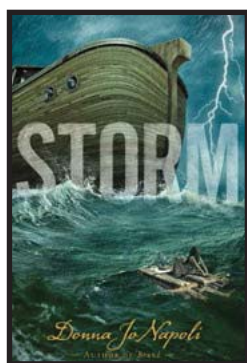


In The Spotlight



Napoli, Donna Jo. *Storm*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014. 368 pp. \$17.99 (9781481403023). Gr. 9-12.

In this amazing story of Noah and the Flood, Donna Jo Napoli uses ancient *Midrash* as well as her own modern *Midrash* to realistically take us to the antediluvian world as it was moments before the rains began. We follow Sebah, a sixteen-year-old girl, who runs out of her house to find her brothers when the rains begin. She immediately gets caught by a flash flood and is carried far down her local river before she can grab onto a ledge. Keeping hold of her pet cat, she scales upward in search of food, avoids wild animals, and watches the world disappear. Eventually, she meets a young boy, Aban, who “takes” Sebah as his own. They stay alive until they manage to reach the top of the tallest tree and when lightning strikes, they build a raft. Instead of dying, they come in contact with an enormous ship! When all their cries for help go unheeded, Sebah climbs a rope dangling from the side of the ark. Promising to survive, she leaves the weak and dying Aban on the raft. Sebah finds shelter and safety on the ark, inside the cage housing the bonobos. With the apes’ assistance, she manages to survive. A series of interesting and entertaining events take place while Sebah lives “invisibly” on the ark, including her discovery of another stowaway.

The writing is exceptional. Well-crafted and engaging, it is difficult to put the book down. Chapters are headed by the rain count (e.g. “Day 24”, “Night 85”, “Days 357-370”). Descriptions of the strain on Noah and his family, as well as the animals’ behavior as they react to being “stuck” on the Ark are vivid and realistic. There is some sexual content, although not particularly graphic as well as some fairly explicit violence. The world before the Flood was not a kind one and survival was not for the weak of heart. Superb writing and a unique story combine to make this a recommended purchase for Jewish libraries.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC

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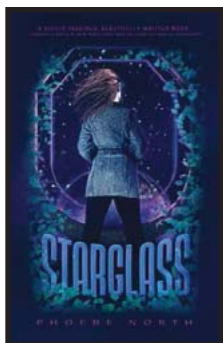
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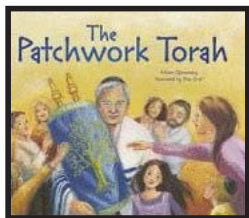


North, Phoebe. *Starglass*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013. 441 pp. \$17.99 (9781442459533). Gr. 9–12.

The spaceship *Asherah* left doomed planet Earth 500 years ago. Since then, it's been travelling towards Zehava, another planet where the refugees hope to find a new home. The *Asherah* is not a “normal” spaceship: all the original colonists were Jewish; all were screened beforehand. However, as time passed, the Jewish practices and ideals have become twisted: For example, *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) and *mitzvot* (commandments) are interpreted to mean that everyone must follow strict regulations. The members of the ruling class (the Council) now decide what occupation each person will follow, whom he/she will marry, and when they will have their obligatory two children via the “hatchery.” In surprising plot twists, the author reveals the sinister hierarchy of the ship and the rebellion that is taking shape. *Starglass* is divided into three parts: Journey, Orbit, and Arrival. To add depth to the narrative, we read “letters” written by one of the original colonists. These letters are not mere literary devices; they add resonance and meaning to the motivation of the characters and, in fact, move the plot forward.

The protagonist of this science fiction/generation-ship novel is Terra Fineberg, a sixteen-year-old girl who is rather messed up. Her mother died of cancer four years earlier; her father, Abba, is distant, abusive, and often drunk; her older brother is married and has little to do with Terra. So what's a mixed-up teenage girl to do? She turns into a slovenly mess, lashes out at everyone, and spends her spare time alone, making sketches of the “natural” world on the spaceship. In lyrical, striking prose, the author writes about the people who pull Terra in different directions and the tough decisions that she must make. The author creates a vivid picture of life on the creaking spaceship and of the characters that inhabit it. If you're looking for a mystery, sci-fi thriller, and coming-of-age novel, this is it. Here is a Jewish *Brave New World* that keeps the reader glued to the page. Because of several steamy sex scenes and a homosexual relationship, *Starglass* might not be appropriate for all Jewish teens.

Anne Dublin, author of Stealing Time, Toronto, Canada



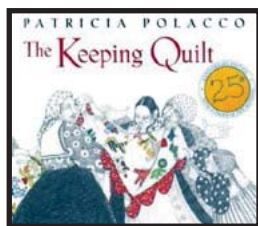
Ofanansky, Allison. *The Patchwork Torah*. Illus. by Elsa Oriol. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2014. 32 pp. \$7.95 (9781467704274). Preschool–Gr. 5.

David's grandfather is a *sofer*, a scribe who carefully, painstakingly, and lovingly letters Torah scrolls for Jewish communities to learn from, live by, and treasure. He teaches his craft to David who, in turn, teaches it to his own children and grandchildren so that the valued traditions can live on through the generations. Damaged Torah scrolls, treasures in their own right but unusable in their imperfect states, find their way over the years into the hands of these dedicated *sofrim*. The scrolls have been rescued from the Holocaust or from a synagogue fire or from a devastating hurricane by caring, loving, courageous Jews who understand the need for preserving these links to the world of their ancestors. David thinks about restoring them but there is so much damage to each that he is not sure that such a major project would result in success. Then his granddaughter, who has learned about recycling, has an idea. Why not take the undamaged sections of each Torah and see if they can be put together into a useable whole – a patchwork Torah with its own unique beauty, combining so many pieces of the past to be used joyfully onward into the future.

This beautifully conceived and written book encompasses so much: tradition, care for the earth, the Holocaust, Hurricane Katrina, relationships through the generations.... It doesn't seem as if all the elements can possibly fit into one coherent story. And yet the author pulls all the pieces

together into an innovative and unique whole; it's a patchwork story, somewhat like a patchwork quilt or a patchwork Torah – and isn't patchwork art often the most beautiful kind of all? Soft color paintings with beautifully rendered facial expressions enhance the artistry of the whole; idea, text, and illustrations perfectly merge into a special reading experience.

Michal Hoschander Malen, North Shore Hebrew Academy Library, Great Neck, NY

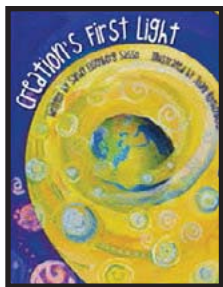


Polacco, Patricia. *The Keeping Quilt: 25th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013. 64 pp. \$17.99. (9781442482371). Gr. K-4.

Librarians in Jewish institutions are going to wonder whether they need to buy the new edition of *The Keeping Quilt*, a beloved classic and the Sydney Taylor award winner from 1988. The answer is: "Of course!" Most school and synagogue libraries already own the original, along with the tenth anniversary edition, and now, like the third in a trilogy, it is time to add the latest one. The original family quilt was lovingly sewn for Polacco's Russian immigrant great-grandmother when she was a child in turn-of-the-century New York City. It went through many iterations, such as a Shabbat tablecloth, a picnic blanket, and a *chuppah*, before it was eventually passed down to Polacco's mother, and then to Patricia, always accompanying Jewish ritual and becoming part of family lore. The last page of the first edition shows the author holding her own daughter, Traci, in her arms. "Someday she, too, will leave home and she will take the quilt with her," Polacco says.

Fast forward ten years and readers are delighted when the new edition is published. The quilt has done more family duty. Traci has a brother now and the quilt serves as a superhero cape, a birthday tablecloth, and a blanket on the deathbed of Polacco's mother. She ends that edition waiting "for the day that I, too, will be a grandmother, and tell the story of the Keeping Quilt to my grandbabies." So.... it's been fifteen years since then! Where is the quilt now? Did her children have their own children? Did they keep the family tradition of the quilt? Plus, wouldn't it be falling apart by now? Gladly, this final edition of the story is a touching reminder of the importance and meaning of family heirlooms, and brings a smile to readers who have been touched by this story for years. The additional fifteen pages relate how the author shared the quilt story all over the country on school visits, and used the quilt as a *chuppah* for the weddings of both her children. But as time passed, the quilt became fragile and Polacco's children asked a quilting guild to make an exact replica, removing one heart from the original quilt to add to the new one. Polacco states, "With a bittersweet heart, I let the original Keeping Quilt leave my care to be on loan to the Mazza Museum at the University of Findlay in Findlay, Ohio. It warms my heart to know that so many people will see the Keeping Quilt on display. Hopefully, it will stir the beauty of memory and the richness of family in their souls."

Lisa Silverman, Sinai Temple Library, Los Angeles, CA



Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg. *Creation's First Light*. Illus. by Joani Rothenberg. Indianapolis: IBJ Book Publishing, 2013. 32 pp. \$17.95 (9781934922941). Preschool-Gr. 2.

Rabbinic and mystical stories differentiate between the "primordial light" of creation's first day and the "luminary light" of the sun, moon, and stars brought into being on the fourth day. Coupling an economy of text with Chagall-like full-page images, Sasso and Rothenberg (*Cain and Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace*, *Adam and Eve's First Sunset: God's New Day*, *Butterflies Under Our Hats*, and *The Shema in the Mezuzah: Listening to Each Other*) deftly explain the difference between these two distinct lights. They begin with the abstract concept of the primordial light hidden in the Torah and its glow in the *tzohar*, the stone given to Adam and Eve passed down through the biblical

generations. More concrete examples of this light, otherwise known as the soul, is explained as being in hugs, smiles, and the face of an innocent newborn. Many of Rothenberg's radiant illustrations incorporate curving sentences directly into the artwork and echo the swirling elements of light. Discussion questions on the final two pages will lead to further classroom conversations. A finalist for the 2013 National Jewish Book Award for Best Illustrated Children's Book, *Creation's First Light* is an illuminating read sure to spark any child's imagination.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN & RACHEL KAMIN

BIBLE STORIES

Herskowitz, Benjie. *David and Goliath with a Twist*. Illus. by Darrell Mordecai. Tel Aviv: Contento De Semrik, 2013. 32 pp. \$14.95 (9789655501964) Gr. K-5.

Idiom lovers meet lovers of biblical lore! This is a cleverly conceived and amusingly executed meeting of two rich worlds, both deserving of picture book attention and synergizing into a fun experience sure to elicit a belly laugh or two. It's a retelling of the David and Goliath story in which a mother relates the tale to her young son in colloquial English and the boy imagines each idiomatic phrase literally. When David's stone hits Goliath's head causing his demise, we also see his big, red throbbing toe because he has just "kicked the bucket". When David saves the day with his trusty slingshot, he has "succeeded with flying colors" and is engulfed by dazzling fireworks. Such phrases provide rich material for bold, comical, colorful, expressive illustration; the three-way combination of classic story, play-on-words, and comic art positively charms. The idioms are defined in context at the bottom of each page and again in a glossary at the end of the book. Who said Bible studies have to be boring? Who said language studies have to be boring? Who said you can't combine disciplines that aren't usually combined and bring new life to each?

Michal Hoschander Malen, North Shore Hebrew Academy Library, Great Neck, NY

Tutu, Archbishop Desmond. *Let There Be Light*. Illus. by Nancy Tillman. Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderkidz, 2013. 32 pp. \$16.99 (9780310727859). Preschool-Gr. 2.

This stunning Midrash on the first chapter of Genesis/Bereshit uses both words and pictures to bring the Biblical words to life. The language is simple and direct while staying true to the Biblical text. Nancy Tillman's illustrations are exquisite in their color and detail as she represents each of the days of creation. Unfortunately, Tillman also incorporates images of God within the illustrations she so beautifully paints. Most often it is a vaguely human-like figure, hands outstretched, masked within a glowing ball of yellow light. Occasionally, God is pictured as a handsome man in the clouds, or as a hand reaching out from the heavens. An image of God is in almost every illustration. This book is published by Zonderkidz, a Christian publishing house, so this type of imaging is not unusual for a book for the Christian market. However, it will be unacceptable for most, if not all, Jewish libraries.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC

Wolf, Gita. *The Enduring Ark*. Illus. by Joydeb Chitrakar. Chennai, Tamil (India): Tara Books, 2013. 34 pp. \$21.95 (9789380340180) HC in slipcase. Gr. K-3.

The basic elements of the well-known biblical story are all here—Noah, the Flood, an ark, animal pairs, and a rainbow. What makes this Noah's ark book different from the countless other retellings

is that it is illustrated and designed in the Bengal Patua style of scroll painting. The book's pages can be read in the traditional Western manner or stretched out in one continuous page eight feet long, making the story literally unfold before the young reader's eyes. However, when well-circulated from any children's collection, this unique characteristic will cause the book to suffer a short shelf life filled with many taped repairs. As mentioned in the text, "great tales deserve to be repeated." While true, *The Enduring Ark* is better suited residing on the shelves of a novelty book collector or on those of a graphic design aficionado. *The Story of Noah and the Ark* by Michael McCarthy (Barefoot Books, 2001), *Noah's Ark* by Anne Wilson (Chronicle Books, 2002), and *The Animals Came Two By Two* by Christopher Wormell (Running Press, 2008) are better choices for Noah's Ark themed story times and circulation.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

BOARD BOOKS

[no author]. *My First Book of Kosher Animals*. Brooklyn: BSD Publishers, 2014. Unpaged. \$6.95 (9780985525026). Preschool.

This bright, colorful board book features photographs of sheep, ducks, deer, cows, and giraffes alongside rhyming text that introduces toddlers to each animal's sound. "The sheep are jumping high and low. What does a sheep say, do you know? Baaa! Baaa! Baaa!" A note on the back cover explains: "Early impressions are deep and lasting. What children see and hear contributes to their personalities and leaves an imprint on their souls. *My First Book of Kosher Animals* depicts exclusively kosher animals, preserving and nurturing the natural purity of the child." The absence of any explanation defining what makes an animal kosher and the peculiarity of these five animal choices unfortunately severely limit the audience for this otherwise visually appealing offering.

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

Koster, Gloria. *Mitzi's Mitzvah*. Illus. by Holli Conger. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2013. 10 pp. \$5.95 (9781467706957). Preschool.

A sweet board book, age-appropriate for the youngest listener, introduces an adorable dog who is searching for her role while visiting a nursing home with her family. The adventure begins with a happy, excited dog looking out the back window of the family car. As the family arrives at the "Shalom Home", she is not allowed to enter the building and must wait outside. Mitzi is constantly pushed aside until a perceptive nurse sees an opportunity for pet therapy that is not to be missed. Mitzi allows herself to be petted, sits on patients' laps, and licks their empty dinner dishes. The occasion for visiting, it turns out, is to help the residents observe Rosh Hashanah. Representational pictures show scenes familiar to the young reader, including challah, apples, and honey, and a *tefillin* bag in one picture. The tone of the story is nurturing and happy, and the Jewish content, though subtle, is present throughout, particularly in the illustrations. Other books in this very successful series include *Tikkun Olam Ted*, *The Opposites of My Jewish Year*, and many others.

Shelly Feit, Library Consultant, Teaneck, NJ

[Editor's note: For a review of *Tikkun Olam Ted*, see the February 2013 issue of *AJL Reviews*.]

FICTION - MIDDLE GRADE

Brahmachari, Sita. *Mira in the Present Tense*. Chicago: Albert Whitman, 2013. 284 pp. \$16.99 (9780807551493). Gr. 5-8.

As her twelfth birthday approaches, Mira Levenson is dealing with some difficult situations. Her beloved grandmother is dying, her relationship with her best friend is growing more distant, and she's

beginning her first relationship with a boy. Mira is also exploring her dual heritage—her mother is Indian and her father is Jewish. A new creative writing class at school helps Mira to hear her own voice, which gives her the strength to deal with challenges and navigate the complicated world of being an almost-teenager. Mira's quirky, artistic, loving family has realistic squabbles and misunderstandings, all the while supporting each other through the thorny parts of life. Originally published in the U.K. as *Artichoke Hearts*, *Mira in the Present Tense* depicts a complex character in Mira—she is devoted to her grandmother, mostly kind to her brother and sister, and willing to take risks to be alone with her boyfriend. Readers will look forward to reading more about Mira in the sequel, *Jasmine Skies*, due out in the fall of 2014.

Marci Lavine Bloch, Silver Spring, MD

Dublin, Anne. *Stealing Time: A Jonah Wiley Adventure*. Toronto: Dundurn, 2014. 144 pp. \$9.99 (9781459709737) Pbk.; \$8.99 (9781459709751) eBook. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 5–8.

Collecting and tinkering with timepieces used to give twelve-year-old Jonah a sense of security, the feeling there was “rhythm and order in the world”. However, since his parents’ divorce and his father’s remarriage, Jonah finds it difficult living in his fractured world. Using an antique pocket watch, Jonah and his stepbrother Toby magically escape the present and are hurled into the past. In each chapter, the boys visit different countries in different centuries and learn about the evolution of clocks, beginning with the crude shadow stick in ancient Egypt and ending with the precise atomic clock in Ottawa, Canada. Following the time travelers on their journey is an unnamed, bushy-haired, and casually dressed stranger whom readers will recognize as Albert Einstein. In the end, Jonah discovers that the ageless obsession with capturing the “correct time” is an illusion when the stranger sums up his view of time and space with three short words: “It’s all relative.” Jonah’s Jewish identity is not an integral part of the story. In fact, it does not come to light until the sixth chapter when he is transported to fifteenth-century Prague. While there, he is beaten up by ruffians who identify him by the “yellow circle on his jacket”. Young lovers of history and novice horologists will find that reading Dublin’s fast-paced and fact-filled book will be time well spent. Includes a glossary of timekeeping terms.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

FICTION – TEEN

Baskin, Nora Raleigh. *Subway Love*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2014. 224 pp. \$16.99 (9780763668457) Pbk. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 9–12.

At one point in this endearing romantic fantasy, Jonas confronts Laura, a girl he has met and rendezvoused with while riding the New York City subway: “What year is it now?” he asks her. “It’s 1973,” she answers—and then adds, “But not for you, is it?” It is then Jonas and Laura realize what the reader already knows: Jonas has fallen in love with his *besht*, his soul mate—but she is living in another time. While Laura tries to escape her hippie mother and abusive stepfather, she comments on psychedelic fashion, the *Brady Bunch*, and Richard Nixon. And as Jonas struggles to make sense of his parents’ divorce, he relies on Facebook, cell phones and Xbox to divert him. The uniquely graffitied subway car they both share enables them to cross the boundaries of time and find each other. Ms. Baskin does an excellent job of guiding the reader through the sights and sounds of the seventies (Laura’s attempt to locate Starbucks—a small coffee roasting company in Seattle—is a nice touch). The author is equally adept in creating characters dealing with loss, love, and the true angst of growing up. However, minor characters are introduced too quickly, and while the idea of *besht* drives the story, Jonas’s Jewish identity is otherwise insignificant to the plot. Once Jonas and Laura step out of that subway car, they each disappear to the other. What will they do? A surprisingly satisfying tender, yet insightful, ending makes *Subway Love* a meaningful ride through the ways of the heart.

