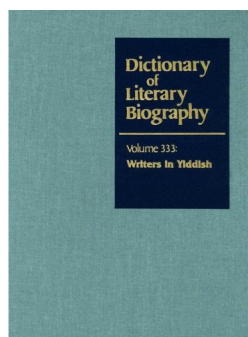


Reference & Bibliography Award Winners Announced

JIM ROSENBLOOM

Many fine Judaica reference and bibliographic works appear each year. The Awards Committee of the Research Libraries, Archives, and Special Collections Division of AJL reviews a great number of them. I chair the committee, whose members are Rachel Ariel, Elliot H. Gertel, Louise Greenfield, Rachel Simon, Barry Walfish, and Yaffa Weisman.

The Judaica Reference Award for 2007 goes to *Writers in Yiddish*, edited by Joseph Sherman (Thomsen Gale, 2007). It is volume 333 of the series, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. This



alphabetically arranged volume contains articles on forty major figures in Yiddish literature. The earliest is Nahman of Bratslav. Each article gives a transliterated and translated list of the author's works and published English translations, including those found in anthologies and periodicals. The main body of the article discusses the life and writings of the author, including information about relations with other writers, discussions of schools

of literature, and brief comments about some of the works. There is a list of works for further reading. A useful feature at the end of each article is the location of the author's papers.

Joseph Sherman is Corob Fellow in Yiddish studies at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University of Oxford. He was previously associate professor in the Department of English, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. He has published widely on Yiddish literature, specializing in Isaac Bashevis Singer, and has translated his novel *Shadows on the Hudson*. His other area of specialization is Dovid Bergelson, whose novella *Opgang* (*Descent*), he recently published in a newly redacted Yiddish text and translation. Sherman's new translation of the novel *Nokh alemen* (*When All is Said and Done*) will be published in the fall.

Reference Honorable Mention is *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic and Mysticism* by Geoffrey W. Dennis (Llewellyn Publications, 2007). There are over 1,000 articles, varying in length from a few lines to more than a page, with extensive cross-references. All Hebrew is transliterated. There are numerous references to primary and a few secondary sources in rabbinic and mystical literature. The value of this encyclopedia is in the wide range of subjects covered; it does not replace

encyclopedias that cover some of the subjects in greater detail. To the best of my knowledge, however, many of the entries do not appear elsewhere in any organized form in other reference literature. Geoffrey Dennis is the rabbi of Congregation Kol Ami in Flower Mound, Texas. He was previously the assistant rabbi at Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. Prior to his ordination at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, he was a registered nurse and RN supervisor.

The 2007 Judaica Bibliography Award winner is *Dictionary of Iberian Jewish and Converso Authors* by Norman Roth (Aben Ezra Ediciones; Universidad Pontificia Salamanca, 2007). Although published in Spain, all annotations are in English. The bibliography includes not only Hebrew works, but those written in other languages, especially Spanish, as well as translations into other languages. Roth includes every edition of which he is aware, including material published in scholarly journals. One can get a sense of the amount of work that went into this 765-page bibliography by noting that the entry on Maimonides (apparently included because he spent his early years in Spain) is 78 pages long. This bibliography will be a basic research tool for all scholars in the field of Spanish Jews and Conversos.

Norman Roth is professor emeritus in the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. In addition to many articles in English and Spanish, he has published the following works: *Maimonides: Essays and Texts* (1985); *Jews, Visigoths, and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict* (1994); *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (1995). He edited *Medieval Jewish Civilization: An Encyclopedia* (2003).



The Honorable Mention in Bibliography is *Inventory of Yiddish Publications from the Netherlands: c.1650 – c.1950* by Mirjam Gutschow (Brill, 2007). This work lists 585 publications, all but three of which were published in Amsterdam. Subjects include narrative prose, plays, humorous literature, textbooks, grammars, religious literature, and regulations of local Ashkenazi communities. Almost all were published before the twentieth century. The author has excluded haggadahs and calendars. The inventory is based on catalogs and other secondary literature. It does not claim to be comprehensive, but is a major step toward identifying all of the Netherlands Yiddish publications. It is a valuable tool for the history of Yiddish literature and culture, as

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President's Message

LAUREL WOLFSON

Dear friends,

It's hard to believe that this is my final President's Column. When I first joined AJL eighteen years ago, my goal was to become an active member of the association. After receiving the scholarship award to complete my degree, I was eager to justify the support and confidence that everyone so generously displayed. I think that I have been on the council since shortly after joining in 1990, first serving as publicity chairperson (with no committee) at the 1991 convention in Miami Beach. Since then, I have held various offices, served on committees, and attended almost every convention.

Personal and professional relationships have both provided much benefit and pleasure over the years, and I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude to everyone. I urge our members to support the AJL Scholarship Fund, since you might be nurturing a future president of AJL.

Thank you to everyone for a most interesting and broadening two years. I look forward to continuing to serve AJL in the future. Best of luck to Suzi Dubin and the incoming board and council.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in Cleveland in June.

Laurel

Convention Exhibitors

Be sure to visit these vendors' tables

- Academic Studies Press
- Alden Films
- Arnold Reisman
- Association of Jewish Libraries
- Barnes & Noble
- Basch Subscriptions & Reference Shelf
- Ben Yehuda Press
- Best Practices Poster Displays
- C.D.I. Systems Ltd.
- Enjoy a Book Club
- Historicana
- Index to Jewish Periodicals
- Jaywil Software Dev. Inc.
- Jerusalem Books, Ltd.
- Jewish Publication Society
- JSP Judaic Art
- M. E. Sharpe, Inc.
- Star Bright Books
- The Magnet Mogul
- The Scholar's Choice
- Treasures Gift Shop
- URJ Books & Music

Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund

YELENA LUCKERT

The Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund provides funds for AJL members to attend their first AJL convention. Please think of this fund as you remember loved ones or commend others' achievements, or if you simply would like to perform a mitzvah.

It is my pleasure to announce the recipients of the Doris Orenstein Memorial Convention Travel Grant to attend the 2008 AJL Annual Convention in Cleveland, Ohio. They are Anne Biermann, Yoram Bitton, Helen Chronister, Debbie Colodny, Esther Hexter, Aimee Lurie, Sean Martin, Anna Skorupsky, Elayna Weisel, and Judy Wolfthal. We wish our new attendees a very productive and enjoyable convention, and hope that they will become convention regulars.

A donation was received from Libby White in memory of Irene Seff's mother. We thank Libby for her generous contribution, which will provide assistance to people new to in the field to attend their first AJL convention and help ensure the continuation of our traditions.

Please contribute to: Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund, c/o Yelena Luckert, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. If you have any questions, please call 301-405-9365 or send e-mail to yluckert@umd.edu.



AJL Scholarship Fund

SARAH BARNARD

You can make a difference...

The great rabbi and sage Maimonides listed eight levels of charity. The highest level is to prepare a person for gainful employment. You have the unique opportunity to make an impact on a library students' training and preparation and, at the same time, promote Judaica librarianship! You can do this by making donations to the AJL Scholarship Fund.

The AJL Scholarship Fund awards \$500 to a talented library science student with an interest in pursuing a career in Judaica librarianship. For each gift, an acknowledgment card is sent to the appropriate person. It is a meaningful way to recognize simchas, honor the memory of a loved one, or make a donation for a speedy recovery. Your donation will always be appreciated! Send your contributions with the appropriate information. Please remember to include the addresses of those honored or remembered in order that we can notify the appropriate persons. We always have impressive candidates, and the awards will be given out at the convention in Cleveland.

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

Name of Donor	_____
Address of Donor	_____
_____	_____
Donation made in honor/memory of	_____
Name of Person(s) to receive card	_____
Address of Person	_____
_____	_____
Notes:	_____
_____	_____

Have You Heard?

LIBBY K. WHITE



AJL's Anna Olswanger, author and literary agent, has launched a new website, www.Host-a-Jewish-Book-Author.com. This free source of books and authors worldwide is searchable by name, location, and genre. Each listing includes the author's city, book titles, lecture topics, areas of travel, and contact information. The site is designed as a clearinghouse for those wishing to arrange author visits and signings.

There is more news about the Responsa Project of Bar Ilan University. Ya'akov Aronson informs us that another database

has been added. COTAR (Collection of Torah Articles) deals with contemporary halakhic questions. Examples are: how to calculate the time of Shabbat while in space, and how to regard medical experiments conducted without a patient's permission. See www.cotar@biu.ac.il.

Lucette Lagnado has been awarded the Sami Rohr Prize. Lagnado is a *Wall Street Journal* reporter and author of *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*.

The Israel Prize for Literature winners are Ida Fink, Tuvia Ruebner, and Nili Mirsky. Fink, author of novels set during the Holocaust, will be most familiar to English language readers. Fink was awarded the over-all prize, Ruebner was honored for his poetry, and Mirsky for her translations.

U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Hass, a professor of English at UC Berkeley, visited Israel for the first time. He was a participant in an academic conference on the relationship between literature and the environment. Hass has stated that poetry struggles with ethical questions that are posed by science.

Natan Sharansky will receive the 2008 Ronald Reagan Freedom Award in June. Former First Lady Nancy Reagan will make the presentation.

The April issue of *American Libraries*, the magazine of the American Library Association, featured an article in its international news section entitled, "Terrorists Strike Libraries in Gaza and Jerusalem." The March attack on the library of the HaRav Marcac Yeshiva, which killed eight students, was described in detail. There was also a report on the bombing of the YMCA Library in Gaza. The library building and most of the collection were destroyed, but there was no loss of life. Sources in Gaza believe that the bombing was in retaliation for the recent reprinting of Danish cartoons said to dishonor the Prophet Muhammad.

AJL Online

To subscribe to Hasafran, AJL's electronic discussion list, send the message: "sub hasafran [your first and last name]" to: listproc@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu.

Visit the AJL website at www.jewishlibraries.org.

Correction

On page 11 of the last issue, the publisher of *Fox Walked Alone* was incorrectly stated. The book was published by Scholastic Canada in 2006.

Chapter Chatter

TOBY ROSSNER

News from the Chapter Relations Committee

We now have three committee members to help us with chapter support: Judy Cohn, from the Greater Los Angeles Area Chapter; Sylvia Firschein, from the Florida West Coast Chapter; and Marsha Lustigman, from the Montreal Chapter. This means each chapter will have a contact person, who will be a liaison between the chapter and national AJL, making sure information on the AJL website is up to date, and serving as a friendly ear in matters of chapter problems and successes.

Since we had such a positive response to our evening meetings at the Scottsdale convention last year, we have planned a program for the AJL 2008 Cleveland Convention devoted just to chapters: How to Run an Effective Chapter. Come hear chapter officers speak about their experiences with organization issues, leadership and succession, member retention, communication, programming, and more. Bring your own concerns to this lively panel discussion. Our panelists will be Marcie Eskin (Judaica Library Network of Metropolitan Chicago), Jean Loeb Lettovsky (Greater Cleveland Chapter), and Yelena Luckert (DC Capital Area Chapter). Irene and Roz will moderate.

Irene Seff: Irene@theseffs.net

Roz Reisner: roz@thereisners.net

Judaica Library Network of Metropolitan Chicago (JLNMC)

Submitted by Rose Novil

The February meeting of JLNMC featured Linda Sawyer, librarian at the Skokie Public Library, who gave suggestions about planning and sustaining book discussion groups. These are some of her recommendations:

- Determine who will participate (children/teens/adults/mother-daughter, etc.).
- Decide how often you will meet (monthly/bimonthly).
- Decide what time will you meet (night/day).
- Decide who will choose the books (the librarians or the participants).
- Make sure that the facilitator is familiar with the selected books (and reviews/bios/etc.).
- Provide reading lists, in paper or via the Internet.
- Prepare questions to engage your audience, and, if you wish, distribute these questions to the group so they can ask the questions.

For the first time, our chapter is hoping to have an informational table at the Greater Chicago Jewish Arts Festival, taking place on June 15. Our chapter is excitedly gearing up to host the 2009 AJL Annual Convention. Our local colleagues are graciously volunteering to help organize this wonderful event, and we hope to see many of you next year.

Greater Cleveland Chapter (AJL-GCC)

Submitted by Andrea Davidson

Many of our members attended a Literary Club session on March 3 at The Temple-Tifereth Israel where Mark Weber, AJL-GCC president, gave an outstanding review of *My Holocaust* by Tova Reich. On April 1 we celebrated the publication of Linda

Silver's book, *The Jewish Valuesfinder: A Guide to Jewish Children's Literature*. Linda spoke to us about the complexities and rewards involved in getting *The Jewish Valuesfinder* to press.

The entire Greater Cleveland Chapter has been working very hard to plan a fabulous 43rd Annual Convention from June 22-25. We look forward to seeing everyone in Cleveland.

We are sad to announce the death of our member Helene Stern.

Capital Area Chapter (AJL-CAC)

Submitted by Michlean Amir and Yelena Luckert

The Capital Area Chapter and Congregation Tifereth Israel honored Mollie Berch with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her many years' contribution to Judaica librarianship in the greater Washington area. Mollie has been the librarian of Tifereth Israel for many years and has been a highly respected educator in the DC public school system as well as in many Jewish schools. She was the principal of Tifereth Israel's Hebrew School for 18 years. The event took place at Tifereth Israel on Sunday, March 23; more than 80 "Mollie lovers" joined in the celebration. A certificate was presented to Mollie by Toby Rossner, who represented the national officers and Chapter Relations Committee of AJL. CAC officers Yelena Luckert and Michlean Amir congratulated Mollie and spoke of her accomplishments. The *Freileche Kneidlach* entertained with Yiddish songs and jokes. It was a heart-warming event for all who attended.

Yelena reports that "our chapter is growing! Which is a really great thing! We now have 38 paid up members, which I think, makes us one of the largest AJL chapters in the country."

(Editor's note: kol hakavod to AJL-CAC on its membership growth. It was a pleasure to travel to Silver Spring to participate in the chapter's freileche afternoon honoring Mollie Berch. The rabbi and chairman of the Library Committee of Tifereth Israel could not have been more hospitable, as were, of course, the members of the chapter.)

New England Chapter (NEAJL)

Submitted by Ann Abrams

In honor of Israel's 60th birthday NEAJL viewed and discussed excerpts of several new films about Israel at its May 9 meeting at Temple Israel, Boston.

San Diego/Tijuana Chapter

Submitted by Helene Rotto

Sherry Berlin from the Jewish Academy (sberlin@sdja.com) is the new chapter president; Roberta Berman is treasurer, and Barbara Sutton is secretary.

Our November meeting took place during the JCC Book Fair. Author Judith Viorst visited our meeting and told us about her books, her family, and her writing process, and graciously answered questions. We felt honored to have her visit with us.

South Florida Chapter (SFAJL)

From *Headlines and Footnotes*, the SFAJL Newsletter

The March meeting of SFAJL took place at the Judaica Sound Archives on Florida Atlantic University's Boca Raton Campus. Host was Daniel Scheide. Members toured the facility and other FAU library departments. SFAJL president Heidi Estrin interviewed Nathan Tinanoff (director) and Maxine Schackman

(assistant director) of the sound archives for her August 2007 podcast, the *Book of Life*. Visit www.bookoflifepodcast.com and search for the episode "Klezmapalooza" to hear the interview; to hear sound samples directly from the archives, visit www.faujsa.fau.edu.

A note from SFAJL Member Lee Wixman (edited)

This June will be my 19th year as a member of AJL. I've enjoyed that time, except when we lost Irene, but, she is still with me in spirit. I started as a helper on the *AJL Newsletter* production staff; later I became a reviewer and ad manager. I have helped with conventions here in Florida and elsewhere. I also helped on the Membership Committee as a recruiter, and I was quite successful in getting many new members, including Florida Atlantic University, St. Vincent's Seminary, the Palm Beach County Library System, and several temple libraries in Florida and elsewhere.

I am proud to have placed displays of *chanukiot* and *haggadot* in some of the branches of the Palm Beach County Library System. The comments from the library staffs as well as the patrons were worth the effort. In each display, I placed one sign that listed the AJL member institutions in the area and a second sign dedicating the exhibit to the memory of Irene.

I will continue my work for AJL for as long as I can.

Southern California Chapter (AJLSC)

From the AJLSC Website

AJLSC's March meeting was hosted by Lisa Silverman, library director of Sinai Temple Blumenthal Library. Lisa conducted a tour of the newly renovated and refurbished synagogue/day school library. Abigail Yasgur and Susan Dubin spoke about new acquisitions.

The May 14 program celebrated Israel's 60th anniversary and featured Professor Yaffa Weisman, library director, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles. For more information about Southern California library events and to find many helpful resources, visit the AJLSC website at www.ajlsc.org.

Florida West Coast Chapter (FWC-AJL)

Submitted by Sylvia Firschein

At each of the meetings of the Florida West Coast Chapter we go around the table asking each attending member to speak on pride, progress, and problems.

Pride = what have you done well and want to share?

Progress = what are you working on and what advice do you need to successfully complete the project?

Problems = what are the problems that you are facing in your library? We feel this is a very important part of our meetings, enabling each of us to avoid reinventing the wheel.

In March, Sylvia Firschein was honored by The Temple Beth Sholom Sisterhood as a *Light of Torah* for her work as temple librarian and in the community at large. For a librarian to be honored in this way was very special. At the celebration Heather Miller, librarian of the day school, spoke about Sylvia's founding and leadership of the Florida West Coast Chapter. "We are indebted to Sylvia for all she has done in the past and we thank her for continuing to be out mentor, recruiter, cheerleader, communicator, master-storyteller, reviewer, messenger, liaison, and goodwill ambassador."

Sylvia is convinced that her library's 2006 AJL accreditation played a positive role in making both her library and its librarian more visible, and she recommends that all AJL Judaic librarians apply for accreditation.

Long Island Chapter (LI-AJL)

Submitted by Wendy Marx

LI-AJL seems to get busier towards the end of the year. We sponsor an annual joint meeting with Nassau and Suffolk County Public Librarians, where LI-AJL members review books with appropriate universal values for public libraries. This year, our own Dr. Marcia Posner made a presentation on tolerance, using hand puppets.

We will again be in the public librarians' eye when we attend the Long Island Library Conference. We will have a table where our banner and LI-AJL materials are displayed. We find this is a great place to attract new members, to learn more about local libraries, and to get ideas on programming in general.

Our final meeting of the year is our annual dinner where chews, *schmooze*, and views are on our agenda!

From Sifria, the LI Chapter Newsletter

Hachai Press is publishing an edited version of a story Marcia Posner submitted several years ago. *The Chicken Lady* (working title) tells the story of a wonderful lady who bought Shabbat chickens for poor families in Jerusalem. Wearing her other hat, Marcia was honored by the American Jewish Congress for her work at the Holocaust & Tolerance Education Center in Glen Cove.

Tess and Morry Garber were honored by their synagogue, Midway Jewish Center.

New York Metropolitan Area Chapter (AJL-NYMA)

Submitted by Rita Lifton, et. al.

The February AJL-NYMA Reference Workshop focused on publishing. Alte Karper, editorial director at Schocken Books, spoke about "Contemporary Issues in American Jewish Publishing." Hannah Miryam Belinfante of the New York Public Library addressed the topic, "Sorting Through Cyberspace: Choosing Databases for Your Library." Rabbi Jeremy Meyerowitz, reference librarian at Jewish Theological Seminary presented "Passing as Sacred: Forgeries in Rabbinic Literature." A lively discussion ensued focusing on how librarians and library catalogs can alert readers to questions about the authenticity of works. One of the points made was that, in an ironic twist to this whole issue, some of these forgeries become collectors' items in their own right.

Over 35 librarians attended the March AJL-NYMA School Workshop. The topic was OPALS, a new English-Hebrew open-source automation system, which many of NYMA members are considering for purchase or have already rolled out in their schools. The meeting was followed by a sumptuous luncheon and a tour of the beautiful new school building. A complete audio recording of both workshops is available at www.ajlnyma.org.

NYMA's April 7 Spring Conference on digitized collections was held at the Jewish Theological Seminary. The final event on NYMA's calendar for this academic year is the Cataloging Workshop.

Award Winners

Continued from p. 1

well as the history of the Jewish book. Mirjam Gutschow studied Yiddish in Trier and Jerusalem, and recently worked at the Menasseh ben Israel Institute and the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam.

This year we are presenting a special “body of work” award to the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit at the University of Cambridge and to its retired director, Stefan Reif. The university’s library houses 140,000 Genizah fragments, containing both religious and secular materials. The collections include the original Hebrew version of the *Wisdom of Ben Sira*. Most of the works are, in the words of the unit’s website, “... the ordinary literature of life—mundane legal papers, business correspondence, medical prescriptions, illuminated pages, marriage contracts, children’s school books, and everyday letters.”

The fragments have made possible the writing of such major histories as S.D. Goitein’s multi-volume *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*. Fragments of early versions of midrash and Talmud have been critical for establishing accurate texts and learning about the development of Jewish law during the Gaonic period (7th to 11th centuries). It is now possible to reconstruct synagogue rites in ancient Babylonia and the Land of Israel. We could expand this list with many other examples. The unit publishes an ongoing series of subject bibliographies on the fragments.

The unit now has an online presence: GOLD (Genizah On-Line Database), containing selected materials. The University of Pennsylvania Library (which has an important collection of Genizah fragments) and the Genizah Research Unit are now involved in a project to digitize all of their holdings, with the goal of eventually having an electronic repository of all the Genizah fragments that are housed in a number of collections.

Professor Stefan Reif was the founding director, and led the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit for 33 years. The accomplishments of the unit listed above are a reflection of his dedication to Genizah research and his skills as a manager of the unit. Dr. Reif is currently a consultant to Cambridge University Library. He was head of its Division of Oriental Studies and is professor of medieval Hebrew studies in the Faculty of Oriental Studies and fellow of St. John’s College, Cambridge.

Stefan Reif has published many articles and books on the Genizah. His specific field of research is Jewish liturgy. Among his publications are: *Shabbetai Sofer and his Prayer-book* (1979); *Published Material from the Cambridge Genizah Collections, A Bibliography 1896-1980* (1988); *The Cairo Genizah: A Mosaic of Life* (1997); and *Problems with Prayers: Studies in the Textual History of Early Rabbinic Liturgy* (2006).

We are honored to present an award to the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit and to Dr. Reif for the incredible contributions they have made to preserving and cataloging Genizah materials and for their contribution to scholarship in numerous areas of Jewish and medieval studies.

Congratulations to all our 2007 winners and honorable mentions.

Congratulations to the Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award Winner

AILEEN GROSSBERG

The Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award Committee is pleased to announce the recipient of this year’s award. The winner is Margaret Chaiken for her historical novel *Stealing the Show*. In this novel 10-year-old Ana, upset that she cannot attend a soccer award dinner that falls on the evening of the first Passover seder, is transported back to 16th-century Antwerp and a family of Conversos. Through her experience of literally walking in someone else’s shoes, Ana learns to appreciate Judaism and to understand the importance of one’s convictions. The character of Ana and the historical character of Dona Gracia Nasi and her family are convincing. The perils of living at the time of the Inquisition and trying to outwit the religious tormentors are vivid, and make for an exciting story.

Ms. Chaiken has a strong interest in international cultures and has spent time in Nepal, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and the Ukraine. In addition she has studied in Israel and France. Most recently, Ms. Chaiken taught at the Park East Day School. She lives in New York City with her husband and young daughter.

Keeping Current

LIBBY K. WHITE

Most of the AJLers who read this newsletter never lived in a world without the state of Israel. The 60th anniversary of Israel’s rebirth is a cause for rejoicing, as well as a time for reflection. It is heart-wrenching to think of the worthy generations who prayed and dreamed, and yet never experienced the return in their time. We should give thanks for what has been achieved. Aside from our personal contributions, we are bound to identify with specific aspects of Israel’s history. As a resident of Baltimore, Maryland, I recall the saga of the ship, the Exodus 1947. The Exodus was an old ferry that attempted to run the British blockade to land Holocaust survivors on the shores of the Promised Land. The story was retold in print and in film. The ship was purchased by the Haganah in Maryland and set sail from Baltimore. Yossi Harel, commander of the Exodus 1947 died at age 90, not long before Israel’s 60th anniversary.

Despite the challenges Israel faces, the state has taken seriously Theodore Herzl’s promises. It has served as a refuge for Jews. It has given confidence to Jews everywhere. It has generated cultural riches to share. So what can we do as Israel’s partners? AJL is playing a constructive role. As readers’ advisors, reviewers, and selectors, we are aware of how Israel is evaluated and we know of the torrent of careless and malicious material. Many associated with AJL have called attention to errors and canards in books, articles, and other media; they have also made solid recommendations. Andrea Rapp, of the Isaac Mayer Wise Temple in Cincinnati, and Linda Silver, of the Jewish Values Finder, deserve praise for their leadership in this field. It’s obvious! By doing our jobs as professionals, we are also wishing happy birthday and congratulations to Israel.

