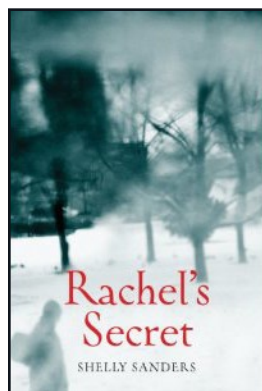


In The Spotlight

Sanders, Shelly. *Rachel's Secret*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2012. 248 pp. \$12.95. (9781926920375) Pbk. Gr. 6–8.

Life is very hard for Jews in Kishinev, Russia in 1903. When fourteen-year-old Rachel witnesses a terrible crime—her Christian friend Mikhail being stabbed to death by his uncle and cousin—she is afraid to go to the authorities. She knows that no government official will believe a Jewish girl. The local Russian newspaper spews anti-Semitic propaganda, blaming the Jews for murdering Mikhail. These lies help to fuel a terrible pogrom on Easter; the bishop and police do nothing to stop the violence. Rachel's beloved father is murdered and their house, along with many others, is destroyed. Mikhail's best friend, Sergei, cares about Rachel and tries to persuade his father, the police chief, to protect the Jewish families. Rachel has told Sergei what really happened to Mikhail, but since his father won't help, she forces herself to testify about Mikhail's true murderers. The story ends with Rachel and her remaining family boarding a train along with hundreds of others. They hope to escape to America, where they can live in peace and Rachel can pursue her dream of becoming a writer. Sergei promises Rachel to find her in America.



The well-written story gives readers a good portrayal of what life was like for Jews in pre-Revolutionary Russia. Rachel is a strong heroine with a loving family. She has growing feelings for Sergei, who is an example of a good Christian at this terrible time. The author's vividly-drawn characters bring the historical period to life while personalizing the story. The reader is kept in suspense about what Rachel will do with her terrible secret. The cover is not attention-getting, but once the book is introduced, it can spark an excellent discussion about how prejudice happens and how it can be used to distort true facts.

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

CONTENTS

Titles for Children & Teens	p. 1	Israel	p. 12
Spotlight	p. 1	Music	p. 13
Bible	p. 3	Picture Books	p. 13
Biography	p. 5	Shabbat and Holiday	p. 14
Comparative Religion	p. 6	Feature Articles: Interviews with Yermiyahu	
Cookery	p. 7	Ahron Taub and Alan Brill	p. 17
Fiction	p. 7	Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults	p. 24
Folktales	p. 11	Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults	p. 53
History	p. 11	Reviews of Multimedia	p. 57
Holocaust and WWII	p. 11	Credits and Contact	p. 59

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Dear Readers,

It is time again to wish you all Shanah Tovah! Happy New Year to you and yours! May it be *Shanah Tovah u-Metukah!* (a good and sweet year).

I would like to thank all our reviewers and co-editors for their excellent work. It is time for farewell wishes to Merrily Hart, co-editor for adult literature for the last 6 years. Merrily has decided to retire from this 'position' and I thank her for all her hard work and dedication. After some recruitment I am happy to announce that Rebecca Jefferson, Head of the Price Library of Judaica at the University of Florida (Gainesville, FL) will be our next co-editor for adult literature. I thank Rebecca for taking on this work and welcome her onboard!

This issue presents 31 reviews of titles for Children and Teens, and 83 reviews of Titles for Adults. We also feature two (!) interviews. Daniel Scheide, RAS president and AJL Reviews co-editor for adult literature, talked with Rabbi Alan Brill about his new book *Judaism and World Religions: Encountering Christianity, Islam, and Eastern Traditions*. Daniel also interviewed Yermiyahu Ahron Taub about his recent book *Uncle Feygele* and his other works. I am very pleased that Ahron let us be the first to publish one of new poems that reflects on library work!

With best wishes,
Uri Kolodney, Editor-in-chief

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's note: This letter refers to: **Zahavy, Tzvee. *God's Favorite Prayers*. Teaneck, New Jersey: Talmudic Books, 2011 (9780615509495);** reviewed by Kathe Pinchuck in the May/June 2012 issue]

[July 13, 2012]
[Dear Editor],

Your review of my book *God's Favorite Prayers* was misleading and inaccurate.

Your reviewer says at first that in the book, "...few prayers are referenced." And then, she says later, "Some prayers are defined in great detail, others are described briefly." In fact, in the book, each chapter on the six archetypes of prayer both cites the text, and addresses the essential meaning of, one or more of the core prayers of Jewish liturgy, including the Shema and the Amida, the Kaddish, the Alenu, Jewish blessings, and contents of the Musaf service for Rosh Hashanah.

Additionally, the reviewer misstates much of the book's main thesis about the archetypes of prayer which I describe. She says about one archetype, "the Celebrity is a high profile leader." The point of my discussion of that ideal type is that the "celebrity" preaches a specific kind of triumphalist monotheism – a sense that "We are number one". Knowing this brings a dynamic focus to the intent of several of the core prayers, such as the Alenu.

The reviewer is imprecise about my archetypal portraits of the Scribe and of the Priest. She then complains, "It is disappointing that in a discussion of Jewish meditation there is no mention of Aryeh Kaplan, whose classic texts have inspired many." My book does not intend a "discussion of Jewish meditation". I develop and describe what I call a "meditator archetype," in order to elucidate the meanings and power of the blessing formula. My original discussion of berakhot shows that each recitation of a blessing engenders a Judaic form of mindfulness.

Last the reviewer criticizes that, "During this discussion, there are many times when Zahavy 'will explain in the following pages,' 'explained previously,' or 'will suffice to say,' which give it the feel of a term paper." My digital search of the Kindle e-book edition confirms that these "quoted" phrases do not appear in my book.

Tzvee Zahavy
Teaneck, NJ

[Kathe Pinchuck's response to Rabbi Zahavy's letter]

August 2, 2012
To the Editor:

One of the challenges of the short, critical style of reviews in the AJL Reviews is that every nuance of the book cannot be captured. All items within quotation marks are taken directly from Rabbi Zahavy's book.

In his "extended discourse," specific prayers are referenced in 46 places, and five prayers books are listed in the "Sources." Seven of the texts are noted as from the Koren Sacks Siddur (Koren, 2009), and the Al Hanisim for Israel Independence Day is from the Siddur Sim Shalom (Rabbinic Assembly, 1998). While one may assume that prayers specific to the High Holidays were taken from Machzor Lev Shalem (2009), there remain almost thirty full texts or references that are not attributed to a particular source.

My summaries of archetypes are taken directly from the book: "Performing on the world's center stage, he [the celebrity] lets us know that he is a star member of the cast of the Chosen People" (page 129); "To generalize, the priest seeks God through familiar symbols and notions" (page 94). The meditator archetype is more problematic. Why develop an archetype of Jewish prayer based on Eastern mindful meditation practices (Jon Kabat-Zinn's *Wherever You Go, There You Are* (Hyperion, 1994)) when there are Jewish sources?

Phrases that give the feel of a term paper (found on pages 1,2,3,4,5,16,18, 20, 21,24, 26,27,28, 30, 31, 32,33, 34, 35, 39, 41, 51, 53, 55, 56, 57, 63,66, 69, 77,78,79, 90, 93, 98, 99, 102, 107, 108, 112, 120, 132, and 133) distract from a point made evident in the book: "To appreciate great prayers, people need to stop, to find their own personal threads of liturgical meanings and to discover all of its energy and excitement."

Sincerely,
Kathe Pinchuck
Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN & RACHEL KAMIN

BIBLE

***David and Goliath.* Illus. by Rob McClurkan. Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 2012. Unpaginated. \$4.99. (9781616266042) Board. Ages 3–5.**

***Noah's Ark.* Illus. by Rob McClurkan. Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 2012. Unpaginated. \$4.99. (9781616266059) Board. Ages 3–5.**

As a reviewer, it's always interesting to receive books from a previously-unknown publisher. Such is the case with the above two books. Barbour is a Christian publisher whose mission is "to publish and distribute inspirational products offering exceptional value and biblical encouragement to the masses". If you're not put off by the preceding statement or the evangelical Christian business philosophy of this publisher, read on. Although the rhymes are somewhat stilted and unexceptional, they convey the gist of the bible stories. The illustrations carry the day with their pleasant colors, animated expressions of people and animals, and exaggerated actions. Because of their small dimensions (5" x 6"), the books would fit nicely into a backpack and would be suited for parent/child bedtime reading.

These two charming books might well appeal to Jewish youngsters as well as Christian children; however, this reviewer had several reservations about the illustrations: In *Noah's Ark*, Noah prays with clasped hands while kneeling by his bed. Since the story of Noah's ark is the most widely-told bible story of all time, try other versions by Lucy Cousins, Jerry Pinkney, or Peter Spier. Furthermore, the young David is portrayed wearing a short robe, sandals, and no head covering. Jean Marzollo's version of this story is more authentic. Not recommended for Jewish homes or libraries.

Anne Dublin, Toronto, Canada, and author of The Baby Experiment (Dundurn, 2012).

Balsley, Tilda. *Oh No, Jonah!* Illus. by Jago. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2012. 32pp. \$17.95 cloth; \$7.95 pbk. (9780761351405). Ages 5–10.

A charming melding of pictures and verse should be a hit for this author/publisher team whose previous releases (*Let My People Go*, *The Queen Who Saved Her People*, and *Maccabee!*) tackled Bible stories using clever rhymes and colorful images that appealed to young children. When asked by God to go preach to the wicked people of Nineveh, a reticent Jonah proclaims, "Preach... That's not fun / Ragging, nagging everyone. / Who will thank me when I'm done? / I'll tell you who: Not even one." The superb bold illustrations beautifully capture the emotional components to the tale. From the anxiety of Jonah and the sailors drawing straws to see who is to blame for the stormy seas, ("Please, just throw me overboard / And peaceful seas will be restored."), to the three days inside the big fish ("Look at this half-eaten stuff. / Life inside a fish is rough.") or Jonah's disappointment at God's lack of punishment for the Ninevites ("God wouldn't even hear him out: / 'What are you so mad about?' / And Jonah went away to pout."), the vibrant illustrations draw in the reader.

The rhyme flow is smooth and witty and the topic of being swallowed by a big orange fish is sure to attract interest. The one criticism would be the somewhat abrupt ending. Although it states that this tale shows us "how to forgive", that aspect of the story is unfortunately downplayed. But this book can still be used successfully in Jewish schools where teachers want to highlight the Jonah story and the nature of forgiveness during the high holidays. Buy this one in the hardcover version for the library, toss some of those old and boring versions of the same story, and don't forget to take it out every year when that kindergarten teacher comes in and asks for a good book for Yom Kippur.

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

McFarlane, Marilyn. *Sacred Stories: Wisdom from World Religions.* Illus. by Caroline O. Berg. New York: Aladdin, 2012. 178 pp. \$17.99. (9781582703046) Pbk. Ages 10 and up.

Previously published as *Sacred Myths* (1996), this book is a skillful retelling of stories from seven world religions. Each section is preceded by an introduction, followed by five stories that were selected to exemplify the basic tenets of the religion. A small black-and-white illustration precedes each story; a sidebar containing (more or less) relevant information follows each story.

Although the design of this book is attractive, with its 5" x 7" size and Garamond font, the computer-generated illustrations are rather amateurish. Further weaknesses are evident in the text. Let's focus on the Judaism section. McFarlane chose five stories from the *Tanach*, but she tells them out of chronological order. For example, the story of Joseph is placed after those of Moses and of David. In the sidebar, she mentions a modern-day version of the Joseph story – the musical, *Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* – a rather incongruous note in a collection of sacred stories. Even worse are the errors: In the illustration that depicts Moses carrying the tablets of the law down from Mt. Sinai, the numbers inscribed are in Roman numerals. Puhlease! Furthermore, in her intro to the Judaism section, the author writes of "several celebrations during the year, each one a holy time that honors events in Jewish history". She includes Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Days of Awe, which do not fall into this category at all.

Because of the errors and the minor place Jewish stories hold in this collection, *Sacred Stories* is not recommended for Jewish libraries. For a non-fiction book dealing with comparative religion, see Sheila M. Kelly and Shelley Rotner's *Many Ways: How Families Practice Their Beliefs and Religions* (Millbrook/Lerner, 2006).

Anne Dublin, Toronto, Canada, and author of *The Baby Experiment* (Dundurn, 2012)

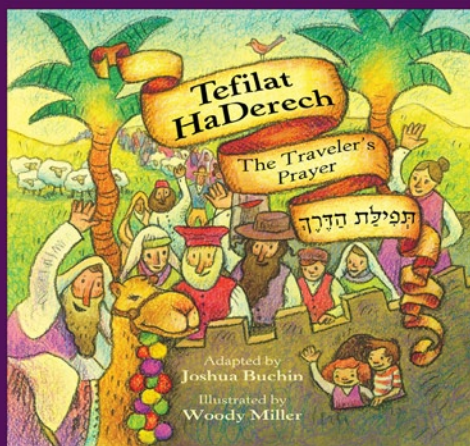
Priddy, Roger. *The Story of Moses; Baby's First Bible*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012. 10 pp. \$4.95. (9780312514556) Board. Ages 3–5.

The story of the Jews in Egypt and the character of Moses are introduced in a board book format, beginning with the Jews living side by side in Egypt with the Egyptians, until a bad king comes to power. There is a lot of text and detail on each page, with lovely, colorful illustrations to complement them. The story of Moses starts with his birth and continues through the burning bush; the story ends when Moses "freed the Israelites from slavery and led them to a new land where they would live in peace." The publisher recommends this book for ages one year old and up. The story is too complicated for the youngest listener. There is not enough character development of either Moses or his mother to create interest or relationship for a young child, and the Bible story is told in an almost mechanical fashion without sufficient emotions for a child to relate to. An unnecessary purchase.

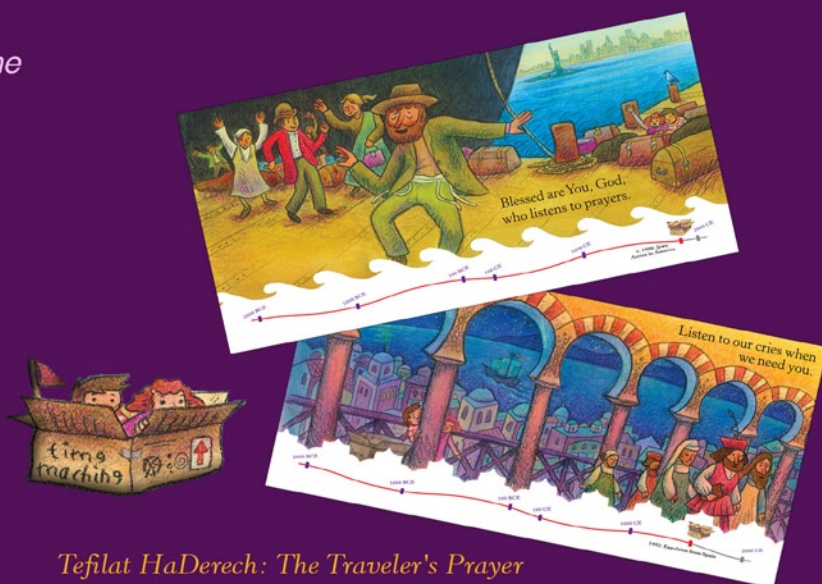
Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

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Spinelli, Eileen. *Jonah's Whale*. Illus. by Giuliano Ferri. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012. 28 pp. \$16.95. (9780802853820). Gr. K-3.

I guess if a snake can talk to Eve, a whale can talk to Jonah. This picture book tells half a bible story, all from the point of view of the animal. A nice enough tale, it is "green" rather than bible genre. God enters as the creator of the whale and the voice telling the whale to save the man on the boat in trouble in the storm. The whale admits he hears Jonah's prayers; we do not know their content. We do not know what Jonah thinks about being in the giant belly. We do know the whale's complaints for three days until God instructs the whale to spit Jonah onto dry land. The whale does, and then returns happily to the sea. He remembers Jonah for years while looking in vain for other men forced to jump overboard. Jonah never forgets the whale; he listens for its song on the beach. What did Jonah do once on dry land? Find another book. The volume does not advance understanding of Jonah's mission, his fears of inadequacy, or his relationship to God as the full bible passage does. This truncated tale stars the animal while drowning the moral by not finishing Jonah's struggle with obedience to God and showing humility for the works of His/Her hand. If you want more green, cute green, with a biblical tint on your shelves, you will not go wrong with this amusing promotion of kind, happy whales.

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

BIOGRAPHY

Dakers, Diane. *Elie Wiesel: Holocaust Survivor and Messenger for Humanity*. (Groundbreakers). New York: Crabtree, 2012. 112 pp. \$12.95. (9780778725558). Ages 10 and up.

There have been many biographies of Elie Wiesel, including several for young people. Canadian author, Diane Dakers, here merges Wiesel's life and Holocaust history in a book for Crabtree's "Groundbreakers" series. (Other subjects in the series include Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor and astronaut Sally Ride.)

The book moves among several stories. Firstly, there is Wiesel's personal life, including his boyhood in Hungary, his time at Auschwitz, and his inspiring achievements since then. Secondly is history: Dakers begins in Nazi Germany, and then goes through the creation of the camps and World War II. Thirdly, the book identifies other causes to which Wiesel has put his name, and some of the many awards he has received. Every page-spread contains at least one image that vividly brings the words on the page to life. There are personal photos depicting Wiesel's life, images of the camps, and others. Regrettably, several are used more than once. There are also many explanatory boxes, describing people (Irena Sendler and Anne Frank among others), and aspects of the Nazi system (such as the tattooed numbers used at Auschwitz). Finally, quotations from Wiesel and others are scattered throughout the book.

This is a useful volume for children who have heard about the Shoah. Overall, the writing is clear. There is an enormous amount of information on a range of topics covering the past 80 years. However, the plethora of images, detailed descriptions, and segmentation of the text may be overwhelming for some students to take in at once. Some photos are very graphic; therefore, the book should not be used with younger children. Because of its completeness, this volume is appropriate for synagogue and school libraries. Includes chronology, glossary, bibliography, and index.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Eliach, Dov. *Trails of Triumph: the Miraculous Stories of Eight Young Men*. Transl. by Moshe Musman. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2011. 437 pp. \$29.99. (9781598267327). Ages 12 and up.

The author conducted interviews for over twenty years to assemble a "diverse collection of personal histories" of eight men who were yeshiva students in pre-World War II Europe and how their boyhood experiences prepared them for the myriad challenges of a changing world. The author spoke with Rav Benzion Yoselovsky, Rav Menachem Mannes Moore, Rav Binyomin Grodka, Rav Shmuel Halevi Schechter, Rav Yaakov Finkelstein, Rav Yonah Bromberg, Rav Yitzchok Beck, and Rav Avigdor Affen. The subjects have many things in common in terms of Jewish observance and Torah study, but come from diverse backgrounds and geographic locations. Each one's journey is unique. There is a glossary, as well as many black and white photographs.

The qualities that make the book authentic also make it a challenge to read. The vignettes, based on discrete interviews, are somewhat disjointed. The language, quoted directly from the interviewees and then translated, can either be considered charming and true to character, or difficult to understand because of the blatant grammatical errors. Because the focus is on the yeshiva world, the book is for Orthodox readers.

Kathe Pinchuck, Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Weaver, Janice. *Harry Houdini: The Legend of the World's Greatest Escape Artist.* Illus. by Chris Lane. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2011. 48 pp. \$18.95. (9781419700149). Ages 8–12.

Nearly ninety years after Harry Houdini's death, his memory lives on. A Google search of Houdini yielded 17,700,000 results. An Amazon.com search revealed nearly 2,500 books on the man, (including a free Kindle version of Houdini's own, *Miracle Mongers, an Expose!*). From his childhood in Budapest to his immigration to Wisconsin to his beginnings on the magician circuit to his lifelong love with his wife, Bess, to his extreme escapes to his death at 52: What is left to tell about his well-documented life?

Weaver's new biography enters an already full field of well-written works, crowded even in her targeted age group. *Escape: the Story of the Great Houdini* (2006) by Sid Fleischman, a magician himself, is a highly readable, information-packed book, which includes, among many photographs, one of himself as a boy with Bess Houdini. Eric Kimmel's *A Spot Light for Harry* (2009) written as an adventure story is a fun and accurate tour of Houdini's life. Agnieszka Biskup's graphic novel, *The Life of the Great Escape Artist: Houdini* (2011), features slightly menacing illustrations rendered from archival photographs, creating a dark, thrilling read for both upper elementary and middle school readers.

Weaver's biography, on the other hand, is a hybrid. A text-heavy picture book, it is too dense for a read-aloud and possibly too difficult for third to fourth graders to navigate on their own. Fifth to seventh grade readers might be too put off by the picture book format to jump into the meaty text. And that would be a shame.

Weaver's book is a good introduction to Houdini's world. Her sidebars include the history of dime museums, child labor laws, and Houdini's metamorphosis trick, and add depth to his story. Jewish day school librarians will appreciate how Houdini's father's move to Budapest is explained in terms of Jewish life in Europe. Readers of all ages will delight in Chris Lane's illustrations at the head each chapter. *The Houdini Tribute* website Weaver recommends in the "Resources and References" section is priceless, as is the *AKA Houdini* site. The "Source Notes" attest to a high degree of research and can lead the reader to further investigation. Overall, Weaver's book is hard to place, but a useful addition to the Houdini canon.

Charna Gross, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA, and member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

COMPARATIVE RELIGION

Steckel, Richard and Michele Steckel. *Faith: Five Religions and What They Share.* Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press, 2012. 36 pp. \$17.95. (9781554537501). Gr. 3–5.

The Steckels travel the world taking tens of thousands of photographs of children. He is a consultant on "nonprofit social enterprise;" she is a photographer specializing in "context photographs." They have produced a book about five world religions, a book which aims to teach tolerance by illustrating that faiths are "more alike than they are different." Virtually all of the photographs are of children. *Faith's* colorful pages in yellow, green, and purple briefly introduce each of the five faiths: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. In some cases, beliefs are stated as if they are facts: "As [Muhammad] meditated, he received the word of God." Other times, they are properly qualified: "*According to the Hebrew Bible* [*italics added*], God promised a man named Abraham...."

After the brief introductions, the book is given over to the enumeration of things that these faiths have in common. All have a role for water (baptisms, *mikvehs*, ablutions); all have stories and rules; all have symbols (crosses, prayer beads, Torahs) and places of worship; all have spiritual leaders – monks, priests, rabbis, imams; all have special rules about clothing. Yes, the commonalities are superficial. All humans have lungs and limbs, but that doesn't enlighten very much. It is open to discussion whether ignoring fundamental differences is the way to promote respect. These religions do not even ask the same questions. Buddhism asks: How do I escape the suffering of the world – not a question for Christianity. Christianity asks: How can I be assured of eternal life in heaven? Not a question that Jews ask. One could go on. The differences are overlooked in order to focus on some largely superficial similarities. Beliefs that truly set a religion apart are absent. For example, one would not know that Jesus is divine, part of a Trinity, a key Christian tenet.

For young children who desire a smattering of facts about different religious observances, this book is adequate and attractive, although it also has a few errors. For example: "The Old Testament is almost exactly the same as the Jewish Torah although the Torah contains other Jewish texts." The Torah does not contain other

texts and the Christian Old Testament includes much more than the Torah. As often observed, when publishers issue books whose authors are not credentialed in the subject area, errors are to be expected.

Andrea Rapp, Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

COOKERY

Groner, Judy. *Maccabee Meals: Food and Fun for Hanukkah.* Illus. by Ursula Roma. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2012. 64 pp. \$8.95. (9780761351443) Pbk. Ages 5-7 (with adult).

Maccabee Meals, a children's cookbook by Judy Groner, is almost a reprint of *Miracle Meals* (1987), by the same author. The following elements are identical in both books: the story of Hanukkah, kitchen tips, how to use the book, metric conversions, Hanukkah candle blessings, dreidel games, and thirteen of the 34 recipes. In the 2012 version, Ursula Roma's color drawings accurately illustrate the particular recipes; in the 1987 edition, Chari Radin's black and white pictures add whimsy and fun to the text. The older edition's spiral binding lies flat, a feature which makes it easier to use as a cookbook, while the new edition is a bound paperback. Some additions to *Maccabee Meals* are new recipes, Hanukkah trivia, and an index. It is organized according to complete meal suggestions, such as brunch, Shabbat dinner, Rosh Chodesh twilight supper, and pajama party. *Maccabee Meals* is recommended for libraries that do not own *Miracle Meals*, but there are too many similarities between the books to make a second copy a worthwhile purchase.