Leda Siskind, YA writer and psychotherapist, Los Angeles, CA

Goodman, Gabriel. *Lightning's Run*. Minneapolis: Lerner, 2014. Bareknuckle series. 100 pp. \$20.95 (9781467714587) Library Bound; \$7.95 (9781467721622) Pbk. Gr. 6–12.

This historical novel is part of a series set in New York City in the 1870s. Hiram, the seventeen-year-old Jewish protagonist, tells the story in the first person. The action begins with a typical Friday night Shabbat dinner, but it soon morphs into something much different. After his family goes to bed, Hiram sneaks out a window, clambers down the fire escape, hitches a ride on the back of a horse-drawn carriage, and makes his way to the Woodrat Club in the Bowery. He watches a brutal boxing match, and then tries to persuade the local boxing coach to teach him how to fight. Why? Hiram works at a brick factory and every payday, a bully called Carter beats him up and takes his money. Hiram figures the only way he can stop Carter is by fighting back. Hiram eventually gets boxing lessons from Lightning, the top boxer at the club. He finally battles it out in a grisly fight at the club and gains a kind of victory. Goodman captures the voice of the narrator as well as of the era. The action is fast-paced; the fight scenes are gritty and graphic.

However, this novella is troubling on several accounts. Firstly, the secondary characters do not come to life and their motivations are often puzzling. For example, although Hiram gets badly beaten several times, Mama doesn't react to his cuts and bruises but is preoccupied with making pickled vegetables and preparing meals. Furthermore, Papa lectures about '*shelom bayit*' (peace in the home), but at the end he gives in to the necessity of Hiram's fighting, when he says it is "a kind of peace". More troubling still is the message that *Lightning's Run* might give to young people: If you're being bullied, the only way out is to fight back physically. For two fine books about boxing (in the context of World War II), see the 2012 Sydney Taylor Award winner for teen readers, Robert Sharenow's *The Berlin Boxing Club* (HarperCollins, 2011) or Jean Jacques Greif's *The Fighter* (Bloomsbury, 2006).

Anne Dublin, author of *Stealing Time*, Toronto, Canada

Lichtenfeld, Mark. *Line Change: Israel's a New Zone for Ethan*. Jacksonville, FL: Mazo, 2013, 207 pp. \$16.95 (9781936778539). Gr. 9–12.

Ethan Connors has just graduated from a modern Orthodox high school in suburban Chicago. He is not thrilled to be spending a week in Kiryat Shemona, Israel, where he will play hockey for Team USA in the summer Maccabiah Games. However, his father has made this plan to ensure Ethan receives a full hockey scholarship to Ferris State. To make matters worse, his parents have arranged for Ethan to stay with their friends, the Borochovs, a secular Jewish family. When he arrives, Ethan is struck by the downtrodden town of Kiryat Shemona and the Borochovs' small, dingy apartment. Danit, the Borochovs' daughter, does not hide her feelings of disapproval for Ethan whom, she feels, is an "arrogant American". Danit lets Ethan know her views about religious Jewish Americans who support Israel financially but do not live or fight on the frontline for the Jewish State. However, the Borochovs' son, Lior, is friendlier to Ethan. The more Ethan spends time with Lior, the more he realizes how fortunate he is. Ethan will enter college in the fall, while Lior must serve for three years in the IDF before he can start college. Ethan also realizes that, on his many trips to Israel with his family, he went to only upscale hotels and tourist spots. He never visited this shabby town on the border of Lebanon that is constantly in danger of Hezbollah terrorist attacks. The plot proceeds and Ethan meets an attractive girl, Shayna, who has a surprising connection to Chicago. Ethan is so affected by this revelation and so in love with Shayna that he decides to leave hockey and his life in the United States and enlist in the IDF.

At the end of the book, the author provides reading group discussion questions. Most of these questions deal with Ethan's sheltered life in the United States and his focus on hockey versus the hardships of the citizens of Kiryat Shemona. Unfortunately, the story rests on too many stereotypes: All American Jews are spoiled, privileged, and upper middle class while Israelis are secular. While fans of hockey will love the descriptions of the games and plays, readers who are unfamiliar with the sport will lose interest in these lengthy narratives.

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

Stein, Tammar. *Spoils*. New York: Knopf, 2013. 272 pp. \$17.99 (9780375870620) HC; \$7.99 (9780307974310) eBook. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 8–12.

Ever wonder what you'd do if you won the lottery? Leni, a high school senior in South Florida, has known both the good—and the bad—of that reality. She has watched her parents spend down the winnings until her family is practically bankrupt. Leni turns eighteen in six days and will receive the last million. Will she dutifully give it to her parents to waste? Or will she keep it for her college fund and alienate herself from her family? Or will she choose to perform a *mitzvah* ...? This dilemma would be intriguing enough, but Ms. Stein smacks the reader—and poor Leni—with the presence of the Archangel Michael who, in an appearance that borders on a mugging, orders Leni to “fix it”.

Ms. Stein is a talented writer, whether she's describing a decaying mansion, the complex emotions of Leni's friend Gavin, or the ecosystems of South Florida. But her insistence on framing Leni's moral and financial crisis as a struggle between Heaven and Hell is an unnecessary and distracting choice. It is unbelievable that Leni, a science geek, would accept Michael's presence as easily as she does. Ms. Stein also reverts to superfluous sidebars, written in the third person, to introduce the reader to bystanders in Leni's story. Leni's relationship with her family and with Gavin, a troubled but worthy young man, are honest and heartfelt, along with her ultimate decision on how to spend that money. This is the real story of *Spoils* but it is unfortunate that the reader has to push through the angel's wings or devil's deals to read it.

Leda Siskind, YA writer and psychotherapist, Los Angeles, CA

Vincent, L.M. *Saving Dr. Block*. Manchester, MA: Bunbury Press, 2013. 275 pp. \$14.95 (9781489542212). Gr. 7–10.

Inspired by the new film, *Dr. No*, Howard Block and his friends Irwin (“Stinky”) Devinki and Mike Hunsacker are determined to help Howard's father, who is being sued for malpractice. Howard and Stinky are busy preparing for their upcoming bar mitzvahs, which involves mainly memorizing their *Haftorah* portions and speeches the rabbi wrote, but they also make time to spy on Dr. Huntley, who actually harmed the patient. Just like the dashing James Bond, the boys develop secret plans, rig telephone recording equipment, and try to steal files to crack their case. Following a disastrous attempt to pass as Christians at a youth group meeting, Howard convinces Dr. Huntley's daughter, Melissa, to help them prove Dr. Block's innocence. Like Bond, Howard saves the day *and* gets the girl.

Set in Kansas City in the early 1960s, *Saving Dr. Block* includes many details about the era, including references to popular music and fashion. Reading this entertaining novel is like listening to a favorite uncle as he reminisces about his childhood. Unfortunately, secondary characters are one-dimensional, several plot elements—including one about racism—are underdeveloped and then simply dropped, and spelling errors abound (the synagogue has an “alter” and someone wears “citrous” colors). Note that several characters use extremely crude language.

Marci Lavine Bloch, Silver Spring, MD

GOD & PRAYER

Rubabshi, Leah Chana. *The Hidden Artist*. Illus. by Phyllis Saroff. Brooklyn: Hachai, 2014. 32 pp. \$10.95 (9781929628722). Preschool.

The young boy in this laminated colorful picture book looks at the beauty of the world with awe as he wonders who drew “this world for me?” It is a mystery until the last page when he realizes that Hashem is the artist: “Look and see / He made this world for you and me!” *The Hidden Artist* is written in rhyme which flows without being forced. The cover illustration shows a young boy surrounded by animals and flowers while he draws on a blank page. Saroff's full-page illustrations in single-page and double-page spreads are beautiful and awe-inspiring: The soaring birds fly off the page; the foamy, churning sea is majestic and powerful; the pink and red sunset is breathtaking.

Ilka Gordon, On-site director, Aaron Garber Library, Cleveland, OH

HOLOCAUST & WORLD WAR II

Dauvillier, Loïc. *Hidden: A Child's Story of the Holocaust*. Illus. by Marc Lizano. Color by Greg Salsedo. Trans. by Alexis Siegel. New York: First Second, 2014. 76 pp. \$16.99 (9781596438736). Gr. 4–8.

A granddaughter wakes up in the middle of the night to find her grandmother awake and crying in the living room. The grandmother begins to tell the story of her experiences as a young Jewish girl, when she was about her granddaughter's age, in 1942 Nazi-occupied Paris. This is a story she has never shared with anyone, not even her own son. While librarians will be familiar with the content—the humiliation of being ignored by “friends,” hidden in an armoire while parents are taken away by police, rescued by neighbors, taken in by a farmer outside the city, reunion with one parent and ultimate loss of another—the graphic novel format enables the information to be more emotionally and physically accessible to children. However, the material is difficult and not for the very young or unprepared.

The illustrations are child-like in nature, as though the granddaughter is drawing the pictures as her grandmother tells her story. Large round heads atop smallish bodies look cartoonish, but do not take away from the seriousness of the tale. While determining the age of the granddaughter and the grandmother in her youth is difficult as a result of these drawings, ages can be inferred from the settings in which the children are pictured. The coloration is appropriate throughout the story. This is an excellent addition to a graphic novel collection and recommended for Jewish libraries.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwordsbooks.com. Washington, DC

Elvgren, Jennifer. *The Whispering Town*. Illus. by Fabio Santomauro. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2014. 32 pp. \$17.95 (9781467711944) HC; \$7.95 (9781467711951) Pbk. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 2–5.

The backdrop of this picture book is Denmark 1943 during the German occupation. Danish Jews have been warned of impending roundups and deportations and, with the help of their fellow citizens, they attempt to escape to neutral Sweden. Elvgren fictionalizes what happened in Gilleleje, a fishing village on the northeast coast of Denmark. Anett is a young girl who, along with her parents and other villagers, helps a Jewish mother and son. Elvgren structures the story sensibly: Anett goes to the baker, the librarian, and the farmer to get bread, books, and eggs respectively for the Jews in hiding. The suspense increases as the nights remain dark and Nazi soldiers come closer to Anett's home. Finally, Anett proposes a plan: The villagers will whisper, “This way” to the mother and son and thus guide them to the harbor. The book ends on a hopeful note as Anett “imagined them walking free on the beach in Sweden”. Although the fate of the Jews of Gilleleje was quite different, Elvgren has chosen to ignore that historical fact and to focus on the Danish Jews who passed through the village to safety.

Santomauro's comic-book illustrations are rendered in muted shades of grey, black, green, and brown. Young people who read *The Whispering Town* will perhaps feel that the Nazi soldiers weren't as feared and hated as they really were. Furthermore, several inaccuracies were evident in the Nazi soldiers' uniforms. Another issue arises as to whether the subject matter of *The Whispering Town* is appropriate for this age group. Unfortunately, this picture book disappoints. For two award-winning books about Denmark during the Holocaust, see Joan Betty Stuchner's *Honey Cake* (Random House, 2007) and Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* (Houghton Mifflin, 1973).

Anne Dublin, author of Stealing Time, Toronto, Canada

Phillips, Dee. *Holocaust: The Story of a Survivor*. Yesterday's Voices series. Costa Mesa, CA: Saddleback Educational, 2014. 48 pp. \$7.95 (9781622508747) Pbk. Gr. 9–12.

In this slim volume, reluctant teen readers receive an introduction to the Holocaust in about 600 words. Using flashback techniques, the story introduces Sarah, a fictional Jewish young woman in Poland, who is facing the separation from her loved ones, including her beau, Jacob, and internment at

a death camp. Before separation, Jacob vows to think of her when he views a full moon. Sarah adopts his mantra, "I will find you." Through a series of vivid scenes, Sarah experiences deportation, selection, labor, death of those around her, the challenge to persevere, liberation by the American army, and finally, in a heartwarming ending, marriage to Jacob.

Back matter includes "Behind the Story" and a "What's Next" section that suggests exercises and activities such as a book group discussion. Author Dee Phillips develops each line of prose carefully, nearly lyrically. She captures the pathos of the times, which can be difficult to comprehend today. Graphic illustrations are equally strong. A few photographs of a boy and a couple are presented as Sarah's family and while they repeat at different points of the story, they do not diminish in poignancy. It was an unfortunate choice to select Sarah as the heroine's name, as it only punctuates the required middle name Jewish women had to adopt under the Nazi regime. Still, the brief story is effective and surprisingly emotionally evocative.

Barbara Krasner, Member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, New Jersey

ISRAEL

Owings, Lisa. *Israel. Countries of the World*. Minneapolis: ABDO Publishing, 2013. 144 pp. \$35.64 (9781617836305). Gr. 5-10.

Like other survey texts on Israel, this volume's chapters cover geography, animals and nature, political system, economics, and cultures of various populations. The color photographs of scenery and animal life are especially beautiful. However, the sections on history and on the conflict with the Palestinians fall far short. It is a problem that authors of these surveys are generally not historians, but children's writers who lack credentials in the discipline and subject matter. This author, Lisa Owings, also wrote books for schoolchildren on Princess Di, Marilyn Monroe, and poison dart frogs. A little research may suffice to author books on those topics for middle schoolers. But a history must be more than a chronicle of events – it must also examine their causes. In the present volume, like so many others of its type, causation is absent. Wars "were fought," "tensions flared", "conflicts escalated", peace "gave way". It is inadequate to say that in 1967, a war "was fought" and that Israel "seized" the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan without informing that Israel was attacked from those places by foreign armies and that their defeat is what left the territories to Israel. Sound history requires that significant facts not be omitted from a narrative. The PLO is defined as "fighting for Palestinian interests" without indicating what those "interests" were or that its methods were terrorism. Arafat is defined as the "initiator of the peace process" omitting his role as a world terrorist leader and agitator for jihad against Israel. From this telling, one would not know of the decades of airplane hijackings, bombings of buses, cafes, schools, children murdered in their homes, and rocket barrages launched at Israeli towns. There are other important omissions, such as the League of Nations' mandate which established in international law the right of Jews to their own state in Palestine. Also, it is incorrect to assert that "the Likud party is ... against Palestinian statehood". One senses that this author meant well, meant to be fair, and has no personal animus. She concludes by saying that Israelis and Arabs are alike: "They all simply want a place to call home." No telling is fair if it misleads the reader – even if done unconsciously (*Washington Post* Code of Ethics). The reader of this book's sections on history and current events will be misled.

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



Washburn, Kim. *Let's Go Explore Jerusalem*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderkidz, 2014. 48 pp. \$6.99 (9780310743187) Pbk. Gr. 3–5

Washburn, Kim. *Let's Go Explore Israel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderkidz, 2014. 48 pp. \$6.99 (9780310743163) Pbk. Gr. 3–5.

Both books, *Jerusalem* and *Israel*, consist of bright color photographs matched with equally bold and colorful text boxes with titles and headlines meant to be catchy, humorous, and pun-filled. The title for the page on the Israeli desert is “Hot Diggity”; the page showing the Mount of Olives is headlined “Olive this Place”. The *Jerusalem* volume is especially heavy on the religions of the city, with the Bible treated as a factual, historical source. “God told Abraham to go to Mount Moriah.... God provided a ram to be killed instead”, or “Jesus did miracle cures, telling a lame man to walk ... and that is exactly what the lame man did!” Stories like these need to be prefaced with wording to the effect that according to Hebrew Scriptures, God said x; according to the Christian Scriptures, Jesus did y. Jesus is referred to as “God’s only Son” and as “the Savior”. Similarly in the *Israel* volume, at Jaffa “Jonah boarded a boat here before he bumped into a very big fish” and on Mount Carmel, “Elijah showed some false prophets who was boss. Answer: God.”

While there are some worthwhile pages about sights to see in Jerusalem, and geographic features of Israel, the snarky tone and the infusion of miracle stories as fact make these books from Zondervan, part of HarperCollins Christian Publishing house, unsuitable for students seeking reliable information for school projects. Furthermore, the assumptions about New Testament stories-as-fact make them especially unsuitable for Jewish schools. There is very little about Islam, and the text box for the Dome of the Rock is confusing, making it sound like the *mikvaot* found there are part of that religion. A few of the analogies (if accurate) are of interest and of use to modern readers: one large stone of the Western Wall weighs the same as twelve humpback whales; Disneyland is slightly larger in square miles than present-day Jerusalem. But the overall tone is not serious or historical, causing particular concern regarding the note on the back cover of each book: “All content aligns with Common Core Standards.” If true, that is discouraging.

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

JEWISH LIFE & VALUES

Hyde, Holly Smith. *Elan, Son of Two Peoples*. Illus. by Mikela Prevost. Minneapolis: Lerner, 2014. 32 pp. \$7.95 (9780761390510) Pbk. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 2–5.

The year is 1898. Elan has already had his bar mitzvah in San Francisco, but his journey toward becoming a man is only getting started. In this historical, multicultural picture book, Elan travels to New Mexico with his Jewish father and Native American mother to engage in the Pueblo ceremony of becoming a man. As they travel, Elan’s mother recalls meeting his father for the first time at her tribe’s Corn Festival and subsequently becoming a member of the Jewish community. After spending time exploring and sharing stories with relatives in Albuquerque, Elan gathers with his family on the mesa where he reads Torah, and later becomes an official Acoma tribesman. Following the ceremony, Elan is invited to participate in additional Pueblo traditions and rituals, like visiting the kiva and taking part in the Eagle Dance. After the festivities, Elan heads back to San Francisco with his parents. He now has a strong sense of belonging to two very special communities. As their trip comes to an end, his mother reminds him, “Always remember, you are the son of two proud nations.”

This book is informative on many different levels. Readers will enjoy the historical perspective of a young boy growing up in the 1800s. The book was loosely based on a real person’s life, which is explained by the historical note at the end. Readers will also learn about several aspects of the Ancoma culture. The illustrator, Mikea Prevost, uses watercolors and collage in an unusual, beautiful way that complements the story’s majestic setting. Students with parents from different backgrounds or those in the midst of the bar/bat mitzvah preparation process will be sure to relate to Elan’s journey.