SSC Accreditation

SUSAN GREENING

The Accreditation Committee has approved accreditation applications for 22 libraries. Congratulations to the awardees for all of their hard work. Accredited libraries have achieved a high level of professionalism as measured by the AJL Standards of Excellence. Accreditation helps elevate the image of libraries within their institutions. We will honor the recipients and present their certificates at the Tuesday afternoon awards luncheon during the AJL Convention in Cleveland.

Basic Accreditation

Jeanette Oshman Library, Robert M. Beren Academy, Houston, TX

Rebecca Kauffman Memorial Library, Keshet Israel Congregation, West Chester, PA

Musik Family Library/Elyse Warshaw Children's Collection, Temple Chai, Long Grove, IL

The Jewish Children's Museum Library, Jewish Children's Museum, Brooklyn, NY

Maurer Library, Bureau of Jewish Education, Indianapolis, IN
Millicent and Sigmund Nathan Library, B'nai Torah Congregation, Boca Raton, FL

Beth El Synagogue Library, Beth El Synagogue, New Rochelle, NY

Irving Shakin Library, Congregation Beth Shalom, Teaneck, NJ
Kestenbaum Library, Yeshiva University Los Angeles Girls High School

Bendiner Library, Temple Beth-El, San Antonio, TX

Basic and Advanced Accreditation

Jay Allen Meyers Library, Temple Israel, Tulsa, OK
Tyche Library, Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas
Weber Library, Adat Ari El, Valley Village, CA

Basic Accreditation Renewal

Cary Jay Zucker Youth Library, Temple Solel, Paradise Valley, AZ

Rabbi Frederick C. Schwartz Library, Temple Shalom of Chicago, Chicago, IL

Meyers Library, Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, PA

Monmouth Reform Temple Library, Monmouth Reform Temple, Tinton Fall, NJ

Advanced Accreditation Renewal

Temple Sinai Library, Temple Sinai, Atlanta, GA

Sheila Sporn Library, Valley Beth Shalom Synagogue, Encino, CA

Arnovitz Library, Katherine and Jacob Greenfield Hebrew Academy, Atlanta, GA

Temple Beth Israel Library, Temple Beth Israel, Longboat Key, FL

Kern Library, Samuel H. Wang Yeshiva University High School for Girls, Hollis, NY

AJL Wiki, Anyone?

DEBBIE STERN

While waiting for updates of our very popular AJL publications on organizing a synagogue library and of recommended books for a basic Judaica library, I think it would be great to start an AJL Wiki that would answer these needs and provide even more information to members and prospective members alike, right on our website. All of us can be instant authors and contribute current information to such a site. The Avi Chai Jewish high school librarians are already doing this. See their wiki at <http://jewishschoolibraries.pbwiki.com>.

If you like this idea, please be in touch with me. Send an e-mail message to dstern@rrc.edu or call 215-576-0800 ext. 234. I'd like to find several wonderful, creative colleagues to serve as wiki-editors.

In the meantime, don't forget:

- the list of AJL publications in print available on the AJL website.
- Linda Silver's new book from Neal-Schuman publishers on *The Jewish Values Finder: A Guide to Values in Jewish Children's Literature*. AJL members should follow the link on the AJL website to order it at a discount.
- the AJL bibliography bank and other book club reading lists found under *Resources* on the AJL website.
- the Jewish Valuesfinder database, also found under *Resources* on the AJL website.
- the Weiner classification scheme documents, available free-of-charge to AJL members, also found under *Resources* on the AJL website.

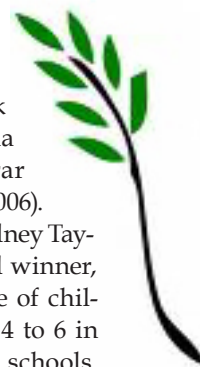
Looking forward to hearing from you!

The winner of the 2008 Olive Branch Book Award (OBBA) is *Julia's Kitchen* by Brenda

A. Ferber (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2006).

This novel, a Sydney Taylor Book Award winner, was the favorite of children in grades 4 to 6 in Toronto Jewish schools. The OBBA reading program gives students the opportunity to read high-quality Jewish books and vote for their choices. For more information, contact

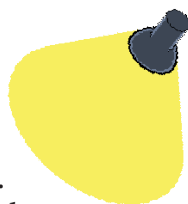
Rochelle Chester, librarian, Leo Baeck Day School, Toronto: rchester@leobaek.ca.



Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY LINDA R. SILVER

In The Spotlight



Shulevitz, Uri. *How I Learned Geography.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. 32pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-374-33499-4. Grades 1-6.

After a long and distinguished career of telling stories with pictures, Uri Schulevitz sums up his personal narrative in *How I Learned Geography*. It could as well have been called, *How I Learned to be an Artist* or *How I Learned to Live in a Flawed World*. With the wisdom and economy of a folktale, Shulevitz pictures the events in a small boy's life: he and his family lose everything in war. They are exiled to a strange land where they endure deprivation and hunger. One day the boy's father goes out to buy bread, but returns without the bread. "I bought a map," he announces triumphantly. "I had enough money only to buy a tiny piece of bread, and we would still be hungry, so I bought the map instead." "I was furious," the boy says, "I didn't think I would ever forgive him." "The next day, Father hung the map. It took up an entire wall. Our cheerless room was flooded with color."

What follows shows how the boy's imagination and spirit are fed with this map, which gives color and scope to a dreary and hopeless exile. The young boy spends his time looking at the map, drawing it, and studying its every detail. He studies and repeats the strange-sounding names on the map, and the "sounds transport him far away without ever leaving our room." The colorful double-spread pages that follow show wide expanses of desert, beaches, mountains, and exotic temples, fruit groves where "I drank fresh water and rested in the shade of palm trees... And so I spent enchanted hours far from our hunger and misery. I forgave my father. He was right, after all." This is the artist's experience that leads humans to find nourishment from within. The illustrated pages progress from sparse to increasingly rich and opulent compositions. The arc of the drawings is upwards and outwards, as young Uri's inner life opens the world for him.

But is it Jewish? We know that Uri Shulevitz was a young Jewish child in Europe, caught in the war. We are familiar with his many illustrated books of Jewish content and meaning. It seems we may conclude that here is a mature artist telling his life's story, which is, after all, a Jewish story. The documentation for, or degree of the artist's Judaism is unimportant, as is the degree of observance represented. This is a Jewish story in the same way that the child's poem about butterflies written during the Holocaust is a Jewish poem. It is also a universal story, and that is what makes it a book that speaks to all children and all parents.

A book like this does not come around very often. It should be added to all children's book collections, both in public and school libraries, Jewish and secular. Its use with children will depend upon theirs and their teacher's imaginations. It would be welcome in storytelling for younger children and as the basis for discussions with 5th and 6th graders. Though fanciful and

oblique, its meaning is not lost on children. Many parents and grandparents will be moved to discuss this book with their children. Highly recommended.

Naomi S. Morse, Silver Spring, MD

BIBLE

Greengard, Alison. *Joseph the Dreamer.* Illus. by Carol Racklin-Siegel. Oakland, CA: EKS, 2008. 34pp. \$10.95. ISBN: 978-0-939144-57-0 Pbk. Kindergarten-grade 2.

In this eighth book of retellings of Bible stories for young readers, the partnership of Greengard and Racklin-Siegel continues a format that works: introduction for the adult reader, Hebrew text, simple but effective retelling of the story, a brightly-colored illustration opposite each section of the story, the literal translation, and a glossary. In a synagogue library, where teachers often ask for a story about a biblical character, these books fit the bill. See other titles like *Noah's Ark*, *Jacob's Travels*, and *Lech Lecha* in this useful series.

Anne Dublin, Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto, Canada

BIOGRAPHY

Michelson, Richard. *As Good As Anybody: Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel's Amazing March Toward Freedom.* Illus. by Raul Colon. New York: Knopf, 2008. 40pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-375-8335-9. Grades 2-5.

What better time than now, when there is such a resurgence of hate in the world and in our own communities, to introduce young children to the childhood, lives, and missions of two exemplary men? This fictionalized joint biography is written in simple, graceful language and illustrated with sensitive pastel portraits. Martin Luther King, Jr., as a young boy, was angry at the treatment Blacks received at the hands of whites; luckily, he had a father who was a preacher and who saw beyond their immediate environs. It took the son to make his father's dream come true. Incensed by the indignity suffered on a segregated bus by a proud black woman, Rosa Parks, King led a bus strike and continued to march throughout the country for equal rights. When the police blocked a march, he called for help.

His pleas were heard by another wise man, also a minority member and a man of religion, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. Heschel's childhood was similar in many ways to King's because his father was also a source of inspiration. It was as if the prophets of old were reborn and had responded to the calls of the righteous when King and Heschel marched together. Those of us who lived during those times were fortunate to have been witnesses to such nobility. An excellent introduction both in narrative and illustration.

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

Drucker, Malka. *Portraits of Jewish-Americans*. Illus. by Elizabeth Rosen. New York: Dutton, 2008. 96pp. \$21.99. ISBN: 978-0-525-47771-6. Reviewed from an advance review copy. Grades 3–6.

The author profiles 21 Jewish men and women who have enriched the country and our lives. They have achieved in a wide range of fields, including science, sports, film, and civil rights, over a span of two centuries. The work is competently written, but some unusual illustrations detract from the narrative. The point of this book is not to provide a venue for the artist's various artistic riffs; that belongs in an art book. What should prevail here is an honest representation of those featured—which allows for artistic excellence, but not extravagance. Each subject is treated in a different artistic style. Does this belong in a collective biography whose intent is to explore the achievements of its subjects? Levi Strauss pictured in blue jeans, for instance, is not bad, but when someone as noble as Rabbi Abraham Heschel is portrayed in grotesque garish combinations of colors, I draw the line.

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

Another Opinion

Conventional art is the norm in Jewish children's books and very few illustrations explore the multiple facets of their subjects' characters or offer children a means of looking beyond the surface towards "many ways of seeing." An earlier collective biography by Doreen Rappaport, illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu entitled *In the Promised Land: Lives of Jewish Americans* (HarperCollins, 2005), illuminates the lives of 13 Jewish Americans through a combination of concise prose and handsome, realistic illustrations. Drucker's book includes more subjects and discusses them competently, but it stands apart because of its art, which dares to delve into the meaning of its subjects' lives through the imaginative use of mixed media. Some of it is quite realistic, like the portrait of Rachel "Ray" Frank, which shows this famous speaker's quiet strength and suggests the force of her personality. Gloria Steinem's portrait is in a pop art style, setting her own media fame during the period when pop artists like Andy Warhol and Jim Dyne were at the height of their popularity. One of the most engaging portraits is of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel because his face is drawn with bold lines and painted in a rainbow of colors, suggesting to this reviewer his commitment to racial equality. The book's final subject is Daniel Pearl and its final illustration is of a poem by an Arab Muslim memorializing Pearl. Jewish children's literature needs more illustrations that dare to be different, that push beyond the limits of the conventional, and Rosen's illustrations are a good example of how that might be done.

Linda R. Silver, *Jewish Valuesfinder*, Cleveland, OH

FICTION

Baskin, Nora Raleigh. *The Truth About My Bat Mitzvah*. New York: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2008. 134pp. \$15.99. ISBN: 978-1-4169-5217-6. Grade 5–7.

After the death of her beloved grandmother, young Caroline is at a crossroads. Poppy, her grandfather, gives Caroline a gold

Star of David necklace that belonged to Nana. The gift arouses a series of emotions in Caroline, who connects with the memory of her grandmother through her own spiritual journey. As her best friend prepares for her bat mitzvah, Caroline wonders if this should be her path, as well. But her mother is opposed to the commercialization of the ceremony, and her father is not Jewish. Caroline must balance her own needs without rejecting her parents' values. *The Truth about my Bat Mitzvah* is a tender story of love, loss, and healing. Caroline's emotions are heartfelt and authentic. Issues of adolescent social dynamics are flawless. Tween readers will hear Caroline's voice and empathize with her struggles. The author bravely presents some of the difficulties that can arise for children whose families have not affirmed a religious connection. Although written for slightly younger readers, it is somewhat similar in theme to *Confessions of a Closet Catholic* because both books deal with the issue of being "too Jewish." An appropriate selection for Jewish or secular libraries.

Barbara Bietz, Oak Park, CA

Binder, Mark. *The Brothers Schlemiel*. Illus. by Zevi Blum. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2008. 256pp. \$19.95. ISBN: 978-0-8276-0865-8. Grades 4–8.

Last year, Mark Binder's Hanukkah stories, collected in *A Hanukkah Present*, were reviewed by this reader as "wry, amusing ... perfect for reading aloud." Disappointingly, *The Brothers Schlemiel*—45 episodes in the life of Chelm twins Adam and Abraham Schlemiel—does not live up to the author's previous standard. The stories are too long, not funny, and certainly not as clever and charming as traditional Chelm stories. While the book jacket recommends this work "for parents, grandparents, and children to share together," the vocabulary, sentence structure, and concepts are too sophisticated for younger children (being read to) and not appealing enough for older readers to pick up on their own. It's a shame, because the illustrations are excellent and the title is perfect.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Manushkin, Fran. *How Mama Brought the Spring*. Illus. by Holly Berry. New York: Dutton, 2008. 32pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-525-42027-9. Kindergarten–grade 3.

The seemingly endless gray Chicago winter has Rosy Levine depressed until her mother tells her the story of how her mother, Grandma Beatrice, brought spring to freezing cold Minsk when she made delicious blintzes in their kitchen. Mama describes how Grandma flipped sunny circles of dough onto a blue tablecloth, built a little white hill into the middle of them, then rolled them into golden, plump blintzes, which sizzled enough in the frying pan to melt the ice on the windows! The delightful illustrations have a folk-art quality, and complement the text perfectly. Reading about the magical way that Grandma Beatrice tamed the Siberian wind "into a soft, sweet breeze" while enjoying the charming illustrations will warm up readers' own cold winter days. Although the word "Jewish" is never mentioned, it's obvious that this is a warm, loving Jewish family. When Mama brings out Grandma's special blue "blintz tablecloth," to make blintzes with Rosy, readers feel the magic of baking in a warm kitchen with delicious smells and are likely to be inspired to use the step-by-step recipe, which is included, to make their

own blintzes. As a child, Rosy's Mama found the blintzes to be "surprising and sweet, just like their name," and that is a good description for this tasty story.

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

Matas, Carol. *The Freak*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2008. 128pp. \$6.95. ISBN: 978-1-55263-930-4 Pbk. Grades 9-12.

Fifteen-year-old Jade is having some strange after-effects following a high fever with meningitis. She sees auras around people's heads, can read minds, and accurately predicts the future. Where do these abilities come from, and what do they suggest about free will, G-d, and the meaning of life? Can Jade change the future? Jade thinks she's crazy and a freak, but her mother, father, grandmother, boyfriend, aunt, and a Jewish psychic named Frieda have other ideas. The suspenseful, entertaining, sometimes humorous plot plays out against a backdrop of Judaism, high holidays, and local anti-Semitic skinheads bent on destroying Jews and immigrants. *The Freak* is book one in The Freak series. It is recommended for its storyline and intriguing philosophical explorations, plus a hip grandma who knows a thing or two about Jewish theology.

Susan Berson, *Denver, CO*

Matas, Carol. *The Freak II: Visions*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2008. 128pp. \$6.95. ISBN: 978-1-55263-932-0 Pbk. Grades 9-12.

In the second novel in The Freak series, Jade is once again presented with an opportunity to prevent a crime by using her psychic powers to change fate. This time, one intended victim is her best friend's mother. Some of the information about Jade's ability to read minds and predict the future is repeated from the first book in the series, *The Freak*, so that this work can stand alone. In attempting to understand her special powers, Jade continues to struggle with questions such as "Is this material world an illusion?" and "Is there an unseen universe?" which are fundamental religious issues. Over the course of the story, various explanations are offered, e.g., we create our own reality; unified field theory, humans as energy; reality of thoughts. While a psychic mentions the possibility of reading Kabbalah Tarot cards, there is less Jewish content in this enjoyable, quick-reading novel than in *The Freak*.

Susan Berson, *Denver, CO*

Rosen, Renee. *Every Crooked Pot*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2007. 240pp., \$9.95. ISBN: 978-0-312-36543-1. Pbk. High school and adult.

Adolescence is full of insecurity for Nina Goldman. She feels unattractive because of the hemangioma, or strawberry birthmark, over her eye. The boys at school taunt her about it. She spends most of her teenage years trying to cover her eye. Nina's home life is difficult as well. Her emotionally needy father makes his children feel guilty whenever he thinks they are straying away from him. The family suffers from his volatile mood swings. Nina, however, is able to use her eye to avert her father's temper. After Nina receives successful treatments for her eye condition, she realizes that she has been using her eye as a crutch to blame for insecurities in other aspects of her life. The author illustrates well Nina's transformation from a self-

conscious girl to a self-confident young woman. The story takes place in Akron, Ohio, and mentions that the family is Jewish. Yet there are few Jewish references throughout the book. The story is written with sensitivity toward Nina's feelings of inadequacy and how much she cares about others' opinions of her. Many readers will empathize with Nina's feelings of being a "tag-along" to her friends; and how she is so desperate to fit in that she will participate in activities that she knows are wrong. The novel is intended for mature readers due to sexual situations and mentions of underage drinking and recreational drug use.

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

Walfish, Miriam. *The Jewel and the Journey*. Brooklyn, NY: The Judaica Press, 2007. 205pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-932443-81-3. Grades 4-7.

In this engaging historical novel, the author has recreated Jewish life in 18th-century Russia and the fervor of the followers of the Gaon of Vilna (1720-1797) to resettle in the Holy Land. The story traces the perilous journey of Ephraim Edelstein, who, along with his family and others, makes the trip of many weeks and months, from traveling by sled on the frozen river, to overland wagons, and finally to sailing on ships. We follow Ephraim's trip by means of maps that the author has conveniently placed at the beginning of each chapter. Ephraim has been entrusted by his grandfather with a precious and mysterious jewel along with a riddle that he must solve. He eventually solves the riddle using the knowledge he has gained through his yeshiva studies, and provides the means for his family to reach their destination. In the process, Ephraim learns a lot about himself, growing and maturing along the way. He also meets many other Jews who inhabit cities along the journey and comes to realize their mutual love of *Eretz Yisrael*.

The characters in *The Jewel and the Journey* are fully developed and we can feel their emotions, from the fear they feel when their ship is attacked by pirates, to their anxiety at approaching the Holy Land. Ms. Walfish has also provided biographical notes, author's notes, a history of Shklov, Russia, and a glossary. The glossary could be very helpful for those unfamiliar with Hebrew and Yiddish terminology. The central theme of this historical novel is love of *Eretz Yisrael* and the lengths to which some Jews of the 18th century pursued that love.

Tammy Gerson, *Congregation Children of Israel, Athens, GA*

GRAPHIC NOVEL

Hinds, Gareth. *The Merchant of Venice*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2008. 70pp. \$21.99. ISBN 978-0-7636-3024-9. Grade 8-12.

Artist Gareth Hinds has abridged Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and transformed it into a graphic novel. He eases readers into the sophisticated language by starting with simplified prose and gradually becoming more faithful to the original verse as the story progresses. This works well for the most part, except in one jarring passage where Portia's father is referred to as "a pretty sharp guy." Young readers will enjoy this lean version of the story in which the beauty and clever wordplay of Shakespeare's text shines through. Locations are subtly differentiated by palette,

with blue for Venice and gray for Belmont. The characters, drawn from live models, are quite expressive and realistic. The scenes are somewhat static, but this is more due to the conversational nature of the play than to any fault of the artist. The characters appear in modern dress, which renders Antonio's blatant anti-Semitism and Shylock's thirst for a pound of flesh particularly disturbing. The age-old question of whether the play is sympathetic or antagonistic to Judaism is not, of course, resolved here. While *The Merchant of Venice* is not, per se, a Jewish story, it can inspire interesting discussion of historical attitudes toward Jews. This pared-down, graphical version will appeal to modern readers while exposing them to the richness of Shakespeare's themes and language.

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

HOLIDAYS

Balsley, Tilda. *Let My People Go!* Illus. by Ilene Richard. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. 32pp. \$7.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-7241-1 Pbk. Preschool-grade 2.

Colorful, cartoon-like pictures and a humorous rhyming text tell the story of Passover and the ten plagues through the use of five roles: the Narrator, Moses, Pharaoh, the Egyptians and the Chorus. Each has his own text in a different color, so this can be acted out as readers' theater at seders, and could also be used in classroom or library presentations. The narrator reads the text in black type, Moses reads the text in purple type, Pharaoh reads the text in red type, etc. The last plague—death to every Egyptian first-born son—is depicted in a non-scary way with an Egyptian holding a rattle while looking at an empty cradle, and the Jewish characters marking their doors with red, since God, through Moses, says, "Sons of Israel I will spare, so listen now, you must prepare." The last frame shows the Jews leaving, but not the waters parting. A different, imaginative approach to Passover for young readers, this will succeed in engaging them in the seder, teach them about the history of Passover, and leave plenty of room for more serious discussion.

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

DePaola, Tomi. *My First Passover.* New York: Grosset & Dunlap/Penguin Putnam, 2008. 12pp. \$5.99. ISBN: 978-0-448-44791-9 Board Book. Ages 1-3.

Originally published by G. P. Putnam's Sons in 1990 and now reprinted in board book form, this is one of the simplest and most accessible books about Passover for very young children. The color illustrations are typical of dePaola's child-like style and the text consists of just a sentence or two on each page. The seder table, covered matzahs, the seder plate, haggadah, and Elijah's cup are all identified and a child is shown asking the four questions. These Passover symbols are the basis of an introductory work that limits its exploration of the meaning of Passover to one sentence, which states, "We celebrate Passover to remember when Moses led the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt." For children about to participate in their first seder, it is a gentle and welcoming invitation.

Linda R. Silver, Jewish Valuesfinder, Cleveland, OH

Gottlieb, Wendy Ruth. *Purr-im Cat.* New York: Pitspopany, 2007. 32pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-932687-91-0. Preschool-grade 2.

A ginger-colored cat named Cinnamon is the model for a series of photographs showing it dressed in costumes made by the author. This incredibly patient cat appears as a bride, a groom, a king, a queen, a little boy, a little girl, a soldier, a pirate, a burglar and in several other guises, all of which are linked by a short rhyming text. At the top of each photo is a vocabulary word (pirate, soldier, queen, etc.) and its Hebrew equivalent. The first sentence states "On Purim my cat loves to dress up for fun..." and that is the extent of the Purim content. If cats could talk, Cinnamon might have a different opinion on how much fun it is. Not recommended.

Linda R. Silver, Jewish Valuesfinder, Cleveland, OH

Rouss, Sylvia. *Sammy Spider's First Shavuot.* Illus. by Katherine Janus Kahn. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. 32pp. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-7225-1 Pbk.

Sammy Spider's First Shavuot is the fourteenth book in the Sammy Spider series. In the first half of the book Sammy and his mother watch Mrs. Shapiro prepare blintzes. The preparation is described in great detail. First Mrs. Shapiro measures the flour. Then she adds eggs, milk, cheese filling and strawberry topping. Throughout, Sammy wants to make blintzes too, but his mother admonishes him with the mother spider's familiar refrain, "Spiders spin webs." The second half of the book talks about G-d giving the Torah to Moses, Moses teaching the Torah to the Jewish people, and the Jewish people passing the Torah's teaching on to their children. Katherine Janus Kahn's vivid illustrations enhance the text. The Jewish values taught in *Sammy Spider's First Shavuot* are sharing and the importance of the Torah. Recommended for the picture book collection of all synagogue and school libraries.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH

HOLOCAUST

Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *The Boy Who Dared: A Novel Based on the True Story of a Hitler Youth.* New York: Scholastic Press, 2008. 202pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-439-68013-4. Grades 8-12.

Helmuth Hubener was a German teenager during World War II. He listened to foreign broadcasts and distributed pamphlets based on the information he heard. For these illegal activities, he was condemned to death. On the day of his execution, Helmuth sits in prison. As he waits, his memories are seen as flashbacks told in the third person. He reflects on his life in Hamburg, Hitler's rise to power, his Mormon beliefs, and the events that led to this day. The author "was so moved by Helmuth's story, which she encountered while writing *Hitler Youth* (Scholastic, 2005), that she wanted to flesh out his story into a fictional form, as well as raise questions about moral courage and personal responsibility." The book includes photographs and an author's note, as well as a bibliography and suggestions for further reading.