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



FICTION

Bornstein, Ruth Lercher. *The Summer Everything Changed.* Self-published, 2012. 133 pp. \$15.95 pbk. (9781930835061). Teen.

As the summer of 1943 approaches, fifteen-year-old Janet Kessler looks forward to time at the lake with her crush, Kurt, near their Wisconsin home. But her immigrant parents have other ideas and send her to family in Milwaukee, where she is introduced to Rudi, a Jewish American soldier, originally from Germany. Rudi tells Janet that he has not heard from his sister, Lilly, who was left in Germany. During the summer, Janet attends art school and overhears anti-Semitic comments from her classmates. After she returns home, she questions her Jewish identity, one which her family has downplayed.

In her prophetic foreword, author Bornstein writes, "It was a summer of the war. The summer of Rudi, but mostly of that other boy. The summer of Lilly, a girl I never met but who has always been with me. It was the summer everything changed." This epistolary novel in the form of diary entries deals with important issues of Jewish identity and anti-Semitism in the Midwest as a microcosm of world events at that time. At the core is the transformation of a teenager wrapped up in her hometown world to a young woman questioning the world around her. Readers will find themselves cheering for Janet when she makes good decisions and wanting to shake her when she makes bad ones. Diary entries could have benefitted by inclusion of date of entry. Recommended for Jewish libraries.

Barbara Krasner, Somerset, NJ and member of Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

Gleitzman, Morris. *Now.* New York: Henry Holt, 2012. 192 pp. \$16.99. (9780805093780). Ages 12 and up.

Spending three months with her grandfather Felix while her parents are in Darfur has been an unusual experience for Zelda with plenty of highs and lows. Accused of being a braggart, Zelda is tormented and bullied by a group of local girls. Fortunately, she has Felix to confide in. He was bullied by Nazis in his youth and can also relate to how difficult it can be to be separated from your parents. Despite all of the horrible things that happened to Felix as a child, Zelda describes him as the happiest person she knows because "he is really good at doing happy things" and does not dwell on the past. However as he approaches his 80th birthday, Felix seems to be depressed and distracted. He became a doctor following the war and dedicated his life to helping people

and saving their lives. His former patients consider him a hero, but he does not see himself that way.

Zelda knows some sketchy details about his difficult childhood, but very little about the girl from her grandfather's past whom she was named after. Felix eventually reveals her story as he and Zelda hide from a firestorm sweeping through their home. Following their dramatic survival, Felix uses his medical skill to rescue the brother of one of Zelda's bullies. After her parents return from Darfur, Zelda and her family have a memorial service for her namesake. Zelda is truly inspired by her namesake's courage and believes that she is lucky to have her in her life.

Set in Australia, American readers may not understand some of the cultural references in the story, but readers of the previous two books of the trilogy (*Once* and *Then*) will be happy to reconnect with Felix. Despite his brutal childhood, Felix created a life dedicated to helping children. His connection to his granddaughter, Zelda, will be especially poignant to readers of the trilogy. Although *Now* lacks the raw emotional tension found in *Once* and *Then*, it is recommended for libraries that own the previous books in the series.

Aimee Lurie, *The Agnon School, Beachwood, OH, and Chair of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee*

Greene, Jacqueline Dembar. *The Crystal Ball: A Rebecca Mystery*. (American Girl Mysteries). Illus. by Sergio Giovine. Middleton, WI: American Girl, 2012. 151 pp. \$6.95. (9781593699499). Gr. 2-5.

Rebecca Rubin is the Jewish doll from American Girl, who stars in the series about an immigrant family in New York around the early part of the twentieth century. Like most newly-arrived Jewish immigrants, the Rubin family lives on the lower East Side. Rebecca wants to be an actress and is interested in anything to do with show business. She goes to a free performance of escape artist, Harry Houdini, and decides to learn some magic tricks of her own. When a robbery occurs in her building, she finds the thief and saves an innocent man who is wrongly accused. The mystery is slight, but will hold the interest of young readers. There are many clues and several red herrings, so beginning mystery buffs will find the villain along with Rebecca. The setting is clearly described and the information about Houdini is accurate. This book is recommended for children who enjoy the Rebecca American Girl series. It is a worthwhile purchase for day school and synagogue libraries.

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

Hiranandani, Veera. *The Whole Story of Half a Girl*. New York: Delacorte, 2012. 224 pp. \$19.99. (9780375989957) Lib. Binding. Gr. 5-9.

Sonia, who describes herself as half Indian, half American, and half Jewish, has to leave her private school when her father loses his job. Learning the ropes at her new public school is enough of a challenge, but Sonia also needs to figure out where she fits in socially. Issues such as race, religion, and fitting in with the "cool" kids didn't come up at the quirky, progressive school she had attended for years. To make matters worse, Sonia's father is sinking into a serious depression. When he for several days, and is then admitted to a psychiatric facility, her whole family has to pull together.

Hiranandani creates a believable voice in Sonia. She sounds like a precocious but real fifth grader, and her struggles to learn the academic and social aspects of a traditional school after many years at an alternative school feel difficult without being melodramatic. Many families are dealing with the challenges of job loss, and while Sonia's family's troubles are more extreme than most readers will have to face, they reflect a situation that may, unfortunately, be familiar to many. Recommended.

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

Levy, Joanne. *Small Medium at Large*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2012. 208 pp. \$15.99. (9781599908366). Reviewed from an advance reading copy. Ages 8-12.

After being struck by lightning at her mother's wedding, twelve-year-old Lilah Bloom awakes in the hospital to discover she has a unique new talent – the ability to communicate with the dead. The first voice from beyond is her beloved Bubby Dora, who hatches a plan to work with Lilah to find a new wife for her father. Finding her dad a date is not the only example of Lilah using her psychic powers for good. She gives a voice to many who have passed on, including the former lead singer of her music teacher's rock band and even her crush's dead father! Along the way, Lilah has some fun adventures like shopping for her first bra and being possessed by the spirit of a famous, but dead, fashion designer to sew dresses for a school fashion show.

The snappy dialogue and larger-than-life characters make this a fun read that will appeal to middle grade girls. First crushes, embarrassing parents, friendship drama, and dealing with bullies are all aspects of the story

that will connect with its intended audience. Lilah is a very likeable character whose choice to use her powers to help people is admirable, especially when some of the dead voices she hears are opinionated and annoying. Jewish content is minimal and although Lilah identifies herself as Jewish, her religion is not central to the plot nor does it appear to overtly influence her decisions. *Small Medium at Large* is a contemporary story with a positive character who also happens to be Jewish. Recommended for all libraries who serve middle grade readers, despite its limited Jewish content.

Aimee Lurie, The Agnon School, Beachwood, OH, and Chair of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

Palacio, RJ. *Wonder*. New York: Random House, 2012. 320 pp. \$18.99. (978345969027) Lib. Binding. Gr. 5 and up.

Despite doing ordinary things like riding his bike or playing Xbox, August feels as though he is the only person in the world who sees him as ordinary. His parents, sister Via, and everyone he comes in contact with sees him as extraordinary because of the severe facial birth defects that have kept him from attending school until now. August is about to begin middle school at Beecher Prep, a private school in New York City, and he is filled with mixed emotions about attending school for the first time. August is soon forced to contend with ordinary obstacles: learning how to navigate the middle school lunch room, dealing with bullies, making friends, and relating to his parents.

This is an unforgettable story that will not only entertain, but also uplift readers from middle grades to adults. Spectacularly written, the short chapters will appeal to both reluctant and eager readers; it is clear that Palacio knows and respects her intended audience. Told from alternating viewpoints, readers get first-person glimpses into other characters' perceptions of August, including his sister Via, his new friends Summer and Jack, Via's boyfriend, and her former best friend. Palacio also incorporates quotes from musicians such as Natalie Merchant and Christina Aguilera, and one chapter is composed completely of emails and texts. The adults in the story are multidimensional. Two notable standouts are August's English teacher, Mr. Brown, and the principal of Beecher Prep, Mr. Tushman. Palacio deftly uses both characters to articulate positive values to readers in a way that is not heavy handed or condescending.

At first glance, this book does not appear to be a Jewish book for middle grade readers. Via and August have a Jewish father and Jewish grandparents who left Russia and Poland to escape pogroms; however, that information is not revealed until about half way through the story. Despite these factors, the book's themes of *chesed* (kindness) and *b'tzelem elokim* (created in the image of God) may strongly resonate with Jewish readers – whether the author intended them to or not. Recommended.

Aimee Lurie, The Agnon School, Beachwood, OH, and Chair of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

Rosenbaum, Thane. *The Stranger Within Sarah Stein*. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2012. 148 pp. \$19.99. (9780896727472). Gr. 8–10.

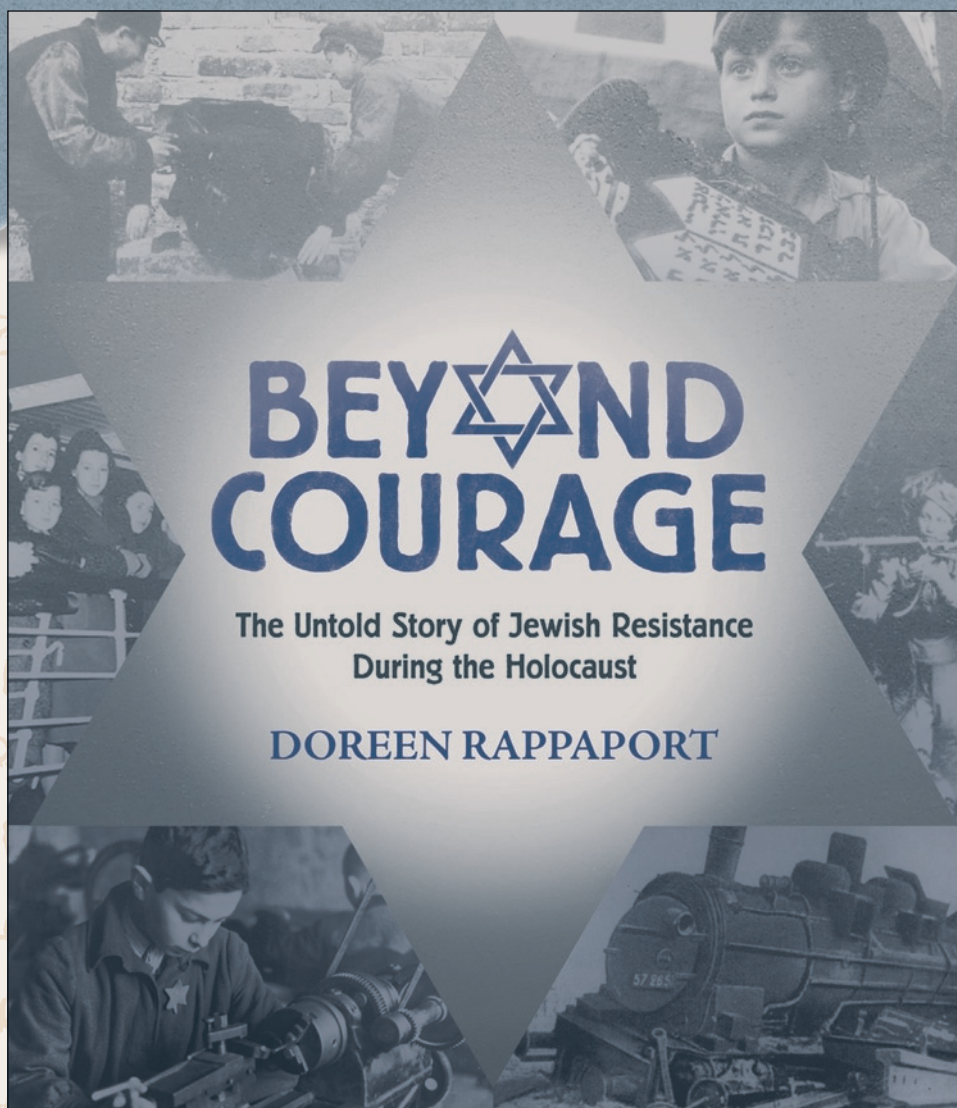
Sarah Stein doesn't know who she is anymore. When she's with her artist father in Manhattan, she dresses, talks, and acts like a streetwise artist; when she's with her chocolate-maker mother in Brooklyn, she feels compelled to be the girly daughter her mother wants. With both parents so wrapped up in their misery about their impending divorce, no one seems to notice that Sarah is having a serious identity crisis. In a plot too convoluted to summarize clearly, Sarah bumps into the shopping cart of Wind, a homeless man, and finds herself in his secret room inside the Brooklyn Bridge. After only a few minutes of acquaintance, the man discerns her troubles more clearly than anyone else around her. What she learns from Wind sends her on a mission that includes firefighters, a New York University professor, a hip-hop producer, and a 9/11 memorial commission.

The author packs a huge variety of issues into this short novel, including 9/11, the earlier World Trade Center bombing, post-traumatic stress disorder, the Kindertransport and the Holocaust, homelessness, mental illness, divorce, a custody fight, and paranormal activity. Sarah narrates the novel, though her voice is not credible as a twelve-year-old. The fact that she is only now becoming curious about why her Jewish grandmother frequently handles a rosary strains credibility, as do her teachers' apparent inability to see that she seems to have a split personality and her parents' blindness about their daughter's struggles. Not recommended.

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



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— *School Library Journal* (starred review)

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Jewish Defense Committee members kept secret notebooks of hidden Jewish children. Background image is from one of Andrée Geulen's notebooks.

FOLKTALES

Davis, Aubrey. *A Hen for Izzy Pippik*. Illus. by Marie Lafrance. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2012. 32 pp. \$16.95. (9781554532438). Gr. K-2.

A Hen for Izzy Pippik, written by Sydney Taylor award-winning author Aubrey Davis (*Bagels for Benny*), is a story of integrity, honesty and kindness. Shaina, a young girl, finds a hen who has escaped from a broken crate with the inscription “Izzy Pippik chickens and eggs” on its cover. Shaina brings the chicken home and Mama allows her to keep the hen, whom she has named Yevka, as her pet until Izzy Pippik’s return. Days pass and Yevka lays many eggs. The townspeople, who are very poor and hungry, want to eat the eggs and Grandpa wants to use Yevka for soup, but Shaina insists that Yevka must be returned to her rightful owner, Izzy Pippik. The eggs hatch into chicks and soon overrun the town. “Curious sightseers rolled in by the busload to see the great flock.” Business booms and the town prospers because of the countless chickens running amok. Izzy Pippik finally returns and gives Yevka to Shaina as a gift.

Although *A Hen for Izzy Pippik* is a charming book, it is not a Jewish book. The only Jewish content is the names Izzy Pippik (belly button in Yiddish), Shaina, and Yevka. The text conveys the universal values of *hashavat aveidah* (returning lost property), standing up for what is right, and kindness but that does not make the book a Jewish book. Marie Lafrance’s drawings in pencil, colored in Photoshop, add an amusing dimension to the text. Shaina and Yevka look alike: Shaina wears a green dress, a red bow, and has a trailing long black braid while Yevka has green tail feathers, a red comb, and a long black trailing tail feather. Recommended for all libraries as a universal book, but not as a particularly Jewish book.

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

[Editor’s note: While it can be argued that *A Hen for Izzy Pippik* does not contain any overt Jewish content, the characters have Yiddish names, the setting is *shtetl*-like, the story has Jewish origins, and the overall package has a Jewish essence and flavor. Libraries where Aubrey Davis’s other picture books are popular, as well as those looking to add to their collection of Jewish folklore and stories that exemplify Jewish values, will certainly want to include this charming tale. *Rachel Kamin*].

HISTORY

Taylor, Zachary. *The Melting Pot: The Peoples and Cultures of New York*. (Spotlight on New York). New York: Rosen, 2012. 24 pp. \$21.25. (9781448857470). Gr. 3-4.

The Melting Pot: The Peoples and Cultures of New York is part of a series of twelve books about New York. The book begins in the early 1600s and ends in the present. One chapter, consisting of three paragraphs, is devoted to Jewish immigration from 1815 to today. Photographs, drawings, and maps illustrate the sparse text. A glossary of difficult terms and an index make the book easy to use as a reference. The simple writing style is appropriate for grades three and four. This non-fiction book is simple to read and provides very basic information in short, three-paragraph chapters. *The Melting Pot: The Peoples and Cultures of New York* does not have enough Jewish content to be classified as a Jewish book, but it does provide information and excellent photographs of New York City, Ellis Island, and famous New Yorkers. Recommended as a supplement for the social studies collection of school libraries.

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

HOLOCAUST & WORLD WAR II

Matas, Carol. *Behind Enemy Lines: World War II*. (I Am Canada). Toronto: Scholastic 2012. 200 pp. \$14.99. (9780545990660). Gr. 7-12.

In 1944, Sam Frederiksen is an eighteen-year-old, Canadian fighter pilot whose plane is shot down during World War II. Sam crashes into a French village and he is rescued by the French Resistance. While being transferred by the Resistance to another hidden location, Sam is double crossed by Nazis. According to the Geneva Convention, the German army should have sent Sam to a Prisoner of War (P.O.W.) camp. However, the Nazis ignored this decree and sent Sam to a French prison, and then transported him along with other fighters to Buchenwald concentration camp. There, Sam witnesses the horrors of the concentration camp including the

gas chambers, brutality, and starvation. He also suffers from Nazi cruelty and unbearable living conditions. Before this time, he was naïve about the Nazis' systematic killing of Jewish people. Eventually, Sam gets transferred to a P.O.W. Camp. The Epilogue states that Sam makes it to England safely just before Victory in Europe (VE) Day.

Although this is a fictionalized account, the book is based on the experiences of 168 Allied airmen who were shot down and sent to Buchenwald. *Behind Enemy Lines: World War II* is part of the *I Am Canada* series, fictionalized accounts of Canadian military heroes based on real historical events and written by Canadian authors. The book features detailed, historical notes about Canada's participation in the air war, the Holocaust, the French Resistance, and the 168 Allied airmen. Also included are photographs of air fighters, their supplies, Nazi guards, and the French Jewish Resistance. Carol Matas has written other recommended books with Holocaust themes such as *Daniel's Story* (1993), *After the War* (1996), *Greater than Angels* (1998), and *In My Enemy's House* (1999). Recommended for all libraries.

Heather Lenson, Librarian of the Ratner Media & Technology Center, Jewish Education Center of Cleveland, and editor of the *Jewish Valuesfinder*

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Rappaport, Doreen. *Beyond Courage: The Untold Story of Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2012. 224 pp. \$22.99 pbk. (9870763629762) Reviewed from an advance reading copy. Gr. 5 and up.

In this ambitious effort, more than twenty stories of Jewish resistance against the Nazis representing eleven countries profile people who rose up against all odds. The book is organized well and the layout is superb. However, there are flaws. Use of the word "untold" in the title is misleading. Some of these stories are indeed well known. Perhaps it was the intent of "untold" to omit any reference to the famed Danish resistance. The photos are exemplary, but there are no photo credits. Rather, the narrative reads like a summary of secondary research. The writing suffers frequently from use of passive voice and weak verbs. But more importantly, while the narrative is highly readable, it lacks cohesion from section to section. The coverage of the profiles -- the book's best feature -- represents resistance throughout the Nazi-occupied lands, demonstrating to young readers just how extensive Germany's control was. But nowhere does Rappaport state that Theresienstadt is Terezín. Nowhere does she state that the Bielski resistance was a popular book made into a major motion picture, *Defiance*. Nowhere does she list the major concentration camps and where and when they were established. Impressive back matter includes source notes and an ample bibliography. However, it does not include places to visit or resources for further information, including movies. Rappaport frequently refers to physical Jewish identity that is off-putting and condemning. Despite its drawbacks, this book is an important contribution to any library because it does serve as a compendium of resistance efforts. Recommended.

Barbara Krasner, Somerset, NJ and member of Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

ISRAEL

Yomtov, Nel. *Israel. (Enchantment of the World)*. New York: Children's Press/Scholastic, 2012. 144 pp. \$39.00. (9780531253137). Gr. 5-8.

Scholastic has engaged a new author to do a rewrite of its earlier (2006) edition of the *Israel* volume for the *Enchantment of the World* series. Nel Yomtov boasts these credentials: as a longtime editor for Marvel comics,

he handled all phases of comic book production and was the colorist for all the Transformer issues and also colored other comics such as GI Joe; his body of work is comprised of hundreds of comic books. He worked as an educational consultant to Major League Baseball, and was for a time employed by a children's book publisher (Rosen, then Hammond). The book's sketchy bibliography of sources for the present work includes a novel about an Afghani refugee family that settles in the United States, and has nothing to do with Israel. It is a children's novel, but is included in the "Non-Fiction" listing.

This rewrite of the previous, fine 2006 edition (by Martin Hintz) introduces errors on the second page of text: Islam's holiest site is not in Jerusalem, but in Mecca. It tells of Israel's birth in 1948, but omits the pertinent facts that Israel was created following a UN resolution, which also called for a Palestinian state for Arabs—which they rejected. These omissions are a hint of the skewed story to come. In fact, the page about Israel's creation is more about the Arabs who fled than the Israelis who fought several invading armies in order to preserve their independent state. In recounting the outbreak of the Six-Day War, there is no mention of the lead-up events: Egypt's expulsion of UN peacekeepers, its blockade of the Israeli port of Eilat (an act of war), Syrian attacks on Israeli farms, or Jordan's shelling of West Jerusalem. Instead, we have the vague "Arab-Israeli clashes continued" and then "Israel attacked Syria, Egypt, and Jordan." Omission of significant facts makes reportage biased and unfair. Stick with the earlier edition of this title; there is nothing to be gained by replacing it with this one.

Andrea Rapp, *Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH*

MUSIC

Turteltaub, Khane-Faygl. *Yiddish Songs For Children*. Illus. by Liz Elsbey. Evanston, IL: Mame-Loshn Productions, 2011. 55 pp. \$30.00. (9780979704260). Gr. 0–5.

Includes English translation, Yiddish, Yiddish transliteration, and musical score. All recorded music on CD, arranged by Leib Yaakov Rigler of Jerusalem, and performed by the Hill Brothers of Eretz Yisroel.

This delightful book is vividly illustrated in color and enhanced by an excellent CD. Dr. Khane-Faygl Turteltaub composed these fourteen songs for her children. The subject and the content of the songs are part of every observant Jewish life; Yiddish is a familiar language and the Torah is the true guide to Jewish life. For the non-observant Jew, this book is a window into a new and different way of life.

The music is contemporary with lively rhythms. This production utilizes a group of children whose mother tongue is Yiddish. Innovative musical instrumentation adds to the folk-like general effect. After listening to the CD a couple of times, the listener is humming the tunes and the words.

The book with the CD will enrich any synagogue library collection, as well as private collections and ethno musical libraries. Children of all ages and their parents will expand their musical ear in terms of language, tunes, and Jewish values.

Nira Wolfe, *Highland Park, IL*

PICTURE BOOKS

Greene, Jacqueline Dembar. *Speak Up, Tommy!* Illus. by Deborah Melmon. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2012. 32 pp. \$17.95 cloth; \$7.95 pbk; \$13.95 eBook. (9780761374985). Ages 3–8.

The story of *Tommy, Speak Up!* is a fantasy come true for any marginalized child: the very thing that makes him an object of ridicule turns him into the class hero. Tommy is an Israeli boy in an American school. He is tormented by his classmates' unkind remarks about his English. One day, a police officer brings his dog for a class visit, a dog, as it turns out, who only understands Hebrew. When the dog won't stop barking, Tommy tells him to "*sheket*." To everyone's amazement, the dog is quiet. Now his disadvantage becomes a special gift that his classmates want to possess. A deal is struck whereby Tommy teaches Hebrew commands in exchange for his classmates teaching him American football. He also gets to help the police department.

Based on a true story, Tommy shows how immigrant children feel in a mostly incomprehensible environment, and how every child has something valuable and special to offer. Native English speakers will better appreciate the travails of their non-English speaking classmates from this glimpse inside Tommy's Hebrew-speaking mind as well as the richness of his background.

The book is also a cautionary tale about cruelty, perhaps even bullying. Unlike, for example, Linda Glaser's

Hannah's Way, also based on a true story, in which Hannah's classmates whole-heartedly support her Orthodox Jewish ways, Tommy's classmates either ignore him or make fun of him at every opportunity. One of Deborah Melmon's wonderfully detailed and colorful illustrations shows a double-spread of children on the playground during recess, with Tommy standing alone in the shadows. Even his teacher seems clueless; at best, she is ineffectual. One wonders what would have become of Tommy if not for the chance visit. I wonder at his magnanimity once the tables are turned. Ms. Greene's books, as her others, will provoke discussions far beyond its 32 pages.