Abby Cooper, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, IL

Meszler, Joseph B., Shulamit Reinharz, Liz Suneby, and Diane Heiman. *The JGuy's Guide: The GPS for Jewish Teen Guys*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2013. 186 pp. \$16.99 (9781580237215). Gr. 7-10.

Teens today have difficult, complex lives to navigate, and not many good guides to help them. This short volume by a congregational rabbi, a Brandeis University sociologist, and two writers attempts to provide some gentle direction. Each of the book's ten chapters takes on an important set of issues, including friends, parents, God, stress, and love. Each section begins with a short overview by Rabbi Meszler, recognizing the topic's importance. This is followed by comments from teens, confirming and adding to the question. There are also references to Jewish leaders and thinkers—Maimonides, Heschel, etc.—who have written on the topic, and to past and present celebrities who can relate to it. Toward the end are specifically Jewish teachings from the Bible, Talmud and elsewhere that deepen the reader's understanding of the issue in Jewish terms. Finally, there is a "What do I think?" section, where the teen is invited to answer questions in terms of his own experiences.

The whole book is written in accessible, conversational language. *The JGuy's Guide* is non-prescriptive; teens will connect to the presentation and respect the lack of assumptions. It is informative, but doesn't talk down to them. Finally, the questions connect young people to their past, but are respectful of their difference from prior generations. Rabbi Meszler and his colleagues have created an important link between Judaism and today's teens. In addition to the intended audience of teens, the book can be used by parents, rabbis, and teachers as they search for ways to link young men to Judaism. The book can also be used as a bar mitzvah or confirmation gift. While it should be in synagogue (and college and seminary) libraries, it may not last there. Professionals may have more and better uses for it. Included are Notes and Suggested Readings.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Rosen, Chaya. *Our New Special Baby*. Illus. by Rivkie Braverman. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2013. 43 pp. \$14.99 (9781598269604). Gr. K-3.

Chaya Rosen, inspired by her brother Ezra who was born with Down syndrome, has written a tender and loving book about a family whose new baby has Down syndrome. Abba explains to the children that their new baby brother is different and Hashem has chosen their family to love and give him the special attention he will need. The children ask important probing questions about their new sibling, such as: Will he not be smart? Will he look funny? Will he be able to play with us? Will he be able to talk? Abba's excellent answers are realistic yet reassuring. The pastel color illustrations are beautiful and soothing and the male characters wear *kippot*. Two appendixes are included: one geared toward older siblings, briefly answers questions about the syndrome in a more detailed and mature fashion; the other, for adults, provides an overview of common medical concerns associated with Down syndrome.

Ilka Gordon, Aaron Garber Library, Cleveland, OH

PICTURE BOOKS

Golan, Avirama. *Little Naomi, Little Chick*. Illus. by Raaya Karas. Trans. from the Hebrew by Annette Appel. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. 34 pp. \$17.00 (9780802854278). Preschool-Kindergarten.

Little Naomi, Little Chick is a tall book (10 ½" x 7 ½") with an apple-green cover where barefoot little Naomi is standing on her head next to upside-down little chick. Rhyming verses follow Naomi through her day, from waking to sleeping. Each left-hand page tells what Naomi is doing, and ends with the refrain, "but not little chick". Each right-hand page contradicts the left with an illustration of little chick doing exactly what little Naomi is doing—only chick-style. The illustrations are offbeat and playful, and there is a clean and airy quality in the book making: red end papers, lots of fresh

white space surrounding the text, and clear, crayoned line drawings. The fun of this book is its ironic predictability. Children will pick up on the contradictions, and enjoy the fun of understanding just the opposite of what is said. This is a refreshing preschool charmer, originally published in Hebrew by Avirama Golan, a noted Israeli author and columnist. However, the lack of explicit Jewish content makes this an optional purchase for most Judaic collections.

Naomi Morse, Silver Spring, MD

Grossman, David. *The Hug*. Artwork by Michal Rovner. Trans. from the Hebrew by Stuart Schoffman. New York, London: Overlook Duckworth, 2013, Unpaged. \$19.95 (9781468302738). Preschool–Gr. 1.

The publication of a children's book by Israeli author David Grossman is an event. *The Hug* narrates a conversation between a mother and her young son as they walk in the country with their dog. When his mother tells him that there is no one like him in the world, Ben objects, saying that this makes him feel alone and lonely. His mother assures him that his uniqueness is a good thing, but Ben is not convinced. Mother and son talk about the ambivalence of being separate, yet needing others. The hug, says his mother, is the universal remedy for our loneliness. We are separate, yet need to be closely connected to others. This delicate emotional ambiguity is the unusual subject of Grossman's book. Unfortunately, the stark white pages and sparse sketches belie the warmth of the subject. Hebrew readers, and those interested in the artistic choices that go into bookmaking, may wish to read the original, *Hibuk*, to see what was lost in translation: the choice of words, the use of delicate cursive handwriting for the text, and unusual page design. The English edition is disappointing. Since it lacks any Jewish content, it is likely to be an unnecessary purchase for most Judaic collections.

Naomi Morse, Silver Spring, MD

Long, Ilana. *Ziggy's Big Idea*. Illus. by Rasa Joni. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2014. 32 pp. \$17.95 (9780761390534) HC; \$7.95 (9780761390541) Pbk. Reviewed from an ARC. Preschool–Gr. 3.

Do you want to read an entertaining story of the supposed origin of the bagel? This is it. Ziggy is a young boy who lives in an idyllic shtetl – everything is clean, orderly, and peaceful. Ziggy is an inventor with unusual ideas – a ball in the shape of a cube or stilts for his height-challenged rabbi. Finally, Ziggy has his best idea yet. He invents a bun with a hole in the center. It's a bagel, of course! Tender on the inside, crispy on the outside, and easily portable on a stick – this invention will rock the world.

Rasa Joni's whimsical, colorful illustrations complement this humorous story, adding expression and further meaning. A recipe for bagels and an historical note are included. *Ziggy's Big Idea* is a tasty treat for young children. For another book about bagels, see Aubrey Davis's *Bagels from Benny* (Kids Can Press, 2003), winner of the Sydney Taylor Award for Younger Readers.

Anne Dublin, author of *Stealing Time*, Toronto, Canada

Snyder, Laurel. *Camp Wonderful Wild*. Illus. by Carlynn Whitt. Las Vegas: Amazon, 2013. 29 pp. \$17.99 (9781477816523). Preschool–Gr. 3.

Whether you loved it or hated it, if you were a Jewish child, you probably attended summer camp at some point over the course of your childhood. The character in Laurel Snyder's clever, colorful new picture book is no exception to this rite of passage. Unfortunately, he is not a fan of this particular summer experience. According to him, camp is riddled with "buzzing, stinging, winging things" and "muck, mud, and goo". Even worse, "In the morning, much too early . . . there are songs you *have* to sing." When looking at the illustrations, however, it is apparent that maybe our main character isn't in as dire circumstances as he suggests. Those songs they *have* to sing? (The horror!) The songs are sung in a sunny field with friends, musical instruments, and smiles abounding. The muck and mud and goo? It's actually perfect for jumping, playing, and fun. Maybe camp isn't so bad after all, but there is one final challenge. As the character reveals at the end, "The very hardest part of camp . . . is when it's time to go."

With bold, bright illustrations and simple, rhyming text, this PJ Library selection is perfect for young children heading to camp for the first time. It shows that you can get through any situation with a little humor; and oftentimes, things that sound bad are really anything but. Highly recommended for all the camp-goers in your life.

Abby Cooper, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, IL

SHABBAT & HOLIDAYS

Garrett, Abra Liberman and Four Day Weekend. *The Maccabee on the Mantel*. Illus. by Ivan Escalante. Irving, TX: Toy Vey, 2013. 22 pp. \$11.99 (9781620987988) Pbk. Plush Toy & Book, \$29.99. Preschool-Gr. 1.

The Elf on the Shelf is a “traditional” Christmas story that began in 2005 and has now grown into a mega-empire of film, books, toys, and other paraphernalia. The premise of *The Elf* is that one of Santa’s little helpers comes to live in a family’s home prior to Christmas to report to Santa who has been naughty and who has been nice. A number of articles have been written on why this may not be a great parenting idea.

It was just a matter of time before someone decided Jewish children needed something to compete with *The Elf on the Shelf*. So, *The Maccabee on the Mantel*, a book with accompanying cardboard Maccabee (or for an extra cost, a darling plush Maccabee), has come our way. Unlike *The Elf*, the job of *The Maccabee* is not to report on behavioral issues, but to share in the holiday and remind children about the many miracles that abound during the Hanukkah season. The book introduces the month of Kislev, summarizes the story of Hanukkah, and includes the Hanukkah blessings (in Hebrew, transliteration, and translation), and several ideas for creating new, fun-filled family traditions. Families, especially those looking to blend holidays, might enjoy this book and concept. However, the simple, cartoonish illustrations and uninspiring, unsophisticated rhyme make it more appropriate for a bookstore or holiday bazaar than a library collection.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC

Glaser, Linda. *Stone Soup with Matzoh Balls: A Passover Tale in Chelm*. Illus. by Maryam Tabatabaei. Chicago: Albert Whitman, 2014. 32 pp. \$16.99 (9780807576205). Reviewed from a galley. Gr. 1-3.

Chelmites and Passover meet in this latest twist on the classic tale about making soup from stones. As in other versions, a poor man arrives in a poor town where the citizens are selfish from want, yet proud. This time, the soup is for a *seder* to fulfill the traditional dictate: “Let all who are hungry come and eat.” The villagers hope they will not be the ones who must feed the stranger. Chelm is famous for being foolish, but no one in this book is sillier than the population of any other village where this story has been set in past centuries. The moral is the opposite of foolish: it reveals how a ragged stranger changes the village forever by teaching how to share. In a series of clever goads, the stranger brings the Chelmites together to make a huge cauldron of soup. The dialog is fun as the stranger cons the townsfolk into providing. The vocabulary varies as the man dupes the village into producing the soup ingredients. This different phrasing is balanced by repetition when describing the size of the offering. The illustrations in earth tones are mobile, but stereotypical; everyone looks alike with the same eyes and the same Jewish noses. The first and last pages sport bold type, so no reader misses the point. Text and illustrations depict a sanitized shtetl culture and setting. The slim book is more a folk tale than a holiday story as it only uses one line, out of context, from the Haggadah. However, anyone wishing a holiday tie-in can happily find it. Although the volume does not reach the standard set by Aubrey Davis’s *Bone Button Borscht*, this latest version is recommended for its cheerful retelling of an ageless story.

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

Gordon, Lynn Taylor. *Gracie's Night: A Hanukkah Story*. Illus. by Laura Brown. Mount Laurel, NJ: Cookie & Nudge Books, 2013. 32 pp. \$18.00 (9780985735302). Gr. K-3.

Traditions are so important. So is love, and there is plenty of love in Gracie's house. It's Hanukkah but Gracie and her papa don't have much money for gifts. In this beautifully crafted rhyming story, readers learn about the power of giving. Gracie doesn't know about new clothes or materialistic items, but rather hand-me-downs and being resourceful. But with Hanukkah coming, she decides to find a job in a department store so that she can buy her papa something special. Only something happens to alter her plans. With unique digital vector illustrations, this story will tug at your heart and help to inspire new traditions for the holiday of Hanukkah.

Lisa Katz, Corte Madera Public Library, CA

Kimmel, Eric A. *Hanukkah Bear*. Illus. by Mike Wohnoutka. New York: Holiday House, 2013. 32 pp. \$12.73 (9780823428557). Preschool-Gr. 3.

A bear awakes from his winter sleep and smells something delicious. The smell is coming from Bubba Brayna's house. She is cooking potato latkes, because she is expecting her friends and the rabbi to visit her. Bubba Brayna, who is 97 years old, does not see or hear well; so, when the bear thumps at her door, Bubba Brayna, thinking he is the rabbi, invites him in and feeds him the latkes. The story is charming and amusing. The whimsical full-color illustrations add to the reader's enjoyment. Especially sweet is Bubba's delighted expression as she serves the latkes to the docile, confused bear and wipes his smiling face.

This story first appeared in *Cricket Magazine for Children* in 1988. An almost identical picture book, written by Eric Kimmel, titled *The Chanukah Guest*, was published in 1990 with illustrations by Giora Carmi. The text in both versions is almost identical. The previous version has a few more sentences and some word changes. The illustrations are totally different—a factor which completely alters the tone of the book. While the 2013 version is whimsical and joyous, the 1990 book is darker and more frightening. In Carmi's illustrations, Bubba Brayna is an ugly old woman and the bear appears menacing. The new version is highly recommended for all libraries' picture book collection—even ones that own the previous version.

Ilka Gordon, On Site Director, Aaron Garber Library, Cleveland, OH

Kimmelman, Leslie. *Sam and Charlie (And Sam Too) Return!* Illus. by William Owl. Chicago: Albert Whitman, 2014. 48 pp. \$13.99 (9780807572153). Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. K-2.

This is a charming beginning reader book filled with lovely stories about three good friends, Sam, Charlie, and Sam Too, Charlie's sister. The five stories abound with good values and friendship, as the children look out for each other and manage to have fun whatever they do. In "A Snowy Day", the three friends go down the block, shoveling the neighbors' walks and playing in the snow. Two of the stories celebrate Jewish holidays, one allowing the protagonists to plant a tree on Tu B'Shevat and one following the friends as they search for the *afikoman* after the Passover *seder* (This story is called "Crunch" and does not have a happy ending for the matzah!) Friendship and sharing are the themes of the stories, though they are not presented in a didactic tone. Colorful, age-appropriate, whimsical illustrations set the tone for the happy relationships. This is a sequel to *Sam and Charlie and Sam Too* (Albert Whitman, 2013), and will work well as both a read-aloud and for new, independent readers.

Shelly Feit, Library Consultant, Teaneck, NJ



Kimmelman, Leslie. *The Very Crowded Sukkah*. Illus. by Bob McMahon. Las Vegas: Two Lions, 2013. 30 pp. \$17.99 (9781477817162). Preschool–Gr. 2.

When it starts to rain shortly after Sam and Ava's family finishes building the sukkah, Ava says, "Poor little sukkah. All alone in the rain." Readers learn otherwise, as the text describes many creatures, including a ladybug, a butterfly, and rabbits that come in to explore the new structure. Soon enough, the rain stops and Sam and Ava's family can enjoy their holiday meal outside.

Geared for young children who already know the basics about the holiday of Sukkot, *The Very Crowded Sukkah* uses poetic prose to give a gentle look at suburban backyard wildlife and part of one family's holiday observance. The many animals depicted all look friendly, and the illustrations feature plenty of detail without feeling busy. This is a welcome addition to the growing body of children's literature taking place around Jewish holidays without being mostly explanations about the holidays. A brief explanation of Sukkot is included to help all readers appreciate the story.

Marci Lavine Bloch, Silver Spring, MD

Koffsky, Ann D. *Frogs in the Bed: My Passover Seder Activity Book*. Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 2014. 32 pp. \$7.95 (9780874419139). Gr. K–6.

The title of *Frogs in the Bed* is based on the song by Shirley Cohen Steinberg. The lyrics to the song are illustrated humorously and will appeal to preschoolers. The sheet music is included at the end of the book. There is also a Maggid comic for older kids that is humorous as well. The activity book includes a two-page layout of *seder* plate symbols and descriptions of what they represent. However, the loopy, overlapping lines from the symbols to the descriptions are confusing to follow. The Four Questions are printed largely in Hebrew and English for children in primary grades to recite easily. There are suggested activities for the *seder* such as making *matzoh* shapes, the *afikomen* maze, and finding the differences between two pictures of a *seder*. Unfortunately, the worksheet-like activities encourage writing which is inappropriate for observing the first two and last two nights of Pesach. In addition, the book is supposed to be geared for younger children and the worksheet activities are too difficult for preschoolers. There are suggested activities to make ahead of the *seder*, which include making a cup for Elijah and a jumping frog game. Although the book has some clever ideas, there are other *seder* companion and activity books that have stronger content for following along with the *seder* or the history of the holiday. *Wonders and Miracles: A Passover Companion* by Eric Kimmel (2004) does a better job of following the *seder* and explaining each part with stories, illustrations, and songs. A stronger Pesach activity book is *More Than Matzah: A Passover Feast of Fun, Facts, and Activities* by Debbie Herman (2006), which includes an informative section about the history, meaning, and celebration of the holiday followed by an activity section with crafts and songs.

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

Korngold, Jamie. *Seder in the Desert*. Photos by Jeff Finkelstein. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2014. 32 pp. \$17.95 (9780761375012). Reviewed from an ARC. Preschool–Gr. 2.

An adventure in the beautiful desert of Moab, Utah, simulating the experience of the Israelites in the desert as they leave Egypt, is the setting for this unusual and meaningful Passover story. The text begins with a question: Why is this *seder* different from all other *seders*? The answer: "Because this year we are celebrating Passover in the desert." The Adventure Rabbi, Jamie Korngold, who has written four other children's books for Kar-Ben (*Sadie's Sukkah Breakfast*, *Sadie and the Big Mountain*, *Sadie's Almost Marvelous Menorah*, and *Sadie's Lag Ba'omer Mystery*), escorts families on a hike into the glorious desert. Men, women, and children band together to climb steep rocks and sandstone; they hike the arid desert till they arrive at the Colorado River to set up and celebrate their *seder*. All the necessary supplies are brought in the hikers' backpacks: Water, *seder* plate, *haggadot*, and of course, food. One hiker carries a Torah. Many of the

traditions of the *seder* are integrated into their hike. The *seder* is spread out on a tablecloth on the ground, enhanced by the *seder* plate with its unique foods and *matzoh*. At “Dayenu”, there is dancing and music of tambourines, celebrating and appreciating all the miracles Jews have to be thankful for on Passover. The joy of the experience is palpable. This photo essay is the record of a real event. Magnificent photographs were taken by Jeff Finkelstein, a professional photographer who is married to the Adventure Rabbi. The natural beauty of the environment and rock formations enhance a child’s appreciation of the blessings of nature and of God. This is a wonderful read-aloud and shared resource to illustrate a unique Passover observance. It should be noted that Halachic Orthodox guidelines are not followed.

Shelly Feit, Library Consultant, Teaneck, NJ

Lieberman, Naomi. *Shabbos, Shabbos I Love You!* Illus. by Avram Zmora. Brooklyn: Hachai, 2013. 28 pp. \$10.95 (9781929628704). Preschool.

