslim anti-Semitism and data regarding its spread in the Muslim world and among Arabs.

Rachel Simon, *Princeton University, Princeton NJ*

Lamm, Norman. *Derashot Ledorot Genesis: A Commentary for the Ages*. Jerusalem, Koren Publishers, 2012. 267 pp. \$24.95. (9781592643615).

Derashot Ledorot Genesis contains a selection of essays based on Rabbi Norman Lamm's sermons delivered between 1952 and 1976. Rabbi Lamm is a philosopher, teacher, author and deep intellectual thinker. Presently, Rabbi Lamm is Chancellor of Yeshiva University and was its president for almost thirty years. These intellectually stimulating sermons (between two and four pages in length) are based on the weekly Torah portions in the book of Genesis. Although the "current events" mentioned in the sermons are no longer current, the inspirational message is still valid today. Rabbi Lamm draws on his broad secular and religious knowledge to make his points and address issues that confront the Jewish people today. Highly recommended for its language, clarity, its discussion of Jewish values and relevancy.

Ilka Gordon, *Aaron Garber Library, Cleveland, OH*

Landau, Melanie. *Tradition and Equality in Jewish Marriage: Beyond the Sanctification of Subordination* (Continuum Studies in Jewish Thought). London; New York: Continuum International Publishing Group (www.continuumbooks.com), 2012.vii, 203 pp. \$111.21. (9781441138064).

Melanie Landau is a Lecturer in the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilization, Monash University, Australia. A progressive, feminist, Jewish intellectual, she examines Jewish Halakhah and tradition against contemporary and her own moral gender-led values. The book mainly deals with *Dinei Ishut* (Marital Laws).

The sub-title of the book "Beyond the Sanctification of Subordination" more than suggests the author's point of view. It is a serious intellectual investigation with some political agenda and perspective. Melanie Landau supports the changes and adaptability of Jewish Law. She presents the current interdisciplinary approach to Jewish *Kiddushin* (marriage) and provokes interest in Jewish feminist scholarship regarding Jewish law and the status of women.

Tradition and Equality in Jewish Marriage is a scholarly work. It contains extensive footnotes and an index. The author has assembled an excellent bibliography that will facilitate further exploration of the subject. It is best suited to the gender collection in an academic and synagogue library.

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

Landress, Barbara Ann. *Her Glory Within: Rejecting and Transforming Orthodoxy in Israeli and American Jewish Women's Fiction* (Studies in Orthodox Judaism series). Brighton, Massachusetts: Academic Studies Press, 2012. 191 pp. \$75.00. (9781618111715).

Landress looks at the portrayal of Jewish Orthodoxy in American and Israeli women's fiction published between 1980 and 2012. She argues that "these two bodies of literature reflect strikingly different attitudes toward Orthodoxy." She begins by defining women's fiction and noting the difference between "American Orthodoxy" and "Orthodoxy in Israel." After a discussion of Orthodoxy and Feminism and a review of several studies of both, she delves into the literature, identifying four prevalent themes: female embodiment, mother-daughter relationships, Israeli politics, and the use of traditional Jewish sources (intertextuality). The works of Hanna Bat Shahar, Yocheved Reisman and Yehudit Rotem provide an "insider's view" of the Israeli Haredi world and are replete with these themes. For a perspective on American Jewish Women's writing, Landress analyses works by Nessa Rappaport, Anne Roiphe, Rebecca Goldstein and Allegra Goodman. Naomi Ragen, born in America and now living in Israel, bridges some of the gaps. A chapter on "Politics, Nationalism and the Secular-Religious Rift" highlights the work of Yocheved Brandes, and Mira Kedar, while Mira Magen and Lilach Galil El-Ami have written books that deal with "Inclusivity and Transformation," dealing with sexuality and lesbianism. The end matter includes an index that focuses more on names than subjects, and an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources.

Landress's work is an academic study, and it reads as such. There are often times when the analysis becomes extremely detailed and intricate, looking at the wording or character relationships of a specific work before returning to the overriding themes. For libraries that own the works mentioned in the book, or that collect women's fiction or books about feminism or women's studies, it is very highly recommended. For most Jewish libraries, it is an excellent resource for book club selections and a strong optional purchase.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Mendelevich, Yosef. *Unbroken Spirit: A Heroic Story of Faith, Courage and Survival*. Jerusalem; New York: Gefen Publishing, 2012. 351 pp. \$29.95. (9789652295637).

In 1970 Yosef Mendelevich, then 22 years old, joined with a group of fellow Soviet Jewish activists in an attempt to hijack an airplane to fly to Sweden and seek asylum in Israel. Aware of the plot the KGB arrested the group and put them on trial. Mendelevich was sentenced to 15 years, serving 11 years in the Gulag before being released to Israel in 1981. This is the first English translation of a memoir Mendelevich originally published in Russian and Hebrew in 1987.

In this autobiography Mendelevich describes his initial activities at age 16 in the Jewish underground movement where he began studying and teaching Hebrew and learning about Judaism and Jewish history. He tells the story of the early Refusnik struggle and how his group came to the decision to attempt a hijacking. He outlines the preparations, their arrest, his interrogation and trial. The bulk of the book is the story of how he survived imprisonment in the Gulag.

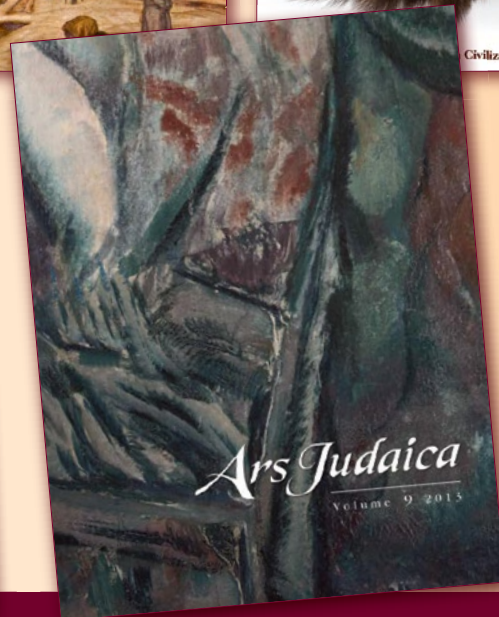
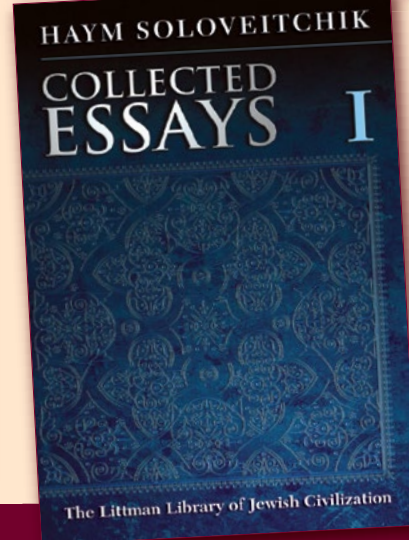
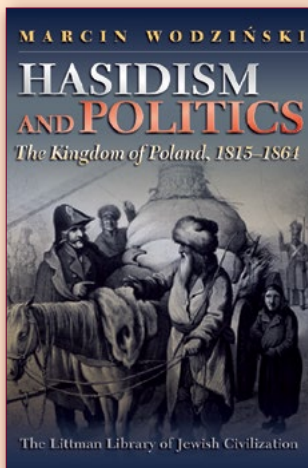
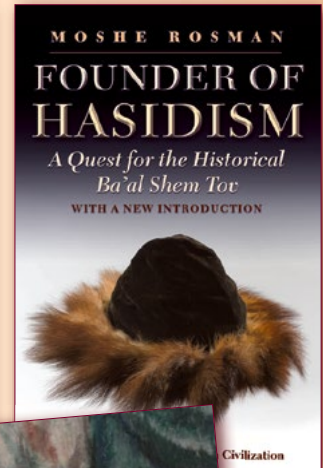
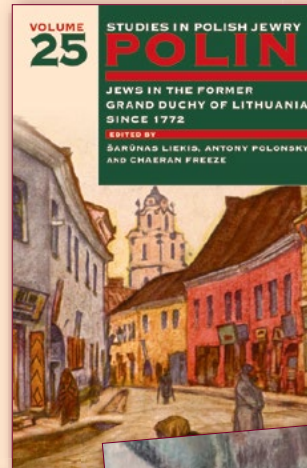
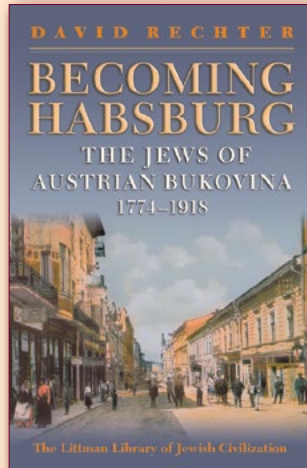
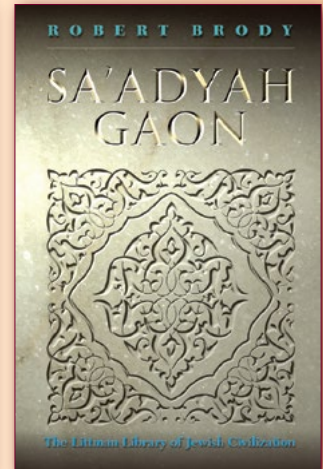
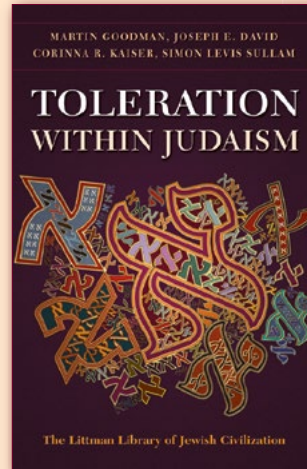
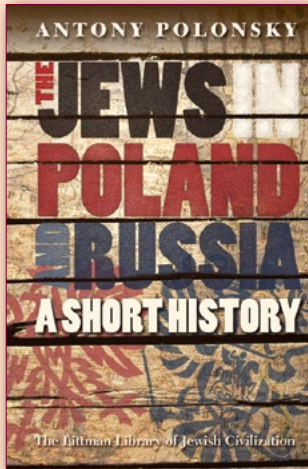
During those years of imprisonment Mendelevich increasingly took on Jewish observances. Much of the book describes his constant cat and mouse fight with the prison guards, KGB informers and camp administration, sometimes successfully, to grow a beard, wear a *kippah*, observe the Sabbath and holidays, *daven* (pray), study Hebrew, keep kosher, and hide Hebrew bibles, *siddurim* (prayer books), and grammars that were smuggled into the prisons. He chronicles his spiritual growth which enabled him to survive. He vividly draws portraits of fellow activists and prisoners he encountered during his years in the Gulag.