Charna Gross, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA and member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

Miller, Kay. *Jews of the Wild West: A Multicultural True Story*. Illus. by author. Union City, NJ: Paint Horse, 2012. 32 pp. \$9.95 pbk. (9780615553887). Gr. 3-5.

Miller, a retired New York City public school teacher turned amateur genealogist, sets pen to paper and paint to canvas to tell and illustrate the collective stories spanning a hundred-year period about her Jewish ancestors, the Staab and Ilfeld families, merchants turned philanthropists in New Mexico. Miller's family tree includes Abraham Staab, a prominent retailer/banker who helped subsidize the building of the Saint Francis Cathedral and of the railroad to Santa Fe. Julia, his wife, not only hosted parties at the family mansion for a visiting president, rabbis, and governors, but lived to tell the tale about a stagecoach encounter with the notorious Billy the Kid. Charles Ilfeld began life in the U.S. as a bookkeeper in his brother's business, keeping track of the sale of merchandise, before setting off to open his own department store.

While these stories may interest descendants of the Staab and Ilfeld families, it is doubtful they will hold the interest of a general audience. In fact, the young reader may feel jilted and disappointed, for the "Wild West" reference in the title suggests rootin' tootin' tales of exciting adventures in an untamed territory, not staid stories of prominent family members conducting business and socializing with politicians. In addition, Miller could have benefited from the services of a professional graphic designer. The book's layout has the text on the left page and the full-page illustrations on the right. On a few pages, the text takes up the entire page and is squeezed within small margins. However, on most of the pages, there are too few words and too much white space, making it seem as if Miller only had the bare bones of these stories and few details. A diligent proofreader would have spotted the fact that on page one, Abraham's brother's name was spelled three different ways -- "Zadock, Zadoc, and Zadok." The fourteen full-color illustrations are framed with borders featuring silver horseshoes and stars of David. All are drawn flatly and fail to enhance the text in an engaging manner. This self-published first book receives an "A" for effort, yet a "C" for execution.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

SHABBAT & HOLIDAYS

Abramson, Susan. *Rabbi Rocketpower in a Tooty-Fruity Tale for Tu Bishvat: A Juicy Mystery*. Illus. by Laura Standley. Bedford, MA: Oak Leaf Systems, 2011. 80 pp. \$9.95 pbk. (9780965954686). Gr. 3-5.

Like Alice dropping into the rabbit hole and encountering an alternative world, young readers opening the glossy covers to any Rabbi Rocketpower book must prepare themselves for a wild ride into the absurd. In this latest installment of the series, an eyeglass-wearing apple named Tooty Fruity is mistakenly freed from the Garden of Eden by the Mensch family's wise-cracking cat, Purr, via an iPad type of time machine. The half-chewed piece of fruit rides along to the Tu Bishvat *Seder* at the synagogue inside Rabbi Mensch's mouth, all the while spouting tips for saving the environment. Tooty Fruity squeaks, shrieks, and shouts its ecological directives, usually without using vowels but liberally using exclamation marks. During the *Seder*, the opinionated apple travels through the rabbi's sinuses, neck, shoulder, stomach, armpit, and brain—all the while being chased by Aaron, Superboy-in-training, and his furry sidekick, Purr. A well-timed sneeze forces the trio out of the rabbi's body, but Mr. Mensch pushes the wrong button and sends the entire congregation, except for the bewildered cantor, into the device. With minutes to spare, the female caped crusader saves the day before the entire world disappears. Standley's black-and-white drawings carry on the cartoon-style tradition set by Di Orio, her artistic predecessor of the previous Rabbi Rocketpower books. Standley ups the zaniness a notch by sketching the oddest illustration in the series so far—Tooty Fruity dangling off Rabbi Mensch's uvula. The book includes a six-page comic strip of the holiday's history, tips on organizing a Tu Bishvat *Seder*, a recipe for chocolate-covered

fruit and nuts, a list of ideas to save the planet, and a glossary of Jewish terms. Adults may groan an “Oy vay!” or two when reading about the Mensch family’s adventures, but readers transitioning from picture books to easy-to-digest chapter books gobble up these literary-lite candies.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

Bullard, Lisa. *Sarah’s Passover*. (Holidays and Special Days) Illus. by Constanza Basaluzzo. Minneapolis: Millbrook, 2012. 24 pp. \$6.95 pbk. (9780761385820). Kindergarten.

Despite high production values—pleasing illustrations, glossary, index, art project, and further print and Internet resources—this slim title does not measure up to other offerings on the already crowded Passover shelf. It is a too generic view of Passover that follows little Sarah as she helps prepare for the holiday. Omissions, inconsistencies, and tone make this book a questionable purchase. The family cleans the house of bread and cookies with no explanation of why these foods are not permitted. Sarah is told that, “Every Passover, we remember that our people used to be slaves. We celebrate our freedom.” No mention is made of who took us out of slavery. “Tricky” Grandpa hides the middle *matzah*, the *afikomen*. Sarah needs to be “tricky too” in order to win the prize. Too bad Sarah and Grandpa are not “clever” instead of “tricky,” a word loaded with so many unpleasant overtones. Chapter Four, “Remember and Celebrate,” reminds the reader that Passover will be over in a few days and soon Sarah will be able to eat bread again. Unfortunately, the illustration on the page shows a jar of peanut butter, a food that most Jews do not eat during Passover, next to the *matzah*. The factual information in the book is thin and confusing, even for a preschool audience. *Sarah’s Passover* is not recommended for any collection.

Rena Citrin, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, IL

Gellman, Ellie. *Jeremy’s Dreidel*. Illus. by Maria Mola. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2012. (9780761375074). Revised and re-illustrated from the 1992 version. Ages 4 and up.

When Jeremy joins in a dreidel-making workshop at the Jewish Community Center, he uses clay to make a Braille dreidel for his blind father. He tells the curious onlookers about visual impairment, and his friends prove that they’ve taken the lesson to heart when they plan an inclusive Hanukkah celebration. The story is mildly didactic without being preachy, and the information on offer is genuinely interesting. Jeremy’s warm relationship with his father and the supportive attitudes of his friends are heartwarming.

Originally published in 1992, this revised and re-illustrated version is much better suited to today’s readers. The original text was unnecessarily wordy and the realistic illustrations were somber. The 2012 version offers a tightened-up text, updated information about adaptive technologies, and colorful, more whimsical illustrations. The new portrayal of Jeremy has no *kippah* (unlike the original), though one of his friends wears one in every scene.

Old and new versions include instructions for making several kinds of dreidels mentioned in the story. Both include visuals for the Hebrew Braille for *nun*, *gimel*, *hey*, and *shin*. Neither version offers a clear visual of the written Hebrew letters, which would have been very useful in the section on dreidel-making. Jewish classrooms, libraries, and families will welcome this update to an old favorite. The storyline and back matter easily lend themselves to extension activities related to dreidel-making or adaptive technology.

Heidi Estrin, Feldman Children’s Library, Congregation B’nai Israel, Boca Raton, FL

Latimer, Miriam. *Dayenu! A Favorite Passover Song*. New York: Scholastic, 2012. 12 pp. \$7.99. (9780545312363) Board. Ages 2–5.

A board book with two to three sentences of text on each page introduces young readers to the basics of the Passover story. The retelling of the tale of the Jews leaving Egypt after years of slavery is combined with the refrain of “*Dayenu!*” The repetitiveness of the refrain successfully involves the listener and draws the young child into the story. Historical and colorful pictures show the Jews leaving Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, receiving the Torah, and getting ready to enter the land of Israel. Interspersed with the historical pictures are illustrations of an intergenerational family attending a family *Seder*. Produced for the PJ Library, this is a successful introduction to the story of the Exodus and to Passover.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood New Jersey



Lynette, Rachel. *Let's Throw a Hanukkah Party.* New York: Rosen, 2012. 24 pp. \$8.25 pbk. (9781448825721). Gr. 2 and up.

From making invitations to playing dreidel, this book provides clear instructions and ideas for children who want to throw a Hanukkah party. Colorful pictures and simple text appropriate for beginning readers make this book accessible to children in second grade and up. Historical information about the miracle of Hanukkah, a glossary, web site for additional information, and an index give the book substance. A recipe with instructions for making latkes, with illustrations to accompany each step, is a nice touch. However, none of the craft projects are terribly original or groundbreaking. This book is appropriate for public, synagogue, and school libraries.

Aimee Lurie, The Agnon School, Beachwood, OH, and chair of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

Press, Ellen. *Ollie and Taavi Celebrate the Holidays.* North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2011. 28 pp. \$10.99 pbk. (9781466287211). **Preschool.**

This self-published look at the cycle of the Jewish year is designed to be used with young children to introduce them to the major holidays. Each holiday is treated in a two-page spread with a sing-song rhyme touching on some of the customs. Although the beautiful photographs of the two dogs, Ollie and Taavi, precede each poem, the dogs are never a part of the narrative. Too cute for words, the two dogs appear with *yarmulkes*, posed at tables with various Jewish symbols such as Shabbat candles and dreidels. The rhymes on the pages, however, are in the first person voice of a child, unless the dogs "light two candles and watch them glow" or "how I love to sit with Daddy, he is so very handy". Although well intentioned, this book does not merit selection for a library collection. The text is amateur poetry, the illustrations do not match the text, and the content is too general to be of much use. Not recommended.

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

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

Bauman, Mark K. *Jewish American Chronology.*

Drew, Cynthia. *City of Slaughter.*

Feldman, Daniel Z. & Stuart W. Halpern, editors. *Mi-Tokh ha-Ohel: ha-Haftarot = From Within the Tent: the Haftarah: Essays on the Weekly Haftarah Reading from the Rabbis & Professors of Yeshiva University.*

Rakeffet-Rothkoff, Aaron. *From Washington Avenue to Washington Street.*

Stepon, Matt editor. *Judaism: History, Belief, And Practice.*

Temes, Peter S. *The Future of the Jewish People in Five Photographs.*

Voolen, Edward van. *50 Jewish Artists You Should Know.*

Loevy, Netta. *World Class Kids: Shalom Kitah B.* Jerusalem, Go2Films, 2010

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THORNS OF PERHAPS

BY YERMIYAHU AHRON TAUB

Perhaps this shall save him

he who has not crossed a synagogue threshold in years
except for a bar mitzvah or ... or as a memoirist delighted
by the sensation on skin of melody etched into wood
prayer shawl golding under sun into binding gilded
the sting of belonging and yet not

Perhaps this shall save him

he who has not submerged in sacred text in decades
except the one by he who brimstoned against gossip and worldly learning
and that largely to please Father may he thrive until 120
years of gridlock crackling between them along the phone wire
relieved that he could weep unseen into indifferent pages

Perhaps this shall save him

he who has not sought out a sanctioned meal in years
except when required by the customs of visitors
or when visiting others startled by a primal animal pleasure
in these stews and breads and flaking curlicued pastries in his palate's
evocation of a clearly demarcated place in the tribal order

Perhaps this shall save him

he who decodes daily the secrets the dates of release buried in
verse the many works using the same title or entwined gasping
at their obsession with the female body as he has never been
the very authorship of these insights as if unnecessary given the garland
of honorifics the teacher the sainted one the most glorious how holy is he

Perhaps this shall save him

he who differentiates this one from others identically named
he who follows up using the telephone number on the title page verso
with his indeterminate accent in the mother tongue unsettling evoking
the pious and the profane the familiarity with the whip elaborating on what
must be done so that their edicts may endure he the most unlikely of guides

Perhaps this shall save him by this it is meant

this toil joyous

fingers and wrists wailing after years of motion seemingly repetitive
in this box not dissimilar from countless others
but distinguished by a tiny flame flickering eternally above
and a singed burgundy velvet curtain slightly parted
against the fires that rage just out of sight but never far away

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INTERVIEW WITH POET YERMIYAHU AHRON TAUB

HELD JULY 2012 BY DANIEL SCHEIDE, RAS PRESIDENT

Taub, Yermiyahu Ahron. *Uncle Feygele*. Austin: Plain View Press, 2011. 120pp. \$14.95. (9781935514862).

AJL: Your latest collection, *Uncle Feygele*, is more overtly autobiographical, and there is more humor, a sense of playfulness that is less prevalent in your earlier work. Are the two elements related?

YAT: I do not consider any of my books to be strictly autobiographical per se, although elements of personal experience sometimes serve as inspiration. After spending years immersed in the academic study of history, I wanted to be unfettered by the demands of empiricism in my creative writing, although historical themes continue to figure prominently. Although many of my poems are written in a first-person voice, the poetic “I” is a literary device rather than a designation of an unmediated authorial self. These poems simply happen to work best in the first person.

Uncle Feygele, the title character of my most recent book, may seem more autobiographical than the protagonists that have appeared in my other books, but is, in the end, a poetic creation.

Uncle Feygele is perhaps the most wide-ranging of all of my books. While my first two books were “defined” by topic and genre, here I allowed myself a certain kind of looseness and, at times, playfulness, as you note. *The Insatiable Psalm* is an extended conversation between an ultra-Orthodox mother and her gay son “eavesdropped” upon by a poetic observer/narrator. As such, all of the poems, in some way, relate to the central protagonists. All of the poems in *What Stillness Illuminated/Vos shtilkayt hot baloykhtn*, are numbered and untitled and have five lines. The thematic range of *Uncle Feygele* may also have affected its language and tone. In looking back through the book, I notice that there is a generous supply of slang and colloquialisms.

AJL: One theme that I’ve noticed in your work is longing: cultural, sexual, spiritual, romantic. Do you think this is accurate?

YAT: Yes, I do, although it may be something to which the genre of poetry itself is ideally suited. Poetry, it seems to me, has an ability to express our deepest, often unspoken, and for some marginal figures, “unspeakable,” feelings. Often, we turn to poetry precisely at times of longing—when we hope certain endeavors will come to fruition or when we wish that they had. That said, longing is just one of many moods expressed in my work. Others, in no particular order, include celebration, homage, joy, reflection, terror, uncertainty, fury, etc.

AJL: On your artists’ statement on your website you write: “A number of my poems are narrative in nature, or at least offer the suggestion of narrative.” I find some of your poems to be tantalizingly vague. Are there back stories that you are choosing not to reveal or are the full details hidden



Photograph taken by Andrew W.M. Beierle

from you as well?

YAT: A successful poem, it seems to me, contains just the right mix of clarity and mystery. If it's too clear, then the poem runs the risk of being obvious. If it's too mysterious, a poem can seem unnecessarily obscure. There is obviously no formula for any of this. For me, a principal goal of a poem is to invite further reflection. Poems that seem quite clear to me are often not clear at all to readers. And readers often have interpretations of my work that are quite far from what I have intended. An artist can always state her/his intentions (when asked) of a particular work, but once circulated, the interpretation of that work cannot be managed or controlled.

AJL: Although many of your poems deal with Jewish themes, it seems that your Yiddish works are often the ones that are the least connected to Yiddishkeit. Is this a conscious decision?

YAT: Of the six poems that also have a Yiddish version in *Uncle Feygele*, three ("Hebrew Lullaby," "Nostalgia," and "Instead of a Manifesto") are arguably Jewish in theme. Publishing a completely bi-lingual poetry book poses enormous challenges. For example, none of my publishers have had design programs that could handle Hebrew fonts. We've always had to come up with workarounds, the details of which are beyond the scope of this interview. In *What Stillness Illuminated/Vos shtilkayt hot baloykhtn*, all of the poems have a Yiddish version. The brevity of those poems made an entirely bi-lingual book feasible. I wish all of my books could be completely bi-lingual, but this would entail an enormous amount of work. It is extremely difficult to get any poetry books published in the current market, let alone completely multi-lingual ones!

AJL: You have a number of bi-lingual poems. Do you write in one language and then translate or do you compose them side-by-side?

YAT: My native language is English, or rather, that mélange of English, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Aramaic known as "yeshivish." English is the language in which I am most at home. However, Hebrew and Yiddish have always been central components of my life. I began my formal study of Yiddish in mid-twenties and have been active in the Yiddish cultural world ever since. Usually, I compose in English and then translate into Yiddish. However, even in writing the English, I try to keep in mind the Yiddish. Sometimes, when in Yiddish, I will go back and alter the English. There is often, then, a "dialogue" between the two languages.

It's intriguing to me that you use the term "bi-lingual poems." Very few of my poems extensively interweave English and Yiddish words and phrases in a single poem, in the way that the Irena Klepfisz does to such extraordinary effect in *A Few Words in the Mother Tongue* in such poems as "Di rayze aheym/The journey home" and "Etlekhe verter oyf mame-loshn/A few words in the mother tongue" (Eighth Mountain Press, 1990). And then the issue of "versions" opens up to larger questions. Are my English-Yiddish poems to be considered one poem with two different versions? Or are they different poems? Are the answers to these questions affected by the fact that, in this case, the poet is the "translator"? The poet Zackary Sholem Berger pointed out that, in some of my poems, the Yiddish version sometimes reveals what was not apparent in the English one.

AJL: Why the pen-name? Since it's so close to your professional name, it's not a matter of anonymity.

YAT: Yermiyahu Ahron Taub/ירמיהו אהרן טאוב is, in fact, my name. I am called Yermiyahu after my great-uncle, my mother's paternal uncle and Ahron after Rabbi Aharon Kotler, who was a co-founder and head of Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, N.J. and my father's *rebbe*. The Anglicized version of my name is Jeremiah Aaron Taub. When I registered for college, I decided to use Aaron,

partially for the sake of expediency. Jeremiah seemed unwieldy, while Jerry and Jeremy held little appeal. And I thought no one outside the Judaic world could ever pronounce Yermiyahu, although I have since learned otherwise. Rabbi Kotler was also known for his opposition to yeshiva students' pursuit of secular studies. Foregrounding "Aaron" therefore seemed (and seems) particularly appropriate. However, among family and in the ultra-Orthodox yeshiva community that is my original home, I was and am called Yermiyahu or Yermie for short.

To me, a plurality of names, or name forms, is a central characteristic of the Jewish condition. As Jews in the United States, we have Anglicized names, Hebrew and/or Yiddish (or other Judaic language) names, names with which we are called to the Torah, to name a few. And not so very long ago in the history of the Jewish people, it was not uncommon for Jews to have even more name forms depending on their place of residence and which country happened to rule it.

AJL: It occurs to me that those are questions that a cataloger would ask. Do you think your work as a librarian (and specifically as a cataloger) has any impact on your work as a poet?

YAT: Libraries, librarianship, and cataloging are explored in greater depth in more recent poems written after the publication of *Uncle Feygele*. One of those poems—"His Favorite Patron"—was published in *Misfits Miscellany* (<http://tinyurl.com/8ewcke5>). Another one is first published here together with this interview.¹ However, I have always been struck by the importance of libraries for so many writers. Writers at AJL conventions, for example, often note the importance of libraries for their own writing not only for their ready supply of information, but also for providing a physical space devoted to knowledge and its democratic dissemination. Being in a library is a vastly different experience from surfing on the internet on one's laptop in a café or in one's home.

Some of the skills of cataloging have been useful in my books, as well. For example, catalogers use romanization systems to represent words in non-Latin alphabet languages in Latin letters. In the Judaica librarianship community, catalogers use the ALA/LC system. For my own books, however, I favored the system established by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research when a word was not accepted into English (and I was amazed at how many words of Yiddish origin have been accepted into Webster's Dictionary).

Beyond that, there is unexpectedly much in common between a poem and a bibliographic record. Both are characterized by an economy and a precision in which every word and punctuation mark matters. Finally, both function as a window onto something larger and perhaps not yet seen or understood.

Yermiyahu Ahron Taub is the author of three books of poetry, *Uncle Feygele* (Plain View Press, 2011), *What Stillness Illuminated/Vos shtilkayt hot baloykhtn* (Parlor Press; Free Verse Editions series, 2008), and *The Insatiable Psalm* (Wind River Press, 2005). A longtime Judaica catalog librarian and member of AJL, he recently completed a term as the Chairperson of AJL's RAS Cataloging Committee. Taub was a creative consultant on *Where is Joel Baum* (Palinka Pictures, 2012), a narrative short film by Pearl Gluck. Visit his website at www.yataub.net.

¹ Editor's note: Yermiyahu Ahron Taub has graciously offered AJL Reviews to be the first to publish his poem "Thorns Of Perhaps" that reflects on the cataloging of rabbinic texts . (See p. 17).

Interview with Alan Brill

HELD JULY 2012 BY DANIEL SCHEIDE, RAS PRESIDENT

Brill, Alan. *Judaism and World Religions : Encountering Christianity, Islam and Eastern Traditions*. New York : Palgrave MacMillan, 2012. 306 p. \$89.00. (9780230103696).

We are quick to correct misconceptions or distortions of Judaism when we encounter them, but how often are we guilty of the same crime when it comes to other faiths? *Judaism and World Religions* by Alan Brill describes how Jewish theologians, past and present have framed other religions and outlines strategies for discussing Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism from a Jewish point of view. Dr. Brill recently spoke with RAS president Daniel Scheide about his new book.

AJL: Your work draws upon a wealth of source material, ancient and modern, well-known and obscure. The Jewish encounter with Buddhism is generally thought of as a 20th century phenomenon. However, you've uncovered earlier engagements. Can you describe them?

AB: Jews encountered Buddhism the same ways that Christians and Muslims did. There were traders, historians, and travelers as well as the accounts they wrote when they returned home. Jews in medieval central Asia knew the differences between the various schools of Buddhism.

One of the more interesting texts is *Meoreot Zvi* (Lvov, 1804) a narrative of the events surrounding the life of Shabbatai Zevi along with a description of his prophecies, visions, magic, and charismatic gifts used in generating a following. The author shows that he read such works and provides many parallels between Shabbatai Zvi's actions and Eastern practices. His goal is to present a captivating account of Shabbtai Zevi with conflicting valences in Enlightenment style, this religious imaginary is important because later the same author will be involved in editing stories of the Baal Shem Tov.

In the province in the sky, which is the great [Lhasa] valley in the land of Tibet next to East India is their great city Potala. There resides the great monk of all their idolatrous monks, called the [Dalai] Lama, who is father of impurity from which all the monks derive their way of crookedness from one of the spirits of impurity.

The matter is like this: The monks called Brahmins make a golem from clay in the image of a man with their magic until skin, flesh, bones, and veins appear. Afterward, they adjure it with (demonic) spirits of the impure spirit because of their crookedness. Then an actual living man literally appears and its appearance is like the golem made from clay by our [Jewish] masters of the names. [The Jewish masters of the name] do everything with the predetermined received skills; in contrast they adjure spirits of the false seven heavens. They are all experts in adjuring spirits of impurity, especially the face-spirit of impurity. By their oaths a face-spirit continuously appears illuminated, sometimes it changes and there will appear a continuous image of the previous (demonic) [Dalai] Lama, who had died.

Here are some other examples:

Samson haLevi Bloch (1782-1845) was a Galician rabbi and author with a wide interest in all aspects of the Jewish Enlightenment. He wrote a three volume work surveying the geography and history of the world based on similar recent works in German. Ultra-Orthodox Rabbinic figures, such as Rabbis Moses Sofer and Mordechai Banet, considered the book worthy to read. The work was reprinted and for three generations served as a basic conduit of knowledge. The first volume of the work, *Shevilei Olam* (1822), surveys the entire breadth of Asia. The perspective of the accounts is that European interest and the rise of the British Empire. Therefore, the accounts stress empire, free trade, maritime connection, and the role of liberty.

Rabbi Shmuel Alexandrov (d. 1941) had been a close friend of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook in Volozhin, where they both studied. Unlike Kook, however, Alexandrov never left Russia and instead became a rabbi in Bobruisk, until his death at the hands of the Germans in 1941. Alexandrov seeks to find a place for the wisdom learned from other religions, especially the idea of Buddhist nothingness. Alexandrov boldly claimed that one universal truth forms the basis of all religions; hence, the Buddhist concept of *nirvana* and Hasidic concept of *ayin* point to the same concept in different words.

