

## Learn @ Your Library: Librarians Are Teachers Too

SUSAN DUBIN

Unfortunately, libraries and librarians have been largely overlooked as key members of the team responsible for our children's education.

Who is your librarian anyway?

- A) Checkerin and checkerout
- B) Book shelper and straightener
- C) The sssher
- D) A valuable teacher

If you answered "D" you are correct. Why should library teachers be cornerstones of elementary education today?

If the children in your school were asked, they would answer that their library teacher introduces them to exciting people, helps them experience great adventures, and stretches their imaginations through a love of books and a quest for knowledge. Their librarian is the person who teaches them how to appreciate literature and to locate, evaluate, and assimilate information.

First and foremost your librarian's objective is to teach students to appreciate the resources available to them in print and non-print formats. We all want students to enjoy reading for pleasure and to find research a great adventure. Librarians reach this objective by:

- Sharing their enthusiasm for books and research
- Facilitating the discovery of great books through the use of book talks
- Rewarding positive reading behavior through reading contests
- Promoting research through class and group projects
- Finding a student's on-switch by matching the perfect book with each child's interests and reading level

Enthusiasm for literature is contagious! Librarians teach and continually reinforce techniques for locating information. Whether it is instructing students in using a library catalog (online or card), the reference collection, or the Internet, librarians are experts and are eager to share their knowledge. Students sometimes ask if we librarians know everything. The answer is, "Of course not! But we do know how to look it up."

Nowadays finding information is not the problem. There is an abundance, indeed, an over-abundance of information out there. The main thrust of library teaching today is helping students learn how to evaluate the information they find and decide what is valid and valuable.

Finding information in itself is meaningless unless it can be used. That is why librarians work closely with classroom teachers and administrators to tie research projects into the curriculum. The most successful teaching helps students in the real world. So part of a librarian's job as teacher is to help students organize the information they have found into a useful presentation. That presentation can take the form of a research paper, a multimedia presentation, a graph, a computerized presentation or whatever has been assigned.

It is important that library skills be taught using the classroom curriculum so that these skills are perceived as necessary tools to accomplish overall educational objectives.

A typical day in our libraries consists of a half-hour to fifty-minute directed lesson for as many as seven different classes.

Every child is instructed in using a classification system (like the Dewey Decimal System or Weine or Elazar), introduced to different types of literature, and taught to use print and multimedia resources. Small-group and individual research time is provided as needed.

During recess and lunch, children visit the library voluntarily to participate in any number of activities: answering a question of the week, helping shelve, process, or straighten books for the library club; using the puppet theater; listening to a story or music at the listening center; using the computers; playing a library game; reading; meeting an author or storyteller; checking in or out books; or just visiting the librarian.

As library instructors, we interact with all the children and staff. Unlike classroom teachers who see one new group of children every year, we see students through all their years at our schools. That means we can really observe each child grow and develop.

It has been said that teachers touch the future. Librarians act as the bridge between that future and the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the past as it has been collected. Librarians are the teachers who show students how to find, evaluate, and use the wisdom that is shelved in their own libraries and the libraries of the world. In a sound bite world, how do we get children to want to read? The answer is to make books and libraries the exciting foundation upon which to build a strong educational experience. That is our goal as library teachers.



**Librarian  
on  
Board!**

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The *AJL Newsletter* (Irene Levin-Wixman z"l, founding editor) is published quarterly by the Association of Jewish Libraries to inform members about association activities and issues related to Judaica libraries. Receipt of the newsletter is one of the benefits of membership. Annual dues are \$50 for individuals or institutions.

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## President's Message

SUSAN DUBIN

AJL President Laurel Wolfson is nursing her ailing mother in Louisville, so I am writing the "president's column" in her stead. We all wish her mother a *refuah shlemah* and hope that Laurel will again pick up pen and paper (or her computer keyboard) to share her thoughts with us in the next Newsletter.

Now that the holiday rush is over, there are many tasks for AJL to accomplish. The work of the association is carried out by the various committees that are listed on our web site. Many committees are looking for new members. Please see which committee is of interest to you and contact the chair to volunteer!

In recent weeks, there has been a flurry of letters about libraries being down-sized and library positions being eliminated. Unfortunately, this is not unique to the Jewish library world, but seems to be an issue for libraries in general. Laurel will appoint a task force to explore the situation and present some recommendations for action to the council at its mid-winter meeting. It is the official position of the Association of Jewish Libraries that libraries are a vital part of all institutions of learning, and that libraries should be staffed by competent, knowledgeable, well-trained librarians or library educators. The AJL Professional Development and Education Committee offers courses at the convention, regional workshops, and other venues for professional development. It is hoped that the new task force will suggest ways to inform the administrators and funders of our institutions that libraries and librarians are essential in this information-rich age.

As I write this column, the fires in southern California are still raging. Concern for those people who have been displaced and any libraries that have suffered damage is in all of our hearts. We hope that those affected will find safety and help.

Plans for the 2008 convention in Cleveland are well under way. Look for details of what to expect in upcoming newsletters and make your plans now to attend what promises to be an outstanding event. I look forward to seeing you all there!

### Newsletter Welcomes Daniel Scheide

Daniel Scheide, a catalog librarian at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton has joined the *AJL Newsletter* staff. He will be co-editor of the adult review section, along with Merrily Hart. Newsletter readers will have noticed Daniel's many contributions to the section. In addition, he recently began writing the back-page column on Jewish music for library collections.

## Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund

YELENA LUCKERT

The Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund provides stipends for AJL members to attend their first AJL Convention. Please think of this fund as you remember loved ones or commend others' achievements.

This is a wonderful way to remember your colleagues and friends at times of sorrow or times of celebration. Your donations will be very much appreciated by first-time attendees to future AJL annual conventions. Recent donations were sent by:

- Libby White, in memory of Charlotte Schoen, mother of Debbie Stern
- George & Diane Rauchwerger, in honor of Fred Isaac's 60th Birthday

Please consider giving to this good cause. Send your check to: Doris Orenstein Memorial Fund, c/o Yelena Luckert, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. For more information, please call 301-879-7035 or e-mail yluckert@umd.edu.

## 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 Web site at [www.jewishlibraries.org](http://www.jewishlibraries.org).



# AJL Scholarship Fund

ELLEN SHARE

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, send donations in memory of a deceased, 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 family.

The following donations were made to the AJL Scholarship Fund between June and October 2007:

- From Lynn Feinman in memory of Debbie Stern's mother Charlotte Schoen
- From Rachel K. Glasser in memory of Debbie Stern's mother, Charlotte Schoen, in memory of Zahavah Karmon, mother of Amalia Warshenbrot, and in memory of Dorothy Hirsch, mother of David Hirsch
- From Sarah Barnard in memory of Debbie Stern's mother, Charlotte Schoen
- From Pearl Berger in memory of Debbie Stern's mother, Charlotte Schoen
- From Roger H. Kohn in honor of Bonnie Shapiro
- From Shoshanah Seidman in memory of Dr. Stanley Sturman, father of Laurel Wolfson

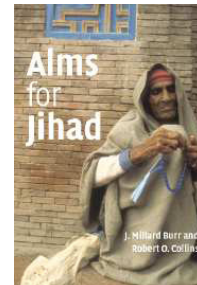
Please complete the form below and send it, along with your donation, to Sarah M. Barnard, Serials Librarian, Hebrew Union College-Klau Library, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220.

|                                   |       |
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| Name of Person(s) to receive card | _____ |
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# Keeping Current

LIBBY K. WHITE

In 2006 Cambridge University Press published *Alms for Jihad: Charity and Terrorism in the Islamic World* by J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins. This title was one of many on the subject that were ordered by the Baltimore Hebrew University's Joseph Meyerhoff Library. In the months following its publication, *Alms for Jihad* became a center of controversy. In Britain, a libel claim was filed against the title's contents. Khalid bin Mahfouz, a Saudi banker, charged that he had been defamed. The authors wrote that Mahfouz had financed terrorism in the Sudan and elsewhere in the 1990s.



Commentators have observed that British libel laws are much more stringent than those in the United States. In any case, a settlement was reached between Cambridge University Press and the claimant. The press agreed to make available printed sheets of corrections and to "pulp" remaining unsold copies. The publisher asked US libraries to remove *Alms for Jihad* from their shelves. Despite such demands, Cambridge University Press appeared to acknowledge that US libraries were beyond British legal jurisdiction.

*American Libraries* for October, 2007 printed excerpts from the American Library Association's Office of Intellectual Freedom blog: "Unless there is an order from a U.S. court, the British settlement is unenforceable in the United States, and libraries are under no legal obligation to return or destroy the book ... it is the library's property to do with as it pleases. Given the intense interest in the book, the desire of readers to learn about the controversy first hand, we recommend that U.S. libraries keep the book available for users."

The controversy sent me to the BHU Library shelves to locate *Alms for Jihad*. It was not in its designated place. A little investigation revealed that *Alms for Jihad* had been checked out some time ago and never returned.

## IN MEMORIAM

Frances Amitay Abramson, a long-time AJL member, passed away on August 10, 2007. Frances was involved in the founding of the Capital Area Chapter in 1974, while serving as librarian of the Washington Hebrew Congregation. She was an alumna of Brooklyn College and Hunter College, and received an MS in science librarianship from Columbia University. From 1981 until her death, Frances was a bibliographer for the Kennedy Institute for Ethics at Georgetown. In 1983 She became curator of Georgetown's Max M. and Marjorie B. Kampelman Collection of Jewish Ethics.

# Chapter Chatter

TOBY ROSSNER

A note from Chapter Relations co-chairs Irene Seff and Roz Reisner: No chapter? If you are interested in reaching out to other Jewish librarians in your area, please e-mail Irene (Irene@theseffs.net) or Roz (roz@thereisners.net).

## Michigan Chapter (AJL-MI)

Submitted by Eileen Polk

The Michigan Chapter is sad to say good-bye to Rachel Kamin, librarian at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield. Rachel and her husband are relocating to Chicago to start new careers. Rachel will become the preschool liaison for the Des Plaines (Illinois) Public Library. Rachel became librarian at Temple Israel after receiving her graduate degree at the University of Michigan in 1997. Under her leadership the temple has offered children and adult book clubs, two book fairs a year, and many other programs. Rachel has served as chapter president for two terms and is currently on the chapter board and chairs the Sydney Taylor Award Committee. We will miss Rachel and wish her and her family the best of luck in the future.

## Greater Cleveland Chapter (AJL-GCC)

Submitted by Andrea Davidson and Linda Silver

Chapter members compiled two lists of notable books and media (one for adults and one for children) in celebration of Jewish Book Month. The lists are distributed at our Jewish Book Month Tea and at the JCC Book Fair, and are posted on the AJL website. The Jewish Book Month lists look better and better, thanks to the quality editing of Wendy Wasman and to funding for professional printing from Kent State Libraries and Media Services. This year the children's list features a photo of Andi Davidson telling stories to children at The Temple-Tifereth Israel and the adult list features Merrily Hart at her job at Siegal College Library.

Our guest at the Jewish Book Month Tea, Ann Redisch Stamper, author of *Something for Nothing* and *Schlimazal and the Remarkable Stone of Pohost*, spoke about Jewish folklore. In conjunction with her visit, the Cleveland Chapter compiled and distributed *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore for Children of All Ages*, a multi-page, illustrated booklist. This list is now available in the bibliography bank on the AJL website.

In another auspicious publishing event, Linda Silver's *The Jewish Values Finder*, published by Neal-Schuman, is about to be released. It is available at Amazon and will be sold at AJL's convention in Cleveland. The book extends and enhances Linda's Jewish Valuesfinder, on the web at [www.ajljewish-values.org](http://www.ajljewish-values.org). In October Merrily Hart, editor of adult book reviews for the *AJL Newsletter*, reviewed Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policeman's Union* for The Temple-Tifereth Israel Library Literary Club. Many AJL-GCC members attended.

Planning for the 2008 AJL convention is in full swing. The planning committee, co-chaired by Andrea Davidson and Wendy Wasman, includes Merrily Hart, Jean Lettofsky, Bonnie Shapiro, and Linda Silver. Fred Isaac, AJL's national

convention chair, traveled to Cleveland to get an update. Jean Lettofsky, AJL's national fundraising chair, is working to raise convention funds. We have already received several generous grants, including a substantial anonymous gift. Other AJL chapters have been offered the opportunity for convention sponsorships; this is one way that smaller chapters can participate in a national convention. News about the convention is located at [www.ajlcleveland2008.blogspot.com](http://www.ajlcleveland2008.blogspot.com).

## Capital Area Chapter (AJL-CAC)

Submitted by Yelena Luckert

On October 11 Jasmin Nof and Yelena Luckert welcomed chapter members to the University of Maryland Libraries, where they gave a tour and talked about their collections and services. Chapter members attended the five events offered by the University of Maryland during the visit of the famous Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko on Oct. 25-27.

## Southern California Chapter (AJLSC)

Submitted by Paul Miller

We are proud that 23 AJLSC members attended the AJL Convention in Scottsdale, Arizona. Seven made presentations: Ellen Cole, Susan Dubin, David Hirsch, Susan March, Harriet Rochlin, Sheryl Stahl, and Yaffa Weisman. We are proud that AJLSC is well-represented on the AJL Council, with Susan Dubin, Ronda Rose, Abigail Yasgur, Sue Greening, Rick Burke, and Fred Isaac all holding elected and appointed positions. We are already looking forward to working on the national convention in Los Angeles in 2012.

We offer congratulations to: Ellen Cole, recipient of the AJL Fanny Goldstein Merit Award, presented at the 2007 AJL Convention; Hava Ben-Zvi, author of a new book, *The Bride Who Argued With God: Tales From The Treasury of Jewish Folklore* (iUniverse, 2006); and Michael Masliah, who served on the panel entitled *My Name is Sherlock Holmes* at the 38th annual Anthony Boucher Memorial Mystery Convention in Anchorage, Alaska.

Another bit of news: AJLSC is now a California nonprofit corporation, with both state and federal tax exempt status. We offer a big thank you to members Rick Burke and Barbara Leff for helping us achieve this milestone in our growth as an organization. Many interesting local programs are planned for this year, starting with a presentation by Dinah Berland, author of *Hours of Devotion: Fanny Neuda's Book of Prayers for Jewish Women*. For more local events of interest and lots of resources, log on to the AJLSC website at [www.ajlsc.org](http://www.ajlsc.org).

## Florida West Coast Chapter (FWC-AJL)

Submitted by Sylvia Firschein

Our chapter's first meeting of the new year was held in Venice, Florida, on October 25. Librarians Carol Kast and Sheila Rosen arranged for local author Pieter Kohnstam to speak about his Holocaust memoir, *A Chance to Live: A Family's Journey to Freedom*. It is a memoir about his childhood life in Amsterdam (Anne Frank was his neighbor and sometime baby-sitter), his family's year-long flight from the Nazis (across Europe to Spain and then to Argentina),

and the people (Christians and Jews) who helped them. We in Sarasota are lucky to have so many writers among us, a number of whom are Jewish and writing books with Jewish content.

### **South Florida Chapter (SFAJL)**

*Excerpted from the October 2007 SFAJL Newsletter "Headlines and Footnotes"*

In the last issue of the *AJL Newsletter's* Chapter Chatter, SFAJL president Heidi Estrin described the chapter's new idea for publishing *Headlines & Footnotes, The SFAJL Chapter Newsletter*. Heidi wrote, "The Guest Editor Program ... will give chapter members the opportunity to take charge of a single issue. The guest editor gets to pick the stories and pictures to be included and can even experiment with the layout." I am happy to report that the first guest-edited edition appeared in my mailbox several weeks ago, and I want to congratulate guest editors Judith Jagoda of David Posnack Hebrew Day School, and Edith Sherman of Weinbaum Yeshiva High School, who made it all happen. Kol HaKavod, ladies!

SFAJL members toured the Miami Jewish Museum's exhibit *Zap Pow Bam, Super Heroes in the Golden Age of Comics*, highlighting the Jewish influence on comic books, prior to their regular meeting at Touro College South on October 24. For those of you who will be visiting Miami in the cold months ahead, this exhibit continues until April 30, 2008.

Heidi Estrin wrote an article about the blogathon fundraiser she held for her Congregation B'nai Israel Library on November 21. Sponsorships were a minimum of \$18; \$36 bought a personal blog, and \$54 paid for a message and a photo. During the fundraiser, Heidi blogged for nine continuous hours, posting interviews, videos, quizzes, greetings, and words of wisdom from your favorite CBI "machers." Details are at [www.cbiboca.blogspot.com](http://www.cbiboca.blogspot.com).

### **Long Island Chapter (LI-AJL)**

*Submitted by Wendy Marx*

In order to let Long Island know who we are and what we do, we find it beneficial to partner with other Long Island Jewish groups. We've had shared meetings with local Hadassah chapters and the Suffolk Association of Jewish Educational Services. This year we are partnering with the Nassau/Queens Bureau of Jewish Education and the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County. We look forward to working with the Hofstra University Hillel in the near future.

To seek new members, every spring we present a program for public librarians, presenting new Jewish books with universal themes appropriate for the public libraries. We also represent ourselves at the Long Island Library Conference, held every May. It is a wonderful venue for us to reach public librarians.

The chapter newsletter has gone "high tech" and will be delivered exclusively by email henceforth. In an effort to promote meeting attendance, the chapter is offering a free yearly membership to any member who attends every meeting this year.

### **New York Metropolitan Area Chapter (AJL-NYMA)**

*Submitted by Rita Lifton*

NYMA's November conference, held at Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York, was devoted to the timely topic *Are you Relevant? Lobbying for Librarians and Libraries*. Coordinated by NYMA's new president, Leslie Monchar, the program's keynote speaker was New Jersey Library Association's librarian of the year and executive director of the Highlands Regional Library Cooperative, Joanne P. Roukens. Following Ms. Rouken's presentation, a focus group conducted by Philip Monchar, market researcher and focus group moderator, identified key talking points to transmit the value of libraries and their professionals. A tour of the recently-restored historic Temple Emanu-El sanctuary rounded out the day. Other NYMA activities being planned for the coming year include cataloging, reference, and school workshops as well as a spring conference.

NYMA's webmaster, Steven Bernstein, has added several innovations to the NYMA website. There is now a *Photo Gallery* of recent NYMA events, an *Articles of Interest* section, and extensive job listings for the tri-state area. In addition, one can subscribe to an RSS feed for up-to-the-minute information about positions as soon as they become available. The website also features a listing of NYMA events, past and present, with access to documentation from past events and the full-text of past issues of *NYMA News*. We invite all AJL members to peruse the NYMA website at [www.ajlnyma.org](http://www.ajlnyma.org).

# Have You Heard?

LIBBY K. WHITE



Late summer and early fall brought both joy and sorrow to the AJL family. Congratulations to Ellen Cole, who became the grandmother of twins and to Ronda Rose, whose son David was married. Condolences to Arna Schwarz, who lost her son, Robby.

Some AJLers began the new year in new positions. Among them are Helen Chronister, now at Tifereth Israel in Columbus, Ohio, and Rachel Kamin, who will become the preschool liaison librarian at the Des Plaines Illinois Public Library.

Lois Ruby's book, *Shanghai Shadows*, was honored as a Kansas Notable Book. Lois notes that the designation respects her native origins, although the title is definitely not about Kansas!

Anne Dublin's latest, *June Callwood: A Life of Action*, was nominated for the Golden Oak Award of the Ontario Library Association.

Peter Cole and Joan Snyder have been named MacArthur Fellows. The MacArthur Foundation makes \$500,000 awards to fellows over a five year period. Recipients are chosen for "exceptional merit and promise of continued creative work." The awards, which are unrestricted, are made to people, rather than to projects. Peter Cole is a poet, translator, and editor. He has translated the work of Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Shmuel HaNagid. Joan Snyder is an abstract painter. In 2005 the Jewish Museum in New York City presented a retrospective of Snyder's work.

A recent survey in *Chicago Magazine* listed the top ten novels about the "Second City." Nelson Algren's *The Man with the Golden Arm* and Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* were among those cited.

Grace Paley, acclaimed poet and short story writer, died on August 22 at her Vermont home. Paley called herself "a combative pacifist." Paley made a memorable presentation at AJL's convention in Cambridge in 2006. Paley's work includes *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* (1974) and *Later the Same Day* (1985). Grace Paley was poet laureate of the State of Vermont.

## SSC Accreditation

SUSAN GREENING

Librarians in the Synagogue, School, and Center (SSC) Division often struggle to make their libraries valued by their institutions. One way to increase your library's perceived value is by achieving AJL-SSC accreditation. Accredita-

tion indicates that your library has achieved a high level of excellence when measured against national standards. The accreditation process will help you gain valuable insight into your library's strengths and weaknesses.

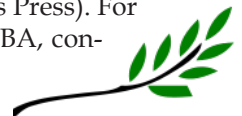
Accreditation is offered at both the *basic* and *advanced* levels. The accreditation is good for three years and may be renewed for another three years. The *basic* process requires you to establish policies, procedures, statistics, and programming that serve the needs of your patrons. The *advanced* process requires that you demonstrate effective policies, procedures, and collections that follow AJL's standards of excellence. Day school/media center libraries must submit a supplementary application for new accreditation or renewal.

Cara Sagal, the librarian at the Heschel Day School in Northridge, California has the following to say about the impact of accreditation on her library, "The accreditation as both a process and a product was very rewarding ... The process stimulated evaluation and improvement while providing a means of accountability to patrons and institution. The entire school community received the news of our successful accreditation with great pride. The accreditation reinforced the tremendous commitment of Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School to the Lainer Library."

For more information, contact Susan Greening, Accreditation Committee chair, by email at [sgreening@earthlink.net](mailto:sgreening@earthlink.net) or by snail mail at 9221 Castle Pines Dr. Austin, Texas 78717-3973. The deadline to apply is January 31, 2008. Complete information and forms can be found on the AJL web site at [www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/accreditation/accreditation.htm](http://www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/accreditation/accreditation.htm).

## Olive Branch Book Award

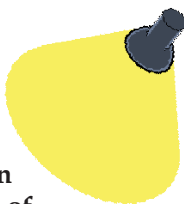
The Olive Branch Book Award (OBBA) is a new readers' choice award for Canadian Jewish children in grades 4 to 6. The OBBA program provides teachers, librarians, parents, and writers insight into young people's reading preferences. It affords an opportunity to honor and encourage authors who create fiction and nonfiction books that appeal to Jewish children. Most important, the OBBA program gives students the opportunity to vote for their favorite Jewish books. The winners of the 2007 Olive Branch Book Award are Kathy Kacer for *The Underground Reporters* (Second Story Press) and Lena Zehavi and Hagit Allon for *The Mystery of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (JPS). Canadian authors nominated for the 2008 award are Kathy Kacer for *Hiding Edith* (Second Story), Carol Matas for *The Whirlwind* (Orca), and Sheldon Oberman for *Solomon and the Ant* (Boyd's Mills Press). For more information about the OBBA, contact Anne Dublin at [adublin@holyblossom.org](mailto:adublin@holyblossom.org).



# Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY LINDA R. SILVER

## In The Spotlight



**Fagan, Cary. *My New Shirt*. Illus. by Dusan Petricic. Plattsburgh, NY: Tundra Books of Northern New York, 2007. 32pp. \$18.95. ISBN: 978-0-88776-715-9.**

Just what a boy wants for his birthday! Every year, David's dear bubbe gives him a stiff, white shirt, the kind that makes him look like "a little gentleman." "Try it on," his parents and bubbe tell him, and the snapshot pictures of David, an adored but homely child, doing so with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm, are hilarious. The humor of both the story and illustrations are amplified by the format, which augments the vintage feel of the story with the look of a scrapbook. When David's shirt "accidentally" falls out of the window and is grabbed by his dog, Pupik, he races through the neighborhood with it, past the Kuni Lemel Bagel Shop, the Sisters Katz Hair Salon, and the outdoor café where Mr. Zangwill sits every day eating a bowl of borscht. When the shirt is finally retrieved, Mom pronounces it a shmatte (rag) but bubbe cleans, dries, and irons it until—"ta-da"—it's as good as new. After it "falls" out of the window a second time and the chase is about to begin again, bubbe says to David, "How about, next year, I get you something different for your birthday?" Both Fagan, author of *The Market Wedding*, and Petricic, illustrator of *Bagels from Benny*, are known for their lilting humor and *My New Shirt* is chock full of it, all delivered without a single mention of the J word but brimming with Yiddishe tam and that particular Jewish warmth for children. For kindergarten–grade 4.

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

**Fleischman, Sid. *The Entertainer and the Dybbuk*. New York: Greenwillow/HarperCollins, 2008. 180pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-06-134445-9.**

The entertainer of the title is The Great Freddie, better known as Sergeant Freddie T. Birch, an ex-GI from Nebraska, who has remained in Europe after World War II and is now a second-rate ventriloquist. The dybbuk is Avrom Amos Poliakov, a young boy who was shot by the Nazis on August 2, 1944. He now seeks revenge for his death as well as for his sister Sulka's. When Avrom enters Freddie's body, it improves the act immensely. Freddie travels through Europe delighting audiences while he drinks water, speaks German, and tapes his lips. Freddie is troubled by his "possession" and seeks help from both a priest and a rabbi, but Avrom will not leave until he tracks down the Nazi who killed him, an SS officer now posing as a Jewish stamp dealer. (He even put a tattoo on his forearm.) Avrom uses Freddie's act to publicize the atrocities committed against himself and other children during the Holocaust, and he and Freddie end up in Arizona,

where the SS officer, still posing as a Jewish stamp dealer, is on trial for the murder of his assistant. Avrom jumps out of Freddie's body and into Junker-Strupp's, where he makes a full confession of this murder, as well as his war crimes and atrocities. Sid Fleischman, a Newbery medalist, has used his knowledge of ventriloquism, his sense of humor, and his humanity to craft an imaginative and haunting "non-Holocaust" Holocaust story. Although all the action takes place after the war, the sense of loss and tragedy echoes through the book. Avrom's wry humor adds dimension to his character, and his vengeance makes for a satisfying ending. The humor and suspense accelerate the pace, as do the travels through European cities and the United States. While the author's note gives historical background and the definition of "dybbuk," the descriptions of atrocities, especially done to children, make this a better choice for readers above the age of 14. It is highly recommended for all libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, *Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ*

*Editor's note:* Other reviews have recommended *The Entertainer* and *the Dybbuk* for fifth grade and up.

**Gershman, Sarah. *The Bedtime Sh'ma, A Good Night Book, Lailah Tov, Kriat Sh'ma al Hamitah*. Illus. by Kristina Swarner. Berkeley, CA: EKS, 2007. \$10.95. 32pp. ISBN: 978-0-939144-55-6.**

*The Bedtime Sh'ma* is a new good night book that will send children to sleep with a Jewish blessing. The content of the child's Sh'ma has been artfully worded and illustrated in this good night book that calms, reassures, and bestows God's blessings. This good night is larger than each individual child alone. Borrowing from the words of the Sh'ma itself, the book talks about how we treat others during the day and about forgiving those who may have hurt us. It talks about being under the loving protection of parents and of God. It shows the world in childlike majesty as a beautiful space where we live, wake, sleep, and grow. There is a quality of wonder imparted by the lovely illustrations. The clear but soft colors glow in shades of blue, white, rose, and gold. The artwork is done in what appears to be a multimedia combination of water-based paint and pastel chalk, giving a softened glow to the simple figures pictured. The sky and the clouds, the stars and the protecting hands, all have an aura of holiness. This is the way Jewish parents want their children's world to look when they put them to bed for a night of calm rest and comfort. The brief text on the verso of each page is printed in a large, simple font with a lot of white space around it. Four pages of text where the Sh'ma is written in both English and Hebrew are designed to reach across the pages in a graceful curve. Excerpts from the bedtime Sh'ma, alternating Hebrew and English, close the book, suggesting that the use of this book may be expanded to read and teach the Sh'ma as the child grows. There is a pleasant and calming CD that accompanies the book, with vocals by Rabbi Julia Adelman,

and guitar music by Benjamin Dreyfus. This gentle offering of Jewish values for the youngest sleepyheads belongs in synagogue, day school, and public library children's collections. Highly recommended for families with children ages 1-6 and for parents and grandparents.

*Naomi Morse, Silver Spring, MD*

**Heller, Linda.** *The Castle on Hester Street*. Illus. by Boris Kulikov. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007. 36pp. \$15.99. ISBN: 978-0-689-87434-5. Reviewed from an advance review copy.

From its first publication by the Jewish Publication Society in 1952, *The Castle on Hester Street* was a winner. So much so that it was awarded a Sydney Taylor Book Award. The 25th anniversary edition of the book, published by Simon and Schuster, replaces author Linda Heller's charming but dated pastel illustrations with Boris Kulikov's big, bright, and bouncy ones. They serve the plot well, adding dashes of whimsy and humor that reflect both grandpa's fanciful reminiscences and grandma's more realistic ones. Kulikov is known for his exaggerated proportions and quirky perspectives so he was the perfect choice to illustrate this delightful immigration story that juxtaposes exaggerated hope with practical determination. Highly recommended for all libraries serving children in grades 1-3, even if the earlier version is in the collection.

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

**Konigsberg, E. L.** *The Mysterious Edge of the Heroic World*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008. 240pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-1-4169-4972-0. Reviewed from an advance reader's copy.

The Nazis were quick to accuse everyone and everything but themselves of degeneracy, including modern art and music, which they termed "entartete" or "degenerate." Artists, often Jewish, who fell into this category included Modigliani, Picasso, and Chagall, Berg, Hindemith, and Schoenberg. What does this have to do with a novel for younger teens set in modern-day Florida? It is a pivotal element in the plot about an edgy friendship between two adolescent boys and their discovery of a lost—or stolen—painting. The plot is complex and the characterization is even more so, with several eccentric adults playing important roles. As with most of the books by this highly talented writer, much is suggested and less is revealed directly, involving readers in a process of discovery as quirky and as challenging as the one that Amadeo and Will embark upon when they help Will's mother dispose of the belongings of an ex-opera singer who is moving from her decaying mansion to a housing complex for the elderly. The Jewish content is rather slight but it is an integral part of the story. As for the enigmatic title, it refers to the hidden aspects of human nature that give people their flaws, their depth of character, and their potential for sometimes rising to heroic heights. Read it with joy for its author's intelligence and literary imagination, as well as for her ability to explore profound truths with verve. Highly recommended for grades 6-9.

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

**The Lord is My Shepherd.** Illus. by Regolo Ricci. Toronto: Tundra Books, 2007. 22pp. \$18.95. ISBN: 978-0-88776-776-0.

The King James version of Psalm 23 has been illustrated by Italian-Canadian illustrator Regolo Ricci in sumptuous picture book format. Rich floral borders enclose old-fashioned rustic scenes that exude a simple, peaceful life. Farm and woodland animals are the only characters, and they provide examples of some of the behaviors named (lying down in green pastures, etc.) without anthropomorphization. The detailed watercolor illustrations create a gently compelling nostalgia that can be enjoyed as a companion to the text or simply as a series of beautiful scenes. The text of the psalm is presented with no interpretation or author's notes to provide context. The archaic language may be unclear to young children, especially to Jewish children who are unlikely to be familiar with the King James Bible. The presentation, however, is religiously neutral and may be enjoyed by Jewish and Christian readers. Ricci also illustrated the Sydney Taylor Honor Book *The Market Wedding* by Cary Fagan. For kindergarten-grade 3.

*Heidi Esrin, Congregation B'nai Israel, Boca Raton, FL*

**Roth, Rita.** *The Power of Song and Other Sephardic Tales*. Illus. by Alexa Ginsburg. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2007. 150pp. \$16.00. ISBN: 978-0-8276-0844-3.

Drawing on sources that range from the Israel Folk Archives (IFA) to Judeo-Spanish ballad chapbooks, the author spins 13 tales from the Sephardic tradition, some of them better known by their Ashkenazi variants. Djoha (Joha) the trickster appears in a story reminiscent of one about the Eastern European folk hero, Hershele Ostropoyler, who intimidates his foes by threatening to "do what my father did." "Zipporah and the Seven Walnuts" is, like Nina Jaffe's *The Way Meat Loves Salt*, a Cinderella story, with origins in Morocco. Another familiar Ashkenazi story about the king who went searching for a true friend is told here as a riddle tale, adapted by the author from Babylonian and Persian Jewish sources. A figure that appears in many of the tales is the man with a shining face, the prophet Elijah. A tale involving the Jews of Valencia and El Cid, the Spanish epic hero, comes from several different sources, which are described in an author's comment that follows the story. These comments, one for each tale, plus the introduction, notes, and bibliography are important additions to the tales, especially for the storyteller or folklorist. The writing style is fluid and direct although in the least successful of the stories, a version of the milk of the lioness tale from Syria and Morocco, it is abrupt and somewhat confusing. The book is similar in format to Gershator's *Wise and Not So Wise: Ten Tales from the Rabbis*, also illustrated by Alexa Ginsburg. There are simple, softly colored black, white, and gray illustrations inside the book and an inviting cover in color. The length of the stories varies. Children in grades 2-6 are the likeliest audience, but the phrase "for all ages," is appropriate for a book as versatile as this one. In the past few years, JPS has published two collections of Sephardic folktales for adults: Matilde Koen-Sarano's *Folktales of Joha: Jewish Trickster* and volume one of





*Folktales of the Jews*, edited by Dan Ben Amos. In addition, Hava Ben Zvi has published through iUniverse her retellings of Sephardic tales for older teens and adults called *The Bride Who Argued with God: Tales from the Treasury of Jewish Folklore*. *The Power of Song* is the first collection of tales from this tradition that is suitable for children, whose familiarity with Sephardi stories up until now has probably come from a few that are scattered in collections, for example those by Howard Schwartz, Nina Jaffe, and Penina Schramm. It is a welcome addition to the rich treasury of Jewish folklore and is enthusiastically recommended.

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

**Wood, Angela Gluck** *Holocaust: The Events and Their Impact on Real People*. New York: DK, 2007. 192pp. \$29.99. ISBN: 978-07566-2535-1. DVD included.

Just when one thinks that the apotheosis of Holocaust pictorial histories has appeared, an even better volume is published. But perhaps none will top this book. It is a unique history that combines insightful text, singular art, photographs of exceptional quality, and personal testimony. Beginning with the dispersion of the Jews from their homeland in the Middle East to all parts of the world, predominantly Europe, it traces their histories in Babylonia, Spain, Poland, the Ottoman Empire, France, and England from fairly benign times to virulent persecutions and expulsion. Not all was gloomy, however; the good times were often brilliant and satisfying. The descriptive pages about the small Eastern European Jewish towns and villages known as shtetls are not to be missed. The period of the Enlightenment, when Jews were first admitted to the larger society in many countries, was followed by prejudice and dampening of opportunity, and eventually persecution and death. Severe reverses included the Dreyfus case in France; pogroms and the publication of the forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in Russia; and in Germany, the placing of blame on its one percent population of Jews for Germany's failure to win World War I, economic depression, and for Bolshevism in the postwar period.

In 1933, the election of Adolf Hitler signaled the end of Germany's postwar democracy and the beginning of the movement that the Nazis hoped would enable them to conquer the world. A poster (p. 35) shows Hitler as a latter-day Jesus Christ in front of a powerful spiritual light with a dove hovering overhead. This is an example of the many rare illustrations in the book. Nowhere else is the phenomenon of what happened so well limned, from issues of popular support for Hitler's policies and his gaining the chancellorship through propaganda and outright lies, to his persecution of Jews. Jews were victimized by distortions of science, enactment of the Nuremberg Laws, expulsion, ghettoization, enslavement in work camps, and murder in killing camps, mainly in Poland. This work describes Jewish resistance through maintenance of cultural life and attempts at rescue plus the role of churches, liberation, and the postwar life of survivors. It is all here, dramatically told by survivors and narrators. The inclusion of survivors' testimony and their photographs throughout the book and in the supplemental DVD, thought questions, charts, maps, a glossary, index, credits and ac-

knowledgements combine to yield a comprehensive picture. Highly recommended for grades 6 and up.

Dr. Marcia Weiss Posner, *Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County*, Glen Cove Manhasset Hills, NY

## BIBLE

**Greengard, Alison.** *Jacob's Travels: Vayetze Yaakov*. Illus. by Carol Racklin-Siegel. Oakland, CA: EKS, 2006. 28pp. \$9.95. ISBN: 978-0-939144-53-2Pbk.

*Jacob's Travels* is a wonderful addition to a bilingual series of handsome paperbacks on Bible stories. Other titles are *In the Beginning*, *Noah's Ark*, *Lech Lecha*, and *Rebecca*. This is the biblical story of Jacob's fleeing to his mother's family in Haran, and encountering an angel on his way to his fateful meeting with Rachel. The story teaches the Bible and introduces readers to this period in Jewish history. The lovely format follows the Hebrew text with a word-for-word English translation on each page, making the text accessible to the reader. The beautiful illustrations are in full color and appealing to children. At the end there is a literal translation of the text, followed by a glossary of Hebrew words from the text.

This charming book is recommended for elementary school children in day schools or congregational Hebrew schools, from early childhood to grade 3.

Shelly Feit, *Moriah School Library*, Englewood, NJ

**Hanft, Josh.** *Miracles of the Bible*. Illus. by Seymour Chwast. Maplewood, NJ: Blue Apple, 2007. 32pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-59354-617-5.

Josh Hanft's elegant retellings of biblical stories and Seymour Chwast's charming fold-out illustrations—especially a scary Goliath, an enormous whale, and manna falling from Heaven—are featured in the latest installment in a series of "miracle" books, including *The Miracle of Hanukkah* and *The Miracles of Passover*. Each one-page tale offers the highlights of a biblical miracle—Isaac's birth to Sarah in old age, the parting of the Red Sea, Samson's strength, Daniel in the lion's den, etc.—with a quotation and citation from the original. A caution: people and animals are killed in some of the stories. Despite the brevity of the text and the appeal of the illustrations, this book of Bible stories is more appropriate for children in the early primary grades, rather than for preschoolers. For grades 1–4.

Susan Berson, *Denver, CO*

## BIOGRAPHY

**Finkelman, Rabbi Shimon.** *Beloved by All: Rav Avraham Pam: A Life of Kiddush Hashem*. New York: Mesorah, 2007. 315pp. \$22.99. ISBN: 978-1-4226-0522-6.

A series of stories told by colleagues, former students and relatives are collected in a biography of the great rosh yeshiva of Torah VaDaath (Brooklyn, New York). This volume

was created for younger readers from the author's *Rav Pam: The Life and Ideals of Rabbi Avrohom Yaakov HaKohen Pam* (Mesorah, 2003). The short entries describe Rabbi Pam's life from his birth in 1913 Poland, through his tenure at the yeshivah, to his death in 2001, and the influence he had on everyone whose life he touched. The book is filled with photographs of the rav. There is no glossary or index, but Hebrew and Yiddish words are followed by translations in parentheses. On the positive side, the stories provide examples of behavior worthy of emulation: dedication to Jewish learning, humility, and respect for all. The brief vignettes are easy to digest, and the stories and chapters do not have to be read in order. On the other hand, it is 315 pages long, and a lot of the information is repetitive. There must be a more interesting way to engage young readers. It is obvious that the book was created by eliminating some of the stories in the adult version that described more complicated Talmudic logic. Sadly, this book will probably be of interest only to Orthodox readers who have heard of Rav Pam and wish to learn more about him. Recommended for readers in grades 5–8.

*Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ*

**Lazo, Caroline Evensen. *Frank Gehry*. A&E Biography Series. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner/Twenty-First Century Books, 2006. 112pp. \$7.95 ISBN: 978-0-8225-2649-0 Pbk.**

Frank Gehry was born Frank Owen Goldberg in Toronto in 1929. In 1947, he moved with his parents and sister to Los Angeles, where he studied fine arts and architecture at the University of Southern California. He changed his name at the request of his first wife, ostensibly to avoid anti-Semitism. Gehry enjoyed a steady growth in reputation and ultimately gained international recognition. The informative text is accompanied by colorful photos of Gehry's major works including the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Weisman in Minneapolis, Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, and the fish sculptures in Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The author explains technical terms as she uses them. She does the same whenever a personality is mentioned. Readers learn about CATIA (computer aided three-dimensional interactive application) and about Constantin Brancusi and George Ohr. This helpful approach enhances the effectiveness of a text that portrays Gehry's architectural innovations as natural outgrowths of his life. A timeline, a list of selected buildings by Gehry, a list of buildings in progress, sources, a bibliography, further reading suggestions, websites, and index are included in a biography that will interest teens and adults.

*Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL*

**Rubin, Susan Goldman. *Haym Salomon: American Patriot*. Illus. by David Slonim. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2007. 40pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-8109-1087-4.**

He's a statue. He's a stamp. Now he is a picture book biography that can't make up its mind if it is serious (text) or silly (illustrations). Susan Goldman Rubin writes an excellent biography of patriotic financier Haym Salomon, important Jewish hero of the American Revolution. She discloses little-known facts about his spying, enabling her to stress his wartime derring-do and deliver a spirited, engaging, ever-

interesting story that includes, but is not bogged down by, his more widely-known, yawn-inducing monetary achievements. Haym's Jewish connection is strong in Philadelphia, but, strangely, weak in New York. Except for Haym's wife, a reader would never know there were Jews in this city—Sephardim, there since the days of the Dutch colony—and a flourishing synagogue (with a Revolutionary occupation era president from the very Hessians who pop up in Rubin's peppy tale). Further Rubin's text does not note that Haym is a new type of Jewish immigrant: an Ashkenazi. Page two states he immigrates from Poland, but readers need the ending historical note (do they ever look at these?) to learn that he is one of the first. Flaws aside, the book is top-notch and a welcome addition to American Jewish history for young readers. The pictures are another story. The color scheme is good, the layout enhances action, but the figures confuse the reading level. No doubt their cartoonish nature intends to lighten the text; heaven forbid we provide sound history without sugar coating. The big noses on every character, including the dog, remove the stereotype from Jewish figures, but they are demeaning for all. These caricatures continually shout cute, detracting from the story's importance. Many pages of long text and the historical and economic content peg this book for readers in grades 3 to 5.

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

## FICTION

**Altein, Chani. *Puzzle Pieces*. Brooklyn, NY: Judaica Press, 2007. 296pp. \$18.95 ISBN: 978-1-932443-67-7.**

Nechama Greenberg becomes the solitary eighth-grade student left in Woodhaven Hebrew Academy. What can she do? *Puzzle Pieces* is a heart-warming book about an Orthodox Jewish girls' day school. Altein brings to life the contemporary American Orthodox Jewish community with its family structure, education system, and aspirations. The plot is interesting, if predictable: Instead of skipping to ninth-grade and being in her sister Rachelli's class, Nechama chooses to join Leah Weiss's eighth-grade class in Lakeview City, and to board with the Weiss family. *Puzzle Pieces* follows the experiences of the girls as they practice good deeds in their everyday life. They help at home, they help each other, and they are involved in serving the Jewish community by visiting the old-age home and organizing school fund-raising events. The emphasis is on living a moral Jewish life, fulfilling the mitzvot (commandments), and appreciating the unique relationship between God and the Jewish people. All the characters except one non-Jewish anti-Semite are good, ethical figures, who serve as models. They solve all their conflicts with the help of their belief, and appreciate the miracles of life with a sense of innocence, based on their emunah (belief) in Hashgahah Pratit (Divine Providence).

The author expresses her ideas clearly and eloquently. She incorporates many Yiddish-Hebrew idioms and provides an adequate glossary at the end of the book. *Puzzle Pieces* is entertaining reading for young teenage girls. For the non-

Orthodox, it is an excellent window into a way of life very different from that of the broader Jewish community. The book will be a welcome addition to libraries that have collections inclusive of all Jewish lifestyles. For grades 6–8.

*Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL*

**Casanova, Mary. *The Klipfish Code*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007. 228pp. \$16.00. ISBN: 978-0-618-88393-6.**

Adults who fondly remember Marie McSwigan's *Snow Treasure*, about the adventures of brave Norwegian children during the Nazi occupation of their country, will be glad to recommend this exciting and suspenseful new historical novel to children today. It, too, is about resistance to the Nazis and their increasingly harsh occupation of Norway from 1940 until 1945. Marit, the main character, is ten when the story begins and she and her brother are sent to live with their grandfather and aunt while their parents work for the Resistance. The island setting is an important part of the story and its climate, landscape, and way of life are all atmospherically rendered, with the sea giving Marit a chance to strike a blow for the resistance and for a climactic escape. The action is very fast-paced and the characters believable but not overly complex in their loyalties and motivations. Children who are not necessarily fans of historical fiction will enjoy it as an adventure story with clear-cut heroes and villains. There are no Jewish characters so it is not a first purchase for Jewish libraries but it is a good choice for collections that include books about resistance during World War II. An author's note gives historical background, including the fate of Norway's Jews, and a glossary supplies the definitions of many Norwegian words and phrases that are part of the story. For grades 5–8.