After his release Mendelevich moved to Israel, studied in yeshivah, married, was ordained a rabbi, and today teaches in Jerusalem's Machon Meir Yeshiva.

This moving account of perseverance, survival, and faith in the Gulag is highly recommended for both synagogue and academic libraries.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA

www.littman.co.uk



The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization

Naimark-Goldberg, Natalie. *Jewish Women in Enlightenment Berlin*. Littman, 2013. 358 pp. \$59.50. (9781904113539).

The tale of the Jewish Enlightenment is often told through the lens of Jewish men writing on matters of Jewish religious thought. Natalie Naimark-Goldberg ably demonstrates that women played a significant role within the history of enlightenment thinking and activity within the Jewish community.

The author describes the lives of many Jewish women living in Berlin during the Jewish Enlightenment through their letter writing, literary activities and busy social lives. It was through these activities that they joined the expanding public sphere and internalized the values of the Enlightenment such as the "acquisition of knowledge, pursuit of happiness [and] desire for self improvement."

The activities of these women should be compared and contrasted to the Enlightenment experienced by their religious male counterparts. Like the men, these women saw themselves as autonomous beings who could utilize reason to analyze their positions within society and the proper way to live their lives. But the differences are critical. Whereas the men were primarily interested in matters relating to their lives as Jews, Jewish society and the relationship of the Jewish community with the state, the women concerned themselves with matters of gender and the more general concern of discrimination of women within society. The primary reason for this, states the author, is that *Judaism* was the primary barrier between the Jewish male and general society. However, for the Jewish woman, it was her gender that prevented a meaningful integration by the host culture. This explains why many Jewish women joined with their Gentile counterparts to attempt societal reform. It also explains why baptism was more common among men than women (other than for marriage). Conversion allowed the man to fully join "enlightened society," whereas for a woman, her gender remained a barrier to full access even after conversion.

The author argues that there is more to the history of the Jewish Enlightenment than the male dominated *Haskalah*. Naimark Goldberg posits that the female centered Enlightenment of the end of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century constituted another legitimate strand of the Jewish Enlightenment, despite its difference in focus.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

Olson, Jess. *Nathan Birnbaum and Jewish Modernity: Architect of Zionism, Yiddishism, and Orthodoxy*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013. xv, 390 pp. \$65.00. (9780804778732).

When I first opened this book I had forgotten about Nathan Birnbaum's contribution to early Zionism, including his coinage of the term "Zionism." I checked my library and found that I had read about this lesser-known figure in *The Origins of Zionism* by David Vital (Oxford, 1975). In fact, Birnbaum had many identities in his lifetime as he transformed from an early Zionist to an organizer of Yiddish language conferences that led to the standardization of the language, and finally to becoming one of the founders of the Orthodox Agudath Israel. Birnbaum and Theodor Herzl both attended law school together in Vienna, but were hardly aware of each other then. Yet, their later personal and ideological disagreements eventually led Birnbaum to leave the Zionist movement.

This book is a fascinating read that sent me looking up more about the events portrayed, and to the dictionary to look up words in English, German, Hebrew and Yiddish. It is a book for serious readers who want to know more about the origins of Zionism and 20th century political Orthodoxy. One of the fascinating events in the book, the Altneuland affair, will be explored further in an article on my blog [Kol Safran](#).

My only complaint about Olson's work is that the notes are supplied in the back of the book and not as footnotes at the bottom of each page. This book is recommended for synagogue, personal, and academic collections.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Malcolm X College Library and University of Illinois--Chicago, Chicago Library, Chicago, IL

Probst, Christopher J. *Demonizing the Jews: Luther and Protestant Church in Nazi Germany*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2012. 251 pp. \$25.00. (9780253001009).

Martin Luder (Luther's birth name) is best known for his 16th century virulent protest (hence Protestant) against practices in the Roman Catholic church, yet his disdain for Jews and Judaism is barely discussed or even known. But in point of fact, Luther's writings on the Jews became a flash point for the Protestant churches in Germany during the rise and administration of the Nazis. Probst is a visiting assistant professor of modern European history at St. Louis University who now brings to open discussion Luther's theological and social thoughts on the Jews which then contributed to Nazi racial policies. In spite of the fact that it was Wilhelm

Marr, who in 1879 characterized judeophobia as anti-Semitism, Probst relies on the historian Gavin Langmuir to distinguish between judeophobia (which Probst refers to as anti-Judaism) and anti-Semitism, matching this set of descriptors against irrational and non-rational thought as a framework matrix for analysis. This approach is then skillfully applied to Luther's theological writings on Jews and Judaism. The author comprehensively examines Luther's theology toward Jews and Judaism as it was interpreted by the different Protestant churches in the contemporary period of Germany's history and especially during the era of Nazi domination and its impact on the state's racial policies. This book is clearly a worthwhile read for a Jewish audience unaware of the basis of Protestant anti-Semitism as a component of the overall phenomenon.

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

Saks, Jeffrey & Joel B. Wolowelsky, eds. *To Mourn a Child: Jewish Responses to Neonatal and Childhood Death*. New York: Oxford University Press, June 2013. 167 pp. \$16.95. (9781602802339).

What does one say to a parent after the loss of a child? No professional training teaches the rabbi, the psychologist, friend or relative all of the correct answers. No parent ever wants to think they will lose a child (or neonate) to disease or accident. This book is a collection of essays written by parents who learned to how to deal with their grief and find the best path to continue after a tragic death. The writers, professionals in the rabbinate, psychology, or academia, wrote these essays to help us understand their feelings and how they coped. This is not a "how-to" but a "how to understand" book. One essay by Avraham (Avi) Weiss tells of not knowing for several years the site of his son's grave. They found the grave and 39 years later put up the stone. Survivors are immediately part of an involuntary support group of fellow mourners. Many writers tell of making contact with others who lost children. By reading this book the reader becomes part of the support group, too. It does not matter that the writers are Orthodox and the readers are not. Everyone can benefit from their experience. One essay ends with the insight that "Making peace with the darkness is what brings light" (p. 55). The stories are sad, yet hopeful. The blessing in the last essay (p. 161) from Rabbi Yisrael Gustman is that your son shall be like every boy. He will have a normal childhood, grow up, mature, enjoy good health and in turn marry and raise his own family.

This book is highly recommended for parents who are survivors and anyone else who may know them. It should be in personal, synagogue and academic collections.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, *Malcolm X College Library and University of Illinois--Chicago Library, Chicago, IL*

Salkin, Rabbi Jeffrey K. *The Gods are Broken! The Hidden Legacy of Abraham*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2013. 157 pp. \$19.95. (9780827609310).

Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin is best known for his seminal *Putting God on the Guest List*, a guide to the Bar Mitzvah process. In this new small volume, he analyzes the midrash of Abraham and the idols, and explores its importance in Jewish life.

The Gods are Broken explores the midrashic story and its offshoots from many different angles. It begins with the generations preceding Abraham's father Terah, and the story's placement in the city of Ur rather than other Middle Eastern locales. It asks about Abraham, the many versions of the tale, and his choice (by God and by the text-writers) to be the first Jew. Chapter four asks about the character of the King, Nimrod, and his images in religious history and in opposition to Abraham. The core of the book may be chapter seven, in which Salkin explores the train of "breaking" from Abraham through the Golden Calf to Kristallnacht and the breaking of a glass at weddings. Why was it important for Abraham to break these idols, and what does the act tell us across the ages? The text is filled with quotations from throughout Jewish history; Talmud and Midrash, medieval sages and modern scholars have all had important things to say about this small vignette. Salkin has skillfully woven them into a useful and comprehensible tapestry.

The volume is accessibly written, but its extensive notes and bibliography, and the numerous references from Torah, Talmud, midrash and Jewish scholarship may place it beyond many synagogue libraries. It would be most useful in university libraries.

