



Association of Jewish Libraries NEWS and REVIEWS

November/December 2019

Volume I, No. 2

Introducing: Jewish Kidlit Mavens

HEIDI RABINOWITZ

In May of this year, fellow AJL member Susan Kusel and I created a Facebook group for Jewish kidlit professionals to discuss books from early childhood through middle grade and young adult. As we said in the official group description, “the kidlit is Jewish; the professionals may or may not be.” As of early October 2019, we have reached 500 members: librarians, teachers, publishers, authors, illustrators, agents, booksellers, book bloggers, reviewers and others interested in serious discussions of the genre. New members must be approved by an administrator, and posts can only be seen within the group; this serves to keep trolls at bay.

The group was created under the umbrella of The Book of Life Podcast’s Facebook page, as a way to extend the show’s new enhanced focus on Jewish children’s literature. The discussions, however, range far beyond the contents of the podcast itself. Members share news, post articles, recommend books, plan meetups, and even advertise job openings. We recently had a very pithy discussion of the Jewish role within the diverse books movement that resulted in posts on multiple blogs and that had a real-world impact, leading to the We Need Diverse Books organization adding more Jewish representation to their mentoring team.

We have a few weekly events within Jewish Kidlit Mavens. On Marketing Mondays, members can share news of their own projects. With many authors in the group, this may include new book announcements or reports on school visits. On Bibliography Thursdays, members pool their smarts to create reading recommendation lists on a new theme each week. It’s a good opportunity for the librarians and educators in the group to share their broad knowledge.

An early member of the group, Lilian Rosenstreich of Kalaniot Books, shared her excitement upon joining: “Hello fellow Mavens. I feel like I’ve been wandering around the desert and have finally found... YOU! I look forward to hearing your stories. Thank you in advance for being my guide.”

To join the Jewish Kidlit Mavens, you must have a Facebook account. Navigate to www.facebook.com/groups/JewishKidlitMavens and click on the “Join Group” button. You will be asked to describe your interest in Jewish kidlit, and Susan or I will approve all appropriate requests within a few days. Many AJL members have joined already, and since all of us are mavens of one kind or another, I hope that more of you will consider participating in our Facebook group!



AJL Online



Visit the AJL Web site at <http://www.jewishlibraries.org>.

To subscribe to Hasafran, please see instructions at <https://lists.service.ohio-state.edu/mailman/listinfo/hasafran>

AJL is now on **Facebook**. Become a fan.

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A Note from the Editor

Shana tova! I hope you all have had a meaningful start to the New Year. The autumn holidays are my favorites and often make me reflect on renewal and growth. At AJL News and Reviews, we are also in a period of renewal and growth; with the latest editions of the recently combined newsletters, I have had the opportunity to invite new voices to our conversations about Jewish books and libraries.

In addition to our mainstays of excellent reviews and our wonderful chapter chatter contributions, the November/December issue of News and Reviews offers a tribute to Mordicai Gerstein, z"l, whose loss is felt keenly in our community, insight into trends in Jewish and Israeli cookbooks in a new occasional feature "Seven Questions With..." and an introduction to a dynamic Facebook group, Jewish Kidlit Mavens!

I hope you all enjoy this issue of News and Reviews! As always, please feel free to reach out to me with comments and suggestions at general-editor@jewishlibraries.org.

Many thanks, Sally Stieglitz

A Tribute to Mordicai Gerstein z"l

*AJL News and Reviews asked Etta D. Gold, Congregational Librarian, Beth Am Library, to share her memories of author and illustrator Mordicai Gerstein who passed away in September 2019. Mr. Gerstein's work received numerous awards and honors, including the 2004 Caldecott Medal for **The Man Who Walked Between the Towers** and the 2006 Sydney Taylor Book Award for **Sholom's Treasure** (Erica Silverman, author; Mordicai Gerstein, illustrator). Her response, below, is shared with permission.*

Greetings Sally and Heidi -

I apologize profusely for not yet writing my tribute to Mordicai Gerstein; but truthfully, I'm finding it impossible. Not just because it's getting tougher for me to just concentrate and write nicely, but also because there's no way I can come up with anything that hasn't already been said more beautifully. His talents for writing and illustrating were nothing short of brilliant and he was totally beautiful inside and out. Have you all read the [New York Times' tribute](#)? I especially loved Seelye's analysis: "Most of Mr. Gerstein's books wrestled in some way with questions about human behavior that worked themselves out through storytelling, though they were never preachy or saccharine. And they did not shrink from subjects like the inevitability of death."