Israel’s poet and philosopher, Ahad Ha’am, said, “More than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews.” In this rhyming book for preschoolers, Shabbos is adored by a contemporary Orthodox Jewish family. Hebrew terms are transliterated using *Ashkenazi* (Eastern European) dialect and a glossary is featured in the front of the book. The cartoon lifelike illustrations by Zmora look computer generated and will appeal to young children. The pages are also glossy and laminated. While the *Ima* (mother) is not mentioned in the text at all, she is pictured lighting the Sabbath candles and holding the Havdalah candle. This is an optional purchase for libraries serving Orthodox communities. *My First Shabbat Board Book* edited by Clare Lister (DK Publishing, 2003) and *Many Days, One Shabbat* by Fran Manushkin (Marshall Cavendish, 2011) will appeal to a wider audience.

Ben Pastcan, Shalom School, Sacramento, CA

Lanton, Sandy. *The Littlest Levine*. Illus. by Claire Keay. Minnesota: Kar-Ben, 2014. 32 pp. \$17.95 (9780761390459). Preschool.

Hannah doesn’t like being the youngest in her family. She is too short to hang fruit in the sukkah, too young to light the Hanukkah candles by herself, she can’t reach the sink, and she can’t tie her own shoes. Hannah doesn’t go to school yet, but Grandpa saves the day when he teaches her that being the youngest is something to be proud of. As Hannah and her family prepare for Passover, Hannah secretly prepares for something else with the help of her grandpa. This is a wonderful story about the importance of being the youngest in the family during the holiday of Passover. *The Littlest Levine* not only shows the importance of family and traditions but the gift of helping each other out. The bright, colorful painted illustrations are simple yet whimsical and will appeal to young readers. The author includes a brief description of Passover at the back of the book.

Lisa Katz, Corte Madera Public Library, Grenbrae, CA.

Match, Bobbie. *Havdallah: Three Stars in the Sky*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Barbara K.F. Match, 2011. 20 pp. \$14.95 (9781467527095) Pbk. Preschool.

This is a clear, concise description of the Havdallah service, the informal home service which sees out Shabbat and eases in the regular work week. The various parts of the service are described and include the words of the pertinent blessings in transliteration and translation. The reason behind each symbolic part of the service is briefly addressed in words a child can understand. The text is accompanied by bright color photographs of a preschool class acting out the ritual as they learn about it during their school day. Recommended for use in the classroom or at home.

Michal Hoschander Malen, North Shore Hebrew Academy Library, Great Neck, NY



Sabbag, Galia. *Shabbat in the Playroom*. Illus. by Erin Taylor. Available at Barnes & Noble or through author's website at <http://shirasseries.com>. 2013. 20 pp. \$18.00 (9781619796386) Pbk. Preschool–Gr. 1.

Written by a teacher to help educate her own students and others, *Shabbat in the Playroom* is the charming story of a young girl whose imagination and sense of fun help her Shabbat dream come true. Shira loves the Kabbalat Shabbat celebration at school and wants her parents to adopt the same rituals into their family life, but Shira's parents are too busy to even consider it. Each week, they put her off with vague excuses. One Friday, Shira decides to stage her own Shabbat celebration right in her playroom. She invites her dolls and stuffed animals and they are perfect guests. She prepares her favorite pretend foods in her play kitchen and finds a white pillowcase to serve as a tablecloth. A brown stuffed sock looks like a challah and a pretty scarf makes an ideal challah cover. Legos topped with yellow blocks look to Shira's excited eyes just like glowing candles. Paper napkins cut into circles work as *kippot*, her Hebrew book looks like a *siddur*, and a plastic drinking cup is just right as a *Kiddush* cup. When her preparations are done, Shira recites the *Brachot* (blessings) she learned in school (included in Hebrew within the text) and revels in her Shabbat celebration. What she doesn't see is that her parents are peeking into the playroom and watching her deep, sincere enjoyment. They are touched by her dedication and joy and promise to share Kabbalat Shabbat with her from that day forward. Although flimsily bound, this colorfully illustrated book tells a delightful story with a spot-on, child-centered approach and conveys gentle emotion in a simple, straightforward manner.

Michal Hoschander Malen, North Shore Hebrew Academy Library, Great Neck, NY

PUBLISHING NEWS

Fern Schumer Chapman's award-winning novel, *Is It Night or Day?* was recently published in paperback by Square Fish (Macmillan). This edition includes bonus material: a Q&A with the author, a 3,000-word story of how a group of Illinois eighth-graders reunited the two Holocaust refugees, and a teacher's guide. *Is It Night or Day?* is the prequel to *Motherland*, the author's memoir of a mother-daughter journey to Germany in 1990.

Many of Yaffa Ganz's books for Jewish kids have been recently reissued: the *Savta Simcha* series, the *Simmy and Mimmy* collection, and *Cinnamon and Myrrh*. Ganz is a recipient of the Sydney Taylor "Body of Work Award" from the AJL for the "totality of her work and her outstanding contribution to the field of Jewish literature for children."

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Hasafran is the electronic discussion list of the Association of Jewish Libraries. It was created in 1991 to provide a forum for the discussion of Judaica librarianship. The list is moderated by Joseph (Yossi) Galron, Jewish studies librarian at The Ohio State University. The views expressed in the list are the opinions of the participants and not necessarily the views of the moderator or of AJL.



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Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND REBECCA JEFFERSON

Aaronson, Akiva. *People of the Book: Five Hundred Years of the Hebrew book from the Beginning of Printing until the Twentieth Century*. Nanuet, New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2014. 231 pp. \$39.99 (9781598269567).

Librarians should know better than to judge a book by its cover, so when you first pick up this hefty volume with its glossy paper and numerous illustrations, don't assume that *People of the Book* is just another good-looking coffee table book. In between the plates and facsimiles the reader will find a well-thought through, carefully organized work on the history of the Hebrew printing of religious books since the invention of the printing press. In addition, a wonderful description of the methods used to print early books will be useful to those new to the field. Vignettes add interest to what could otherwise be a dry litany of published works; the chapter divisions make easy-to-read small sections, perfect for those few free minutes of the day normally devoted to scanning emails.

This book includes several indices: chronological date of printing, location of printing, printers and a short glossary for unfamiliar Hebrew terms. However, there is not one comprehensive, general index, so many lesser names in the history of Hebrew printing will only be uncovered by reading the entire volume. An index in Hebrew would have been useful as transliterations are rendered according to Ashkenazic pronunciation. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to see works printed by Jews in Arab lands included, even though the statement about the length of time that Jews lived in Iraq is incorrect.

This work is clearly aimed at the more observant community. The writing style is clear and accessible to young adult readers, and thus it is recommended for schools and synagogues. It would also complement undergraduate studies in Jewish history or even serve as an aid to new Hebraic catalogers. Next time you pick up a dusty old volume out of a donation box, don't judge it by its cover: check *People of the Book* to see if it is a milestone publication in the history of Jewish printing.

Jacqueline Ben-Efraim, *Special Collections Librarian, Ostrow Library, American Jewish University, CA*
Aizenberg, Salo. *Hatemail: Anti-Semitism on Picture Postcards*. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2013. 248 pp. \$24.29 (9780827609495).

Hatemail, described as "the most bizarre book to ever grace a coffee table," provides a shocking sample from one of the world's leading collections of Judaica picture postcards. This concise visual history examines anti-Semitism through caricature art on postcards published as early as the 1890s and throughout the world.

The chapters are carefully organized by anti-Semitic themes and often by country of origin, including Germany, France, Great Britain, and the United States. Other portions of the work are classified by tumultuous events in Jewish history. For example, one of Aizenberg's richest chapters includes a series of picture postcards portraying Captain Alfred Dreyfus' defenders as grotesque. The postcards narrate the unfolding story of anti-Semitic events and perceptions during the Dreyfus Affair. Opening the book to any two pages, readers can at once grasp the disquieting normalcy by which extreme Jewish stereotypes and misrepresentations were publicly distributed and shared. Throughout the work, Aizenberg exposes the unpleasant side of penny postcards wherein Jews were depicted as deformed, animal-like and cheap and were ridiculed and alienated.

All the postcards contain annotations, with publication information and translations where applicable. Every chapter has an introduction for geographical and historical context comprehensible to students. *Hatemail* is highly recommended for academic libraries and synagogues. The pictures also may be suitable for high school libraries as a classroom supplement.

Danielle Winter, *Yiddish Book Center*

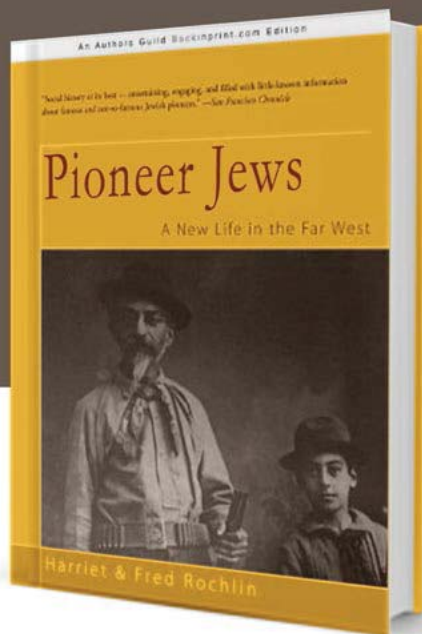
Appelbaum, Peter C. *Loyalty Betrayed: Jewish Chaplains in the German Army during the First World War*. London, Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2014. xxiii, 358 pp. \$79.95 (9780853038474). Also available as an eBook.

About 30 Jewish chaplains served in the German armed forces during the First World War, they are all named and extensively described in this detailed study. Separate chapters are devoted to several of them and large portions consist of quotations from their diaries and sermons. Among these chaplains, the best-known is surely Leo Baeck, who served as rabbi in Berlin and, during the Third Reich was president of the Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden, which represented the interests of the Jews during that period. Rabbi Baeck was interned in Theresienstadt and survived the Holocaust. His courageous leadership and support of his fellow-Jews during those fateful years is well known.

The title indicates that the author set out to shed light on the bitterly ironic way in which the chaplains' loyalty and patriotism in wartime were betrayed by Nazi Germany, yet he devotes only seven pages to this aspect of his book. Various appendices contain tables and lists of specialized information on German military ranks, Jewish terms and other matters.

Much fascinating information about the experiences and thoughts of these Jewish chaplains can be gleaned from this thorough treatment of a topic which until now has received little attention from English-speaking scholars. However, the highly specialized topic is not likely to find wide popular appeal. Recommended for large scholarly collections.

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



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BOOKSELLERS

Artson, Rabbi Bradley Shavit. *Passing Life's Tests: Spiritual Reflections on the Trial of Abraham, the Binding of Isaac.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2012. 150 pp. \$18.99 (9781580236317).

There are many books on the *Akeda* (the Binding of Isaac), dealing with a multitude of issues and viewpoints. Rabbi Artson's new volume is a contemporary view of the story, focusing on the lessons this pivotal event can teach us today.

Part One, "Exploring the Depths" contains the Hebrew text, and a personal translation of the tale, followed by a series of commentaries by Artson, both literal and interpretive (*Peshat* and *Remez*). In Part Two, "Deepening our Encounters," the author takes a variety of perspectives on the text. The thirteen chapters include "Mortality: What You Learn When You're Under the Knife," "Priorities: Balancing Spontaneity and Foresight," and "Integrity: Hearing the Voice of God." Each of these essays analyzes Abraham's actions, and transfers them into our own time and potential situations. In the chapter on Faith, for example, Artson discusses his own crisis when his wife gave birth to their twins prematurely. Ultimately, he says, "I didn't have answers, but I had *emunah*, the ability to trust in faithfulness." The book's conclusion is a call to belief, a commitment to something bigger than ourselves that will sustain us in the tests we all have to face.

Passing Life's Tests has a number of applications and uses. On a basic level, it is intended as a commentary on a particular – and perennially interesting – Torah text. In addition, it may be of value for rabbis and other counseling professionals seeking new ways of helping people deal with life's many challenges.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Avinoam Cohen, ed. *רש"י ובית מדרשו (Rashi and His Disciples).* Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2013, 264 pp. \$49.00 (9789652264244). Hebrew.

Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, universally known as Rashi, died in 1105. The nine-hundredth anniversary of his death was observed around the world in 2005, and this volume contains the proceedings of a conference held at Bar-Ilan University shortly afterwards, in 2006. Most of the thirteen articles deal with one of Rashi's two great exegetical projects – his commentary on the Hebrew Bible and on the Babylonian Talmud. These commentaries have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention already, and the studies in the present volume focus, for the most part, on fairly restricted aspects – how Rashi interprets biblical miracles or rare Talmudic terms, to give two examples. Others ask more far-reaching questions – how did Rashi mark the Talmudic quotations on which he was commenting (Yakov S. Spiegel)? What language did Rashi use to teach Talmud to his students (Yonatan Moss)?

A third theme, besides Rashi's two commentaries, is Rashi's disciples. Among his best known students are Simhah of Vitry, editor of the Mahzor Vitry, and Shemayah, who wrote commentaries on many *piyyutim* (liturgical poems). Each of these is discussed in one of the chapters of this volume (Hananel Mack, Yosef Rivlin), as are one of Rashi's legal disputes with his teachers in Germany (in an important essay by Moshe Amar) and changing Halakhic rules in northern France regarding place names in divorce documents.

It is unfortunate that this volume was published so long after the conference on which it was based. The survey of critical editions of Rashi's Talmudic commentary (*Yirmiyahu Malhi*), for example, is by now outdated, since several important studies on the topic have appeared in the intervening seven years. Nevertheless, many of the studies in this volume will prove valuable to students of Rashi's work.

Pinchas Roth

Boum, Aomar. *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013. xvii, 220 pp. \$36.00 (9780804786997).

Boum, a southern Moroccan Muslim and an American-trained anthropologist, examines how Muslim men in southern Morocco in the early 21st century remember and think of Jews. Boum's specific research is based on local family archives and interviews with an equal number of men from four

generations: great-grandfathers, grandfathers, parents, and youth, of which only the first two groups had first-hand memories of Jews who left the region from the mid-1950s. He shows that those who knew Jews often had positive views of them and lamented their departure, claiming the economic deterioration of the region on the absence of Jews. On the other hand, the younger generation, who did not live in close proximity with Jews, is often influenced in its views by current politics, mainly the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian struggle, and consequently views Jews negatively. Much of the study uses historical sources and studies which serve as important background for the main objective of the book. By focusing on memories and views of regular Moroccan Muslim men, whether they knew Jews or not, this book is an important contribution to the study of Jewish-Muslim relations from a Muslim point of view.

Rachel Simon. Princeton University. Princeton, NJ

Brown, Adam. *Judging "Privileged" Jews: Holocaust Ethics, Representation and the "Grey Zone."* New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2013. 222 pp. \$85.00 (9780857459916).

The *Shoah* and questions of ethics have been linked since the end of the Second World War. With a focus on the Jewish values of *umah* (nation) and *chaim* (life), Brown provides an important contribution to Holocaust Studies as he carefully builds upon Primo Levi's "grey zone" in order to explore the passing of moral judgment by writers and artists on those "privileged" Jews who served their Nazi masters. The "privileged" Jews were those Jews the Nazi's chose with Machiavellian care to maintain hierarchical order amongst their fellow Jews in ghettos and concentration camps who, unbeknownst to them, were bound for slaughter. Brown analyzes the ways in which historians (such as Raul Hilberg who spent a great deal of ink on this difficult subject) and film producers (like Claude Lanzmann in the expansive *Shoah* and Steven Spielberg in the widely popular *Schindler's List*) pass moral judgment in their assessments of these Jews. Brown concludes his study rather simplistically, but with deep emotional appeal: What would the reader do?

This is an extremely fine choice for any setting devoted to difficult ethical choices, whether the audience is Jewish or not, whether the reader or sponsoring group is religious or not. Price aside, this book is a thought-provoking read.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Caspi, Tamar. *How to Woo a Jew: The Modern Jewish Guide to Dating and Mating.* Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2014. 274 pp. \$17.00 (9781580055000).

The world of Jewish dating has become more complicated in the modern era due to internet dating and people dating later in life. There are many dating columns out there, but Tamar Caspi, a Jewish columnist, focuses only on Jewish dating and the unique issues that it presents. This book is a compilation of her advice columns since 2008, and includes personal vignettes and Caspi's response to the letter writers. As she discusses different topics throughout the book, she uses these writers' stories to make her points.

The book is broken up into chapters that focus on the process of beginning to date all the way through marriage, giving real tips and advice to help the reader through the dating process. Helpful charts and statistics are used throughout to reinforce what the author is discussing. An entire chapter is dedicated to whether or not Jewishness is a factor in dating, offering advice on how important this should be in terms of deciding who to date. Another chapter concerns internet dating and the importance of a creating a good online profile. A chapter is dedicated to communication and first dates; another deals with questions of sex.

This book would be appropriate in a public library, or a more secular Jewish one. It is not recommended for yeshivas or Jewish day schools.

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

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Chabot, Adele. *The Best Secret Revealed: a year in Israel.* Jerusalem: Targum Press, 2013. 189 pp. \$16.99 (9781568715735).

The target audience for this book is Orthodox high school students. Its purpose is to encourage them to spend a year studying in a seminary or Yeshiva and traveling in Israel upon graduation. The book even supplies a question and answer section at the back. The author, who has had this experience herself, speaks with enthusiasm about her love for Israel's historical and archaeological sites, her exciting outdoor adventures, and her admiration for Israelis, whom she finds friendly and hospitable. Every day she spends in Israel, she feels a strong connection with the Jewish people and the Jewish past. While the writing is rather amateurish (employing phrases such as "a lot of fun" and "a bunch of friends,"), Chabot's enthusiasm is inspiring and contagious.

Presenting a travel narrative from the unique perspective of a young Jewish adult, this book would be appropriate not only for the Orthodox but for *all* young adults.

Ellen Share, Librarian, Washington Hebrew Congregation

Dohrmann, Natalie B and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds. *Jews, Christians and the Roman Empire: the Poetics of Power in Late Antiquity.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. 388 pp. \$69.95 (9780812245332).

Both editors are professors at the University of Pennsylvania and authors in the area of Jewish and Christian history. This book is divided into three parts with thirteen essays. In the excellent Introduction, "Rethinking Romanness, Provincializing Christendom," the editors summarize the work's highlights, including its analyses of rabbis in the Roman culture, Jewish and Christian differences, and the place of Jews in a Christianized empire. The essays in the first part of this volume focus on the early history of rabbinic interpretation and custom amidst Greek and Roman culture. The second part is devoted to the rise of Christianity and the conflicts that followed. The third part deals with the continuity of Jewish custom as well as increasing anti-Semitic rhetoric rooted in Greek culture. All the essays are well researched by contributors specializing in Jewish and Christian history, law, literature and art from various universities in the US and Israel. This volume would make a fine addition to any library with a scholarly collection in this area.