Fred Isaac, *Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*



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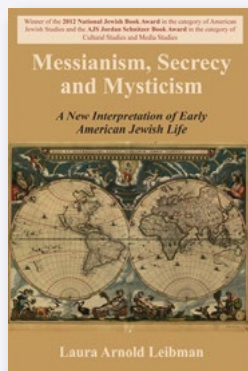
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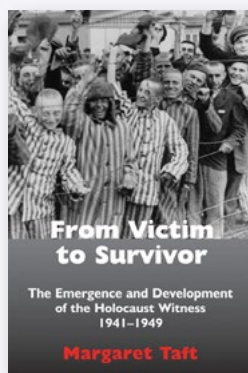
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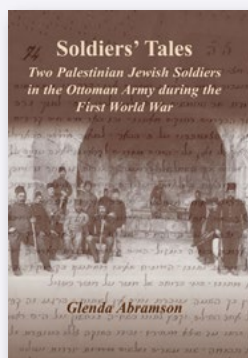
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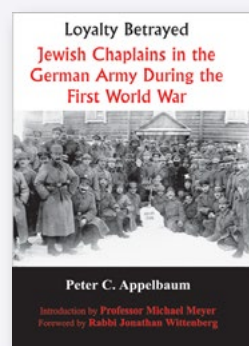
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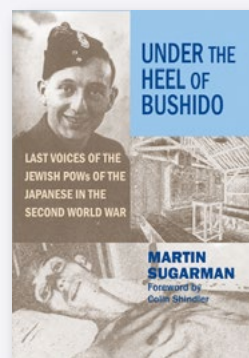
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Gloria Deutch, Jerusalem Post

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Schachter-Shalomi, Rabbi Zalman M. *My Life in Jewish Renewal. A Memoir.* With Edward Hoffman. Lanham. Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc., 2012. 232 pp. \$34.95. (9781442213272).

This absorbing memoir presents the life of one of the most important spiritual leaders and teachers today, the founder of the Jewish Renewal movement. The memoir is divided into three parts, beginning with boyhood and youth before the Holocaust. The second part is devoted to Reb Zalman's early work as a rabbi in the United States. A final section describes Reb Zalman's experiences planting the seeds of Jewish Renewal. Black and white photographs of Reb Zalman at different stages of his life and some of the people who influenced him are included, and the text is interspersed with quotes from Reb Zalman's writings and other relevant documents. The appendices include four reminiscences of figures who are part of Reb Zalman's story, as well as a reflection on unfulfilled plans and projects. The book concludes with a glossary of terms, a bibliography and an index. This memoir has broad appeal, and it is recommended for all types of Jewish libraries, and Judaica collections, starting from high school. It is a valuable resource for understanding the growth and development of Jewish Renewal, and a notable contribution to American Jewish history.

Susan Freiband, Retired Library Educator, Volunteer Temple Librarian

Schwartz, Dov. *From Phenomenology to Existentialism: the Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik.* Translated by Batya Stein. Volume 2 (Supplements to the Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy; 19). Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013. xix, 414 pp. \$189.00. (9789004243330).

Rabbi Soloveitchik (often referred to as "the Rav") played a unique role in Orthodox Jewish thought, particularly in areas such as religious Zionism, *halakhah* (Jewish law), negation of metaphysics, and dialectics. Schwartz has written an academic book that attempts to help us understand Soloveitchik's work overall. Schwartz has the advantage of looking at the totality of his work and finding connections to Aristotle, contemporary Jewish philosophers such as Abraham J. Heschel and Will Herberg, and classical philosophers such as Maimonides, and Judah Halevi. This second volume follows Schwartz's first volume, *Religion or Halakha* published by Brill in 2007. The first volume covers the Rav's early thoughts as found in *Halakhic Man* and before.

Soloveitchik's writings are quite complex and must be considered on several levels. However, at times I felt Schwartz made the explanation of his philosophy more complicated than the original works. His *Kol Dodi Dofek* was originally a homily in honor of Israel Independence Day, but Schwartz finds allusions to the Holocaust, pain and suffering, national rebirth, as well as a transformation of the Rav's thoughts concerning religious Zionism.

I recommend this book to anyone who wants to understand the Rav's philosophy in a way that the reading of individual works can not convey. This book is for scholars and academic libraries.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Malcolm X College Library and University of Illinois--Chicago, Chicago Library, Chicago, IL

Schwarz, Guri. *After Mussolini: Jewish Life and Jewish Memories in Post-Fascist Italy.* Translated from Italian by Giovanni Noor Mazhar. London; Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell (www.vmbooks.com), 2012. xv, 224pp. \$111.21 (9780853038559).

After Mussolini is a serious historical examination of the period 1943-1961 in Italy. Guri Schwarz has discovered that in point of fact neither Mussolini nor Hitler imposed Fascist-racist anti-Semitism in Italy. Indeed, recent research reveals that Italian Anti-Semitism is deeply rooted in Italian culture. Only with the assistance of Italian-Jewish intellectuals and institutions did Italy succeed in establishing the universal "myth of the good Italian." This book was originally published in Italian by Gius, Laterza & Figli (2004) as *Ritrovare se stessi. Gli ebrei nell'Italia postfascista*.

After Mussolini is divided into two main parts: "The Reorganization of Jewish Life" and "Paths of Memory." The volume contains a "Preface to the English Edition" and opens with a "List of Abbreviations." Each chapter has extensive notes, and the work concludes with a vast bibliography of archival sources, contemporary periodicals, authored works, edited collections, and journals, followed by an index.

Guri Schwarz is an Italian Jewish historian, academician and, since 2005, a member and coordinator of the scientific board of the Center for Contemporary Jewish Documentation of Milan (Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea). This book is a scholarly work that contributes to a more realistic view of life in Italy; it will provide greater knowledge of the historical facts for Jewish readers in particular. *After Mussolini* is most appropriate for academic and research collections.

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

A SMART, DARING, ORIGINAL NEW TAKE ON THE TORAH

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THE 54 CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE:

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Rachel Axler

Aimee Bender

Rich Cohen

Sloane Crosley

Susan Dominus

Joshua Foer

Jamie Glassman

Ben Greenman

A. J. Jacobs

Saki Knafo

Damon Lindelof

Sam Lipsyte

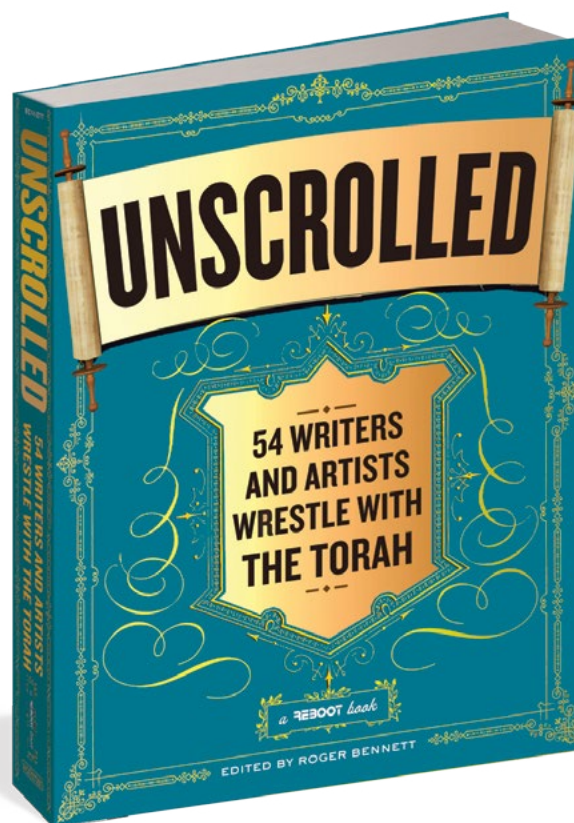
Adam Mansbach

Rick Meyerowitz

Josh Radnor

Jill Soloway

REBOOT is a national network of young, creative Jews founded on the belief that every generation must grapple with the questions of identity, community, and meaning on its own terms. Reboot has created over 100 projects, including the National Day of Unplugging and the international architecture contest Sukkah City.



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Schwarz, Rabbi Sidney, ed. *Jewish Megatrends: Charting the Course of the American Jewish Future*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013. 256 pp. \$24.99. (9781580236676).

The struggle for survival we face today is not new. Jews have been defined as “the Ever-Dying People” for generations. It has been important that we re-assess ourselves and change direction, especially in difficult times. Rabbi Schwarz (founder of PANIM), aided by leaders from around the country and across the spectrum, has made an important contribution to the ongoing discussion.

The volume opens with a lead essay, in which Schwarz proposes four elements that will secure Jews, especially those under 40, in the coming years. The parts are “Wisdom/Chochmah,” “Social Justice/ Tzedek,” “Community/Kehillah,” and “Lives of Sacred Purpose/Kedushah.” Each element contains a proposition, dedicated to focus leaders and readers on thinking about how to resolve the deep and real difficulties we face in the 21st Century. This thesis is followed by thirteen essays by such recognized executives as Elise Bernhardt (Foundaton for Jewish Culture); Jonathan Woocher (JESNA); David Ellenson (HUC-JIR), and Joy Levitt (92nd Street Y, New York). The commentators use their essays to discuss how they and their organizations have dealt with the current situation, and how they are gathering the disenchanted, disaffected, and un-connected young Jews. The book closes with a final essay in which Schwarz analyzes the three themes that predominate in the other contributions: “Authenticity,” “Relationships,” and the “Many Doors” approach to Jewish community.