The first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, was attracted to Theravada Buddhism as part of his general interest in stoic heroic values, reading the *Dhammapada* together with Spinoza, and the Bible. In

1961, Ben-Gurion visited Burma as a guest of the Prime Minister of Burma, Thray Sithu U Ba Khin, whose country achieved independence alongside the new state of Israel. According to the newspaper reports, the Buddhists found the Israeli delegation as “materialistic in outlook and more interested in the present values of Buddhist Meditation than in what one would gain in the after-life.” Their Buddhist host wanted them to understand that the goal of Buddhist meditation is the realization of *nirvana*, a cessation of mental activity.

AJL: Jewish-Muslim relations are currently tense. Do you think readers would be surprised at the more complex portrait you paint in your book?

AB: Yes. It seems that the millennium of co-existence has been forgotten in the tensions of the last sixty years and even the historians of mid-twentieth century who wanted to paint a golden age have been forgotten. Under Islam’s humanistic age under the Ummayyads and Abbasids—the Jewish religion adopted Islamic forms to create moments of true synthesis between Judaism and Islam, especially in the realms of philosophy, theology, poetry, linguistics, jurisprudence, science, and literature. A remarkable indication of the depth of this penetration of Arabic language and culture is the adoption of Islamic terminology to designate even the most sacred notions of the Jewish faith, a fact which has practically no parallel among Ashkenazi Jewry prior to the modern era. For example, the Hebrew Bible would be referred to as the Koran, the *halakhah* as the *shari’a*, and Moses as rasul Allah “the Apostle of Allah’.”

Ignatz Goldziher (1850 – 1921), Hungarian orientalist and Orthodox Jew, is certainly the strongest and most unusual advocate for Jewish–Muslim understanding in the scholarly history; he regarded Judaism and Islam as kindred religions. Despite his status as a Jew, he was allowed to study with Muslim clerics in Al Azhar in Cairo. Goldziher had the utmost admiration for Islam and thought that Islam had evolved into “the only religion which, even in its doctrinal and official formulation, can satisfy philosophical minds.” “My ideal,” he said, “was to elevate Judaism to a similar rational level.” For Goldziher, Islam is not simply a sibling religion of Judaism; he urges the Jewish minority in Christian Europe to view Islam as a model for its own development.

Trude Weiss-Rosmarin (1908 – 1989) was an Orthodox Jewish-German-American writer, scholar, and feminist activist. She co-founded, with her husband, the School of the Jewish Woman in New York in 1933, and in 1939 founded the *Jewish Spectator*, a quarterly magazine, which she edited for fifty years. She advocated already in 1967, a strong Jewish-Muslim dialogue as the only source of Middle East peace. “If henceforth Jews will assign to Jewish-Muslim dialogue the importance that is its due, the Arabs, in whose nationalism religion is as important as it is in Jewish nationalism, will eventually -- and perhaps sooner than cold-headed realists will dare expect -- rediscover that the Jews are their cousins, descendants of Abraham’s eldest son, Ishmael, who was Isaac’s brother.”

“If the young State of Israel is to survive and prosper it must become integrated into the Arab world and be accepted by its neighbors. We believe that with a complete reorientation, especially a muting of the insistent harping on the theme of “Israel is an outpost of Western civilization” the Arab nations would accept Israel on the basis of the kinship which unites Jews and Arabs.”

The settlement of Jews in Mandate Palestine followed by the establishment of the State of Israel with the displacement of the native residents from their homes created severe tensions between Judaism and the Arab world. There was a rise of Muslim anti-Semitism which spread from the Arab lands to the rest of the Muslim world. Jews, in turn, portrayed the Muslim Arabs as their mortal enemies. Within both groups, politics gained ascent over traditional theology.

AJL: In the past, interfaith efforts have largely involved Reform Jews. It seems that in recent years, Orthodox communities have increasingly become more interested. How would you explain this?

AB: First, the number of Orthodox [leaders] is disproportional among those who lead the various Jewish communal organizations. Second, in the post-9/11 world the turn was to have discussions and encounters with the most traditional rather than with those already disposed toward pluralism. The goal was to learn how to encourage others to let their moderate traditionalists speak rather than the extremists. Third, much of the encounter was with Catholic hierarchy, Evangelicals, and Muslim moderates who sought Jewish leaders with similar views. There was a religious reawakening of traditional religion in the public sphere in which “God is back.” On the other hand, on the local congregational level the encounters are more prevalent among

liberal clergy. I discuss some of these issues in my prior work: *Judaism and Other Religions*.

AJL: In addition to publishing in more traditional outlets, you have a wide-ranging blog The Book of Doctrines and Opinions (<http://kavvanah.wordpress.com/>). What is the place of blogs within academia, particularly within Jewish studies?

AB: I think that blogs and online resources are important and will continue to grow in importance. The same way many textbooks now include a CD-ROM, in the future there will be a need for online resources. The goal of my blog, and those of other academics, is not to explain our books, rather to offer a window into how we apply our knowledge to processing new information and items in the news. It is a form of expert knowledge on a topic. I actually limit my blog to topic that I know about: interfaith, Jewish thought, contemporary religion. I avoid posting about politics, current event, and entertainment- all topics in which I have no expertise. This way people know what I am reading, working on, and think about; they see how I process new books on interfaith or Jewish thought.

AJL: In addition to interfaith, your other areas of interest include Kabbalah and Hasidut [Hasidism]. The Jewish mystical tradition has a reputation as being more xenophobic than other strains of Judaism, yet it seems to be the most attractive to outsiders. Why is this?

AB: Mysticism was a twentieth century theological category with roots in Protestant thought, especially Quakers, which postulated a universal direct experience of God outside of creed and institution. If one studies certain strains of Kabbalah and Hasidut, one quickly sees their xenophobia and demonization of gentiles, dividing the world into a dualism of good and evil. However, if one collects the statements of direct experience of God in Hasidut that imply a unity of being or a pantheism, then one has statements readily understood by outsiders, especially mystics of other faiths.

AJL: Your previous book *Judaism and Other Religions: Models of Understanding* spent a lot of time presenting negative images of non-Jews within Jewish tradition. Did you have any hesitation about publicizing these statements?

AB: No, they were all already available on the web on anti-Semitic websites. If we reject the negative statements, then we have to publically reject them and those Jews who still cite them.

AJL: In your book, you draw a distinction between the views of professional and amateur historians, particularly when it comes to portrayals of Islam. Do you feel that history written by non-academics has a place in libraries? Should we be wary when making collection development decisions?

AB: Yes, I strongly think this is an issue. First, there has been an avalanche of Jewish history monographs written by professionals in the last 40 years, but few survey volumes offering a readable overview for the lay reader. Therefore most popular works are still reworking narratives from the early twentieth century. The conclusions of the major mainstream Jewish historians of the last decade are almost unknown to the average Jewish reader. Second, amateur writers inevitably are weak on context, so that they describe prior ages through their current political agenda. They are not very different than the American history works written by the Christian right. Even the basic truths of Jewish history presented at Beit Hatefusot Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv are contradicted by these politically driven amateurs.

Rabbi Dr. Alan Brill is the Cooperman/Ross Endowed Professor in honor of Sister Rose Thering at Seton Hall University. He is the author of the *Thinking God: The Mysticism of Rabbi Zadok of Lublin* (Ktav, 2003), *Judaism and Other Religions: Models of Understanding* (PalgraveMacmillan, 2010) and *Judaism and World Religions* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). His specializes in Contemporary Jewish Thought, Interfaith, and Jewish Mysticism. His next book will be on varieties of modern Orthodoxy. Brill's online article Recognizing the Other: Sameness and Difference in a Jewish Theology of Religions is available at <http://www.jidaily.com/a2459>.

Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND MERRILY HART

NONFICTION

Ancel, Jean. *The History of the Holocaust in Romania.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011. 699 pp. \$50.00. (9780803220645).

The history of the Holocaust in Romania is a very complex subject that no one had researched thoroughly until the late Jean Ancel took it upon himself to study meticulously all the relevant archives, especially those that became available after the fall of the communist regime in the late 1980s.

Ancel took a broad view of the war period in Romania, but then, through 38 chapters, focused on such topics as the Romanian Orthodox Church and its attitude toward the “Jewish Problem,” Nazi influence on Romanian political life and the Jewish leadership under the National-Legionary regime. He also studied specific areas and cities, among them Bessarabia, Bukovina, Kishinev, Czernowitz, Transnistria and Iasi. Finally, Ancel included in his work important and well-explained statistical data on the Holocaust in Romania.

The wealth of information included in this tome and the superior organization and presentation makes it a must for any Judaica library with a Holocaust collection, whether a basic collection, or a rich, academically focused one. Unfortunately Jean Ancel died before he could publish further on his extensive research results.

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

Baer, Elizabeth R. *The Golem Redux: From Prague to Post-Holocaust Fiction.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012. 229 pp. \$27.95. (978081433627). Also available as an ebook.

Legend holds that Rabbi Judah Loew, the leader of the sixteenth-century Prague Jewish community, created a golem, a giant man of mud, and infused him with life in order to face the threats to the community. This mythical hero has been portrayed in almost all media, including comic books and an episode of The X-Files.

The introduction to Baer’s book gives a brief description of the golem, its place in literature and popular culture, and a review of several scholarly essays and books on the subject. Subsequent chapters give in-depth analysis of specific works and prevalent themes, including those by Isaac Bashevis Singer, Elie Wiesel, and Marvel Comics. She demonstrates how the stories have drawn from legend, from other golem tales, and from the authors’ imaginations (intertextuality). The epilogue summarizes five texts of particular significance. There is a very detailed index, a comprehensive bibliography, and chapter notes at the end. The author discusses the impact of the Holocaust on imaginative literature, as well as the portrayal of anti-Semitism in many golem stories.

Baer focuses on golem fiction that is realistic, except for the creation of the golem, and sees the role of the golem in post-Holocaust literature as “an affirmation of the viability and authority of the imagination of story, and of creativity.” Scholarly without being pretentious, the book is highly recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Bauman, Mark K. *Jewish American Chronology.* Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2011. 155 pp. \$85.00. (9780313376047). Also available as an ebook.

Mark Bauman is best known as a historian of the American Jewish South. In this new chronology, he has compiled a small guide to the entire American Jewish experience.

As a simple listing, the book contains important information in short statements. Most of the descriptions are succinct. The topics include big events (the opening of Ellis Island in 1891) and small ones (Jews petition for Hebrew instruction at the University of California in 1872). There are religious milestones (in 1922 Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan conducts the first Bat Mitzvah); sports events (Hank Greenberg hits a grand slam home run in 1945 to win the American League pennant for the Detroit Tigers); and cultural milestones (in 1884 Julia Richman becomes the first Jewish woman to serve as Principal in New York City). All of them have contributed to the creation of the Jewish community.

Beyond this, the volume contains 21 different notations indicating aspects of life: headings including “African-American/Jewish relations,” “Science,” “Immigration” and “Performing Arts” help guide the reader/researcher through the tangled web of data and provide context. The volume also contains one-paragraph

biographical portraits of several important figures, including Rebecca Gratz, Mordecai Kaplan and Shoshanah Cardin. Finally, there are numerous photographs and document reprints. The short glossary, bibliography, and index all help make the volume easier to use.

In a book this ambitious, every librarian will recognize gaps and wish some events or people had been added. Yet as an up-to-date, small-format, easy to use, and complete volume, it is hard to imagine a better reference source for schools and synagogues. The price may put it out of reach for many small libraries, but its value is very high.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Becking, Bob. *Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Construction of Early Jewish Identity*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011. 215 pp. \$148.50. (9783161501111).

Frevel, Christian, editor. *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*. (Library Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies). New York: T & T Clark, 2011. 337 pp. \$150.00. (9780567310507).

Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Construction of Early Jewish Identity, eleven essays written by Bob Becking, focuses on three topics: (1) the composition and date of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah; (2) the theme of mixed marriage and its relation to the province of Yehud during the Persian period; (3) the roles of Ezra and Nehemiah in the transition from Yahwism to Judaism. Two essays (chapters 5 and 11) are new, while the others were published previously. In this collection, the culmination of the author's fifteen years of scholarship on the topic, he challenges four traditional understandings of Ezra-Nehemiah -- 1) that Ezra was written by the Chronicler, (2) that the Chronicler made use of a variety of written sources, (3) that events in the book relate to specific events in the Persian period, and (4) that Ezra is the founder of Judaism -- and offers new understandings regarding the roles that the historical figures and the books that bear their names played in the construction of early Jewish identity. Recommended for large, advanced academic libraries.

Mixed Marriages contains an introduction and fifteen essays, most of which were originally presented as part of a panel discussion at the 2009 Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting in Rome. While many of the essays address issues in Ezra-Nehemiah, other biblical texts are examined, as well as literature from *Elephantine*, *Qumran*, and the *Pseudepigrapha*. All of the authors address the topic of intermarriage, but, like the biblical and extra-biblical texts they examine, they differ in their approaches and conclusions. The volume provides a good overview of current scholarly discussion of intermarriage and group identity in Second Temple Judaism. Overall, the essays contribute to the broader conversation regarding the formation of Judaism during the Second Temple period when separation and integration were key, pivotal issues. Recommended for larger academic libraries.

Beth A. Bidlack, Librarian, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH

Berkowitz, Joshua. *Third Base for Life: A Memoir of Fathers, Sons, and Baseball*. New York: Vantage Point Books, 2012. \$15.95. (9781936467228).

When Gabe Berkowitz asks his father Joshua if he can play in the same exclusive baseball tournament in Cooperstown Dreams Park as his cousins, Joshua is reluctant to consent. With only a year of little league under his belt, Joshua does not think Gabe is ready for that level of competition. Gently prodded by his wife to support Gabe's dreams, Joshua realizes that he should stop letting his own fears hold him back in life and assembles a team from his son's small Jewish Day School in Boston. Recruiting players and convincing parents is not an easy task: some parents need assurance there would be kosher food at the tournament, others wondered if it would "damage the kids' psyche" to compete in a tournament with children whose baseball skills were far superior to their own. However, the Rashi Rams team is formed and miraculously accepted into the tournament. The players and coaches overcome many obstacles as they prepare to play at Cooperstown and as they face formidable opponents on the field. Yet despite these challenges, it is an incredible experience for everyone involved with the team.

Berkowitz, a physician, has crafted a tender memoir that will resonate not only with baseball enthusiasts, but with anyone looking for a compelling story about the bonds between fathers and sons. His focus includes not only his relationship with his father and his son, but also highlights the relationships between other children and parent coaches on the team including one parent battling cancer. Berkowitz resisted turning the story into a cheap Jewish knock-off of the classic baseball movie, *The Bad News Bears*, and the children in the story are written about in a way that is respectful and generally is a true reflection of their age. Recommended.

Aimee Lurie, Librarian, Agnon School, Beachwood, OH; Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award, AJL

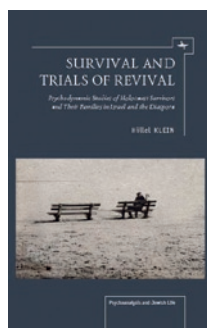


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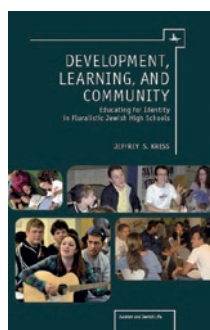
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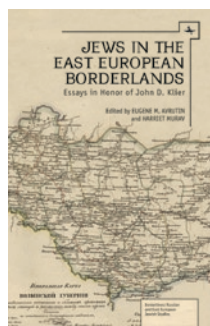
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Rabbi Shimon ben Zemach Duran (1361-1444) was a colorful rabbinic authority in Algiers. In his book, *Zohar Harakia*, on methods of enumerating the 613 commandments, he summarizes the work of previous authorities on this subject, especially Maimonides and Nachmanides. He also presents his own system of enumeration. Thus, his work is a compact introduction to this fundamental subject. The text, first printed in 1515, is written clearly and arranged as a commentary on Ibn Gabirol's poetic version of the 613 commandments, which is chanted on Shavuot. This English translation and notes make it accessible to lay readers as well as students of Jewish law, liturgy, and medieval Jewish history.

"Philip Caplan's translation of *Zohar Harakia* by Shimon ben Zemach Duran is a learned and faithful rendition of an important Jewish religious classic. The work consists of a commentary by a major medieval rabbi on a major liturgical poem by the great Solomon Ibn Gabirol dealing with the 613 commandments. Mr. Caplan's translation will be studied and appreciated by anyone who is interested in medieval Jewish halakha, poetry, and liturgy."

—Raymond P. Scheindlin,
Jewish Theological Seminary of America

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Bleich, J. David. *Contemporary Halakhic Problems.* (Contemporary Halakhic Problems; vol. VI). Jersey City: Ktav, 2012. 455 pp. \$39.50 HC; \$26.95 PB. (9781602801950; 9781602801943).

This volume, the latest in the series, includes a selection of Rabbi Bleich's columns from the journal *Tradition* and portions of his *Shi'urim* and seminars delivered at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and elsewhere.

Rabbi Bleich tackles the various subjects thoroughly and eruditely. He does not aim to reach a *Psak-Halkhah* (halakhic determination); however he analyzes the process of discussion and presents as many points of view as possible. All the problems are very interesting. Some relate to medical issues and result from innovation and technology: choosing between therapies, blood-sugar tests, use of Viagra on Shabbat. Among other highlights: torture and the ticking bomb, sacrificing the few to save the many, issues concerning Kohanim, the case of the poisoned sandwich, and a \$25,000,000 Funeral.

The book can serve both as a reference book and as a reading material. There are illuminating footnotes and useful indices of passages cited, names and subjects. This worthwhile book is a must for academic Jewish libraries, synagogue libraries, Yeshivot, Kollels, and Jewish Day High Schools.

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

Blidstein, Gerald J. (Ya'akov). *Society and Self: on the Writings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik.* New York: Orthodox Union Press, 2012. 155 pp. \$25.00. (9781602802049).

Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik was the leading Rabbi and thinker of Modern Orthodoxy in the United States in the twentieth century. His influence extended to Israel and the rest of the English speaking countries. He taught for very many years and his students have gathered his works and published those using notes and tape recordings. Many have also published their personal recollections of his opinions and conduct. Professor Blidstein was a prominent student and has published a number of essays about "the Rav" in various books and journals. They have now been gathered into one volume. He addresses many issues including: was Rabbi Soloveitchik really a "religious Zionist"; how did he see the Jewish people; and his approach to the dialogue with the Catholic Church. Professor Blidstein also discusses his attitude to death and mourning. Of special interest is the distinction between "a priori" and "a posteriori." He describes situations where "the Rav" would not have approved a course of action, but since the decision has already been taken, he advised how to continue.

Although the essays have been gathered from different sources and were written at different times, the work has a logical structure. Unfortunately, there is some duplication of material between the essays, which can be irritating. However, I did find the book to be a useful collection.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Carlebach, Elisheva and Jacob J. Schachterm editors. *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations: In Honor of David Berger.* (The Brill Reference Library of Judaism, v.33). Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012. 547 pp. \$237.00. (9789004221178).

This book contains articles on a number of issues of special interest to Professor Berger, Dean of the Bernard Revel Graduate School at Yeshiva University. How did Christians understand Judaism? What did Jews think of Christians? What was the influence of Christian Culture on Judaism? Anti-Jewish violence and conversionary efforts are analyzed, as are some aspects of current dialogue between Christians and Jews. Among the 22 articles are such topics as: "Judaizing the Passion: The Case of the Crown of Thorns in the Middle Ages"; "The Different Hebrew Versions of the 'Talmud Trial' of 1240 in Paris"; "Karaism and Christianity: An Evolving Relationship"; and "The Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam and the Status of Christians." This article on Amsterdam by Miriam Bodian discusses how the views of Conversos about Christianity changed after they left Spain and settled in Amsterdam. Did they still consider Christianity a form of idolatry? Was the Protestant faith also a form of idolatry? Did their understanding of Christian faith influence how they understood Jewish belief?

This is but one example of a book filled with valuable new contributions to the field of Jewish-Christian relations. It is recommended for all research collections in Judaica, as well as those in Jewish-Christian relations.

*James P. Rosenbloom, Judaica Librarian, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA;
Past President, Association of Jewish Libraries*



Davis, Marni. *Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition.* (Goldstein-Goren Series in American Jewish History). New York: NYU Press, 2012. 272 pp. \$32.00. (9780814720288). Also available as an ebook.

Interest in Prohibition has remained constant for many years. Ken Burns' 2011 documentary reinforced the issue's relevance by raising both scholarly and moral questions surrounding the issue and its history. Professor Marni Davis's important book frames the discussion in particularly Jewish terms.

Jews and Booze is divided into three parts. Part 1, which covers the Nineteenth Century, explains that, while some Jews owned bars and distilleries (a few also ran breweries), their involvement was a matter of opportunity, as it allowed acculturation into American society. More important, none of the important Jewish leaders before 1900 were active supporters or sponsors of the Temperance movement. Part 2, "Alcohol and Anti-Semitism," first describes the effect of the Eastern European Jews on the issue. It explores how the line between "Wet" and "Dry" merged into anti-Semitism during the 1890s and after, and what that change meant in various parts of the country (including Atlanta, where it became part of the debate over Leo Frank). Part 3, "Jews and the Prohibition Era," explores the Jewish responses to prohibition in the early 20th century. "Rabbis and Other Bootleggers" describes the Jewish responses to the movement prior to 1920, particularly in the South, where it intersected with race relations. "The Law of the Land is the Law" explores varying and frequently confusing reactions to the Dry years of the 1920s by Rabbis, bootleggers and others.

Marni Davis has given us an important summary of the role of liquor in American Jewish life, and its connection to other issues. It should be considered for academic collections. However, its tone makes it no more than an option for most synagogues.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Dojc, Yuri and Katya Krausova. *Last Folio: Textures of Jewish Life in Slovakia.* Photographs by Yuri Dojc. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011. 128 pp. \$24.95. (9780253223777).

Haunting images of disintegrating books, desolate shelves and damaged *tefillin* are enough of a reason for libraries to purchase *Last Folio: Textures of Jewish Life in Slovakia*. This slim catalog of the recent exhibit by award-winning photographer Yuri Dojc gives the reader a new viewpoint of the indescribable loss of the Holocaust. The accompanying text describing the journey that produced these pictures is well written and concise. The work, which could easily be turned into a coffee table book, is an inexpensive addition for a synagogue or research library. Even though many of the photographs are online, the stories behind them are not; and after all, preserving these stories of what was lost in the Holocaust should be part of the mission of all AJL member libraries.

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

Dror, Yehezkel. *Israeli Statecraft: National Security Challenges and Responses.* (BESA Studies in International Security). London and New York: Routledge, 2011. 246 pp. \$138.00. (9780415616300).

The author is Israel's preeminent specialist on public policy with close ties to government decision makers. With a deep appreciation of both the social sciences and security studies, he integrates principles from these disciplines into a long-term historical public policy analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The theoretical framework presented here, while focused on specifics of Israel, is applicable to security studies in general. For Dror, statecraft must necessarily take into consideration a concern for its populations which ultimately feeds into what the author considers Israel's most pressing challenge: its Arab population and the government's policy on Jewish settlements and the occupied territories. Israel's successes are noted: the establishment of strong diplomatic relations with western powers, especially the United States, nuclear opacity, and a strong message to the Arab World that the annihilation of the Jewish state by force is unattainable. But the author stresses the need for long-term thinking and related policies that will bring about an integration of peoples into a regional peace plan. In a succinct manner, Dror presents a well-documented analysis that deserves a great deal of appreciation and thought. This is a study for security professionals and anyone interested in Israeli political choices.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC



Dynner, Glenn, editor. *Holy Dissent: Jewish and Christian Mystics in Eastern Europe*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011. 406 p. \$44.95. (9780814335178).

The Jewish-Christian encounter is rarely simple and the imprint of one culture upon another appears in unexpected places. *Holy Dissent* examines the influence of Christianity on Jewish sects within Eastern Europe and vice-versa. Many of the essays concentrate on the Christian influence on Hasidut. Others examine little-known Christian sects such as the Subbotniks and Dukhobors that adopted Jewish practices. Pawel Maciejko shows how Rabbinic leaders such as Jacob Emden actually endorsed elements of Christian doctrine in order to make a united front against Sabbateanism and Frankism. Perhaps most surprising is Marsha Keith Schuchard's essay tracing the impact of Sabbateanism on William Blake and Emanuel Swedenborg. Recommended for academic libraries.

Daniel Scheide, Librarian, Wimberly Library, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL; RAS President, AJL

Ellenson, David and Gordis, Daniel. *Pledges of Jewish Allegiance: Conversion, Law and Policymaking in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Orthodox Responsa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012. 216 pp. \$30.00. (9780804778053).