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

**Elkeles, Simone. *How to Ruin My Teenage Life*. Woodbury, MN: Flux, 2007. 281pp. \$8.95. ISBN: 978-0-7387-0961-1. Pbk.**

In this well-written coming-of-age tale, a sequel to *How to Ruin a Summer Vacation*, we encounter 16-year-old Amy, who is trying to keep her life back home in Chicago on track as challenging events swirl around her. Nothing is going the way she would like. Her mother has gotten married, moved to the suburbs, and is expecting a baby with her new husband. Amy is not sure where she fits into this equation and, not having overcome the self-centeredness that she took with her to Israel, she has trouble imagining the new baby as her sister or brother. She has moved in with her Israeli father after her mother's marriage and is trying to work out their relationship. At the same time, she is attempting to figure out how they should each handle the social relationships in their lives.

As readers of the earlier book will remember, Simone's father had never been a part of her life until he appeared the previous summer and insisted that she go with him to Israel to visit her ailing grandmother. Avi, the boyfriend she met in Israel, is now in the Israeli Army; he appears suddenly in Chicago to visit Amy on his leave. Things are further complicated for her by relationships in the neighborhood, including an annoying new boy who has just moved into her apartment

building, and some serious trouble that her beloved dog has gotten into with a nasty neighbor's prized poodle. Amy is a well-defined and personable central character, who does not always think things through completely but speaks to us in a fresh voice. The reader likes her and sympathizes with her struggles. The story moves swiftly and there is Jewish content galore. While in Israel, Amy, whose father but not mother is Jewish, decides to convert to Judaism. During this story, she is not yet converted and is still studying. There are issues that the purchaser of this book has to be aware of such as the fact that Amy's parents were never married and she regarded her father as "the sperm donor" until he became a part of her life. Recommended for readers in grades 9–12; it is more of a draw for girls than for boys.

*Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ*

**Kimmel, Eric A. *A Picture for Marc*. Illus. by Matthew Trueman. New York: Random House, 2007. 101pp. \$11.99. ISBN: 978-0-375-83253-6.**

In Eric Kimmel's imaginative story based on the boyhood of artist Marc Chagall, Marc is a very real boy—one who dislikes school, stares at clouds and cats, questions the fairness of the world, and discovers what it means to be an artist. In the pictures Marc makes, his home town of Vitebsk is transformed from "the dullest town in the world" into a colorful, dream-like scene of local sights, sounds, and smells. As he did in *A Horn for Louis*, a story based on an incident in the life of Louis Armstrong, Kimmel combines biographical details with episodes he invents to fit Chagall's future artistic endeavors. For example, Grandfather eating carrots on the roof becomes Uncle Noah playing the fiddle. As he studies with a local artist—Chagall's actual teacher, Yehuda Pen—Marc demonstrates insight beyond his years. He understands the role of the artist "to seek out what is true and show it to the world." Unlike other books about Chagall, this one focuses only on Marc's boyhood. Like *Dreamer from the Village* by Michelle Markel and *I Am Marc Chagall* by Bimba Landmann, it, too, will inspire readers to trust their dreams. Easy to read and with short chapters, the black-and-white illustrations are wonderful and Kimmel's deadpan humor is delightful. For grades 4–6.

*Susan Berson, Denver, CO*

**Peacock, Shane. *Eye of the Crow: The Boy Sherlock Holmes, His 1st Case*. Toronto: Tundra Books, 2007. 260pp. \$19.95. ISBN: 978-0-88776-850-7.**

Peacock has invented a back-story for Sherlock Holmes, providing a motivation for his detective activities and an explanation for his cold, emotionless manner. Young Sherlock learns acute observational skills from his scientific Jewish father and the art of dramatic disguise from his operatic Christian mother, who together form a loving but destitute couple rejected by both their families. A local murder piques Sherlock's interest, and his efforts to solve the case become desperate when partial blame is wrongly directed his way. The present-tense narration adds tension to this tightly-constructed detective story. The very visual descriptions paint scenes and moods with cinematic flair. Characters are

well drawn and are interesting personalities in their own right. The formality of the text feels authentic for the Victorian time period. Holmes is referred to often as a “Jew” or “half-Jew” and anti-Semitism (as well as anti-Arabism) is shown to be common in Victorian England. Neither Jewish practice nor ideas, however, have any part in the story. Holmes’s Jewish ancestry is the only Judaic content offered, and mostly serves to reinforce his position as an outsider. At a stretch, the book could be used as a discussion starter on the theme of social outsiders and prejudice. We always like to claim famous people as “members of the tribe,” so reimagining Sherlock Holmes as half-Jewish is an entertaining idea. This is a well-written story that, while not of any real Jewish significance, may be used to round out larger Jewish collections. For grades 5–7.

*Heidi Estrin, Congregation B’nai Israel, Boca Raton, FL*

**Pressler, Mirjam. *Let Sleeping Dogs Lie*. Trans. from the German by Erik J. Macki. Asheville, NC: Front Street, 2007. 207pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-932425-84-0. Reviewed from an uncorrected proof.**

Memories of Nazi crimes loom heavily over this novel for mature teens, written by one of Germany’s foremost writers for young people (*Anne Frank: A Hidden Life; Malka, Shylock’s Daughter*). Johanna returns from a school trip to Israel shaken by an encounter with a Holocaust survivor who accuses her grandfather — “that goddamned Nazi” — of having stolen her parents’ business. Johanna’s family’s life revolves around that business, an upscale clothing store, and it is the source of all of the privileges that she has known growing up in contemporary Germany. When she tries to pry the truth out of her father, he reacts with fury, insisting that the store was purchased and not stolen and telling her to “let sleeping dogs lie.” But she doesn’t and that is the conflict that drives the plot of this intense story of injustice, denial, and inherited guilt, and their effect on one intelligent and introspective young woman. Johanna’s character is delineated with subtlety and understanding, along with most of the other characters, a few of whom are Jewish. The story is colored in shades of gray rather than in black and white. Published originally in 2003 in Germany, Pressler’s intended readers are assumed to be more historically aware, more concerned with their nation’s past, and more socially sophisticated than can be assumed of most American teen readers. Several rather explicit sex scenes may be problematic for adult book buyers but even more problematic is the level of interest that American readers will bring to a particularly German generational dilemma. For those thoughtful readers who look beyond their own circumstances for an understanding of both history and human behavior, *Let Sleeping Dogs Lie* is seriously compelling. For grades 10–12.

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

**Propp, Vera W. *Candles in the Closet*. Albany, NY: Bennett Rose Publishing, 2007. 209pp. \$14.95. ISBN: 978-1-933994-14-7.**

After the Jewish expulsion from Spain in 1492, many generations of twelve-year-old girls learn secret rituals from their

mothers, grandmothers, or great-grandmothers. The girls believe they are Catholic, but it is revealed to them that their ancestors were Jewish and that they must continue the secret rituals — kissing a mezuzah, lighting Shabbat candles, fasting, baking matzah, saying the Sh’ma, etc. — that were handed down from generation to generation as mere superstitions or to honor their ancestors. The reader is struck by the burden these young girls face as they are asked to continue the rituals in secret, without telling friends or younger siblings, and hiding their heritage from servants and the Catholic Church in fear of evil spirits, bad luck, or death. Their present-day successor, Bonnie Lopez of Tucson, Arizona, discovers the meaning behind the secret rituals and befriends relatives who, like her, are interested in pursuing knowledge about their Jewish roots. The book’s focus is on teenage girls, but its stilted writing style limits its appeal. It would have benefited from the addition of a “family tree” to help readers keep the characters and generations straight. Vera Propp is the author of a Sydney Taylor Honor Book called *When the Soldiers Were Gone* (G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1999). For grades 6–8.

*Susan Berson, Denver, CO*

**Roy, Monique. *Once Upon a Time in Venice*. New York: iUniverse, 2007. 55pp. \$8.95. ISBN: 978-0-595-41659-2. Pbk.**

Nine-year-old Samuelle is being raised by his grandfather Leo after his parents’ death. When Leo is diagnosed with cancer, he takes the boy with him to his birthplace, Venice. They visit the city’s great tourist attractions and meet Leo’s boyhood sweetheart Isabella. Samuelle wants especially to see the Ghetto, which his grandfather has told him about. After he learns (by accident) about Leo’s illness, Samuelle makes his way to the Ghetto alone, where he finds a new friend. Yosef is a transplanted American Jew, working as a sofer. He shows Samuelle the craft of transcribing Torah scrolls, and helps the boy realize that his grandfather’s illness is an opportunity as well as a burden. This touching story for third and fourth graders has lots of unrealized Jewish potential: the Jewish references, though specific, have limited follow-through. We are told early in the narrative that young Leo was hidden during the Nazi roundup of Italian Jews, but that story is never mentioned again. Samuelle’s encounter with Yosef is lovely, but it comes late in the book; it is unclear whether the boy will receive any Jewish sensibility or education as a result. Recommended only for large synagogue and school libraries with a need for books about Jewish life in Venice.

*Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

**Schonzeit, Miriam. *The Ten Worst Things and Other Stories*. Brooklyn, N.Y: Judaica Press, 2007. 264pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-932443-65-3.**

The 19 inspirational short stories that make up this collection were originally published in the author’s weekly column in *Yated Ne’eman*, “the only paper in the world controlled by rabbonim,” according to the publisher. Set in the contemporary Orthodox world, they contain unobtrusive morals and feature wise teachers and understanding parents. Some of the values imparted in the stories are the im-



portance of making others feel good and appreciating your siblings (especially important in these large families), and the benefits of learning on your own rather than copying other students' homework. This boy learns after his rabbi tells him about "a matter of trust. I trust you to do the right thing." The title story sums up the author's point of view. It features a girl named Zahava who is in a bad mood because she can't go to camp when her friends are going. Observing Zahava's complaining and taking it out on her family, her wise mother suggests that she make a list of the things she is grateful for, causing her to reflect on the good things she does have. Seeing her mother's siddur (prayer book) makes her think: "Imagine not knowing how to daven," so the first thing she lists is "I'm frum" (religiously observant). Some of the others are: "I have good friends; I'm healthy, my family is healthy; I'm alive; I have nice clothes to wear;" and "I have plenty to eat." An extensive glossary explains the Hebrew and Yiddish terms used throughout the sticky-sweet stories in this collection. For grades 4-6 and appropriate mainly for an Orthodox audience.

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

**Stupkniker, Yehudit. *The Remarkable Invention that Saves Zion: A Tale of Triz*. New York: Pitspopany, 2007. 292pp. \$18.95. ISBN: 978-1-932687-74-3.**

There are some very imaginative and interesting stories here: about a telescope that when aimed out the window of a Shomron classroom, shows what was occurring in biblical times; about the theft of said telescope by evil anti-Semites and the discovery of their diabolical plot to destroy Israel; and about four friends who bond as a result of their studies as well as their traumatic experiences of terrorism. There is also a subplot about an American visiting his cousin who learns about Israel's history, loses his arrogance, and develops pride in his heritage. Throughout the book are long speeches full of Zionist dogma and of course, Triz. Triz is the original Russian acronym for TIPS—the Theory of Invention Problem Solving, a way of thinking through a problem and learning to define it differently. This method is used in various situations in the story. But with all this going on, and being explained in intricate detail, the pace is slow to the point of inertia. The characters are described so completely that there is no nuance or development. While these descriptions give a strong sense of place in ancient and modern Israel, they detract from the other elements of the plot. The situation also strains credulity: high school students in an advanced program on a university campus are given access to a "secret invention" while their professor, whom they have known for years, jets off to an international conference. There is an excellent chart of "Rabbinic Leadership in Israel" for the past 2000 years. It is obvious that the Israeli author wishes to publicize the beauty, history, and significance of her home, but with no maps, glossary, or author's note, the book is best suited for Zionist, Orthodox readers, and is thus "preaching to the choir." "Triz" is an optional purchase for Orthodox libraries and appropriate for readers in grade 7 and up.

*Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ*

## FOLKLORE

**Bar-El, Dan. *Such a Prince*. Illus. by John Manders. New York: Clarion, 2007. 32pp. \$16.00. ISBN: 978-0-618-71468-1.**

A spoof on folk tales about three brothers on a quest to marry the princess, this is told in a Yinglish-flavored narrative by a frumpy little fairy named Libby Gaborchik. She advises the king to save his dying daughter, Princess Vera, by offering her hand in marriage to the first man to bring her three perfect peaches. As interpreted by the author and illustrator, parody and slapstick humor prevail. The cover and first full-page illustration are designed to look like a tabloid newspaper, with sensational headlines and come-on lines like "Local Fairy Tells All." The story unfolds as stories like this one do: the first two brothers, Sheldon and Harvey, are big, conceited hunks who fail; the youngest, a skinny nebbish named Marvin who loves his mother, prevails with the help of the fairy. The deceitful king and queen, who don't want to award Marvin what is rightfully his, are humiliated and in the end, as Libby tells us, "Marvin is now Prince Marvin. His mother is retired and living the good life. Vera is healthy, and the king and queen have less stress. Oh, and I turned Sheldon and Harvey into reptiles ... A joke, darlings, a joke! ... Laughing is good for your health." There is plenty to laugh about in this fractured fairy tale but will children understand that the humor is Jewish? Perhaps it doesn't matter, just as it doesn't matter that this isn't really a folk tale. After all, laughing is good for your health. "Trust me. I'm a fairy. I know these things." For grades 2-5.

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

**Becker, Laney Katz. *Three Times Chai: 54 Rabbis Tell Their Favorite Stories*. Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 2007. 144pp. \$22.00. ISBN: 978-0-87441-810-1.**

Searching for solace during a time of her own physical healing and spiritual challenge, Laney Katz Becker approached rabbis to share the stories meaningful to them. She gathered tales from Reconstructionist, Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox rabbis, who responded with folklore, midrash, original fiction, and stories from real life. From each rabbi, she also solicited a statement about the resonance of the story for him or her individually, connecting each tale to the teller and to the listener.

Tales are at once personal and universal. They link to Jewish experience, even though some may not have started out as Jewish stories. The number of stories is significant to Becker—a multiple of eighteen, the Hebrew *chai*, which means life. Becker divides the 54 stories into four sections: community, religion, God's world, and outlook. Some amuse, some inspire, and some explain. They explore relationships between people, with the earth, and with God; miracles; Jewish identity; practices; spirituality; perspectives; and searches. Some of the stories are traditional classics, like "If Not Higher," and will be well known; others, like the tale about Louis D. Brandeis wishing to have chosen Judaism for himself, may be new. Famous characters—the Ba'al Shem Tov, Miriam, Moses, King Solomon, Elijah, and Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev—figure, along with an old man from

Georgia who wants to be rescued from rising floodwaters, a water bearer in India, and an ambulance driver in Denmark during World War II. Stories range in length from one to seven pages. What's not to like in this collection? Different voices lend variety. Told conversationally with smoothing by Becker, the stories read well and uphold Jewish ethical and religious values. Recommended for grades 4 to 8, but best savored when read aloud one at a time.

Sharon Elswit, *The Jewish Story Finder*, New York, NY

**Jungman, Ann.** *The Prince Who Thought He was a Rooster and Other Jewish Stories.* Illus. by Sarah Adams. London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2007. 87pp. \$14.95. ISBN: 978-1-84507-793-8.

The ten stories in this collection include some familiar ones, drawn from sources that the author identifies in an endnote. Jungman, author of *The Most Magnificent Mosque* (2004), retells them in a simple folkloric style that is suited to reading aloud or telling. Besides the title story, there are versions of tales about making something from nothing, the man with the crowded house, the Golem, and the faces of the Czar. Most are from Russia but Poland, Germany, the former Czechoslovakia, Morocco, and Tunisia are also represented. A very modest-looking book in this era of lavish formats, it is illustrated with black, white, and gray-toned pictures—several for each tale. The small size makes it nicely portable and children in the middle grades will easily be able to read it by themselves. Recommended as an additional purchase for folklore collections. For grades 3–5.

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

**Yashinsky, Dan.** *Suddenly They Heard Footsteps: Storytelling for the Twenty-First Century.* Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2006. 318pp. \$25.00 ISBN: 978-1-57806-927-9.

Part memoir, part instruction guide, part storybook, and part bibliography, the author relates his experiences as a storyteller and shares with the reader what he has learned. He advises talking to expert storytellers, and chronicles his relationships with three experts. He suggests how to find stories (cull the 398.2 section of the library), and how to adapt stories and make them one's own. He includes some humorous moments, as when a little boy gets up and tells a story that he ends by screaming expletives, and he explains how to deal with listeners who are making disruptive noises. Seven of the author's stories illustrate how to adapt older tales and make them relevant for new audiences. Yashinsky draws on his Jewish heritage and includes several Jewish stories in the text. In the "Suggested Resources" and annotated bibliography, he recommends such legendary Jewish story tellers as Martin Buber and Howard Schwartz, and he thinks very highly of Yaffa Eliach's *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*. But his main focus is on the native tribes of Canada and their storytelling traditions. For those who want to tell stories, or wish to hone their craft, it is an excellent resource. For most Jewish libraries, the inclusion of the abovementioned authors and books will be adequate. For librarians and storytellers.

Kathe Pinchuck, *Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ*

## GOD

**Following Tilly Bee. The Land of Milk and Honey Series.** New York: Little Simon Inspirations, 2007. 14pp. \$7.99. ISBN: 978-1-4169-3974-0. Board book.

Tilly Bee is a bear who leads a parade of strangely-dressed little animals to places in the world where the perfection of God's creation can be seen. And felt, because on every other page, there is a textured object to touch and stroke. The illustrations are of the insipid greeting card variety and the text, while short and to the point, is written as a jarringly un-rhythmic jingle. Most of the Little Simon Inspiration books are Christian in point of view and while this one is religiously neutral, it is also just too icky for words. *Becky and Benny Thank God* by Howard Bogot, with similar (but Jewish) content, format, and intended audience (toddlers and young preschoolers), is a much better choice. Not recommended.

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

**DeBoer, Rondi.** *God Must Really Love ... Numbers!* Illus. by Steve Haskamp. New York: Simon and Schuster/Little Simon Inspirations, 2007. 14pp. \$6.99. ISBN: 978-1-4169-3356-4. Board Book.

**DeBoer, Rondi.** *God Must Really Love ... Opposites!* Illus. by Steve Haskamp. New York: Simon and Schuster/Little Simon Inspirations, 2007. 14pp. \$6.99. ISBN: 978-1-4169-3357-1. Board Book.

Two other books in this series—*God Must Really Love ... Colors!* and *God Must Really Love ... Shapes!*—were reviewed and recommended in the September/October 2007 issue of the *AJL Newsletter*. They are written and designed for very young children and impart their concepts simply and colorfully. A refrain runs through them, ending each page of text with a hearty "Good job, God!" The pictures are clear and bright, decorated with foil. The book about numbers goes from one to ten, illustrating the concept with everyday things like one butterfly with two wings on to nine trees with ten peaches. The final page of text recapitulates all of the numbers. The concept of opposites is conveyed by up and down, big and little, fast and slow, hot and cold, and light and dark, again with a summary at the end. Both books are religiously neutral in point of view and would be fine for Jewish toddlers and preschoolers.

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

## HISTORY

**Greene, Jacqueline Dembar.** *The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire.* Code Red Series. New York: Bearport, 2007. 32pp. \$25.27. ISBN: 978-1-59716-359-0.

While the historical event described here is not exclusively Jewish, the victims were largely Jewish and the union activity that followed was led by many Jews. It was a pivotal event in immigrant Jewish history. In short bursts of easily readable text, accompanied by maps, historic photos, and quotations from survivors, the terrifying story of the 1911 fire



at New York's Triangle Waist Company sweatshop is told. Lack of security features in the building ensured a disaster, and the tragedy led to new building codes, fire safety laws, and unionization of workers. This excellent history — part of the Code Red series of books on disasters such as the space shuttle explosion, the Titanic, and Three Mile Island — is perfect for middle school report writers. A glossary, bibliography, and index are included. Jacqueline Dembar Greene is the author of two historical novels for children: *Out of Many Waters* and its sequel, *One Foot Ashore*. For grades 6–8.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

## HOLIDAYS

**Hanft, Josh.** *The Miracles of Passover*. Illus. by Seymour Chwast. Maplewood, NJ: Blue Apple Books, 2007. 28pp. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-1-59354-600-7.

A cogent text, lively illustrations, and flaps to lift are the three notable features of this third miracle book on which Hanft and Chwast have collaborated. It tells the story of the Exodus, contrasting the dignified figure of Moses with the rather effete one of Pharaoh, and concludes with scenes of two seders, one from times past and one of today, complete with a seder plate whose foods are discovered by lifting flaps. Chwast's illustrations are deceptively simple because they convey so much meaning so economically. The colors are muted but the palette is varied so that there is much to look at on every page. As in *The Miracles of Hanukkah*, the text follows the Bible without fictional details being added. Recommended for kindergarten–grade 2.

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

**Katz, Karen.** *Where Is Baby's Dreidel?* New York: Little Simon, 2007. 14pp. \$6.99. ISBN: 978-1-4169-3623-7. Board book.

A curious baby lifts the flaps of this sturdy board book to discover what's behind the curtains (a menorah), what's under the table (candles), what's behind the egg carton (latkes), what's under Grandma's apron (a present), what's behind the fruit bowl (gold coins), and what's in the living room (Baby's dreidel). The minimal text is accompanied by clear, bright illustrations decorated with foil. As a simple introduction to some of the symbols of Hanukkah, this is fine for toddlers and a good addition to the early childhood collection of all types of libraries.

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

**Lamstein, Sarah Marwil.** *Letter on the Wind: A Chanukah Tale*. Illus. by Neil Waldman. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2007. 32pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-932415-74-1.

Based on a Tunisian folktale called "A Letter to the Almighty," found in the Israel Folk Archives, this handsomely-illustrated book tells the story of a drought-stricken village that has no oil to light the Hanukkah lights. A poor man of faith has the scribe send a letter to the Almighty, asking for enough oil to last all eight nights. A strong wind blows the letter to a rich merchant, who fulfills Hayim's request because

he believes the Almighty has chosen him to do so. Among the gifts he sends is a bejeweled menorah with his name on it. Seeing the menorah, the village scribe thinks Hayim has stolen it and he sends a letter to the rich merchant to find out. The merchant himself visits Hayim and together they are able to assure the villagers that the menorah was a gift from the Almighty, in response to Hayim's "letter on the wind." A fluid writing style is enhanced by a book design that pairs rectangular blocks of text and images with the curved, flowing lines and glowing colors of the illustrations. The book's generous size makes it a good choice for reading aloud to a group. Recommended for grades 1–4.

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

**Rouss, Sylvia.** *The Littlest Maccabee*. Illus. by Greg A. Cohen. New York: Pitspopany, 2006. 32pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-932687-76-7.