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

Dreyfus, Kay. *Silence and Secrets: the Australian Experience of the Weintraubs Syncopators.* Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing, 2013. 316 pp. \$34.95 (978192867804).

The Weintraubs Syncopators were a German and primarily Jewish cabaret act that traveled extensively throughout Europe in the 1930s. In keeping with popular European trends, the band's act included elements of comedy and burlesque in addition to jazz and swing numbers. After a long engagement in Russia, it became apparent that the band could not return to Germany. Thus, in 1937 the Syncopators arrived in Sydney, Australia. The band members remained in Australia but being German citizens most were interned as enemy aliens during WWII. Kay Dreyfus presents a fully researched case detailing the cultural and political issues the band members faced because of ethnic discrimination but more importantly because their style of performance was at odds with the Musicians' Union of Australia and their rules. Dreyfus describes how the band members settled into their new country, and the heartbreak of losing their careers and status.

The book is organized into four main sections. The first details the history of the band and the repercussions of landing in war-time and decided non-European Australia. The second and third sections are the heart of Dreyfus' research and focus on the interactions between the band members and the Musicians' Union and the State of Australia. The fourth section questions the Jewish factor and the degree to which this discrimination affected the ability of band members to book performances.

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

Epstein, Lawrence J. *The Basic Beliefs of Judaism: A Twenty-first Century guide to a Timeless Tradition.* Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, Inc, 2013. 201 pp. \$35.00 (9780765709691).

There are numerous introductions to Judaism directed toward Jews, and other books that attempt to describe Judaism to non-Jews. Lawrence Epstein, a retired professor of English, has added his efforts to that last shelf.

The book is divided into ten chapters, combining summaries of belief, Torah and Talmudic stories, life-cycle events, science and history. Prof. Epstein's earnestness is clear. This is a labor of love for Judaism and Jewish values. The text, however, gives the impression that the author has too much information. As a result, he picks details from everywhere, without a narrative thread guiding him (and the reader) through the topics. As one example, the chapter on "The Creation of the World" includes Torah and science, Midrash and scholarship, with insertions on what different people believe (and sometimes why). The book asserts things as normative that are movement-specific, quotes sources without explaining why they are important (or who the people—from Maimonides to Heschel—are), and moves from idea to idea without preparing the reader or describing the path or its end-point. The result is frequently confusing. Worse, the lack of care with sources and lack of proper identification of the ideas and people he cites does a dis-service to the concepts he wishes to explain.

Professor Epstein has written several books about Jewish comedy, and a biography of George Burns. While I might be interested in knowing more about that topic, I am reluctant to do so after reading this book. Regrettably, *The Basic Beliefs* should not be in any Judaica library.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Fine, Steven. *Art, History and the Historiography of Judaism in Roman Antiquity.* Leiden: Brill (Brill Reference Library of Judaism), 2014. 234 pp. \$140.00 (9789004238169).

In this excellent book, Fine wears many hats—those of classicist, art historian, Talmudic scholar, cultural and religious historian. He comments that "the issues raised in Art, History, and the Historiography of Judaism in Roman Antiquity are larger than any of the terms that frame the title alone. This book is about the interplay of thing, text, and thought in the ways that we model the past—and thus as much a 'thick description' of ourselves as of antiquity."

This brilliant collection of twelve fascinating essays is beautifully adorned with over 64 carefully chosen illustrations revealing a highly developed aesthetic sense. Fine is also up-to-date on modern technological developments in art history, such as polychromy analysis that allows one to reconstruct the original polychromatic palette of ancient architecture and to re-imagine the role of color in the Greco-Roman world. He brilliantly makes insightful correlations between Talmudic and other ancient Jewish texts and the material and artistic reality of the Temple.

There is a balanced, judicious care in his tight scholarly writing that takes the reader back into the past not as a dry artifact to learn "about," but "from" as it relates to the reader's lived reality. Yet Fine's writing is not burdened down with technical scholarly jargon, it is highly readable for scholar and layman. Includes bibliographical references and index. Recommended for all libraries.

David B Levy, NYC, Touro College

Fishbane, Michael and Joanna Weinberg, eds. *Midrash Unbound: Transformations and Innovations.* Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013, 480 pp. \$64.50 (9781904113713).

The editors' purpose in compiling this academic work was to enlarge the current perspective on Midrash by examining this ancient form of scriptural exegesis across centuries and continents. The time period examined ranges from as early as late antiquity all the way through twentieth-century Eastern Europe. The editors contend that Midrash is a "fundamental form of Jewish culture" and that it maintains an integrity in all of its expressions over the course of two thousand years.

The book is divided into four parts to match what the editors believe represents four different

periods of historical development. Part I is titled “Origins and Sub-Surface Traditions” and spans the first to fifth centuries C.E. where certain foundational elements of the genre are considered. Part II discusses “Later Midrashic Forms” and describes the fifth to eleventh centuries as Midrash expands into additional arenas, such as liturgy and polemics. “Medieval Transformations” is the subject of Part III when Midrashic developments include “intense lexical annotation of Midrashic texts ... and their acute scholastic examination.” Part IV treats the Early Modern period, which undergoes significant changes due to the invention and popularization of the printing press and its return to the synagogue via Rabbinic sermons. The editors conclude that whether Midrash developed along *derushim* (populist lines) or via the elite (scholarly and kabbalistic avenues) the “Midrashic corpus was received anew, revised for new audiences and purposes, and used to generate currents of personal and national redemption.” This book is written for the academia and, although not uniformly the case, is largely inaccessible to the reader of general interest.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

Gross, Esther. *MA-Zel Tov: You're Married, Now What?* Nanuet, New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2013. 72 pp. \$9.99 (9781598260465).

Advice for the soon-to-be married and already married is presented in alphabetical order. Each double fold includes a clear color photograph on the right side of the page; a short statement of rhyme appears on the left, as well as a quote from either the *Tanach* or a Jewish source. For the letter M: “Marriage is like planting a tree: persistent nagging can sap its energy; it requires time and space, to spread and grow at its own pace; only then can it produce fruits plentifully.” Other key words include “aspire,” “verbalize,” and “focus.” At the end of the book is a poem entitled “Let Us Make a Deal,” and an additional alphabetical listing of “Marriage Motivational Musings,” which includes advice like “be a lifter, not a leaner” and “treat your partner as if they were what they could be.”

As with alphabet books for any age, the focus and use of letters is important. While the focus is clear, the advice can be applied to any relationship, not specifically to marriage. The use of some words for certain letters is often a stretch. For N, the statement begins “Note: treat your partner as you would treat yourself.” For S, “Set a warm environment.” For W, “Weed out unrealistic expectations” is the recommendation given. The ever-challenging “X” guides the reader to “Xemplify [sic] refined character traits.” Some of the rhymes are forced, and not all the advice is given in rhyme, which makes for a somewhat uneven read. The book makes a cute gift, but it is an optional purchase for most libraries.

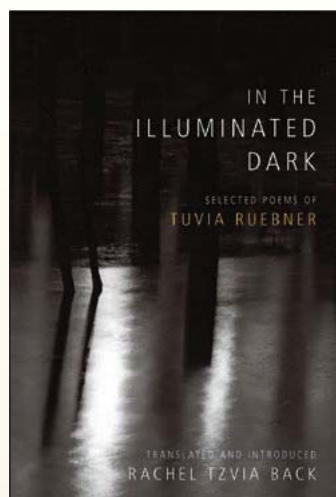
Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Grunstein, Rabbi Yehoshua C. *Daven Your Age: An Adult Journey through the Daily Prayer Service.* Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2013. 238 pp. \$18.00 (9789652295996).

Rabbi Yehoshua Grunstein, an American-born rabbi, who studied at Yeshivat Har Etzion for eight years, received his rabbinical ordination from the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. Rabbi Grunstein’s premise in this book is that the last time most adults invested time and effort into learning about the meaning and spirituality that should accompany our daily prayers was in grade school. To remedy this situation Rabbi Grunstein delivered a series of lectures whose purpose was to “bring the level of prayer up to the level of our knowledge of the laws governing it.” *Daven Your Age* is a compilation of these lectures delivered at the Beth Israel community in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Each short chapter discusses one of the daily prayers, its purpose and its relevance to the person reciting it. At the end of each chapter is a summary of the points covered. In the last pages of the book Rabbi Grunstein provides a paragraph that reviews the theme of each lecture. Prayers discussed are: the *shema*, the *amidah*, *aleinu*, *shir shel yom* and others. *Daven Your Age* is well written, clear and easy to understand. It can be used as a reference book when an individual would like to add more intensity and spirituality to his or her daily prayers. Recommended for all libraries.

Ilka Gordon, Onsite Director, Aaron Garber Library, Cleveland, OH

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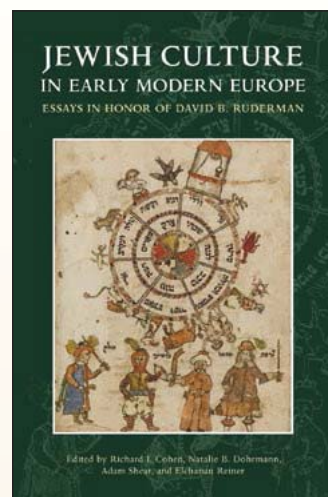


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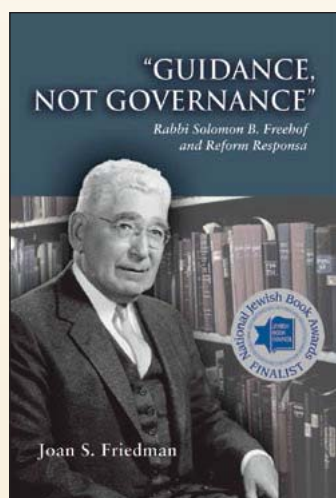


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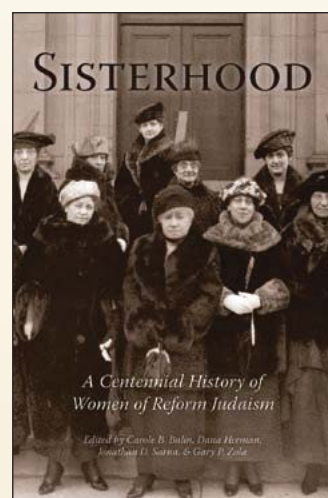


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Grypeou, Emmanouela and Helen Spuling. *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013. x, 537 pp. \$252.00 (9789004245525).

This book selects several Genesis stories that have a universal message such as the paradise story, Cain and Abel, the Flood and Joseph's encounter with Potiphar. One author is an expert in early Christian sources and the other an expert in ancient rabbinics. Each chapter is skillfully crafted to explain the commentaries from both Jewish and Christian ancient sources.

The analysis of the ancient approaches to the Biblical text reveal a common set of shared values on the ethics and morality in the Bible, but the two traditions couldn't be further apart in understanding the ancient mind. The Christian sources see Jesus' struggle in every story. Sometimes the Church Fathers demonstrate knowledge of rabbinic traditions. The authors conclude that there are few patterns in the exegesis and each case must be examined on its own merits.

More than 100 footnotes for each chapter and references within the text make reading this work a challenge. I wanted to check the references to see if the authors were correct, but this would have taken too much time. I did sample a few of the references to books that were frequently quoted such as *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer* and *Midrash rabba*.

This is a book for scholars who have a command of Hebrew Bible and Biblical commentaries. It is also for readers willing to take an interest in Christian exegesis. The book is priced too high for the casual reader, and it is only likely to find a home in an academic or theological library.

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

Halbertal, Moshe. *Maimonides—Life and Thought*. Translated by Joel Linsider. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014, 400 pp. \$36.00 (9780691158518).

In a sea of literature about the great twelfth-century Jewish sage and philosopher, one could do no better than turn to Moshe Halbertal's single volume work on Maimonides. Halbertal frames his book around Maimonides' attempt to transform Jewish thought in two significant ways. The first attempt was to create a systematic, unambiguous and comprehensive compilation or code of Jewish Law. Prior to Maimonides, Jewish Law resided in the pages of the Mishna and the Talmud, which was full of disagreements and debates. Maimonides took the unprecedented step of codifying Jewish Law by stripping out the Mishnaic and Talmudic minority opinions and unresolved disputes and setting forth black letter Jewish law.

The second attempt was in the realm of Jewish philosophy and had three primary components. The first was the struggle against prevalent anthropomorphism. The second was a shift away from the then conventional view of God manipulating the world through the regular use of miracles and the like towards a more natural and causal order at the center of the workings of the universe. Finally, the third component was a fundamental shift in viewing what discipline and thought was "within accepted tradition" and what was considered "outside of tradition." For example, science and philosophy was considered outside the realm of religion and Jewish tradition. For Maimonides, when proven true, a scientific or philosophical principal necessitated a reinterpretation of religious tradition. These three components created a profound confrontation with the Jewish philosophical status quo.

Halbertal points out that Medieval Jewry had its share of great thinkers and Halachists but, taken together, Maimonides' transformations had a profound and lasting impact on Jewish thought, even though Maimonides' opinion never alone carried the day.

Accessible to both scholar and interested general reader, this book should be the first work on Maimonides for an English reader to approach.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY



Halkin, Hillel. *Letters to an American friend: A Zionist's Polemic.* Jerusalem & New York: Gefen Publishing, 2013. 246 pp. \$19.95 (9789652296306).

Hillel Halkin is perhaps best-known today as a prolific essayist and article-writer. In addition, he is a sought-after translator, who has brought many Israeli authors to the attention of the English-speaking world. But his first book has been unavailable for many years. Happily, Gefen Publishing has brought it back into print.

Halkin's six essays — framed as "letters" — were ostensibly written between October 1975 and April 1976. They begin just after the author has returned from a stint in the Israeli Army, stationed near the Lebanese border, and end just before his next posting. As the subtitle indicates, they constitute a polemic in favor of both the Jewish state and the concept of *Aliya* (Jewish immigration to Israel). Each letter covers, from a different perspective, arguments by Halkin's friend that Jews do not need to settle in the Holy Land. From his home in Zichron Ya'akov, Halkin urges the opposite view. Life in the Diaspora, he contends, is weaker than in the Holy Land, and Judaism's hold on people elsewhere in the world is destined to decline. Despite the problems Israel has, and will continue to face, there is an authenticity in the Land that cannot be felt anywhere else. His tone is always friendly, but insistent. In his new Introduction, Halkin recognizes that his arguments are not new, but asserts that the discussion remains relevant and that no better responses have been made.

There are few forty-year old books about Israel that remain pertinent today. This is surely one of them. Hillel Halkin's engaging style and powerful rhetoric are still meaningful. The book can be used as a text on the issues, and can also serve as a personal touchstone for those of us still struggling with the relationship between the West and the Jewish state. It should be considered by all libraries.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Handler, Suzanne. *The Secrets They Kept: The True Story of a Mercy Killing that Shocked a Town and Shamed a Family.* USA: iLane Press, 2013. 140 pp. \$14.99 (9780988563902).

As a middle-aged-woman, Handler learned that her beloved grandfather, Sam Levin, had shot and killed his daughter Sally (the author's aunt) decades earlier. Now understanding that this secret had colored many of her family's relationships, the author investigated the events that had haunted and strongly affected her family.

In 1937, her grandfather, Sam Levin, had been a successful businessman and active member of the Jewish community in Cheyenne, Wyoming where he lived with his wife and their 5 children including Handler's mother. Handler discovered from newspaper accounts, court records, and some neighbor's memories that Sally had been mentally ill. After two suicide attempts, she was diagnosed with dementia praecox (now known as schizophrenia) and it was recommended that she be institutionalized. Apparently neither Sally nor her father felt they could live with this option and decided that Sam would kill them both. After fatally shooting his daughter, Sam tried, but failed, to kill himself.

Handler does an admirable job of researching life in Cheyenne, the state of mental health care, and the legal system in the 1930s. Unfortunately since her mother and uncle (Sally's siblings) absolutely refused to answer questions about Sally, the circumstances of her death, or their family life at the time, the reader never gets a sense about Sally herself. Recommended for larger collections.

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

Hegedus, Gyongyi (Ginger). *Saadya Gaon: The Double Path of the Mystic and the Rationalist (Etudes Sur Le Judaisme Medieval; 58)* Leiden: Brill, 2013. 246 pp. \$133.00 (9789004256446).

This fascinating study explores two of Saadya Gaon's most important works - his *Book of Beliefs and Convictions* and his *Commentary on the Sefer Yezirah*. Hegedus seeks to compare the rationalist theology of the former with the neo-Pythagorean (and less rationalist) tone of the latter. She contextualizes Saadya's writings, analyzing them in a comparison with Islamic parallels. Through her analysis,

Hegedus determines that the works can be traced back to two different ancient traditions corresponding to two layers of wisdom, both of which strive to know the divine: "... one, consisting of *proving* based on objectively perceivable evidence and the other of *seeing*, i.e. having an illuminative experience." Hegedus argues nevertheless, that the elements of "sensation-based externalism and insight-based illuminationism" should not be considered as standing in opposition to one another. Rather, they correspond to two distinct mental processes, each yielding different realms of knowledge.

Hegedus' purpose in preparing this work is to define and describe the two paths to wisdom, the rational and the contemplative which find expression in Saadya's *Book of Beliefs and Convictions* and his *Commentary on the Sefer Yezirah*. With clearly postulated arguments and accessible conclusions, this work is an important study in early medieval Jewish philosophy. Supplemented with a comprehensive bibliography, footnotes, and index, Hegedus' book will be an extremely valuable addition to libraries with concentrations in Jewish philosophy and Mizrahi Judaism.

Randall C. Belinfante – American Sephardi Federation

Held, Shai. *Abraham Joshua Heschel: The Call of Transcendence*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013. 333 pp. \$45.00 (9780253011268).

Abraham Joshua Heschel was one of the foremost Jewish religious figures of the 20th century. As a professor, philosopher, author and activist, he compelled Americans both by word and act. His thoughts may be found throughout American Judaism today. But the meanings within his vast writings are still being unraveled.

The Call of Transcendence attempts to reveal the essence of Heschel's philosophy. In seven dense and provocative essays filled with quotations, Shai Held uncovers and connects the master's writing. The discussion begins with an analysis of the concept of "wonder" – perhaps the best-known concept in Heschel's oeuvre. From there Held moves to a comparative analysis of Heschel and several Christian theologians and philosophers, including Heidegger, Rahner, Barth and others. In "Divine Silence and Human Protest" Held explores the basis of Heschel's life as an activist. The other essays describe Heschel's wide-ranging writing from other perspectives. The extensive notes identify the source material and also extend the discussion. Perhaps the biggest lack in the book is the absence of a biography. Because Heschel died in 1972, many young scholars only know his name. A summary of his life in both Europe and America would have helped orient the reader and advance an understanding of both the genesis of his positions and their development.