Ms. Bartoletti conducted interviews with Helmuth's friends and family, did archival research and visited Germany to create

a compelling historical fiction that addresses issues with which the world is still struggling: lessons about civil liberties being taken away in the name of national security and the acquiescence of silence when wrongdoing is taking place. The Jewish content consists of Helmuth's frustration with anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda and the treatment of Jewish classmates and storeowners. There is also an account of Kristallnacht which shows the true character, or lack thereof, of the Nazis. This book is recommended for libraries with extensive Holocaust collections. It belongs on the shelf with *Someone Named Eva* (Clarion, 2007) and *Hitler Youth*, which give perspective on non-Jewish experiences during World War II. Given the detailed descriptions of torture, this book is appropriate for readers aged 14 and up.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Shalom, Teaneck, NJ

ISRAEL

***The Bat-Chen Diaries.* Trans. by Diana Rubanenko. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. 112pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-8807-8. Grades 6-10.**

Bat-Chen Shahak's collected journal entries, letters, poems, and photos introduce us to a charming and gifted Israeli girl, as she grows from age ten to fourteen. Her sensitivity, innocence, and her ultimate fate evoke an earlier diarist, who wrote, "despite everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart." Although Kar-Ben Publishing focuses on books for Jewish children, here is one book that could have a much wider appeal. Almost any American youngster could identify with Bat-Chen's writings, wherein she describes her first schoolgirl crush, feelings of love yet annoyance with her parents, and sadness at the death of beloved grandparents.

Of course, there are a few experiences that non-Jewish (and even some Jewish) American children might *not* identify with so readily: fasting on Yom Kippur, struggling to learn to don a gas mask, and longing for peace. These American readers might wonder what Yom Kippur is, or why Bat-Chen has to learn about gas masks. And what is "Purim"—the holiday that coincided with her fifteenth birthday—the day on which she was killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber? Unfortunately, the reader's knowledge of these things is assumed.

This children's book, unique in that it puts a human face on the statistics about terror victims, might be the only place where American youngsters can meet a real-life Israeli child who shares her feelings and dreams. It would be so enhanced by a few explanatory notes to make Bat-Chen's life a bit more meaningful and comprehensible to them, and it would also benefit from captions for the photographs from Bat-Chen's picture album. Which one in this sleepover scene is Bat-Chen? Is that her friend Ye'ela hiking with her? *The Bat-Chen Diaries* is recommended for children in grades 6 and up, who will find making Bat-Chen's acquaintance a pleasure. However a golden teaching opportunity may have been lost. Perhaps a second edition will provide those few sentences here and there to put the diary's entries in context, and explain why, for example, a ten-year-old child wrote a poem called "The Gas Mask."

Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

Hanel, Rachael. *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.* Days of Change Series. Mankato, MN: Creative Education, 2008. 48pp. \$21.95. ISBN: 978-1-58341-5481. Grades 7-12.

This is a survey of the Arab-Israeli conflict, from nineteenth-century Zionism through the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. Nearly half its 48 pages are full-page photographs, mainly archival photos, and the caption insets are well done, informative, and relevant to the narrative. This title offers a better effort than other, similar series books about the Middle East conflict, but it suffers from the common drawback of assigning free-lance writers to write books on complex subjects about which they have little expertise. While much of the narrative is excellent, there are a few errors of fact. Examples are the assertion that Palestinians began to "clamor for an independent state" before World War I, or that it was an "age-old belief among some Europeans that Jews were inferior to the Caucasian race." There are places where a lack of clarity misleads the reader. An example is the statement that the UN partition plan "created borders for Israel and designated areas for Palestinians." (The plan created borders and states for both peoples.) And there are important omissions. For example: yes—"Israeli tanks and troops poured into the West Bank" in 2002, but this was in response to the Passover massacre in Netanya, which killed 29 people and injured 140 others, as they prepared to observe the seder ceremony. The West Bank town of Jenin had become a center for launching these terrorist attacks and after the Netanya assault, Israel sought to root out the terrorist infrastructure.

Hanel is a good writer, who has written other titles for this publisher, on less controversial topics, such as penguins, parrots, gladiators, and koalas. But authors of books on complicated historical/political subjects should bring enough depth of background to their task that readers can trust that factual errors and subtle, if unintended, bias are absent. I'm afraid this solid effort fails that test. Includes index and short bibliography.

Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

Luxenberg, Alan. *The Palestine Mandate and the Creation of Israel, 1920-1949.* The Making of the Middle East Series. Philadelphia: Mason Crest, 2008. 80pp. \$22.95. ISBN: 978-1-4222-0171-1. Grades 7-12.

"People often use the terms 'state' and 'nation' interchangeably. However ... it is important to understand the difference between these terms when studying the history of the Middle East ... a *state* is the political apparatus that governs a country, while a *nation* is a group of people who share a cultural heritage ... Nationalism is the idea that a nation should have its own state." As those opening words of text indicate, readers of *The Palestine Mandate and the Creation of Israel* will be treated to a clarity of writing rarely seen in social studies series books for pre-college age students. They will also meet with a striving for objectivity, which is the hallmark of the discipline of historical writing. From the Ottoman background to World War II's aftermath, from modern Zionism's origins to the development of Arab nationalism, the author chronicles the attempts, successes, and setbacks in the effort to satisfy the nationalistic drives of the two nations—Arab and Jewish—of Palestine. Trivia is excluded; the essentials of the historical record are included. The glossary and timeline entries are concise and devoid of propaganda.

The publisher asserts that its mission is to provide high-quality, core-related materials for grades K-12, produced by the most proficient and knowledgeable editors, advisors, and authors. Judging by this entry in its new series *The Making of the Middle East*, and by volumes in an earlier Mason Crest series, *Modern Middle East Nations*, this imprint has succeeded in setting a standard that puts to shame the amateurish, error-ridden, biased work one too often finds in other publishers' social studies series. Includes an index, short bibliography, and list of Internet resources plus maps and archival photographs.

Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

Pohl, Kathleen. *Looking at Israel.* Pleasantville, NY: Gareth Stevens, 2008. 32pp. \$8.95. ISBN: 978-0-8368-8770-9 Pbk. Grades 3-6.

Part of the "Looking at Countries" series, this book gives no information about the author's background or qualifications. However, she has written a straightforward, bland, but serviceable description of Israel today—its climate, houses, foods, etc., accompanied by color photos. No history is included, there is no mention of "Palestine," and neutral language avoids controversy. Jerusalem is identified as the capital of Israel. Even describing the Jewish population, the author manages to be even-handed and accurate, noting that "some Jews follow strict rules about how to dress and what to eat ... Other Jews do not follow such strict rules." Web resources, a glossary, and an index make this a good basic resource for elementary school country reports.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Sofer, Barbara. *Keeping Israel Safe: Serving in the Israel Defense Forces.* Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. 56pp. \$7.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-7222-0. Pbk. Grades 6-12.

Keeping Israel Safe is a useful source that will help to fill the requests of those students who hunger for information on Israel's armed forces and military history. It deftly combines facts about the IDF's various branches, ranking system, and famous operations with the stories of four Israeli friends—all teens deciding which branch of the service to enter. At only 56 pages, with photographs on every page, this book provides a sketchy treatment of its topic and could be stronger in explaining the threats faced by the IDF. It is recommended as an introduction to the subject of the Israeli military today.

Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

JUDAISM

Avital, Dr. Moshe. *Quiz Me on the Torah: More Than 1,200 Challenging Questions and Answers.* Jerusalem: Mazo, 2007. 166pp. \$18.00. ISBN: 978-965-7344-17-0. Grades 5-11.

The National Bible Contest (Chidon HaTanach) has always been a challenge. This work presents more than 1,200 questions about Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Each section includes multiple-choice questions, "About Whom Was This Said?," "Who Did the Following?," "What Is the Correct Number?," "Identify the Person," "Who Said What to Whom?," "Who Does The Statement Refer To?," questions about places, objects, events and relationships; and fill-in the missing word

questions. The answers, accompanied by chapter and verse, are in the back of the book.

Dr. Avital is a former director of the Department of Education of the Jewish Agency for Israel. In that capacity he directed the National Bible Contest in the United States, and created many of the questions in the book. His expertise is evident in questions that demand a thorough knowledge of the material. Although those not so familiar with the Bible may have preferred the questions to be arranged by weekly Torah portion, the book is an excellent resource for learning and review. The English version was reviewed and is highly recommended. The book is also available in Hebrew.

Kathe Pinchuk, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Bier, Ian, and James DuPrie. *In the Beginning ... Canaan Tours of Jewish History Series.* Durham, NH: Purple Monkey Books/Sephirot Press, 2007. 199pp. \$14.99. ISBN: 978-0-9802071-0-1 Pbk. Grades 4-7.

Shem and Sephira are Canaan dogs that are native to Israel. In this story they can talk and offer to share their knowledge of Jewish history with two children named Maya and Josh, claiming "an oral tradition going back to the sixth day of creation. We've been there for all the important dates." A weird concept, with fast-paced dialogue and some humor, but it gets even weirder as Maya and Josh howl at the moon, leave their bodies, and enter the bodies of their dogs for a trip to the Negev, the ancestral home of Canaan dogs, in a non-linear time frame. A canine Sanhedrin/Assembly is convened and the story has a kabbalistic, New Age undertone—sacred circles, Everywhen, time travel, primal breath, and an emphasis on Jewish mystical traditions. Adam is "Earth Being," and G-d is "Source of Powers" as they travel by ruach to the 6th day of creation. The dogs' message is sound—to have faith in "Creator" and a relationship with all creation. A glossary is embedded in the text, with special sections on G-d, Manna, Tanach, Rosh Chodesh, Olam, etc. An optional purchase for synagogue or community libraries.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Kornblau, Yitzchok. *Trekking through Time: The World-Wise Adventures of Yisrael and Meir.* Illus by Ruth Beifus. Brooklyn, NY: Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation, Mesorah/Artscroll, 2007. 104pp. \$24.99. ISBN: 978-1-4226-0084-9. Grades 3-6.

This volume from Artscroll and the Chofetz Chaim Foundation is intended to help children learn the significance of evil speech and its implications. The story follows Yisrael and Meir as they dream a journey through time and space to Europe, Asia, and North Africa. In each place, they experience Jewish life during critical moments and spend time in the world of the great Torah commentators. Each place uncovers another aspect of *lashon hara* and *rechilus* (gossip) in the world and in their own lives.

Each double-page spread is designed like an elementary Talmud page. In the middle is the boys' story in cartoon format. The left side includes an explanation of where they are, a rule from the Chofetz Chaim on proper speech, and an explanation of the rule. On the right is a map of the travelers' journey, a short exploration of the rule's implication in real life, and a "personal reflection" by one or both of the boys. The content is serious but

not grim, and the various elements are well integrated in order to involve both adults and children. *Trekking through Time* includes several important concepts that children would do well to learn and use. Regrettably, the delivery feels a bit didactic at times, and the information a bit forced. Nevertheless, it is a worthwhile tool that would be best used by parents and teachers alongside students, rather than by children alone. It is recommended for schools and for larger synagogue libraries, possibly as a curriculum resource rather than a circulating item.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Rotman, Risa. *Fit for a Princess*. Illus. by Tova Leff. New York: Hachai, 2008. \$10.95, 36pp. ISBN: 978-1-929628-38-4. Preschool-grade 2.

An unnamed princess finds that her “long, swishy gown” and her crown get in her way as she goes about her favorite tasks of tending the royal library and garden. She asks her advisors to suggest alternative dress styles, and women in costumes from various lands and eras suggest their own modes of dress. While less cumbersome, these outfits take away from the princess’s sense of identity. Finally, in frustration, she creates her own style: “clothing that is graceful and dignified, beautiful and neat,” and that will show her to be “the daughter of a king.” She achieves this by adopting Orthodox-style modest dress: a plain skirt and blouse.

The moral of the story is that “we can be proud to dress in our own unique way because we are all daughters of Hashem, our king.” Orthodox girls may enjoy the princess, the parade of fashions, and the positive message, but other readers will be mystified by the girl’s “plain Jane” makeover, and are more likely to be intrigued by the Hogwarts effect inadvertently achieved by the combination of the plain outfit and the royal cape and scepter. Recommended for Orthodox collections only.

Heidi Estrin, Congregation Bnai Israel, Boca Raton, FL

Shachnowitz, Rabbi Zellig. *The Jewish Kingdom of Kuzar: The Rise and Fall of the Legendary Country of Converts*. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2007. \$19.99. 237pp. ISBN: 978-1-58330-929-2. Grades 5–9.

The Jewish Kingdom of Kuzar, originally written in German by Rabbi Zellig Shachnowitz, first appeared as a serial in *Der Israelit*. In 1928 it was published in book form in Frankfurt, and was translated into Hebrew in 1924. The Hebrew translation was reprinted in 1980 and a new Hebrew adaptation edited by A Chachamovitz was published in 2005. The English edition, translated by Rabbi Boruch Kalinsky, is based on the Chachamovitz edition. The book being reviewed includes a translation of the preface to the 2005 Hebrew edition, which states that this book was written “to protect [youth] from the pernicious influences of the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment).” As for the story, the pagan king of Kuzar has a recurrent dream in which he is told that his intentions are good but his deeds are evil. The king seeks truth outside his pagan religion. In his quest for truth he studies philosophy, Christianity, and Islam, but is not satisfied. Finally he delves into the Jewish religion, and is convinced that there is where truth lies. As a result, the king, along with all the people in his kingdom, convert to Judaism. The style is dry and dull even though the author adds some interesting characters and weaves

in the marriage of a young couple as a subplot. Characters are not well developed and the language is oversimplified. Peppering the text are Hebrew and Aramaic words and phrases that might be familiar only to those children attending a Jewish day school, for whom it is marginally recommended.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH

Silvers, Ester Katz. *Sondra’s Search*. New York: Devora, 2007. 238pp. \$21.95. ISBN: 978-1-932687-95-8. Grades 8–12.

Assimilation is the biggest dilemma facing the American Jewish community. Young non-observant liberal Jews are wondering about their religion and their Jewish identity. Is there a conflict between being Jewish and being American? Why should Jews not date or marry non-Jews? Is it not enough to be a moral human being? In this novel, Ester Silvers tackles all the above questions and many more. Based on her own childhood, she tells an engrossing story about a teen-age girl, Sondra Apfelbaum, and her extended Jewish family, who live in a small farm town in Kansas. The family members emigrated to the U.S. from Germany before and after the Holocaust. The American-born Jewish children are a minority living in an open Christian society. They face all the temptations and dangers of their age group. Can they and should they remain Jewish?

Sondra’s mother is a Holocaust survivor, and many of the relatives of both her parents perished in the Holocaust. While searching for her family’s lost Sefer Torah, Sondra grows up, matures, reinforces her American Jewish identity, and travels to Israel and Germany. In her enthusiasm to share her own satisfying experience as a baalat teshuvah, Ms. Silvers proselytizes successfully to other Jews. Besides informing the reader of many aspects of Orthodox observance and way of life, the book is a discreetly romantic story. The author shields readers from bad language and volatile situations. *Sondra’s Search* is a worthy addition to young adult collections in day schools, synagogues, and public libraries.

Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

PRAYER

Delval, Marie-Helene. *Psalms for Young Children*. Illus. by Arno. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2008. 86pp. \$16.00. ISBN: 978-0-8028-5322-6. Preschool-grade 3.

Intended for early childhood, the simple vocabulary of *Psalms for Young Children* is appropriate for preschool and primary grade children and the colorful, whimsical illustrations are appealing. Each poem consists of several simple rhyming sentences excerpted from approximately 42 psalms. Many of the excerpts talk about children being afraid or sad and being comforted by G-d. Young children usually do not cry out to an abstract G-d for help when they are frightened but rather, to their parents. The poems in the book of Psalms are too complex to be stated in a few simple sentences. In addition, the abstract concept of G-d is very difficult for young children to understand. Although the book is printed on heavy shiny paper and the illustrations are charming and beautiful, this reviewer cannot think of an audience that would appreciate a watered down version of Psalms. Despite its

attractive format, *Psalms for Young Children* is not recommended for Jewish libraries.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH

Another Opinion

Translated from the French original, this lovely collection of paraphrased psalms is not directed specifically at Jewish children but would work beautifully for them. Each of the 39 selections reduces a psalm to its essence in no more than seven short lines, like a small poem. A child's feelings of joy, gratitude, fear, security, trust, praise, and love are featured. Colorful, full-page illustrations of children in nature accompany each psalm. Recommended for grades 1-5.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

The Lord is my Shepherd: The Twenty-Third Psalm. Illus. by Gennady Spirin. New York: Philomel Books, 2008. 28pp. \$17.99. ISBN: 978-0-399-24527-5. Grades 3-6.

We who are citizens of a troubled world seek consolation and hope in our lives. It is not surprising, therefore, that two versions of this beloved psalm have recently been published. Gennady Spirin's oil paintings on canvas are stunning in their rich colors and evocative symbols. Each double-page spread illustrates one line or verse of the psalm printed on a parchment scroll. A large, fold-out painting, which contains the earlier images, provides a spectacular ending. Because of the difficult language of the King James version, such as "restoreth" and "anointest," and because the symbolism of the illustrations is rather mature for young children, this is an illustrated book rather than a picture book. The same difficulty with language would apply to Regolo Ricci's attractive version (Tundra, 2007) of this psalm, however Ricci's watercolor illustrations of pastoral and wildlife scenes would appeal to younger children than Spirin's. Both books are recommended for public and synagogue libraries.

Anne Dublin, Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto, Canada

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

Visotzky, Burton L. *A Delightful Compendium of Consolation: A Fabulous Tale of Romance, Adventure & Faith*. Teaneck, NJ: Ben Yehudah Press, 2008. 327 p. \$17.95 (ISBN 978-1-93473-020-1).
p. 21

Ackerman, Diane. *The Zookeeper's Wife*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007. 368 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-39306-172-7).
p. 22.

Schneiderman, Simon. *Preoccupied with My Father*. Toronto, ON: ECW Press, 2007. 57 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-1-55022-810-6).
p. 25



See you at the 2008 AJL Convention in Cleveland

Come celebrate several milestones at the 43rd annual AJL Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, June 22-25, at the Marriott Cleveland East, where Israel's 60th anniversary, JPS's 120th anniversary and the 40th anniversary of the Sydney Taylor Book Awards will be recognized.

The keynote speaker on Sunday evening, June 22, is Dr. Ellen Frankel, editor-in-chief and CEO of the Jewish Publication Society. Her appearance will coincide with JPS's 120th anniversary. Israel-related topics include sessions on the Dead Sea Scrolls; Israeli comic books and graphic novels; issues in contemporary Israel; and updates on the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem.

In honor of the 40th anniversary of the Sydney Taylor Book Awards, a special post-convention will take place on Wednesday, June 25th, which will feature authors, illustrators and children's literature specialists. Presentations by current and past Sydney Taylor Book Award recipients will highlight this event. This all-day program is open to both convention attendees and the public for a separate fee.

CEU credits will be available for an additional \$45.00. The celebration will kick-off Tuesday evening, June 24th, with the presentation of the 2008 Sydney Taylor Book Awards during the convention's annual banquet.

Other special events include hands-on technology sessions for school librarians, "Freshmen Seminar" on practical Judaic library skills; and building AJL chapter effectiveness.

Convention Attendees can see sites of Jewish Cleveland on the Lolly the Trolley tour on Sunday afternoon and on Monday evening, enjoy a light supper at the Temple-Tifereth Israel, and view a special exhibit of Jewish books designed by Sue Koletsky, director of the temple's Museum of Religious Art. After dinner, there will be a tour of the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage which is on the same grounds as the Temple.

For more highlights and information about the 43rd Annual AJL Convention go to the convention blog, [www.ajlcleveland2008blogspot.com](http://www.ajlcleveland2008.blogspot.com).

Reviews of Titles for Adults

EDITED BY MERRILY F. HART AND DANIEL SCHEIDE

FICTION, LITERATURE & THE ARTS

Agnon, S. Y. *To This Day*. Translated by Hillel Halkin. Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2008. 177 p. \$18.96 (ISBN-978-1-59264-214-4). Reviewed from an advance review copy.

Readers of good literature are in for a great treat with the publication of the first English translation of S.Y. Agnon's sixth novel, *To This Day*, published in Hebrew in 1951. Hillel Halkin, the translator, is certainly up to the challenge of presenting Agnon to English readers. Because of his unique Hebrew, many expressions in Agnon's works are not translatable. Halkin says that his is "an idiosyncratic literary construct based on rabbinic Hebrew ... often turning its back on the spoken language of Israel, in effect an imaginary dialect of its own." On the whole, Halkin's translation, which uses "an idiomatic English that strives to convey the special flavor of Agnon's style" succeeds in this difficult task.

The novel is based on autobiographical themes. Shmuel Yosef Agnon, like the narrator, Shmuel Yosef Bach, left his hometown in Galicia to live in Palestine. He was not ready to settle there permanently and so he returned to Europe, specifically to Berlin, for several years, and spent World War I there. The narrator, like the Wandering Jew, moved from one rented room to another during the years of the war.

The reader becomes familiar with some of the tensions of his life and of Jewish life in general. There are conflicts between the East European Jews and the German Jews, the "Yekkes," between Jews and their Christian neighbors, between Zionist Jews and others, and between those who would like to live in Palestine and others who needed the broader world. Not to be missed are the tensions between the vegetarians and the meat lovers. All of this comes out in interwoven stories filled with humor and lively descriptions of people and places. One is afraid to miss a sentence or an expression for each is a jewel in a crown constructed to perfection with seemingly great ease. It is no wonder that the Nobel Prize was awarded to Agnon and we can be thankful to Toby Press for making another one of his works accessible to English readers. The book belongs in every collection of Judaica, large and small.

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

Alexander-Frizer, Tamar. *The Heart is a Mirror: The Sephardic Folktale*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008. 690 p. \$65.00 (ISBN 978-0-81432-971-9).

When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, they settled in many different places: Turkey, Greece, the former Yugoslavia, the Land of Israel, and some cities in Morocco. Although these Sephardim all have the same ancestry, their new surroundings influenced the development and the passing down of oral stories and tales. The author's main goal is to analyze the folktales and specific characteristics and singularities for each particular

group. The sources for this study are approximately four thousand Sephardic folktales, mainly in Hebrew and Ladino, told by the descendants of the Spanish Diaspora.

The book is divided into three parts. In part 1, the author examines the relationship between group identity and folk literature by means of canonical Hebrew sources, their connection with their land of origin, and stories from prominent families and historical events. Part 2 consist of an examination of the different literary genres. The last part discusses the art and characteristics of storytelling. A similar title, *Folktales of the Jews: Tales from the Sephardic Dispersion*, edited by Dan Ben-Amos (reviewed in the November/December 2007 *AJL Newsletter*), has a potentially wider audience. The tales are presented one-by-one, followed by commentary, background, comparisons with other tales, and folklore motifs. By contrast, in *The Heart is a Mirror*, the tales are embedded in the analytical text, many are presented in an abbreviated format, and the degree of analysis varies. On the other hand, the indexes are easier to use than in Ben-Amos's book. These titles are really complementary for the academic scholar, but lay readers will find Ben-Amos's book much easier to use, if all they want is a folktale. Recommended for all academic libraries.

Sonia Smith Silva, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

Apple, Max. *The Jew of Home Depot and Other Stories*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. 170 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-0-80188-738-3).

Jewish humor often deals with irony, incongruence, or a Jew's feeling removed from mainstream society. All of these are evident in the thirteen stories included in this collection. The title story concerns a Chabad (Lubavitch) rabbi and his large family that move to Marshall, Texas, at the behest of its lone Jewish citizen, who is "eighty-five and dying and surrounded by gentiles." Other stories are about a man's dealings with his Alzheimer-stricken mother, a women who is worried about her daughter's interest in throwing shot put, a tall Chinese lady who hopes to meet Yao Ming (a professional basketball player) and marry him, and a pharmacist interested in a research scientist who works underground.

The funniest stories are the most Jewish. In "Stabbing an Elephant," a young rabbi is challenged when a prominent synagogue member's daughter is upset by a picture of a Maccabee stabbing an elephant in a Hanukkah book. In "House of the Lowered," a car accessories store owner is mistaken for the angel of death when he visits a hospital patient. A Jewish scrap metal dealer must hire back a proselytizing Black Muslim because he is the only one who can work and maintain an essential machine in "Indian Giver."

These stories have been published previously in journals or magazines. The author creates situations that are both touching and funny. This book is highly recommended for all libraries, and would be great for a discussion group.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Bachman, Merle L. *Recovering "Yiddishland:" Threshold Moments in American Literature.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007. 326 p. \$29.95 (978-0-81563-151-4).