Sylvia Rouss, author of *The Littlest Frog*, *The Littlest Candlesticks*, and other works in that series, inserts a little mouse into the Hanukkah story. The mouse plays a key role in driving away the soldiers of King Antiochus when his squeaking scares the elephants on which the Greco-Syrian soldiers are said to have ridden. This version — delivered in rhyme — gives no credit to the bravery of the Maccabees, and the cartoonish illustrations are rather garishly colored. It is a fairly cute addition to the Hanukkah collection but there are many superior Hanukkah stories for preschoolers. For preschool–kindergarten.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

**Werner, Osher.** *Pharaoh and the Fabulous Frog Invasion*. Brooklyn, NY: Judaica Press, 2007. 32pp. \$13.95. ISBN: 978-1-932443-63-9.

Written in rhyme, this is a clever picture book based on midrashic stories about the frogs who were one of the ten plagues in Egypt. Pharaoh and Egypt are being invaded by frogs, but unless we know the story of the ten Passover plagues we do not know why. Moshe and Aaron, two faceless figures, come to speak to Pharaoh, and then turn the Nile waters to blood. Again we do not know why. The brightly colored cartoon-like illustrations are wonderful. They capture Pharaoh's anger at having frogs emerge from his water pitcher and his confused surprise as frogs suddenly appear in his bed. The illustrator gives the frogs personalities: some have a mischievous look in their eyes, others take their job seriously, and others are just having fun. *Pharaoh and the Fabulous Frog Invasion* is a whimsical book but it presupposes a prior knowledge of the Passover story. The word Passover or any significant information about the holiday is nowhere in the book. It is recommended as an additional purchase for grades 2–4. Although the illustrations would appeal to younger children, the text is too long for them to appreciate.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH



## HOLOCAUST

**Haugen, Brenda.** *The Holocaust Museum. We the People Series.* Mankato, MN: Compass Point, 2007. 48pp. \$25.26. ISBN: 978-0-7565-3357-1.

Part of a series that explores US history, *The Holocaust Museum* discusses the history of the Shoah and how it is interpreted and remembered at the well-known Washington, DC museum. Written in crisp, declarative, unemotional language, with effective sepia-toned historic photographs, this book is recommended reading before visiting the museum. It will be particularly useful in school settings as part of studies in history, current events, and human rights. In the history section, however, there is no analysis of German citizens' role in the Holocaust; the blame is placed entirely on the Nazi Party, the German government, and Hitler as dictator. Supplemental materials—e.g., glossary, timeline, mini-biographies, and resources at the library and on the web—are helpful additions. The bibliography focuses on books about children in the Holocaust. For grades 6–9.

*Susan Berson, Denver, CO*

**Wolf, Joan.** *Someone Named Eva.* New York: Clarion Books, 2007. 208pp. \$16.00. ISBN: 978-0-618-53579-8.

The narrative begins with the Nazis' violent punitive incursion into Lidice, Czechoslovakia and with the roundup of Milada, the lead character, her family, and everyone else in their town, none of them Jews. The men are shipped off

but the women and children are kept together in a gym. Two white-coated men arrive and make measurements of children estimated to be worthy of retraining as Aryans. These are the children who are shipped to Germany for retraining in the *Lebensborn* orphanages, which—as depicted in this book—were strict but quite comfortable schools with food as plentiful as the propaganda their captive children were fed. If this were just a straight narrative of the experience, rather than a multifaceted character study, it would not be as fine a piece of writing. The interrelationships among the children and the militant quality of their trainers are explored. The injunction of Milada's mother that she never forget who she is and her grandmother's precious star brooch, which she has managed to conceal, help Milada to remember that Eva, her new German persona, is a sham. The most interesting parts are when Eva is adopted and becomes fond of her German family, despite herself, and, at the climax, when she realizes how she must weigh her actions and feelings. The seven-page author's note at the end of the book is evidence of Wolf's careful attention to reference sources. She worked with AJL's Michlean Amir, reference archivist at the US Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Washington, DC, and consulted other impeccable sources. This is a fascinating and often charming novel, based on real historical events. Recommended for grades 5–9.

*Dr. Marcia Weiss Posner, Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, Glen Cove Manhasset Hills, NY*

**Spielman, Gloria.** *Janusz Korczak's Children.* Illus. by **Matthew Archambault.** Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2007. 40pp. \$17.95. ISBN 978-1-58013-255-8. Pbk.

Can the story of Janusz Korczak be written for second and third graders? *Janusz Korczak's Children* is an appealingly small and short book with softly painted full-page illustrations that convey the artist's appreciation for this serious subject. The text oversimplifies the complex material of Janusz Korczak's life and in the process, the import of Korczak's courageous leadership is lost, and the plight of his Jewish orphans comes across as a collection of rather dry facts. In some cases, the short sentences compromise the accuracy of the information. We read, for example, that Dr. Korczak worked to create a model orphanage in Warsaw, and that he headed that orphanage for the rest of his life. Neglected is the fact that this was an orphanage for Jewish children. Their Jewishness, after all, was the reason they were there. The last sentence of the book reads "They were never seen again." This may serve as an ending for a fairy or folk tale, but for a nonfiction book set 1942 Warsaw, it will only raise questions. "Is this a true story?" and "What really happened to the children?" are questions second or third graders will surely ask. If their teachers or parents are not prepared to answer these questions, or do not wish to describe the concentration camps to their children, this book would be an unwise choice for seven-to-nine-year-olds. Teaching the Holocaust is important, but it is also important to wait until children are old enough to absorb and understand difficult and disturbing material.

Although the sentences in this book are short and simple, there are a number of difficult words, and the material of course, is anything but simple. There are also inaccuracies: Korczak's father did not forget to register his son's birth. According to the research of Betty Jean Lipton, the author of a full-length biography of Korczak, *The King of Children*, upper class Jewish parents in Warsaw at that time purposely delayed registering their sons in the hopes of postponing or avoiding their induction into the Czarist army, as Warsaw was then part of the Czarist empire.

Besides Lipton's biography, there is a short and well-illustrated biography of Korczak by David Adler called *A Hero and the Holocaust*, published in 2002 by Holiday House. In measured prose, it tells the truth with frankness, in a voice that is obviously that of a loving adult. It is a book written to be read together with a parent or teacher, who can gauge and react to the child's response. Although it has many good qualities, *Janusz Korczak's Children* does not serve its subject well. Neither does it meet the reading needs of second and third graders. It is not a recommend addition to the Korczak literature for children in those grades.

*Naomi Morse, Silver Spring, MD*

### Another opinion

Janusz Korczak, the pen name of a Polish physician, author, and orphanage director, is a lesser-known hero of the Holocaust who protected the lives of Jewish children at great risk to his own. In fact, he perished with the children Treblinka, rather than take advantage of an opportunity to

leave them and save his own life. This brief, highly readable biography, nicely illustrated and written in a straightforward if dispassionate style, offers inspirational values of kindness, fairness, and devotion in a non-violent Holocaust story (though there is mention of children dying from disease in the Warsaw Ghetto and the possibility of Jews being killed in concentration camps). The author includes a timeline and bibliography. The book would be an excellent addition to school libraries. For grades 5-7.

*Susan Berson, Denver, CO*

**Vander Zee, Ruth and Marian Sneider.** *Eli Remembers.* Illus. by **Bill Farnsworth.** Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007. Unpaged. \$18.00. ISBN 978-0-8028-5309-7.

A young boy fondly remembers high holidays at his great-grandparent's home along with an unusual ritual: great-grandma would always shed a tear while lighting seven candles before the festive meal. When Eli inquires as to why great-grandma "cries on such a happy night" he is told by his mother that, "Some things are too difficult to talk about." In fact, as Eli grows older, the ritual persists, but is never explained. One year the family goes on a trip to Lithuania to find the house where great-grandma lived when she was a little girl. Before they return home, the family takes a trip to the Ponar Forest to lay flowers at the mass grave there. At this time, Eli's parents explain to him the tragedy of the event and how many of their relatives are buried there. A plaintive full-page image of Eli staring out at the reader is striking. He states, "I felt like somebody was hitting my chest." When his father explains that it is the way of the family not to talk about this to anyone, Eli places the roses on the mass grave and responds, "It's okay, Grandpa, it won't be a secret anymore. I'll always remember."

This beautiful and affecting book adds something new to the genre of illustrated books about the Holocaust. Rarely do we find a story of a present-day youngster who is placed directly at the location of past tragic events, especially at a mass grave. Most Holocaust books either relate events within their historical framework, or let the older generation be the mouthpiece and do the explaining to American children while they are safe in their homes or schools. The fact that there are some survivors who "do not speak of these events" is realistic, and creates a tension in the story that makes it quite readable. The striking oil paintings enhance the flow of the narrative and create mood, as in the depiction of the rental van stopping in the soundless, snow-covered Ponar Forest with four people getting out in search of a grave marker. The author (previously known for another Holocaust book entitled *Erika's Story*), includes information explaining the executions in language appropriate for children. This story was based on actual events in the co-author's life from which a British documentary was made in 2004. This book is an effective use of the genre and can be shared with children learning about the Holocaust from grades 4 and up.

*Lisa Silverman, Temple Sinai, Los Angeles, CA*



## ISRAEL and the MIDDLE EAST

**Barber, Nicola.** *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East.* World Almanac Library of the Middle East Series. Milwaukee, WI: World Almanac Library, 2007. 48pp. \$11.95. ISBN: 978-0-8368-7337-5.

An enormous range of topics are treated in this 48-page book: ethnicity and religion, art and language, Bedouins and Sephardim, cuisine and costume, Berbers and kibbutzniks. It succeeds in giving a picture of the rich variety of Middle East peoples, but the aggregate presentation of topics too frequently leaves a view slanted against Israel. When referring to refugees who fled their homes following the creation of Israel, only Arab refugees are mentioned, whereas an equal number of Jews fled their Arab homelands. The ingathering of Jewish immigrants to Israel is depicted only as a source of tension among Israelis, but it also represented a welcome fulfillment of an age-old dream and a unique achievement in molding people of diverse cultures into one nation.

Israel is accused of destroying Bedouin life, but governments of other lands where Bedouin ways are in decline are not. There are factual errors, as well. Most Middle East Jews were *not* to be found in Iraq, Syria and Egypt; Morocco had as many Jews as those three countries combined, and Algeria, Iran, and others had larger Jewish populations than Syria. The legend that the gospel-writer Mark brought Christianity to Egypt is stated as if it were historical fact. It is disappointing that publishers seem to have so much difficulty producing social studies books that simply provide accurate, factual information for schoolchildren. Like most other books in this series, there is much useful and correct information, but readers will need guidance in recognizing biased assertions and factual errors. For grades 6–12.

*Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH*

**Burgan, Michael.** *Teens in Israel.* Global Connections Series. Minneapolis, MN: Compass Point Books, 2007. 96pp. \$31.93. ISBN: 978-0-7565-2443-2.

*Teens in Israel* is an ineptly written book that attempts to describe life for Israeli teenagers in the country's various ethnic groups. The selection of information is heavily skewed toward two topics that are not especially relevant to the subject of teens (but easy to find when doing superficial research on the Internet): differences in Jewish religious practice and the socio-economic disparities which the author seems to believe exist among Israelis of Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi origin. With the exception of some slight coverage given to the complex Israeli school system, virtually all of the cursory and very poorly organized information can readily be found elsewhere. Moreover, the description of teenage life is so general as to be almost useless. The author warns readers that this may be a problem when he begins the second chapter by stating, "It is difficult to describe the daily lives of Israel's teens." The difficulties he encounters are reflected in bland generalities such as "teens have typical chores, such as cleaning their rooms or doing the dishes" (p. 25) and "Israeli teens also enjoy movies, television shows, and popular music ... (p. 71)." His attempts to discuss all of

Israel's ethnic groups, from Bedouins to Circassians to Mizrahi Jews, result in a jumble of facts and unsupported assertions, such as the misleading statement that Israel "seized" Gaza and the West Bank in 1967. Israeli Arab teens get quite a bit of attention in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict but almost nothing about their actual teenage lives is revealed except for the mistaken impression that Israeli Arabs are abjectly poor. Further weakening a book marked by superficial content and an obvious lack of authorial knowledge of its subject is an organization that undermines the content by interrupting its flow not just with sidebars but with entire pages of extraneous but vaguely related information that has the confused reader flipping pages forward to discover where the narrative continues. As in many trade series of this kind, *Teens In Israel* includes flashy graphic elements such as color photographs and maps, color pages, end materials that provide quick facts about Israel ("At a Glance"), a good historical timeline that notes the history of Israel in the context of world events, a short glossary, additional resources, source notes, a select bibliography, and a detailed index. Teens wondering how their counterparts in Israel live will learn a lot more from the Internet than they will from this very poor and over-priced book.

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

**Downing, David.** *Conflicts of the Middle East.* World Almanac Library of the Middle East Series. Milwaukee, WI: World Almanac Library, 2007. 48pp. \$11.95. ISBN: 978-0-8368-7333-7.

**Downing, David.** *Geography and Resources of the Middle East.* World Almanac Library of the Middle East Series. Milwaukee, WI: World Almanac Library, 2007. 48pp. \$11.95. ISBN: 978-0-8368-7334-4.

**Downing, David.** *Governments and Leaders of the Middle East.* World Almanac Library of the Middle East Series. Milwaukee, WI: World Almanac Library, 2007. 48pp. \$11.95. ISBN: 978-0-8368-7335-1.

**Downing, David.** *History of the Middle East.* World Almanac Library of the Middle East Series. Milwaukee, WI: World Almanac Library, 2007. 48pp. \$11.95. ISBN: 978-0-8368-7343-6.

These are four books in a series for grades 6–12 that surveys different aspects of the Middle East, defined as 15 present-day countries stretching from Libya in the west to Iran in the east. The four, written by David Downing, exhibit thought and skill in their organization. For example, the volume on governments and leaders discusses regimes in monarchies, one-party states, Islamic states, and democracies. Regarding democracy, there is an excellent discussion about the preconditions, such as free press and absence of intimidation, that need to be present for democracy to have meaning. There are some "fuzzy" areas, however. For example, Baathist regimes are more than simply "nationalist;" they are also authoritarian, if not outright fascist. Islamic regimes have governments that "reflect Islamic beliefs,"

but there should be some indication of what it means when governments enforce Islamic religious law.

Although the author strives for fairness in presenting all sides, he unfortunately succumbs to asserting some inaccuracies that contribute to biased views. For example, the Conflicts volume, which is the most problematic, is wrong about Sabra and Shatilla: Ariel Sharon did *not* “allow the massacre [at refugee camps in Lebanon] to take place,” and the charge that he had foreknowledge of the killings committed by Lebanese militiamen was rejected not only by an Israeli investigation but by a New York Federal court that heard Sharon’s libel case against *Time* magazine. Similarly, its discussion of the hardships imposed on Palestinians by Israeli construction of a border fence should, for fairness’ sake, explain that erecting the barrier was a response to terror attacks by Palestinians, and that the fence diminished those attacks by 90%. Amazing to this reader, the section on the war on terror claims that Abdullah Azzam, Osama bin Laden’s mentor and father of the idea of the global jihad, “opposed the use of terrorism.” And in discussing bin Laden’s motivating factors, Downing omits from the list bin Laden’s own oft-stated inspiration that comes from his religious beliefs. Finally, the Conflicts volume ends in mid-sentence.

Overall, Downing’s writing shows a welcome absence of the outright prejudice and smugness that we often see in series books on political topics. But his striving for objectivity and accuracy falls short. Because of their many positive features, his books could be useful introductions in junior and even senior high school – but only if supplemented and amended by an instructor or by other sources to correct the sometimes flawed treatment.

*Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH*

**Hampton, Wilborn.** *War in the Middle East: A Reporter’s Story: Black September and the Yom Kippur War.* Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2007. 112pp. \$19.99. ISBN: 978-0-7636-2493-4.

There are some factual subjects that, in the hands of a skillful writer, read like suspense stories. Eileen Cooper’s *The Dead Sea Scrolls* and Bruce Feiler’s *Walking the Bible* immediately come to mind. Here is another: Hampton’s first-person account about his experiences as a reporter in the Middle East during two critical events: Black September (1970) and the Yom Kippur War (1973). In the former, the Jordanian military attacked and ultimately expelled radical Palestinian groups that had set up a virtually independent state within Jordan. Hampton was pinned down along with other reporters and a few guests at Amman’s Hotel Intercontinental and his story of how he got the story will keep readers on the edge of their seats. During the Yom Kippur War, when Egyptian and Syrian forces attacked and, for a while, threatened to overcome the Israelis, Hampton was able to drive to war zones in the north and the south, seeing firsthand what was going on from the Israeli vantage point. The style in which he recounts these experiences is reportorial in the best sense of the word: accurate, objective, cogent, and gripping. He provides historical background and personal anecdotes, telling readers what he is feeling and providing a close-up view

that most nonfiction for children doesn’t achieve. Besides its value as military history, Hampton’s book gives readers a very exciting taste of the life of a foreign correspondent and an insider’s glimpse at how the news media in war zones works. Highly recommended for grades 6–9.

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

### Another Opinion

At the end of the Yom Kippur War in the Sinai, the author reports, Egyptian soldiers walk toward Israeli soldiers. Unsure what to do, the Israeli commander asks his superiors how to handle the situation. “Take them prisoner,” he is told. “They don’t want to surrender,” the Israeli commander says. “They want to shake hands.” This exchange exemplifies the author’s view of Arabs and Israelis throughout his book. By implication, Israelis are arrogant, intransigent, militaristic, and aggressive. Arabs/Palestinians are peaceful, human, and reasonable. The photographs convey the same message. Photos of Israelis mainly involve tanks, guns, and military aircraft. Palestinians are mostly shown in refugee camps or in the rubble of war. Even though he prefaces his book with the admonition, “no one side is right or wrong,” the author clearly favors the Arab side of the story. Arafat is referred to, but with no links to terrorism. If not for this bias, the book might be of interest to high school journalism students or those writing a paper on Black September or the Yom Kippur War.

*Susan Berson, Denver, CO*

**Kort, Michael G.** *The Handbook of the Middle East. Revised Edition.* Minneapolis, MN: Lerner/Twenty-First Century Books, 2008. 319pp. \$39.93. ISBN: 978-0-8225-7143-8.

The first edition of this essential handbook was published in 2002. It has been substantially updated, with coverage including events of 2007. Filling a gap that existed in the first edition, there is now a map of each country inserted into the appropriate chapter. Country-by-country information is followed by a chronology, an encyclopedia consisting of brief entries about people and places, source notes, a selected bibliography of authoritative adult books, a list of websites and books for further reading, and an index. The organization of the two editions remains the same, with a discussion of the Middle East as a region followed by country information, divided into topics such as geography and people, economy, history (subdivided by period), and politics. The format of the second edition has been slightly changed with the removal of some color photographs that were sprinkled through the first edition, and more white space for greater ease of reading. For thorough, accurate, and unbiased information about countries of the region, this is an excellent reference work for students in grades 6–12 and adults.

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

**Schemenauer, Elma.** *Welcome to Israel. Welcome to the World Series.* Mankato, MN: The Child’s World, 2008. 32pp. ISBN: 978-1-59296-917-3.

Aimed at children in the primary grades, this is a copiously illustrated overview of Israel that will be acceptable for

introductory information and simple reports. Illustrated with maps and many color photographs, it is arranged topically into such subjects as location, geography, flora and fauna, history, nationhood, people, etc. The information is accurate, printed in large type, with ample margins. Reference aids include fast facts about the country, a pronunciation guide, a glossary, short list of books and websites, and an index. It is more fluently written than Adele Richardson's *Israel* (Creative Education, 2006), which was reviewed in the Sept/Oct. 2007 issue of the *AJL Newsletter* and would be a good follow-up to *Sammy Spider's First Trip to Israel* and *My Cousin Tamar Lives in Israel*. Recommended for kindergarten–grade 2.

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

**Stacey, Gill.** *Religions of the Middle East. World Almanac Library of the Middle East Series.* Milwaukee, WI: World Almanac Library, 2007. 48pp. \$11.95. ISBN: 978-0-8368-7338-2.

This volume is the best in the World Almanac Library of the Middle East series. Besides giving general overviews of the important tenets of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the author examines subgroups of those faiths that are unique to the region. Thus the chapter on Christianity informs the reader about the Maronites of Lebanon and the Coptic Christians of Egypt. The chapter on Islam covers not only the more familiar Sunni/Shia divide, but also smaller sects: Alawites, Ismailis, and Druze. These are good introductions to these faiths, and the section on Judaism—its divisions, history, and culture—is notable for its fairness. The chapter on Islam explains important terms one usually doesn't find in these sorts of texts—terms like *hadith*—the oral traditions about Muhammad that serve to supplement the text of the Koran—and *dhimmi*—non-Muslim peoples who have a distinct status under Islamic law. Like other books in the series, there are interesting and provocative sidebar quotations, a timeline, glossary, and brief but appropriate references for further learning. There are a few shortcomings: the Islam section is weak on the concept of jihad; the illustrations for the Judaism chapter over-emphasize ultra-Orthodox Jews; Zoroastrianism is called “monotheist,” whereas it was really dualistic; and the Persian-born Bahai faith is absent. Despite these shortcomings, the book is recommended for grades 6–12.

Andrea Rapp, *Wise Temple*, Cincinnati, OH

## JUDAISM

**Meltzer, Amy.** *A Mezuzah on the Door.* Illus. by Janice Fried. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2007. 32pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-1-58013-249-7.

Noah and his family have moved from a noisy apartment in the city to a quiet house in the suburbs. Noah is lonely and misses the varied noises of his apartment building, especially the clank and clunk when Mrs. Feldman washes the dishes, the sounds of Maya practicing the violin, and Mr. Gollis's loud achoos when he sneezes. Mother decides to have a

*hanukkat habayit* celebration, which Noah confuses with the holiday of Hanukkah. His mother explains the difference between the two Jewish celebrations and mother and Noah proceed to the Jewish gift shop where Noah picks out a blue mezuzah to affix to his doorpost. While Noah looks at the array of mezuzahs, the salesman explains how a mezuzah is made. That night Noah's friends from the city arrive to celebrate. Noah's mother and father affix the mezuzah to the door and recite the blessing together. Many of the guests kiss the mezuzah on Noah's door. Noah looks at his mezuzah, thinks about all the friends and family who have touched and kissed it and no longer feels lonely. Young children, especially those who have just experienced a move will relate to Noah and may find comfort from the story. Janice Fried's pleasing mixed-media (water color, colored pencils, collage, pen and ink, and a scratching technique), softly colored pictures greatly enhance the text. Appropriate for ages 5-8, *A Mezuzah on the Door* is highly recommended for all libraries, because of its sweet story, accurate Jewish content, and beautiful illustrations.