Held has written a brilliant collection of essays that should help both theologians (LC classes it in BM755) and philosophers connect to Heschel's work for many years to come. It should be in most academic libraries and all seminary libraries. It is not an introduction to Heschel's thought, however, and is therefore an optional purchase for most synagogues.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Heller, Deborah. *The Goose Girl, the Rabbi, and the New York Teachers: A Family Memoir*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2013. 197 pp. \$17.95 (9781475969078).

The author, who received a PhD in Comparative Literature from Harvard University and taught for many years at York University in Toronto, explores her family history. Her great-grandmother was somewhat of a rebel: she refused to shave her head and wear a wig after marriage, and she earned passage to the United States by bringing geese to market. On her father's side, the author is a descendant of Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Heller, who served as the chief rabbi of both Prague and Kraków during the 17th century. The main focus of the book, however, is on Heller's parents, Isiah and Bertha, who both grew up in New York City and taught in the New York City School System for many years. Their life was one of left-leaning politics, summers spent in the mountains or at the beach, and a retirement spent reading and traveling. The couple's association with those involved in Communism brought

scrutiny from their employers. The author recounts her life growing up, detailing her academic career and her relationship with her parents. Heller also has a sister, who is mentioned tangentially.

Although the Heller family identified as being Jewish and lived in a neighborhood with other Jewish teachers, they did not celebrate Jewish holidays or observances. Isiah Heller was knowledgeable about Jewish culture, but he and his wife chose not to pass on this heritage to their children, which he laments later in life: "There was a time when I believed in the melting pot. You and Judy were the losers."

The most interesting parts of the book are where the Hellers' lives intersect with historical events, particularly during the "red scare" of the 1950s when the author's father was brought in for questioning by the Board of Education for his involvement in a Communist group. Otherwise, this is a very personal recollection focusing mainly on Isiah and Bertha Heller's lives; as such, it is not suggested for library purchase.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Joskowicz, Ari. *The Modernity of Others: Jewish anti-Catholicism in Germany and France*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, c2014. 392 pp. \$65.00 (9780804787024). Also available as an eBook.

"As German and French Jews began to adopt liberal middle-class values during the nineteenth century, Catholicism served as a convenient foil to help Jewish intellectuals, politicians, and activists define what it meant to be a good citizen, to practice a respectable religion, and to have a healthy family life." Joskowicz uses a broad definition of anti-Catholicism ("Jewish anticlericalism appears not only in overtly anti-Catholic statements but also in minor references and asides") and he argues that "Jewish anti-Catholic polemics were part of a larger consensus about the relevance of religion for nation building as well as social stability... secularist polemics encouraged Jews' public expression of Jewishness." Joskowicz claims that "Jewish anti-Catholicism as a constitutive element of political thought was specific to the period of Jewish emancipation and liberal ascendance in Western and Central Europe." *The Modernity of Others* attempts to show *both* the similarities and the differences of Jewish anti-Catholicism in Germany and France. This book suffers from long and convoluted sentences balancing opposite arguments and from a propensity to use a limited vocabulary (the terms "parallels" or "entangled" appear half a dozen time in a few pages in Chapter One). For academic libraries with comprehensive Jewish studies collections only.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.

Khalili, Laleh. *Time in the Shadows: Government in Counterinsurgencies*. Sanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013. 347 pp. \$27.95 (9780804778336).

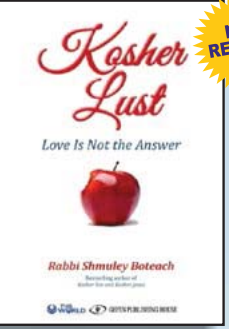
Khalili, a Senior Lecturer at the School of African and Oriental Studies of the University of London takes on the counterinsurgency policies of the British in Kenya, Malaya and Palestine, the French in Indochina and Algeria, and Israel in dealing with the Palestinians. The lion's share of the book deals with the United States and its war on terrorism waged in Iraq and Afghanistan, with coverage given to the Abu Ghraib scandal, irregular rendition, and imprisonment at Guántanamo Bay.

Ostensibly, the author's thesis is an examination and analysis of the colonial powers' response to riot, insurrection, and asymmetric warfare in territories they either controlled or dominated. An implicit and underlying theme of the work is a vilification of the attempt by European colonialists, Israel, and the United States to impose their authority on native peoples of the Third World who seek self-determination. This value judgment became prominent and popular in the post-World War II era and, therefore, is not well suited to use in the generalized fashion found here. A more substantial argument put forth is that liberal democracies that claim to respect the rule of law, in fact behave quite the contrary in the conduct of war. Believing their counterinsurgency policies to be more humane they more readily employ armed conflict as part of their national policies.

Khalili's examination of Israeli political and military actions towards the Palestinians may provoke strong reactions. Best suited for an academic library and audience.

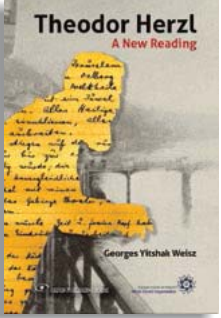
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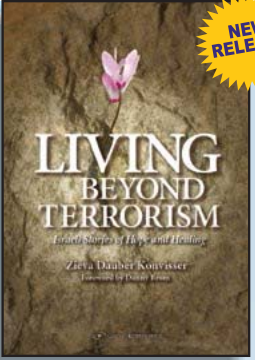
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This is the story of Jackie Semha, a young girl born in Tunisia to a loving family and community, yet one in which only boys are celebrated. Her journey from Tunisia to France, Israel, Canada and finally the USA is full of wit, humor and insight. She proves that truth is stranger than fiction.



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 *Gefen, it's not just good wine*

Lambert, Josh. *Unclean Lips: Obscenity, Jews, and American Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2014. xi, 265 pp. \$35.00 (9781479876433). Also available as an eBook.

What comes to your mind when you hear the words "obscenity", "Jews" and "American" in one sentence? Lenny Bruce? Phillip Roth? Censorship? Free Speech? Close, but no cigar... Lambert's book describes deep (historical) and wide (cultural) aspects of the seemingly larger than life correlation between American Jews and obscenity laws, pornography, and culture. From the anti-Semitic view that Jews tended to favor obscenity because their speech and writing *were* obscene, through the notion that Jews played a large role in waging war *for* pornography and against censorship in the American legal system since the 19th century, the author presents a cultural matrix where Jews were both celebrated and reviled in American Society.

Lambert offers examples of texts and legal cases to pose the question about the seemingly close correlation between being Jewish and being at the forefront of promoting free speech (in two languages: Yiddish and English!). He analyses literature, journalism, graphic novels, film and television in great detail to create a comprehensive context for his argument that while the large number of Jews involved in the "war on obscenity" was disproportionate to their percentage in the general population, it was more incidental than intentional or culturally driven. This book is recommended for academic libraries collecting in the areas of Jewish culture and identity.

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

Lefkowitz, Chaya Sara. *The Tefillah Revolution: Practical Inspiration for Great Kavanah*. Menucha Publishers, Brooklyn. 2013. 184 pp. \$17.99 (9781614650959).

Several books have attempted to explore *Kavanah*, the concept of focus and intentionality in prayer; in this short volume Chaya Sara Lefkowitz adds her voice and insights to the conversation.

In the first part of the book, "Preparation for Prayer," the author explores ideas of prayer from the perspective of the one praying. She is interested in opening the door to a meaningful experience, rather than exploring the intellectual and philosophical dimensions of prayer. She discusses both the difficulties in attaining *Kavanah* and in maintaining it. She also recommends visualization (though she does not use the term) as a means to enter the conversation with God. The second part, *The Tefillos*, moves chronologically through the prayers in the *Shacharit* service. Each chapter contains the Hebrew text of a prayer and an English translation. This is followed by a "Pray with Perception" essay, exploring the meanings of important words and phrases. The chapter closes with an alternative version of the prayer. Several chapters, including the *Shema*, are extended because of the importance of the statement. The chapter on *Shemoneh Esrei* contains all nineteen of the prayers, with appropriate commentary on each part.

The Tefillah Revolution should be considered for every library. It is a simple guide that has resonance for most of us trying to find meaning in the service. The author's inclusion of many stories from the Midrash, the lives of the Rabbis, and the Holocaust should provide additional power for many readers and seekers.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Lehrer, Erica T. *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places* (New Anthropologies of Europe) Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2013. 274 pp. \$28.00 (9780253008800).

Since the fall of Communism in 1989, Jewish trips to Poland have increased significantly. Lehrer examines several key topics in heritage tourism, centering on Kazimierz, an historic Jewish area in Krakow, where some sites remain and where a new Jewish cultural district has emerged. Some Jews abhor Poland as an eponymous site of anti-Semitism and death camps, and "mission trips" often exploit this horror to discourage critical thinking and prevent interaction with locals. Yet, Jews with Polish roots face both trauma and a rich history when visiting, discovering surprising traces of the Jewish past in food, language, and architecture — as well as the chance to interact with local Jews. Non-Jewish Poles also play a major role in maintaining Jewish sites and culture, past and present: caring for cemeteries, running Jewish bookstores and restaurants, and organizing the massive annual Jewish culture festival. The lines between Jews and non-Jews are often blurred: with some Jews having mixed Jewish-Catholic-Polish heritage, some Christians become Jewish-identified through their Jewish activities, and many Jews who don't discover their ancestry until adulthood. And while the wooden figurines of Jews and Jewish-style restaurants may appear kitschy or downright offensive to visitors, it is much more complicated than it appears on the surface. Having visited Poland myself, I especially appreciate the author's scholarly and nuanced analysis, and I hope that more people will think critically about the timely issues addressed here. Recommended for academic and community libraries.

Amanda (Miryam-Khaye) Seigel, Librarian, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library, NY.

Levin, Jeff and Michael F. Prince, eds. *Judaism and Health: A Handbook of Practical, Professional and Scholarly Resources*. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013. xxviii, 404 pp. \$50.00 (9781580237147).

Since Judaism focuses on life in this world, maintaining health to preserve life and to enable it to reach its optimal potential is an important factor in Jewish law. *Judaism and Health* is a modern collection of information built on Jewish law and scholarship that will help promote a healthier future. The editors combine their own research, with the work of twenty-eight other Jewish contributors, and present helpful information in the application of this central Jewish outlook to the field of medicine and care giving.

The volume has five main parts: Judaism, Medicine and Healing; Pastoral Care and Caregiving; Jewish Approaches to Coping with Challenge; Judaism, Psychology and Health; Communal, Organizational and Policy Perspectives. The writers include medical professionals, Rabbis, scientists, educators, psychologists, philosophers, ethicists, artists, and poets. Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, MD

talks about "Judaism and Addiction" describing his vast clinical experience in rehabilitation of these conditions. The artist Judith Margolis paints and draws as part of "Creativity and Healing in a Jewish Context". Rabbi William Cutter, PhD, and Ronald M. Andiman, MD quote and follow Jewish poets in "Words Worth Healing".

With a welcoming forward by Rabbi Elliot N. Dorff, PhD, and a concise introduction by the editors, *Judaism and Health* fulfills its mission as *A Handbook of Practical, Professional and Scholarly Resources*. Medical and Nursing Schools, Rabbinic Seminaries, as well as Synagogue libraries and public libraries will all benefit from its contents; as the publisher remarks: "For People of All Faiths, All Backgrounds."
Nira Wolfe

Melammed, Renée Levine. *An Ode to Salonika: The Ladino Verses of Bouena Sarfatty Garfinkel*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012. 336 pp. \$35.00 (978-0253006813).

To grasp the significance of what was lost in the Holocaust, one must look back at life prior to Nazi rule. Bouena Sarfatty Garfinkel commemorates Jewish life prior to and after the Holocaust in her town, Salonika, Greece in the form of coplas: small 3-9 line verses that, traditionally, were used in Sephardic communities as a way of preserving religious and cultural traditions and to commemorate significant historical occurrences that affected the community.

In *Ode to Salonika: The Ladino Verses of Bouena Sarfatty Garfinkel*, Renee Levine Melammed has arranged Sarfatty's coplas in thematic order, separating the coplas into two sections. The first section includes coplas about everyday Jewish life in Salonika: dowries and marriage, births and circumcisions, family dynamics, philanthropy, education and work. The second section includes coplas commemorating the suffering of Jews at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators.

Sarfatty was born in Salonika, which traced its roots to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. Salonika connected Eastern and Western Europe and Jews served as bankers, middlemen, merchants, fishermen and tobacco workers. Life took a turn for the worse in the early twentieth century, culminating in the tragic invasion and takeover of the city by the Nazis. Sarfatty served with the partisans during WWII, posing as a cook in a German office camp, gathering information about each officer, and smuggling children into Palestine through Turkey and Syria.

Sarfatty's purpose for writing her coplas was to preserve Salonikan Jewry in its entirety, including its joys and sorrows. She commemorates precious Sephardi and Salonikan customs, such as *el dia de la luna*, the day in which wool is cleaned and prepared for bed stuffing. In the second section of coplas, verses are devoted to the three men she accused of collaborating with the Nazis, including Vital Hasson who cheated, robbed, beat and terrorized fellow Jews and supplied black market goods to the Nazis.

In small doses of verse, Sarfatty thoroughly, yet succinctly, explains, describes and preserves Salonikan and Sephardic life. In each section, Melammed provides a thorough historical background and perspective for the coplas. This is an excellent book for the student of Sephardic Jewry.

Yossi Gremillion, volunteer librarian, Temple Beth El-Boca Raton, Florida

Mess, Jonathan, M., Maurice Samuels and Nadia Valman, eds. *Nineteenth-Century Jewish Literature: A Reader*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013 (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture) vi, 469 pp. \$29.95 (9780804775472).

This anthology comprises sixteen Jewish-European stories-novellas by thirteen popular Jewish authors (nine men and four women) dating from 1833 to 1902 and translated by the editors from French or German. Insightful prefaces accompany each fictionalized tale.

Nineteenth-Century Jewish Literature opens with an erudite anonymous introduction. The volume is divided into four main sections: Literature and the Invention of the Ghetto; Historical Fiction and the Sephardic Experience; Experiments in Jewish Realism; Fictions of Religious Renewal. Lucid and appropriate footnotes appear at the bottom of the pages. The book concludes with a list of Sources and Suggestions for Further Reading.

It is amazing how contemporary the main subjects of these stories feel: the reader connects to tales from the past about village, city and ghetto life through issues and concerns that still persist today, including assimilation, anti-Semitism, the personal and community impact of intermarriage, and the preservation of tradition and the sense of Jewish nostalgia.

Utilizing and adapting mainstream European literary forms, the authors focus on the Jewish life of the period, producing romanticized protagonists within intricate plots. The first story, "The Peddler" by Leopold Kompert (1849) reflects almost all the above points while weaving a breathtaking mystery that unfolds to a questionable happy ending.

Nineteenth-Century Jewish Literature is very readable, provoking Jewish introspection about all aspects of Jewish life in all times and all locations. It is a worthwhile compendium to Nineteenth-Century literature in general. Recommended for Jewish high schools, synagogue libraries, public libraries, and personal collections.

Nira Wolfe

Meyer, Beate. *A Fatal Balancing Act: The Dilemma of the Reich Association of Jews in Germany, 1939-1945*. Translated by William Templar. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2013. 441 pp. \$100.00 (9781782380276).

A Fatal Balancing Act, which first appeared in German in 2011, is an extremely well-researched and meticulously-documented study, relying heavily on original source material to document the history of the Reich Association of Jews (*Reichs Vereinigung Juden in Deutschland*) during WWII. The author, a Senior Researcher at the Institute for the History of German Jews, in Hamburg is also a lecturer in that city's university's history department. This is a study of Nazi administrative measures, beginning in 1939, to organize Germany's Jewish population in a centralized manner in an attempt to force migration, to "repatriate" the Jewish community's wealth and treasure, and ultimately to make Germany *Judenrein*. The maliciousness of this monstrous action was exacerbated by forcing selected Jews to become functionaries in the evil confronting them. By 1941 emigration was forbidden and a policy of mass deportation was initiated, forcing the Jewish Association to make choices and decisions, necessarily favoring one set of folk against another. Two years later, those Jews who were not protected, or part of a mixed marriage were then also deported to concentration camps and a deplorable fate.

Meyer concludes that given so few alternative options, the total control of Nazi power over Germany, and the fact that so few countries willing to accept Jewish refugees, the outcome for German Jews would not have been significantly different regardless of the decisions made by the Jewish Association.

This is an excellent addition to a Holocaust studies program or library. The selection may be marred by the cost of the book which, however, can be offset by its value.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Novikoff, Alex J. *The Medieval Culture of Disputation: Pedagogy, Practice, and Performance*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. 327 pp. \$89.95 (9780812245387).

In this significant work, Novikoff investigates the evolution of the medieval disputation from its origin as a pedagogical dialogue in the monastic setting to its final consummation in public debates that brought together both scholars and the less educated populous. Using numerous published and unpublished documents, Novikoff explores the nature of this phenomenon, arguing that the debate and argumentation made manifest in these disputations yield valuable insights into medieval thought and culture. The medieval disputation essentially began as a collection of Socratic arguments, hearkening back to the polemical dialogues of the ancients. With the addition of a sizeable dose of Aristotle (and the logic of debate), the disputation became institutionalized, particularly in the universities and in the preaching of the mendicant orders. The phenomena reached its apex in the 13th century in the dramatic manifestations of the public "disputations" between Christians and Jews, a device commonly employed to disguise Christian intellectual attacks on Jews and Judaism. Yet, from the height of its application it

swiftly fell into disuse, rejected and condemned by the scholars and pedagogues of the 15th-16th centuries who sought to break free from the ways of the past. A fascinating and highly readable study, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation* opens up the world of medieval scholarship and pedagogy, revealing the evolution of the medium of "Disputation," a mechanism that was of critical import in the medieval world. With endnotes, an extensive bibliography, and an index, this work would be a valuable addition to libraries with concentrations on medieval culture and history, particularly as they pertain to Jewish/Christian relations.

Randall C. Belinfante – American Sephardi Federation

Pardes, Ilana. *Agnon's Moonstruck Lovers: The Song of Songs in Israeli Culture.* Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2013, 202 pp \$30.00 (9780295993034).