The struggles that *Jewish Megatrends* points to are common throughout American Jewish society today. For that reason alone, the book should be in all major Jewish institutions (seminaries, Federations, etc.), and rabbis and community leaders should be aware of it. It is not entirely clear, however, whether it should be in every synagogue library. While it is clearly written and concise, its recommendations may not be close enough to “ground level” for every congregation and every congregant.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Secunda, Shai & Steven Fine eds. *Shoshannat Yaakov: Jewish and Iranian Studies in Honor of Yaakov Elman*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012. 485 pp. \$277.00. (9789004235441).

Shoshannat Yaakov is an important new festschrift with twenty five essays (two in Hebrew) contributed by Yaakov Elman’s colleagues and associates. Long a serious scholar across a wide spectrum of biblical, rabbinic and Middle Eastern studies, Yaakov Elman’s interests and extensive bibliography are reflected in the diversity of the contributions. In the area of Iranian studies, we find papers by Kiel, Macuch, and Shaked, which examine elements common to Zoroastrianism and rabbinic Judaism, subject matter explored in a number of Elman’s own writings. Other articles, such as those by Keller, Herman, and Kalmin consider how other facets of Persian culture impacted rabbinic Judaism. In addition there are articles by Bernstein and Milikowsky which delve into details of the Dead Sea Scrolls, while others, such as those by Fine and Schiffman, investigate the impact of the Samaritans.

The scholarship in this festschrift provides an interdisciplinary exploration of the intersection between Persian and rabbinic culture. An enlightening survey of the literature, it is a critical work not to be missed by any library with a focus on Middle Eastern studies.

Randall C. Belinfante, American Sephardi Federation

Shilon, Avi. *Menachem Begin: A Life*. Translated by Danielle Zilberberg and Yoram Sharett. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2012. 545 pp. \$40.00. (9780300162356).

A massive and comprehensive biography of one of Israel’s most prominent and simultaneously controversial political leaders, Menachem Begin. A staunch Zionist, Begin was a proud activist beginning in his youth in Poland and as an underground militant leader in mandatory Palestine, employing violent opposition to British authority, and later as a right-wing politician in Israeli politics from the country’s first government until his retirement in October 1983. Shilon is a graduate student at Bar Ilan University and an op-ed editor for *Israel Hayom*. He has gathered an enormous amount of both original and secondary source material to produce the first Hebrew-language biography of Begin. Whether it is due to the narrative style or the result of the translation, the book is not always a smooth read. Nevertheless, this life history must become a standard text in order to understand not only the story of Menachem Begin, but also the intricacies of Israeli politics and the many crises the state has faced up through early 1991 when the subject passed away. Shilon shows how, as Prime Minister, Begin used his diplomatic dexterity to bring about a peace treaty with Anwar Sadat of Egypt in 1979. Notably, it was Begin’s decision to bomb the Iraqi nuclear plant at Osirak and to become embroiled in heated debate over the Israeli incursion into Lebanon in 1982. This is an absolutely necessary addition to any large synagogue or Jewish school library.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Shindler, Colin. *Israel and the European Left: Between Solidarity and Delegitimization.* New York: Continuum, 2012. xxi, 308 pp. \$29.95. (9781441150134).

Colin Shindler is Emeritus Professor and Senior Research Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, who was motivated to write this book by what he sees as “the closing of the progressive mind” when it comes to the politics and ideologies driving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Shindler offers a history of the ideological opposition to Zionism by Marxism-Leninism from the October Revolution in Russia until today. The book takes to task the European Left, especially British Communism, and their offshoots, by tracing the inception and development of anti-Zionist platforms and policies from their Trotskyist roots to their current manifestations as anti-Israeli boycotts by British intelligentsia.

While the book does not offer a conclusion *per se*, Shindler’s own feelings about the hypocrisy of the Left are well reflected in the title and subtitles of his last chapter “The Campaign Against Normalization” where he states: “For many groups in Europe the idea of a rapprochement between Arafat and Rabin did not further revolutionary endeavor. It did not fit into the theory of ideological opposition to Zionism. It certainly did not appeal...in that Israel would no longer be considered an aberration.” (“The Banishment of Dialogue,” p.269)

Recommended for libraries collecting in the area of Middle Eastern Studies and Zionism, as well as to readers who would like to be informed about the ideological history of anti-Zionism.

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

Sidran, Ben. *There Was a Fire: Jews, Music and the American Dream.* 2nd ed. [S.l.]: Nardis Books, c2012. 372 pp. \$18.00. (9781450753630).

The title of this book refers to the story of the Baal Shem Tov lighting a special fire at a particular spot and saying a prayer to save the people. With each subsequent generation, the prayer, the fire, and the spot have been forgotten, and all most people remember is that “there was a fire.” Ben Sidran uses this phrase to tell the story of the Jewish contribution to the development of American music in the twentieth century. Though he speaks from the perspective of an insider, Sidran’s personal story does not overwhelm his material. Instead, his informal, engaging style makes it easy to read this thorough, in-depth history straight through. One of the greatest strengths of this work is that the author often pauses to explain in musical terms why a particular piece or style is significant and/or “Jewish.” These explanations are rudimentary enough for the non-musician to understand, and they are very enlightening. Along with many familiar and less well-known anecdotes, Sidran uses telling quotes from important figures to advance his narrative. The other side of the story is the close interaction between Jews and African-Americans in creating the music, and Sidran tells every facet of it. The book is at its weakest when Sidran departs from objective history to try and describe why a particular piece or style of music or artist is expressing something tangibly Jewish. This approach is at odds with most of the book, in which he tries to avoid a concrete definition of the phenomenon of the Jewish presence in American music. Though he knows his subject completely, Sidran makes some erroneous statements about general history, such as referring to Bertold Brecht as a Jew. He also has an unfortunate tendency to begin a sentence with, “Too...” The book has an index and a comprehensive bibliography. Highly recommended for academic collections on music and/or American Jewish history.

Beth Dwoskin, Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

Simonsohn, Shlomo and Joseph Shatzmiller, eds. *The Italia Judaica Jubilee Conference (Brill’s Series in Jewish Studies).* Leiden: Brill, 2013. 266 pp. \$140.00. (9789004243316).

This collection of scholarly articles brings to light a variety of topics concerning the history of Italian Jewry from the Renaissance through to Emancipation. As one would expect, there are articles that focus on traditional areas of research into Italian Jewish life and culture, such as manuscripts, commerce and money, but topics that relate to Jewish life today are also covered. For example, the volume includes an article about community registers and minute books from hundreds of years ago detailing the same concerns you would find in Jewish organizational records today. Another article examines the influence of popular Italian literature on Jewish Italian writing, a matter that is relevant to current discussions on the influence and impact of the wider culture. Even though many of the articles could influence how we understand Judaism in the context of modern society, *Italia Judaica Jubilee* does not belong in small school and synagogue libraries and is a work best suited for academic institutions.

Jacqueline Ben-Efraim, Special Collections Librarian, Ostrow Library, American Jewish University, CA

Soloveitchik, Joseph, B. *Vision and Leadership: Reflections on Joseph and Moses*, edited by David Shatz, Joel Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler. Jerusalem: Ktav Publishing House, Inc. for The Toros Horav Foundation, 2013. 239 pp. (9781602802193).

This volume is the latest in MeOtzar HoRav Series. As with all other texts by the Rav, this one was not written by him, but rather it is taken from transcriptions and edited by his students and associates. The text in this volume is very rich and deserves to be studied along with all other commentaries on Torah. The Rav's thoughts on Joseph and Moses go far beyond what the title might suggest, bringing new and rare insights into the familiar stories that he discusses. These insights are both practical and philosophical and thus greatly enhance one's reading of the Torah.

One example will illustrate what happens when even a single word is analyzed by this great teacher. Take the word "justice." In his chapter entitled "Justice, Peace and Charity: Moses as Judge" we are given a thorough explanation of the difference between *justitia civilis* and the Jewish idea of *mishpat shalom*. In the former, there is a winner and a loser; one who is "right" and one who is "wrong." In the latter, justice and charity and peace go hand in hand. There is no winner and no loser. There is a give and take on both sides. The Rav expands on these principles and lays the groundwork for a much deeper understanding of Moses' role as "judge." He was not only a judge but in his role as judge, he was really a teacher and friend as well. This particular chapter is very useful now during the month of Elul as we prepare for the *Yamim Noraim* (the Days of Awe). The book contains a general index as well as an index to Biblical and Rabbinic sources.

This reader suggests that the book along with all the others in the series be part of all Jewish high school libraries and all synagogue collections. It would also be appropriate for all academic Judaica collections. Highly recommended.

Marion M. Stein, retired librarian

Soomekh, Saba. *From the shahs to Los Angeles: three generations of Iranian Jewish women between religion and culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012. 224 pp. \$24.95. (9781438443836).