The subject matter of this book has great relevance today; particularly in Israel where the official government led (Orthodox) Rabbinical Courts determine who is a Jew and who is not a Jew.

The question of who is a Jew is a modern one. The problem was created by the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) in the waning years of the 18th century and the changing relationship between the nation state and the citizen. As Jews began assimilating they often left their Judaism behind or wished to marry a non-Jew upon their recognized conversion. Once Israel was formed in 1948, the dilemma only increased as the government had to address the thorny and often complicated question of "Who is a Jew?" with meaningful civic implications.

The book is divided into five chapters which cover the rabbinic sources, discuss how 19th century Rabbis in Germany and Eastern Europe answered the question, then turn to the issue in America and Germany in the 20th century. The fifth chapter focuses exclusively on the State of Israel.

It is the concluding chapter that will be controversial to some and draw criticism from many Orthodox. The authors draw the conclusion from their analysis that Jewish law is not dispassionate and impervious to change, but instead is quite flexible and open to considerations of larger public policy and attuned to the very personal concerns of the respondent. This does not mean that precedent or tradition is ignored, but that the Rabbis "performed their *halachic* work with an eye to the demands of the law as well as the realia of the rapidly metamorphosing world in which they lived."

David Tesler, Yonkers, New York

Engel, David, Lawrence H. Schiffman and Elliot R. Wolfson, editors. *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan*. (Supplements to the Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy). Leiden: Brill, 2012. 329 pp. \$176.00. (978900422233).

The articles in this volume concentrate on Medieval Jewish history, especially on Jewish-Christian relations. Subjects range from "Were Jews Made in the Image of God? Christian Perspectives and Jewish Existence in Medieval Europe" to "Orality and Literacy: the French Tosaphists." Kenneth Stow writes about the Christian attitude toward the martyrdom of Jewish children by their parents in "The Cruel Jewish Father: From Miracle to Murder." Two articles hold very different views of Rashi's biblical commentaries. Avraham Grossman in "The Commentary of Rashi on Isaiah and the Jewish-Christian Debate" argues that Rashi uses his commentary on Isaiah to present his polemic with Christianity. Daniel Lasker, on the other hand, in "Jewish Knowledge of Christianity in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," says that he does not believe that scholars who see anti-Christian polemic in Rashi's biblical commentaries have proved their thesis.

One particularly fascinating article is David Engel's "Salo Baron's View of the Middle Ages in Jewish thought." Baron held a less negative view of Jewish life in the Middle Ages, and a less positive view of Jewish life in modern times, than the views of many other Jewish historians. Engel suggests that general Polish historiography during the period when Baron was first formulating his historical views might have influenced Baron as he was developing his own views on Jewish history. Hopefully, this will lead other scholars to investigate other early influences on Baron. This book is highly recommended for any research collection on Jewish history.

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

Feldman, Daniel Z. & Stuart W. Halpern, editors. *Mi-Tokh ha-Ohel: ha-Haftarot = From Within the Tent: the Haftarot: Essays on the Weekly Haftarah Reading from the Rabbis & Professors of Yeshiva University.* New York: The Michael Scharf Publication Trust of Yeshivah University; New Milford: Maggid Books, 2011. 743 pp. \$29.95. (9781613290316).

In contrast to Maggid's series from Yeshivat Har Etzion (reviewed in AJL Reviews May/June 2012), these essays do not represent a unified 'Yeshiva University approach' to Tanakh study. Quite the contrary, this volume is meant to demonstrate the diversity of the institution. Accordingly, some authors employ close readings of the text, some demonstrate the relationship between the *haftarah* and the corresponding *parashah*, and some simply use the *haftarah* as a jumping off point to discuss some *halakhic*, *aggadic* or historical theme. There are essays of a scholarly bent aimed at the academy or classroom and some in a conversational style better suited for the pulpit. In addition to the weekly readings, special Haftarot for holidays are covered as well. This work is primarily aimed at a Modern Orthodox audience, but any Jewish institution will find something of value in this wide-ranging collection. Recommended for synagogue and school collections.

Daniel Scheide, Librarian, Wimberly Library, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL; RAS President, AJL

Fischman, Stanley H. *Seven Steps to "Mentschhood": How to Help your Child Become a Mentsch: an Interactive Guide for Parents.* Israel: Penina Press, 2012. 144 pp. \$18.95. (9781936068234).

This handbook for parents of elementary school aged children uses seven quotes from the Tanakh as stepping stones to leading an ethical Jewish life. Each quote demonstrates a Jewish value which builds on the one before; starting from the more concrete ("you shall love your fellow man as yourself") and moving to the more abstract ("you shall be holy"). The chapters start with a discussion of the quotation, followed by stories from rabbinic literature or contemporary sources that illustrate the value. Fischman then gives examples of how a child can apply this value to his/her life, especially at school.

The author draws not only on Jewish texts, but also on educational and psychological theory. Directed mostly at parents, this book also includes notes to the students and starting points for parent-child discussions.

In a couple of the chapters, the author wanders a little from his main point. Chapter 2 in particular, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart," seems to spend more time on the later part of the quote on rebuking your fellow man than on dealing with hatred or difficult people.

While Fischman wrote this for Yeshiva students and parents, the lessons could certainly be used in other day school, supplementary programs, and at home.

Recommended for synagogue and school libraries.

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

Frakes, Jerold C. *Yerusholayim de'Lita: di Yidishe kultur in der Lite = Jerusalem of Lithuania: A Reader in Yiddish Cultural History.* Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2011. 285 pp. \$59.95. (9780814211670).

This volume is at one and the same time an anthology of Yiddish-language texts about Jewish Lithuania and a reader for intermediate and advanced students of Yiddish. According to the preface (which is in English), this book "arose from the need for practical reading materials for...students in the Summer Program in Yiddish Language and Literature at the Vilnius Yiddish Institute at the Universitetas Vilniaus." The 51 selections, which are Yiddish-only with Yiddish-English glossaries, are "by and about representative individuals and cultural groups in Jewish Lithuania – particularly Vilnius and its environs – over the course of the last four centuries." The brief texts vary in their reading levels, as indicated by the bracketed numerals [1] to [4] (ascending level of difficulty) adjacent to the passages' titles. Background readings are by Professor Frakes (a specialist in Old Yiddish literature at the University of Buffalo, SUNY), but the majority of texts are excerpted from previously published works. Chronologically, the original sources range from the *Mayse-bukh* (1602) to a contemporary short story (1996) by the linguist Dovid Katz. Their subject matter is rich and diverse, covering a gamut of historical, folkloristic, literary, and scholarly genres and topics. Unusually, the readings' original orthographies are retained; this is done intentionally, so as to familiarize students with the diversity of spelling schemes employed in Yiddish. *Jerusalem of Lithuania* is recommended for research collections with strong holdings on Eastern European Jewish (especially Yiddish) culture.

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

Garber, Zev, editor. *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*. (Shofar Supplements in Jewish Studies). West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011. 405 pp. \$59.95 (9781557535795). Also available as an ebook.

Stahl, Neta, editor. *Jesus Among the Jews: Representation and Thought*. (Routledge Jewish Studies Series). London and New York: Routledge 2012. 248 pp. \$135.00. (9780415782586). Also available as an ebook.

The Jewish Jesus is an outstanding collection of 19 essays: each deals with the Jewish nature of Jesus in the context of history and theology. A number of the essays were originally presented at a symposium on "Jesus in the Context of Judaism and the Challenge to the Church," hosted by the Samuel Rosenthal Center for Judaic Studies at Case Western University in 2009.

Part one is an historical examination of Jesus based upon classical texts, including *kabbalah*, various mystical tracts, and *Midrashim*, with the notion that he was a rebel Nazarene Rabbi. Part two is devoted to the relationship of Judaism to Christianity in broad, thematic terms. Particular focus is placed on the tensions that emerged once Christianity was firmly established and conflicted with its theological and cultural origins, along with what is considered as Jewish misunderstandings of Jesus. Part three is a diverse collection of essays that deal with Jewish scholarship on Jesus and the impact of Judaism on the belief system brought about following the demise of Jesus. One argument presented in this section is an analysis of four Jewish thinkers' reclamation of the true origins of Jesus, providing a service to inter-faith discussions. Questions at the end of each essay guide the readers in further discussions examining ideas that are presented. Overall, this is a testament to the vitality of a continuing Jewish-Christian dialogue as well as a subject for study by Christian bible scholars and those interested in early Church history.

Jesus Among the Jews is a collection of 14 essays authored primarily by academicians of Hebrew and religious studies, all of whom look at the role of Jesus in Jewish creative thought and history. Jesus is known to almost all biblical scholars as an historic figure, but the question of the Jewishness of his character as viewed by the Gospels is examined here as a Jewish text with a foundation in David, Isaiah, and the Psalms. Included also is an essay looking at magic in Jewish literature during Talmudic times as an additional possible source for a Jewish interpretation of Jesus. Other sources examined include the *Palestinian Talmud* and the *Midrash Psalms*. Moving to another period, from antiquity to the 13th century, the figure of Abraham Abulafia is viewed as a key figure in the subversion of both the Jewish and Christian understanding of Jesus as the son of God. In early modern Judaism, one essay discusses the development of Jewish Messianism that brings attention to and an attraction of Jesus. There is even an essay on Israeli artists' images of Jesus, which rounds out an impressive array of varied disciplinary interpretations by Jewish commentators on Jesus.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Gilboa, Amos, Ephraim Lapid and Yochi Erlich, eds. *Israel's Silent Defenders: An Inside Look at Sixty Years of Israeli Intelligence*. Ramat ha-Sharon: Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center; Jerusalem & New York: Gefen Publishing House, 2011. 385 pp. \$29.95. (9789652295286).

Written mostly by former members of the Israeli intelligence community and published by the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center (IICC), this book surveys the history of the three Israeli intelligence services: the Israel Defense Intelligence (IDI, which is part of the Israel Defense Force, the IDF), the Mossad (the Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations) and the Israel Security Agency (ISA, known by its Hebrew abbreviation Shabak). The book is divided into six sections, followed by three appendices and data about the contributors; no bibliography or index are included, although some references are made in the text. In the first section three former heads of each of the services describe their visions and challenges. This is followed by descriptions of the foundation of the three intelligence services. The third section examines eight examples of success and failure of the services followed by a section examining intelligence challenges in different arenas.

The articles are quite informative though issues are somewhat repetitive. The fact that most of the articles were published by the IICC has advantages and disadvantages: the authors know much more than they could publish and whereas authors outside the intelligence community might not hesitate to cite foreign sources for secret events which are forbidden by the Israeli censorship to be initially published in Israel, it seems less likely in this case. Thus, one could find much more data and analysis in other publications about the Israeli intelligence community, but the lack of a bibliography leaves this task to the initiative of the reader. The lack of an index makes finding specific topics or persons cumbersome. The illustrations add an important aspect. The strength of this book is bringing much of the sixty years of history into one volume in succinct and clear language from a

reliable source, but that source limits what and how much it is ready to reveal. Consequently, this is an important historical survey of the Israeli intelligence community, but readers should be aware of its limitations.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

Goldwag, Arthur. *The New Hate: A History of Fear and Loathing on the Populist Right*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2012. 368 pp. \$27.95 HC; \$16.00. PB. (9780307379696; 9780307742513). Also available as an ebook.

While this book is ostensibly about the 'New Hate,' conspiracy theories in right-wing American political discourse, Goldwag spends far more time examining the 'Old Hate,' in particular anti-Semitism. It is striking how so many conspiracy theories that take a neutral or even positive view of Jews closely borrow from the tropes of anti-Jewish hate literature. Just substitute 'Jew' for 'liberal' or 'Freemason' or 'Muslim' and the direct influence of *The International Jew* and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion jumps off the page. While only one chapter of *The New Hate* deals directly with anti-Semitism, Goldwag continually shows how the conspiracy theories of the past and present are just one step removed from the hatred of Jews. A fascinating look at the literary forbearers of today's Tea Party and 'Birther' movements and their connection to Jewish history.

Daniel Scheide, Librarian, Wimberly Library, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL; RAS President, AJL

Gotliffe, Harvey. *The Oy Way: Following the Path of Most Resistance*. Santa Cruz: Cogitator Publications, 2012. 90 pp. \$14.95. (9781882302369).

This is a less-than-successful attempt by the author and his friends to present thirty-six Yiddish idioms as meditative exercises. Each expression is written in English transliteration followed by English pronunciation guide, and English translation. Black and white photographs demonstrate the various stances. Verbal instructions about movements, benefits, and thoughts accompany each idiom. The book includes a short chapter about "the story of Yiddish," and an explanation "why The Oy Way." There is a concise bibliography, and a short biography of Harvey Gotliffe. One can learn about Gotliffe's project on www.theoyway.com. The Oy Way is an attempt to be cute and entertaining. However, the clichés are too old and the presentation is not good enough to stimulate interest on the part of someone new to the subject of Yiddish idioms. The book is not a worthy acquisition for any library.

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

Greenspahn, Frederick E., editor. *Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah: New Insights and Scholarship*. (Jewish Studies in the 21st Century) New York: New York University Press, 2011. 250 pp. \$25.00. (9780814732861). Also available as an ebook.

Despite the subtitle, most of the essays presented here are literature reviews. This is not a drawback, however. In a field that is constantly evolving, it can be difficult to keep abreast of current trends. This collection stems from a 2009 conference held at Florida Atlantic University. As someone who attended the conference, it is interesting how some presenters come across better in print and how some are much clearer in person. Particularly fascinating are Shaul Magid's examination of biblical interpretation in *Hasidut*, Matt Goldish's survey of messianism and Allison P. Coudert's history of Christian Kabbalah. It's hard to think of a better introduction to the current field of Kabbalah scholarship. If you have an interest in Kabbalah, but are not aware of recent trends in the field, this is the book to pick up.

Daniel Scheide, Librarian, Wimberly Library, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL; RAS President, AJL

Handelman, Susan. *Make Yourself a Teacher: Rabbinic Tales of Mentors and Disciples*. (Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies). Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011. 151 pp. \$70.00 HC; \$30.00 PB. (9780295991290; 9780295991283).

Susan Handelman has written books on Jewish studies and literary theory, with titles that conjure up violent images. Her latest volume is a slim one, based on a series of lectures she delivered in Seattle in 2004, and it explicitly strives to make the academic enterprise a gentler one. Handelman explores the relationship between teachers and students through close readings of stories from the Talmud. She makes her task more challenging (for the Talmud abounds with accounts of teaching and learning) by focusing on the figure of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, one of the most difficult Sages. Rereading the well-known stories about Rabbi Eliezer (including the *Oven of Akhnai*, of course), Handelman brings a wider perspective, easing the stories back into their literary

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context, and a focused interest in pedagogy. She brings modern Jewish thinkers into her conversation – Levinas, Rabbi Yosef Eliyahu Henkin and Michael Chabon, among others. The book was written to be accessible and its insights, literary and educational, are relevant to the many readers of these rabbinic sources, and to teachers and lecturers seeking insight from Jewish sources.

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

Henze, Matthias, editor. *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. 568 pp. \$50.00. (9780802803887). Also available as an ebook.

This collection of eighteen commissioned essays written by a group of international scholars serves as a systematic introduction to biblical interpretation in the Jewish literature dating from the third century BCE through the second century CE. Each of the authors focuses on a particular literary work and discusses the types of biblical interpretation that are found within it. The resulting survey is divided into eight sections—an introduction on the beginnings of biblical interpretation by renowned scholar James Kugel; the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (which includes essays on the Hebrew Bible, *Septuagint*, and *Targums*); the Rewritten Bible (which includes essays on *Jubilees*, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, and Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*); the Qumran literature; apocalyptic literature and testaments (which includes essays on the book of *Daniel*, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*); wisdom literature (which includes essays on Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon); Hellenic Judaism (which includes essays on the writings of Philo and Josephus); and biblical interpretations in antiquity (which also serves as a conclusion to the collection). The various modes of interpretation described include lexical interpretation, analogy, the filling of gaps, resolving contradictions, the identification of anonymous figures, name etymologies, allegory, theological exegesis, and historical contemporization. Indexes and an extensive bibliography are included. Recommended for academic libraries.

Beth A. Bidlack, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH

Hoffman, Lawrence A., editor. *All These Vows: Kol Nidre*. (Prayers of Awe, vol. 2). Woodstock: Jewish Lights), 2011. 264 pp. \$24.99. (9781580234306).

Another fascinating and useful series on prayer and liturgy is brought to life by Rabbi Hoffman, long-time Professor of Liturgy at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

"*Kol Nidre* is at one and the same time both less and more than a prayer: 'less than' a prayer in that it is actually a legal formula with none of the formal characteristics that designate prayers as a distinctive outcry of the human spirit: but 'more than' a prayer in that it is an entire ritual in and of itself."

Discussing the issues raised by the moral problem of abjuring all vows, Rabbi Hoffman considers the opinions of the seventh-century *geonim* (Rabbinic authorities) that, speaking of *Kol Nidre*, "call it a foolish custom that is to be avoided" and debunks theories connecting the prayer to the suffering of conversos during the Spanish Inquisition. 38 essays explore the history of the prayer, its relation to Jewish law, its appearance, modifications and omission in the liturgy through the ages, the music and interpretation of the prayer today. The authors include a roster of well-regarded Rabbis and scholars in the American and British world of Reform, Conservative and Liberal Judaism. As is often the case in a collection of essays, there is much that is repetitive, but the reader can choose to read just a few essays and still understand them thoroughly. Includes bibliographic notes, glossary but no index.

Both this volume and volume 1, *Who by Fire, Who by Water -- Un'taneh Tokef*, (reviewed in *AJL Reviews* Nov./Dec 2010) are recommended for all non-Orthodox synagogues, schools and centers.

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

Honig, Avrom and Honig, Bubbe. *Feed Me Bubbe: Recipes and Wisdom from America's Favorite Online Grandmother*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 2011. 218 pp. \$16.00. (9780762441884). Also available as an ebook.

Bubbe became a food writer at age 80. *Feed Me Bubbe* is a compilation of recipes from Bubbe's online show that can be found at www.FeedMeBubbe.com. On her show, Bubbe demonstrates the recipes found in this kosher cookbook. Most of the recipes are traditional Jewish kosher fare such as *kasha varnishkes*, potato latkes, marble mandel bread and matzo apple kugel. The recipes are written clearly and are easy to follow. Each recipe is accompanied by an anecdote by Bubbe and Bubbe's family pictures. At the bottom of each page is a Yiddish

word and its translation. The book includes basic information on keeping kosher. Also included is an annotated list of Bubbe's favorite Yiddish songs, holiday menus, a glossary of cooking terms, measurements and a general index. Recommended for all libraries that have a cookbook collection. *Feed Me Bubbe* would make an excellent shower gift for someone who is interested in cooking traditional Jewish food or for an experienced cook who wants good, simple Jewish recipes.

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

Ibn Ezra, Abraham. *Sefer Ha'ibbur: A Treatise on the Calendar*. Translated and annotated by Mordechai S. Goodman. Jersey City: Ktav, 2011. 246 pp. \$59.50. (9781602801608).

Calendrical reckoning is an essential subject in rabbinic texts, which understand time as a process. See: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10382>. Intercalation and calculating the molad (new moon) are complicated scientific skills, and, according to some, require esoteric astral magic power that provides insight into arrangement of the constellations.

Eleventh and twelfth century Spanish Rabbis such as R. Abraham bar Hiyya, Abraham Ibn Ezra, and Maimonides contributed to practical calendrical determination, drawing on the findings of Greco-Arabic scientific astronomy. Besides being an awesome biblical exegete, religious and secular poet, philosopher and grammarian, the polymath Ibn Ezra wrote scientific works on astronomy, mathematics, and the Jewish calendar. Two versions of *Sefer ha-Ibbur* (Book of Intercalation), were written. Goodman, an excellent translator proficient in the technicalities of the Jewish calendar, provides the first annotated idiomatic and clear English translation of Ibn Ezra's *Sefer ha-Ibbur*. Goodman claims he has drawn on seven different manuscripts. Another significant translation of *Sefer ha-Ibbur* was that of S.H Halberstam (1874). While Goodman's is not a critical edition, his excellent English translation is followed by eight useful appendices and a glossary of helpful technical terms.

Almost all of Goodman's bibliography comes from the 19th and 20th centuries. Thus Goodman does not cite the recent discovery of Shlomo Sela (*Abraham ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science*, 2003) that a larger fragment of the last 3rd chapter exists. This aside, this edition and translation of ibn Ezra's *Sefer ha-Ibbur* is a valuable contribution. Recommended.

David B Levy, Touro College, New York

Idel, Moshe. *Saturn's Jews: On the Witches' Sabbath and Sabbateanism*. (Robert & Arlene Kogod Library Judaic Studies). New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011. 216 pp. \$140.00. HC; \$34.95 PB. (9781441121448; 9780826444530).

Moshe Idel's new book, *Saturn's Jews*, lends new insight into the impact of fourteenth and fifteenth century astrology. His focus is the phenomenon of "Saturnism." He explores the connection between a fascination with the seventh planet Saturn and the development of later Jewish mysticism and the Sabbatean movement that became prominent in the seventeenth century. Hellenistic, Arab, and Jewish cultures were heavily influenced by astrology, and it is clear that many believed that each "people" was presided over by its own special planet. Because of its association with Saturday, Saturn was closely connected with the Jews and the Jewish Sabbath. Saturn was also considered to preside over the dark arts and witchcraft and Idel explains how these associations were to serve as the basis for widespread anti-Semitism in the medieval world.

Saturnism was rejected by the majority of mainstream Judaism, and condemned by Maimonides. Nevertheless the astrological associations were to become the focus of intense examination by what Idel terms a "secondary elite," a small band made up of a few noted sages and Kabbalists, including Abraham ibn Ezra, Abraham Abulafia, Joseph Ashkenazi, and Yohanan Alemanno. Idel also explores the influence that Saturnism exerted on the Sabbateans. The "Messiah" was supposedly associated with the planet Saturn, and this had dramatic implications for the Sabbath observer Sabbatai Zevi (1626-1676).

This is a fascinating, scholarly study which is complimented by notes, indexes and a bibliography.

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

Jacobs, Jill. *Where Justice Dwells: A Hands-On Guide to Doing Social Justice in Your Jewish Community*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 2011. 264 pp. \$24.99 (9781580234525). Also available as an ebook.

Where Justice Dwells is a practical guide for Jewish community leaders. Jacobs does not sugar-coat the difficulties in the day-to-day work involved in social justice, but tackles them head on. She warns against

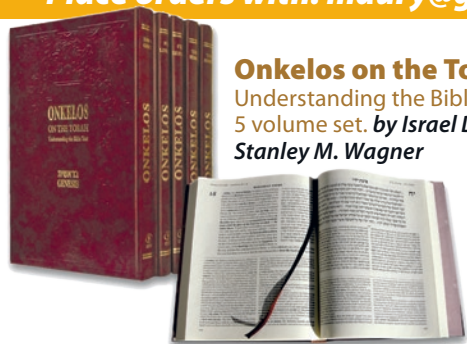
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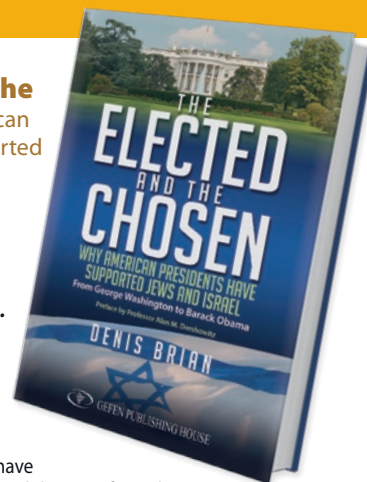
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the 'Tzedek tzedek tirdof' syndrome, slapping popular biblical or Rabbinic phrases onto the cause of the week without serious consideration of the texts. She highlights the importance of social action within Jewish tradition, maintaining that it is no less 'authentically Jewish' than *kashrut* or Shabbat. She notes that *Halakhah* encompasses all aspects of Jewish life and that ethical business practices and providing for the needy are deeply established within our heritage, and she constantly infuses the discussion with a wide range of *halakhic* and *midrashic* sources. A well-written handbook, it inspires while avoiding the preachiness of similar works.

Daniel Scheide, Librarian, Wimberly Library, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL; RAS President, AJL

Jones, Kenneth R. *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Apocrypha*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2011. 305 pp. \$166.00. (9789004210271).