This is one of the most impenetrable academic works I have read in terms of its dense lists of references and breadth of scope. The title is no less revealing about its contents: do Agnon's lovers serve as examples of Israeli culture that may be applied to other realms? Where does the Song of Songs fit into the story of Agnon's lovers and Israeli culture? Of course, it is well-known that the Song of Songs has provided a potent literary reference commonly evoked throughout Western culture, and for the emerging state of Israel it has proved an especially rich symbol of the renewal of Jewish life in the Land; yet I was unable to determine exactly what one was to glean from the myriad details in this book, which reminded me of similar obscure commentaries on James Joyce's *Ulysses*. This work is clearly meant for the English language reader who is already deeply familiar with Agnon's corpus of work and the intellectual history of Israel from the first Aliyah in the late 19th century through to the late 20th century. It demands a wide-ranging acquaintance with the scholarly giants of many disciplines, including literature, history, botany, anthropology, sociology and more.

Due to the expanse of detail covered here, as well as the in-depth knowledge required to fully grasp the associations Pardes makes, it seems that the work is intended only for the cognoscenti and, as such, I would suggest that it is added to scholarly collections in Hebrew letters. It could be used as a text for Hebrew literature and Jewish cultural history classes since the notes section is so rich and comprehensive, yet its esoteric language will deter all but the most determined reader. On the whole, this book is a curiosity and not for all collections.

Marion Stein, retired librarian

Ray, Jonathan. *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry.* New York & London: New York University Press, 2012. x, 214 pp. \$39.00 (9780814729113). Also available as an eBook.

In this study Ray examines how expulsions of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, internal migration, and conversion to Christianity shaped the process which created the Sephardic Diaspora in the 16th century. Using Spanish, Portuguese and Jewish primary and secondary sources, he shows how groups based on familial and regional ties migrated to and settled in North Africa, the Ottoman Empire and the Low Countries and gradually changed their identity from that of a limited regional origin to a wider Sephardi identity which did not exist while Jews lived in the Iberian Peninsula. Ray examines in detail the relations between Jews from various Iberian origins, how the local Jews in countries in which they settled regarded them, and inter-class relations. He also examines the reasons for conversion at various times and places and how these *Conversos* were treated by other Jews. Another interesting topic addressed within this work is the relation between Rabbinic and popular Judaism. Despite the complexity of the subjects dealt with, the study is clearly written and is a major contribution to Jewish studies in general and Sephardic studies in particular as well as for studies on migration and religion.

Rachel Simon. Princeton University. Princeton, NJ





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Temple De Hirsch Sinai Libraries <http://lib.tdhs-nw.org/bin/home>

Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein Upper School of Ramaz Library/Media Center <http://rmzu.hl.scoolaid.net>

Perceptions 2012: An International Survey of Library Automation

(Published January 2012)

<http://www.librarytechnology.org/perceptions2012.pl>

Resnick, Susan Kushner. *You Saved Me Too: What a Holocaust Survivor Taught Me about Living, Dying, Fighting, Loving, and Swearing in Yiddish.* Guilford, CT: Skirt: Pequot Press, 2013. 229 pp. \$24.95 (9780762780389).

This moving memoir is a tribute to a very charismatic Holocaust survivor, Aron Lieb, who was born in 1919 in the small town of Zychlin, Poland. After all his close relatives were killed by the Nazis, only he and his brother survived the brutality, starvation, sickness and forced labor of Auschwitz, Dachau and Birkenau death camps. Lieb restarted his life in America and one day he met the author, Susan Kushner Resnick, and a wonderful friendship blossomed. Both friends were dealing with psychological issues: Susan had suffered with post-partum depression, and Leib had to carry with him with all the horrors he experienced in the Holocaust.

With humor and sensitivity, we glimpse into the last years of Aron's life, and we learn how the lives of these two people were enriched by their friendship for each other. As they get to know each other they share their wisdom and compassion. Susan becomes his steadfast friend, fighting for his rights to have proper care at an eldercare facility and dignity in his last years of life, promising him that he would not die alone. A very unusual memoir, this book is written in second-person prose with no chronological order, nevertheless it will still be cherished by all readers. Recommended for all synagogues and community libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University

Ruhlman, Michael. *The Book of Schmaltz: Love Song to a Forgotten Fat.* Photographs by Donna Turner Ruhlman. New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2013. 178 pp. \$25.00 (9780316254083).

Professional cook and cookbook author Michael Ruhlman explores the use of chicken fat, *schmaltz*, as a once popular, now maligned, base for many Jewish (especially Ashkenazi) dishes. His curiosity piqued by a Jewish *bubbe* (elderly woman) in his neighborhood, Mr. Ruhlman discovered its flavor, which he considers far superior to the modern margarine or vegetable oil substitute – and not necessarily unhealthier, given his advocacy of animal fat which, until a century ago, was a major ingredient in many cultures. For the Jews, in particular, fat not only enhanced but compensated for a cuisine largely borne out of poverty and deprivation. Nowadays, he writes, “there’s Jewish guilt, which is such a powerful emotion that even a goy such as myself is afflicted, and then right behind it is the Fear of Schmaltz.” Indeed, the very word has entered the secular lexicon to connote oversentimentality. But, in his view, the fault in the bad reputation of schmaltz lies mainly in the modern factory processing of poultry.

The writing is breezy, charming, and definitely appealing to an upscale crowd attracted to multicultural fare. Colorful photographs (by Ruhlman's wife), along with instructions, guide the reader through the preparation of schmaltz which, as shown by Mr. Ruhlman's neighbor (and *bubbe*) Lois Baron, must be cooked with onions; the result is *gribenes*, a supreme delicacy. There are traditional dishes (i.e. *kreplach*, *kishke*, knishes), contemporary gourmet (parisienne ghnocchi), and gourmet variations of traditional dishes (chopped liver cooked in red wine vinegar). Even pastry is presented.

The recipes seem mouth-watering. Unfortunately some call for milk, although Ruhlman, aware of the kosher prohibition against mixing meat and dairy, insists that water may be substituted. For this reason, *The Book of Schmaltz* might be better suited in a public library or culinary institute. Nevertheless, this book helps vindicate what was once the essence of Jewish cooking.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University New York, NY

Safran, Joshua. *Free Spirit: Growing Up on the Road and off the Grid.* New York, Hyperion, 2013. 273 pp. \$24.99 (9781401324605).

For those who may not recognize this author, he is “an attorney, writer, speaker and occasional rabbi”. He is also a television and film personality. This retelling of his childhood is very well written (although at times overlong), and for those of us who grew up in the generation of his mother, Claudia,

it rings familiar bells. This reader was drawn into Safran's compelling and minutely detailed personal story, but an essential question remains unanswered: what is the Jewish aspect of this book? The dedication page reads in part: "*To Leah: I once learned in the Talmud that not even a blade of grass would grow were it not for its own special angel, hovering over it and whispering Grow! Grow! You are my own special angel. I aspire to be yours.*"

Throughout the book there are a few Jewish references, but its main focus is the extreme hippy life that he and his mother led during Joshua's formative years. One may see Jewish influence in the social values and activism pursued by mother and son, but for this reader this does not sufficiently qualify the book as of Jewish interest. Unfortunately, the jacket blurb description of Safran as an "occasional rabbi" — is never addressed. What does this phrase mean? From where and when did Safran's Jewish sensibility hail?

For the library that collects books of marginal Jewish interest, this book would fit into a collection of mid-20th century Americana. It tells the first person story of someone who now clearly identifies as a Jew, but it does not reveal how this identity evolved.

Marion Stein, retired librarian

Schnur, Dan, ed. *American Politics and the Jewish Community: The Jewish Role in American Life (An Annual Review of the Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life, vol. 11)*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press for the USC Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life, 2013. 139 pp. \$25.00 (9781557536594).

If one could read only one book to understand American politics and the role of Jews in the drama, this book is it. This slim volume is divided into two parts and six essays with an introduction by Ambassador Dennis Ross; whether a novice to politics or an aficionado, one cannot help but be engaged by the perceptive observations and analyses found here.

Rather than a defense of the American Jewish support of Israel, Ambassador Ross provides a credible argument as to why there is an incentive for a close relationship between the two countries. Steven Windmueller gives an historical review of the role of Jews in America's development from its beginnings to the present. Ira Sheskin continues by contrasting the small size of the Jewish community in comparison with the overall population to the disproportionate impact of its voting power. Eric Uslander follows and looks at the appeal of the Democratic Party to American Jews and offers a clear and rational explanation of this affiliation. The republican character of the American democracy is set out by Sandy Maisel who lists and discusses Republican Jewish politicians at the federal level from 1945 to 2013. Section two offers a campaign statement by two American Jewish politicians, Fred Zeidman (Republican) and Matthew Brooks (Democrat), as to why their affiliation is the right one for the American Jewish community. This is a well-written collection that is a great purchase for the casual reader and a synagogue — or even academic — library regardless of size.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Secunda, Shai, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in its Sasanian Context*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014, 256 pp. \$55.00 (9780812245707).

An old witticism claims that the Talmud department at Hebrew University should be renamed the "Talmid" department, since it houses only one student. While the situation was never quite so grim, recent years have definitely seen a revival of interest in the academic study of Talmud. Among the causes for this change, two are relevant to this book. First, a young generation of Talmudists has incorporated the concerns and terminology of cultural studies and other contemporary critical projects into their work. Second is the rise of Irano-Talmudica. This term signifies the parallel interest in the composition of the Babylonian Talmud in late antique Iraq, and in the culture of the Zoroastrian religion whose adherents ruled the region during the same period. While occasional attempts had been made

for decades by Talmud scholars to locate information about the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Talmud in order to better understand individual terms or stories, it was only in the late 1990s that Yaakov Elman of Yeshiva University focused his sights on this project. Since then, his students and others in the US and Israel have applied themselves to the field. Secunda's book is the first full-length publication to engage with the interaction between the authors of the Babylonian Talmud and their neighbors. Summarizing the latest findings of Talmudists and Iranists, including Secunda's own important contributions, *The Iranian Talmud* tries most immediately to answer a preliminary question. How much did the rabbis of the Talmud know about Zoroastrianism, how much did Zoroastrian priests know about the Jewish religion, and what did the two groups think of each other? Rich in fascinating texts, awareness of cutting-edge research and cultural allusions, this book is well-written and crucially important. Taking on the most important and elusive book in the rabbinic canon with an array of historical, literary and philological tools, *The Iranian Talmud* represents today's Jewish studies at its best.

Pinchas Roth

Sharir, David. *David's Psalms. Paintings by David Sharir. Translated by Benjamin J. Segal. Jerusalem, Israel: Gefen Publishing House LTD, 2013. xxi, 87 pp. \$38.00 (9789652296191).*

The Jewish Israeli artist David Sharir was commissioned to illustrate the biblical book of Psalms (*tehillim*). Using thirty Psalms, Sharir has created forty Psalm paintings. Hebrew verses (*pesukim*) are incorporated into the paintings which are presented alongside Benjamin Segal's English translations. In addition, below each lithograph the relevant verses, or quotations from them, appear in Hebrew with vowels.

The book opens with an enlightening essay by Shulamit Laderman (the Art Historian of Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies), focusing on Sharir's art and his interpretations of King David's poetry. All of the paintings were made with watercolors and gouache. Generally Sharir painted one picture for each selected Psalm, however, for some he painted two paintings, like for Psalm 137 which describes the mourning of Zion, or a triptych, for Psalm 92, which extols the qualities of the Righteous. Sharir's style of painting is unique for its colors, stereotypical figures, and the utilization of Hebrew script within the paintings. He interprets the Psalm text according to his understanding of the Hebrew language and his knowledge of biblical commentaries.

The primary significance of *David's Psalms* is the excellent artwork by Sharir. It is more difficult to make an authoritative statement regarding the English translation of the Psalms by Rabbi Benjamin J. Segal. There are many excellent and scholarly English translations of the Book of Psalms. Future editions should correct editorial mistakes in the introductory essay. For example: "Psalm 5" should be "Psalm 55" (p. ix); "stag" should be "doe" and vice versa (p. xi). *David's Psalms* could be considered as an acquisition, mainly because of Sharir's art, for a collection dealing with biblical art expression. *David's Psalms* provides a useful table of contents and helpful index.

Nira Wolfe

שנר, משה. בראשית היתה השואה: הגות יהודית מתמודדת עם משמעות הקיום היהודי לאחר השואה. ירושלים: מאגנס, 2014. 493 pp. \$35.40 (9789654936897). Also available as an eBook. Hebrew.

This is a comprehensive overview of Jewish philosophers' and spiritual leaders' thinking about the meaning of Jewish survival and existence in a post-Holocaust world. The author, who is a child of a founding family of Kibbutz Lohamei ha-Geta'ot (The Ghetto Fighters Kibbutz) and one of the founders of the museum commemorating and documenting the Ghetto fighters (Bet Lohamei ha-Geta'ot) describes in great detail the prevailing thoughts and beliefs amongst historians, theologians, philosophers, rabbis and writers about ways to comprehend, understand, reconcile with and commemorate the

catastrophe that was the Holocaust. From Ultra-Orthodox to Liberal Judaism, and from the historical to the existential, Shner presents and analyses the writings of Berkovich and Soloveichick, Rubenstein and Wiesel, Borowitz and Greenberg, and Emry and Wiesel, to name a few. One can only hope that this rich collection is translated into English and made available to teachers of the moral and ethical implications of the Holocaust. Highly recommended to Hebrew readers on the topic.

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

Sicher, Efraim (editor). *Race, Color, Identity: Rethinking Discourses about "Jews" in the Twenty-First Century*. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2013. 380 pp. \$110.00 (9780857458926). Also available as an eBook.

This is the newest addition to a substantial body of publications in the last 20 years about Jews and race. Many essays here deal with Jewish identity in relation to African and African-American identity, following the main racial narrative of U.S. history with its black-white focus. In a way, it is a testament to the pervasiveness of particular forms of racism. This focus is compelling and dominant, even among changing demographics, global migrations and identities explored in the book's essays, which compel us to consider the implications and complications of Jewish ancestry, DNA, conversion, migration, the "racialization" of peoples, mixing, anthropology, and lost tribes, among others. While some essays shed new light on relatively current topics such as the Lemba, Islamophobia, and Ethiopian Jews, I was disappointed not to find more about multicultural, multi-ethnic Jews; about families shaped by interracial adoption, intermarriage, gay marriage, and conversion; or about the emergence and ingathering of Jewish groups from a greater variety of locations around the world. While admittedly and unabashedly aimed at an academic audience, I found some of the essays to be overly theoretical and dense, with long-winded paragraphs and inconclusive conclusions. I would recommend this book for academic libraries with collections in Jewish Studies, African and African-American studies, and related disciplines such as history and anthropology.

Amada (Miryem-Khaye) Seigel, Librarian, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library, NY

Sokolow, Reha and Al Sokolow. *Defying the Tide: An Account of Authentic Compassion During the Holocaust*. Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing, 2013. 169 pp. \$15.95 (9789652296429).

Ruth Abraham was born in 1913 in Lobau, when it was part of Germany. When the area was transferred to Poland after World War I, the situation deteriorated for the Jews. The family moved to Allenstein and eventually to Berlin. As Hitler rose to power, the family sensed the growing anti-Semitism. Weighing their options, several of Ruth's sisters left Germany, but Ruth married and stayed in Berlin with her parents. They lived through the growing restrictions and degradations. Eventually Ruth's parents and her sister and their family were deported. Ruth and her husband Walter were working in forced labor jobs when Ruth became pregnant. On her nightly commutes home, she sensed someone was following her. Maria Nickel, a German, was disgusted by what the Nazis were doing and decided to help this pregnant Jewish woman. She and her husband used their own identity papers to create fake ones for the Abrahams. Ruth delivered the baby, then went into hiding in the countryside. After the war, she returned to Berlin and reunited with Maria. Although Ruth and Walter moved to the United States in 1948, they remained close with Maria and her family. Maria was inducted into the Righteous Among the Nations in 1970 for her role in saving the Abraham family.

The detailed narrative starts and ends with the author's voice and switches between Ruth's story and Maria's story (the author is Ruth Abraham's daughter). Each is told in the first person, so a change in font or chapter titles indicating this would have helped make it clear who was speaking. Black and white photographs of family members and Maria before and after the war are included. On the one hand, the book illustrates life before the war, the constant tension and precarious situation of those in hiding, and the amazing bravery and kindness of those who helped Jews to survive. On the other

hand, it is a very personal story, filled with information about this one family. It is a solid purchase for libraries with large Holocaust collections; an optional purchase for other Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Soussan, Henry C. *The Gesellschaft zur Foerderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums in its Historical Context*. Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck (Schriftenreihe Wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 75), 2013. 196 pp. \$81.00 (9783161505119).

This outstanding, thorough, and well researched book documents the importance of the Society for the Advancement of the Science of Judaism in its historical context, traces the social and ideological impulses leading to its formation, and notes its impact on scholarship up to the present time.

Soussan discusses the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism) movement, whose pioneers sought academic recognition as an essential step towards full social equality, emancipation and enlightenment for Jews. He discusses the institutionalization of this *Wissenschaft* and the societies linked to it; the crisis of learning in Wilhelminian Germany and its impact on *Wissenschaft*; the conflicts between Jews and Protestants, and between Liberals and the Orthodox. The history of the *Gesellschaft zur Foerderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums* is examined with this information as a background.

More attention might have been paid to the Orthodox response to *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The fact that some Orthodox scholars were open to some of the findings of *Wissenschaft* and employed its methodologies makes this topic deserving of more attention.

Summing up, this most excellent work of scholarship should be acquired by all libraries. It is a benchmark study that brings together the culmination of much scholarship.

David B Levy, Touro College, NYC.

Vecsey, Christopher. *Jews and Judaism in The New York Times*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013. 395 pp. \$100.00 (9780739184691).

For over a century, *The New York Times* has been America's primary source of reliable information. In this volume Christopher Vecsey explores its coverage of Jews and Jewish issues over a thirty year span, from 1970 through to 2000. Vecsey himself has a connection to the newspaper: his brother George serving as one of its sports reporters for many years.

Each of the book's ten chapters deals with a general subject. Chapter 1, "The Jewish Question," quickly discusses the history of the paper and identifies some of its Jewish editors and writers. Later sections cover "Jewish Institutions," and "The Legacy of the Holocaust" among others. Within each topic, Vecsey identifies and quickly summarizes relevant articles in the paper. In Chapter 4, "The Structures of American Judaism," for instance, Vecsey cites dozens of articles dealing with the religious realm. Interestingly, half of the chapter is taken up with a listing of discussions of Hasidism, but there is no separate analysis of articles on the Conservative movement. Elsewhere there are sections devoted to coverage of Senator Joseph Lieberman, Elie Wiesel, and Yiddish.