Merle Bachman's primary intent is to examine the transformation of the immigrant into an American. Her second goal is to find a connection between herself, a contemporary American Jewish woman, and the life and language of the immigrant generation of her grandmother. This volume represents her attempt to do so through an exploration of American Jewish literature and its link to Yiddish language and culture.

The author's search begins with an examination of Abraham Cahan's novel *Yekl* (1896). The author describes it as a burlesque—a combination of social commentary on lives of immigrant Jews and a comic novel that parodies the attempts of immigrants to rise in American society. In chapter three the focus shifts to the lives and status of women, as depicted by Anzia Yezierska in her short story collection *Hungry Hearts* (1920). In later chapters the author analyzes Yiddish poetry written in the 1920s, introduces the poet Mikhl Likht, translates his poem "Procession Three," and explores the meaning of translation.

Merle Bachman has written an important volume on the place of Yiddish in American Jewish life and thought. Most of it is scholarly; therefore it is primarily recommended for academic and research libraries. However, the opening chapter is a lovely, powerful, and thought-provoking 40-page essay on the value of Yiddish literature and the culture of nostalgia. I highly recommend this section to all librarians who are interested in the questions it poses. Includes bibliography, illustrations, and index.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Benedek, Emily. *Red Sea.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007. 384 p. \$24.95. (ISBN 978-0-31235-491-6).

Four planes in different parts of the world blow up in flight on the same day. Israel is not directly involved, but is interested in all terrorist attacks. A team from the Shin Bet, Israel's secret service, headed by Julian Granot, a retired Special Forces commander, goes to work on the case. Julian uses an ambitious, young freelance aviation reporter, Marie Peterssen, as an undercover operative to gain information. The two team with FBI agent Morgan Ensley to uncover the terrorist plot. As they pursue their international investigation, they uncover plans for a major terrorist attack on New York Harbor. Marie wonders about Julian's intentions. Is he after the terrorists who blew up the plane, or is he seeking revenge for the death of his partner twenty years ago? She also learns that she may have personal ties to the terrorist leader. This fast-moving suspense novel is realistic enough to scare readers, but they will not be able to put it down. *Red Sea* is an excellent choice for public library fiction collections.

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

Brooks, Geraldine. *People Of The Book.* 2008. New York: Penguin Group. 372 p. \$25.95 (ISBN 978-0-67001-821-5).

Geraldine Brooks's best-selling historical fiction is a lively thriller, a paean to an ancient manuscript, and a love letter to librarians as *kustos*, guardians of the book. Hanna Heath, an unlikely Australian rare book conservator, is selected to examine and treat the unique and valuable Sarajevo Haggadah, which

disappeared during the recent Balkan war and is scheduled to be displayed at a grand re-opening at the museum. Hanna finds clues to the Haggadah's travels in the process and each clue—a hair, a sliver of insect wing, a wine stain—provides the inspiration for a fascinating chapter in history, relating the story of lives touched by the book. A Muslim museum director hides the book and a Jewish partisan in Sarajevo in 1940, a Jewish doctor in 1894 Vienna receives the book's clasps as payment from a dying Muslim bookbinder, etc. All these stories and characters come alive but, despite the appealing character of Hanna, this thriller ending in Israel and Sarajevo disappoints.

Ms. Brooks is very careful with historical details and in an afterword, carefully separates fact from fiction. However, the actual story of the Haggadah since 1894 is so surprising and fascinating that the modern fictional elements pale in comparison. For an account on Ms. Brooks' research, see her article in the *New Yorker*, Dec. 3, 2007. Recommended for book groups and popular reading in synagogues and community libraries.

Lee Wixman, Boynton Beach, FL, and
Merrily F. Hart, Siegal College, Cleveland, OH

Chagall, Marc, Illustrator. *The Bible: Genesis, Exodus, the Song of Solomon.* San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2007. 437 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-0-81186-045-1).

The text of the book is entirely in English with accompanying works of art by Marc Chagall. The reproductions are beautiful, with vivid and clear colors. Many of the pictures are in the primary colors of red, yellow, and blue with an additional vivid green. Reproductions were supplied by Réunion des musées nationaux in France. There is no commentary to the text, and I would not recommend purchasing this small book, which is 6 ¼ inches in height by 4 inches in width, for the text. It appears to be a Christian translation with the use of words "brethren" and "pilgrimage." For a lover of Chagall's art, however, it could make a very nice gift book.

Ellen Share, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington, DC

Cohen, Sara Blacher, and Joanne B. Koch, eds. *Shared Stages: Ten American Dramas of Blacks and Jews.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, (SUNY Series in Modern Jewish Literature and Culture) 2007. 544 p. \$24.95 (ISBN-978-0-79147-282-8).

The complex and volatile relationship between Blacks and Jews in post-World War II America is the focus of the theatrical works anthologized in *Shared Stages*. The editors bring together ten contemporary dramas that examine both the intense alliances and the bitter divisions that often characterized the bond between these two groups. The characters are as varied as the plots and the playwrights range from established artists to new emerging talent. With the intent of placing these works "all in the same room to keep company with each other," Cohen and Koch invite readers to "test the truths of their own experiences against the truths expressed in the plays."

Understanding the historical context of these works is important to grasp fully their social and cultural import and feel their emotional impact. The editors' lengthy introduction provides such a context. Each play is introduced by a brief statement about the play and the playwright. The plays collected here include John

Henry Redwood's "No Niggers, No Jews, No Dogs," Anna Deavere Smith's "Fires in the Mirror," Lewis John Carlino's "Sarah and The Sax," Oyamo's "I am A Man," Tom Cole's "Medal of Honor Rag," Michael Henry Brown's "The Day the Bronx Died," and Barbara Lebow's "The Left Hand Singing." Several of the plays have been made into films such as "Driving Miss Daisy," by Alfred Uhry and "I'm Not Rappaport," by Herb Gardner. Cohen and Koch's own play, "Soul Sisters," is a musical. *Shared Stages* is recommended for academic libraries.

Sheila L. Darrow, *Central State University, Wilberforce, OH*

Drucker, Eugene. *The Savior: A Novel.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007. 208 p. \$23.00 (ISBN-978-1-41654-329-9). Reviewed from an advance review copy.

What kind of a novel should one expect from a world-renowned violinist? Eugene Drucker uses his knowledge of classical music in an attempt to portray Nazi SS guards as human beings, albeit certainly flawed ones. He includes detailed descriptions of musical pieces, which would be known only to those who have familiarity with this music.

In the context of the Holocaust, one of the most difficult questions to answer is "How did human beings participate in such heinous crimes on a daily basis?" In the book, a violinist who is not fit to fight in battles, is called upon to play for Jewish prisoners who suffered so much that they lost their humanity and any interest in living. The experiment Gottfried Keller was to participate in was to see if such people with "frozen souls" could be brought back to a semblance of life by being exposed to the beautiful music they had known.

The Savior reads smoothly, and although it is a work of fiction, the book includes much factual information. And here, in the final analysis, is what one must conclude regarding attempts to understand the Holocaust—it is probably not possible. This book belongs in large Holocaust collections and in collections of materials on Jewish music.

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

Harshav, Benjamin. *The Moscow Yiddish Theater: Art on Stage in the Time of Revolution.* Documents translated by Benjamin and Barbara Harshav. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. 199 p. \$45.00 (ISBN 978-0-30011-513-0).

The Moscow Yiddish Theater provides an introduction to the State Yiddish Chamber Theater (GOSEKT), founded in Petrograd in 1919 and relocated to Moscow the following year, where it eventually was renamed the State Yiddish Theater (GOSET). Harshav reminds us of the key role that GOSEKT's founding director, Aleksey Granovsky, played in establishing it as the quintessential revolutionary theater in Soviet Russia. Granovsky staged radical readings of classic scenes by Sholem Aleichem and Abraham Goldfaden, adapting Max Reinhardt's use of mass scenes to Bolshevik cultural demands. (Depicting the inner world of a play's characters, in the manner of Anton Chekhov and Konstantin Stanislavsky, was considered to be a bourgeois luxury.) After Granovsky defected in 1928 the company was led by its principal actor, Solomon Mikhoels.

This attractive volume includes an abundance of photographs of GOSEKT and GOSET productions, as well as color reproduc-

tions of costumes and decorations, including the famous mural by Marc Chagall, "Introduction to the Yiddish Theater," which once adorned the theater's walls. Prof. Harshav's brief historical sketch is accompanied by his painstaking essay in which he deciphers Chagall's mural and by contemporary accounts by GOSEKT members, critics, and other observers ranging from Osip Mandelshtam to David Ben-Gurion. (Curiously, the volume's jacket illustration is of a costume used in a production of GOSEKT's arch rival, the Hebrew-speaking HaBima [Habimah] troupe.) The Moscow Yiddish Theater is an invaluable sourcebook, and is highly recommended for research collections.

Zachary Baker, *Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, CA*

Karmel, Henia and Ilona Karmel. *A Wall of Two: Poems of Resistance and Suffering from Krakow to Buchenwald and Beyond.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007. 119 p. \$16.95 (ISBN 978-0-52025-136-6).

Sad, powerful, and horrifying, this book of poetry deserves a place in any serious collection of Jewish literature. The story behind the poems is as remarkable as the poems themselves. They were written in Polish by two young Jewish sisters from Krakow, Henia and Ilona Karmel, while they were interned at a forced labor camp. They hid the poems in the hems of their dresses, and, expecting to die, handed them to a relative for posterity. Amazingly, the poems survived and so did the women. For this collection, they were translated literally by two Polish speakers and then reworked poetically by American writer Fanny Howe, who knew Ilona Karmel personally. Of her effort, Ms. Howe says, "... I adapted the literal translations that I was given, turning them into forms of contemporary poetry." The poems are harsh and spare, telling the story of the nightmare the two girls lived, as well as their emotional and physical responses. They succeed as works of literary art, as testimony to Jewish suffering, and as historical documents. In a letter to a fellow Polish Jewish poet, which is included in the book, Henia wrote, "This is an ordinary, primal cry, the rattle of one being choked. These poems were never written with popularity or fame in mind. They are only Songs of the Damned." Informative and gripping background material is included, as well as photographs of the two women in their youthful beauty. Highly recommended.

Beth Dwoskin, *Proquest, Ann Arbor, MI*

Leshem, Ron. *Beaufort.* Translated by Evan Fallenberg. New York: Delacorte Press/Random House, 2008. 360 p. \$24. (ISBN 978-0-55380-682-3).

Liraz "Erez" Liberti is a twenty-something second lieutenant in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) assigned to an outpost at Beaufort, an old crusader fort at the top of the highest peak in southern Lebanon, in 1999. He must keep his 13-man commando unit alive while under almost constant mortar and rocket fire from Hezbollah. Leshem tells the story of this group of young soldiers in their own voices as a stream of consciousness. Their lives unfold as they grapple with war, death, and a government that seems detached and cynical. Readers will be drawn into their lives as they swear, joke, and form strong bonds with one another. This outstanding debut novel won Israel's Sapir Prize for literature in 2006. It was made into a movie, with a script co-authored by Leshem, which won the Berlin International Film Festival Silver

Lion award for best director. The book is a searing indictment of war as well as a portrait of Israel as a nation in upheaval due to both constant fighting and political division between hawks and doves and religious and secular Jews. It is a must-read for anyone concerned with the consequences of war. Highly recommended for all collections, *Beaufort* is an excellent choice for book groups in search of something dealing with current issues.

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

Megged, Aharon. *The Flying Camel and the Golden Hump*. Translated by Vivan Eden. New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2007. 335 p. \$14.95 (ISBN 978-1-59264-196-3).

The title refers to the narrator's most recent bestseller, which earned rave reviews and spawned numerous interpretations. But his worse nightmare has come true: Kalman Keren's way of life is altered when a pompous literary critic, Naphtali Schatz, who has ignored the book, moves into the apartment above him with his pleasant, friendly wife, Naomi, who enjoyed it. Keren cannot concentrate on his new novel, and has chosen to write about this situation instead. The noise from upstairs, including the nightly typing, "which grinds up the guts of the many books in the room to turn them into article sausage," leaves him distracted and frustrated.

Keren's slice of life mirrors Israeli culture and society. The reader encounters different immigrant experiences, the care of rabbits, French literature, Israeli history, and Jewish philosophy, which are drawn out through the eclectic residents of Keren's apartment building. The writing is clever and humorous, with interesting characters and a strong sense of place. The plot often gets bogged down in the details—particularly the literary descriptions of sexual encounters—which may distract some and interest others.

There are many references to all types of literature, and the reader would benefit from an insider's knowledge of writers, critics, and literary interpretation. Originally published in Hebrew in 1982, this novel is one of many of Megged's works published in translation by Toby Press. Recommended for all libraries, especially those that collect Israeli fiction.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Oren, Michael. *Sand Devil: A Negev Trilogy*. New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2007. 201 p. \$14.95. (ISBN 978-1-59264-212-0).

The desert has always been a place of mystery. Raw and untamed landscapes conceal within them a storm of human ardor and wild encounters. Michael Oren's characters in these three novellas embody much of this untamed passion and setting. His characters include Batya, the shy, single woman, whose house is broken into by an escaped convict, and Roman, the Russian immigrant, a former violin prodigy, who finds himself in a sleepy backward town in the south of Israel, after many European concert hall performances, the horrors of the Holocaust and 40 years in Siberian exile. The most striking and chilling story relates the adventures of a fundamentalist family, that moves from America to the Israeli desert to adopt a biblical way of life which, finally ends in a most dramatic and eschatological manner. The surreal sense of these stories is deepened by a lack of any definite historical period reference.

Beautifully and engagingly written, in a style somewhat reminiscent of Amos Oz's early stories, these stirring novellas are fit for high-school and adults readers. Oren captures not only the social marginality of his various characters, but also a variety of individuals most characteristic of Israel since its establishment in 1948: the North-African immigrant, the talented Russian musician, and the zealous fundamentalist.

Noa Wahrman, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

Pollack, Eileen. *In the Mouth: Stories and Novellas*. NY: Four Way Books, 2008. 257 p. \$18.95 (ISBN 978-1-88480-082-5).

Like *The Odd Couple*, the stories in Eileen Pollack's *In the Mouth* focus on characters of opposite lifestyles, generations, or points of view, although in a more serious vein. By the end of most of the stories, however, the protagonist comes to an understanding of the other character. Each story centers around the way that people relate to one another.

In one story, a 90-year-old man confesses that he was never properly converted to Judaism. Anxious to be buried next to his wife, he urges his son to arrange a bris. In another story, a daughter wonders why her father never had the curiosity to open a safe that has been in the basement of his dental office since he bought the building many years ago.

The stories are engaging and flow smoothly with vivid description and good character development. While the plots are sometimes unusual, Pollack brings out feelings and issues that are common. The stories are enhanced by Pollack's picturesque way of describing ordinary events: "Even before they left the baggage area, Wendy knew her father was dying. The flaps above the luggage chute, those frayed canvas vulva, gave birth to her suitcase. 'That one's mine,' she said, and was stunned when he allowed the bag to circle past. They watched it complete a lifetime around the belt and disappear into the windswept nothingness beyond."

While conveying a serious message, the book is sprinkled with humor. *In the Mouth* is a good read. At the conclusion of each story, one is eager to begin the next one. I recommend this book for synagogue, community center, and academic libraries.

Lee Haas, Temple Emanu El, Cleveland, OH

Rand, Archie. *Had Gadya*. Miami, FL: Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, 2007. Ten cards with images for the song.

This is a rather unusual review for this forum since the item being reviewed is not a book but of a series of illustrations by the American-Jewish artist Archie Rand, a respected and innovative artist and a member of the faculty of Brooklyn College, who has explored scriptural and liturgical elements in his paintings.

In 1989 he painted series based on the 54 chapters of the Bible, which became the cornerstone of the Jewish Museum's 1996 "Too Jewish" exhibition. He continues to produce serial works which push the envelope of what can be called Judaic painting culture. His approach to *Had Gadya* is unique. Instead of depicting the ten scenes of the song, Rand bases his images on works of Jewish artists of the past. These artists' works are associated by Rand with an image from the song itself. For example, the image of the goat appears in a detail from the famous painting by Maurycy Gottlieb of a prayer in a synagogue on Yom Kippur. Rand sees the two men at the center of the painting as suggesting a father

and son of the *Had Gadya* song. Matthew Baigell, the noted Jewish art historian says in his commentary on the series that Rand's "point of view is not to duplicate the story line in pictures. Rather he invents a parallel visual universe that evokes aspects of the text and therefore in Talmudic fashion invites the viewer to think about and to ruminate on the meaning of what is being read and visualized."

I found the connection between the song and the paintings chosen by Rand to be rather strained. Since the reproductions published by the Steinbaum Gallery are meant for publicity and are not of a high quality, it is also impossible to make a judgment about the paintings. All told, this series of illustrations, printed on 5 x 7" cards, is not suitable for libraries. Libraries that specialize in Jewish art need higher quality reproductions than this series offers.

Nanette Stahl, Yale University Library, New Haven, CT

Singer, Margot. *The Pale of Settlement: Stories*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2007. 213 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-82033-000-6).

This collection of short stories links three generations of a family, with both Israeli and American connections. The main character, a young woman, struggles to understand the history and myths of her family's past. The stories are powerful explorations of the borderland between Israeli and American Jews, immigrants and expatriates. They span the period from the beginnings of the young state of Israel to recent events, violence, terrorists, suicide bombings, and media coverage of alleged massacres in Palestinian refugee camps. The author, currently assistant professor of English at Denison University, has drawn on a wide range of factual materials to ensure the intellectual, historical and political accuracy of the stories. A note on sources is included. The book is a winner of the Flannery O'Connor Award for short fiction. The writing style is clear, direct, and interesting, capturing and holding the reader's attention. The book is recommended for collections in public, secondary school, college, and university libraries.

Dr. Susan Freiband, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras

Smith, Glenn D. *Something On My Own: Gertrude Berg and American Broadcasting, 1929-1956*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007. 293 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-81560-887-5).

Most of those who remember the early days of television broadcasting, will recall with a smile *The Goldbergs* ("Yoo-Hoo, Mrs. Bloom" she would shout out the window to a fictional radio character), a regularly scheduled series about a New York City Jewish family, facing the challenges of assimilation in a rapidly changing world. This series, which garnered very high ratings on TV, was also a very popular radio series in the 1930s (which ran for 15 years), and developed into a comic strip, vaudeville tours, and a movie. Born in New York in 1899, Tille Edelstein, who later became known as Gertrude Berg, was the first woman to star, write, direct, and produce a broadcast series. Driven by an almost compulsive need to control all the details of her professional and private life, Gertrude Berg's life revolved around the role of Molly Goldberg not only in radio and television, but also on Broadway. Behind the scenes of the warm, friendly, down-to-earth character of Molly, was Berg, who was to win the first Emmy award for

an actress in the television series, as well as Broadway's Tony award for her portrayal of a Jewish widow in *A Majority of One*. Berg was to face the struggle of anti-Semitism throughout the broadcast world and later the McCarthy era's blacklisting of a very popular actor in her series. Berg was a trailblazer for actors to follow for years to come. This well-written, well-documented book is highly recommended.

Martin Goldberg, Penn State University, Monaca, PA

Visotzky, Burton L. *A Delightful Compendium of Consolation: A Fabulous Tale of Romance, Adventure & Faith*. Teaneck, NJ: Ben Yehudah Press, 2008. 327 p. \$17.95 (ISBN 978-1-93473-020-1).

Dr. Burton Visotzky has written a thoroughly engaging epistolary novel based on documents found in the Cairo Geniza. He skillfully weaves together actual texts found there with midrashim that were often embedded in the letters from the period and pure fiction. It is not possible to tell where one element ends and the next begins, and this is perhaps the most noteworthy part of this book. The author tells a very exciting story about a family from old Cairo—their business, their family and the events of the period. One of the main characters is the 19-year-old daughter, who runs off with a Muslim companion. It is her journey and adventures that form the main plot of the story. Her relations with her family back home and the many talents and skills that she has and must employ are an important part of the narrative.

As the story unfolds, the reader is made aware of many facts of Mediterranean Jewish life during the high Middle Ages. These episodes, based on information from the Geniza documents, will appeal to adult and young adult readers. The novel would also be a fine addition to any course in medieval Jewish history, allowing for many ways of integrating Torah with geography, history, and literature. I highly recommend this book for all school and synagogue collections.

Marion M. Stein, A. J. Heschel High School, New York, NY

York, Karen S. *Sons of Adam Daughters of Eve: Biblical Images in Art from Tulsa Collections*. Tulsa, OK: Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art, 2007. 95 p. \$25.00 (ISBN 978-0-97998-510-2).

Sons of Adam Daughters of Eve is the catalog of an exhibition held from October 28, 2007 to January 20, 2008, at the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Even though the edition being reviewed is paperback, this book is beautiful and suitable for coffee table display. The paper is glossy, the page layout is excellent, and the color photography is very well done. The art includes sculpture, furniture, paintings, textiles, enameled pieces, silver, china and ivory. The beautiful artworks are well chosen. The artists in the show include well known artists such as Marc Chagall, Shalom of Safed, and Reuven Rubin, as well as lesser known artists and artisans. The book is organized thematically, and covers subjects such as Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the Flood, Abraham, Isaac, Rebecca, and Moses. Accompanying each piece of art is a short biographical sketch of the artist and an explanation of the subject matter, including the biblical source of the subject. For example, accompanying the sculpture entitled "Rachel Weeping for Her Children," is a short retelling of the story from Genesis 29-31 (including the reference) and the verse from Jeremiah 31:14, in which Rachel weeps for her

children as they are forced into exile. Recommended for the art book collection of all libraries.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH

HISTORY & HOLOCAUST

Ackerman, Diane. *The Zookeeper's Wife*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007. 368 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-39306-172-7).

A riveting account of the family of Jan and Antonina Zabinski, two Polish Christians who risked their lives to save Jews. As zookeepers at the Warsaw Zoo, their eccentric behavior in taking care of a menagerie of wild pets in their home and in an adjacent zoo afforded them the opportunity to hide Jews right under the noses of the Nazis. Antonina applied her knowledge of animal instinct and behavior in dealing with the Nazi mentality in some very dangerous situations, and probably saved her life and the lives of others. It is the kind of book that will appeal to a variety of people because it covers a diversity of subjects. The reader will learn about animal behavior, animal husbandry, extinct animals, the personality of rescuers, Holocaust history in Poland, the Warsaw ghetto, Polish folklore, and Jewish artists.

While conveying the horrors and cruelty of the Holocaust, the book is different from the usual Holocaust book. *The Zookeeper's Wife* is not completely filled with scenes of brutality, and contains amusing animal anecdotes which defuse the horror. The courage and altruism of young people, the Zabinski's son and young resistance fighters, provide inspiration for young adults.

This is an appropriate book for adults and young adults, and is highly recommended for synagogue libraries, as a gift book, and as a confirmation gift.

Ellen Share, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington DC

Apelbaum, Laura Cohen & Wendy Turman, eds. *Jewish Washington: Scrapbook of an American Community*. Washington, DC: Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington, Lillian & Albert Small Jewish Museum, 2007. 96 p. \$36.00 (ISBN 978-0-9792365-0-1).

This beautiful coffee-table sized volume, which originated from an exhibit in 2006, links the Jews of Washington to the history of their city. There are over 200 images, including wood engravings, postage stamps, and dozens of photographs. They include personal photos, reminders of the city's immigrants, the history of local businesses and institutions, the city's role as the nation's capital, and local heroes and heroines. Many of the images have never before been displayed publicly.

A chronology of the community from its beginnings in the mid-19th century is followed by excerpts from oral histories of several contemporary residents, a section of photos of objects from the exhibition, and a list of institutions that have contributed their documents and objects. The introduction by Professor Hasia Diner and the afterword by Dr. Pamela Nadell are important short essays on American Jewish history.

Regrettably, the brief captions, while appropriate in "scrapbook" form, do not do the topics justice. For example, the text only mentions Rabbi Abram Simon, long-time leader of Washington Hebrew Congregation, and Rabbi Emmett Frank, one of the heroes of the Civil Rights movement. Even with these

flaws, *Jewish Washington* is an elegant treasure trove about an important city. It should be acquired by large synagogues and academic institutions.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Ascher, Abraham. *A Community Under Siege: The Jews of Breslau Under Nazism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007. 324 p. \$55. (ISBN 978-0-80475-518-4).