Popovic, Mladen, editor. *The Jewish Revolt against Rome: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism). Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2011. 472 pp. \$196.00. (9789004216686).

Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 provides a close reading of the Roman Empire's reach and power as described in the writings of one oppressed population of the empire whose cultural and religious center, Jerusalem, was razed to the ground in 70 CE. Jones suggests that the paucity of native literatures from most of the Roman Empire does not allow for a comprehensive cultural reading of other oppressed populations, but the abundant Jewish national literature that survived the destruction allows just that. He offers a post-colonial reading of 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, 3 Baruch, 4 Baruch, the Sibylline Oracle and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* as representations of cultural resistance, examining difficult questions raised by the people affected by the devastation of the land and its people. Recommended for academic libraries collecting in the area of and interdisciplinary studies of cultural resistance.

The *Jewish Revolt against Rome* is a collection of sixteen articles presented at a conference held at the University of Groningen in 2010. This title aims to bring together different disciplines asking questions about a pivotal period in Jewish history. Literary, archaeological, historical and epigraphic sources are presented and analyzed, attempting to reconstruct the background, the context and the events that came together during the revolt. The volume includes new perspectives on the writings of Josephus Flavius, the Christian Scriptures, the *Epigrapha* and texts of *Dead Sea Scrolls*, as well as evidence suggested by coins found in the area.

These two volumes are part of a growing academic field that is revisiting an event that was the beginning of the end of the Second Jewish Commonwealth. Both are recommended for academic libraries collecting in the area of Post Biblical literature. The *Jewish Revolt against Rome* is also highly recommended for collections in the area of Jewish and Roman history, and Early Christian literatures.

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

Kanoff, Aviva. *The No-Potato Passover: A Journey of Food, Travel and Color*. [Self-published through Brio], 2012. 165 pp. \$29.99. (9780615592626).

Author/chef Kanoff does not have a grudge against potatoes; rather she has challenged herself to find a variety of low-carbohydrate recipes that can be prepared with a minimum of fuss for Passover. Inspired by her love of travel, she features recipes from around the world. This vibrant book has full color photographs of each dish and many other pictures of fresh produce and international scenes. This book is a visual feast.

Unfortunately, Kanoff did not put the same care into the directions for the recipes that she did into the look of the book. Ingredients listed are not always included in the directions (for example, do the sun-dried tomatoes and hearts of palm get added raw or cooked in the Warm Mushroom Salad?), pictures of the dishes do not always match the recipes (e.g. slices of grilled eggplant are pictured for an eggplant, tomato, and red pepper dip), and she doesn't explain unusual ingredients (for instance, where to get *za'tar* [Middle Eastern herb similar to oregano] or what to substitute.) Most oddly, while she features spaghetti squash and quinoa heavily in her recipes and has a section in the introduction devoted to them, she doesn't explain how to cook them or what they taste like. In her dessert section, she abandons her low-carb approach and mostly offers variations on (kosher for Passover) cake-mix baked goods and fruit cobblers.

Experienced cooks will be inspired by her international offerings, but beginners will be frustrated by the incomplete directions. Recommended for large collections only.

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

Kaplan, Steven J. *Rabbinical Counseling*. Lanham: Jason Aronson, 2012. 150 pp. \$60.00. (9780765708557).

The guidance of a Rabbi does not always end where emotional or psychological distress begins. While many people will seek assistance from a licensed psychotherapist, there are times when a Rabbi is sought for counsel. In writing this book, it is Steven J. Kaplan's intention to help the Rabbi to "not only be *halachically* sound but psychologically accurate" in providing this guidance in a way that is "compatible with Jewish teachings." It is meant for the traditional as well as non-traditional Rabbi, regardless of skill level. The book contains short, readable chapters that include case examples and that quickly get to the heart of what formal counseling textbooks might take pages to convey. The chapters are divided into five sections that cover counseling concepts, the connection between religion and psychotherapy, psychodynamic understandings, counseling processes, and various forms of psychological distress the Rabbi will likely encounter. As with any book on counseling, mileage may vary. While it is meant for the Rabbi of any skill level, time and experience will aid in the development of a richer, more nuanced understanding of the information contained within. The book is also peppered with typos. Nonetheless, it serves as an enjoyable and helpful crash course for the Rabbi who may only receive one course (if that) on counseling during Rabbinical school. This book is recommended for synagogues and academic libraries serving rabbinical students.

Rachael Neu, *Reference and Instruction Librarian, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

Kogman-Appel, Katrin. *A Mahzor from Worms: Art and Religion in a Medieval Jewish Community*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012. 295 pp. \$49.95. (9780674064546).

For Kogman-Appel, the "Mahzor from Worms" (now preserved in Leipzig) is "not solely as a series of images, but a whole, a liturgical book and a ritual object of communal character ... a particularly interesting chapter of Jewish book culture, and a witness of Jewish communal life. *A Mahzor from Worms* is about religious concepts, ideas and thoughts, values and norms, and religious rituals and cultural symbols." Kogman-Appel devotes considerable space to accurately place the *Mahzor* in its socio-cultural context, the Qalonymide-Pietist mentality of the followers of Eleazar of Worms. It is a very ambitious agenda and Kogman-Appel has mastered a broad spectrum of *midrashic* and Rabbinic

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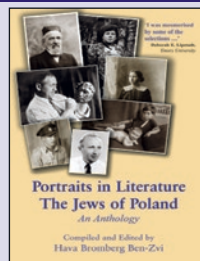
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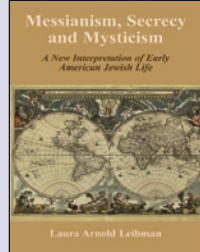
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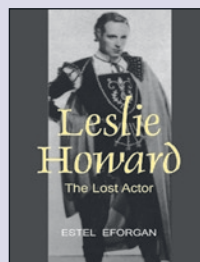
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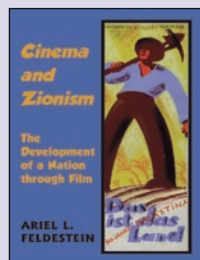
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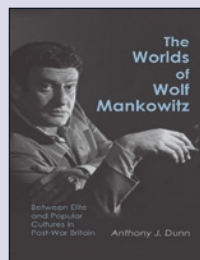
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sources to buttress her arguments. For example, a very short chapter links directly a Passover sermon by Eleazar ben Judah of Worms with the illustrations in the *Mahzor*. The history of the depicted rituals leads the author to the roots of Ashkenazi *Halakhah* (Rabbinic law), *minhag* (custom), ethics, and mystic traditions and the role they played in pietist scholarship, on the one hand, and in the community of Worms, on the other. A scholarly book which goes well beyond Jewish iconography to the core of a medieval Jewish community facing many challenges from within and from the Christian cultural environment. For all academic libraries.

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

Kolsky, Rachel and Roslyn Rawson. *Jewish London: A Comprehensive Guidebook for Visitors and Londoners.* Northampton: Interlink Books, 2012. 224 p. \$17.95. (9781566569002).

The Jews were expelled from England in 1290 and the community was re-established in approximately 1655. London was always the community center and therefore has a very rich Jewish history.

This richly-illustrated guidebook is divided into two parts. The first part includes eight walking tours, primarily in the central London area, which concentrate on Jewish history and modern Jewish institutions. The second part of the book is divided by area and surveys historical sites, restaurants, hotels, synagogues, museums, etc. There is a short section on one-day tours from London. The book enables the reader/user to dispense with a car and most of the sightseeing can be done using public transport. All the walks start and end at an underground station.

However, if I am interested in a list of synagogues or Jewish hotels in London, I have no choice but to use the index of the book. The index does seem to be comprehensive. When I looked for synagogues in the index, I had no problem, but I did not find an entry under restaurants! After I skimmed the index, I found 'cafes and restaurants.' However, the librarian in me cringed, when I found that there are no 'see references' whatsoever. Obviously, there should have been references from 'restaurants' and from 'kosher restaurants.' I hope that they will correct this fault in the next edition.

There is no other guide to Jewish London and this is a beautiful, entertaining and well-prepared book. The authors invested a lot of effort, but the index still needs work.

Chaim Seymour, *Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

Editor's note: Although out-of-date, there are actually two other guides to Jewish London. Jewish London by Linda Zeff, published in 1986 (9780861885398), and The Synagogues of London by Paul Lindsay, published in 1993 (9780853032410).

Kornbluth, Doron. *Why Be Jewish? Knowledge and Inspiration for Jews of Today.* Jerusalem & Monsey: Mosaica Press, 2011. 312 pp. \$17.99. (9780981497471).

Inspirational literature is difficult to categorize, and frequently even tougher to evaluate. This is especially true when dealing with volumes purporting to reinforce Jewish identity.

In the introduction, Kornbluth asserts that a growing number of people have asked the question in the title; what used to be assumed is now subject to intense scrutiny, and the answer is no longer a given. The rest of the book is a series of twenty vignettes exploring the topic from many angles. Each of them is written in a different voice and with a different audience in mind. One is an extended diary entry from a woman who had fallen away from Judaism; her story recounts her return from an assimilated lifestyle to the beginning of an understanding of the richness of Jewish traditions. Another tells of a young Israeli who travels to Asia after his time in the army; his turning point is a meeting with the Dalai Lama, who tells him to return to Judaism, the source of his belief system. The other essays carve out other aspects of Jewish life, and attempt to draw the reader in.

I am sure many people might find their road into Judaism by reading the stories in *Why be Jewish?* Others would connect with a lost piece of their lives and return to religion through it. Kornbluth's essays are emotional but not evangelical, committed but not impassioned. At the same time, I find it hard to be enthusiastic about it. This book should be considered as an optional purchase by synagogue librarians, as an addition to the Spirituality collection.

Fred Isaac, *Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*



Kugel, James L. *A Walk Through Jubilees: Studies in the Book Jubilees and the World of its Creation.* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, 156). Leiden: Brill, 2012. 434 pp. \$212.00. (9789004217683).

The *Book of Jubilees* (probably written in the early second century BCE) is a retelling of much of Genesis and some of Exodus. Kugel says that many of the people of Israel thought that they had lost the favor of God, who had punished them for violating the terms of the Sinai covenant. The author of this book wanted to assure the people that they still had God's favor. *The Book of Jubilees* envisions history as being divided into jubilees (understood as units of forty-nine years, based on a solar calendar). The people could thus see a long term pattern in history. God's alliance with the people predated Sinai. Adam, Enoch, Noah and Abraham were the start of an unending chain of priests. Abraham and his descendants already followed practices similar to those laid out at Sinai. The history of the people is filled with ups and downs, God punishing and then forgiving.

The first half of the book is Kugel's commentary on select verses (based on the 1989 text and translation by James C. VanderKam). The second half of the book is a group of studies on such subjects as whether or not *Jubilees* is older than the *Genesis Apocryphon*; *Jubilees* and Philo on Genesis; and divine names and epithets in *Jubilees*. The strength of the commentary and studies is in the analysis of how the Bible was reinterpreted in *Jubilees* and in other ancient texts.

This barely begins to describe the wealth of material and analysis in this excellent work. It is highly recommended for research collections in Bible or Judaica.

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

Ladin, Joy. *Through the Door of Life: A Jewish Journey Between Genders.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012. 255 pp. \$26.95. (9780299287306). Also available as an ebook.

A fascinating personal narrative of Professor Jay Ladin, a teacher of literature at Yeshiva University, who, after completing his gender transition, returns to the Orthodox Jewish campus as a woman to continue her academic career. The irony of redefining her identity in the context of an institution for which gender and identity are defined in terms of divine law does not escape her or the people that embrace her, or the people who reject her upon her return. The painful moments, the courage, and the humor reflected in Ladin's story are engaging and educating, as she offers the ethical compass and the underlying themes that guided her through it all, Rabbi Hillel's questions from The Ethics of the Fathers, 1:14: "If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am for myself alone, who am I? And if not now, when?"

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

Lamm, Norman. *The Megillah: Majesty & Mystery, a Commentary on Megillat Esther and the Ma'ariv Evening Service for Purim.* Compiled and edited by Joel B. Wolowelsky. New York: OU Press, 2012. 190 pp. \$25.00. (9781602801974).

I recently reviewed Rabbi Norman Lamm's Haggadah, (AJL Reviews, Sept./Oct. 2010) which was prepared in the same way, by selecting appropriate passages from his writings. I have similar reservations about this publication. The reader should be careful with the material since it was originally written in very different contexts and the commentary sometimes lacks consistency or seems very brief.

The book itself is divided into two major parts. The first part is basically the service for the evening of Purim and includes the Evening prayers together with the text of the book of Esther with a commentary. The second part is a selection of Rabbi Lamm's sermons delivered on different important occasions.

I was disappointed, feeling that there was not enough commentary, but the selections do stimulate thought. For example, there is a well-known midrash concerning a maidservant standing by the Red Sea when the Egyptians were swallowed up who-- she saw more than the prophet Ezekiel saw. This is the first time that I have come across a real analysis of this midrash.

The Book of Esther is set in the diaspora and therefore Rabbi Wolowesky chose a number of quotations with regard to proper conduct in a non-Jewish environment.


The sermons were added as an appendix, but I found them interesting as historical documents, written while the events themselves were taking place. His sermons prior to and after the Six Day War really succeed in conveying people's feelings at the time. Maybe we can hope for some more sermons!

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

Lau, Binyamin. *From Yavneh to the Bar Kokhba Revolt.* (The Sages: Character, Context & Creativity, Volume II): New Milford: Maggid Books, 2011. 435 pp. \$24.95. (978159262465).

The second volume of this acclaimed series is now available in English translation. Informed by both traditional and academic sources, Lau weaves together a compelling account of the religious and political struggles of the 1st and 2nd century sages, dealing with the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple and the reality of Roman rule. The tensions between the various factions of Rabbis and Jewish society at large are brought to life, as are the debates regarding nationalism and the authority of the Rabbinat. Lau, a prominent *Dati Leumi* (Religious Zionist) Rabbi takes a middle ground approach to the historical accuracy of Rabbinic texts, more skeptical than traditional commentaries, but less so than academic scholars. At the end of each section, Lau offers brief personal reflections, connecting the issues of *Yavneh* to contemporary Israeli society. The author presents no simple answers, but a treasure-trove of questions. Fascinating and thought-provoking reading, *From Yavneh to the Bar Kokhba Revolt* is highly recommended for all libraries.

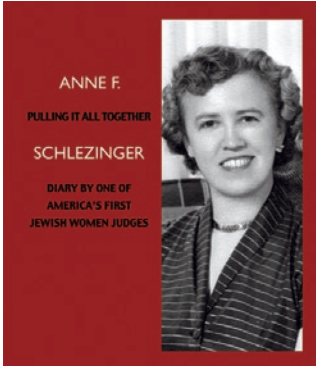
Daniel Scheide, Librarian, Wimberly Library, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL; RAS President, AJL



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PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Diary by One of America's First Jewish Women Federal Judges

Edited by **Prof. Ron Hart**

Introduction
Prof. Shulamit Reinharz
Hadassah-Brandeis Institute

“*Pulling It All Together* is a highly unusual, revealing and well-edited diary that introduces us to the life and work of one of America's first Jewish women judges...Here she reveals many facets of her life and work, shedding light... on crucial decades in twentieth century American history.”

- **Prof. Jonathan Sarna**, Professor of American Jewish History, **Brandeis University** and Chief Historian of the **National Museum of American Jewish History**

ISBN: 9781935604013. Paper. 596 pages. \$34.95

Lister, David. *Intergalactic Judaism: an Analysis of Torah Concepts based on Discoveries in Space Exploration, Physics and Biology.* Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2011. 328 pp. \$29.95. (9789655240535).

Books like this one, on Judaism and science, tend to be of two sorts. The first sort aims to justify Judaism by showing that it is consistent with science (Judaism with an inferiority complex). The second sort takes the opposite approach and examines science or scientific theory in the light of Judaism.

The author, Rabbi of Edgeware United Synagogue near London, is trying to do something else. His book has a lot in common with the philosophical proof of the existence of God through the “argument from design.” This argument states that if one immerses oneself in the complexities of our world, one cannot help but believe that the world was designed by a being and did not happen by chance.

Most of the book is devoted to our knowledge of the solar system. The scientific information is fascinating, well-written and profusely illustrated. There are over thirty chapters, for example: “Divine Brilliance,” “A Sunny Disposition” and “Life on the Outside.”

I was reminded of a book of parables, first the story, then the moral. Most chapters open with a science “lesson” and followed by a moral with a Jewish message, for example: “Just as the

Venera team (who built ships to explore Venus) built on their mistakes... one attempt to attain spiritual greatness paves the way for a second and a third...”

The author is sometimes over-enthusiastic about modern science. There was too much science and too little Judaism. I came away very grateful for the scientific presentation but did not feel that I had learned enough or been inspired enough about my Judaism.

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

Loader, William. *Philo, Josephus, and the Testaments on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in the Writings of Philo and Josephus and in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.* (Attitudes towards Sexuality in Judaism and Christianity in the Hellenistic Greco-Roman Era; vol.4). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. 488 pp. \$65.00. (9780802866417).

Sexuality "is understood in the broad sense of matters pertaining to sexuality rather than the more defined sense which we find in discussion of sexual orientation and sexual theory." As the title indicates, this volume consists of three parts – sexuality in the writings of Philo, sexuality in the writings of Josephus, and sexuality in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. For each set of writings, Loader provides an in-depth introduction, a detailed analysis highlighting each writer's position on a broad range of matters pertaining to sexuality, and a summary conclusion. In addition, the volume contains thorough indexes and an extensive bibliography. This is the fourth volume in the author's series. Other volumes include examinations of sexuality in *Enoch*, *Levi*, and *Jubilees*; the *Dead Sea Scrolls*; and the *Pseudepigrapha*. This volume and the monumental series are recommended for academic libraries and larger synagogue libraries.

Beth A. Bidlack, Librarian, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH

Lorberbaum, Yair. *Disempowered King: Monarchy in Classical Jewish Literature.* Translated by Jonathan Chipman. London: Continuum, 2011. \$44.95. (9781441140883).

Professor Lorberbaum of Bar Ilan University examines the treatment of the concept of kingship in the Bible and Talmudic literature. He identifies three perspectives. Direct theocracy envisions any ongoing human political authority as a betrayal of the God of Israel, believing if the Torah is followed, there is no need for a permanent governmental structure. Royal theology considers the king as chosen by God and, in some real sense, representing Him. The third approach is a rather limited view of the powers of the king. All three interpretations are found in the Bible and the Talmud, but the third one dominates the Talmudic literature, according to Professor Lorberbaum. Recommended for academic collections.

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

Mendelssohn, Moses. *Moses Mendelssohn: Writings on Judaism, Christianity, and the Bible.* (Tauber Institute Series for the Study of European Jewry & The Brandeis Library of Modern Jewish Thought). Edited by Michah Gottlieb. Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011. 267 pp. \$26.00. (9781584656845).

Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), one of the modern period's most famous Jewish philosophers, created a body of work promoting the best ideals of the European Enlightenment with a life devoted to Judaism. This superb selection of material by Mendelssohn allows the reader to experience not only a brilliant mind that helped shape modern Jewish thought; it helps put the reader into the shoes of an eighteenth century Jew. What is striking about this collection are the wonderful contextual essays (prefatory notes, which illuminate the frequent intellectual questions his fame brought about -- and predicaments that Mendelssohn wanted to, or felt forced to, address. The scope of these writings encompasses ancient to European philosophies, history, Jewish thought, Bible and Christianity. Mendelssohn defended his own original and logically reasoned approach for observing *Halakhah* (Jewish law). His defense of Judaism and for "staying Jewish" still resonates today for many. Included are selections of both public and personal letters Mendelssohn wrote to other intellectuals; segments from his books, including *Jerusalem*; and other writings on the Bible translated here from German or Hebrew. Mendelssohn's Enlightenment appeal for religious tolerance in Germany and its outcomes are fascinating given that the same enlightened ideas also shaped the thinking of America's founders. This collection serves as a perfect primer of Mendelssohn's writings which lead the reader to better understand his influence on modern Jewish thinking until the present. The book is structured for easy use in a college or synagogue course and will likely spur plenty of class discussions. Includes bibliographical references and index. Recommended.

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

Meyers, Helene. *Identity Papers: Contemporary Narratives of American Jewishness.* New York, SUNY Press, 2011. 239 pp. \$23.95. (9781438439235). Also available as an ebook.

The premise of the book is that contemporary Jewish literature understands and reflects Jewish difference from two perspectives: the traditional view of being different from non-Jews, and the ways in which Jews relate to other Jews. Identifying and analyzing issues of Jewish identity is a growing field, both in the area of

prose/fiction writing and as an academic discipline. This past year has seen books published from the historical perspective, such as Ted Ross' *Am I a Jew* discussing identities of Christian-Jews & Crypto-Jews, books from the perspective of religious life, such as Anouk Markovits' *I am Forbidden*, and David Ellenson's *Pledges of Jewish Allegiance*, and works of fiction such as Ellen Ullman's *By Blood*.

Helene Meyers suggests that "Jewish reading is part and parcel of identity formation," and that Jewish identity and community have been historically forged through reading and study. She then proceeds to examine texts that are "explicitly and extensively Jewish centered" to illustrate her assertions. The book's structure sorts and analyzes these texts in three detailed chapters: Feminism and Orthodoxy, Queering the Jewish Family, and The Color of White Jewry. These chapters make for a dense reading that is slightly alleviated by sub-dividing them into specific titles, and by a very detailed index.

Recommended for libraries that collect in the areas of identity and American Jewish literary works.

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

Mittleman, Alan L. *A Short History of Jewish Ethics: Conduct and Character in the Context of Covenant*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. 201 pp. \$34.95. (9781405189415). Also available as an ebook.

This is a fine study and relatively accessible for an academic work. The author, a professor at Jewish Theological Seminary, acknowledges the complexity of the Jewish ethical tradition but concludes there are at least three major themes: a concern for both personal virtue and a just political order, encouragement for perfectionism, and a monotheistic grounding for ethics. In 201 pages, Dr. Mittleman provides enlightening discussions of many texts and thinkers. The biggest challenge, perhaps, is his chapter on rabbinic ethics given the vastness and unsystematic nature of those writings, characteristics he freely acknowledges. The book is mostly descriptive rather than evaluative. Dr. Mittleman does seem particularly concerned to show the value of Jewish ethics to those operating from mainstream secular philosophical schools of thought. Recommended.

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

Moore, Megan Bishop and Kelle, Brad E. *Biblical History and Israel's Past: the Changing Study of the Bible and History*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 518 pp. \$46.00. (9780802862600). Also available as an ebook.

Biblical History and Israel's Past is a handy reference volume for students of the Bible and the history of Israel. The book proposes new approaches to studying the realities of Israel and Judah in the ancient world. It presents theories and facts emerging from the changing study and the new disciplinary perspectives informing the writing of biblical histories since the 1970s.

Each chapter describes a well-defined historical period through biblical and archaeological lenses, from the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs' time to the Post-Exilic Persian period. Past theories about the era are then presented, followed by new research, highlighting areas of discourse while explaining context, terms, and dates. Each chapter ends with a conclusion summarizing the issues examined. Recommended for school libraries, as well as colleges offering courses on Biblical history.

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

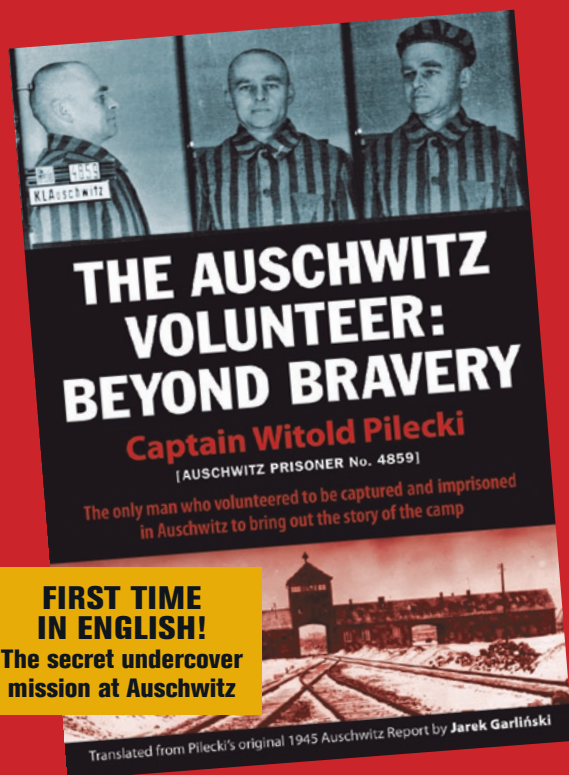
Navon, Chaim. *Gesher B'not Yaakov: Maamad haIshah baHalakhah -- Bain Avar l'Atid =A Bridge for Jacob's Daughters*. Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot. Sifrei Hemed [www.ybook.co.il], 2011. 231pp. 88 NIS. (9789655452723). Hebrew.