Ilka Gordon, *Beachwood*, OH

**Metter, Bert.** *Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah: The Ceremony, the Party, and How the Day Came to Be.* Illus. by Joan Reilly. New York: Clarion, 2007. 70pp. \$15. ISBN: 978-0-618-76772-4.

Following the trend of updating useful books for young people, here is a new version of a book on bnei mitzvah. Bert Metter wrote the first version in 1984, when his own children were preparing. The book begins with the history of bar mitzvah. This is followed by an overview of bat mitzvah, including both Judith Kaplan's ceremony and the advent of women rabbis. Metter then discusses the day's events, including the service, the Torah, and the role of the young person. The book continues with the party (both elaborate and quiet celebrations are included). Finally, there are comments and memories from numerous celebrities, including Larry King and Marlee Matlin, who discuss the most memorable aspects of their ceremonies. This book will help prepare pre-bnei mitzvah students (4th and 5th graders) for their big day. In particular, it should excite them about the process and comfort them in the knowledge that others have done it—not all of them perfectly—before them. It is not a family preparation guide (see Salkin and others for planning tips); nonetheless, for children who are getting ready to start the journey, this should be a useful addition. It has a bibliography, selected bibliography, source notes, and index.

Fred Isaac, *Temple Sinai*, Oakland, CA

## TERRORISM

**Landau, Elaine.** *Suicide Bombers: Foot Soldiers of the Terrorist Movement.* Minneapolis, MN: Lerner/Twenty First Century Books, 2007. 120pp. ISBN: 978-0-7613-3470-5.

Like Landau's other books on wide-ranging topics for middle and upper grade students, *Suicide Bombers* shows a

breadth of research that differentiates her work from many other trade books for students. (There are editing mistakes, however, in the spelling of two of her sources: Emanuel Sivan and Khaled Abou el Fadl). It has some discussion of Japanese kamikaze pilots and the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers, but its main focus is on the Muslim world. Through personal stories of bombers and opinions of analysts, Landau explores the various factors — political, cultural, religious, and personal — that influence young men and women to murder civilians by blowing themselves up. She provides welcome treatment of the role of recruiters and trainers who, it is noted, do not recruit their own children for these “martyrdom missions.” A careful reading will inform the reader that “martyrdom” here has a different meaning from that in Christianity or Judaism, where a martyr is someone who chooses death rather than betray his faith. In Islam, a martyr is someone who dies in a jihad; it is not a question of leaving Islam.

Landau’s introductory note tells readers what her book is *not* about; it is only about the feelings and motives of the bombers. This may be seen as absolving her of providing historical context to terrorist acts. But it does not change the fact that the narrative leaves erroneous impressions through its incompleteness. For example: of Hanadi Jaradat, the female bomber of a crowded Haifa restaurant, we read that her motive of revenge was sparked when her brother and cousin “were killed by Israeli forces.” Landau may have seen it as beyond her purview to mention that these young men were part of the Al Quds Brigades of the terrorist group Islamic Jihad, but inclusion of that fact would have contributed to balance and fairness. Similarly, documenting the humiliation that Israeli checkpoints have caused to Palestinians

would have been fair had she added that the checkpoints were instituted because of suicide bombers who were freely entering Israel.

Finally, one caveat regarding the age of the target audience: Landau includes the promise to young male “martyrs” that they will have sex with the heavenly virgins, and even reports how one bomber was found to have wrapped his genitals in what he thought was a protective covering, for their “future use in Paradise.” Has an index, bibliography, and black-and-white photos. Recommended for grades 10–12 with the caveats noted above.

Andrea Rapp, *Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH*

Note: *The Devora Doresh Mysteries 2* by Carol Korb Hubner (Judaica Press, 2007), which was reviewed in the Sept/Oct 2007 issue of the *AJL Newsletter*, was first published as *The Twisted Menora and Other Devora Doresh Mysteries* in 1981 by Judaica Press. All but one of the stories in the original edition are re-printed in the new edition.

Three books reviewed in the Adult Review Section would also be of interest to high school students. They are: Mike Comins’s *A Wild Faith* (p. 28), Martin Schiller’s *Bread, Butter and Sugar* (p. 35), and Paul Azous’s *In the Plains of the Wilderness* (p. 37).

## Children’s Classics Will Soon Be Back in Print

Publishers have begun responding to the need to re-issue classic, but out-of-print, Jewish children’s books. *The Castle on Hester Street* by Linda Heller, a picture book about the joys and tribulations of starting a new life in a new country, is reviewed in this issue of the Newsletter. It was originally published by the Jewish Publication Society in 1952, and won a Sydney Taylor Book Award for younger readers. The new edition has just been released by Simon and Schuster, illustrated gloriously by Boris Kulikov.

Another beloved classic picture book, *Chicken Man* by Michelle Edwards, will be released by New South Books in January 2008. And Marshall Cavendish has just announced a plan to publish a new line of classic children’s books. The publisher is interested in titles that have received awards, have enjoyed starred re-

views, or have withstood the test of time in story hour. Marshall Cavendish is asking for suggested titles to be sent to Marilyn Mark, Associate Editor of Marshall Cavendish Children’s Books at Marshall Cavendish, 99 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, NY, 10591 or to mark@marshallcavendish.com.

AJL members may recall that several years ago Anna Olswanger led an SSC initiative to alert publishers to the need to bring Jewish children’s books back into print. And AJL has recently published *Jewish Classics for Kids*, an annotated list of about 100 classic titles compiled by Linda R. Silver. Perhaps, with continued urging from AJL members, Marshall Cavendish and other publishers will respond to an effort in which AJL has been a leader. Please send your suggestions to Marshall Cavendish soon!





# Reviews of Titles for Adults

EDITED BY MERRILY F. HART

## FICTION

In the Adult Review section the emphasis is usually on non-fiction. We also focus on books that are not widely reviewed in the general press. In this issue, the editors redress the balance with a section of capsule reviews adapted from the Greater Cleveland Chapter's list. We thank Wendy Wasman, editor, and her colleagues for this list prepared for Jewish Book Month.

**Andrzejewski, Jerzy.** *Holy Week: A Novel of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.* (Polish and Polish-American Studies) Ohio University Press, 2007. 152 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-0-8214-1716-4).

Published in Polish in 1945 and newly translated into English, Andrzejewski's novel dramatically portrays the abandonment of the Jews to Nazi persecution by the dominant Polish society in Warsaw.

**Anton, Maggie.** *Rashi's Daughters: Book II: Miriam.* Plume, 2007. 496 p. \$15 (ISBN 978-0-452-28863-8).

This second book in the trilogy continues the portrayal of daily life of Jewish women in medieval France, as seen through the eyes of Miriam, midwife and headstrong daughter of Talmud scholar Rabbi Salomon ben Isaac (Rashi).

**Appelfeld, Aharon.** *All Whom I Have Loved.* Translated by Aloma Halter. Schocken Books, 2007. 256 p. \$23 (ISBN 978-0-8052-4177-8).

Appelfeld's latest novel to be translated into English tells the haunting story of nine-year-old Paul Rosenfeld and his family in Eastern Europe in the 1930s.

**Begley, Louis.** *Matters of Honor.* Knopf, 2007. 320 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-307-26525-8).

In the 1950s, three Harvard roommates struggle with loyalty, integrity, and status pressures in school and in the ensuing years. One of the roommates, Henry, is a Polish refugee who survived World War II in hiding and continues to battle anti-Semitism at every turn.

**Bloom, Amy.** *Away.* Random House, 2007. 256 p. \$23.95 (ISBN 978-1-4000-6356-7).

A young immigrant woman stops at nothing in her quest across continents to find her daughter, whom she thought perished in a pogrom that killed her husband and parents.

**Chabon, Michael.** *The Yiddish Policemen's Union.* Harper Collins, 2007. 432 p. \$26.95 (ISBN 978-0-00-714982-7).

What if Sitka Alaska, not the British Mandate in Palestine, became the Jewish homeland? It is now six decades later, and Sitka, which has grown prosperous under the Yiddish speak-

ing Jews, is reverting back to Alaska. Meanwhile, homicide detective Meyer Landsman is busy trying to solve the murder of his chess-playing neighbor.

**Danford, Natalie.** *Inheritance.* St. Martin's Press, 2007. 224 p. \$23.95 (ISBN 978-0-312-34902-8).

This engaging first novel takes readers from present-day America to Italy during World War II, as a daughter learns her father's secrets when she travels to his hometown in Italy after his death.

**Elon, Emuna.** *If You Awaken Love.* Translated by David Hazony. Toby Press, 2007. 229 p. \$14.95 (ISBN 978-1-59264-145-1).

Shlomtzion, a 40-year-old interior designer living in Tel Aviv, has fled the Orthodox world after her childhood sweetheart broke off their engagement because his rabbi refused them his blessing. Now, years later, she is forced to confront her old flame and re-examine her emotions and her religious and political beliefs.

**Englander, Nathan.** *The Ministry of Special Cases.* Knopf, 2007. 352 p. \$25 (ISBN 978-0-375-40493-1).

In his first book since the memorable short story collection, *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*, Englander explores the erasure of identity among a Jewish family living in Buenos Aires in 1976, the time of the country's "dirty war," when suspected political subversives were kidnapped by the Argentine security forces and "disappeared." Englander's dark themes demand readers' close attention.

**Etzioni-Halevy, Eva.** *The Garden of Ruth.* Plume, 2007. 340 p. \$14 (ISBN 978-0-452-28673-3).

Etzioni-Halevy's imaginative second novel focuses on the biblical story of Ruth.

**Havazelet, Ehud.** *Bearing the Body.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007. 304 p. \$24 (ISBN 978-0374299729).

Nathan Mirsky and his father Sol, a surly Holocaust survivor, travel to San Francisco in an effort to come to terms with the death of free-spirited Daniel, the estranged brother and son whose complicated life and violent death force his survivors to examine their own troubled histories.

**Isaacs, Susan.** *Past Perfect.* Scribner, 2007. 352 p. \$25 (ISBN 978-0-7432-4216-5).

Popular novelist Isaacs' eleventh novel has former CIA analyst Katie Schottland using her expertise to solve the mysterious disappearance of a colleague and the murders of two East German asylum seekers.



**Jenoff, Pam.** *The Kommandant's Girl*. Mira, 2007. 400 p. \$13.95 (ISBN 978-0-7783-2342-6).

Emma Blau, a young librarian, escapes Krakow's Jewish ghetto with false papers provided by her activist husband who has left to join the Jewish resistance. She winds up working for a German general, and the consequences that ensue test her new marriage.

**Judah, Sophie.** *Dropped from Heaven: Stories*. Schocken, 2007. 243 p. \$23 (ISBN 978-0-8052-4248-5).

This debut collection of stories illuminates the little known community of Bene Israel in India.

**Kellerman, Fay.** *The Burnt House: A Peter Decker/Rina Lazarus Novel*. William Morrow, 2007. 438 p. \$25.95 (ISBN 978-0-06-122732-5).

One of the less successful entries in the series featuring detective Peter Decker, the latest will still be requested by Kellerman fans.

**Levi, Primo.** *A Tranquil Star: Unpublished Stories*. Translated by Ann Goldstein and Alessandra Bastagli. W.W. Norton, 2007. 176 p. \$21.95 (ISBN 978-0-393-06468-1).

The first new American collection of fiction by Italian chemist and Holocaust survivor gathers 17 stories previously published in Italian between 1949 and 1986.

**Litman, Ellen.** *The Last Chicken in America: A Novel in Stories*. Norton, 2007. 224 p. \$23.95 (ISBN 978-0-393-06511-4).

Set in Squirrel Hill, Pittsburgh, the author joins a wave of recent Soviet Jewish immigrants in portraying the lives of their fellow refugees, adapting (or not) to American life.

**Lowenthal, Michael.** *Charity Girl*. Houghton Mifflin, 2007. 334 p. \$24 (ISBN 978-0-618-54629-9).

The Committee on Prevention of Social Evils Surrounding Military Camps imprisons Frieda Mintz, a 17-year-old Jewish shopgirl from Boston, when her first encounter with a soldier turns from idealistic love into a nightmare of bureaucracy and medical mistreatment during World War I.

**Mekler, Eva.** *The Polish Woman*. Bridge Works Publishing, 2007. 250 p. \$21.95 (ISBN 978-1-882593-99-6).

In 1967 Manhattan, 29-year-old Karolina Staszek suddenly appears in Jewish attorney Philip Landau's office, claiming to be his long-lost cousin, hidden by a Catholic family in Lublin. In this suspenseful novel, Philip must decide if Karolina is a shrewd con artist or his real cousin who survived the Holocaust.

**Mendelson, Charlotte.** *When We Were Bad*. Houghton Mifflin, 2007. 336 p. \$24 (ISBN 978-0-618-88343-1).

To all appearances, the Rubin family of London is perfect. However, the façade is about to crumble in this humorous and sympathetic portrait of a family in crisis.

**Modan, Rutu.** *Exit Wounds*. Drawn & Quarterly, 2007. 168 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-1-897299-06-7).

Modan's first full-length graphic novel centers on Koby, a taxi driver in Tel Aviv, and Numi, a young soldier who draws Koby into her efforts to find Koby's father, her former lover, who may have been a victim of a suicide bombing.

**Nahai, Gina B.** *Caspian Rain*. MacAdam Cage, 2007. 290 p. \$25 (ISBN 978-1-59692-251-8).

This story of a haunted Jewish family in Tehran during the last years of the shah focuses on the disastrous marriage of impoverished Bahar and wealthy Omid.

**Nassib, Selim.** *The Palestinian Lover*. Translated by Alison Anderson. Europa Editions, 2007. 164 p. \$14.95 (ISBN 978-1-933372-23-5).

Originally published in French, this sharply observed novel tells the love story between a young Golda Meir and the son of a rich Palestinian family.

**Ragen, Naomi.** *The Saturday Wife*. St. Martin's Press, 2007. 304 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-312-35238-7).

Delilah Goldgrab is a Queen's Yeshiva girl who relinquishes her dream of living in luxury when she becomes a rebbitzin and must face the challenges within her marriage and the modern Orthodox community.

**Rakoff, Alvin.** *Baldwin Street*. Bunim & Bannigan, 2007. 205 p. \$23 (ISBN 978-1-933480-14-5).

Rakoff's novel is set in Toronto during the Depression, with a cast of characters who are members of the tight-knit Jewish immigrant community.

**Reich, Tova.** *My Holocaust*. HarperCollins, 2007. 336 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-06-117345-5).

A scathing satire on the trivialization of the Holocaust, Reich's novel will infuriate more than a few. It is both hilarious and deeply serious from its depiction of enterprising survivors who inflate their wartime experiences to wannabes representing the poultry holocaust, the fur holocaust, and a parade of others looking for a piece of the action.

**Roth, Philip.** *Exit Ghost*. Houghton Mifflin, 2007. 304 p. \$26 (ISBN 978-0-618-91547-7).

In this ninth installment of the Zuckerman saga, Nathan deals with the ravages of age, an obsession with a beautiful, wealthy young Texan, and a scandalous new biography of his mentor, E. I. Lonoff, the subject of the first Zuckerman novel, *The Ghost Writer*.

**Schwarzschild, Edward.** *The Family Diamond: Stories*. Algonquin Books, 2007. 224 p. \$13.95 (ISBN 978-1-56512-410-3).

Set in Philadelphia, these nine scintillating stories by the author of *Responsible Men* explore the bonds that both create and dissolve family relationships.

**Segal, Lore.** *Shakespeare's Kitchen: Stories.* New Press, 2007. 240 p. \$22.95 (ISBN 978-1-59558-151-8).

Segal's wonderfully realized stories center on Ilka Weisz, star of the author's classic novel *Her First American*, and her relationship with the dysfunctional family that is formed by her intellectual co-workers at the Concordance think tank.

**Silva, Daniel.** *The Secret Servant.* Putnam, 2007. 400 p. \$25.95 (ISBN 978-0-399-15422-5).

Israeli operative Gabriel Allon returns in this entertaining new thriller to fight terrorism and hunt down the kidnappers of the goddaughter of the president of the United States.

**Sofer, Dalia.** *The Septembers of Shiraz.* Ecco, 2007. 340 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-06-113040-3).

After Isaac Amin is arrested for the "crime" of being Jewish in post-revolutionary Iran, he and his family endure the nightmare that has transformed their country and made them outcasts. The author's family fled Iran after the Islamist revolution and this riveting first novel vibrates with the immediacy of lived experience.

**Ulinich, Anya.** *Petropolis.* Viking, 2007. 324 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-670-03819-0).

Sasha Goldberg, a biracial Jewish teenager living in Asbestos 2, escapes her dying Siberian town and her overbearing mother to search for her father in America. In her debut novel, Ulinich weaves an engaging story with a thoroughly captivating protagonist.

**Yahia, Mona.** *When the Grey Beetles Took Over Baghdad.* Braziler, 2007. 344 p. \$22.50 (ISBN 978-0-8076-1582-9).

Winner of the Jewish Quarterly-Wingate Prize for Fiction, this vivid and personal story of growing up Jewish in Baghdad is set against the backdrop of political upheaval and an increasingly fractured society.

**Yizhar, S.** *Preliminaries.* Translated by Nicholas de Lange. Toby Press, 2007. 305 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-59264-190-1).

Written in 1991, but recently translated into English, this autobiographical novel of a young boy growing up in Palestine in the 20s and 30s marked the final flowering of the great novelist's *oeuvre*.

**Yizhar, S.** *Midnight Convoy & Other Stories.* With an Introduction by Dan Miron. New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2007. 283p. \$14.95 (ISBN 978-1-59264-183-3) Pbk.

The only available English-language collection of Yizhar's shorter fiction, this book includes a representative selection of seven of Yizhar's works beginning with his first published story in 1938. Each has a different translator. Yizhar Smilansky (1916-2006) was born in Rehovot, Israel. His family was from Russia, members of the Zionist pioneer intelligentsia. He was a member of the Israeli parliament, as well as a professor of education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and of Hebrew literature at Tel Aviv University. During his long literary career he was highly regarded in Israel, and received several prestigious awards for this work. He

is considered the founding father of Israeli literature and its chief master of prose fiction. In a lengthy introductory essay, Dan Miron discusses and analyzes his early work, written between 1948 and 1963, and the late works written in the 1990s. He describes the author's themes and style, his lyricism, and his reverence for nature. This collection is an important one for students and scholars of Israeli literature. It also can be enjoyed by the general public. It is a welcome addition to short story collections in Jewish public, community center, synagogue, and academic libraries.

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

## NONFICTION

**Ansh, Tamar.** *A Taste of Challah: A Comprehensive Guide to Challah and Bread Baking.* Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 2007. 201 p. \$34.99 (ISBN 978-1-58330-922-3).

**Wiener, Shira and Ayelet Yifrach.** *The Secret of Challah.* Photographs by Tamar Kinarty. Rosh Pinna, Israel: Reshit Publications, 2007. 120 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-965-90779-2-2).

Challah is such an intrinsic part of Shabbat and such an important mitzvah, that many have been too intimidated by the requirements for separating dough, working with the yeast dough, and shaping or braiding the challah to make their own loaves. Fear no more! Two new books include easy-to-follow recipes, beautiful color photographs, and excellent suggestions. There are recipes for specialty breads and other yeast dough creations such as pretzels and bobkas. The books include the laws of separating challah, and the appropriate blessings and prayers to say during the process. Measurements and conversions are noted. There are tips on using yeast, and applying glazes to achieve different effects, and descriptions of lots of different shapes and sizes to create.

In *The Secret of Challah*, the braiding section includes explicit instructions and illustrations, although some of us need more guidance than "alternately repeat steps 2 and 3." The final pages include specialty shapes as well as shapes for the different Jewish holidays. The placement of the ingredients in a colored side bar and the numbered instructions in the middle of the page facilitate preparation. While not as comprehensive as *A Taste of Challah* in terms of recipes and detailed braiding techniques, it is full of excellent advice and recipes and recommended for all libraries.

Ms. Ansh's book includes fun ways to use rolls and dough for Purim breads, baskets, and napkin rings. One of the interesting tips is to practice with Play-Doh to improve your braiding skills. The stories and explanations included are more anecdotal than those in *The Secret of Challah*, which are based on various discourses and writings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The only drawback to this book is that while you will want to refer to it, you will not want to leave it near the baking area. It is highly recommended for all libraries, but particularly as a gift for brides.

*Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ*

**Ben Amos, Dan, ed.** *Folktales of the Jews. Volume 2: Tales from Eastern Europe.* Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2007. 624 p. \$75.00 (ISBN 978-0-8276-0830-6).

This anthology is the product of a 15-year endeavor spearheaded by Ellen Frankel, editor of the Jewish Publication Society. It contains 71 tales culled from the Israel Folktale Archive (IFA), translated into English, arranged in categories such as Tales of the Supernatural, Hasidic Tales, Tales Between Jews and Non-Jews, and Moral Tales, and presented with extensive notes and commentaries. Each tale is followed by an analysis of its folklore motifs; comments on its similarities to other IFA tales; historical, literary and cultural backgrounds; and any unique aspects. While this is a book of scholarship in which every detail of a folktale is analyzed and referenced, the tales are accessible to all readers.

Parent-child relationships, romance, wealth and poverty, reasons for war, and old age are the usual motifs, and the tales feature miracle working rebbes, demons, wise peasants, and kings and their daughters. While some tales are more memorable than others, they all attest to the storytelling tradition in Jewish life. Each story is given a title and attribution. Included are biographies of the narrators and collectors (ethnographers), a 72-page bibliography, and indexes of motifs, tale types, and contents. Dan Ben Amos, the editor and author of the commentary to the tales in this volume, along with Dov Noy, the consulting editor and designated founder of the academic field of Jewish folklore, are to be congratulated for an impressive achievement. The first volume, *Tales from the Sephardic Dispersion*, was published in 2006.

*Esther Nussbaum, Ramaz Upper School, NY*

**Ben David, Aryeh.** *The Godfile: 10 Approaches to Personalizing Prayer.* Jerusalem, New York: Devora Publishing, 2007. 125 p. \$12.95 pbk. (ISBN 978-1-932687-94-1) \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 978-1-932687-93-4).

As an Orthodox Jew who prays regularly, I know that prayer can be mechanical; after its completion, it is rare to feel satisfied with its quality. This book is a manual. It deals with how to evaluate our relationship with G-d and how to pray. At the kernel of the book are ten approaches to prayer, for example, that of the lover, the artist, or the mystic. In each case, the author presents a relevant quotation from a central figure such as Rabbi Levi of Berdichev or Rabbi Kook. The quotation is followed by an analysis and discussion of how to implement the approach.