Ascher was born in Breslau and experienced the beginnings of Nazism there before he and his family emigrated in 1939. This account skillfully interweaves personal history and meticulous scholarship drawn from archival sources and personal interviews. The result is a portrait of the Jews in Breslau from the beginning of Hitler's ascent to power until the deportation of the very last Jews from their city. Beyond that, however, it is emblematic of the events all over Germany during the ten years of Nazi rule. Ascher describes accurately the gradual tightening of the net around the Jews until, in the end, those who were caught in it suffered total annihilation. His account demonstrates clearly the community's extraordinary courage and ingenuity in maintaining its social support network and community cohesiveness against nearly impossible odds. A lengthy bibliography testifies to the thoroughness of Ascher's work. Photos and a thorough index enhance the value of this well-told horror story.

This reviewer, who herself lived in Breslau during those years, must note that, aside from a few misspelled place names and minor errors, one major flaw is the description of the "New Synagogue" as a Reform synagogue. The "Neue Synagoge" was part of the "Liberal" movement, for which there exists no real equivalent in America. It was characterized by observance of *mechitzah* (separate seating of the sexes) and liturgy exclusively in Hebrew. There were, however, organ music and a mixed choir, and the sermon and prayer for the country were given in German.

Susanne M. Batzdorff, Congregation Beth Ami, Santa Rosa, CA

Benninga, Benno. *In Hiding: Surviving an Abusive 'Protector' and the Nazi Occupation of Holland*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007. 186 p. \$23.50 pbk. (ISBN 978-0-85303-632-6).

There are numerous accounts of Jewish families in hiding during the Holocaust, but this memoir conveys the real sense of stress and anxiety of being placed with a family that was less than hospitable, creating a living hell for those in hiding. The author, who was a teenager at the time, relates how his family survived nearly two years in wartime Holland, using the diary his father wrote as a basis for this book. The Jewish family was taken in by a farmer and his wife (Piet and Tina Dekker), and paid a weekly rent which included food: "This arrangement was expected to be an equitable one for both parties. We would be sheltered from forced deportation to one of Hitler's work camps, and our hosts would be financially compensated." Unfortunately, Tina Dekker was irrational and confrontational, accusing the Jewish family of stealing petty items, gouging them on food, etc. The author wrote: "[The Dekkers'] daily lives were inevitably disrupted, though they themselves probably were not at much risk for harboring us, were they to volunteer to the police information on our whereabouts. Would there come a time when our financial arrangement would not be enough to offset Tina's aggravation

at having us in her house? Under the threat of discovery—or betrayal—and inevitable deportation to a dismal work camp, we were at the mercy of an increasingly unstable woman whose husband had little influence on her irrational behavior.”

While the author describes the arguments with the Dekkers, the threats of being handed over to the German authorities, and their quest to “make peace,” this book seems like one endless tale of shouting, fighting, bickering, etc. For large Holocaust collections.

Martin Goldberg, Penn State University, Monaca, PA

Bartov, Omer. *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 232 p. 2007. \$26.95 (ISBN 978-0-69113-121-4).

It is interesting to find a book written by a seasoned historian and pleasantly readable for the general public. But for those who wish to use the book as scholarly text, there are abundant footnotes. This book is a labor of love and a memorial to a deceased mother and many lost relatives.

Bartov visited 20 towns in the western part of Ukraine, an area that was once Eastern Galicia, where many Jews once lived in towns shared with Poles and Ukrainians. He looked for remnants of the rich Jewish life and culture that existed before the Holocaust and found very little, with more disappearing every day. As a result, the author predicts that soon there will be no evidence at all that Jews ever lived there. The synagogues, in most cases, had either been destroyed or were converted into sports clubs or other practical buildings. Any remaining signs such as Stars of David or Hebrew writing were erased or painted over. Cemeteries are often so neglected and overgrown that they can not be located. Only here and there does one find signs over mass graves of Jews executed during the Holocaust. Most often the signs are general—these are memorials to the victims of Fascism, not necessarily to Jews. Ukraine has not begun to face its part in the annihilation of its Jewish citizens.

Because so many of us have roots in Galicia, and because it is a very readable and yet a scholarly, well researched work, the book is recommended for every Jewish library—in synagogues, schools or centers—and certainly for large Judaica collections.

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

Elovic, Eve. *Till They Meet Again*. Jerusalem, Israel: Mazo Publishers, 2007. 208 p. \$16.95 (ISBN-978-965-7344-15-6).

Eve Elovic provides a riveting story of her family’s experiences in Poland during the Holocaust. David, an art dealer, is away on business when his wife, Helena, children, Esther, Ruth, and Benjamin, parents, sister-in-law, and nephews, are caught by the Russians and sent to Siberia. David is left to survive on his own, demonstrating a will to live, and a sense of cunning and wiliness that mirrors Helena’s own so many miles away. Alternating chapters lead the reader through two equally fascinating, yet vastly different tales, which are tied together at the end with the triumphant reunion in Israel of David, Helena, Ruth, and Benjamin.

Helena’s trail to freedom passes through Siberia, the loss of her mother-in-law, working in an orphanage for Jewish children, and being part of the first successful transport of Jews to Israel—

along with the children in the orphanage, two of her children, and her nephew. Only Esther and Simon are left behind as they are considered too old to be part of the transport, so instead they remain with relatives in Russia. David’s trials include imprisonment and passing as a non-Jew, while not knowing the fate of his family. Well written, this work draws the reader into the family’s experiences. The tales of illicit love make this book inappropriate for younger readers; however, this book is an important addition to Holocaust collections, addressing the survival of those who did not enter the camps—and survived with a mostly intact family.

Sara Marcus, Yeshiva Har Torah, Bellerose, NY

Fine, John S. and Frederic J. Krome. *Jews of Cincinnati*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing (*Images of America Series*) 2007. 126 p. \$19.99 (ISBN 978-0-73855-106-7).

Arcadia Publishing has created hundreds of visual histories of towns and cities, neighborhoods and ethnic groups across the nation. In some cases they are the first attempts at local history; in others they act as important supplements. Several focus on Jewish communities, including Milwaukee, Chicago, and Detroit. All of them can serve as accessible photographic scrapbooks of American Jewish history.

Like the others in the series, the volume on Cincinnati’s Jewish past combines wonderful historical photography with extensive and highly informative captions. Instead of narrative text, there are portraits of local leaders, and an easy-to-follow chronology from the 1820s to World War II. The authors lean heavily on material from Hebrew Union College and the Reform movement, which had its headquarters there until 1950. There are wonderful portraits of UAHC executives, HUC faculty, and group photos of the history of the movement. The growth of Jewish life resulting from post-1880 immigration is demonstrated by photos identifying the city’s numerous agencies and institutions. There are also photographs of important local Jews, including Lillian Wald (who was born in Cincinnati), and the founders of Manischewitz matzah and Fleischmann’s yeast.

The book has nothing on the community since the 1970s. While local residents may be aware of recent developments, others would benefit from more up-to-date information. The volume is well worth the price for most synagogue libraries, but librarians at research institutions should be aware of Sarna and Klein’s *Jews of Cincinnati* (1989), a more comprehensive historical survey.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Fontaine, Resianne, Andrea Schatz and Irene Zwiep, eds. *Sepharad in Ashkenaz Medieval Knowledge and Eighteenth-Century Enlightened Jewish Discourse*. Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (*Verhandelingen, Afd. Letterkunde. nieuwe reeks. deel 189*) 2007. 334 p. \$71.50 (ISBN-978-9-06984-482-4).

To appreciate this volume of scholarly papers, proceedings from a colloquium in Amsterdam, February 18-21, 2002, the reader must have a grasp of Jewish philosophy and history. The lectures vary widely in approach, but many of the authors view the historical progression of the Enlightenment and the awakening of Jewish philosophy of the eighteenth century in light of influences from the medieval period, especially the Sephardic philosophers, writers, and poets. They reexamine the historiography

raphy that has held sway in the last decades of Jewish scholarship to note the important contributions of Sephardic thinking on the Ashkenazi communities. Some take note of influences such as Hebrew printing presses, translations, and new editions of medieval works. Others note the challenges of new scientific and medical advances or revolutionary thinking. Included are important evaluations, such as the influences on Moses Mendelssohn, who “personally embodied” Jewish Enlightenment. Israel Zamość, Solomon Maimon, Israel Ben Moses Halevi, Yehuda Halevi, and many other philosophers and writers have their works put into perspective to reveal the fascinating networks of integrations of Sephardic thinking into the Ashkenazi worlds. Abstracts of the lectures are presented in the back of the volume along with a list of contributors and an inadequate index. Recommended for academic libraries.

Judith S. Pinnolis, Brandeis University, Boston, MA

Fram, Edward. *My Dear Daughter: Rabbi Benjamin Slonik and the Education of Jewish Women in Sixteenth-Century Poland.* Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 2007. 37 p. \$39.95 (ISBN 978-0-87820-459-5).

Finalist in the category “Eastern European Studies” of the National Jewish Book Awards for 2007, this book is a study of the religious life of Jewish women in 16th-century Poland. It includes a transcription of the original Yiddish and an English translation of a small treatise by Rabbi Benjamin Slonik (ca. 1550-after 1620), called *Seder Mitsvot ha-Nashim* (Cracow, 1585). Fram emphasizes the importance of Slonik’s work in the overall genre of literature for Jewish women, underlining the didactic purpose of the work, and contrasting the religious instructions given by Slonik with the equivalent statements of the *Shulhan Arukh* and of its Ashkenazi commentaries. Fram also measures the extent and the limits of Slonik independence from other contemporary *poskim* (rabbis expert in halakha), including Slonik’s own teacher, Moses Isserles. Written in a highly readable style, the book is a superb contribution to the fields of Jewish women and Yiddish studies. Chapter three of *My Dear Daughter* and selections from the English translation of *Seder Mitsvot ha-Nashim* should soon find their place in the best undergraduate curriculums in the United States. Highly recommended for any academic library.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD

Gutman, Israel, editor-in-chief. *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust. Europe and Other Countries Part I.* Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007. 560 p. \$35. (ISBN 978-0-9764425-8-5).

“He who saves one human being is as if he saves an entire world.” This teaching from the Talmud is the basis of Yad Vashem’s concept of the “Righteous Among the Nations,” gentiles who saved Jews during the Holocaust. The museum honors these courageous people with a garden and plaques bearing their names. Now Yad Vashem is producing an encyclopedia containing their stories. The first volume was released in 2003 and there are volumes covering France, Italy, Germany and Austria, Belgium, and Poland. This volume, labeled Europe (Part 1) and Other Countries, covers Austria, Brazil, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland,

Turkey, and the United States. A general introduction provides a brief overview of the Holocaust and the role of rescuers. A series of historical introductions goes into greater detail on specific countries. Chapters on each country include alphabetical entries for each rescuer with a brief discussion of his/her role in aiding Jews and a photograph if available. A short glossary of Holocaust terms helps readers better understand the events. A detailed index helps locate individuals with variant spellings of names or name changes. This important work gives well-deserved recognition to a group of brave individuals who remain unknown to most of the world. It belongs in all academic, public, school, and synagogue libraries.

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

Kohen, Elli. *History of the Byzantine Jews: A Microcosmos in the Thousand Year Empire.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007. 268 p. \$38.00 (ISBN 978-0-76183-624-7).

This book is clearly a labor of love by Elli Kohen, professor emeritus at the University of Miami (specializing in cell biology). More of an ecumenical dialogue through shared history with the modern Greek Orthodox community than a historical tome, it explores certain historical events important to both communities. I found the book rather difficult to follow—it really suffers from poor editing. For example, “Some pages of Byzantine Jewish history are marked with brutality since these were not gentle times despite, the artistic achievements and refinements of Byzantine culture.” Many sections seem to be summations of other author’s works (which are referenced). There are 100 pages of references and index. These also need editing—footnote 183b is placed between 103a and 104—discovered when I searched in vain for footnote 102. The index is formatted in a double column that is a mix of page reference and definition (“Coron, tiny foothold of Christian occupation at the tip of Ottoman-controlled Peloponnesus 68”). I would not recommend this book as a starting point in understanding the history of the Jewish community and would recommend it only for libraries comprehensively collecting Byzantine materials.

Suzanne Smailes, Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH

Kremer, Roberta S., ed. *Broken Threads: The Destruction of the Jewish Fashion Industry in Germany and Austria.* Oxford: Berg, 2007. 128 p. \$34.95 (ISBN 978-1-84520-660-4).

This book was an outgrowth of the landmark exhibit, *Broken Threads*, produced by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre in partnership with the Original Costume Museum Society of Vancouver in 1999. *Broken Threads*, which resembles a museum catalog with numerous pictures and a rather sparse text, is both fascinating and devastating at the same time. It chronicles the total elimination and destruction of Jewish involvement in the fashion industry (including designing, production and selling). Jewish tailors and merchants began in fashion by selling second-hand clothes because it was allowed in an otherwise restrictive environment. Their role evolved into being major contributors in the development of ready-to-wear clothes and high fashion in Germany. In the 1920s and ‘30s, the Jews had a major impact on the German economy and culture. “Berlin, which in 1925 had more than four million inhabitants, became the centre of artistic

and intellectual life and the favored shopping destination, out-ranking even Paris and London." Through a series of decrees, the Nazis confiscated Jewish businesses, ending forever their involvement in this aspect of the economy. Most of those involved died in the Holocaust, with a few able to escape and carry on in other countries. Recommended for university libraries, special collections, and synagogue libraries.

Ellen Share, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington, DC

Medding, Peter Y., ed. *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews*. New York: Oxford University Press (*Studies in Contemporary Jewry*) 2007. 345 p. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-0-19534-097-6).

This is the 22nd volume of the annual *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* of the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, at The Hebrew University, Jerusalem. The title reflects only about two-thirds of the contents of the book, the rest being book reviews on topics with which the institute deals. The ten papers that make up *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews* range from the general to the specific. Among the papers dealing with the broader picture are Sergio DellaPergola's paper, examining the international migration of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, Michel Abitbol's paper on the history and historiography of Jews of Muslim lands in modern times, and Harvey Goldberg and Chen Bram's paper on critical sociology and the study of Middle Eastern Jewries. Several papers examine religious aspects of the topic: Zvi Zohar deals with Sephardic halakhic tradition in the 20th century, Nissim Leon examines Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's role in the Haredi movement, and Kimmy Caplan studies Haredi Mizrahim in Israel. Gender issues are reflected in Doli Benhabib's paper on literary portraits of Mizrahi female immigrants and in Henriette Dahan Kalev's paper on Mizrahi women and the Israeli feminist movement. More specific are Yaron Tsur's paper on the brief career of the Moroccan immigrant Prosper Cohen, and André Levy's examination on how Moroccan Jews in Israel perceive Morocco, and how Jews in Morocco view Israel. These are well-documented and interesting papers on topics of growing importance in Israel and among world Jewry.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

Nadav, Mordechai. *The Jews of Pinsk, 1506 to 1880*. Edited by Mark J. Mirsky & Moshe Rosman. Translated by Moshe Rosman and Faigie Tropper. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007. 606 p. \$75.00 (ISBN 978-0-80474-159-0).

This is the first of two volumes on the history of Pinsk, one of the two formerly mostly-Jewish cities in eastern Europe (the other is Berdichev). Pinsk was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth until 1793, when it was annexed by Russia. It was the birthplace of the great Hasidic leader Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, and of the Maskilic leader Judah Leib Gordon, and it was also the home of such Zionist and Israeli luminaries as Moshe Kol, Chaim Weizman and Golda Meir.

Originally written in Hebrew as *Toldot ha-Kehillot Pinsk-Karlin, 1505-1880*, by Mordechai Nadav, a native Pinsker and leading Israeli scholar, it was published as part of the literature to memorialize the destroyed communities. Based on a plethora of published and unpublished sources, both Jewish and non-Jewish, in Polish, German, Russian, Yiddish, and Hebrew, this painstakingly detailed history constitutes a microcosm of the eastern

European Jewish experience. It sheds light on pivotal events, such as the Chmielnicki massacres, the Swedish and Muscovite wars, the Hasidic-Mitnagdic conflict, and changes our understanding of the evolution of the *shtetl*, the traditional Jewish town.

The original Hebrew monograph has been enhanced by the editing of Moshe Rosman of Bar Ilan University, and Mark J. Mirsky of the City College of New York. The book is divided chronologically between the period of Lithuanian rule (1505-1793) and Russian rule (1793-1880).

"For Jewish historians, scholars of eastern Europe, researchers on identity and ethnicity, genealogists, university students, and general readers seeking to understand the historical Jewish community that underlies the myth of the *shtetl*." Recommended for both synagogue and research libraries.

Veronica Belling, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

Raab, David. *Terror in Black September: The First Eyewitness Account of the Infamous 1970 Hijackings*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 272 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-40398-420-3).

On 6th September 1970, the Palestinian terror group PFLP hijacked four planes. Three hijackings were successful, but the attack on the El Al plane did not succeed due to the presence of armed guards. Of the three planes, two were brought to a desert airstrip in Jordan and one was blown up in the Cairo international airport. A BOAC plane was hijacked on the 9th September to Jordan. The members of the various Palestinian groups within Jordan did not recognize Jordanian government authority and had set up a state within a state. These events brought things to a head leaving no choice for King Hussein, but to take his kingdom back by force while repelling a Syrian attack in support of the Palestinians.

David Raab, 17 years old at the time, was one of the hostages. The book includes a first-person narrative of his experience, together with selections from other hostages' stories, the separation of the hostages, the negotiations with the hijackers, and an analysis of the Jordanian civil war. The text is well-documented from sources including the British National Archives, Jordanian Arab Army Military Archives, Nixon papers, etc., and multiple secondary sources.

Since David Raab is writing the book, it is clear that the story has a happy ending, but the author still manages to create the sort of tension that prevents the reader from putting down the book. The book is of interest to students of modern history, and should appeal to the general reader.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Schneiderman, Simon. *Preoccupied with My Father*. Toronto, ON: ECW Press, 2007. 57 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-1-55022-810-6).

Written and illustrated in tribute to his father, Yoel Schneiderman, this work demonstrates the author's love, honor, and admiration. One meets Jorel (Yoel) the tailor, his family in Warsaw, and his family after surviving the Holocaust, as well as Simon's mother Hela. The work enables the reader to follow a child's life from his parents' family stories to his life today in Canada. Yiddish songs and beautiful illustrations in various media add to the heartwarming narrative. Adults will appreciate the artwork, while young readers will gain awareness of a sense of survival

and of facing adversaries. Designed by Paul Hodgson and written in simple precise language full of sadness, *Preoccupied with My Father* is a loving tribute to all who lived during the Holocaust. For high schoolers and adults.

Sara Marcus, *Yeshiva Har Torah, Queens, NY*

Tatz, Colin, Peter Arnold & Gillian Heller. *Worlds Apart: The Re-Migration of South African Jews.* Australia: Rosenberg Publishing, 2007. 360 p. \$31.00 (ISBN 978-1-87705-835-6).

In the 1970s, a third of South African Jewish emigrants went to Israel, 24% to the United States and only 13% to Australia. Today, Australia and New Zealand are the preferred destinations of 40% of South African Jewish emigrants, who now constitute over 10% of the Jewish population of Australia, an estimated 10-15,000 individuals. The authors, three ex-South Africans living in Australia, explore the reasons behind this, comparing the factors that motivated the original Litvaks to emigrate to South Africa, to the very different character of their later emigration.

A survey of 608 South African emigrants, conducted between 2003 and 2004 revealed that while "fear of the future" and "ideology" were the main spurs to emigration during the Apartheid years, since the dawn of democracy they have been overtaken by "crime" and "family unification." On the other hand, "economic" reasons and "avoidance of army service," the main spurs of emigration from Lithuania, no longer play a part.

The picture that is presented of South Africans in Australia is both positive and negative. On the one hand, they are considered to be vibrant and unified, and on the other, they tend not to integrate and to prefer to perpetuate their own South African Jewish networks and identity. They have "brought their *shtetl* with them." Few are aware of Australia and New Zealand's xenophobic past. It is likely, however, that their children, who have attended school and university in Australia, will blend as successfully as preceding generations.

Suitable for researchers, as well as lay readers.

Veronica Belling, *University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa*

Tsadik, Daniel. *Between Foreigners and Shi'is: Nineteenth-Century Iran and Its Jewish Minority.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture) 2007. 295 p. \$60.00 (ISBN 978-0-80475-458-3).

Focusing on the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah (1848-1896) in Iran, Daniel Tsadik examines developments in the position of Jews as a minority in Iran during the nineteenth century. Based on diverse archival and scholarly material in Persian, Judeo-Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, and European languages, Tsadik examines changes in the religious, social, economic, and political position of the Jews, on the background of changes in Iranian politics and foreign intervention, as well as attitudes among the surrounding Muslim majority within the population at large and the Shi'i clerics in particular. Following an introduction and a chapter dealing with Shi'i legal attitudes toward the Jews, Tsadik divides his examination chronologically into four chapters, ending with conclusions. Notes, bibliography, index, and a map are included. Tsadik shows how the Shah reached his decisions regarding the Jewish minority and how in a big country like Iran, with its dispersed Jews in hard-to-reach locations, the Shah's policy was not always

followed by local governors and was often opposed by the local Muslims. The role of foreigners in this process, especially that of European Jews, is of particular significance. This thorough study is an important contribution to our knowledge of Iranian Jews as well as for the study of Middle Eastern Jews, Iran, the Middle East, minorities, and relations between the Middle East and foreign powers, and should be in academic libraries with collections on these topics.

Rachel Simon, *Princeton University, Princeton, NJ*

Zaken, Mordechai. *Jewish Subjects and their Tribal Chieftains in Kurdistan: A Study in Survival.* Leiden & Boston: Brill. (Jewish Identities in a Changing World, no. 9) 2007. 375 p. \$162.00 (ISBN 978-9-00416-190-0).

Mordechai Zaken studies the life of the Jews of Kurdistan (mainly Iraqi Kurdistan) as a minority group among their mostly Muslim neighbors. Following a short introduction on Kurdistan and the position of its Jews, the study is divided into four parts: urban Jews and their tribal aghas (chieftains); rural Jews and their tribal aghas; some aspects of daily and personal life, focusing on safety of life, economic life, and conversion; and the period between WWI and the emigration to Israel. Because most Kurdish Jews emigrated to Israel in the early 1950s and the reports on their lives in Kurdistan are few, much of the study is based on interviews Zaken conducted in Israel between 1987 and 2002 with 56 Kurdistan-born Jews, and interviews with Kurdish Jews that were conducted in the 1970s. The study is very detailed and provides much hitherto unknown information on Kurdish Jews and their relations with their Muslim neighbors. Among the lesser known issues are conversion of Jews to Islam, the Jewish experience during WWI, and the period prior to the mass emigration to Israel. Despite the existence of the part dealing with daily and personal life, very little description and analysis refers to women (except for kidnapping and forced conversion). All in all this is an important contribution to the study of Kurdish Jews within the framework of the larger Muslim society, and is of interest to the study Middle Eastern and North African Jews, the study of minorities, and of Iraq in general.

Rachel Simon, *Princeton University, Princeton, NJ*

ISRAEL & THE MIDDLE EAST

Berger, Shalom Z., Daniel Jacobson, & Chaim I. Waxman. *Flipping out?: Myth or Fact? The Impact of the "Year in Israel."* New York: Yashar Books, 2007. 218 p. (ISBN 978-1-93314-323-1).

It has become customary for young Orthodox men (and some young women) to study for a year in Israel after graduation from a high school Yeshivah program and before going to college. The three authors discuss different aspects of this phenomenon. Berger examines the impact of the year in Israel on the students' values, beliefs, and behaviors. He surveys students before they leave for Israel, immediately after the year in Israel, and again a year later. He also discusses the adjustment period after students return to the more secular American environment. In the second section, Jacobson describes the students' psychological development during the year in Israel. He examines the influence of the students' parents, rabbi, and study partners on the

students' sense of self. Waxman studies the relationship among American Orthodoxy and Zionism and Israel. He offers a brief history of Zionism in the United States, a history of the year-in-Israel programs, and the relationship of each to aliyah.

The authors give thoughtful consideration to questions of the correlation between the students' religious observance and their connections to other people, the lasting effects of their year of intense study, and their comfort levels once back in the United States. Recommended.

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

Dumper, Michael. *The Future for Palestinian Refugees: Toward Equity and Peace.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007. 233 p. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-1-58826-474-9).