Saba Soomekh's ambitious new work explores the experiences and identities of three generations of Iranian-Jewish-American women, in Tehran and Hamadan, Iran during constitutional monarchy, and in the time of the revolution, and in Los Angeles. Soomekh addresses a multitude of issues, first exploring women's experiences with education, modernization, religious observance, assimilation, and gender roles in a predominately Muslim environment, and later their adaptation to life in the United States, where they struggle to reconcile traditional expectations with new opportunities. The author manages to convey the unique experiences of an under-researched population, while also finding commonality with related groups and drawing on existing research.

This book illuminates women's lives in a surprisingly comprehensive way, given the complex interplay of issues, and connects the experiences of three generations within an historical context. In Iran, Jewish women's religious activities took place in the home, centering on food preparation and ritual, and on fulfilling traditional gender roles and family life. Educational and employment opportunities were limited. The Shah brought modernization and less segregation, and the expectation to be both modern and traditionally female. In the United States, Iranian Jewish women have more opportunities for education and employment, and the chance to participate in synagogue life, while trying to balance traditional and changing expectations. The struggles of the youngest group, in particular, illustrate the double standards for female behavior and specifically Iranian-Jewish-American pressures regarding their employment, education, and gender roles. Recommended.

Amanda Seigel, Librarian, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library, NY

Strom, Yale, ed. *Shpil: the Art of Playing Klezmer*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2012. x, 153 pp. \$39.69. (9780810882911).

The term Klezmer refers to traditional Jewish music from Eastern Europe. This music can be traced back over a 1000 years. It is connected to Jewish liturgical music and was usually played at weddings. Modern Klezmer music shows a strong Hassidic influence.



The book has eight chapters. Yale Strom writes two introductory historical chapters and the rest of the chapters are devoted to the different instruments employed, such as clarinet, violin, etc. Each chapter discusses the famous players and their styles and explains how a beginner can start playing Klezmer.

The various contributors point out that Klezmer music does have distinctive features, but there are also common features with the various types of East European folk music. In the United States, jazz and folk music influence the modern Klezmer music.

Although an outsider, I do feel that this is a successful manual for a beginner in the field. What disappointed me, however, was the very superficial treatment of the Israeli scene.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Toch, Michael. *The Economic History of European Jews: Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages.* Leiden & Boston: Brill (*Etudes sur le Judaïsme Medieval*; 56), 2013. 373 pp. \$203.00. (9789004235342).

This book is a detailed survey and analysis of the demographic and economic history of the Jews in Byzantium, Italy, Germany, France, Iberia and Eastern Europe from the 9th through 11th (and occasionally 12th) centuries. The first Section reviews the extant information on demographics and occupations. The Second section deals with such subjects as commerce, money, agriculture and crafts, followed by general conclusions. The appendixes present information on every known place of Jewish settlement, accompanied by detailed references to the sources of the information and by maps of each of the areas covered.

Some of the author's conclusions, based on a thorough review of the evidence, run contrary to commonly held perceptions. For example, Toch has found no evidence of commerce during this period between the areas under Islamic control and the lands of Europe Asia and Africa, with the possible exception of Sicily. The Jews did not function as commercial intermediaries between Europe and the Muslim countries bordering the Mediterranean. Most of the commerce and production was local. Contrary to commonly held assumptions by scholars such as Salo Baron: "None of the techniques and instruments of trade or credit, of crafts or agricultural and other entrepreneurship were an exclusive domain, conceived or even merely amplified by Jews."

The huge scope of the information in this outstanding volume, along with the rethinking of many assumptions about the demographic and economic status of European Jews in this period, makes this volume an important addition to any academic library collection in Jewish or general history.

Jim Rosenbloom, Brandeis University, past president AJL

Volf, Miroslav, ed. *Do We Worship the Same God? Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Dialogue.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2012. 166 pp. \$20.00. (9780802866899).

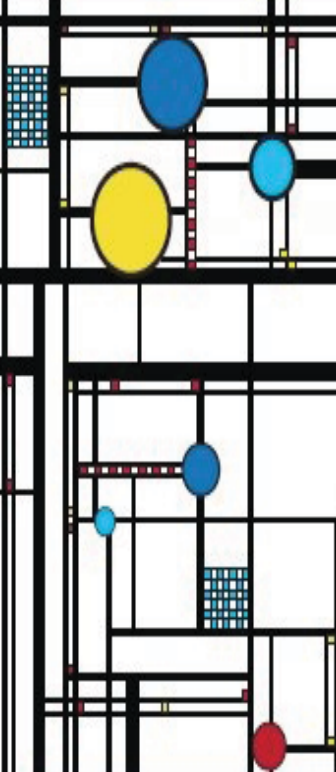


One should not expect an unambiguous answer to the title question from this diverse collection of essays by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim scholars. Christoph Schwobel concludes that from the Christian perspective all three religions *must* have the same God regardless of their worship. Amy Plantinga Pauw points out that the alternative to the claim that other monotheists worship the same God is not that they worship different creators of heaven and earth, but rather that they are idolaters or heretics. She rejects this alternative.

Alon Goshen-Gottstein outlines the range of historical Jewish responses to Christianity and concludes that the question awaits future resolution. For now, we can only take note of God-like behavior we observe in Christians, an indicator of the presence of God in their religion. Likewise, Reza Shah-Kazemi notes contradictory trends in Muslim thought. Some strands see the Christian doctrine of the Trinity as the antithesis of monotheism, while others embrace Christians as fellow monotheists whom they invite to find fulfillment in God's ultimate revelation in the Qur'an. Peter Ochs interprets the "...equivocal voice of Jewish wisdom" on this question as "a sign that the answer depends on when and where and why I entertain it." It is, however, an urgent theological question and his first response is that he *prays* that we worship the same God.

As a solid scholarly discussion of a vital contemporary religious question, this text belongs in most Jewish academic libraries. Despite its level of difficulty, it also deserves consideration for synagogue libraries that deal with inter-faith issues.

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



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Wein, Berel & Warren Goldstein. *The Legacy: Teachings for Life from the Great Lithuanian Rabbis*. Jerusalem, Koren publishers, 2012. 213 pp. \$29.95. (9781592643622).

Rabbi Berel Wein is an orthodox rabbi, historian and prolific writer who discusses ethics and morality as they relate to the teachings of the great rabbis of Lithuania. When Rabbi Wein and Rabbi Goldstein, who share in writing this book, quote prominent Rabbis they include Talmudic, biblical, mishnaic and other important sources of Jewish philosophy and thought. The reader is exposed to the *mussar* (ethical teachings) of great Lithuanian rabbis. Topics include the importance of being a mensch, the Yeshiva movement and the concept of the *klal mensch* (a community minded and inclusive person). An appendix providing an historical context, relates the history of the Lithuanian community and its influence on today's yeshiva world. Additional features include a glossary of terms mentioned in the text and a chronology of rabbinic personalities starting in the fifth century BCE and ending in 2007. Recommended for all libraries whose patrons are interested in *mussar* and want to learn about the lasting contribution of the Lithuanian rabbis.

Ilka Gordon, Librarian, Aaron Garber Library, Cleveland, OH

Weiss, Susan M. and Netty C. Gross-Horowitz. *Marriage and Divorce in the Jewish State: Israel's Civil War*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2013. 218 pp. \$40.00. (9781611683646).

Due to the 1953 Rabbinic Court Jurisdiction (Marriage and Divorce) Law, all marriages and divorces in Israel are religiously based and officiated by the rabbinical courts, which causes an extra level of frustration and anger that doesn't exist in other countries where marriage and divorce are guided by secular law. In Israel, only men can grant a Jewish divorce, a *get*, which causes many women hardship and strife. While the courts can attempt to compel a man to grant a *get*, they can't guarantee that he will want to divorce his wife, and many men use the granting of a *get* as a bargaining chip in custody battles and alimony fights. As a result, many women are trapped for years waiting for their divorces to be granted. *Marriage and Divorce...*, is written by two experts in the field. Gross-Horowitz is a reporter for the Jerusalem Post and Weiss is an accomplished Israeli divorce attorney. The book details the personal stories of six women, trapped for years by vindictive men who abused them mentally, emotionally, and physically, and at the end of the day destroyed their lives forever. Each account tells the story of a specific woman and her personal struggle to become unchained from a recalcitrant husband, some cases lasting almost twenty years. These six women are not all religious, yet due to the nature of divorce in Israel, they were all in the same awful predicament when they chose to end their marriages. The women are identified by pseudonyms, but actual court documents are included. A disturbing portrayal of the nature of modern divorce in Israel, this book is recommended for academic institutions and perhaps law libraries. It may also provide a valuable teaching tool for high school libraries.

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

Wodzinski, Marcin. *Hasidism and Politics; The Kingdom of Poland 1815-1864*. Oxford, UK: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013. 358 pp. \$59.50. (9781904113737).

Marcin Wodzinski, in another masterful book on Hasidism, turns his expert attention to analyzing the political history of the Kingdom of Poland and its relationship to the Hasidic movement. Most discussions of Hasidism and Hasidic innovation focus on the mystical and theological revolutions that Hasidism created and spread. In this work, the author argues that the social interactions of Hasidism with the Polish Kingdom, its political representatives and the local leaders of the Jewish Enlightenment, are just as important in understanding the nature and growth of the movement.