The author continually emphasizes that a change in one's approach to G-d affects his relationship with his fellow-man and vice versa. This is a short book, offering a lot to a reader willing to open himself to the ideas within it and to invest in carrying them out. I have one minor reservation. Rabbi Ben David presents different approaches using representative figures, each of whom has a very complex philosophy of life. He might have pointed out that none of these short quotations is fully representative of the richness of its author's thought, and I would suggest that anybody who enjoys this book continue by re-reading these brief quotations in their original context.

*Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

**Braiterman, Zachary.** *The Shape of Revelation: Aesthetics and Modern Jewish Thought.* Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007. 300 p. \$55.00. (ISBN 978-0-8047-5321-0).

This sophisticated book is rich in insights and provides a wealth of connections. Braiterman knows a lot about his time period, post-modern theory, and the history of art and philosophy. He shares his vast knowledge with German culture and philosophic universalisms. Those interested in the religious aspects of aesthetics, including theology, will find a treasure trove of information. The author makes a creative and valuable contribution to a new reading of Buber and Rosenzweig by illuminating the artistic cultural context of their German environment and *Bildung*. Braiterman explores the overlap between revelation and aesthetic form, and shows that the works of Buber and Rosenzweig have important correlations with the modernist painters Klee and Kandinsky. This book is recommended for all libraries hosting upper level academic art history, history, and philosophy programs, or wherever there are readers interested in philosophically informed modern aesthetics.

*Dr. David B. Levy, Brooklyn, NY*

**Comins, Mike.** *A Wild Faith: Jewish Ways into the Wilderness, Wilderness Ways into Judaism.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2007. 221 p. \$16.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-316-3).

Rabbi Comins has written a fascinating book for anyone who takes Judaism and the outdoors seriously. His book speaks to this reader in a special way; for me the intersection of Judaism and the natural world is a very important connection. In studying the Mishnah, I was intrigued to discover that the rabbis had a strong and very detailed awareness of all aspects of agriculture. This should not be surprising, as our religious calendar is so closely tied to the annual cycles of nature and the time of the tefillot change according to the length of the days as the seasons wax and wane.

Rabbi Comins speaks both to the well-informed Jew who may or may not have a strong connection to the wilderness and to the Jew who loves the wild and may not be aware of the nature connections in our faith. His ideas will evoke different reactions depending on the reader's place on the nature/Judaism continuum. Generally, anyone who is familiar with meditation techniques, yoga practice, or simple outdoor activities like hiking, canoeing, skiing or biking, will find valuable suggestions for increasing the spiritual side of his or her encounters with nature. Some of the author's suggestions would work just as well in an indoor setting such as a beit midrash, synagogue, or living room. The section of the book called A Map of the Heart is particularly useful for conveying the values of Judaism as they relate to each other and to nature. This book takes a different approach to Jewish practice, and may be a good guide for people seeking a spiritual path to Judaism. Recommended for synagogue, public, and high school libraries.

*Marion M. Stein, Abraham Joshua Heschel High School, NY*



**Cutter, William ed.** *Healing and the Jewish Imagination: Spiritual and Practical Perspectives on Judaism and Health*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2007. 219 p. \$24.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-314-9).

In his collection of essays, Bill Cutter (a colleague of mine at HUC), brings together rabbis, scholars, and medical and legal professionals to discuss many of the issues that occur when Judaism and health intersect. This anthology demonstrates that Judaism offers tools to individuals, communities, and practitioners for dealing with health-related issues. The essays in this volume vary in depth and tone (from very formal to personal). Individual essays offer inspirational stories from the Bible and mystical texts; ways to make medical decisions by either looking at Jewish narratives or using halakhic methods; approaches for dealing with stigma both from community and personal perspectives; insights into disability issues; and strategies for deciding when and how to use new technologies.

Many works on health and healing seem to focus on acute illness and injury. One strength of this collection is the inclusion of issues relating to chronic disease, disability, and aging. In his essay, Elliot Dorff suggests a "Copernican revolution." Instead of viewing a society in which the disabled are treated as abnormal, he tries envisioning a world in which we acknowledge that most of us are "temporarily able-bodied" and that we'll all have to deal with limitations at some time in our lives. The changes in attitude, policies, and architecture that this would bring about would be revolutionary. In the section on stigma, David Schulman discusses HIV/AIDS and other diseases that result in a "spoiled identity" of the ill person. Rachel Adler continues this discussion with her analysis of "tzaraat." While many people translate this as "leprosy," she defines it as a radical illness that erodes either our bodies or our minds. Adler examines dementia as an example of tzaraat. Recommended for most libraries.

*Sheryl Stahl, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, CA*

**Elior, Rachel.** *Jewish Mysticism: The Infinite Expression of Freedom*. Translated by Yudith Nave. Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007. 207 p. \$39.50 (ISBN 978-1-874774-67-9).

*Jewish Mysticism* has a telling subtitle, *The Infinite Expression of Freedom*; for Elior, Jewish mystics seek to reveal "the concealed divine intention in the holy text [which] is open to a variety of interpretations, without challenging its basic truth and its sanctified formulation." Drawing from the "Jewish mystical library ... written at various times and places from late antiquity to the beginning of the twentieth century," Elior paints a fascinating tableau of Jewish mysticism, and explores the phenomenon of mysticism in general. This is a book of synthesis, crisscrossing the field, juxtaposing evidence from diverse sources, and not a tame chronological depiction of Jewish mysticism. At the same time, the book is accessible to the beginner, listing the sources used in chapter one, and in the annotated bibliography. A valuable tool is the appendix which offers a list of the "historical and literary figures, kabbalists, and mystics mentioned in Jewish mystical literature," with a selected bibliography after each biographical note.

For academic libraries, large synagogue libraries, and the adventurous lay person.

*Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD*

**Feinstein, Edward, ed.** *Jews and Judaism in the 21st Century: Human Responsibility, the Presence of God and the Future of Covenant*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2007. 169 p. \$24.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-315-6).

The editor of this book defines it as a "rabbinic conversation." Five prominent, highly articulate American rabbis (representing Orthodoxy, Conservatism, Reform and Reconstructionism) discuss Judaism, past present and future. The book is divided into two parts. In the first part, each rabbi is asked how he has changed and what changes he has seen in Judaism. In the second part eleven subjects are discussed, including the role of the synagogue, the Holocaust, and the vanishing American Jew. All speakers emphasize "a love for the Jewish people" together with hope for the future. I was impressed by the intellectual level of the discussion and see this book as an interesting contribution to the continuing discussion about Jewish identity.

*Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

**Fineberg, Michael, Shimon Samuels, Mark Weitzman, eds.** *Antisemitism, the Generic Hatred: Essays in Memory of Simon Wiesenthal*. London, Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007, 329 p. \$75 cloth (ISBN 978-0-85303-745-3); \$35 pbk. (ISBN 978-0-85303-746-0).

This memorial volume to Simon Wiesenthal has two parts. The first part consists of tributes from friends and prominent personages who knew Wiesenthal and/or worked with him. Among the eulogists are King Hussein of Jordan, Mary Robinson and Simone Veil.

It is encouraging that the book was published not only by the Simon Wiesenthal Foundation but also by UNESCO, and it enjoyed some backing from the French government. The essays are well written, aiming to describe the current situation rather than discussing theoretical aspects. A lot of emphasis is placed on anti-Zionism as a disguise for antisemitism. A special article in the collection is a short piece by Yaakov Kirschen on the use of humor to fight antisemitism. There is a famous comment by Rashi that, "hatred destroys all logic" and this is made manifest by the fact that the extreme left and the extreme right together with Islamic fundamentalists can use the same material and make common cause against the Jews. An important book, which I would recommend whole-heartedly.

*Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

**Gold, Ben-Zion.** *The Life of Jews in Poland before the Holocaust: A Memoir*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. 154 p. \$21.95 (ISBN 978-0-8032-2222-9).

This book is a beautifully-written intimate memoir of Ben-Zion Gold's life as a child in Poland. Gold was the director and rabbi at Harvard-Radcliff Hillel for over 40 years. Born in 1923 in Radom, Poland into a traditional Jewish home, Gold's father, a businessman, was a city councilman with Socialist leanings. The chapter My Religious Upbringing,

which lovingly depicts the everyday life of his family and the weekly and yearly rhythms of family and communal life, will become a classic picture of traditional Jewish prewar life. Most of the book covers Gold's life from age four up to the arrival of the Germans. We experience his life through the eyes of a child — entering heder and playing hooky, observing the courtship and marriage of his sister, experiencing his own adolescent awakenings, developing his religious sensibility, and discovering the various types of Orthodox Jewish life styles: the Lithuanian yeshiva students, Hassidim, and Mussarniks. At the end of the book he chronicles his escape from a convoy to Dachau and rescue by US troops, and his reconstructed life after the war — arriving in the United States in 1947 and regaining a connection to Judaism as a rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary. With this ending the book becomes an account of a spiritual quest, as well as a loving record of the world that was religious Polish Jewry. This book is a must for all libraries but may not be suitable for juveniles.

*Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College, Newton Centre, MA*

**Greenspoon, Leonard J. & Ronald A. Simkins, eds.** *American Judaism in Popular Culture* Lincoln, NE: Creighton University Press/University of Nebraska Press. (Studies in Jewish Civilization, v. 17) 2007. \$35. (ISBN 978-1-881871-56-9).

This volume contains 14 papers presented at the University's Harris Center for Judaic Studies Conference in 2004. The presenters include several well-known figures in Judaica research — Jenna Joselit, Steven Alan Carr, Jeffrey Gurock — as well as other commentators. Five of the essays deal specifically with films. The collection also includes "Tchotchkes: A Study of Popular Culture in Tangible Form" by Judith Neulande, a piece on S.J. Perelman, two commentaries on rock music, and a study of Jewish references in contemporary daily comic strips by Leonard J. Greenspoon. A few contributions are insightful. Joselit's commentary on the broad range and wide popularity of entertainment available on the Lower East Side, and Lynn Rapoport's analysis of the Three Stooges' two short films lampooning Hitler and Mussolini are especially worthwhile. Others range from the mildly interesting to the pedestrian. At least one of them (Jeffrey Gurock's essay on basketball player Tamir Goodman) has been published elsewhere.

The critical community views Jewish culture as exemplary of American immigrant society during the decades from 1880 to 1920. These essays, on topics of general interest, are well researched and reasonably well written. For these reasons, this volume will be of interest to large academic libraries and seminaries. Synagogues, unless they are collecting the Creighton Studies series, do not need to acquire it.

*Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

**Halperin, David J.** *Sabbatai Zevi: Testimonies to a Fallen Messiah.* Oxford : Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007. 235 p. \$49.50 (ISBN 978-1-904113-25-6).

In 1648 Sabbatai Zevi declared himself the Messiah; in 1666 he converted to Islam. After his death in 1676, he had

followers who continued to believe him to be the redeemer of Israel and he still does to this day. While there have been a number of excellent books on Zevi, David J. Halperin lets us catch a rare glimpse of what it was like to be a Jew in this era of upheaval. In *Sabbatai Zevi: Testimonies to a Fallen Messiah*, Halperin translates into English five contemporary accounts of Sabbatai Zevi's life, from his followers as well as his detractors. Not only does Halperin introduce each document by placing it into its proper historical and sociological context, but he also provides generous annotations, explaining the many biblical and rabbinic references and relevant historical figures. Like much of the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization's publications, it not only achieves a high level of scholarship, but it is also very readable. Highly recommended.

*Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, FL*

**Isaacson, Walter.** *Einstein: His Life and Universe.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007. 675 p. \$32 (ISBN 978-0-7432-6473-0).

Isaacson's masterful biography of Albert Einstein may well come to stand as the definitive one. It takes into account all Einstein-related papers and is based on thorough research of scientific, biographical, and historical documents, plus much legendary matter that has arisen around this fascinating figure of the 20th century. With exquisite skill the author describes Einstein's often contradictory personality, his independence of thought, creativity, and modest bearing, yet his insistence on speaking his mind regardless of possible repercussions and public opinion. According to the biographer, "The world had never before seen, and perhaps never will again, such a scientific celebrity superstar, one who also happened to be a gentle icon of humanist values and a living patron saint for Jews."

Although Isaacson accurately describes the complex world of Einstein's path-breaking contributions to science, readers who cannot follow him into these realms will nevertheless enjoy and learn from the book. Einstein's multiplicity of interests — freedom of expression, music, pacifism, Zionism, world government — and his wry sense of humor, expressed in hundreds of pithy comments, shine vividly on every page. The reader will discover a great deal to admire and revere, but will be puzzled by his human inadequacies, which marred his family relationships and caused much unhappiness to those close to him. The writer offers new insights into his subject's life and complex character.

The clear print and page layout facilitate reading this lengthy tome. Highly recommended.

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

**Jacobson, David C.** *Creator, Are You Listening?: Israeli Poets on God and Prayer.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007. 243 p. \$34.95 (ISBN 978-0-253-34818-0).

For this work, Professor Jacobson selected three men and three women, two deceased and four still active Israeli poets: Zelda Mishkovsky, Yehuda Amichai, Asher Reich, Rivka Miriam, Hava Pinhas-Cohen, and Admiel Kosman, all

published between the 1950s and the beginning of the 21st century. The choice was subjective, but the poems included in this collection “constitute a good basis on which to engage scholars and lovers of Hebrew poetry in a consideration of the religious dimension of Israeli poetry.” For each of the six poets Jacobson provides a biography and an overview of the themes to be studied. Then come the selected poems in Hebrew with English translation, each followed by a line-by-line analysis, illuminating how the words chosen by the poet illustrate the themes addressed. According to Jacobson, “Whether these poems speak of God’s presence or absence, they always have much to say about the contemporary search for the divine and ... speak in uniquely direct ways to our most central spiritual concerns.” A fine anthology, scholarly and accessible at the same time, recommended to all interested in Israeli poetry or prayer in literature.

Roger S. Kohn, *Silver Spring, MD*

**Kaplan, Beth.** *Finding the Jewish Shakespeare: the Life and Legacy of Jacob Gordin.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007. 304 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-8156-0884-4).

Think fast: what comes to your mind when you hear “Yiddish theater?” For most people, I believe, the answer would be “Goldfaden” or “Adler.” For me, it was always *Mirele Efros, the Jewish Queen Lear*. Considered one of the “juiciest” roles in the repertoire of any Yiddish troupe, this was the part that any aspiring actress would kill to play, and every Yiddish theater spectator flock to see. Melodramatic, heart wrenching, tear jerking and magnificent – you always got your money’s worth. Now comes a book about the playwright, Jacob Gordin, written by his great-granddaughter. Beth Kaplan is out to redeem her majestic ancestor from oblivion and vindicate his ideology, struggles, humiliations, and eventual tragic death in 1909 at the age of 56. Kaplan spent almost 25 years documenting Gordin’s life and legacy, “not as a scholar, but as a curious great granddaughter.” Gordin’s stature is evident in the partial list of his plays in the appendix, as well as in the selected bibliography (which does not include one of the earlier biographies of Gordin, written by Isaac Turkow-Grudberg in 1970). Although Gordin richly “borrowed” from Ibsen and Chekhov, Kaplan still crowns him as the “Jewish Shakespeare,” making her case in a first-person narrative, in the loving voice of a great-granddaughter who unashamedly takes his side and describes his triumphs and his disappointments in detail. Still, the book is a delightful exploration of the history of the Lower East Side of New York at the turn of the century, especially that of its intelligentsia, its playwrights, authors, actors and critics. Jacob Gordin’s life is traced from his birth in Russia, to his emigration to New York. This work describes his politics, his talents, and his interpersonal relationships, and offers us a closer look at the way he wrote, published, directed, and controlled his plays and the people around him. The book would have benefited from more photographs of scenes from the plays, troupes and actors that made Gordin into one of the most popular playwrights of Jewish theatre.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, *Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles, CA*

**Kastner, Bernie.** *Understanding the Afterlife in This Life.* Jerusalem & New York: Devora Publishing, 2007. 217 p. \$21.95 (ISBN 978-1-932687-89-7).

Kastner draws from modern science, Torah, stories, jokes, and anecdotal evidence to glimpse “beyond the veil” of this world to the next. According to tradition, our lives do not end after this world, but we live in a continuum of lives. Kastner urges that we not wait to study the afterlife for the sooner we strive to understand, the sooner we will have a chance to find happiness. This is an excellent work but it is not comprehensive; many more philosophic texts, e.g., Rav Saadia Gaon’s *Sefer Emunot VeDeot*, Rav Bachya ibn Paquda’s *Sefer Hovot LeLevot*, and midrashic texts, could have been offered. Historical treatment of the subject e.g., how the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes differed on the view of the afterlife, and later Hebrew and Latin texts such as Crusade narratives and martyrs’ views of heaven, are not examined. Kastner does touch on passages from the Zohar, Ramban, Iyov, Kohelet, Tehillim, Pesachim 50a, Sifri, Shabbat 88, Rabbis Aryeh Kaplan and Avigdor Miller. This is an immense topic, and Kastner has done a good job, given his intended limited scope. He is a certified reality therapist whose research focuses on therapeutic approaches in dealing with death anxiety, end-of-life issues, and bereavement. This intriguing and well-written work is recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Dr. David B. Levy, *Baltimore, MD*

**Kaufman, Debra et al., eds.** *From the Protocols of the Elders of Zion to Holocaust Denial Trials: Challenging the Media, Law, and the Academy.* London, Portland OR: Valentine Mitchell, 2007. 131 p. \$85.00 (ISBN 978-0-85303-641-8); \$29.95 pbk. (ISBN 978-0-85303-642-5).

This collection of papers from a conference held at Northeastern University in 2001 is a response to the Irving v. Penguin/Lipstadt trial. The authors use this trial as well as the Eichman/Nuremburg trials and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* trial to examine the persistence of anti-Semitic and racist invective despite the existence of evidence that it is false. The papers demonstrate how historians, journalists, and lawyers use evidence to construct their arguments and theories. They encourage teachers and students faced with online and print documents reasserting theories such as those in the *Protocols* or the texts produced by Holocaust deniers to examine them closely and discover how their authors use historical facts. This is an interesting collection of papers that will be useful in academic collections supporting graduate programs in journalism, history, law and Holocaust studies.

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

**Lenhoff, Howard M.** *Black Jews, Jews, and Other Heroes: How Grassroots Activism Led to the Rescue of the Ethiopian Jews.* Lynbrook, NY: Gefen, 2007. 324 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-965-229-365-7).

*Black Jews, Jews, and Other Heroes* is a rather imprecise main title for a book that details the inspirational story of the rescue of the Beta Yisrael community of Ethiopian Jews





from the perspective of one of its tireless activists, the author Howard M. Lenhoff. While pursuing his career as a scientist, Lenhoff became involved in a grassroots organization, the American Association for Ethiopian Jews (AAEJ), serving as president. The story is replete with roadblocks encountered: the controversy over whether the community qualified to enter Israel under the Law of Return (their Jewishness was hotly debated among religious authorities and Knesset members); the lack of response to the issue by the American Jewish establishment, which precipitated the founding of the AAEJ; the necessity of dealing with the American political system because of the delicate relationship between the United States, Ethiopia, and the Sudan, to which the Beta Yisrael fled. The narrative is filled with poignant stories of individuals whose desire to live in Israel and practice their religion helped them endure great hardships both before and after their immigration. Acts of great courage and unbelievable tales of heroism bring to life the story of the several stages of immigration, known as Operation Elijah (I and II), Operation Sheba, Operation Moses, Operation Pidyon Shivuyim and, finally, Operation Solomon. The author gives credit to every rabbi, politician (senators and representatives), and layman who signed on to the cause.

Lenhoff's anecdotes and animated writing style make the narrative very engaging. AJLers will enjoy reading about a rather dangerous rescue mission during which the code words used on transatlantic telephone lines were "library" for Israel and "book" for immigrant, and the Israeli agent was "mailman." Hence, the message "the mailman brought sixty new books to the library this week" was easily understood. This book is an important addition to the subject of immigration to Israel, and is recommended for all libraries.

*Esther Nussbaum, Ramaz Upper School, NY*

**Leshem, Rabbi Zvi. *Redemptions: Contemporary Chassidic Essays on the Parsha and the Festivals*. Jerusalem: Southern Hills Press, 354 p. 2006. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-1-933882-03-1).**

This compilation of essays on the weekly Torah portions, holidays, and special Sabbaths will uplift any Sabbath table. Written largely during the author's tenure at Nishmat, a women's learning institute in Israel, their content encompasses far more than Chassidism. Rabbi Leshem weaves together a number of influences — e.g., Rashi, Rav Kook, Rav Soloveitchik — in a cogent, intelligent way to convey a range of eclectic and contemplative ideas. Rabbi Leshem's overt Zionism permeates the essays. In addition to the traditional Jewish holidays, he includes contemporary Israeli holidays — e.g., Yom HaShoah and Yom Hatzmaut — and integrates current events and issues to make themes within the *parashot* more relevant to today's world. Some come across as a little sophomoric, such as ADHD (in *Toldot*, concerning the education of children) or domestic violence (in *Vayishlach*, concerning Rachel and Leah). Others are a bit more controversial and politically charged, like his criticism of the Israeli government or the surrounding secular culture. Essays published after the expulsion from Gush Katif frame the settlers' plight within the context of major holidays; on Yom Kippur, for example, he explains how "to forgive and not forget." The theme of

suffering is often used here and linked to the Holocaust; a frequent source is the Piaseczner Rebbe, hy" d, who died in the Warsaw Ghetto. The message is how to stay happy in an overwhelmingly depressing world.

The general flavor of the book, however, remains upbeat. Chassidic themes abound: the joys of Jewish prayer, the revelation of G-dly light, and the importance of communal service. The author's insights enhance each holiday and special Sabbath (e.g., Shabbat Shirah, Shabbat Nachumu). This book might have benefited from a glossary of Jewish words and phrases, and some background on the key spiritual and intellectual figures mentioned throughout the essays (as well as their works cited). However, the author provides ample background and details for each Torah portion. His erudition is obvious, and is integrated in graceful prose. Recommended for all synagogue libraries, and possibly outreach professionals.

*Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, NY*

**Lyons, Len. *The Ethiopian Jews of Israel: Personal Stories of Life in the Promised Land*. Photographs by Ilan Ossendryer. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2007. 240 p. \$34.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-323-1).**

In 1977, there were 100 Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Today there are approximately 100,000. The story of their exodus from their ancestral home to Israel is a thrilling historical event, but they are still not fully integrated into their new land. The struggle to become part of Israeli culture without losing their unique traditions and values is fascinating. They must overcome poverty, illiteracy, and discrimination. This book uses the stories of more than 50 men and women to illustrate the challenges facing Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Having fled their native land to escape a ruthless dictator, they are today soldiers, lawyers, teachers, actors, musicians, and religious leaders. The stories depict their accomplishments and offer a taste of their culture. Beautiful color photographs of the subjects accompany their narratives. This inspirational volume illustrates the diversity of Israel's population as well as some of the country's problems. School, synagogue, academic, and public libraries will want to add it to their collections.