This book is in Hebrew, and hopefully will be translated into English. It attempts to reconcile the contemporary status of Jewish women with the *Halakhah* (Jewish Law). Rabbi Chaim Navon, an Orthodox Rabbi in Modieen, Israel, teaches at several institutions in Israel, among them "Yeshivat Migdal Oz" for women.

Rabbi Navon's point of view is that the core basis and development of Jewish religious life is *Halakhah*. Changes are predicated upon cautious and gradual considerations of tradition and contemporary communal realities. *Halakhic* questions relating to women are many and not all of them are answerable. Social changes in human society do not skip over Jewish society, and indeed the main progress of women learning Torah and Talmud has been adopted and encouraged by most of the Jewish world. On the other hand, *halakhic* ruling in regards to women being called to the Torah, women reading the Torah in public, women being counted as part of a *Minyan*, women serving as witnesses, or women as equal partners in marital ritual relationships, and many other religious issues, are still in the process of being debated. There are many ways to confront these dilemmas,

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Center for Strategic & International Studies

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— Professor Gerhard L. Weinberg,
author of *A World at Arms: A History of World War II*

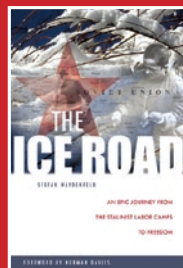
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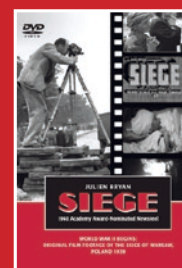
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and the main thing is to respect Jewish values with consideration of the past and the future.

Gesher B'not Yaakov is an important book for every Jew (both observant and secular). It is readable both by laypersons and academics. It will enrich public, academic, synagogue and day-school collections.

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

Perl, William R. *The Holocaust Conspiracy: An International Policy of Genocide*. Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2011. 261 pp. \$29.50. (9781602801929).

This book, originally published in 1989 and recently republished, presents a very clear case for the idea that the Allies not only ignored the plight of the Jews during WWII, but deliberately blocked any possibility of saving not only the victims during the War, but also refugees following the War's termination. Perl, a professor of psychology, unearthed documents that demonstrated how nations such as the United States, England, Canada, Switzerland, as well as the International Red Cross, were intent on providing no room for victims of Hitler's death machine. Perhaps the Allies' position on the Jews of Europe is best described by the response of a Canadian official if Canada would admit Jewish immigrants after the war: "None is too many." This well written book is recommended for adult readers who wish to read an interesting, well-documented thesis on how rampant anti-Semitism was the root of the allies' conspiracy to ignore any possibility of rescue.

Martin Goldberg, Head Librarian, Penn State University, Monaca, PA

Rakeffet-Rothkoff, Aaron. *From Washington Avenue to Washington Street*. New York: OU Press, 2011. 498 pp. \$29.95. (9789652295651). Also available as an ebook.

Rabbi Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff's fascinating memoir chronicles his life from a childhood in the Bronx to his *aliyah* to Israel and his work with the Soviet *refuseniks*. Rabbi Rakeffet-Rothkoff, was a devoted student of Rabbi Joseph Solevechick (the Rav) and remained close to his rebbe throughout the Rav's life. Included in the text are many references to the Rav's teachings, philosophy and Torah insights, along with the author's personal remembrances of the Rav.

The reader is treated to a behind-the-scenes look at prominent twentieth century Torah personalities in the United States and pre-World War II Europe and the nascent Torah institutions that were emerging in the U.S. When Rabbi Rakeffet-Rothkoff went on *aliyah* he became the staff editor of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. In addition, he pioneered the now very popular Torah education institutions in Israel whose programs are geared to diaspora youth. A passionate lover of Israel and the Jewish people, Rabbi Rakeffet-Rothkoff served in the IDF and was sent by the Mossad on a dangerous assignment to teach Torah to Jews in the former Soviet Union. Included in the book is a lengthy bibliography, appendices that include original documents and letters, photographs and a comprehensive index. This well-written, entertaining, and scholarly book is highly recommended for all synagogue and high school libraries because of its fascinating firsthand look into Jewish education and the significant events in twentieth century Jewish history.

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

Raskin, Aaron L. *By Divine Design: The Kabbalah of Large, Small, and Missing Letters in the Parshah*. Brooklyn: Sichos in English, 2011. 435 pp. \$29.95. (9780983125013). Also available as an ebook.

This warm and readable book is a double treat: inspirational for its lessons in Torah and educational for its explanation of the orthographic irregularities found in so many verses. Each Torah portion is presented in order and discussed; there is also a chapter devoted to major Jewish holidays. The introduction, which contains the rules of textual analysis, presents the most basic rule: there is no such thing as an error. Not only is each word, letter, or diacritical mark deliberate, but also any deviation of spelling or punctuation.

Drawing on classic sources – biblical, talmudic, midrashic, and kabbalistic – the author delves into notable verses, such as the small alef in the beginning of Leviticus, for broader spiritual or ethical meanings. The cantillation and Gematria charts, and appendices on both the Torah scroll -- number of lines and columns and amount of white space -- and the Noachide laws provide an intellectual framework.

Some of the jokes that precede each chapter might seem too sophomoric or dated for today's audience. Nevertheless, they lend a personable, engaging feel, along with anecdotes at the end of each chapter and suggestions for self-improvement. The choice of typeface and layout give the book a good, clean look.

By Divine Design will appeal to outreach professionals and lay people wanting either a taste of Torah at a Sabbath meal or a chance for greater access to the study of sacred texts. Recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

Roberts, Cokie & Steve. *Our Haggadah: Uniting Traditions for Interfaith Families*. New York: Harper, 2011. 137 pp. \$19.99. (97800062018106). Also available as an ebook.

There are many wonderful Haggadot available today for any and all demographics and interfaith resources are plentiful; what does *Our Haggadah* bring to the table? Not much, other than the name recognition of these radio and television journalists. This book is meant for readers with absolutely no knowledge of Judaism and seems to be the result of hastily cobbled together Google searches. While there are some insights into the Seder based on Cokie Roberts' Catholic faith, this is emphatically not co-opting Jewish ritual and re-imagining it through Christian eyes; it is an attempt to make non-Jews feel more comfortable at the Seder. While the effort is laudable, the authors don't seem fluent enough with Jewish tradition to make it work. There is a constant tone of apologetic embarrassment for the idea of holding a Seder at all. There are some cute anecdotes about the Roberts' family, but little else of value here.

Daniel Scheide, Librarian, Wimberly Library, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL; RAS President, AJL

Rothstein, Gidon. *We're Missing the Point: What's Wrong with the Orthodox Jewish Community and How to Fix it*. New York: Orthodox Union Press, 2012. 256 pp. \$25.00. (9781602802025).

Many books have appeared over the past generation, proposing remedies for the problems of contemporary Jews and Jewry. *We're Missing the Point* is Dr. Gidon Rothstein's analysis of the difficulties facing contemporary Orthodoxy in particular.

Rabbi Rothstein proposes that Jewish life can be built from a series of unequivocal arguments. Using primarily Torah, with support from Maimonides and other sages, he proposes in Part 1 that certain aspects of our history are absolute: Belief in God, the Exodus, and the giving of Torah among them. He then analyzes certain aspects of our lives and demonstrates how the absolute beliefs can frame issues for us. In Part 2 the author examines the Noahide Laws and other elements that have become critical to Orthodox practice and belief. He shows that, while important (and perhaps even vital) to our religious structures, they are not at the same level as the bedrock structures. At the end of the book, he returns to the question in the title; here he discusses several areas of life where observant Jews have not adequately responded to the needs laid out in Torah and *Halakhah* (Jewish Law).

We're Missing the Point has several things in its favor. The argument for undeniable religious elements that can form our lives is strong. Also, the writing is both substantive and easy to follow. In the end, however, the conclusion is inadequate to the task; our lives as Jews can be better, and more meaningful, but Rothstein has not argued the issues as forcefully as he might. While interesting, the book should be considered an optional purchase for most libraries.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Sanchez, George J., editor. *Beyond Alliances: the Jewish Role in Reshaping the Racial landscape of Southern California*. (The Jewish Role in American Life, vol. 9). Lafayette: Purdue University Press for the USC Casden Institute, 2012. 146 pp. \$25.00. (9781557536235). Also available as an ebook.

This volume contains four well written and researched articles about Jewish activists and visionaries who took part in the shaping of the political and cultural matrix of Southern California between 1930-1970. Profiled are: David C. Marcus, an attorney who led legal battles advancing the civil rights of Mexican-Americans; Max Mont, a labor and civil rights activist; Rosalind Weiner Wyman, who served on the Los Angeles City Council in the 1940-1950s and helped redefine Jewish liberalism; and William Phillips, a musician who opened a music store in Boyle Heights that became a neighborhood resources for musicians of all ethnicities, encouraged and mentored by him.

The Casden Institute, established in 1998 at the University of Southern California to study contemporary Jewish life in America, emphasizes the role Jews played in shaping the politics and culture in the western United States. This volume is highly recommended for academic libraries that collect in the areas of American Jewish history and culture, Labor Relations and Civil Rights history in America.

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

Schachter, Allison. *Diasporic Modernism: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 198 pp. \$35.00. (9780199812639).

A critical review on the relationship between Yiddish and Hebrew, challenging previous notions of divisions based on nationalistic narratives rooted in the geography and geopolitics of the 20th century. The

author offers a reading of works of S.Y. Abramovitch, Yosef Chaim Brenner, Dovid Bergelson, Leah Goldberg, Kadia Molodowsky and Gabriel Preil that examines their responses to socio-historical conditions of the Jewish languages, the different audiences they addressed, and their places in an evolving modernist culture.

Highly recommended for academic libraries collecting in the areas of Jewish culture and languages.

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

Sender, Yitzchak. *The Commentators' Shavuos: Insights on Bikkurim, Dovid HaMelech, Matan Torah, and related Topics*. Nanuet: Distributed by Feldheim, 2011. 375 pp. \$24.99. (9781583303405).

This book is excellently organized into the following sections: Bikkurim, Dovid HaMelech, Matan Torah, The Ten Commandments, Moshe Rabbeinu, Laws and Customs, Aliyas Regel, Chalukas Hatanach, and Prophecy. It gives a good overview of the central themes and categories that classify Shavuos. R. Sender arranges relevant portions from Tanakh, *halakahic Midrashim* (i.e. Mechilta, Sifre, Sifra), Aggadata of the Tannaim and Amoraim from Bavli, Yerushalmi, Rishonim, Ahronim, Responsa texts, Musar literature, and Jewish philosophy, under these categories. These traditional ancient and medieval sources are peppered and spiced up with the thoughts of recent *Gedolim* (last 500 years) such as the Maharal, Noda B' Yehuda, the Chofetz Chaim, Netziv, Rav Chaim Brisker and other Soloveitchik family geniuses. Thus the voices of 2000 years of Rabbinic learning echo in these pages, where the embers of previous and current generations ignite in a woven synthesis that is unique. For example, a *gemara* regarding the script of the '*luhot*' will be traced in its reception history that summarizes the views of the Radvaz, Rashi, Ritva, and Maharal etc. Sometimes the views of *Rishonim* will be compared and contrasted as in the case of the rationalist Rambam and mekubal Ramban mediated with *Drashos HaRan*. This is not an academic work. But is from a very traditional perspective infused with *emunah* (faith) and *bitochon* (trust in God) that reflects traditional rabbinic learning steeped in lore and *Torah 'she-be-`al peh'* (Oral Law).

The book would have benefited from a bibliography, index, historical glossary placing each Rabbi in his epoch, and more extensive uniform formatted footnotes. That small caveat aside, this book is a positive contribution to other works and anthologies on Shavuos.

Dr. David B Levy, Touro College, New York

Simon-Shoshan, Moshe. *Stories of the Law: Narrative Discourse and the Construction of Authority in the Mishnah*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 304 pp. \$74.00. (9780199773732).

Moshe Simon-Shoshan offers an original analysis of the formation of the text of the Mishnah, the founding text of *Halakhah* (Jewish Law), examining the place of stories in a book of law. In a revision of his dissertation he argues that the editors of the Mishnah shaped stories using earlier sources to construct a narrative arguing for and justifying continued Rabbinical rule from the period of the Second Temple through the post-Temple period.

The book opens with a very theoretical chapter on the literary structure of stories in the Mishnah, drawing on contemporary literary theory and legal theory. In the main part of the book Simon-Shoshan provides a close reading of individual stories from the seder Moed of the Mishnah, including well known stories like Honi the circle maker and R. Gamliel's conflict with R. Joshua over setting the date of Rosh Hodesh and Yom Kippur. He examines parallel versions of the stories from other sources, including Josephus, baraitot, the Tosefta, the two Talmuds as well as modern historical research.

Simon-Shoshan argues that the editors of the Mishnah shaped an ideological work to picture the Rabbis and Rabbinic court as the central arbitrators of the law and authority. In their overall narrative the Rabbis controlled the Temple, were the main leaders of Second Temple Judaism and formulated the post-temple form of Judaism, even though current scholarship questions their numbers and power before the period of the third century. He reads the stories in the Mishnah as providing support for the Rabbis but also examines where the narrative shows ambiguity, providing a counter-narrative of opposition to Rabbinical rule and alternative sources of authority in priests, holy men, and groups such as the Sadducees. This book is highly recommended for academic libraries.

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

Soloveitchik, Joseph B. *The Lonely Man of Faith*. Rev. ed. Jerusalem: OU Press and Maggid Books, 2012. 79 pp. \$24.95. (9781613290033).

This is a new edition of the classic work by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, the father of Modern Orthodoxy in

America. It is a work of pure philosophy, distilling many of the fundamental questions and dilemmas about faith in God. Though it is based on lines from Genesis, it is not a strictly Jewish work. Rather, it is a foundational essay of western religious philosophy. Using the dialectic method, Rabbi Soloveitchik attempts to reconcile the two accounts of Adam in Genesis: Adam I, whom he calls "majestic man," the secular master of worldly knowledge who regards everything, including religion, in pragmatic terms, and Adam II, whom he calls "covenantal man," the man who sees the world not as a thing to be mastered but as a creation that can enhance his communion with God. The lonely man Rabbi Soloveitchik describes is modern man, who must continually try to reconcile the primacy of Adam I with the true spiritual union that Adam II seeks, but in the last chapter of the book he describes the prophet Elisha as the paradigm of the man of faith who successfully reconciles the two Adams, making the theory concrete. This edition contains a foreword by Reuven Ziegler that explains and outlines the essay, though the outline would be more useful with page numbers. Overall this is an excellent edition, but some libraries may still have the earlier one. In addition, the entire essay is available online through the *Tradition* magazine website. Required for academic collections; recommended for libraries supporting study groups, etc.

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

Stampfer, Shaul. *Lithuanian Yeshivas of the Nineteenth Century: Creating a Tradition of Learning*. Translated by Lindsey Taylor-Gutharz. Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012. 416 pp. \$64.50 (9781874774792).

The Talmudic academies of pre-WWII Lithuania were extremely influential – not only in their own time but ever since, creating an entire society that is often referred to as the Yeshiva "World." The sheer size of this world can be gauged by the recent funeral of Rabbi Yosef Shalom Eliashiv, which drew a reported 250,000 mourners. The history of these yeshivot is often shrouded in legend, and it can seem impossible to determine how they actually developed and how their character changed over time. Shaul Stampfer of the Hebrew University has devoted many years to studying the social history of the Lithuanian yeshivot and their students. His doctoral dissertation was devoted to three of the most important academies – Volozhin, Slobodka and Telz – and his research has since appeared in Hebrew in two successively updated editions. This English-language version of his work includes yet more updates, taking into account newly discovered archival evidence. Stampfer sifts through mountains of documentation, searching for versions that ring true and painting an extraordinarily detailed account of every aspect of life in the famous yeshivot. His book is vital to the students of Orthodox Jewish history and of Jewish culture in Eastern Europe.

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

Stepon, Matt editor. *Judaism: History, Belief, and Practice*. (The Britannica Guide to Religion). New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2012. 366 pp. \$70.50. (9781615304875).

Judaism History, Belief, and Practice is the second in the Britannica Guide to Religion series for ages 15-18. The book covers Jewish history from biblical times to the present. Included are short articles on important Jewish philosophers, statesmen, biblical personalities and authors of classical Jewish texts. It is a comprehensive encyclopedia of Jewish thought, practices, history plus major events and personalities. However, the book is written from a Christian point of view. Much of the information is accurate and important for every informed Jew to know, but the underlying attitude is Christian. For example, in the articles dealing with biblical history, Judaism is described as just one of many ancient cults, which is not the message Jewish religious schools want to convey to their students. The language is at times stilted and too advanced for high school students. Not recommended for Jewish schools or synagogue libraries.

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

Temes, Peter S. *The Future of the Jewish People in Five Photographs*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. 216 pp. \$26.95. (9780803239791). Reviewed from an Advance Reading Copy.

Many struggle between the idea of a Chosen People and the merit of universal virtues: "Is it good for the Jews?" versus "Is it good?" As generations advance, most Jews are less obviously identified as Jewish through religion, culture, or associations. Using a combination of memoir, analysis of history, Torah commentary and references from interesting, authoritative, and diverse resources, the author bases his discourse on five photographs that invoked reflection. The first is of a stone carving in Iran that depicts the Persian Emperor Darius conquering and

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enslaving his enemies, and the second is of two Jews from Kaifeng (China) in 1910, a once vibrant community that no longer exists. Both pictures spur a discussion of whether strict adherence to religion or adaptation will guarantee existence. He examines Zoroastrianism, and both Reconstructionist and the Renewal Movement of Judaism.

The third photograph is the iconic image of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marching with Martin Luther King, Jr. *Tikkun Olam* (Repairing the World) and the civil rights movement weigh heavily in this chapter. The fourth photograph is of the trial of Adolph Eichmann. Temes draws on Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* to discuss the Holocaust, the nature of evil, and the challenges of the modern state of Israel. The final photograph shows a female scribe repairing a Torah scroll. From this (most Torah scribes are male), Temes sees how Judaism can be adapted within a framework to make it relevant to more people.

While there is no definitive answer to any of the questions raised in the book, the lively discussion and simple logic give the reader much to think about. The price makes this a strong option for most Jewish libraries. It is an excellent choice for a book club or Jewish high school history class.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

***Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories.* Toronto: The Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada, 2011. 246 pp. \$25.00. (9780986730603).**

This is a collection of personal narratives and family histories by Canadian Jews who have been involved with the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada, and who have used that involvement as an impetus to tell their stories. The storytellers span generations and birthplaces. The stories are divided into categories: Why Genealogy?; Journey from the Old World to the New; The World We Lost (Holocaust stories); Jewish Life in Canada; Making Connections (genealogy stories); The Promised Land (Israel stories); Family Stories; and The Search Continues. Despite its sponsorship, this book is not exclusively about genealogy. Most of the stories are personal accounts, but several are well-researched and include footnotes. Taken together, these stories are eyewitness descriptions of Eastern Europe and the Holocaust, Jewish and local history in Canada and Western Europe, Israel, and other countries. Details of twentieth century life that historians prize emerge in these pages. There is no deathless prose here, but the writing is matter-of-fact and unforced, truly narrative in style and easy to read. One piece is by the noted Yiddish translator, Miriam Beckerman. The book includes several excellent reproductions of historic photographs and documents. Recommended for Canadian libraries, genealogy collections, and collections focusing on writing personal history.

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

Trigano, Shmuel. *Philosophy of the Law: The Political in the Torah.* (Contemporary Jewish Thought). Jerusalem and New York: Shalem Press, 2011. 555 pp. \$25.95. (9789657052716).

The author, an Algerian-born French intellectual and philosopher, Professor of Politics and Sociology at the University of Paris, argues that a political philosophy can be found in the Hebrew Bible. This is an intriguing notion, since while Trigano rejects the notion that political philosophy is exclusively a Greek contribution to western civilization, it was the Greeks who created the word and theory of what was political. In a deeply philosophical manner, the author tackles the issue of leadership in biblical Israel among the characters of Judah, Joseph, and Levi and sets up the context for his political philosophy. The method employed in this work is biblical exegesis and an examination of the nature of Judaism as set out in the foundational text, the Torah. God's relationship with man is a covenant, different from Rousseau's "social contract," in the sense that the omnipresence of God established a relationship with Israel; it was not a human condition as conceived of by the Greeks and the *polis*. There is, finally, a normative tone to Trigano's interpretation of biblical political philosophy, arguing for true fulfillment as Israel closes the distance between God's demands and its commitment to these strictures.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Professor Emeritus, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Voolen, Edward van. *50 Jewish Artists You Should Know.* Munich and London: Prestel, 2011. 151 pp. \$18.37. (9783791345734).

This book is part of a series by Prestel publishing titled "50 [fill in the blank] You Should Know." Titles published so far vary from architects and photographers to Bauhaus icons and contemporary fashion designers. Each title includes a selection of 50 items that fit the subject, some text about the artist or 'object,' and illustrations.

This title also includes a timeline for each artist, which puts him or her in context with other artists of the era and with significant historical events of the time. In addition, there is a short column with biographical information,

including a small portrait. The text occupies one page only, while the illustrative content occupies one to three pages.

The format reminds one of a coffee table book (although it is not one of those heavy, oversized, hard bound books) – minimal amount of text, and a lot of illustrations. The selection seems random; there is no explanation of the selection process or why those 50 were chosen over many others; this is especially annoying when it comes to the selection of the eight Israeli artists. It is surprising to see that Yitshak Dantsiger (1916-1977) and his 'Nimrod' were not included. Among the 50 selected, 43 are men and only seven are women. This reviewer is no expert in the field of Jewish Art, but it seems that there are many other female artists the author could include, such as Anna Ticho (1984-1980) or Chana Orloff (1888-1968); not to mention Judy Chicago (1939-), the famous Jewish feminist artist. This book could serve high-school libraries or undergraduate students in Academic libraries.

Uri Kolodney, *Hebrew & Jewish Studies Librarian, The University of Texas at Austin Libraries, Austin, TX*

Weinstein, Batsheva, editor. *The Complete, Informative and Inspirational Bais Yaakov Cookbook*. Skokie: The Fund for Jewish Education, 2011. 384 pp. \$36.99. (9781583303481).

In 1915, Sarah Schenirer organized a small group of girls in Krakow, Poland and began teaching "Jewish studies." Her legacy is the Bais Yaakov movement: hundreds of schools providing not only an academic education, but lessons in character development and the outlook and skills needed to maintain a Jewish home. After a blessing from Rebbetzin Kanievsky, OBM, and a history of Bais Yaakov, there are 200 original recipes "to uplift and enhance your Shabbos, Yom Tov and Everyday Table."

A far cry from the paper and plastic spiral binding book with recipes for chopped liver and kugel, the high production quality of this volume is evident in clear color photographs that accompany most of the tantalizing recipes for dishes such as Tomato Basil Soup, Skirt Steak with Chimichurri Sauce, Blackened Salmon, and Rebbetzin Kanievsky's challah recipe. Ingredients and recipes are laid out on each page for ease of use. The recipes themselves contain simple, easy to obtain items, and, with the exception of some of the desserts, require few steps and basic cooking techniques.

The back matter includes "Culinary Tips" about wine, meat, fish, spices and herbs, and fruit and vegetables; the pros and cons of various cookware and kitchen gadgets, and tips for setting the table. There is an index that lists the recipes alphabetically, with some subheadings for things like Poultry and Desserts. Invaluable to the Orthodox cook are the *halakhic* guidelines for such issues as cooking on Shabbos and checking vegetables. The Bais Yaakov Cookbook will be used frequently as a reference and resource, and it is very highly recommended for all libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, *Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel*

Weisberger, Rachelle. *Biblical Beauty: Ancient Secrets and Modern Solutions*. Englewood Cliffs: Anbern Press, 2011. 215 pp. \$26.95. (9780983558507).