She goes on to say: "He often called the business of being human messy, difficult, even incomprehensible – and yet wonderful. Despite the weightiness of some of his subjects, he was a mirthful man who reveled in life's mysteries, took delight in mischief-making and retained his capacity for wonder. Many of his books were laugh-out-loud funny."

All I can say is that I truly adored him -

My best, Etta

Seven Questions with Lia Ronnen

SALLY STIEGLITZ, AJL NEWS AND REVIEWS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

AJL News and Reviews Editor-in-Chief Sally Stieglitz spoke with Lia Ronnen, Publisher and Editorial Director of Artisan Books, an imprint of Workman Publishing. Ronnen has developed notable books on Jewish and Israeli cuisine at Artisan, including *Shuk: From Market to Table, the Heart of Israeli Home Cooking* (2019), *The 100 Most Jewish Foods: A Highly Debatable List* (2019) (reviewed in this issue of *AJL News and Reviews*), *Breaking Breads: A New World of Israeli Baking* (2016), and *Balaboosta: Bold Mediterranean Recipes to Feed the People You Love* (2013).

AJL: Can you tell us a little about how you became involved in publishing Jewish and Israeli cookbooks?

Ronnen: I was born in Jerusalem and spent my early childhood there, and although my adult life has been in America, I'm still very connected to Israel through family and friends, as well as annual visits. So pretty much anything having to do with Israel is of personal interest to me. I have been editing and publishing illustrated books for 25 years—books that aim to inform, entertain, and delight in highly visual ways. There is a tremendous untapped market for contemporary, attractive, visual gift books of Jewish and/or Israeli topics, and as the editorial director of Artisan, I'm in charge of choosing which books we make. So I happen to be in the fortunate position of being able to sign up books that are of particular interest to me and to publish them in a way that is successful for my company, as well.

AJL: Do you find that food and cooking form very tight bonds (or divisions) in the Jewish community?

Ronnen: I think that food has always been an intrinsic and important part of the Jewish identity. It's also a part of our identity to argue over who makes the best chicken soup, how to make the best latkes, and where to find the thinnest cut of smoked salmon. We argue about it and we bond over it, simultaneously. For most American Jews, the bond over Jewish food has been the love of Ashkenazi food—smoked fish, pickles, blintzes. If a divide does exist, it's between the dominant cuisine of Ashkenazi Jews in America and the lesser-known cuisine of Persian or Syrian Jews, for example.

AJL: For those of us who are not that familiar with Israeli cooking, can you explain how it differs from what most Americans think of as Jewish cooking?

Ronnen: Jewish cooking in America has been defined by its European origins. It's Ashkenazi food—bagels, smoked fish, borscht. While many European Jews of course eventually made their homes in Israel, they were just one of many cultures that arrived there. European food never really took off in Israel—instead, it was the food of Moroccan, Iraqi, Persian, Yemenite, Bukharan, and other Middle Eastern Jews that caught on. It mixed with Palestinian cuisine—hummus, falafel, grilled meats—and formed what is today known as Israeli food. But it's an ever-morphing identity. In fact, it's probably too soon to define Israeli food and whether it has a separate identity from the foods of its cultural origins. American Jews who think of Jewish food as lox and pickles are astounded when they get to Israel and realize Jewish food there is *chraime* (spicy Moroccan fish) and *kubaneh* (a Yemenite Shabbat bread). American Jewish fast food is bagels and cream cheese and a knish. In Israel, a quick meal is anything from a falafel or *sabich* sandwich to *bourekas* or a *malawach* topped with a poached egg. Israel has the advantage of a superb climate, and only the produce in California can rival what is available there—and that influences the food tremendously, as well. Israelis eat all forms of salad and fruits all day long. They especially like to eat salad for breakfast.

AJL: Do you get feedback from readers, such as “my grandmother made that recipe” or “my grandmother made that recipe but you forgot a half teaspoon of poppy seeds?”

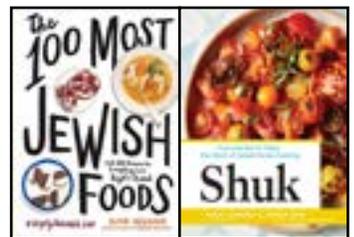
Ronnen: Yes, all the time! Last spring we published a wonderful book called *The 100 Most Jewish Foods*, which was edited by *Tablet* magazine's Alana Newhouse. The title itself inspired the best kind of argument – why is one food considered Jewish, for example, and not another? We get a lot of “feedback” when it comes to Jewish cooking – as you suggested, it's often along the lines of, “This recipe sounds good, but my grandmother made it better.” I love that, by the way. I love that pride of food is such a part of the Jewish culture and that people are passionate enough about their heritage to engage with our books in this way.