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

**Miller, Jonathan. *The Compassionate Community: Ten Values To Unite America*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 243 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-4039-7408-2).**

Jonathan Miller is a Conservative Jew who serves as state treasurer of Kentucky. In this brief book he uses ten Bible stories to inform the nation's political conversation. The tales he cites are focused on heroes including Noah, Joseph, David, and Esther. After retelling each biblical story, he connects its leading character to a contemporary ethical issue: Jacob and the Value of Work; Joshua and the Value of Faith, etc. He then ties the topic to a current problem in American society; current issues such as over-use of credit cards and debt, national security, justice, and peace are analyzed in light of the ancient wisdom of the Bible. The author cites both Jewish

and Christian writers in exploring the ills of our society and advancing proposals for their cure. Some proposals involve individual decisions; others are legislative responsibilities. All of his correctives are characterized by common sense and exclude personal attacks.

The book has four appendices (including websites), listing groups that deal with the various issues. Most of them are either secular or Christian, though a number of Jewish organizations are listed. This is a heartfelt approach to many issues we face. The writing is accessible and the concepts are well explored. It is more political science and advocacy than Judaica. Larger synagogues, academic, and seminary libraries might purchase it as a volume on contemporary society or as part of their social justice programs. Smaller collections, however, may want to pass on it.

*Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

**Neusner, Jacob. *The Talmud: What It Is and What It Says*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. 166 p. 2006. \$70 Cloth (ISBN 978-0-7425-4670-7). \$23.95 Pbk. (ISBN 978-0-7425-4671-4).**

In this slim volume, Jacob Neusner explores the Talmud, using the documents themselves as his primary evidence. He starts by presenting the historical background. Chapter two is devoted to the Mishnah, its status as law, and its philosophical import. In chapter three he explores the Gemara, and its sources in the debates of the sages. Chapter four compares and contrasts the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, concluding with a section on "Why the Bavli Won." Chapter five discusses the Talmud's status as Torah, and the concept of the Chain of Tradition identified in Pirke Avot. Chapter six brings the rabbis into the discussion, as holy men themselves and as "living Torah," the source of its continuity. The final short chapter places God in the equation, concluding with the idea that Hashem will resolve all questions at the end of days.

Despite its simple title, this is not a book for beginners. It uses well-known stories (from Bava Metziah and Pirke Avot) and lesser known topics (from the Yerushalmi) to construct a complex argument. Many quotes are extensive, and cover both halakhic and aggadic arguments. This book belongs in synagogue libraries that have Talmud-conversant communities, and in academic institutions. Other libraries should stick to Steinsaltz, Abrams, etc., which are more user-friendly.

*Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

**Paldiel, Mordecai. *Diplomat Heroes of the Holocaust*. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2007. 241 p. \$29.50 (ISBN 978-0-88125-909-4).**

While many European Jews foresaw the threatening clouds of Nazism and attempted to flee their homelands legally, one diplomat in Warsaw said, "All universal problems, for better or worse, sooner or later find a solution. The only unsolvable problem is the Jewish question. It is a cyst that forever persists among nations as they develop." Journalist Dorothy Thompson wrote, "It is a fantastic comment on the inhumanity of our times that for thousands and thousands of people a piece of paper with a stamp on it is the difference

between life and death." The diplomats who chose conscience over bureaucracy are highlighted in this book.

This book relies on the list of those awarded Yad Vashem's Righteous Among the Nations, the highest title granted to non-Jews who risked their livelihoods and their safety to save Jews. For diplomats, Yad Vashem formulated two criteria: the diplomat had to have issued papers to more than one individual, usually many more, and to have acted in violation of clear instructions. Organized by city and country, the context of what occurred in each area is described, followed by the stories of individual diplomats. Good graphics and photos are included. The author is the director of the Righteous Among the Nations Department at Yad Vashem. The preface is provided by Rabbi Arthur Schneier, who lived under Nazi occupation in Budapest, and the introduction is written by Richard Holbrooke, US Ambassador to Germany (1993-1994) and the chief architect of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the war in Bosnia. This book is an excellent resource for high school and adult collections of Holocaust materials. An essential, highly-recommended title.

*Martin Goldberg, Penn State University, Monaca, PA*

**Pollock, Lindsay. *The Girl with the Gallery: Edith Gregor Halpert and the Making of the Modern Art Market*. New York: Public Affairs, 2006. 462 p. \$30 (ISBN 978-1-58648-302-9).**

In November 1941, an unknown African-American artist named Jacob Armstead Lawrence received wide recognition and critical acclaim for his narrative series *The Migration of the Negro*. The series of 60 tempera paintings depicting the mass movement of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North was being featured at the esteemed Downtown Gallery in New York City. Soon after the opening of the exhibit, the gallery's owner, Edith Gregor Halpert, asked Lawrence to join her client list of prominent American artists, which at various times included Georgia O'Keefe, Ben Shahn, Stuart Davis, and Marguerite Zorach. With Halpert as his art dealer, Lawrence sold half the series to the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and the other half to the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. Years later he remarked, "I always owe Edith Halpert. I think she was one of the great American dealers." Lawrence was one of the few Downtown Gallery artists who gave Halpert credit for his success.

Pollock documents Halpert's rise from poor Russian-Jewish émigré to one of the most influential art dealers of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. Opening the first modern art gallery in Greenwich Village in 1926, Halpert set out to introduce contemporary American art to the masses. She championed art that was politically charged, and her promotion of American folk art was relentless. *The Girl with the Gallery* is as much about the business of art dealing and Halpert's relationship with her clients as it is about art and artists. Halpert not only changed what was dealt, but also how it was marketed and sold, and her methods proved successful. In the depth of the Great Depression, for example, Halpert's Downtown Gallery sales exceeded \$100,000. Through her business relationship with the powerful Rockefeller family, she contributed greatly to the folk art museum in Colonial Williamsburg and to art exhibits at Rockefeller Center and

Grand Central Station. Lindsay Pollock, who writes a column on the business of art and the art market for *Bloomberg News*, provides a vivid account of a remarkable business woman who shaped the modern art world. Her *Girl in the Gallery* is an important contribution to the history of modern American art and women's history.

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

**Romain, Gemma.** *Connecting Histories: A Comparative Exploration of African-Caribbean and Jewish History and Memory in Modern Britain.* London: Kegan Paul, 2006. 273 p. \$120 (ISBN 978-0-7103-1223-5).

This densely-written volume compares the immigrant experiences of two groups that moved to Britain in the early and mid-1900s. While Jews are often held up as an immigrant success story and African-Caribbeans as a disappointment, Romain says that neither assessment is entirely correct, and that the two groups actually have much in common. For each community, Romain examines myths of the "Mother country" and the "Promised land," feelings of living in a diaspora, and the role of collective memory.

Written for scholarly audiences in the field of anthropology or ethnology, this book is full of jargon and is a challenge for the layperson to understand. Recommended for large academic libraries.

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

**Rothschild, Edith.** *Nutrilicious: Food For Thought and Whole Health.* Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 2007. 260 p. \$26.99 (ISBN 978-1-58330-300-9).

I am always looking for recipes for nutritious meals for Shabbat and the holidays, and am delighted to find Jewish cookbooks that move away from more traditional Jewish cooking that can be high in sugar, fats, and empty calories. This cookbook provides nutritious vegetarian recipes. Although Rothschild does not mention the concept in her book, the recipes are based on the macrobiotic principle of eating and cooking, which stresses balancing the acid and alkaline in the body to achieve optimum health and vitality. In keeping with this concept of eating, *Nutrilicious* has many recipes using grains, legumes, and vegetables. The book's greatest appeal will be among people who have an understanding of and commitment to vegetarian cooking and the macrobiotic way of eating. You may want to recommend this book to cooks and dieticians working in synagogues, schools, nursing homes, camps, or retreats. It can, perhaps, start to change the way we cook and help reduce obesity.

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

**Schiller, Martin.** *Bread, Butter and Sugar: A Boy's Journey Through the Holocaust and Postwar Europe.* Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2007. 113 p. \$25 (ISBN 978-0-7618-3571-4).

*Bread, Butter and Sugar*, another addition to Holocaust memoirs, is based on the childhood experiences of Martin (Menek) Schiller. It is outstanding for its vivid writing, particularly its depiction of the relentless horror through a child's

eyes. The author uses a third-person, rather than first-person narrative, to retain the distance of hindsight and even a certain irony, as shown by the juxtaposition of famous liturgical passages with the horrific events. "Who shall live, who shall die," recited on the High Holidays, takes on, in the relentless selections and deportations, special significance.

"Bread, butter, and sugar" refers to the treat Menek was given in the halcyon prewar days whenever he was sick. It becomes an obsession during the stressful times when food was scarce and brutality rampant. "Food began to take center stage in all his dreams," he writes, as he describes the all-consuming hunger and thirst. After fleeing eastward at war's outbreak, Menek and his family ended up interned as slave laborers at the Skarzysko concentration camp, where his father perished and Menek worked at a munitions factory. In the German retreat he and his brother were sent to Buchenwald, where they survived thanks to a kindly block leader and the Russian POWs with whom they shared a barracks. What makes this book uplifting is not only the happy ending—Menek's survival—but the aftermath, which covers his reunion with his mother and cousin, his arrival in America, and his burgeoning career as an engineering consultant. This is a highly life-affirming memoir, although the author admits to losing his faith during the hard years. For adult Jewish libraries or high school and college libraries with Holocaust collections.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, NY

**Schor, Esther.** *Emma Lazarus.* New York: Nextbook, Schocken, 2006. 347 p. \$21.95 (ISBN 978-0-8052-4216-4).

This biography brings to life the 19th-century world of Emma Lazarus, poet and author of the words inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty. She was born in 1849 to a wealthy Sephardic family in New York. The book describes her large family, her growth and development as a writer, her mentors and friends, her causes and beliefs. Using a cache of personal letters discovered in 1980, Esther Schor describes the complex and vibrant literary world of Emma Lazarus, a woman she characterizes as alert, witty, scandalously smart, a champion of the oppressed. She shows how Emma was a woman far ahead of her time, a feminist, activist, Zionist, and secular, nationalist Jew. Schor quotes liberally from Emma's writing, including and discussing poems in the text, as well as in an appendix.

The biography is organized chronologically, divided into four time periods. There are extensive footnotes for each section, as well as a bibliography of sources, writings of Emma Lazarus, and biographical, historical, and critical sources. There is also a general chronology, from 1492 to 1999. The author is a poet and professor of English at Princeton University. Her biography is clearly written, interesting and readable. It should attract a broad audience, including students, scholars, and the general public. It is a good addition to biography collections in Jewish high school and public libraries, synagogue libraries, and to Jewish studies collections in academic libraries.

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

**Shatin, Leo.** *Simple Wisdom: Modern Tales from Chelm.* Minneapolis, MN: Syren Book Co., 2007. 195 p. \$14.95 (ISBN 978-0-929636-73-3).

*Simple Wisdom* takes place in 21st-century-Chelm, a shtetl or village in Eastern Europe, which closely resembles the fabled Chelm, except for the addition of a few telephones. The three main characters, Moishe, Lazer, and Coilee, are “tamen” or simple folk. Imagine Amelia Bedelia, a character who understands expressions literally, or the Three Stooges – Moe, Larry, and Curly – in Chelm. The 45 chapters don’t have to be read in order. In earlier stories, the characters bumble and fumble in each situation. Later chapters end without mishap or misunderstanding. The characters change from foolish to kind, considerate, and well respected. When they reflect on life, they add what the author calls simple wisdom – statements that could have come from your grandparents’ mouths. The author peppers his language with Yiddish words, which he translates or explains briefly. Most of the book consists of conversation among the characters. The author, a psychiatrist, analyzes human behavior and character interactions nicely. Yet sometimes he slips into professional language when simple speech is appropriate. The author had fun writing this book, and the modern topics are imaginative – Chelm characters dealing with vegetarianism, overpopulation, or obesity. This book is appropriate for libraries whose readers read for fun.

*Tsipi Wexler, Sha’arei Mishpat College  
Hod HaSharon, Israel*

**Twerski, Abraham J.** *Happiness and the Human Spirit: The Spirituality of Becoming the Best You Can Be.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2007. 176 p. \$19.99. (ISBN 978-1-58023-343-9).

Rabbi Dr. Twerski asserts that most people suffer from “Spiritual Deficiency Syndrome” (SDS). While the authors of the Declaration of Independence considered “the pursuit of happiness” an inalienable right, the author contends that “to be truly happy, we need to be continually in the process of exercising and implementing the elements of the human spirit to the best of our abilities. True happiness – and true spirituality – comes from becoming the best human beings we can be.” The focus of this work is spirituality. Through the use of personal experience, stories, and examples, Rabbi Twerski examines different aspects of the human spirit and discusses how we can develop these aspects to make our lives more satisfying and rewarding. Many of these aspects deal with relating to ourselves and others, such as the ability to be humble, the ability to be patient, and the ability to change. The book is divided into three parts. The first defines happiness and SDS. Part two reviews 11 components of the unique human spirit, including the ones mentioned above. The last part outlines ten steps to happiness. Because of his work in addiction psychiatry, Rabbi Twerski is very familiar with step programs. These steps are not as arduous, although becoming spiritual, and therefore happy, will take time and effort. The book also includes suggestions for further reading.

While the book includes some stories about Rabbi Twerski’s father, also a rabbi, it is relatively “pareve” in terms of

religious content or Jewish ways to spirituality. If patrons enjoy Rabbi Twerski’s writing, or are interested in the topic, this is a good choice. For specific information on Jewish spirituality, consult your local rabbi.

*Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ*

**Weiss, Jonathan.** *Irène Némirovsky: Her Life and Works.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007. 200 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-8047-5481-1).

The story of Irène Némirovsky has captivated readers ever since her masterpiece, *Suite Française*, was published in 2004. The manuscript had been kept untouched in a suitcase since its author was deported to Auschwitz in 1942; it was finally unearthed, painstakingly transcribed by her daughter and published. Taking France by storm, it won the Renaudot Prize posthumously and became a best seller. In 2006 the book was translated into English, opening her work to a new audience. Némirovsky’s life and work present a puzzling tangle of contradictions. Born in Kiev, she immigrated to France with her family in 1919 and wrote only in French. After her breakthrough novel, *David Golder*, was published in 1929, she became a respected member of Parisian literary circles – and yet was never quite accepted as a French writer. Although she was Jewish, she exhibited a striking ambivalence, even hostility, toward her origins, and her fiction contains harsh anti-Semitic caricatures. As the Germans marched on Paris, she and her children converted to Catholicism. Jonathan Weiss, a professor at Colby College, has written the first book to analyze Irene Némirovsky’s work for readers of English. It tackles the troubling facts of her life and brings readers to an understanding of her as “an author in search of an identity.” The increasing restrictions imposed by Vichy authorities gave a new urgency to her insistence that she be considered a French writer rather than a Jewish writer; her pleas went unanswered, and ultimately, her own identity struggle remained unresolved. Weiss’s book, concise and lucid, illuminates Némirovsky’s complexity and the larger questions raised by her work. Highly recommended for undergraduate and graduate collections at academic libraries.

*Joy Kingsolver, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies  
Chicago, IL*

## NONFICTION IN BRIEF

### *Capsule Reviews by Daniel Scheide*

**Azous, Paul.** *In the Plains of the Wilderness.* Jerusalem: Mazo Publishers, 2006. 307 p. \$32.95 (ISBN 978-965-7344-10-1).

*In the Plains of the Wilderness* is a highly-readable, brief survey of modern (18th-century to the present) Jewish history. The two main threads that run through the work are the birth of Zionism and the state of Israel and the development of Reform and Conservative Judaism. While the author’s approaches the subject from an Orthodox perspective, he has a clear understanding of non-Orthodox movements and discusses them in depth without demonizing or misrepresenting

them. The book offers a generous bibliography and endnotes, but lacks an index, crucial for a work of this nature. Highly recommended primarily, but not exclusively, for Orthodox high schools and synagogues.

**Scharfstein, Sol.** *The Book of Haftaret For Shabbat, Festivals and Fast Days: An Easy-To-Read Translation With Commentary.* Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2006. 453 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-0-88125-929-2).

This large-print edition of the weekly and holiday *haftaret* includes a brief but enlightening commentary, setting the stage for each reading by placing it into a proper historical and literary context, and identifying the connection to the corresponding Torah portion. It should be noted that this edition does not include original Hebrew texts. Recommended for synagogue libraries.

**Wolfson, Ron.** *The Spirituality of Welcoming: How To Transform Your Congregation Into a Sacred Community.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2006. vi, 207 p. \$19.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-244-9).

Synagogue 2000 (now called Synagogue 3000) is an initiative led by Ron Wolfson aimed at finding new ways for synagogues to engage and inspire their communities. *The Spirituality of Welcoming* shares insights gleaned in the first decade of this study. While Dr. Wolfson's suggestions are primarily aimed at larger Reform congregations, his approach can also benefit an Orthodox shtetle struggling for a minyan. Recommended for synagogue libraries.

## Elections for AJL Officers

Nominations are being sought for AJL officers for the 2008-2010 term. The vacancies are for president, vice-president/president elect, vice-president for membership, vice-president for publications, recording secretary, corresponding secretary, and treasurer. If you are interested in being considered for an elected position or if you wish to recommend potential candidates, please contact Ronda Rose (frose@att.net) by January 2, 2008. RAS and SSC officers are elected by each division.

The next AJL election, to be held in spring 2008, will be our first electronic ballot. In order for this to succeed, we must have accurate email addresses for all members who have them. If your email address has changed, or if it changes before the election, please contact vice-president for membership Yossi Galron (galron.1@osu.edu) to correct it. Members without email may request a paper ballot. Instructions will be published in the next issue of the newsletter and will be posted on the web site and on Hasafran. It's your AJL – vote!

## AJL Welcomes New Members

Melanie Berman  
Sandra Birch  
Deena Bleich  
Regina Burgess  
Helen Chronister  
Ginger Darrow  
Carol Fass  
M.M. Feldman  
Kate Friedman  
Rena Fruchter  
Howard J. Fuller  
Marc Galinkin  
Sandra K. Johnson

Barbara Josselsohn  
Randall Kaufman  
Sarah Marwil Lamstein  
Ilene N. Lefkowitz  
Johanna Rachel Lewis  
Jill Lubiner  
Henry Mayer  
Benjamin Pastcan  
Eva Radding  
Monica Rosenfeld  
Dora A. Salm  
Bruce G. Schneider  
David Sclar

Laurence Seidenberg  
Judith Solomon  
Natasha A. Solomon  
Sharon Solomon  
Izabella Taler  
Melinda Taormina  
Nancy Webster  
Barbara Weinbaum  
Nancy C. Weinberger  
Judy Wolfthal  
Jai R. Zion

ברוכים הבאים!

# Treasurer's Report

SCHLOMIT SCHWARZER

| <b>INCOME<br/>Description</b>            | <b>Budget<br/>2006/2007<br/>6/30/2007*</b> | <b>Activity<br/>2006/2007</b> | <b>YTD balance</b> |
|--|--|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Gifts                                    | 1,500.00                                   | 525.00                        | (975.00)           |
| Membership dues                          | 52,000.00                                  | 50,733.68                     | (1,266.32)         |
| Membership labels                        | 2,000.00                                   | 1,900.00                      | (100.00)           |
| Publications                             | 750.00                                     | 3,620.50                      | 2,870.50           |
| Ref. Bk. Award                           | 850.00                                     | 900.00                        | 50.00              |
| Bibliography Award                       | 900.00                                     | 900.00                        | 0.00               |
| S. Taylor Bk Award                       | 3,500.00                                   | 5,390.00                      | 1,890.00           |
| S. Taylor Ms Award                       | 1,500.00                                   | 1,500.00                      | 0.00               |
| S. Taylor Bk Award from membership       | 500.00                                     | 600.00                        | 100.00             |
| Sydney Taylor Award Poster               | 100.00                                     | 34.50                         | (65.50)            |
| Valuesfinder                             | 0.00                                       | 0.00                          | 0.00               |
| JL Income                                | 0.00                                       | 93.01                         | 93.01              |
| Newsletter Income                        | 1,000.00                                   | 1,960.00                      | 960.00             |
| Professional Dev/Ed. com.                | 1,000.00                                   | 450.00                        | (550.00)           |
| CDs Interest                             | 1,050.00                                   | 974.98                        | (75.02)            |
| Bank interest                            | 1,500.00                                   | 3,315.40                      | 1,815.40           |
| Reserve account interest                 | 1,300.00                                   | 2,737.78                      | 1,437.78           |
| Orenstein convention subsidies           | 400.00                                     | 206.00                        | (194.00)           |
| Scholarship fund                         | 750.00                                     | 257.00                        | (493.00)           |
| Travel Fund                              |  | 1,064.00                      | 1,064.00           |
| Tribute cards                            | 100.00                                     | 217.00                        | 117.00             |
| 2006 Convention income                   | 0.00                                       | 10,000.00                     | 10,000.00          |
| 2007 Conv travel grants (Littauer grant) | 4,000.00                                   | 3,000.00                      | (1,000.00)         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                             | <b>\$74,700.00</b>                         | <b>\$90,378.85</b>            | <b>15,678.85</b>   |

| <b>EXPENDITURES<br/>Description</b> | <b>Budget<br/>2006/2007</b> | <b>Activity<br/>2006/2007</b> | <b>YTD balance<br/>6/30/2007**</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| President                           | 2,000.00                    | 326.18                        | 1,673.82                           |
| National Mailings                   | 1,000.00                    | 0.00                          | 1,000.00                           |
| National office - telephone         | 750.00                      | 699.79                        | 50.21                              |
| National office                     | 360.00                      | 0.00                          | 360.00                             |
| Legal services                      | 2,500.00                    | 375.00                        | 2,125.00                           |
| Corporate filings                   | 400.00                      | 574.00                        | (174.00)                           |
| Liability insurance for Board       | 1,200.00                    | 981.00                        | 219.00                             |
| Accounting Services                 | 2,500.00                    | 984.30                        | 1,515.70                           |
| Consultant                          | 0.00                        | 0.00                          | 0.00                               |
| Vice President                      | 1,500.00                    | 0.00                          | 1,500.00                           |
| Membership                          | 2,000.00                    | 1,778.29                      | 221.71                             |
| Membership recruitment              | 250.00                      | 0.00                          | 250.00                             |
| Membership directory & cards        | 200.00                      | 1,068.00                      | (868.00)                           |
| Membership printing, brochure       | 0.00                        | 0.00                          | 0.00                               |
| Life membs/Fan. Goldstein Awds      | 50.00                       | 0.00                          | 50.00                              |
| Publications                        | 1,650.00                    | 1,512.13                      | 137.87                             |
| Stationery                          | 1,300.00                    | 1,055.68                      | 244.32                             |
| Corresponding Secretary             | 250.00                      | 99.30                         | 150.70                             |
| Recording Secretary                 | 25.00                       | 21.67                         | 3.33                               |
| Treasurer                           | 350.00                      | 122.08                        | 227.92                             |
| R&S                                 | 500.00                      | 1.17                          | 498.83                             |