According to the prologue, Vecsey's intent is to describe the landscape of *Times* coverage over the three decades. Certainly the inherently useful compilation of data in the coverage of Jewish topics and personalities in the news is deserving of praise. Yet, regrettably, Vecsey does not create a narrative line that leads to a significant conclusion, either in defense of the *Times* or condemning it. We are left with an impressive catalog, but without either complete context or commentary. The book should be in major academic collections; all others can pass it by.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA



Walter, Moshe. *The Making of a Halachic Decision: A comprehensive analysis and guide to halachic rulings.* Brooklyn, NY: Menucha, 2013. 231 pp. \$17.99 (9781614650898).

What are the tools used by a *posek* (rabbinic judge) in making a *halachic* (legal) ruling? Rabbi Moshe Walter, an Orthodox rabbi in Silver Spring, himself a *posek*, has written a useful guide to the *halachic* decision-making process and the classic works used in determining Jewish law.

Writing for both beginners as well as scholars, Walters traces the process of the codification of Jewish law by medieval rabbinic figures, the *rishonim*. He describes the rational behind the composition of classical works as well as their content, including the *Arba'ah Turim*, Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, and commentaries on the Talmud including Alfasi's *Sefer HaRif* and Rabbeinu Asher's *Sefer HaRosh*. He continues to explain how Yosef Karo's *Shulhan Aruch* became the primary code of Jewish law for Sefardim and for Ashkenazim with the addition of the *Mapa* of Moshe Isserles. Chapter 3 focuses on the *Biur HaGra* written by the Vilna Gaon. Chapter 6 shows how Yisrael Meir Kagan's *Mishneh Berurah* became the source book for Ashkenazim for contemporary decisions on the *Orach Chayim* section of Jewish law, day to day Jewish life as well as Sabbath and holiday observance.

In the second section Walters explains the responsibilities of both the *posek* in reaching a decision, and the petitioner in seeking an answer. Finally he presents the debates between researching a decision starting with the Talmudic sources versus reaching one starting with the latest *halachic* authority, and he provides guidelines on how to use the various authors' works.

Walters supplies numerous footnotes as well a useful glossary of terms along with a brief description of the scholars cited and an appendix with the original Hebrew introductions to many of the works cited. This book is highly recommended for libraries with collection on Jewish law.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA

Ziv, Orly. *Cook in Israel: Home Cooking Inspiration.* Israel: Orly Ziv, 2013. 245 pp. \$39.99 (9789659207107).

Orly Ziv is a nutritionist, cooking instructor and culinary tour guide. In her book *Cook in Israel*, Orly invites us into her home as she demonstrates healthy, kosher, home cooking. The 100 mostly vegetarian recipes are largely drawn from her Greek Sephardi background. She includes a few family favorite meat dishes, recipes from other Sephardic and Mediterranean communities, and a section on Jewish holiday foods. The organization is unique and demonstrates her philosophy of healthy eating with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, fish, grains, legumes and olive oil. The first three chapters concentrate on vegetables: Eggplant and tomatoes, Salads, Vegetables. She then moves to Grains and Legumes, Breads, Fish, Family Recipes, Holidays, and finally Sweets. The recipes focus on classic recipes, often with a little twist, fresh produce and simple techniques. Each recipe is accompanied by a large close-up image of the completed dish. The plating is beautiful and tantalizing but approachable. The photography itself is outstanding and included are pictures of Orly in her kitchen working closely with others. These images are demonstrative of the warmth of tone and approachability in the writing.

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



Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

Appel, Jacob M. *Wedding Wipeout: A Rabbi Kappelmacher Mystery*. Cozy Cat Press, 2013. 249 pp. \$14.95 (9781939816146).

Florence and Lorraine Eisenstein, elderly spinster heirs to the Eisenstein Egg Cream fortune, live on generous trust funds established by their father. His will states that if one of the sisters marries, she will lose her funds. Of course the family is surprised when Florence announces that she is getting married. The morning after the wedding, she is found dead in her bed. Did she have an asthma attack? Did her husband murder her? Her lawyer asks Rabbi Jacob Kappelmacher to investigate the death. In no time, he discovers lots of relatives who spent the night in the family home. Of course they are all suspects. Kappelmacher and his assistant Steinmetz investigate by interviewing everyone. The dysfunctional family creates a complex crime that the rabbi unravels. It will leave readers wondering why the rabbi devoted so much time to it. Agatha Christie meets the Talmud in this mediocre mystery.

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

Cohen, Marvin M. *Dancing in the Shadows: A Sephardic Memoir*. Self-published, 2013. 346 pp. \$16.95 (9781461044475).

Marvin Cohen grew up very aware that his family was different from the other Jews in Brooklyn and on the Lower East Side. They were dark-skinned and they spoke Ladino instead of Yiddish. They also experienced discrimination and prejudice. Cohen's family originally came from Yemen and the Balkans. They were strict Orthodox Jews who also believed in spirits and superstitions. They kept an ancient copy of the Book of Esther that contained secrets that had to be protected. Cohen tells the story of his family, based on stories that he heard from his grandparents. Although he was raised speaking Ladino and Hebrew in an observant home, he abandoned the traditions in his late teens and married a Christian woman. He later rediscovered them and wrote this fascinating memoir that demonstrates the struggle to balance tradition and assimilation common to all immigrant families. This book will give readers a glimpse at little-known aspect of Sephardic culture. Book clubs will enjoy discussing the story.

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

Feldman, Joshua Max. *The Book of Jonah: A Novel*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2014. 336 pp (9780805097764). [Reviewed from an ARC.

As the Biblical story tells us, God tells Jonah to go the Nineveh; Jonah resists, spends time in a whale, and then finally acquiesces. In Feldman's novel, we meet Jonah Jacobstein, a successful New York lawyer who is on the brink of partnership in his law firm, and who is determined to finally decide between the two women he's been seeing for years. But something throws Jonah off his planned track. While he is out celebrating being added to the defense team of a huge pharmaceutical company that stole the formula for one of its successful drugs, Jonah gets visions from God. His first vision is a simple one, but they gradually become more intense. Jonah tries to explain them away by citing alcohol, drugs, exhaustion, and even madness, but none of the explanations are satisfactory. Because of the visions, he is unable to maintain his willful ignorance of others' suffering and fragility. Jonah flees from these visions, not in a whale, but in Amsterdam, hoping that drugs and new surroundings will keep the visions at bay.

Feldman also introduces Judith Bulbrook, an extremely bright young woman, whose idyllic childhood with loving parents is destroyed by their deaths in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. With their deaths, she loses her faith in any sort of force for good in the world. Jonah and Judith have a random meeting in Amsterdam and spend the day talking. But when Judith gets upset, Jonah again flees. This time though, he feels guilty for abandoning Judith and tries to figure out if finding Judith and helping her is connected to the visions he had been having. Feldman successfully follows themes of the Biblical story without being too literal. The protagonists are nuanced and believable. Highly recommended.

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

Jaffe, Daniel M. *The Genealogy of Understanding*. Maple Shade, NJ: Lethe Press, May 2014. 326 pp. \$20.00 (978159021109).

Midrash is a traditional vehicle for Torah study. Daniel M. Jaffe creates modern Midrash with these collection of short stories. Each is linked to a weekly Torah portion, but they are not presented in order. A quote from the Torah introduces each story and a concordance at the end of the book shows readers which portion the author has chosen for each story. In fact, as one reads, one can think of several portions that would be appropriate. The themes of loss, betrayal, and conflict recur. The author bases his stories on family members and members of his community. Readers will encounter a rabbi who has been unfaithful to his wife, a couple struggling to maintain their marriage after a series of stillbirths, and a friend considering intermarriage. They will also meet the author's parents, who have opposing approaches to religious observance. His mother is afflicted with Alzheimer's and his father must deal with this. His family must also struggle with is coming out as a gay man. This very personal collection of stories makes for a unique approach to Torah study. It is also an excellent choice for book clubs because the content is thought-provoking.

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

Kalogridis, Jeanne. *The Inquisitor's Wife*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013. 432 pp. \$15.99 (9780312675462). Advance reading copy.

In 1481 Seville, it is hard to know who to trust. Marisol Garcia is confused. She sees her mother lighting candles in secret on Friday night; she is teased by the neighborhood boys as a "marrana" (a derogatory name for converted Jews), but she knows her mother paints icons of saints and that her own father is an "old Christian." Marisol is quickly wed to Gabriel Hojeda, whose brother plays a key role in the Inquisition. Marisol's mother has seemingly committed suicide to save the family from torture and death, but Marisol's father is eventually arrested, tortured and burned alive for heresy. In all this turmoil, Marisol is reunited with her childhood sweetheart, who has secretly been helping *conversos* and *crypto-Jews*, even though he is a clerk for the Inquisition. Antonio helps Marisol escape Seville, and she is eventually reunited with her mother, who hid and escaped to Portugal, where Jewish religious items had been smuggled inside the statues of the saints Marisol's mother had painted.

There is a strong sense of place in 15th century Spain, with dress, home furnishings and architecture described in such intricate detail that it often overtakes the plot of the novel, but demonstrates the author's research and dedication to make this work of fiction historically accurate. The tensions and foreboding of all citizens during this tumultuous time is prevalent throughout the story. Many aspects of the story stretch plausibility, but the author also shows the political atmosphere of the period and key players' true motivation. This book is a good selection for libraries whose patrons enjoy historical fiction.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Lapid, Lihi. *Woman of Valor*. Translated by Amit Paredes. Springfield, NJ: Gefen House, 2013. 202 pp. \$24.95 (9789652296405).

The struggles of parenting, from conception through childrearing are featured in this best-selling novel by Lihi Lapid. Originally written in Hebrew, this book was translated into English and is now available for American audiences. It weaves the tale of two women, both mothers, and the realities of raising Jewish children and having a successful marriage and career. One of these women lives the fantasy: perfect kids, perfect marriage, and a successful career, while the other is the reality: troubled marriage, an autistic child, and a career that is falling apart. Throughout the tales actual letters to the author about personal life experiences published in her *Yediot Ahronot* column are interspersed, adding another layer of depth to the story. Although confusing to follow at first, this novel really encompasses what it is like to be a Jewish mother, balancing the reality of life, and the fantasy of what one expects her life to be. This book is recommended for all Jewish-themed libraries, especially ones that cater to adult women.

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

Lieder, Tim, ed. *King David and the Spiders From Mars*. New York: Dybbuk Press, 2014. 171 pp. \$12.75 (9780976654681).

Everyone loves a good scary movie and vampires and werewolves haunt the best-seller lists, but true aficionados know that short stories represent the best in horror fiction. *King David and the Spiders From Mars* is editor Tim Lieder's second collection of stories inspired from the Hebrew Bible in an attempt to rescue the Tanakh from both fundamentalists and knee-jerk haters of religion. The first two stories expand on ideas found in Midrashic sources on Genesis and Daniel, molding them into classic horror tropes. Another tale is a tribute to H.P. Lovecraft as biblical pastiche. The next two stories tackle the political drama of the Book of Samuel evoking George R.R. Martin and William Shakespeare while *God Box* by Lyda Morehouse is a cleverly ironic retelling of I Samuel 5 in outer space. The final story, another Lovecraft-inspired work is perhaps the most evocative and subversive. Most writers who tackle the Lovecraft mythos (and there are many) tend to gloss over his racism and sexism. *The Chabad of Innsmouth* by Marsha Morman ingeniously exploits these notions to highlight the same xenophobic elements in the Lubavitch movement. A highly successful collection.

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

Luxenberg, Miriam. *Code Blue: A Novel*. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Publications, 2013. 208 pp. \$19.34 (97809888895836).

Chavi is 35, bright, and single, a difficult place to be in an Orthodox community. Moishe proposes to her, but there is one condition. Actually, his mother is imposing it. Will Chavi comply? Meanwhile, the Kanowitz family is dealing with a difficult problem. Their newborn son is in the neonatal intensive care unit and not expected to survive. The doctors want to pull the plug but the religious Kanowitz family will not allow it. This soap opera set in the Orthodox world raises important social issues and demonstrates the obstacles that women in the community face every day. Book clubs will have plenty to discuss despite the trite plot and pedestrian writing.

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

Mishani, D. A. *The Missing File*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013. \$25.99 (978-0062195371). Also available as an eBook.

Avraham Avraham is a police inspector in Holon and this tale is about his attempt to find a missing teenage boy. Avraham is short and bald and sometimes loses his temper. It is not at all clear that he is a particularly good detective, though he likes his work and his chief hobby is reading and watching crime fiction and spotting the supposed errors of the detectives. His supervisor, Ilana, seems to be quite competent, though, and she thinks well of Avraham. The plot is intriguing and there is a surprise ending that is deftly done. The love story that emerges in the latter part of the tale strained my credulity as I did not see why the woman would be attracted to the man. Still, this is an entertaining yarn, recommended for contemporary detective story collections and those of Israeli popular fiction.

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

Oz, Amos. *Between Friends*. Translated by Sondra Silverston. Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013. 179 pp. \$24.00 (9780547985589).

In his collection *Between Friends*, Amos Oz has written eight short sketches, each one an incisive portrait of a member or two of (the fictional) Kibbutz Yekhat. It most likely reflects Oz's memories of the kibbutz in which he grew up, with its ideals of communal life, sharing chores as well as revenue and deciding the fate and future of each member according to what is considered best for the community. Each story sheds vivid light on a particular characteristic of kibbutz life and sharply elucidates the strengths and weaknesses of kibbutz existence. However, we are also treated to the feel of spring, the chirping of birds, and the fragrance of flowers. Each character is presented in meticulous, realistic

detail, but also with affection and some pathos, so that our empathy is instantly awakened and we are reluctant to leave each individual as we turn to the next story. The author seems to realize this, and so each character he lovingly evokes reappears more than once in this collection and interacts with a number of other kibbutzniks.

This book would make great material for discussion, because each character has so much more depth to be explored than Amos Oz's short story perspective allows us to perceive. Highly recommended.

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

Rich, Roberta. *The Harem Midwife*. New York, NY: Gallery Books, 2014. 352 pp. \$16.00. (9781476712802).

A sequel to the *Midwife of Venice*, *The Harem Midwife* is a novel about the 16th century Ottoman Empire. Hannah, a recently arrived Jewish midwife, is summoned to the palace to become the official midwife of the sultan's offspring. After the birth of the sultan's second child, Hannah is requested back for a very unusual purpose: to ascertain whether a new arrival to the harem is fit to copulate with the sultan. Upon arriving Hannah realizes that she is a Jew and lies to protect her. What ensues next is a winding tale of intrigue, suspense, and havoc, in which the lives of Hannah and her husband Isaac are upended by this new arrival.

A historical novel about Jewish life in Constantinople during the Ottoman reign, this book is appropriate for public, synagogue, and school libraries.

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

Tidhar, Lavie. *Martian Sands*. Hornsea, England: PS Publishing, 2013 213 pp (9781848635982).

In 1941 on the eve of Pearl Harbor, Bill Glimmung showed up from the future in the office of President Roosevelt with instructions for him on how to enter and win the war against the Germans. All he wants in exchange for his military intelligence and supply of weapons from the future, is for the President to pressure the British into giving the liberated Jews a place to settle.

Meanwhile back on future Mars, rumors are flying that the Israelis on the Kibbutz Dorot at the foot of the FDR Mountains have developed a time machine. Miriam Elezra is assigned the task of tracking down this rumor. With the help of Golda Meir, or rather the personality of Golda Meir programmed into a simulacrum, Elezra sets off across the Martian desert.

At the same time, programmer Carl Stone, a.k.a. K't'Amin, a reborn four-armed Martian warrior, finally gets the vision from the Supreme Emperor that he had been hoping for. He and his fellow warriors set out to find a way back to the ancient Martian kingdom. And across town, Josh Chaplin just wants to sell enough manure to be able to afford to fix his alarm clock which has gotten surprisingly cantankerous.

At times confusing and at times thought-provoking, Tidhar hops between planets and time streams. Recommended for larger collections.

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

Don't Forget to Check Out AJL News!

The May/June 2014 issue of *AJL News* has lots of internal AJL organizational news, and lots of exciting articles about the activities of our members all over the world.

Reviews of Multimedia

Wauer, Britta. *Im Himmel, unter der Erde (In Heaven, Underground)*. Seventh Art Releasing, 2011. 90 min. Sale (DVD) \$295.00.

Rarely does one think of a cemetery as a lively place, but this documentary about the Weissensee Jewish Cemetery in Berlin shows its history, ecology, and the deep connection experienced by many people to the largest active Jewish cemetery in Europe, where over 115,600 souls have been laid to rest.

Through interviews with historians, family members, cemetery staff, and others, the history and culture of those buried there is explained. Affluent German Jews of the late 19th century built massive ornate monuments. The Nazis were superstitious of demons that allegedly roamed the grounds, so the cemetery was left untouched during World War II. Situated in East Berlin, it suffered from neglect and overgrowth during the Communist regime. Today a group of German Army reservists make it their duty to put stones on unmarked graves; two researchers studying birds of prey tag fledglings that nest in the trees; and an art class takes pictures and rubbings for projects.

As many of the film's protagonists mention, one is struck by the verdant and quiet oasis in the middle of the city. The interviews with people from different countries and backgrounds, and the filming of the cemetery during different seasons and weather emphasize the cemetery's universality. The cinematography and sound are excellent, although it is sometimes hard to follow because it is almost entirely in German. The movie is a good choice for a film series, and it is recommended for libraries with either large film collections or large collections related to the history of Jews in Germany.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

Bier, Gabriella. *Love during Wartime*. Seventh Art Releasing, 2010. Sale (DVD) \$299.00.

The trials and tribulations of star-crossed lovers Osama (Assi) Zatar and Jasmin Avissar are documented from about 2004 until 2010. An Arab from Ramallah working in Israel, Assi meets Jasmin, an Israeli, and they fell in love. They marry, but their relationship seems doomed: Assi cannot live in Israel, and Jasmin cannot live in Ramallah. Jasmin's mother is a Holocaust survivor who was born in Berlin, so Jasmin moves there to establish citizenship with the hope of living there with Assi. Assi is arrested and harassed by the Palestinian Authority because of his marriage to Jasmin. He moves to Berlin, but is frustrated that he cannot work and that the immigration process is so slow. The couple end up living in Vienna, and the documentary closes with a sonogram of their baby girl, Leila, who was born in 2010.

The film does an admirable job of showing the slow wheels of the legal system and the couple's frustration. It is obvious there is deep affection between them, evidenced by their willingness to fight to be together. Unfortunately, the production quality detracts from their story. While the hand-held cameras capture real life well, there is often poor lighting and sound and the pace is very slow. The subtitles are deficient with typographical errors and some poor translations. The choice of title is also questionable, since there is no active war going on. Despite this, *Love during Wartime* is an excellent choice for those libraries collecting materials about Israeli-Palestinian relations, and it will be a film series choice that sparks lively discussion.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel



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