Rachelle Weisberger, a cosmetologist, makeup artist and skin care specialist has written an informative book on skin care, hair care, makeup and fragrances. As an introduction to each chapter which contains helpful tips and scientific information on beauty, she tells the story of a biblical woman who exemplifies the characteristic which is the topic of the particular chapter. For example Weisberger uses the alluring Rahab, to introduce her chapter on makeup. Rahab used kohl on her eyes (much like women do today) to enhance her beauty. A diagram of how to apply makeup is an added feature of this chapter. Sarah, Bathsheba, Esther, Miriam and Judith are also included. Weisberger brings biblical quotes to support her discussion of these women's beauty regimens. Part II of Weisberger's book deals with inner beauty and feminine leadership in both biblical times and today. An index of biblical sources is included, as well as a copious index of books and web sites relating to each topic. Recommended for the self-help collection of all libraries.

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

RE-ISSUED AND REVISED EDITIONS OF PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED TITLES:

Kirschebaum, Levana. *The Whole Foods Kosher Kitchen: Glorious Meals Pure & Simple*. New York : Levana Cooks, 2011. 399 pp. \$39.95. (9781467507042).

This cookbook, reviewed in the November/December 2011 issue, is available in a new, revised and expanded edition.

Ornish, Natalie. *Pioneer Jewish Texans*. Texas A & M University Press, 2011. 376 pp. \$30.00. (9781603444231).

This volume, reviewed in the September/October 1989 issue, is available in a new reissued edition with the format "updated and redesigned for a fresher, more contemporary look."

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Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND MERRILY HART

LITERATURE: NOVELS, STORIES, POETRY AND LITERARY CRITICISM

Clayton, John J. *Mitzvah Man*. Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press (Modern Jewish Literature and Culture), 2011. 268 pp. \$26.95. (9780896726833). Also available as an ebook.

This story revolves around a man named Adam Friedman, a successful business man whose life is thrown into turmoil when his wife dies in a tragic accident. Both Adam and his teenage daughter Lisa must find a way to deal with their grief. As part of Lisa's efforts to help give her father strength, she makes him a t-shirt that says "Mitzvah Man." This sparks Adam to do random acts of kindness and provides a way to cope with his feelings. The problems begin when he starts hearing voices and seeing auras. His close friends begin to worry and really become concerned when one of his "mitzvah acts" causes the media to get involved and random "followers" start camping out in front of the house. It takes many people to come together to help this family. Clayton has created sympathetic characters and a great relationship between a father and daughter. His view of the modern media is accurate. Readers will enjoy taking the journey and may even be inspired to help a charity with their work. This book is recommended for Jewish libraries.

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

Corman, Leela. *Unterzakhn*. NY: Schocken, 2012. 206 pp. \$24.95. (9780805242591).

Graphic novels have been used to depict the travails of living on the Lower East Side in New York, most notably the ones by Will Eisner (his *Contract with God* and *New York: Life in the Big City* trilogies). However, such cartoon narratives are usually written by men and feature male protagonists. An alternative voice may be found in *Unterzakhn*, which tells the tragic story of two sisters – Fanya and Esther Feinberg.

Fanya witnesses a woman die after a botched abortion, which leads to her ending up an assistant to a "lady doctor" who selectively promotes safe sex and abstinence, as well as coming to the aid of pregnant women. Esther, attracted to the glamour of the theatre, becomes a dancer-prostitute at a burlesque-whorehouse. She is ostracized from her family because of her loose reputation. A short back story relates the story of the sisters' father, the only member of his family to survive a pogrom. He was able to stay alive through his quick thinking, thievery, and good luck.

Despite the melancholy nature that permeates the book, there are also moments of hope, redemption, and reconciliation. Although Fanya had turned her back on Esther, she nonetheless seeks her out to help her abort her child when Esther gets pregnant. After Fanya becomes pregnant and homeless, Esther – who has become a successful star of the stage – opens her home to her and takes care of her as she becomes progressively sicker.

Unterzakhn is not recommended for collections in the Orthodox community, as it contains strong language and illustrations of sexuality and violence. It is recommended for the Judaica graphic novel sections of public, Jewish centre, and (liberal) synagogue libraries.

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

Drew, Cynthia. *City of Slaughter*. Mckinleyville, CA: Fithian Press, 2012. \$15.95. (9781564745149). Also available as an ebook.

Carsie Akselrod and her younger sister Lilia find themselves suddenly orphaned after a pogrom in their Russian shtetl. After a perilous journey, they arrive in New York, speaking only Yiddish, but determined to make a new life for themselves. They discover a city full of life, but also full of corruption and prejudice. They eventually get jobs at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, a sweatshop best known for the horrible fire that killed most of its workers in 1911. Lilia is one of the victims. Determined to survive, Carsie becomes an advocate for workers, children and women while building a successful millinery career. The author has created a strong debut novel that puts readers into the environment of early twentieth-century New York. Carsie's trials will make them wonder whether she can survive, but her strength and optimism will inspire them. This is an excellent choice for book clubs and for mature teens.

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

Eco, Umberto. *The Prague Cemetery*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011. 444 pp. \$27.00. (9780547577531).

Though the title was intriguing and one assumed that it would include interesting information regarding the old Jewish cemetery in Prague and the history of its community, that subject is only tangential to what was, to this reviewer, a very tedious book to read.

It is set in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century with a reigning conspiracy theory focused on a psychotic, split personality central figure. Both he and other individuals in the book emerge as vague figures that are difficult to identify with and the story line is so complex that one loses the threads that are probably supposed to eventually converge.

The greatest difficulty was reading through the virulent anti-Semitic passages which are excessively included. The review of a book usually concludes with a recommendation regarding whether or not a Judaica library should include it. In this case, it seems that the book is neither a necessary nor an appropriate addition to a collection of Jewish books on any level. It certainly would not be a book that a synagogue discussion group would choose.

Michlean Amir, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Englander, Nathan. *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank: Stories*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012. 207 pp. \$24.95. (9780307958709). Also available as an ebook.

What makes Nathan Englander unique as an American writer is the voice he gives to people not normally represented in contemporary literature. Ultra-Orthodox Jews, West Bank settlers, vegetable sellers in Mahaneh Yehudah, and adolescents on Long Island are among the characters in this new collection of short stories. In some of the stories (though not all), the voices ring eerily true. The truth is what is at stake in many of these stories – the truth of human intention and action that always eludes our grasp – as are the moral issues raised by Jews possessing more freedom and agency, in Israel and in the diaspora, than in the past. *What We Talk About* is a provocative and important addition to collections of Jewish fiction.

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

Grenimann, Yehiel. *Far Away from Where?* Jerusalem: Mazo Publishers, 2011. 231 pp. \$16.95. (18153013559).

Two Polish Holocaust survivors, Yanosh and Eva, childhood sweethearts, marry and start a new life, aiming to journey to Australia. The story tells of their trials and difficulties in escaping the killings and aftermath of the war and presents a picture of Jews rebuilding their lives.

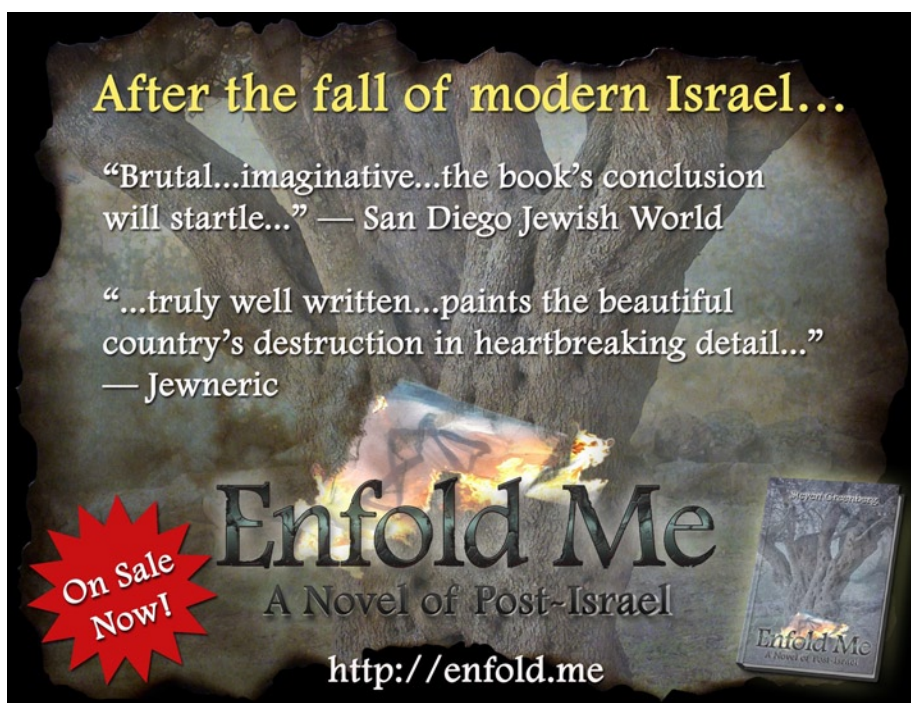
The author, who grew up in Australia, is a child of Holocaust survivors. He is a rabbi and educator in the Masorti movement, who now lives in Jerusalem. His novel is an interesting read, suitable for fiction collections in Temple and synagogue and Jewish community center and public libraries.

Susan Freiband, Retired Library Educator, Arlington, VA

Marcus, Ben. *The Flame Alphabet*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 2012. 289 pp. \$25.95. (9780307379375). Also available as an ebook.

In this science fiction novel language in all its forms becomes toxic. The poison spreads first from children, as parents literally wilt under the lash of the painful words directed at them by their offspring. In time, the illness expands to adult speech, the written word, and even gestures. As only children are immune, they are quarantined and adults leave them behind, fleeing to lonely, uncertain, unnamed locales. The narrator, Sam, struggles to keep his family together despite the toxin his daughter unleashes on him and his half-dead wife. The mysterious illness is complicated by the fact that it may or may not have originated with Jewish children, and that certain Jewish families have access to a synagogue, or “Jewish hut” where an unbelievable listening device nicknamed a “Moses mouth” gives them contact with a “rabbi” who rambles cryptically. This extended metaphor about the power and loss of communication has no real plot – the story just devolves.

The book would have had more impact as a short story. The writing is powerful, even lyrical in its descriptions of illness, of the substances that Sam uses to try to concoct cures, of the strange food and odd materials that are part of the world where people are surviving without communicating. Unfortunately, the same images keep recurring, and the settings are not really visible to the reader. A story about loss of communication needs more visual imagery to compensate. And, it occurs to this reader that children can be even more violent in their speech



to their peers than they are to their parents. Finally, this is an unrelentingly bleak tale, and the Jewish content remains arcane—is it incidental, or not? This book will probably not be popular in a synagogue collection, but is recommended for academic or comprehensive fiction collections.

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

Marmer, Jake. Jazz Talmud. Rhinebeck, NY: The Sheep Meadow Press, 2011. 91 pp. \$14.95. (9781931357883).

The Talmud is known as an intricate legal text whose mastery requires many years of devoted study. But it is also a record of lively discussion, debate and thought among generations of rabbis

and other people. It has a special cadence, even in its densest scholastic strands. Many learners never notice that cadence, most pay it little attention, and very few are able to capture it. Jake Marmer's book of poetry attempts to capture the ineffable magic of the Talmudic flow, using it as the riff of his jazz-inspired spoken word performances. The result is multivalent, mystifying flocks of words that send the reader in many different directions. The 'talmudically' informed reader will pick up on familiar phrases recast in unimaginable ways and a rhythm that is both unexpected and deeply ingrained. The many references to terms and masters of jazz music were lost on this reviewer, but they certainly aroused curiosity ('Thelonious Monk in Jerusalem'). The poems reflect Marmer's experiences in recent years – life in Jerusalem and in New York, marriage, parenthood, work.

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

Milgram, Goldie and Frankel, Ellen, with Peninnah Schram, Cherie Karo Schwartz and Arthur Strimling, editors. Mitzvah Stories: Seeds for Inspiration and Learning. New Rochelle, New York: Reclaiming Judaism Press, 2011. 328 pp. \$25.00. (9780094804801).

Stories about *mitzvot* (commandments) are collected in a volume dedicated to one of the modern masters of Jewish storytelling, Peninnah Schram. After the dedication and an introduction about appreciating *mitzvot*, there is a "driver's manual" that includes three essays about storytelling and using stories. The stories are arranged in five sections corresponding to different *mitzvot*: love and healing, joy and generosity, Shabbat and holidays, life cycle and learning, and serving and experiencing God. An index, bibliography on *mitzvot* and a glossary constitute the back matter. A discussion guide and podcasts are available on the publisher's website, www.reclaimingjudaism.org. The story theme index, which would facilitate use of the stories, is not, as promised, on the website at this time.

Some stories borrow heavily from others: "The Magic Gourd" is based on "The Wish-Ring," "The Moon's Garment" is reminiscent of "A Cloak for the Moon," and "If My Wedding Dress Could Talk" is from the classic "Something from Nothing." The simplicity and power of other stories take one by surprise – "The Clubhouse Turn," "The Escort," and "Playing Monopoly with Melvin" in particular. But many are too personal or too specific to have universal appeal. The contributors include legendary storytellers like Schram, Howard Schwartz, and Ellen Frankel, as well as less well-known educators and artists. Many of the contributors have the certification of *magid* (storyteller) through the Jewish Renewal movement.

For those interested in the Jewish Renewal movement and creative storytelling, it is a solid purchase. Most others can rely on the rich tradition of Jewish storytelling that includes *midrash*, parable, allegory, and folktales.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Orner, Peter. *Love and Shame and Love: A Novel*. New York: Little Brown, 2011. 439 pp. \$24.99. (978031612938). Also available as an ebook.

A three-generation saga centered on Alexander Popper, the scion of a Chicago Jewish family. Many of the beautifully crafted short chapters read more like character sketches until the reader is well advanced into the story and the characters in the different generations begin to take a shadowy shape. Similar to most current novels, the story skips back and forth between present and past and between generations. Seymour's letters home to his wife Beanie from a WWII troop ship in the Pacific serve as a recurring reminder of his lack of understanding of his spouse, a feature in all three generations. Chicago, its politics and scenery are powerfully represented and reference is made to Saul Bellow's evocations of the city, with a somewhat humorous and dismissive aside from Kat, the love of Popper's life. The novel, which has little Jewish content, has very little plot and no happy endings, like much of modern day life. Recommended with reservations.

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

Raz, Simcha. *Tales of the Righteous*. Translated by Dov Peretz Elkins. Jerusalem: Gefen, 2011. 231 pp. \$24.95 (9789652295408). Also available as an ebook.

In his foreword, Elie Wiesel praises Simcha Raz: "Make no mistake, the telling of the Hasidic tale is a special skill and one that Simcha Raz knows well." One of my first introductions to the Hasidic tale was through Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim*, but the two books are very different. Martin Buber was fighting for Jewish identity and presented the Hasidic tale to a generation who knew nothing of their Jewish heritage. Gershom Scholem rightly accused him of romanticizing *Hasidut* (Hasidism). I don't think Buber would have denied it and many people would consider that the end justified the means.

However, Simcha Raz wrote this book with very different intentions. Firstly, the book includes many Jewish figures who were not Hasidim, such as Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, the head of the "Mussar" movement or even figures who dissociated themselves from Hasidism such as Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik or Rabbi Baruch Epstein, the author of *Torah Temimah*. The author chose East European luminaries who lived prior to the Second World War. The common factor is that they lived exemplary lives. The chapters are arranged alphabetically including, for example, "Anger," "Authors and books," "Emotion" and "Eretz Yisrael." This book first appeared in Hebrew in 2000.

The aim is to present examples of moral conduct in a form which will hold the reader's attention and interest. In my case, I found the author was successful. However, to what extent he succeeded in influencing my conduct is another question. Highly recommended!

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

Sem-Sandberg, Steve. *The Emperor of Lies*. Translated by Sarah Death. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011. 664 pp. \$30.00 cloth; \$18 pbk. (9780374139643; 978-1250007636). Also available as an ebook.

"Is a dream a lie if it don't come true, or is it something worse?" (B. Springsteen, "The River"). This novel about the Lodz ghetto explores the role of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, a businessman who headed the "Council of Elders" and is purported to have administered the ghetto as his own feudal society. He dreamed of making the residents indispensable to the Nazis, setting up factories that produced goods in exchange for food. But he also sent people to their deaths. Although this account is more sympathetic than many, Rumkowski is ultimately shown to be a narcissistic pawn of the Nazis.

The book includes a glossary, a map of the Lodz ghetto with a list of major street names, and a translation of the original memorandum establishing the Lodz ghetto. The full text of Rumkowski's "Give Me Your Children" speech, which Sem-Sandberg sees as the turning point in Rumkowski's "reign," is also included. A list of the main characters is helpful as the book has what others have described as a "Dickensian cast." The author draws from *The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto* (Yale University Press, 1984), kept in the Archive of the Jewish administration, and other primary resources for many of the details. Originally published in Sweden, it won the 2009 August Prize. The narrative is often graphic and very disturbing. It makes the dry information from *The Chronicle* into a heart-breaking read, adding names and families to the stark reporting of statistics of suicides, deaths and deportations. Many of the Polish, German and Yiddish words are not included in the glossary and their meanings are not obvious from the context. The subject matter and length may deter some readers, but this is a solid choice for all libraries, particularly those with Holocaust collections.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Strömberg, Fredrik. *Jewish Images in the Comics: A Visual History*. Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2012. 424 pp. \$26.99. (9781606995280).

Jewish Images in the Comics is the first publication to focus on stories with Jewish content found in comic books, comic strips, graphic novels, and (to a lesser extent) political cartoons. One of the most notable characteristics of the work is the outlining of the division of the book into chapters, as explained in the Introduction. This arrangement of the material functions as an effective classification scheme which may be used by Judaica librarians to organize their libraries' graphic novel collections.

Each chapter contains a two-page introduction of the subject area, followed by a series of one-page reproductions from a comic with each facing page giving details about the comic and its context. There is an annotated bibliography and an index.

Although Strömberg's guide is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive (which would be an impossible task), his book manages to list a majority of the most important comics work of Jewish interest and includes comics from 12 countries. Unfortunately, Canadian cartoonists are underrepresented and there are no entries for Chinese *manga* or Italian *fumetti*. Webcomics are wholly absent from the book, although two of the examples had started out as webcomics. There are several omissions of significant examples (e.g. the Jewish War Heroes miniseries, *Megillat Esther*, The Anne Frank House Authorized Graphic Biography and "When the Goddam Jews Take Over America!"). Strömberg acknowledges the title of each work discussed, the author(s) and/or illustrators and the copyright date, but the publisher and place of publication are often missing, making it more difficult for the reader to obtain copies of the comics work.

Despite the drawbacks, Strömberg's book is an essential collection development tool for acquisitions librarians who want to establish or expand their Jewish comics / graphic novels sections. An expanded edition or supplementary volumes would be most welcome.

Steven M. Bergson, *Jewish Comics Blogspot*, <http://jewishcomics.blogspot.com>

Reviews of Multimedia

SOUND RECORDINGS

Klezmerson. *Siete. Tzadik*, 2011. (music, CD) \$13.95.

Tzadik has released another innovative collection of songs from a unique group, Klezmerson. This band from Mexico City offers a new slant on Jewish music, mixing klezmer, rock, and electronic music with *Charenga*, *norteño*, *son*, and *cha-cha*. The vocals are in Spanish and Yiddish and the instruments include accordion, keyboards, clarinet, saxophone, flute, and percussion along with *Huapago veracruzana* and *requinto*. The songs are lively and ironic. *Se va* is about a beautiful woman stealing a man's soul and going...to Tijuana. *Zuntik* tells the story of Shmuel cursed by God to be stuck with a fool named Domingo who was ugly and clumsy, but no one minded. In fact, Domingo ends up with Shmuel's fortune as well as his daughter. Those who enjoy the new klezmer as well as Latino music will have fun listening to Klezmerson.

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

VIDEO RECORDINGS

[Editor's note: readers are encouraged to check the appropriate format for their playback devices. Some devices might be 'zone-free' and play any DVD, but some may play only certain 'zones', i.e. NTSC (Region 1) or PAL (Region 2).]

Farahani, Ramin. *Jews of Iran*. Amsterdam: NIK Media, 2005 Dist. by Ruth Diskin Ltd. 52 min. Sale (DVD) \$29.00.

This short video appears to be the only modern visual information on the Jews of Iran. Shot by an Iranian Moslem, it opens with a notice that it was produced with Iranian government approval. Production values are cold, with few lighting effects, a kind of clumsy "video verité." The video looks at Jews in Hamadan, visiting the purported tomb of Esther. In Tehran, two women, Jewish and Moslem, talk about their lifelong friendship,

which extends to their teenaged sons. Most of the interviewees appear nervous and wary. Almost every female in the video wears a hijab, regardless of her religion, including those in the Jewish girls' school. In Isfahan, the director interviews an artist, Soleiman Sassoon, whose work is inspired by Jewish themes interwoven with Islamic architecture. Sassoon is an art teacher at a Moslem school in which a student expresses respect for him in one breath, and anti-Semitic attitudes in the next. The naturalistic style of the documentary reveals the tension in the Jewish community with stark clarity. It's heartbreaking to hear these Jews articulate their simultaneous love and fear of their country, so reminiscent of German Jews in the 1930's. This video also touches on the role of Jews as keepers of Iranian music traditions. The short English narration explains that, due to Shiite disapproval of music, Jewish shopkeepers once sold all the musical instruments in Tehran. Soleiman Sassoon's son plays a beautiful short piece on an instrument reminiscent of a tsimbl. Most of the video is in Farsi, with English subtitles. The disc played on my DVD player, but not my late-model computer. # Highly recommended for academic collections, comprehensive A/V collections, and libraries collecting materials on Mizrahi Jews.

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

Loevy, Netta. *World Class Kids: Shalom Kitah B. Jerusalem*, Go2Films, <http://www.go2films.com>. 2010. 54 min. (DVD) \$95; Educational \$295.

World Class Kids, winner of the Jury Special Award for best documentary (Jerusalem International Film Festival), follows a multiethnic second grade class in a Tel Aviv elementary school. The class includes Jewish, Chinese, Philippine and Arab children. The school follows the Jewish school curriculum which includes Jewish holidays, current events and the political situation in Israel. As the children study and converse in class their learned prejudices surface. A child from Ashkelon joins the class for a short time, because enemy rockets are falling in her neighborhood and her parents decide to move temporarily. The child, who wonders why people call her a Russian, talks about having to run to a bomb shelter every time a rocket falls. She also tells the class that the "Philopinis" want to kill the Jews which makes the child from the Philippines very uncomfortable. When the class discusses the situation in Gaza, the Arab child feels uncomfortable and goes into a corner to cry. During most of the documentary, the children get along well and seem to enjoy school. The film has some scenes of the children at home and the relationship with their parents and their absent loved ones. For example the Chinese family teaches their child how to read and write Chinese and the family from the Philippines talks to their close relatives on Skype. The DVD is in Hebrew with English subtitles. The subtitles are written in a large font and are easy to read. The translation is good. Recommended for libraries that collect documentaries.

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

Tal, Ran. *Children of the Sun. Israel: Lama Films, 2007; Distributed by Ruth Diskin Ltd. 70 Minutes, (DVD) \$ 29.90.*

This DVD is in Hebrew with English subtitles. A group of adults born and raised in the pioneering kibbutzim in Israel are browsing through old photographs and movie clips (1930-1970) while voicing their thoughts on the kibbutz way of life. The kibbutz movement started approximately 40 years before the founding of the State of Israel. Underlying the ideology was a belief in socialism and communal living which included the shared ownership of most material property.

Children of the Sun brings to light several important aspects of raising children in *Beit Yeladim* (Children's House), communal life, work ethics, and Zionist and commune ideologies. It is very emotional to watch and the voices and thoughts of the narrators are complemented by views of their adult faces at the end of the video.

Children of the Sun is a treasure to anyone interested in the movement to create the State of Israel. The aim of the pioneer kibbutzim in Israel was to create a new breed of Zionist Jews: physically strong, believers in communal ideology and dedicated to the State of Israel. Have they succeeded? Academic libraries that deal with the pioneers of Israel, the kibbutz history and the history of the Jews in the twentieth century should have this DVD. Sociologists who delve into research of the Communist ideology will be interested to see it practiced in real life.

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

Don't Forget to Check Out AJL News!

The September/October 2012 issue of AJL news is chock full of member news, election results, fond farewells, AJL outreach, and the first stirrings of excitement for the AJL 2013 Conference in Houston, Texas.

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