Chapter one describes the Polish policy towards the Jews. The next three chapters focus on the political developments that occurred within the Kingdom and how those events affected the Hasidic movement. Chapter five analyzes how Hasidic political activity was a direct outgrowth of the policies of the government against the Hasidism. Chapter six examines intra-Hasidic relations and the complicated relationship between the Hasidic elite and the masses. The seventh and final chapter discusses how the influence of the Jewish Enlightenment affected governmental action against the Hasidism.

The author concludes that the Hasidism were remarkably successful in identifying and exploiting governmental ineffectiveness and inefficiency to their benefit. While some of this was due to governmental inadequacy, much should be attributed to the purposeful manipulation of that reality by the Hasidic leaders. The government also

continuously failed to fully understand the Hasidic movement and its growing importance, and the Hasidic leaders capitalized on that fact. These successes had a great influence on the growth of the Hasidic movement within the Kingdom of Poland and in the larger continuing legacy of the Hasidic movement in particular and even, to some degree, to Jewish history and Jewish political activity in general. This book is best suited to the scholar or serious student of the Hasidic movement in nineteenth-century Poland. It will not be of interest to the casual reader.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

Woeste, Victoria Saker. *Henry Ford's War on Jews and the Legal Battle against Hate Speech*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. xv, 408 pp. \$55.00. (9780804772341).

The kernel of this book is devoted to a libel trial. Henry Ford, the inventor of the Model T Ford, was a prominent American anti-Semite. He purchased a newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*, in order to propagate his views. The libel suit was brought by Aaron Sapiro, a Jewish lawyer involved in setting up co-operatives for the marketing of agricultural produce. Sapiro was the subject of a series of articles in *The Dearborn Independent* which claimed that he was a leader of a Jewish conspiracy to despoil the farmers. The trial resulted in a mistrial due to a problem with one of the jurors. Aaron Marshall, a central figure in the Jewish establishment, then negotiated a compromise.

The book provides biographical material on the three central figures, Henry Ford, Aaron Sapiro and Aaron Marshall, both before and after the trial. The three figures are complex and the author endeavors to provide balanced pictures of each of them.

The book is an important discussion of the problem of how to reach a proper balance between the right to free speech and the need to block "hate speech," a subject which was relevant in the 1920s when the trial took place and is certainly very relevant today.

Although the book is an academic work, the product of a leading university press, the reader is still conscious of how passionately the author is involved in the issues she discusses. The book is useful for the historian, students of law and students of American Jewish history. It is also important for us to understand how our fathers and grandfathers had to deal with modes of anti-Semitism which have since disappeared and should strengthen us to meet the new types of hate that we encounter today.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Wyshogrod, Diane. *Hiding Places, A Mother, A Daughter, an Uncovered Life*. Albany, New York: Excelsior Editions, State University of New York Press, 2012. 298 pp. \$24.95. (9781438442433).

This memoir presents the story of Diane Wyshogrod's mother, Helen Rosenberg, who, along with her parents, survived the Holocaust in Zolkiew, Poland by hiding for sixteen months in the cellar of an elderly Christian couple. The book is based on the author's interviews with her mother, after moving to Jerusalem with her family. Wyshogrod is a clinical psychologist and writer from New York. Her reflections on the process of recovering her mother's story, as well as her own, give the book a depth and richness beyond other Holocaust memoirs, with many layers of meaning and poignant analysis. Different type faces and sizes are used to present differing points of view, as well as changes in presentation of text. The book includes not only the period of the 1940's, but also the summer of 1995 when Diane and her brother, along with their mother and father, return to Poland to revisit the place where her mother was born, lived and hid during the war. The final part of the book describes their experience at Yad Vashem getting official recognition as righteous gentiles for Emil and Maria Lozinski, who hid Helen and her parents in their cellar. Interesting family photographs are included. The book is an unusual and powerful Holocaust story, as well as a valuable contribution to the literature dealing with mother-daughter relationships. It is recommended for Judaica collections in academic libraries, as well as Jewish public library, community center, Temple and synagogue library collections.

Susan Freiband, Retired Library Educator, Volunteer Temple Librarian

Yasgur, Rabbi Benjamin S. *Torah Conversations with Nechama Leibowitz*. Jerusalem; New York: Urim Publications (www.UrimPublications.com), 2013. 128 pp. \$23.95. (9789655240696).

Rabbi Yasgur's *Torah Conversations* adds light and a human face to the much admired biblical teacher Nechama Leibowitz (1905-1997). Yasgur, who has been Leibowitz's student since 1972, has maintained a relationship with his teacher via personal correspondence, phone calls and visits. Professor Leibowitz has never left Israel since her arrival in 1930.

Rabbi Yasgur presents biblical discussions like "The Rule of Distant Past" (*Avar Rahok*), "Jacob's Masquerade," "The Arrival and Return of Jethro," as well as contemporary religious-observant issues. One of the latter is the interesting "Psak from Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerback" regarding interaction with drivers on Shabbat. Professor Leibowitz writes in Hebrew and biblical quotations are in Hebrew. The Hebrew texts are supplied with parallel translations into English. Rabbi Yasgur acquaints the readers with Professor Leibowitz's interactive "Pedagogic Principles," as well as "Nechama's Self-Defined Contribution to Torah Learning." The reader is able to investigate, in English, "A Classic Example: A Gilayon from Nechama Leibowitz on the Binding of Isaac." Yasgur and Leibowitz discuss teaching Humash in the Diaspora, and "Living in the Diaspora vs. Israel."

The book will interest all teachers and students of the Bible. It should be a part of Jewish High Schools, Yeshivot, Synagogues and academic libraries. Updates and revisions to the volume may be found at: www.ConversationswithNechama.com.

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

The Zohar (Pritzker Edition). Volume 7. Edited and translated by Daniel C. Matt. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. xii, 591 pp. \$55.00. (9780804783057).

This seventh volume of the *Zohar* deals with more than half the book of Leviticus from *parasha Vayikra* to *Aharei mot*. Of particular interest are the priestly rituals, including the image of the golden cord attached to the Kohen Gadol (high priest) on Yom Kippur before he enters the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. If the priest died, the cord would allow fellow priests to be able to pull him out. This cord is mentioned in the *Zohar* but not in the Torah or Talmud.

Matt's translation is great tool for understanding the *Zohar*. However, the *Zohar* needs to be studied in its original language in order to fully understand it. Statements such as "Soul and spirit join as one eternally. One participates with the other, and we have established this matter" are replete with hidden meanings, but hopefully this translation will help encourage some to embark on a greater in-depth, personal study of the *Zohar*.

This book is recommended for synagogue, personal, and academic collections.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Malcolm X College Library and University of Illinois--Chicago, Chicago Library, Chicago, IL



Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

Corasanti, Michelle Cohen. *The Almond Tree*. Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 2012. 348 pp. \$11.55. (9781859643297).

This is the story of Ichmad Hamid, a young, gifted Palestinian boy. His family is devastated by the deaths of close family members and the loss of almost everything due to an accusation of collaborating with terrorists. Ichmad is granted a special opportunity to leave his village and go to school in Israel because of his academic prowess. At university, he meets a professor who has strong, negative feelings about Palestinians. When Ichmad shows tremendous promise and presents an important idea, the two work hard to overcome their differences. They manage to do so and end up with extraordinary work, which wins them the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Ichmad has a hard time being happy with all his success however, because his family continues to suffer and other members of Ichmad's family are not able to conquer the feelings of hate that are borne out of the circumstances and from what they are taught. The hatred leads to more pain and death. This can be a controversial book, and it is sure to stir up many feelings in its readers. While it is clear that the author has tremendous knowledge of and laudable compassion for the Palestinian population, there seems to be an agenda that this book wants to satisfy. It paints all Israelis as mean, spoiled, and judgmental. The author creates an unrealistic and unbelievable set of circumstances for the protagonist and the book ends up feeling overly sentimental. Jewish librarians need to be cautious when adding this book to a collection as there may be controversy. Each librarian must decide if this is something that will work for their collection and patron population.

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

England, Zahava D. *The Gilboa Iris*. Jerusalem: Gefen, 2012. 465 pp. \$19.95. (9789652295743).

Dara Harow is an American *olah* (female immigrant to Israel), and this novel follows her from the 1980s when she volunteers on a kibbutz in her late teens until the early twenty-first century. There are two Israeli men, Roni and Uri, who are her romantic interests. The core story definitely has the potential to be interesting and the thriller aspects of the tale, involving Arab terrorists and neo-Nazis, are not badly done. Unfortunately, the bulk of the novel concerns two love stories which are handled much less well. The banter between the main protagonists is meant to be cute, if a bit vulgar, but I found myself rolling my eyes at it. Interestingly, while the men have very good qualities, they are both portrayed stereotypically as arrogant Israelis. Even more tiresome than the immature persiflage is the overuse of modifiers. I lost track of how many times brows “crinkled” and smiles and eyes were needlessly described. This tale is simply not well written.

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

Kanner, Rebecca. *Sinners and the Sea: The Untold Story of Noah's Wife*. Howard Books/Simon & Schuster, 2013. 337 pp. \$22.99. (9781451695236).