There are approximately four million self-identified Palestinians whose families left their homes in pre-state Israel or immediately after the Jewish state's creation in 1948, for multiple reasons, almost all of which are subject to immense debate. Michael Dumper, a British academician, seeks to place the disposition of these people, legally considered as refugees, in a global perspective, examining how people in similar conditions have been treated by organizations devoted to reducing the refugees' difficulties. He also places the role of the refugees in the complex of issues that have been subject to negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Dumper chooses to apply international humanitarian law as the preferred filter to find a solution. Resettlement of refugees, non-combatants who have become victims of violent conflicts, has become a regularized component in negotiations to resolve those conflicts. Dumper recognizes that the repatriation of Palestinians to their pre-1948 homes is an unreasonable expectation, given Israeli concerns for its security, combined with the efforts it has taken in the occupied territories with respect to land acquisition. He proposes that UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East) take an even larger role than previously, since it has a service component and could provide the necessary social welfare protection to the Palestinians. In lieu of return, Dumper proposes reparations—as distinct from restitution—as a fallback position for Palestinians, with the international community contributing to the effort. He concludes his analysis with a call for a two-state solution, generally under the rubric of restorative justice. There is an added bonus to this slim volume: a listing of related and relevant websites for the interested reader and researcher.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Enderlin, Charles. *The Lost Years: Radical Islam, Intifada, and Wars in the Middle East 2001-2006.* NY: Other Press, 2007. 377 p. \$25.95 (ISBN 978-1-59051-171-8).

Winslow, Philip C. *Victory For Us is to See You Suffer: In the West Bank with the Palestinians and the Israelis.* Boston MA: Beacon Press, 2007. 224 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-80706-906-6).

Zertal, Idith and Akiva Eldar. *Lords of the Land: The War over Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-2007.* NY: Nation Books, 2007. 531 p. \$29.95 (978-1-56858-370-9).

Israeli administration of territory captured after the Six Day War of 1967 is the overall theme of these three books. *The Lost Years* is a story of six years, 1998 to 2004, a period when Prime

Minister Ariel Sharon attempted to force the Palestinians to recognize that the use of violence would not achieve their desired effect. The author is a journalist with astute observational skills and extensive personal contacts with relevant decision makers. He makes it clear that Israeli government decisions in the West Bank are complicated by the division between the military and civilian governments with different intelligence conclusions providing different assessments of Palestinian motives. The starting point for Israeli negotiations with the Palestinians is the demand for a cessation of terrorist violence against Israeli targets, civilians and structures. The Palestinian response is one that requires a positive gesture on the part of Israel, most importantly, a freeze on Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Occupation, dominated by military control, is detailed with frequent errors based upon faulty intelligence resulting in the deaths of innocent Palestinians, leading to a heightening of tensions. The escalation of violence is interrupted by peace missions, third-party interventions, or meetings between Israeli and Palestinian officials. Enderlin, although not present at the incident, was the journalist whose voiceover narrated the news report, later discredited, blaming Israeli troops for the killing of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy. He cobbles together the escalatory series of provocations and retaliation of Palestinian terrorism and the IDF response. The author concludes, following a litany of casualties, that much could have been avoided if there were a serious peace process and a halt to the Israeli settlement policy. Israel and the international community are confronted with the issue of poverty in the Gaza Strip with, noticeably, no mention of Palestinian responsibility.

Military occupation is certainly difficult for the occupied population but, perhaps, in a vicarious way, even more so for the occupiers. For Philip Winslow, his contacts with Israeli soldiers brutalizing Palestinians in any number of ways, the situation has led what would otherwise be generally fine young people to become inhuman, mistreating others simply because they can. The focus is on Israeli settlements and their populations, and the favored treatment settlers receive from Israeli authorities, especially when confronted with violent resistance from Palestinians. A collection of anecdotal experiences is presented with little attention paid to the discrepancy between official government policy and aberrant behavior of individual soldiers. Stories of hardship prevail. Mention is made, certainly, of Palestinian-initiated and conducted violence, but still less examination of their motivation, which is left to speculation related to the hardship of the occupation. The collection of anecdotal evidence of individual acts by IDF soldiers is provocative. Winslow puts forth a highly controversial and cynical argument, to wit: Israeli counter-terrorist measures are not entirely put into place to protect its citizens. Rather there is a concerted effort to reduce the Palestinian economy, allowing Israeli investors to purchase land and homes from disgruntled Palestinians. An Israeli proposal for settlement of contentious issues was provided by then Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, soon after cessation of hostilities in 1967, to include an autonomous Palestinian state, border adjustments and settlement offers for Palestinian refugees, but little came of it all.

The Jewish reader who accepts without equivocation the notion of the humane Israeli soldier-occupier, or Israeli settlers

simply responding to divine commandments and treating Palestinian with traditional Jewish ethical behavior will find *Lords of the Land* a difficult read. Nevertheless, this is perhaps the most authoritative account of Israeli government policy—or lack thereof—towards Israeli acquisition of private Palestinian land either to create settled housing developments for Jews or establish a symbolic presence to insure a Jewish imprint on biblical sites. Both authors are Israelis who conducted numerous interviews with other Israelis from all levels of society and walks of life, supplementing them with research in official archives as well as those maintained by various newspapers. They first plowed through the planning process implemented by the Israeli government in the immediate aftermath of the Six Day War in 1967. The emergence of the Gush Emunim and violent Palestinian reactions to it, including two uprisings (the two Intifadas) are also put into a perspective of provocation and reaction, with each turn creating a continuous stream of complex social and political dynamics. Two important contributions, in addition to the historical development of settlements, are an examination of “settler society” and the policy-making relationship of the Israeli government to the entire settler movement.

Sanford Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Felton, John. *The Contemporary Middle East: A Documentary History.* Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2008. 729 p. \$115.00. (ISBN 978-0-87289-488-4).

In this extensive history the author has selected more than 120 primary documents, covering Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, and the Arab-Israeli conflict; the latter is the only one that will be discussed here. Official UN resolutions, treaties, charters, letters, etc. are included in the collection, the texts a reader might expect. Each document is preceded by an introduction of a page or more, setting the historical context, but documents connected to the various Israel-Arab wars omit the information that the goal of all the wars was the destruction of Israel. Documents showing the PLO and Yassir Arafat espousing peace and recognition toward Israel are included. It's what is missing that is the problem. Stated simply, when Palestinians present an official conciliatory stand in English, followed by a contradictory and rejectionist stand in Arabic, *both* should be included.

For example, after signing the Oslo Accords, Arafat gave speeches in Arabic comparing the Accords to a famous truce of 7th-century Muslims with their foes. This historic peace was broken after the Muslims had gained enough strength to resume the war and defeat their enemy. Its meaning is well understood in the Muslim world, and at least one such Arafat speech should be included in this collection, since the Oslo agreements hold such prominence.

Similarly, the “phased plan resolution,” adopted by the Palestinian National Council after the failed Arab 1973 war against Israel should be included with other documents about that war. The plan's main provisions called for continuing the “armed struggle” against Israel and using any territories ceded by Israel as a base of operations for that purpose. The absence of such sources makes any collection on the conflict deficient in balance and understanding, and belies the publisher's claim that this collection “tells the complete, objective story” of its topics.

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

Fialkova, Larisa, and Maria N. Yelenevskaya. *Ex-Soviets in Israel: From Personal Narratives to a Group Portrait.* Detroit, Wayne State University Press (*Raphael Patai Series in Jewish Folklore and Anthropology*) 2007. 373p. \$49.95 (ISBN 978-0-81433-169-9).

More than a million citizens of the former Soviet Union (FSU) now live in Israel. The first came between 1971 and 1973, when it was difficult to obtain visas. The next wave of immigration in the 1990s was larger. The authors of this book, both immigrants from the FSU who now teach at the University of Haifa (Fialkova) and the Technion (Yelenevskaya) have studied this group to see how it adjusted to life in a new country and to learn about its mythology and folklore. They interviewed 143 subjects who had been in Israel from two months to ten years. The subjects came from the European, Asian, and Caucasian republics. As a group they are well educated and have varying Jewish backgrounds. The interviews provide fascinating insights into the cultures of both the immigrants and the Israelis. The immigrants expected to find a homogeneous “promised land” where they would feel secure and welcome. They discovered a multicultural society and found themselves strangers among their own people. Anyone interested in Russian studies, Jewish studies, folklore, or history will find a great deal of relevant information here. This is an excellent book for academic library collections.

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

Florence, Ronald. *Lawrence and Aaronsohn: T.E. Lawrence, Aaron Aaronsohn, and the Seeds of the Arab-Israeli Conflict.* New York: Viking, 2007. 513 p. \$27.95 (ISBN 978-0-67006-351-2).

Ronald Florence tells the story of two extraordinary personalities who, for different reasons and with opposing goals, became involved in the British efforts regarding the Middle East in general and Palestine in particular during WWI. The British archeologist T.E. Lawrence advocated Arab nationalism and independence while the Zionist agronomist Aaron Aaronsohn called for a Jewish state in Palestine. Based on rich documentation with endnotes (but no bibliography) and an index, the book reads like a historical novel, making it an engaging introduction to the political and military history of Palestine and the Middle East during WWI and the implications for future developments. Vividly woven around the strong personalities of Lawrence and Aaronsohn and their supporters, this book is an easier read than typical academic studies, though one must bear in mind that much of what makes a gripping narration (e.g., dialogs, thoughts, and feelings) is often only loosely based on contemporary evidence. Still, the book draws from diverse sources and will do a great service if it introduces readers to the complexity of some of the roots of current events in the Middle East.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

Miller, Aaron David. *The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace.* NY: Bantam Dell, 2008. \$26. 406 p. (ISBN-978-0-55380-490-4). Reviewed from an advance review copy.

A nice Jewish lad from Cleveland, whose career goal was to be a history professor, became a Middle East affairs expert and advisor to both the Clinton and both Bush administrations.

This is the story of how the author, after completing his doctoral studies, made his way into the State Department and, over the course of more than 20 years, meandered throughout the Middle East, meeting high officials from Arab capitals and Jerusalem. Although he worked for the State Department, he also had an insider's view of influence peddling in Congress. It is this rare positioning that gives Miller's work a distinct advantage as he provides insights based on contacts with the personalities at the highest level of government. Instructive is his opinion on the effectiveness of AIPAC in guiding US foreign policy in the region in general, but towards Israel specifically. Miller gives the reader an extensive analysis of America's policy and evaluation of such figures as Henry Kissinger, Jimmy Carter, and James Baker, largely based on his personal experience, but augmented by numerous personal interviews. In the end, he argues for a policy of greater engagement by the United States, and by extension, Israel, with political actors who impact upon the Arab-Israeli conflict, a position that will, undoubtedly, raise the hackles of many.

Sanford Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Rogov, Daniel. *Rogov's Guide to Israeli Wines.* New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2008. 455 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-1-59264-210-6).

This handy, attractive, pocket-sized guide, by Israel's eminent wine connoisseur, is produced on glossy paper and includes photographs of many wine labels. Rogov's fourth annual comprehensive guide begins with an introduction that discusses the history of wine making in Israel, Israel's grape growing regions, and the types of grapes grown in each geographical location. The bulk of the text consists of descriptions of over 160 wineries and detailed ratings of the wines they produce. The afterword includes a chapter on wine cabinets, a guide to tasting wines and a blank rating chart the reader may use when tasting and rating wine. The 2008 edition is 50 pages longer than the previous edition and includes a substantial number of new wines and new wineries. An extensive glossary of wine terms and an index of wineries are also included. As an added feature, Rogov includes the phone number and email address of each winery. This book is highly recommended for all adult collections. For those who do not drink wine, the descriptions and history of wine making and wineries are worth reading.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH

Shapira, Anita. *Yigal Allon, Native Son, a Biography.* Translated by Evelyn Abel. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (*Jewish Culture and Contexts*) 2008. 384 p. \$49.95 (ISBN 978-0-81224-0-283).

The publication of this book in English is opportune, since Professor Shapira has been awarded the Israel prize this year. She is an expert, if not *the* expert, in the history of the Palestine Mandate and the early years of the State of Israel. Yigal Allon was one of three, along with Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin, who were born in Eretz Yisrael and played central roles in the early history of Israel.

This volume, first published in Hebrew, is devoted to the years 1918 to 1950, with a summary of the rest of Allon's life. The work examines his leadership of the Palmah and his contribution in Israel's War of Independence. Yigal Allon also served as deputy prime minister and foreign minister of Israel.

Allon tends to be forgotten because he never became prime minister and the reader is left with a feeling (which I am not sure is justified) of waste. "The longing for the rootedness of Eretz Israel, for native authenticity held on to the figure of Allon as a symbol of all the unrealized hopes of the generation born and bred in the land." The biography is highly readable. The translator did a first class job. This is an historical text which can be read for pleasure.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

JUDAISM & JEWISH LIFE

Alter, Robert. *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007. 518 p. \$35.00 (ISBN 978-0-39306-226-7).

Although Alter provides a short introduction to this volume and devotes more space to notes than to the biblical text, his emphasis is always on poetry and meaning, not scholarly commentary. His notes are erudite, but concerned mostly with explaining the translation. He provides a short bibliography, but he does not cite his sources and instead uses phrases such as "Traditional commentators commonly think ..." or "Some interpreters think ..." Alter states that the translation is on the whole quite literal, and that what he aimed at is to "represent Psalms in a kind of English verse that is readable as poetry yet sounds something like the Hebrew."

This is primarily a literary composition, something that might be expected from one who has made a career of literary analysis of the Bible in works such as *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (1985). So did Alter succeed in writing English poetry that sounds like the Hebrew? To my ear he did. In fact, when I tried to fit his English texts to music that had been written for Hebrew psalm texts, for the most part only minor adjustments were needed to make them fit. After I got used to his concise, direct, style I also found his translations suitable for devotional use. This work is recommended for most Jewish libraries.

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

Anidjar, Gil. *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press (*Cultural Memory in the Present*) 2008. 139 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-0-80475-695-2).

This collection of four essays is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the concept "Semites" and the second part is devoted to literature. The first two essays see Semites as a category including both Arabs and Jews, who are classified by the Americans and Europeans as outsiders. One essay is an ideological statement and the other essay is an assessment of Edward Said's work. In the second section, the first essay tries to determine whether Hebrew literature is evolutionary or revolutionary. The second essay (to my mind the most interesting essay) discusses Judeo-Arabic literature and the very special symbiosis between Jew and Arab, when Jews lived in Arab countries, indeed "cultural memory in the present."

This is not an easy book to read. The language is very technical, but the second, more literary part, I found to be very stimulating.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Ben-Moshe, Danny and Zohar Segev, eds. *Israel, the Diaspora and Jewish Identity*. Brighton, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2007. 353 p. \$35.00 (ISBN 978-1-84519-242-6).

Editors Danny Ben-Moshe (University of Melbourne) and Zohar Segev (University of Haifa) have brought together a thought-provoking collection of essays in an interesting, effective arrangement, which provides a wide range of perspectives from Israel and the Diaspora. The book explores the question what is "the place of Israel in Diaspora Jewish identity?" Part I, Issues and Themes, includes chapters on "The New Anti-Semitism, Jewish Identity, and the Question of Zionism," "Jewish Continuity and Israel Visits," "Israel in Orthodox Identity," "Conservative Judaism, Zionism, and Israel," "The Place of Israel in the Identity of Reform Jews," "The Jewish Left, Jewish Identity, Zionism, and Israel," "The Changing Identity of American Jews," "Israel and the Peace Process," "Israel's Foreign and Defence Policy and Diaspora Jewish Identity," "Gender and Israel in Diaspora Jewish Identity," and "The Place of Israel in the Identity of Israelis in the Diaspora." Each of the chapters begins with an essay, which is followed by responses from commentators in Israel and the Diaspora. This combination adds breadth to the exploration of the topic and, in some cases, enables a sense of dialogue. Part II, Countries and Regions, includes chapters on Canada, Great Britain, Latin America, France, Australia, United States, South Africa, and Russia.

Recommended for academic and research libraries, as well as other libraries with collections on Israel and the Diaspora. Includes glossary, information on contributors, and index.

Ilya Silbar Margoshes, University of Regina, Regina, SK Canada

Bisk, Tzvi. *The Optimistic Jew: A Positive Vision for the Jewish People in the 21st Century*. Jerusalem: Maxanna Press, 2007. (ISBN-978-1-93451-5-723).

It is difficult to place this book in a genre. Is it only a personal statement? What are the author's credentials? For whom is this book written? Usually these questions are answered before the first page of text, but with this volume the answers are never made clear.

Mr. Bisk states in his introduction that the 21st century is the time for Jews to demonstrate their coping skills, honed over many centuries of displacement—skills that have prepared them for our globalized world. What follows is a brief history of Zionism, a description of the many talents of the Jewish people, and myriad dogmatic statements telling readers what they should and should not do, and what they should and should not believe. The tone of the book is didactic, yet nearly all the quotes are unattributed, and when they are attributed, there are no citations for the sources. The book contains neither index nor bibliography. This is clearly not a scholarly work yet the reader is expected to place the quotations in time and space. Is every reader, for example, familiar with Abraham Maslow's pyramidal hierarchy of human needs?

The author has distinct likes and dislikes when it comes to Jewish people. He has no use for the Orthodox, nor for people who engage in what he considers "boring work." This would include all manual labor such as farming and unskilled industrial labor. He feels Jews are above that sort of work. Although there may be some genuine statements contained in this book,

plowing through the rest is not worth the time, and all the useful information is available in other sources. Not recommended.

Marion M. Stein, A. J. Heschel High School, New York, NY

Blau, Rivkah, ed. *Gender Relationships in Marriage and Out*. New York: The Michael Scharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press, 2007. 298 p. \$29.50 (ISBN 978-0-88125-971-1).

The editor has assembled a collection of essays discussing current and historical aspects of marriage and male-female relationships in the Orthodox community, with some chapters drawing more heavily on the rabbinic literature, while others depend more on anecdotal and real-life examples. Aharon Lichtentein surveys the literature of *hazal* as related to different models of marriage. Attitudes towards sexuality are addressed by Adiel Schremer, focusing on Talmudic times, and by Shaul Stampfer, focusing on more modern times. Other essays address the plight of single Orthodox Jews in an era of rising marriage age, focus on the community helping all members, provide first-hand reports of single Orthodox Jews, address premarital guidance, and focus on *niddah*. The work includes a list of resources and notes for each entry and a brief index.

Intended to educate single people to the supporting documentation, to ensure that they are not alone, as well as to educate the community in which singles are striving to survive at the same level as a family, this work will provide support to all. Each reader can find an author to meet his or her own unique needs. This work is a welcome addition to a collection serving single Orthodox Jewish people, although it might not be of interest in other populations.

Sara Marcus, Yeshiva Har Torah Queens, NY

Dubov, Nissan Dovid. *Inward Bound: A Guide to Understanding Kabbalah*. Jerusalem, New York: Devora Publishing, 2007. 212 p. \$21.95. (ISBN 978-1-93268-798-9).

"People pay attention when you mention the Kabbalah—they are genuinely fascinated by its lure." Rabbi Dubov's book will hold readers' attention with its clear concise narrative and framing of the material in the context of Jewish history and *Hasidut* (Hasidic philosophy). The book begins with some key FAQs (frequently asked questions)—definitions of kabbalah and the differences between kabbalah and *Hasidut*. A timeline with and significant personalities follows. Several charts dispersed throughout the book clarify concepts from the text.

The material is presented in three parts. The first deals with the history of kabbalah, its transmission through the ages, and its relationship to the Messianic Era. The second part delves into the principles of kabbalah: the soul, the *sefirot*, reincarnation, and the purpose of creation. The final section expounds on practical kabbalah, including meditation, joy, and Torah study. The last two chapters of this section are influenced heavily by the author's Lubavitch background, with a discussion of the Lubavitcher rebbe as Mashiach, which may be off-putting to some. The most interesting of the three appendices is a discussion asserting that non-Jews can learn the aspects of kabbalah that deal with the seven Noahide laws. A glossary and a list of suggested websites are included. Recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Fein, Ronnie. *Hip Kosher: 175 Easy-to-Prepare Recipes for Today's Kosher Cooks.* Philadelphia, PA: DaCopa, 2008. 230 p. \$16.95 (ISBN 978-1-60094-053-8). Reviewed from an advance review copy.

Living up to its title, *Hip Kosher* truly does provide 175 modern recipes for the kosher home using standard, and not-so-standard yet easy-to-find, ingredients. Including discussions of kosher cooking and halal, the work is a useful guide for novice chefs to bring current dishes into the kosher kitchen as well as for the "hip" chef to bring skills and love to kosher cuisine. A detailed table of contents lists recipes included in each chapter; there is no index. Included are soups; salads sorted into meat, poultry and fish salads, and vegetable, grain, and fruit salads; grains and pastas; fish; meat; poultry; eggs and dairy; sandwiches; vegetables; and desserts. The work also includes some miscellaneous basics such as a quick *ras el hanout* and *harissa*. For each dish, there is a discussion of the recipe, variations to adapt it for dairy or meat meals, a list of ingredients, simple-to-follow directions, serving size, and a tip on how to improve the recipe. Most recipes include suggestions for accompanying dishes. A welcome addition to any high school or public library, this work will educate and entertain almost any reader wishing to cook simple, yet tasty and interesting dishes for their families and guests.

Sara Marcus, *Yeshiva Har Torah, Queens, NY*

Gotzmann, Andreas & Christian Wiese, eds. *Modern Judaism and Historical Consciousness: Identities, Encounters, Perspectives.* Leiden: Brill, 2007. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-9-00415-289-2).

This book does not offer rabbinic theodicy or faith-based rabbinic hagiography, honorific praise of *Gedolim* by painting legendary portraits. This volume probes the new, post-enlightenment historical consciousness—its concerns, premises, uses of *Wissenschaft*, and ideologies. It inspires an interdisciplinary dialogue regarding the influences, developments, dynamics and breaks that characterize modern historical writing in Jewish studies. Lacking are the historical interrogation of Jewish mysticism pioneered by Scholem, and Jewish art pioneered by Narkiss, Sukenic, and others. The authors do not do justice to the radical rupture and catastrophic consequences of the Shoah as a watershed event, separating modernity from post-modernity.

This scholarly work had its origins in a conference that took place at the Berlin Jewish Museum in September 2003. Recommended for all academic library collections.

David B. Levy, *Brooklyn, NY*

Gubkin, Liora. *You Shall Tell Your Children: Holocaust Memory in American Passover Ritual.* New Brunswick, NJ : Rutgers University Press, 2007. 209 p. \$23.95 (ISBN 978-0-81354-194-5).

The Holocaust has shaped every aspect of modern Jewish life in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Liora Gubkin's study of post-War American haggadot explores those influences. She limits her study to non-Orthodox haggadot, (incorrectly) stating that contemporary Orthodox haggadot generally do not incorporate Holocaust memorial. Although the author draws many fascinating conclusions, one is constantly distracted by the staggering number of factual errors and faulty assumptions upon which she bases her work. Many of these errors do not take anything

away from her arguments; attributing the Hasidic *Hineni mukhan* meditations to the Conservative movement; the *Ani ma'amin* to Maimonides, who certainly inspired, but did not write the prayer, etc. Unfortunately, the author is apparently not familiar enough with the traditional haggadah and rabbinical literature to know when modern versions truly deviate from them. Time after time, Gubkin finds significance in the 'resonances of multi-cultural identity politics' in a contemporary Haggadah commentary which is simply quoting or referencing the midrash, Rashi, or another classic text. She also frequently mis-transliterates Hebrew texts in ways that alter the meanings of the passages she quotes. This is simply not the level of scholarship one would expect from a university press.

Daniel Scheide, *Florida Atlantic University*

Gunsher, Cheryl. *Days of Purpose Days of Fulfillment.* Jerusalem, New York: Devora Publishing, 2007. 189 p. \$21.95 (ISBN-978-1-932687-44-6).

This is a collection of vignettes in the Musar tradition: short, instructive stories and teachings of moral conduct. They aim to explore important questions that the author has reflected upon in her own personal journey of spiritual healing. The book is divided into five sections, each containing a grouping of short parables (mostly a page or a page and a half), with a lesson at the end. The book is dedicated to the author's great great grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Asher Boyarsky, the Magid of Vashilashok. His legacy is reflected in her teachings. They are presented in a clear, easy-to-read style, and reflect a traditional Orthodox tradition. This book is a useful addition to Jewish public and school libraries and particularly yeshiva collections.

Dr. Susan Freiband, *University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras*

Harris, Jay M., ed. *Maimonides after 800 Years: Essays on Maimonides and His Influence.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. 343 p. (ISBN 978-0-67402-590-5).

Based on a conference at Harvard University commemorating 800 years since the death of Maimonides, this volume presents a refreshing range of perspectives on the towering Jewish thinker. Though most of the articles deal with the philosophy of Maimonides, especially as presented in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, there are several important contributions to other aspects of his personality. Four pieces deal with his legal code, the *Mishneh Torah*, and Menahem Ben-Sasson discusses the continuity between Maimonides and his descendants, especially in the political sphere.