| <b>EXPENDITURES (cont.)<br/>Description</b> | <b>Budget<br/>2006/2007</b> | <b>Activity<br/>2006/2007</b> | <b>YTD balance<br/>6/30/2007**</b> |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Reference Book Award                        | 1,100.00                    | 1,020.00                      | 80.00                              |
| Bibliography award                          | 1,100.00                    | 520.00                        | 580.00                             |
| SSC President                               | 1,000.00                    | 275.00                        | 725.00                             |
| Sydney Taylor Book Award                    | 4,000.00                    | 5,485.00                      | (1,485.00)                         |
| Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award              | 1,750.00                    | 1,513.82                      | 236.18                             |
| Valuesfinder                                | 3,000.00                    | 2,505.40                      | 494.60                             |
| AJL YA/Teen Book Award                      | 1,000.00                    | 0.00                          | 1,000.00                           |
| Judaica Librarianship                       | 12,000.00                   | 7,725.26                      | 4,274.74                           |
| Newsletter                                  | 26,000.00                   | 18,965.08                     | 7,034.92                           |
| Newsletter Advertising                      | 100.00                      | 82.71                         | 17.29                              |
| Proceedings                                 | 25.00                       | 63.17                         | (38.17)                            |
| Public Relations Committee                  | 5,000.00                    | 984.00                        | 4,016.00                           |
| Prof. Dues NISO                             | 200.00                      | 150.00                        | 50.00                              |
| Professional Dev/Education Com              | 1,000.00                    | 520.00                        | 480.00                             |
| Library accreditation                       | 1,000.00                    | 217.54                        | 782.46                             |
| Mentoring Committee                         | 1,000.00                    | 493.72                        | 506.28                             |
| Chapter relations                           | 1,500.00                    | 1,493.91                      | 6.09                               |
| Bank charges                                | 50.00                       | 12.01                         | 37.99                              |
| Orenstein convention subsidies              | 300.00                      | 315.87                        | (15.87)                            |
| Scholarship fund                            | 2,000.00                    | 1,460.00                      | 540.00                             |
| Archives                                    | 100.00                      | 0.00                          | 100.00                             |
| Special Projects/Fundraising                | 500.00                      | 0.00                          | 500.00                             |
| Tribute cards                               | 0.00                        | 0.00                          | 0.00                               |
| Midwinter travel                            | 10,000.00                   | 3,853.93                      | 6,146.07                           |
| Midwinter food                              | 500.00                      | 491.12                        | 8.88                               |
| Web page                                    | 100.00                      | 0.00                          | 100.00                             |
| Internat'l Liaison                          | 750.00                      | 750.00                        | 0.00                               |
| National Convention Committee               | 3,000.00                    | 213.68                        | 2,786.32                           |
| 2007 Convention Seed Money                  | 50,000.00                   | 10,000.00                     | 40,000.00                          |
| 2007 Convention travel grants (Littauer)    | 4,000.00                    | 3,000.00                      | 1,000.00                           |
| 2007 Convention travel grants (AJL)         | 10,000.00                   | 8,000.00                      | 2,000.00                           |
| 2007 Convention Support                     | 5,000.00                    | 33.98                         | 4,966.02                           |
| 2007 Convention Speaker Honorarium          | 500.00                      |                               | 500.00                             |
| 2008 Convention Seed Money                  | 5,000.00                    | 5,000.00                      | 0.00                               |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                | <b>171,360.00</b>           | <b>84,743.79</b>              | <b>86,616.21</b>                   |

|                     | <b>Budget<br/>2006/2007*</b> | <b>All Activity<br/>6/30/2007</b> |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>INCOME</b>       | 74,700.00                    | 90,378.85                         |
| <b>EXPENDITURES</b> | 171,360.00                   | 84,743.79                         |
| <b>DIFFERENCE</b>   | (96,660.00)                  | 5,635.06                          |

| <b>Account Balances</b>    | <b>6/30/2007</b>  |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Checking                   | 13,786.99         |
| Savings                    | 32.79             |
| Money Market               | 137,669.35        |
| Money Market II (Reserve)  | 76,075.13         |
| 15 mo. CD                  | 0.00              |
| <b>Bank Accounts Total</b> | <b>227,564.26</b> |

\*Negative numbers for income mean that income exceeded budgeted amount.

\*\*Negative numbers for expenses mean that expenses exceeded budgeted amount.

# Scottsdale Convention

## General Membership Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Laurel Wolfson at 10:40 am. The d'var Torah was given by Jim Rosenbloom. Using Mishlei (Proverbs), he spoke about how librarians are the keepers of wisdom. The minutes of the June 21, 2006 general membership meeting were approved as corrected.

**President's report.** Laurel Wolfson reported that over \$1,500 was collected at the banquet for Mazon. Thanks go to Yaffa Weisman for coordinating this project. Laurel worked on three conventions over the past year: Scottsdale, Cleveland and Chicago.

This was a spectacular convention planned nationally. Planning conventions this way should expand the pool of possible convention sites. From now on, National will assist local chapters in planning conventions by assuming responsibility for finances, fundraising, exhibits, advertising, and scheduling of AJL business meetings. Convention 2012 will be in Los Angeles. We now have six possible locations for future conventions: Philadelphia, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Houston and Baltimore.

Laurel asked that members please consider volunteering for AJL committees. Ronda Rose is chair of the Nominating Committee. Contact her if you are interested in being on the committee or running for a board position. Voting this year will be done electronically. Those requesting paper ballots will receive one. The AJL Handbook will be updated before the 2008 election.

**VP/President-elect's report.** Susan Dubin thanked the Convention Committee for doing an outstanding job this year! The Chapter Relations Committee has been traveling and meeting with potential chapters. The Mentoring Committee has been working on a knowledge base of information to share in addition to helping new members by matching them with seasoned librarians. AJL wants to encourage regional workshops. National will help financially. Proposals should be sent to the vice-president/president elect. They will be evaluated by a committee consisting of the president, vice-president/president-elect, presidents of each division, convention chairperson(s), and the treasurer. The immediate past president is an alternate member.

**Treasurer's report.** Schlomit Schwarzer's mother is ill, but stable. So far, income is \$89,532.12. Expected income is \$126,200. So far, expenditures are \$56,714.94. Expected expenditures are \$171,360. The final budget will be available mid- to late-summer. We have \$235,564 in the bank. According to our accountant, we should have one year's reserve in the bank, which we have.

**VP for Membership's report.** Yossi Galron reported that AJL had 1,090 members in 2006/2007. A total of 1,400 invoices were sent in April; 400 have been returned already. A new membership chair is needed for next year.

**VP for Publications report.** Deborah Stern reported that Linda Silver's new publication had good sales, as did the Sydney Taylor seals. The Weine Classification System will be available online for AJL members only. Debbie is looking into improved methods for vending AJL's publications. Anyone with ideas for new publications should contact her. If you are interested in joining the Publications Committee, please let Debbie know. Send papers for the *Proceedings* to Joan Biella.

**SSC report.** SSC president Etta Gold acknowledged the hard work of the SSC Board. If you use the Weine Classification System, please contact Etta. Etta congratulated everyone on a wonderful convention. The January 2007 issue of *Booklinks* had an article about the Sydney Taylor Book Awards co-authored by Heidi Estrin and Rachel Kamin. The Accreditation Committee is looking for new members. A new Teen Award was added to the Sydney Taylor Book Awards. The Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award was given to a well-deserving new author.

**RAS report.** RAS president Elliot Gertel acknowledged the hard work of the members of the RAS Board. Amsterdam, Holland was named a possible AJL convention site. The Cataloging Committee discussed changes in uniform titles. NISO has been discussing technical standards. The RAS Awards need endowed funding. RAS would like to bestow a Body-of-Work Award next year to the Cambridge Geniza Project. CARLJS is being dissolved. Zachary Baker will look into this issue. The Jewish program at ALA will take place on Friday morning at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. Yasher Koach to Rachel Leket-Mor and Haim Gottschalk and the entire 2007 Convention Committee. Thanks to David Hirsh and Pearl Berger for RAS programming.

Public Relations chair Heidi Estrin thanked Sheryl Stahl for the convention blog and all those who participated in phoning-casting. Contact Heidi with any news you would like others to know. Media contact information is needed, especially RAS-related. There will be a post-convention generic press release available. Ronda Rose, chair of the Nominating Committee, announced that three SSC and three RAS members are needed for the committee. If you are interested in serving on the AJL Board, please let Ronda know.

*Judaica Librarianship* volume 13 is due out late this summer or early fall. The committee is soliciting submissions for volume 14.



# Scottsdale Convention

**Old Business.** The spring 2008 election will be done electronically. Access codes will be given to those with Internet access. Paper ballots will be available to those requesting them. The cost of this service is \$1,200. Usually, a very low percentage of AJL members cast ballots. The board would like to encourage all members to exercise their right to vote. Watch for announcements in the *AJL Newsletter* and on Hasafran. The attendee roster will be posted on the password-protected portion of the AJL website. Convention evaluations should be handed in today or sent to Suzi Dubin. Ellen Cole suggested that the evaluations be made public. A summary will appear in the *AJL Newsletter*.

**New Business.** AJL may be interested in creating a postage stamp for AJL business. This will be looked into. The National Convention Committee will work with the local Convention Committee in deciding on a reduced fee for students.

**Announcements.** The 2008 AJL Convention will *not* be on Father's Day! There will be a National Convention Committee meeting right after the General Meeting. Karen Ulric is collecting digital pictures taken at the convention. Send them to her at [ajladmanager@ajl.com](mailto:ajladmanager@ajl.com). Peggy Pearlstein is the new head of the Hebraic Section in the African and Middle East Division of the Library of Congress.

*Elana Gensler, Recording Secretary*



## RAS Division Annual Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 am. The minutes of the R & S meeting of 2006 were accepted. We welcomed a new member, Rachel Ariel, of Duke University.

**Judaica reference and bibliography awards.** Jim Rosenbloom reported that this is the second year honorable mentions were awarded. This will continue. Elliot thanked Eric Chaim Kline and Dr. Greta Silver for sponsoring the bibliography and reference awards, respectively.

**IFLA and international meetings.** Edith Lubetski, the former chair, would like to encourage foreign memberships. Last year, we discussed a possible convention at the British Library in 2008, but no plans are in the offing. David said that Abraham would consider hosting an AJL convention in Amsterdam and RAS voted to support it. AJL helps support travel to international conferences; there is a line in the budget for it. The Littauer Foundation started to support foreign travel when AJL held its conference in Israel in 1990,

and still supports travel to AJL conferences for members who do not live in the US.

**Cataloging.** There have been discussions regarding de-Christianizing of subject headings and uniform titles, particularly "Bible. O.T." and "Bible. N.T." The Even Shoshan dictionary is the standard for vocalization; however, different editions of Even Shoshan have different vocalizations. A wiki will be set up to list known discrepancies. The Cataloging Committee plans to endorse a technique approved by MARBI (Machine-Readable Bibliographic Information) to set off non-filing characters.

**ALA-EMIERT.** The EMIERT (Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table) JIC (Jewish Information Committee) event at ALA 2007, "Resources and Remembrance: ALA Visits the United States Holocaust Museum," will take place on Friday, June 22 from 9:00 a.m. to noon at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. It will focus on Holocaust resources, including the Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive. A discussion ensued concerning the fact that the videos were made in order to be public, but they are not easily accessible. Yaffa volunteered to serve as a liaison between RAS, University of Southern California, and the Shoah Foundation. It was suggested that Yaffa ask the Shoah Foundation to present at AJL next year and that perhaps the index can be made available independently of the videos.

**NISO.** Elizabeth Vernon voted on seven ISO standards on behalf of AJL from November 2006 to June 2007.

**ATLA.** Arthur Quinn is trying to facilitate greater sharing between AJL and ATLA.

**Old business.** Jim Rosenbloom reported that he has spoken to Jean Lettofsky, the point person for fundraising, regarding endowed funding for the reference and bibliography awards. Jean and Jim have already approached potential donors. Jim said we will be looking for funding for a body-of-work award for Cambridge Genizah Project, and hope to have the presentation of the award at AJL next year. He would like suggestions for additional "body of work" awards.

**New business.** Suggestions for RAS programming for 2008 include: OCLC report on its services; the Maltz Museum and local Jewish history; publishing in Wycliffe and ultra-Orthodox communities; life of Abba Hillel Silver; 60th anniversary of Israel; the library schools in Pittsburgh; archives sessions can include the American Jewish Archives and the Cleveland Jewish Archives; a round table on encouraging students to go into Judaica librarianship; i-phone revolution in Judaica; Hebrew and nonroman references in authority files; the new Simon Wiesenthal film; Israeli cinema and films; maybe something Yiddish related.

# Scottsdale Convention

Zachary reported on the shock of Richard Siegel's announcement of the dissolution of CARLJS. Until last year, CARLJS was well funded, and supported the Fund for Jewish Cultural Preservation, a consortium which helped small libraries buy RLIN searches, and the Feinstein lecture series. Richard Siegel announced the suspension of the Fund for Jewish Cultural Preservation. The issue of the RLIN search blocs is not resolved. As of now, only the Feinstein Lecture remains. Zachary plans to contact David Gilner, the current CARLJS president, to form a Feinstein Lecture Committee, which would be a legacy body for CARLJS. The committee would select lecturers and work with the foundation to continue to get funding for the lecture. Whatever remains of CARLJS will be folded into AJL/RAS. David suggested starting a consortial group for preservation, on the model of the CRL Area Microfilm Preservation programs.

*Yasher-koah/kol-hakavod* to the Arizona Convention Committee. *Yasher-koah/kol-hakavod* to David Hirsch, Pearl Berger, and Tina Weiss for coordinating the RAS programming, and to Michlean Amir for coordinating the archives sessions. A need new programming committee is needed for next year's convention.

*Shulamith Z. Berger, Recording Secretary*



## SSC Division Annual Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 am. Etta Gold, SSC president, provided highlights of the midwinter meeting in New York in January 2007. She discussed some of the important issues raised during 2006-2007, especially the budget increase necessary to help fund new awards such as the Sydney Taylor Book Award for Teens, and also to help subsidize committee chairs so they can attend the convention. Etta will put photos from the convention and the midwinter meeting up on AJL website.

**New Business.** Andrea Davidson reported about the upcoming Cleveland Convention to be held June 22-25, 2008. The theme is to be "Tradition, Text & Technology." Wendy Wasman described with great enthusiasm the various attractions and tours which are being arranged for the AJL in Cleveland. The keynote speaker is to be Ellen Frankel of JPS. A request was made that the tours be advertised early to facilitate planning. A proposal was made to plan a future convention session to increase awareness of and promote participation in committees. Susan Berman proposed that a statement be drafted describing the importance of hiring

professional library staff in synagogue and community libraries. Suzi Dubin responded that the AJL board will be doing so, and that this issue is of great concern to all.

**Accreditation Committee.** Sue Greening described the two levels of the process: basic and advanced. Why should a library go through the process of accreditation? In order to create and maintain standards of excellence which are recognized by our profession. It provides excellent PR within one's organization be it school, synagogue, or federation. Accreditation is good for three years and is renewable. There were 20 libraries accredited this year. How many of our libraries have achieved accreditation by AJL? Approximately 80 (only 10%). All are strongly encouraged to apply and undergo this process. For help and more information, please contact Sue Greening or Suzi Dubin. There is also a need for members to serve on the Accreditation Committee, so please consider applying to Sue.

**Sydney Taylor Book Awards Committee.** Rachel Kamin reports that the eminence of the STBA has increased dramatically, and that publishers are now paying attention and sending their authors to our convention. A terrific article by Rachel and Heidi Estrin was published in the January issue of *Book Links* which outlines the history of the STBA and describes past honor winners, many of whom are outstanding in the field of children's literature.

STBA has expanded to include a special prize for YA, since there have been many worthy titles submitted over the past few years. In 2008 AJL will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the STBA with special post-conference sessions. Remember to purchase STBA kids (seals, awards, etc.). There are openings on the STBA as of January 2008, and the term is for 4 years. Please apply to Kathy Pinchuk, incoming chair, if you are interested.

**Sydney Taylor Manuscript Committee.** Arlene Grossberg reported that there were 16 manuscripts submitted in 2006-2007. After furious deliberation, "Getting Rid of Jeremy," by Yael Marmelstein of Betar Illit, Israel, was the winner. Yael traveled to AJL this year to accept her award and we expect to read much more of her in future.

Laurie Haas is looking to recruit members for this committee and describes the position as demanding, but very rewarding. One must be willing to read, review, critique, and return a compendium of feedback to the author for revision.

**Cataloging Committee.** It was agreed that Etta Gold's proposal to change this committee name to the "Weine User's Group," be adopted, that the group form a discussion list on Google, and that current members be notified of changes and updates by email. Please contact JudyGreenB@aol.com

# Scottsdale Convention

for further information. There was a proposal for the future creation of an "Elazar User's Group."

**Business arising from AJL Convention 2007.** Samples of library policies from Maureen Reister's Freshman Seminar are available to members from all types of libraries. Please contact Maureen. These will also be available online in the

*Proceedings.* All presenters are requested to send their presentation materials and text to Joan Biella for publication in the AJL Convention 2007 Proceedings. Please send all convention photos to Karen Ulric (AJLAdmanager@gmail.com) for publication on the web (via SnapFish or Ofoto). Send all bibliographies, including those from presentations at the convention, to Susan Berman.

*Marsha Lustigman, SSC Secretary*

## Avi Chai Bookshelf Librarians Attend 2007 AJL Convention in Scottsdale

SUSAN DUBIN

The Association of Jewish Libraries welcomed 45 high school librarians who were funded by the Avi Chai Bookshelf Grant at its annual convention in Scottsdale. High school librarians from all over the United States and Canada participated. Avi Chai librarians presented sessions on information literacy in the digital age (Karen Ulric and Marsha Lustigman), Google for librarians (Adele Bildersee), and Hebrew cataloging with OPALS (Henie Krishtalka and Norma Newman). Leslie Monchar, a Bookshelf librarian and chair of the Professional Development and Education Committee, organized the outstanding Freshman Seminar. Bruchie Weinstein, another Bookshelf librarian, presented as part of that session. Handouts from these sessions are posted on the Avi Chai Bookshelf Librarians wiki. They can be accessed at <http://jewishschoolibraries.pbwiki.com>. Four sessions were videotaped by Avi Chai and are available for those who were not able to attend or would like a review:

- Karen and Marsha's session on blogs and wikis: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4799200551802073184&hl=en>.
- Heidi's session on podcasting: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-3152688200551211718&hl=en>
- Adele Bildersee's session on Google for librarians: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2413983991710289184&hl=en>
- An introduction to the library automation program OPALS: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-8315078644843294763&hl=en>

In addition to presenting at the convention, several of the Bookshelf librarians have accepted leadership roles in AJL. Marsha Lustigman, from Montreal, has a board position as the new SSC secretary. Serving on the council are Leslie Monchar, as chair of the Professional Development and Continuing Education Committee; and Michal Davis, as co-chair, along with Lani Droz, of the Mentoring Committee. Participation in AJL on a national or local level is encouraged to further professional development and recognition.

Avi Chai has been providing support to high schools since 1999. One hundred sixty-nine schools have participated in the program, which offers funding for school libraries to purchase materials. Library mentors are assigned to work with Avi Chai librarians to help with library operations and procedures as well as ordering. A new Avi Chai initiative this year will provide online webinars for further professional development opportunities. Librarians in the Bookshelf program are encouraged to join AJL and attend its conventions. AJL provides sessions at each convention that will be of interest to high school librarians, and gives the Avi Chai librarians the opportunity to meet their professional colleagues and exchange ideas. Avi Chai is planning to provide funding for Bookshelf librarians to attend the AJL Convention again in Cleveland in 2008.



# Be-Kol Ram: Focus on Jewish Music

DANIEL SCHEIDE

Sampling is the practice of using a pre-existing recorded musical work and transposing it into a different context in a new recording. While this technique originated in hip-hop, it has become practically ubiquitous in music made in the 21st century.

In the realm of Jewish music, one of the most creative musicians to make use of sampling is Josh Dolgin, a.k.a. So-called. His 2005 debut *The So-Called Seder: A Hip-Hop Haggadah* mixed cantorial and children's Passover recordings from the 1940s and 50's with live musicians, including rappers Killah Priest of the Wu Tang Clan and Matisyahu, as well as klezmer musicians David Krakauer and Pete Sokolow. The samples, when placed in a hip-hop setting, usually convey a kitsch sensibility, at times nostalgic, at times mocking. So-called's collaboration *Hiphopkhasene* with klezmer violinist Sophie Solomon puts Jewish wedding music through a similar treatment. The same aesthetic permeates the work of DJ Balagan, DJ Shotnez (a.k.a. jazz saxophonist Ori Kaplan) and others.

In our profession, we are constantly faced with issues of intellectual property and copyright. As technology creates more and more ways to creatively exploit the resources of our past, these legal and ethical issues grow exponentially. In my last column, I mentioned DJ Handler's *Y-Love Mixtape*. None of the great number of samples used had been cited in the liner notes. I emailed DJ Handler about this. He told me that the disc was "in the tradition of mixtapes." He declined to mention whether or not the artists he sampled

gave permission for their work to be used or whether or not they were compensated for this use. Should they have been? As in most areas of life, the Jewish tradition provides arguments for both sides of the issue.

In *Pirke Avot* 6:6, it is written "Whosoever tells a thing in the name of him that said it brings redemption to the world." On the other hand, in his introduction to his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides specifically makes the reader aware that he will be quoting other writers at length without citation. He intended that the reader not pre-judge any ideas presented due to their Greek or Arab origins.

While there is a dispute about the presence or absence of the concept of intellectual property in Jewish law, the point is moot for two reasons. First of all, there is the concept of *dina de-malkhuta dina*, the law of the government under which they live is binding law on Jews. Also, with the prevalence of such disgusting stereotypes of money-hungry Jews, do we really want to be saying that our laws of theft are more permissive than those of the state?

Musicians often have hard lives, financially speaking. If we profit from their work, we need to compensate them. Civil law, religious law, and ethics are all running to play catch-up with the ways artists are using emerging technologies. Jewish music and art are no less affected by these challenges. How will we meet them?



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## Association of Jewish Libraries

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