The Biblical story of Noah leaves readers wondering about his wife. She has no name and no history. Novelist Rebecca Kanner creates a contemporary Midrash with this story. As the book begins, readers meet a 19-year-old woman with a birthmark on her face. The people in her community shun her as someone with the mark of a demon, but her widowed father does his best to protect her. He arranges for her to marry Noah, who is 600 years old but desperate for sons. His sight and hearing may be failing, but he manages to father three sons, and he works hard to convince the wicked inhabitants of the city of Sorum that they should follow the rules of the God of Adam. Noah's wife has her hands full with Shem, Ham, and Japheth, but she also befriends Herai, a developmentally disabled young woman. She would like Herai to marry one of her sons, but Noah is afraid that their children will be disabled, so he refuses to allow it. When God tells him to build an ark and save his family and the animals, he does so. His wife works tirelessly to tend to everyone's needs and keep sibling rivalry under control. Although the story lags at times, it is definitely not the traditional tale found in children's books. The bleak world of sinners in a harsh desert before the storm and the strong woman thrust into an unknown world offer readers a powerful character that finally has an identity. This would be an interesting book club choice.

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

Liram, Nimrod. *To Be A Princess*. New York: Gefen Publishing, 2012. \$16.95. (9789652295682).

An eclectic collection of short stories with a wide range of setting and characters, this book explores both the value of human relationships and the importance of developing personal skills. The characters in these stories are working hard to learn some specific skills so they can contribute to society and/or build a meaningful relationship with someone for whom they have feelings. While the ideas behind the stories are interesting, there are elements to most that did not come together and leave the reader confused and wanting more clarity. The “thread” that holds these stories together is thin and eluding, and it is not clear how they each fit into this collection. The best stories in the collection are those that concern the army: they are complete, come together well and are thought provoking. An optional purchase, some stories in this collection may serve for group discussions.

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

Markovits, Anouk. *I Am Forbidden*. New York: Hogarth (Random House), 2012. 302 pp. \$25.00. (9780307984739).

The author, who was raised in a Satmar home, has crafted a story that sweeps from World War II Transylvania to the streets of Williamsburg. Five-year-old Josef witnesses his family's murder by Rumanian soldiers. He is adopted by his family's non-Jewish housekeeper. He later rescues a young girl, Mila, when he sees her running with her family after a train transporting their Rabbi. Mila's parents are killed, and Josef helps get her to Zalman Stern, a Hasidic Rabbi and her father's study partner, who has escaped to the south. Zalman searches out Josef and arranges for him to study in America.

As the Stern family grows, Zalman accepts a job in Paris. Zalman's oldest child, Atara and Mila become “sister-friends.” Mila feels protected by the Hasidic strictures while Atara feels stifled. Soon Mila and Josef marry and settle in Williamsburg, and Atara leaves her family. When Josef and Mila have been married ten years and still have not had children, she takes matters into her own hands. After multiple fertility treatments, rereading the biblical story of Tamar and Yehudah (whose progeny will be the Messiah), and learning that the Satmar

Rebbe desecrated the Sabbath while saving himself from the Nazis on the Kasztner train, she surmises that it's permitted to do the wrong thing for the right reason and becomes pregnant after a casual sexual encounter in Paris. At the same time, Josef finds out that he cannot impregnate his wife. When baby Rachel is born, despite the strict dictates of Jewish law, Josef can neither divorce his wife nor disown the baby, so he retreats into a life of fasting and celibacy. Close to her wedding day, their 17-year-old granddaughter Judith discovers the secret and kills herself. Josef dies when he hears this news. The book ends with Mila still dreaming of the Messiah coming and reuniting with her parents and Josef. A glossary is included.

Many universal themes permeate the story: post-Holocaust attitudes, friendship, faith in religion and its leaders, and family and belonging. Who is more courageous: Mila for staying and living within the confines of an insular Hasidic community or Atara for leaving? With nuanced characters and a strong sense of place in both Paris and Brooklyn, Markovits' English-language debut is very highly recommended for all libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Meyer, Henye. *This is America!* Lakewood, NJ: Israel Bookshop Publications, 2012. 352 pp. \$21.56. (9781600911965).

While many historical novels are written about the Jewish immigrant experience at the start of the 20th century, *This is America* offers a different perspective. Written from the viewpoint of a young immigrant girl, this novel raises issues of religious observance that few other books delve into. The importance of Jewish tradition, especially keeping the Sabbath, an issue that many immigrants faced, is central, with the novel promoting the observance of Jewish tradition as it was in the old country. A conflict between old and new is prevalent, with old-world values receiving top billing. Originally published as a serialized novel in *Hamodia* magazine, *This is America* is best suited for an Orthodox high school or Orthodox synagogue library. The book includes Yiddish and religious terminology that may not appeal to a broader audience. Clearly written on a young adult level, this book is not recommended for adult libraries or less affiliated ones.

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

Neugeboren, Jay. *The American Sun & Wind Moving Picture Company*. Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2013. Reviewed from an ARC.

Neugeboren's protagonist, Joey, is the child of the eponymous movie making family company of the silent film era. With an active imagination, Joey often provides the plots lines of the company's movies. In addition to offering storyline support, Joey manages props, lugs equipment, and acts in the movies in both male and female roles. The novel thus provides an interesting look at the production of these early films.

Each chapter focuses on a discreet phase of Joey's life as he grows from childhood to young adulthood. During certain periods of his life, Joey lives disguised as a woman, raising his beloved's children. Throughout the book, the lines between his imagination, movie roles, and real life blur.

While there are hints that his family is Jewish, it is not until the last chapter that it is stated explicitly and we see some Jewish observance. Recommended.

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

Weizman, Janice. *The Wayward Moon*. St. Paul, MN: Yotzeret Publishing, 2012. 313 pp. \$14.95. (9781592871018).

Set in the year 854, in a town called Sura (in modern day Iraq), Rahel, a 17-year-old Jewish girl, is handed an incredible burden. Instead of preparing to meet her fiancé for the first time, she will have to flee, leaving behind her intended, her home, possessions, and her identity. An enemy of her father has burst into her house and killed her father. Rahel has had to kill him in self-defense. At that time and in that area of the world, Rahel's choices and rights are limited. Rahel encounters wealthy merchants, Islamic theologians, Christian monks, illicit lovers, and shrewd innkeepers. She must outplay them all. In the end, Rahel will have to decide where she will be happy and safe.

Readers will be amazed to learn that this is Weizman's debut novel as it is written so expertly. The imagery is particularly impressive. The setting comes colorfully alive in exquisite detail. The story is heart-rending and the heroine inspiring. Readers will cherish this book. It is recommended for Jewish libraries.

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

Reviews of Multimedia

Aronson, Josh (Director). *Orchestra of Exiles*. Bronislaw Huberman. New York: First Run Features, 2012. (85 minutes). DVD. \$22.95.

Violinist Bronislaw Huberman (1882-1947) and his establishment of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra are the subjects of this documentary. A child prodigy, Huberman concertized widely. He then took time off to attend the Sorbonne, and afterwards returned to performing as a giant in the world of classical music. Huberman's humanist activism was ignited observing the sufferings during World War I, and he saw it as his mission during the 1930s to bring together the finest Jewish musicians from Europe to an orchestra in Palestine. Huberman spent three years auditioning instrumentalists and building his orchestra. In the end, this endeavor proved not only a feat, bringing such distinguished musicians to a fledgling country, it also saved the lives of over a thousand people from the devastation and destruction of European Jewry during World War II. Huberman put his reputation and career on the line trying to establish a new orchestra, got the backing of Toscanini, and worked until his goal was met. In addition to outstanding rare footage and photos of classical musicians and locations in Europe, this documentary also contains occasional reenactments of parts of the story, which are tastefully done. The film is replete with classical music (some are Huberman's recordings), and it includes interviews with famous musicians, such as Joshua Bell, Zubin Mehta and Itzhak Perlman. The IPO still exists as one of the world's finest symphony orchestras. Recommended for all.

Judith S. Pinnolis, Brandeis University

Kahn, Daniel and the Painted Bird. *Bad Old Songs*. [Berlin]: Oriente Musik, 2013.

Daniel Kahn's new CD is very much a sequel to his previous one, *Lost Causes*. The ensemble from that recording has been scaled back to just Kahn himself, violinist Jake Shulman-Ment, Hampus Melin on percussion, and bassist Michael Tuttle. There is the same dramatic cover art, the lyrics supplied in Yiddish and English in Courier font, and the same mix of haunting, classic Yiddish folk songs and music from central Europe such as a piece by Schumann with lyrics by Heine. The compilation includes originals by Kahn and Shulman-Ment, along with a powerful version of Leonard Cohen's "Story of Isaac" and "Olaria Olara" by the Greek activist musician Dionysis Savvopoulos. Again, the singing and playing is faultless; again, the vision is dark, wry, and suffused with a harsh and cynical take on the triumph of capitalism over Jewish and world socialist dreams. In the world of musical releases, it is a truism that cuts on an album should vary in tempo, beat, and theme. An artist who doesn't want to be formulaic will craft his CD's to differ from each other in style and subject. To his credit, Daniel Kahn is too much of a purist to follow these dicta, but when each CD contains similar material, their overall force begins to be diluted. There is no shortage of material for a talent like Kahn's. New arrangements and more up-tempo pieces might broaden his audience without weakening his political convictions. There are many political songs that move listeners with their beauty, including one or two by Kahn. Nevertheless, all of Daniel Kahn's work is worth collecting and this CD is no exception. Recommended for contemporary music collections.