The theme of the Maimonides' influence on later generations is picked up in almost half of the articles, in different ways. Some concentrate on the generations that followed closely upon Maimonides, when Jews throughout the Mediterranean were swept away by the appeal of a philosophically rigorous Judaism. In more long-lasting terms, Alan Nadler's article discusses the *Guide's* appeal to different Jewish groups in early modern Eastern Europe. Haym Soloveitchik's discussion of *Mishneh Torah's* hidden polemics against Karaites leads him into a stirring description of the beauty of Rambam's work and the responses that its structure elicited from generations of talmudists. Structural aspects of *Mishneh Torah* are also discussed by Bernard Septimus.

The range of subjects discussed makes this volume relevant to a wide variety of intellectually-minded readers. Readers will be requesting it for the many important studies it contains.

Pinchas Roth, New York Public Library, NY

Hirschfield, Brad. *You Don't Have to be Wrong for Me to be Right; Finding Faith Without Fanaticism.* NY: Harmony Books, 2007. 271 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-30738-297-9).

In a world that has experienced wars and terrorist attacks on a gigantic scale in the name of religion, a book like this is timely and important. Rabbi Hirschfield advocates dialogue instead of warfare, conflict resolution through debate and discussion, faith without fanaticism. Through anecdotes drawn from his own experience and events in recent history, he describes a constructive attitude toward life that allows us to disagree instead of disconnecting, to be open and committed rather than opinionated and insistent on foisting our own truth upon others. He shows that diversity is a quality to be cherished and not quashed, and encourages discourse and debate, because they may lead to better understanding.

The book ends on a hopeful note, as it contemplates how human beings, respecting the divine in themselves and in each other, and resolving conflict without bloodshed, can cooperate to bring the Messiah closer. A wide-ranging, ecumenical bibliography and an index are added assets. The font and page layout are exceptionally clear and attractive. Recommended for academic and synagogue libraries.

Susanne M. Batzdorff, Congregation Beth Ami, Santa Rosa, CA

Hirschman, Elizabeth Caldwell, and Donald N. Yates. *When Scotland Was Jewish: DNA Evidence, Archaeology, Analysis of Migrations, and Public and Family Records Show Twelfth Century Semitic Roots.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007. 258 p. \$45.00 (ISBN 978-0-78642-800-7).

Forget the kilts and bagpipes. If this intriguing book is to be believed, the original Highland dwellers were distinctly non-Celtic. Two genealogists argue that French and Spanish crypto-Jews, fleeing the Christian persecutions of the south, made their way in migratory waves up to the Scottish region, mated or intermarried with the local populace, and left behind a legacy of Semitic symbols, traditions, and influence.

The evidence is fascinating. Through DNA samples, the authors discover more than a drop of Mediterranean blood among residents and descendants of Scotland, reflecting the population transfers throughout medieval Europe. They also trace familiar Scottish surnames to variations of Judaic or Arabic-sounding counterparts e.g., Campbell, Caldwell, Gordon. Jews settled and established themselves economically, certain families forging a network through trade, professions, and marriage.

Included are lengthy lists of prominent or royal family trees, and biographies of Protestant Reformation leaders. Contemporary drawings depict notable Scottish burghers and officials with suspiciously Semitic features. A study of churches and tombstones reveal biblical motifs, and—*Da Vinci Code* fans take note—a connection between the Jews and the Templars.

Appendices and footnotes detail the DNA project and sources. Some of the information, however, is debatable, or plain wrong. There is mention of a "Levite name, tracing from the Davidic

line." King David was an Israelite, not a Levy. Because Christianity had always borrowed from Judaism, it is difficult to interpret what might have been imitative, or even coincidental. However, these findings do confirm that the seed of Abraham got around, and they make Scotland an interesting place to visit. For adult Jewish libraries or British history collections.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, NY

Hughes, Aaron W. *The Art of Dialogue in Jewish Philosophy.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008. 234 p. \$24.95 pbk. (ISBN 978-0-25321-944-2); \$65 cloth (ISBN 978-0-25334-982-8).

Aaron Hughes examines five Jewish philosophers, from the 11th to the 18th century, who expressed some of their ideas in the popular literary genre of a dialogue. This format enabled them to show the rational compatibility between the Torah and philosophy, and the highly developed and intellectual status of Judaism. Judah Halevi (*The Kuzari*) wrote in Arabic, Shem Tov ibn Falaquera (*Iggeret ha-Vikuah; Sefer ha-Mevaqqesh*), and Isaac Polleqar (*Ezer ha-Dat*) wrote in Hebrew, while Judah Abravanel (*Dialoghi d'Amore*), and Moses Mendelssohn (*Phaedon*) wrote, respectively, in Italian and German.

The book's introduction deals with the selections of the specific dialogues, and the methods, aims, and scope of this particular literary form. Following is an in-depth analysis of each chosen philosopher and his work. In each chapter the author examines and compares the variety of Jewish social and religious cultures. In the epilogue, Hughes explains how modern Jewish philosophy and modern Jewish philosophers, like Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, and Martin Buber, transformed the concept of philosophical "Dialogue" to a new principle of "Dialogic" that enabled them to focus on how one encounters God through inter-human relationships.

The Art of Dialogue in Jewish Philosophy includes extensive notes, an expanded bibliography of primary and secondary sources, and an index. Although Hughes explains and translates philosophical terms in foreign languages throughout the text, the addition of a glossary would have been helpful. This volume will enrich academic collections on philosophy and religion.

Nira G. Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Jacob, Benno. *The First Book of the Bible: Genesis.* Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2007. 358 p. \$49.50 (ISBN 0-88125-960-8).

There aren't very many Reform rabbis who are regularly cited by Orthodox scholars. In fact, there's pretty much just Benno Jacob (1862-1945). Since its original publication in 1934, his biblical commentary has been enormously influential in all spheres of Jewish scholarship. Originally published in German, it was translated into English by Rabbis Ernest and Walter Jacob, the commentator's son and grandson.

This translation is highly abridged. It was thought that much of the philological discussion and Jacob's polemics against the Documentary Hypothesis would be of interest only to scholars, who could refer to the original German text. This abridged edition, out of print since 1974, is a tremendous resource, suitable for academics and laypeople alike. Even today, the commentary is innovative, yet deeply rooted in the tradition of the classic *parshanim*.

One of the most important biblical commentaries of the 20th century, this is a vital addition to any academic library, as well as synagogue and school libraries of any denomination.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Kedar, Karyn D. *The Bridge to Forgiveness: Stories and Prayers for Finding God and Restoring Wholeness.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2007. 147 p. \$19.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-324-8).

Rabbi Karyn Kedar has built a deserved reputation as a contemporary explorer of Jewish tradition and its connection to the human heart. Her third book invites the reader to move through the various stages of forgiveness. The voyage Rabbi Kedar takes is very personal. She recalls events from both her childhood and her adult life. Like a storyteller, she describes her responses to critical times and to tragedies and beautiful moments. She then asks readers to travel with her into the recesses of her heart, in order to open their own souls to healing. Her itinerary has nine sections, including "Choosing," "Acceptance," and "Learning." Each of these units contains both essays (most of them two or three pages) and short personal poems illustrating the stage, image, or attribute she is describing. Thus, "Forgiveness" has a poem "Esa Enai—I Lift my Eyes" and a prose study "Protection" appears in the segment on "Restoration."

This is not a how-to book, nor is it a scholarly treatise on *teshuvah*. There are very few references to the Jewish year or life cycle events, and it does not appear that the author has mined her sermons for it. It is, however, a useful introduction to the general topic of forgiveness, by a sensitive and knowledgeable teacher. Like her other volumes, *God Whispers* and *Our Dance with God*, it is recommended especially for synagogue libraries.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Kolatch, Yonatan. *Masters of the Word: Traditional Jewish Bible Commentary from the Eleventh Through Thirteenth Centuries. Volume II.* Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2007. 426 p. \$35.00. (ISBN 0-88125-939-X).

Rabbi Jonathan Kolatch's goal in the Masters of the Word series is to cover the "waterfront" of classical biblical commentary from the rabbis of the Talmud through modern times. In this second volume Rabbi Kolatch emphasizes Rashi and later Ashkenazi commentators, and Ibn Ezra as a representative of the Sephardi world. His tools include both traditional texts and modern critical editions. His approach is first to lay out the necessary background, and then to offer selections in Hebrew, and then in translation. In the first two volumes he focuses on segments of commentary from each parashah of Genesis. He plans further volumes to cover examples from the remainder of the Pentateuch.

Kolatch covers much in breadth and depth. He sometimes tries too hard to prove the orthodoxy of his material, especially in cases where the commentators' own words may offer a broader vision of the text. He often refers to individual rabbis by acronym rather than by name. Where he does use names he favors Hebrew transliteration rather than accepted English forms. He does, however, transliterate according to Israeli standard, rather than Ashkenazi pronunciation. In the bibliography, the author would have done better to separate primary from secondary sources.

He has standardized his footnotes sufficiently that one can go from footnote to bibliography with relative ease. Such concerns aside, I recommend this series for inclusion in the collections of all academic and seminary libraries, and, selectively, for inclusion in congregational and community libraries as well.

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

Kurshan, Ilana. *Why Is This Night Different from All Other Nights? "The Four Questions" Around the World.* NY: Schocken Books, 2008. 160 p. \$16. (ISBN 978-0-80524-252-2). Reviewed from an advance review copy.

"Ma Nishtana" is probably the most famous question in Judaism. The youngest family member has been asking the four questions at the Passover seder for who knows how many years. Another very old tradition is that of asking in Hebrew as well as their native tongue, so that everyone present can understand. In this volume the four questions are presented in 23 different languages, including Afrikaans, Swedish, Farsi, Turkish and Marathi. Each version includes the questions in the original alphabet plus transliteration. A brief history of the Jewish population that speaks the language and a photograph or piece of artwork from the country, often depicting Passover preparations or seder rituals, are included. Each section includes information on when Jews first arrived, their "golden age" in the country, and the number of Jews living there today.

In the introduction Joseph Telushkin points out that the questions are not answered directly during the seder so he supplies these answers. For those interested in their ancestors' backgrounds, or looking to add interest to their seder, it is an interesting and quick book. The format makes for easy reference. It is appropriate for all libraries, and larger libraries should consider multiple copies for those who want to ask the questions in a different language at their own seder.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Shalom, Teaneck, New Jersey

Lambert, Nick. *Jews and Europe in the Twenty-First Century: Thinking Jewish.* London: Vallentine Mitchell (Parkes-Weiner Series on Jewish Studies) 2008. 332 p. \$35.00 (ISBN 978-0-85303-761-3).

This book, based on the author's doctoral thesis, examines Jewish life in Europe, concentrating on the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Italy. Approximately 65 respondents—prominent intellectuals and leaders of the communities—were interviewed in 2000 with follow-up interviews in 2006. The sample is most certainly not representative of the Jewish communities and I felt that the most important quality required of a respondent was articulateness.

The first chapters of the book deal with the communities. This is followed by a discussion of the views of Arendt, Steiner, and Zweig by respondents, and the respondents' opinions of non-Jews' views of Jews. The last chapter is devoted to views on Israel. Recurring themes were: dissatisfaction with the leadership of the communities; denigration of "neo-Orthodoxy," which was said to have replaced the local Orthodoxy (which apparently was many of the respondents' golden age); and estrangement from contemporary Europe.

I was generally impressed by the portrayal of the communities, and think that perhaps the leaders chosen were rep-

representative but the reliance on intellectuals, who are usually anti-establishment, left the book a little unbalanced. The book is stimulating and gives a detailed portrayal of contemporary European Jewry.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Lamm, Norman. *Faith & Doubt: Studies in Traditional Jewish Thought.* Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2006. 364 p. \$35.00 (ISBN 978-0-88125-952-0).

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, modern Orthodox Judaism's most erudite scholar, has published a third edition of his 1971 book *Faith & Doubt*. Rabbi Lamm is the former president of Yeshiva University and now holds the post of chancellor of that university. *Faith & Doubt* consists of thirteen essays dealing with topics such as the Jewish ethics of leisure, man's position in the universe, religion and extraterrestrial life, and scholarship and piety. The third edition updates previous editions and has a new chapter on law and morality. Each essay is followed by copious notes. Rabbi Lamm's writing style and use of language are superb. Highly recommended for the Jewish philosophy and spirituality collections of all academic and synagogue libraries.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH

Luzzatto, Moshe Hayyim. *The Complete Mesillat Yesharim: Dialogue and Thematic Versions. Based on MS Guenzburg 1206, Russian State Library, Moscow, first edition, Amsterdam 1740. Edited, translated and annotated with introduction and indices by Avraham Shoshana and associates.* Cleveland, OH: Ofeq Institute, 2007. 626 p. \$34.99 (ISBN 978-1-88125-544-4).

Mesillat Yesharim is accepted as one of the central works on Jewish ethics in Orthodox circles. It is not a theoretical work, but a practical text on how to improve one's conduct. The author claims: "I have written this work not to teach people what they do not know, but to remind them of what is already known and quite familiar to them."

The current edition includes the familiar text together with an unknown version reproduced from a recently discovered manuscript. The text we know was written as a conventional book. The manuscript version was written in dialog form, reminding one of books like the *Kuzari*. The dialog version is 288 pages long, whereas the version that appeared in print is only 235 pages long.

The book contains the original Hebrew text together with an English translation and critical apparatus in English, which includes comparisons between the two texts. The book relies on a variety of classical Jewish texts and the sources appear in the notes.

The team that produced this text has done a first-class job. This work is useful both for people who are familiar with *Mesillat Yesharim* and want to study with the best text available, and for people who want to acquaint themselves with Jewish ethical literature.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel



Malkin, Yaakov. *Epicurus & Apikorsim.* Jerusalem: The Library of Secular Judaism and Milan Press, 2007. 173 p. \$25.00 (ISBN 978-9-65911-511-2).

Epicurus, the founder of one of the four schools of Greek philosophy, taught that pleasure was the end of life. Malkin explores the potentially fascinating subject of Epicurus' influence upon the Jews. He also discusses the heretics known as *apikorsim*, which is a Hebrew word derived from the name Epicurus, though not all those so labeled were his followers. The book is something of a defense of secular Judaism. Unfortunately, it is quite repetitive and reads like a number of overlapping essays strung together. Some of the assertions in it are incorrect or misleading (e.g., that in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides rejected animal sacrifice). Also, the strangeness of Epicurus is not conveyed. For example, one would never guess from this book that the philosopher said, "a man never gets any good from sexual passion, and he is fortunate if he does not receive harm."

It is difficult to define the intended audience for this poorly conceived and executed book. While there is a bibliography, there are no footnotes, which makes it of limited use to scholars. Yet the subject seems rather abstruse for a general audience. If one wants an explication of secular Judaism, the author's earlier book, *Secular Judaism: Faith, Values, and Spirituality* is a better choice. Not recommended.

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

Mann, Rabbi Daniel, ed. *Living the Halachic Process: Questions and Answers for the Modern Jew.* Jerusalem; New York: Devora Publishing, 2007. 410 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-93268-788-0).

This collection includes interesting selected responsa (compilation of answers to questions) of the Eretz Hemdah Institute (www.erezhemdah.org), from their web-site "Ask the Rabbi." This English service has been guided by Rav Yosef Carmel and is geared towards the *dati leumi* in Israel, and the modern Orthodox in the Diaspora. It is a cooperative production of Yeshivot Hesder, Bnei Akiva, Mizrahi, Yeshiva University, and Young Israel.

Living the Halachic Process opens with "How to Use This Book," "Sample Source Sheet from Companion Compact Disc" (one can also download the sources from files.erezhemdah.org/files/books/LIVING.pdf), and an elaborate "Introduction: The History and Process of Halacha." There are eleven sections in the book (A to K): Tefilla (Prayer); Berachot (Blessings); Shabbat; Mo'adim (Festivals); Kashrut; Tzedaka (Charity) and Ribbit (Usury); Holy Articles; Miscellaneous; Family Law; Monetary Law; and Hashkafa (Jewish Outlook). In each section questions are arranged mostly according to complexity. The responses are supported by extensive footnotes, which are further illuminated in the companion CD. The book ends with a glossary/index.

Living the Halachic Process emphasizes the importance of a close relationship with a local rabbi in solving both halachic and personal matters. The book provides well substantiated analysis of specific issues in the context of the halachic process. It is a welcome additional resource for rabbinic school and yeshiva libraries. For a more general reader it is an excellent introduction to the profound and highly articulated process of how Orthodox Judaism deals halachically with new issues.

Nira G. Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Mertens, Bram. *Dark Images, Secret Hints: Benjamin, Scholem, Molitor and the Jewish Tradition.* Oxford; New York: Peter Lang (Studies in German Jewish History; vol. 7) 2007. 278 p. \$67.95 (ISBN 978-0-82047-219-5).

Walter Benjamin was a German Jewish philosopher, a prominent literary critic between the two world wars, and a close friend of Gershom Scholem. Mertens claims to have found a salient Jewish influence on Benjamin's work and ascribes it to his enthusiasm for the work of Molitor. Molitor was a Christian expert on Judaism, who published a magnum opus on Judaism with a strong kabbalistic element.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first includes a detailed study of Jewish tradition; chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to Molitor, and chapters 4 and 5 to Benjamin. Considerable emphasis is placed on a theory of language, where: "... language is the immediate cause of creation and that everything must necessarily exist in language ..."

This is not a book for the general reader. Readers who want to immerse themselves in this book need a working knowledge of German, some French, and a little Greek. The author explains the content of the quotations, but does not translate them. The notes are extensive.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Munk, Elie. *World of Prayer.* Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2007. 2 v. \$49.99. (ISBN 978-1-58330-636-9).

A new, revised edition of the popular commentary on the Siddur. Originally published in German in 1933, *The World of Prayer* is not only a commentary, but a defense of the traditional liturgy. The inclusion of the prayers in the original Hebrew makes this edition easier to use, but that is not sufficient incentive to purchase it if you already have an earlier edition of the work. Recommended for school and synagogue libraries.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Myers, Jody. *Kabbalah and the Spiritual Quest: The Kabbalah Centre in America.* Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007. 272 p. \$49.95 (ISBN 978-0-27598-940-8).

The continued interest in Jewish mysticism leads naturally to a desire to understand its history, value, and institutions. The current volume concentrates on one of the best known organizations, the Kabbalah Centre. The book begins with a description of kabbalah, and a general history from medieval times until the mid-20th century. The material here is basic, focusing on the teaching of Yehuda Ashlag and his followers. Chapter two links kabbalah to the cults and other movements of the 1960s and '70s, and introduces Philip Berg, the founder of the centre and author of its most important texts. The centre's primary kabbalistic teachings are discussed, and its social and communal practices described. Later chapters explain the group's approach to mitzvot, Jewish rituals and holidays, summarize the centre's basic practices, and examine the kabbalists' approach to disease, medicine, prayer, and meditation. The final section includes profiles of several members of the centre and adherents of its work.

The author has apparently been provided generous access to the centre's personnel and documents, and this book appears to be an authorized survey of the Kabbalah Centre and its work, rather than a tool for study. The book is recommended only for

large research and university libraries, and institutions that study Jewish religious organizations in contemporary society.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Rose, Or N., Jo Ellen Green Kaiser & Margie Klein. *Righteous Indignation: A Jewish Call for Justice.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2008. 351 p. \$24.99 (ISBN: 978-1-58023-336-1).

This is a collection of 40 essays, arranged in seven units: Judaism, justice, and American life; Renewing creation: Judaism and the environment; the temple of the spirit: the human body; The yoke of oppression: social and economic justice; Klal Yisrael: creating an inclusive community; Seeking peace: Israel, Palestine, and American Jewry; The seventy nations: global concerns. Written by "many of the finest minds in the progressive Jewish community, the essays ... cover a wide array of social justice topics," writes David Ellenson in his foreword. In their introduction, the editors state that this anthology compiles essays by "activists who view their justice work as integral to their identities as Jews, and who view the teachings of Judaism as foundational to their activist efforts." The anthology contains "intellectual and spiritual resources to encourage a sophisticated conversation about Judaism, social justice, and environmental responsibility."

A must-have book for an academic library with a significant American Jewish studies program. This anthology will probably play an important role in advancing the progressive agenda in the upcoming American elections.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD

Rosen, Michael. *The Quest for Authenticity: The Thought of Reb Simhah Bunim.* Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2008. 415 p. \$27.00 (ISBN 978-965-524-003-0).

Three Hasidic leaders gave fame to the city of Przysucha—pronounced Pshishka in Yiddish—in Kielce Province in southeast central Poland: R. Jacob Isaac b. Asher (ha-Yehudi ha-Kadosh), his disciple Simhah Bunim, and Menahem Mendel, of Kotsk. None of them left any written words. The central thesis of Rosen's book is that there is an inner coherence of ideas running from the Yehudi to the Kotsker rebbe; it is not clear therefore why Simhah Bunim is the central figure and how his statements are different from those of the other two. Rosen reviews the following topics: Torah and theology, limited leadership of the tsadik, quest for truth and authenticity, introspection, and prayer. In conclusion, Rosen devotes a chapter each to the opposition to the Przysucha school of Hasidism and to the transformation of its heritage by later generations.

This book is not the definitive study of Przysucha Hassidism in all its nuances. Rosen presents extensive citations in English and translations of statements attributed to the three Hasidic rabbis, with the original Hebrew text in an appendix. This book could have greatly benefited from a skillful copy editor, who might have cut the many repetitions, integrated into the text some of the ideas relegated to appendixes, and harmonized the footnotes. Many citations appear more than once, word-for-word, in different chapters of the book.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD



Schafer, Peter. *Jesus in the Talmud.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007. 210 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-69112-926-6).

"Is Jesus of Nazareth mentioned in the Talmud?" When asked this question, many Jews would respond, "No." Professor Peter Schafer, however, has a different response. In this series of scholarly essays, he asserts that Jesus's life is recounted in the Talmud, although in scattered form that is not always easy to discern.

Each of the book's nine chapters explores an element of Jesus's life. They include "The Frivolous Disciple," "The Torah Teacher," and "Jesus' Execution." Using both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, Schafer finds evidence that the Talmudic rabbis were very much aware of Jesus and recorded his activities. He cites instances, in the Bavli especially, that he believes contain references to Jesus's birth, his performance of miracles, and even his "Punishment in Hell."

The truth of Jesus's life has long been of interest to Jews, both lay people and academics. This book takes its readers deep into the topic, and presents some fascinating premises, which should be taken seriously. But with 35 pages of notes, bibliography and index, it is written for scholars. While it is priced for general purchase, only large synagogues, universities, and seminaries will have use for it.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Sokolow, Moshe. *Studies in the Weekly Parashah: Based on the Lessons of Nehama Leibowitz = Hatsi Nehamah.* Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2008. 284 p. \$22.50 (ISBN 978-9-65524-004-7).

The work, whose Hebrew title derives from the word play on the Talmudic adage *tsarat rabbim hatsi nehamah* (shared distress is a partial consolation), offers readings on the weekly parashah/sidrah evoking the style of Nehama Leibowitz by drawing on her lesser-known published works and private lessons. Sokolow does not use the *Iyyunim/Studies* or the original *gilyonot*. Instead he draws on *Perush Rashi la-Torah: Iyyunim be-Shittato*, which Nehama co-authored with Moshe Ahrend, (Open University, 1990) and *Limmud Parshanei ha-Torah u-Derakhim le-Hora'atam* (World Zionist Organization, 1975). This book is written in an easy-to-read and original style, which often employs a light, humorous touch in its stylistic phrasings e.g., "Va-Yelekh—Elementary, My Dear Rashi," an allusion to Watson via A.C. Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.

This book of *nehamah* (consolation) affirms love of *Medinat Yisrael*, the Hebrew language, and Tanakh study. It is recommended for all Jewish libraries (synagogue, JCC, academic, seminary, etc.). It joins Nehama's oeuvre, and the growing number of books (e.g., *Tales of Nehama* by Leah Abramowitz and *To Study and to Teach: the Methodology of Nechama Leibowitz* by Shmuel Peerless) that reveal Nehama's wisdom and skill as a teacher.

David B. Levy, Brooklyn, NY

30 minute Seder: The Haggadah that Blends Brevity with Tradition. Scottsdale, AZ: 30minute-Seder, LLC, 2006. 31 p. \$5.95 (ISBN 978-0-9791256-0-7). Reviewed from an advance review copy.

This book, more of a pamphlet than a full-sized haggadah, claims to have "saved seders" by including only the highlights of a traditional seder yet keeping its meaning. It markets it-

self as "rabbinically approved" and appealing to "just about every" branch of Judaism, but from looking through the text it is obvious that it does not cater to the Orthodox. Its format, design and marketing as well as the text itself, imply almost a desperation to convince minimally or unaffiliated Jews that yes, your seder can be fun (as if the regular-sized four- or five-hour seder is not fun!), and its introduction reads almost like a movie trailer. The book also advertises a link to the publisher's website, www.30minuteseder.com, which contains songs to download, and games and other things to make the seder interesting. There are a few assorted details about the order of the seder that are inaccurate, one example being the meal coming after the afikomen, when the afikomen, as the seder dessert, is supposed to be the last thing eaten. However, based on the simple yet meaningful and attention-grabbing way this haggadah is written and laid out, it is very possible that someone who was not planning to make a seder at all would see this and decide that it wasn't such a hassle after all. Recommended for Reform or general Jewish libraries and public libraries; also may be a good choice for children's sections.

Shoshana Hurwitz, Hurwitz Indexing, St. Louis, MO

Van Harn, Roger E., ed. *The Ten Commandments for Jews, Christians, and Others.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007. 236 p. \$22. (ISBN 978-0-80282-965-8).

This book serves a dual function. It is an attempt by serious religious thinkers to find the relevance and appropriate meaning of the Ten Commandments for contemporary America. At the same time, it is a fascinating exercise in interfaith dialogue. An essay representing one of the religions is devoted to each of the Commandments, and it is followed by a short rejoinder written by a member of the other faith.

When it comes to the contemporary messages of the Commandments, the two religions are usually in harmony. The negative impact that 21st-century technology can have on people's ability to contemplate and appreciate life is not in dispute, nor is there any discord over the central importance of the Holocaust to interpersonal and international ethics. A disagreement over whether homosexuality can be considered "normal" says more about different politics than about religious differences.

Religious differences do, however, show up in nearly every essay. The very numbering of the Commandments differs from the Jewish Bible to the Christian Old Testament. Other gaps, ranging from separate exegetical traditions to subtle nuances of inclusion, make it clear that this interfaith conversation is both enriching and tense.

Written in clear, accessible English, this book is suitable for a general reader interested in a relevant interpretation of the Ten Commandments.

Pinchas Roth, New York Public Library, NY

Weiner, Ellis, and Barbara Davilman. *How to Raise a Jewish Dog.* New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007. 165 p. \$12.99 (ISBN 978-0-31615-466-6).

Written by the fictional "Rabbis of the Boca Raton Theological Seminary," Rabbis Monica and Allan, this humorous book shows the reader (Jewish and non-Jewish alike) the Jewish way

of raising a dog. The rabbis use techniques they developed from “the things our parents had done in raising us as children and the life strategies we acquired in response to our upbringing.” Therefore, if you don’t find stereotyping of Jewish child-rearing amusing, don’t buy this book. (After all, Weiner and Davilman are the authors of *Yiddish with Dick and Jane*.) However, if you are willing to laugh at yourself, and maybe even your parents, then I recommend you read this book. I found it hysterical. The text is accompanied by photographs by Susan Burnstine illustrating the concepts, which are really very funny—I fell out of my chair laughing at the photo of Rabbi Monica “socializing” her dog. “Advanced Commands” include “If she starts talking about her son I’m going to have to kill myself and you’re going to have to find your own way home” and “Put on a sweater, I’m cold.” Diet and exercise, training and obedience, health, travel, and the older dog are all covered. Filled with charts, easy-to-read lists, and great photos, this book makes a wonderful gift to any dog lover. Recommended to all libraries that collect humor.

Suzanne Smailes, Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH

Weisberg, Chana. *One Baby Step at a Time: Seven Secrets of Jewish Motherhood*. Jerusalem: Urim publishers, 2007. 302 p. \$25.95. (ISBN 978-9-65524-001-6)

For those who can’t wait to read the book, Weisberg reveals her seven secrets under these categories: Learning to value our mothering accomplishments, Learning to let God help you out, Figuring out what we need to be happy, Learning to value our supporting and nurturing role, Learning to value our role in the home, Choosing to grow from hardship, and Don’t worry, be hopeful. If it seems that the list focuses more on the mother’s attitude than on concrete parenting techniques, you’re right.

While there are certainly joys in being a parent, there are also many times of boredom, frustration, seemingly endless repetition, pain, and fear. Weisberg’s essays deal with the day-to-day issues of motherhood. She stresses the need to find meaning in everyday tasks and to find balance among children, spouse, household chores, God, and most importantly, self.

Some readers might be put off by her common refrain to rely on God, but there are plenty of suggestions to help non-religious parents as well. She points out the importance of parenting classes, spouse, friends, and community. While written from the point of view of an Orthodox stay-at-home mother in Israel, her stories and tips could help parents in a variety of other situations.

Weisberg acknowledges that our priorities and perspective change over the years and that our parenting skills and styles change also. She offers suggestions and techniques that worked for her and in other essays, gives different strategies that worked for other parents. Recommended for synagogue and community libraries.

Sheryl Stahl, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles, CA

Weisblum, Moshe Pinchas. *The Hermeneutics of Medieval Jewish Thought: Understanding the Linguistic Codes of Rashi and Nahmanides*. With a preface by David B. Levy. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2007. 264 p. \$109.95 (ISBN 978-0-77345-288-6).

Rashi wrote commentaries on the Bible and on the Talmud, which are still heavily used today. His style is economical and has

given rise to a number of super commentaries. Dr. Weisblum has chosen to examine Rashi’s use of “klomar” (that is). He concludes that “klomar” is used in a number of different contexts, but its function is to draw attention to and emphasize the part of the sentence that follows.

The second part of the book starts with words used by Nahmanides to divide the explanatory parts of his commentary from the mysticism. The author then devotes approximately half of the book to a discussion of Nahmanides’ mystical beliefs.

The title is misleading and does not mention this analysis! The font used suggests that the book was reproduced from a Microsoft Word document. The proofreading is unprofessional: “understnding” on the book’s binding, for example. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein appears on p. 80. On p. 81 he has become, Rabbi Fienstein. A table on page 113 includes a system error note in bold type: “Error bookmark not defined,” etc. etc. A poorly produced book, but the analysis of Nahmanides’ mystical approach may be of interest to some readers.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Wolfe, Marjorie Gottlieb. *Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lover = Yidish far Libhobers fun Hint un Kats*. Illustrated by Earl W. Engelman. Syosset, NY: Malka Publications, 2007. 129 p. \$13.00 (ISBN 978-0-6151-6799-2).

Pet lovers interested in Yiddish may find this collection of cartoons, photographs, anecdotes, and Yiddish sayings related to dogs and cats amusing. The author captions each illustration with a transliterated Yiddish aphorism. She also has a list of dog obedience commands in Yiddish and a pet glossary that includes terms such as *barkaholic* (a dog that will not stop barking) and *cataclysm* (any great upheaval in a cat’s life). This may be a cute gift for someone who enjoys animals, but it is not a necessary purchase for libraries.

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

The Zohar. Translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt. Pritzker edition, Volume 4. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007. 576 p. (ISBN 978-0-80475-712-6).

The Pritzker translation of the Zohar is a major, ongoing project of Judaic scholarship. Its most prominent feature, of course, is a meaningful, poetic rendering of the dense mystical tradition. Taking advantage of modern technology, the edition is accompanied by a website containing the edition of the Aramaic text upon which the translation is based. Daniel Matt maintains a close relationship with Israeli scholars conducting critical research on the Zohar’s textual development, and the results of that research are hidden in the footnotes of Pritzker’s edition.

The main body of the Zohar is essentially a midrash on the Pentateuch. This volume covers the first part of Exodus through the Ten Commandments. These are profound biblical episodes, and the Zohar exploits them to the fullest. This familiar structure, however, hides surprises, such as deeply conflicted discussions of the religious stature of Ishmael (and, by implication, of Islam) and an entire treatise on physiognomy, the divination of character from people’s external characteristics.

The text is almost entirely in English, with occasional Hebrew words to facilitate the understanding of the Zohar’s many

puns and word-games. Extensive footnotes supply the Sefirot to which various concepts correspond—a courtesy neglected by the original authors of the Zohar—and references to a wide range of commentaries and academic studies. An important reference work for any English-language Jewish library.

Pinchas Roth, New York Public Library, NY

SOUND RECORDINGS

Ahuvatel, Miriam. *Hassidic Shabbat Songs & Nigunim of Karlin*. Jerusalem: M. Ahuvatel/CD Baby, 2007. 1 compact disc (79:10). \$16.95.

Miriam Ahuvatel serves up a musical feast for the Sabbath Table in this loving tribute to her father and his Hassidic heritage. The album contains Shabbat songs, Niggunim, prayers, and instrumentals.

From the upbeat instrumental klezmer of the first track (“Ye-varekh”) to the *a cappella* “Yah Ekhof” which ends the album, the melodies evoke a beloved musical heritage. Ahuvatel’s voice is deep, silken, and clear. The album comes with lyrics in Hebrew, English, and English transliteration to encourage those listening to sing along.

This would be a wonderful introduction to anyone not already familiar with Hassidic music. It will also delight those in whom these melodies echo from childhood. Some of the melodies, though clearly traditional, have been modernized by Ahuvatel to include elements of jazz, and klezmer.

Maxine Schackman, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Bender, Brian and Little Shop of Horas. *Eyn Velt*. Shutesbury, MA: Face the Music, 2008. 1 compact disc (65:43) \$15.00.

Brian Bender has created a clever instrumental album that will delight many listeners. The back of the album cover tells us that we will be hearing “original and traditional Jewish melodies blended with Latin, Caribbean, African and Middle Eastern rhythms,” and that is exactly what we get. Each song meanders through continents as it intertwines traditional Jewish melodies with global musical elements. The results can be quite interesting and surprising. On the other hand, one could argue that the music is neither fish nor fowl and that traditionalists could take objection to the insertion of such foreign elements.

Nevertheless, I found this album to be delightfully easy to listen to and intriguing in its message, i.e., that Jewish music is broad enough to encompass the world. The cover art is beautifully expressive of the content of the album.

Maxine Schackman, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Herzog, Todd. *Proverbs*. Chandler, AZ: VoxArt Music, 2007. 1 compact disc \$15.00.

With a mainstream pop sound, Todd Herzog attempts, in his second CD, to bridge the gap between organized religion and the undefined spiritual sense awash in the world. Although many of the lyrics are taken from Jewish sources, there is not much in the songs that is distinctively Jewish and could compare in a broad sense to any religion’s inspirational music. Nevertheless, Herzog’s goal in producing this CD is well meant, and from a sneak peek at material that may be on his next album—more

distinctively Jewish—it is evident that his career will take him in many directions. Very enjoyable to listen to and recommended for all types of libraries.

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

Kontorovich, Alex. *Deep Minor*. St. Louis Park, MN: Chamsa Records, 2007. 1 compact disc (54:19). \$15.00.

Since John Zorn’s Masada Quartet debuted in 1993, many recordings attempting to fuse jazz and klezmer have appeared, with varying results. It’s safe to say that Alex Kontorovich’s *Deep Minor* is an unqualified success. Saxophonist/clarinetist Kontorovich, a Russian-American professor of mathematics, composed all of the tunes, touching upon New Orleans and Cuban jazz, tango, heavy metal, and bluegrass, but never wandering too far from a foundation of klezmer and post-bop jazz.

While Kontorovich is a capable leader and an excellent soloist, the real star of the show is banjoist/guitarist Brandon Seabrook. His percussive, aggressive accompaniment, in the tradition of the great jazz pianist Thelonious Monk, is compelling, yet it never draws attention away from the soloist. Also like Monk, his improvisations are angular, dissonant and remarkably cliché-free, yet they always contain a strong connection to the original melody. Bassist Reuben Radding and drummer Aaron Alexander, both staples of the New York avant-garde and Jewish music scenes, are as solid a rhythm section as anyone could ask for, driving the music forward and always tightly in sync with the rest of the band.

This disc is highly recommended for jazz and Jewish music collections. One can only hope to hear much more from this ensemble in the near future.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Putumayo. *Putumayo Presents Israel*. New York, NY: Putumayo World Music, 2007. 1 compact disc \$14.98.

Israel, a CD produced by Putumayo World Music, is a delightful compilation of new Israeli music from a variety of artists. It is an excellent example of the diversity of Israel’s population, which includes immigrants from all over the world, reflected in their music, incorporating influences from a variety of styles including reggae, pop/rock, folk, jazz, and African. The liner notes even include a Middle Eastern recipe, and a portion of CD profits go to an Israeli charity. Highly recommended, especially for those libraries with a collection of world music.

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

Sarah Aroeste Band. *Puertas*. New York: Aroeste Music, 2007. 1 compact disc (45 min.) \$15.99

In their second release, *Puertas*, the Sarah Aroeste Band, places traditional Ladino music into the context of contemporary rock music. Given the thoroughly modern arrangements, it is sometimes hard to believe that nearly all of the songs on *Puertas* are traditional Sephardic tunes.

In addition to the standard rock band instrumentation, there is pervasive use of the oud, played by Yoel Ben-Simhon. The use of this Middle Eastern instrument, the precursor to the Western lute, never seems out of place. It provides counterpoint, both literally, as well as perhaps metaphorically, as a Mizrachi voice in dialogue with the Western and Sephardic elements in the music.

Unlike so many recordings, the album is not over-produced. There is a feeling of intimacy, as if the listener were hearing the band live at a small club.

"Thessaloniki," the only song sung in English, is also the only real miss on the album. A cover of the jazz standard "Afro Blue" with new lyrics, it is the song to leave off when you transfer the album to your mp3 player. The album is rounded off by an incredible remix of *Puertas* by Israeli-American dj Tamir Muskat. While stylistically out of place, this dance remix, reminiscent of world fusion groups like the UK's TransGlobal Underground and Muskat's own group, Balkan Beat Box is, on its own, well worth the price of the disc. *Puertas* is a solid album that would be a great addition to Sephardic and rock music collections.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Yood. *Passin'over*. Beit Shemesh, Israel: TightRope Productions, 2007. 1 compact disc \$12.97.

If you like classic rock and blues, you will love Yood's debut album *Passin'over*. A listener might be a little disappointed at the lack of real Jewish content in this CD other than the song titles and look of its long-bearded members, whose sound is closer to ZZ Top than Matisyahu (one of their claimed influences). Even after a careful examination of the lyric sheet, one would be hard-pressed to find more than a vague connection to Judaism in many of the songs. Nevertheless, Yood, whose other influences include Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Led Zeppelin, Cream, and Bob Dylan, is considered by many to be one of the best bands in new Jewish music. This CD would make an excellent addition to any general library music collection; not as much for collections that are specifically Jewish.

Shoshana Hurwitz, Hurwitz Indexing, St. Louis, MO

Zorn John. *Volac*. Performed by Erik Friedlander, violoncello. New York: Tzadik, 2007. 1 compact disc (41:24). \$16.00. TZ 7363.

In the early 1990s, avant-garde composer John Zorn began the Masada songbook, hundreds of melodies tunes based on the *Misheberakh* and *Ahavah Rabah* modes, the melodic basis of Eastern-European Jewish music. In 2004, he composed a second Masada volume, *The Book of Angels*, and has since been showcasing a wide variety of musicians performing this material. *Volac* is the eighth volume in a series of recordings of these works.

On this disc, we hear solo 'cello interpretations by Erik Friedlander. In addition to his own solo projects and bands such as Topaz, Broken Arm, and Chimera, Friedlander is a member of two ensembles devoted to performing the Masada songbook, the Masada String Trio and Bar Kokhba. A solo instrumental album, performing a repertoire specifically based on a limited melodic vocabulary, might be a recipe for monotony in the hands of a lesser interpreter. This is far from the case. Friedlander gives each piece its own individual character, fully exploiting the range of timbral possibilities inherent in his instrument.

One of Zorn's aims in the Masada songbook was to create a body of work that would be equally comfortable in the hands of a klezmer band, a punk rock group, or a solo instrumentalist. In recordings like *Volac*, it becomes clear that he has succeeded.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Books And Audio Received

These titles will not be reviewed in the AJL Newsletter for reasons of space, scope, or date of publication. They are listed here as a courtesy to the publishers and a service to AJL readers. The materials themselves are donated to libraries.

Auerbach, Aaron. *Neverending Parenthood: Be a Mature Parent For Your Adult Child*. Jerusalem: Devora, 2008.

Balas, Egon. *Will to Freedom: A Perilous Journey Through Fascism and Communism*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008.

Blumberg, Arnold. *Zion Before Zionism, 1838-1880*. Jerusalem: Devora, 2007.

Brodzki, Bella. *Can These Bones Live? Translation, Survival and Cultural Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Coffey, Tom. *Blood Alley*. New Milford, Conn.: Toby Press, 2008.

Goldstein, Warren. *Defending the Human Spirit: Jewish Law's Vision for a Moral Society*. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2006.

Harington, Donald. *Farther Along*. New Milford, Conn.: Toby Press, 2008.

Isay, Jane. *Walking on Eggshells: Navigating the Delicate Relationship Between Adult Children and Parents*. New York: Flying Dolphin Press, 2007.

Lippincott, Robin. *In the Meantime*. New Milford, Conn.: Toby Press, 2007.

Monda, Antonio. *Do You Believe?: Conversations on God and Religion*. New York: Vintage Books, 2007.

Nussbaum, Martha C. *Liberty of Conscience: In Defense of America's Tradition of Religious Equality*. New York: Basic Books, 2008.

Paretsky, Sara. *Bleeding Kansas*. New York: Putnam, 2008.

Quddus, Marguerite Elias. *Cachee*. Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2007.

Reinhartz, Henia. *Fragments de ma Vie*. Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2007.

Salem, Jack. *Heirs to the Pushcart Fortune*. Baltimore: PublishAmerica, 2006.

Shtibel, Rachel. *Le Violone*. Shtibel, Adam. *Témoignage d'un Enfant*. Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2007.

Steinberg, Jonny. *Sizwe's Test: A Young Man's Journey Through Africa's Aids Epidemic*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008.

Ta-Shma, Israel M. *Creativity and Tradition: Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Scholarship, Literature and Thought*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Wills, Lawrence M., ed. *Ancient Jewish Novels: An Anthology from the Greco-Roman Period*. New Milford, Conn.: Toby Press, 2007.

Wolf, Howard R. *Far-Away Places: Lessons in Exile*. Jerusalem: Artzy, 2007.

Yad Vashem Studies. Vol. 35: 1-2. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007.

Letter to the Editor

It is with some diffidence and reluctance that I write to you about a very negative review appearing in your newsletter by Daniel Scheide of Florida Atlantic University of my book *Richard and Adolf: Did Richard Wagner Incite Adolf Hitler to commit the Holocaust?* Scheide writes 'Nicholson reports, without comment, that Hitler possessed the Spear of Longinus which was used to "pierce Christ's side on the cross". This unquestioning acceptance of Christian mythology is bit surprising coming from an unambiguously Jewish publisher such as Gefen.'

Not only is there comment on the spear but it is a central theme in the book. This self-same spear appears in *Parsifal*, Wagner's opera and helps cure Amfortas of his wound. Its significance arises from the fact that the central female role Kundry is a feminine version of the Wandering Jew. She saw Christ on the cross and laughed—so Wagner tells us in the libretto of *Parsifal*. Wagner then explains how she must die for this and symbolically all Jewry. *Parsifal* is Wagner's most anti-Semitic opera and the book explores in fascinating details this theme. A number of Wagner's operas deal with this same theme of the Wandering Jew, including *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser*. *The Ring of the Nibelungs* is a vast four part opera that illustrates how the Nibelungs (Jewish stereotypes) must yield to the Herrenvolk golden boy proto-Nazi, Siegfried.

All these operas illustrate in dramatic form Wagner's political and racist message that the Jews must be destroyed. When this is linked to his polemical writings the picture becomes even clearer. He did say after all 'One day the German people will not shrink from their sacred task of finding a final solution to the Jewish question.' That amongst other passages was to find such a resonance with Adolf Hitler.

Scheide claims my book has 'cobbled together sensationalist passages from a handful of popular sources' and then recommends no library purchase the book. The cobbling to which he refers took 15 years to research and includes more than 1500 footnotes and an extensive bibliography. He says the 'volume of literature documenting his influence on Hitler is staggering' and yet mentions no single book that covers the same ground.

All the other reviews of the book have been full of praise of the scholarship and lucidity of the argument. As a non-Jew and Wagner lover I was mystified for many years at the ban on Wagner in Israel. Once I explored the depths of the anti-Semitism I changed my mind dramatically. I then spent all those years

painstakingly setting the record straight. It seems such a tragedy that one review can consign this learning to the dustbin. Hitler ordered that all Jewish books be burnt - is the modern equivalent that they be banned from all libraries?

Christopher Nicholson

Daniel Scheide responds

Before addressing Mr. Nicholson's specific complaints, I would like to say that I think that a dialogue of this nature can be very valuable. Given the enormous amount of work that goes into writing a book, it is far too easy for a reviewer to casually dismiss a work.

That being said, I have to say that I stand by my review. Upon reflection, I regret my use of the words "cobbled" and "handful." Mr. Nicholson did a tremendous amount of research on this book. My critique is that he did not seem to evaluate his sources critically, nor bring anything new to the discussion. Many of his sources, particularly ones that he relied heavily upon, are very flawed. I regret that due to space constraints, I did not mention in my review that the book was an enjoyable read. However, that is not the only criterion used to judge a work. My responsibility as a reviewer is to evaluate the reliability of the information presented as well as its usefulness in a library's collection.

In retrospect, I think my phrase "Nicholson reports, without comment, that Hitler possessed the Spear of Longinus" was unclear. Indeed, this is a crucial idea in the book. What I meant was that Mr. Nicholson unquestioningly accepted the legend of the Spear of Longinus as historical fact. For some, this may not be an issue, but this is a problematic assumption for academic and Jewish audiences, the primary readership of the *Newsletter*.

I stand by my assertion that the influence of Wagner on Hitler has been the subject of a great deal of research, both scholarly and popular. Peter Viereck's *Metapolitics* examined this relationship back in 1941, and in recent years, we've seen *The Ring of Myths: The Israelis, Wagner and the Nazis* by Na'ama Sheffi, *Wagner's Hitler* by Joachim Kohler, *Richard Wagners "Das Judentum in der Musik": eine kritische Dokumentation als Beitrag zur Geschichte des Antisemitismus*, by Jens Malte Fischer, and the work of Paul Lawrence Rose, to name but a few of the better known studies.

We all have limited resources. The purpose of our reviews is not to issue approbations or bans, but to provide a context to help our colleagues prioritize their collection development decisions. And, at the end of the day, this is merely my opinion.

Be-Kol Ram: Focus on Jewish Music

DANIEL SCHEIDE

John Zorn's parents had been determined to raise him as a blank slate, with no connection to his Jewish heritage. In the early 1990s, at the forefront of the downtown New York avant-garde scene, he decided to consider his Jewish identity. He had recently curated a Jewish music festival in Munich, where he had premiered his chamber work *Kristallnacht*, and was looking for a new direction for his work. At this point in his career, he had composed game pieces, explored every musical genre he could find, and fused free jazz and hard-core punk rock with a jump cut style heavily influenced by cartoon music. Where could he go from there? He decided to write melodies.

He gave himself a challenge: to write one hundred melodies in a year. He set a few ground rules for himself. First, the tunes would not be for any specific instrumentation; they could be played by any instrument. Second, they could not exceed five staves of music. Third, they would be limited to the two modes, or scales, associated with Eastern-European Jewish music, the *Misheberakh* and *Ahavah Rabah* scales.

He wrote one hundred tunes in a year, followed by another hundred the following year. This collection of tunes was called the Masada songbook. His goal was to create a body of Jewish music that would be equally comfortable in the hands of a klezmer band, a punk rock group, or a solo instrumentalist. At first, this music was chiefly performed by Zorn with his Masada Quartet, a jazz ensemble modeled after the Ornette Coleman

Quartet, which had pioneered free jazz in the 1960s. Zorn organized other ensembles to tackle the Masada songbook from other perspectives. Bar Kokhba was influenced by lounge music, Electric Masada resembled jazz-rock fusion groups of the 1970s, and the Masada String Trio explored quieter chamber-jazz.

It was not very long before artists from every point on the musical spectrum were working with the Masada songbook, from the heavy metal band Fantômas to renowned jazz artists Medeski, Martin & Wood and Bill Frisell, to Japanese rock groups such as the Ruins and Cibo Matto, to chamber ensembles and klezmer bands.

By 2004, it seemed that Zorn's interest in Jewish music was beginning to wane. As usual, Zorn defied expectations, and within a few short months, he composed over three hundred new Masada tunes, calling this second volume of melodies *The Book of Angels*. To date, there have been ten recordings of this material, including by the Cracow Klezmer Band, jazz pianist Uri Caine, avant-garde rock group Secret Chiefs 3, and several of Zorn's own ensembles.

A 2006 MacArthur fellow, John Zorn's influence of contemporary Jewish music has been significant. His parents had sought to keep Judaism and Jewish culture from shaping him, but instead, John Zorn has helped to shape modern Jewish culture.



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