Beth Dwoskin, Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

Prudovsky, Leon (Director). *Welcome and...Our Condolences*, 2012. Produced by Estee Yacov-Mecklberg and Haim Mecklberg. Distributed by Go2Films. Color, in Russian and Hebrew. English Subtitles. (26 minutes). DVD.

The early 1990s marked the height of emigration from Russia to Israel. Misha's family gives him a camera so he can occupy himself on one such journey. He documents the family's apartment, the trip to the airport, his family and the other passengers on the plane. His parents often ask him to "shut it off." When they finally arrive in Israel, they discover that their elderly Aunt Rosa has died in transit. Since she died before being processed by the Ministry of Absorption, she does not have the correct documents and the family cannot arrange burial. What should they do?

At one point, Misha is filming while sitting in a wheelchair and, being a good Jewish mother, Ola tells him "Get off it immediately. It's filthy. Who knows who sat in it?" She sends him to find a Russian-speaking clerk, and the next thing you know, Aunt Rosa is in the wheelchair and they are being processed by a clerk. They tell her Aunt Rosa is very tired from the trip and she shouldn't be woken up. As the family prepares to leave the processing center, a delegation comes in with balloons, flowers, and music: Aunt Rosa is the 100,000th immigrant from Russia. They speak to a minister who tells them they can get their aunt's grant check, but they will have to wait a while to bury her.

The film has all the signs of a home movie: weird camera angles, pauses between recording, people hiding their faces, and inconsistent sound quality. We see the Ministry of Absorption processing center at Ben-Gurion Airport; the endless waiting; the myriad of forms and bureaucracy, and some surly personnel. Until the credits roll, one will think this was actually filmed by a young boy in 1991. Dark comedy at its finest and highly recommended!

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Reisen, Avrom. *Poor Matza*. Audio book. Translated from Yiddish by Harvey Fink, Narrated by David Skulsi. British Columbia, Canada: Post Hypnotic Press, 2012. Unabridged (8hours, 45 minutes). 8 CDs. \$34.00. (9781927401552).

What is *poor matza*? It is matza laboriously handmade by poor, tired Jews working overtime and the title story of this outstanding audio recording. Avrom Reisen (1876-1953) was an important and prolific Yiddish poet and storyteller. Beautifully translated and read, these unadorned sketches speak of the family life and work of ordinary Jews. Stories like "When Does Mommy Eat?" "His Brother's Bullets and Grandfather's Clock," present touching scenes of such lives. The CD includes biographical information about Avrom Reisen, along with his friend Moishe Nadiv's charming sketch "Days With Avrom Reisen." This CD is an excellent introduction to the Yiddish literary scene in New York during the early days of the century. The only thing that this reviewer thought lacking was a title list of the stories on each CD.

Students of literature in Jewish and secular high schools and colleges, family groups of varied generations, members of a Yiddishe Vinkle, all will be entertained by Reisen's wry and ironic humor. *Poor Matza* is enthusiastically recommended for Synagogue libraries, Jewish community libraries, high school and college collections, home libraries, and eldercare centers. A book version of these stories is available (ISBN: 9780978005672), and it would make a good companion purchase.

Naomi Morse, Silver Spring, Maryland

Seeger, Petra. *In Search of Memory: the neuroscientist Eric Kandel, winner of the Nobel Prize*. Production by FilmForm Köln. Distributed by Icarus Films, 2008. (95 minutes). Home video use only \$24.98. Sale/Institutional: \$398.00. DVD.

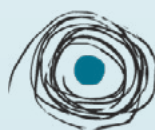
This wonderful film produced by filmmaker Petra Seeger chronicles the life of the Jewish neuroscientist Eric Kandel who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2000 for his research on the physiological basis of memory storage in neurons. Based on Kandel's autobiographical book, archival footage and dramatic recreations, we learn about Kandel's childhood in Vienna, Austria. After fleeing the Nazis, Kandel and his brother arrived in Brooklyn, NY in 1939. Tutored by his grandfather in Judaic studies, Kandel studied at the Yeshiva of Flatbush and was later accepted to Harvard University where he completed his undergraduate degree in History. At Harvard, he became interested in the process of learning and memory. Kandel graduated from medical school in June 1956 and eventually became a psychoanalyst and neuroscientist. Later he was invited to join Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons to become the founding director of the Center for Neurobiology and Behavior. Working at his Columbia University laboratory, Kandel and his colleagues demonstrate in this film their experimental research about how the brain stores memories. In this film we see Kandel and his family take a trip back to Austria in search of traces of their past. A warm, funny and bright personality, he cherishes his ties with Judaism. We have the privilege of listening to some of his lectures given in Vienna and New York, which explore both his professional and personal life. A wonderful movie about a Jewish brilliant scientist and human being, this film is recommended for all libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University, Montreal, Canada





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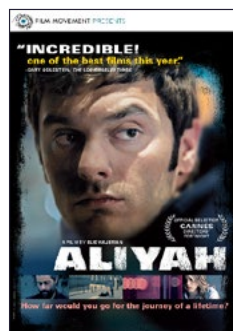


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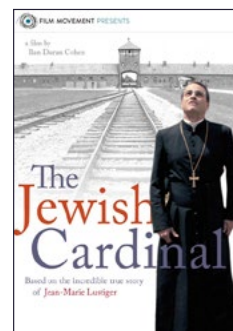
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Seroussi, Edwin, editor. *Cute Boy, Charming Girl: Children's Songs of the Modern Hebrew Nation (1882-1948)*. (Anthology of Music Traditions in Israel Series, number 22) Jerusalem: Jewish Music Research Centre, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2013. 55 pages in English; 121 pages in Hebrew; CD included. \$20.00. (Available online at <http://jewish-music.huji.ac.il>).

Simple children's music is not so simple. The songs composed and sung in Israel in the pre-state period (up to 1948) were used for teaching moral and ethical values, a love of Zion, and the Hebrew language. The songs were collected and compiled by several researchers at the Jewish Music Research Centre and former curators in the National Sound Archive of the National Library of Israel. The songs combine universal aspects of childhood with pertinent themes of the nascent state. Lyrics are often set to German songs or Chasidic *niggunim* (tunes).

The CD comes with a small, but thick book that includes 55 pages in English about the history of the songs and the time period. The songs are placed in several categories that include "Songs for the Yearly Holiday Cycle," "Songs about the Sea and Ports," which are often about immigration, "Songs about Animals," and "Activity Songs" for learning games and dances. Detailed biographies of the performers are also included. The Hebrew text comprises 19 pages of explanation, history, and performer biographies and incorporates the lyrics to the songs as well as background notes. An extensive list of "References Cited" separates the English text from the Hebrew.

The songs are more for academic study than "sing-a-long," often featuring a lone woman's voice and no musical accompaniment. Many of them were collected during field research during the 1990s from elderly people who sang these songs in their childhood. Some of the more interesting selections include a song about building a port by poetess Lea Goldberg, two odes to books, a cleanliness song that warns "dirt is the source of diseases," and quite a few songs about dwarves. The CD and "liner notes" are recommended for libraries with extensive Jewish music collections and/or comprehensive collections about Zionism and modern Israel.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Zorn, John. *Prufkas: Book of Angels. Volume 18. David Krakauer plays Masada, Book Two. Tzadik TZ7396, 2012. 1 CD. \$14.99.*

All music in this collection is composed by John Zorn, and played by David Krakauer on clarinet in that emphatic and highly charged masculine manner for which he is renowned. Krakauer is accompanied on this album of eight pieces by an ensemble of Sheryl Bailey on guitar, Jerome Harris on electric bass, the voice of Michael Sarin, and laptop by Keepalive. On occasion, in such pieces as "Egion" or "Neria-Mahariel," a "Jewish" modal flavor stating a melody will appear, but it quickly morphs into contemporary jazz. The music is, as usual with Zorn, loud, dissonant, Jewish, exciting, cacophonous, sophisticated and exciting, with titles in typical Zorn-babel. Despite a klezmerish-type theme here and there, it is profoundly not "klezmer," but very much a continuation of ongoing creativity in the realm of new American Jewish music, dwelling in the jazz/Avant idiom aka "radical Jewish culture" that Krakauer and Zorn have produced for over twenty years (is it still "new" radical culture?). Only one selection is somewhat extended: "Parzial-Oranir," a piece with more time for repetitive play and development on thematic moments, even a structured return theme at the end of this story/ tone telling/ painting. Those familiar with contemporary Jewish repertoire will enjoy the familiarity of tunes "not quite recognizable," such as in "Tandel," but nevertheless clearly and consciously accessible amid the maze of sounds that explore Zorn's ideas. Krakauer's playing excels at everything. He is the master of playing clarinet with every ounce of testosterone available. Highly recommended as a fine Zorn assemblage for contemporary American jazz or Jewish collections.

Judith S. Pinnolis, Brandeis University

Don't Forget to Check Out AJL News!

The September/October 2013 issue of *AJL News* has lots of internal AJL organizational news, and lots of exciting articles about the activities of our members all over the world.

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Half-page (vert)	\$110	$3\frac{5}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$
Half-page (horiz)	\$110	$7\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$
Quarter-page	\$55	$3\frac{5}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$

Ads may include color and hyperlinks.
Dimensions are in inches

All ads must be prepaid. Please submit all
inquiries, finished copy, and checks to:

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