AJL: What are some future trends in Jewish or Israeli cooking?

Ronnen: Many of the trends happening in Israeli cooking and in Jewish cooking in America are happening in food everywhere, which can essentially be summed up as a return to and exploration of the food of one's own culture. For decades, the fancy restaurants of the world were French, and this was as true in Tel Aviv in the 80s as it was in Denmark and Argentina. But over the past 25 years, we see chefs the world over having the revelation that serving French food in a climate and culture that has nothing to do with France is a shame. So today we are watching both professional chefs and home cooks reexamine the foods of their heritage, sometimes adding new techniques or finding ways to make it relevant to today's audience. What is particularly exciting in Jewish/Israeli food today is that it is happening on all fronts – there are Ashkenazim exploring the food of their grandparents as much as Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) Israelis are cooking their grandparents' food anew. What I hope we will see soon is Jewish cooks taking this to the next level and making “fancy” restaurant food from the food of their heritage. In the Israeli food scene right now, we're at a bit of an in-between phase, with much of “grandmother's cooking” still relegated to casual-eating status.

AJL: Favorite Jewish or Israeli cookbook?

Ronnen: You have to forgive me, but it's two of the books I've published, *The 100 Most Jewish Foods* and *Shuk*. *The 100 Most Jewish Foods* is my favorite gift to give to Jews – it's as much about history and culture and debate as it is about food. It's just a delight, and I find that people can't put it down. And *Shuk*, by Einat Admony and Janna Gur, is my new kitchen bible. Einat is an Israeli restaurateur of Persian and Yemenite heritage, and her coauthor, Janna Gur, was for decades the editor of Israel's most important food magazine. Their cookbook is jam-packed with easy-to-make and completely delicious salads, stews, breads, fish, and chicken dishes that are as appropriate for everyday meals as they are for special occasions.



AJL: This interview will be in our November/December issue of *News and Reviews*. So I want to ask – Chanukah: latkes or *sufganiyot*?

Ronnen: I think this comes down to salty versus sweet, right? In which case, I will always choose salty. In my house, we make the latkes and buy the *sufganiyot*. This Chanukah will be our first with our newborn daughter, and I can't wait for her to taste my latkes. And then I'm sure the next question will be – applesauce or sour cream?!

AJL: Thank you for speaking with us!

“Seven Questions with...” is an occasional series of interviews with influencers in the world of Jewish books and libraries. Seven Questions with Lia Ronnen is the first in this series.

To Answer Your Questions: Pinterest...

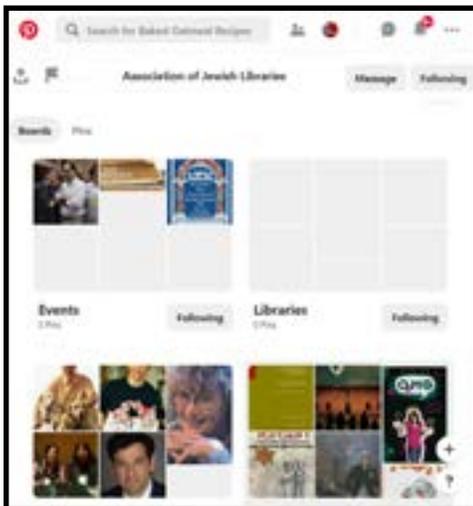
ELLEN SHARE, AJL VICE PRESIDENT OF SYNAGOGUE, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Pinterest is a social media website with an enormous amount of information that can be used by librarians, teachers, parents, and administrators. There is a plethora of ideas for art projects, bulletin boards, library promotions and publicity, reading suggestions, and library sayings and quotes – just to name a few areas. It is a very extensive website, and there is no charge to use it. I would suggest that if you sign up, you might want to use an alternative email address to avoid getting a bombardment of emails in your regular inbox, or you can turn off email notifications in the Pinterest's settings. There are “Pins” from individuals and businesses. This website is relatively easy to navigate, and your search terms will usually come up with a hit.



I recently was looking for an easy-to-make wand for a magic theme to promote our Annual Tzedakah Read-A-Thon. In keeping with the theme, I wanted each student to have a wand. I found many suggestions: one called “How to Make an Easy Wand” and another “Princess Wand.” These were just what I was looking for: easy to make and with inexpensive material that I might have on hand. I really like this aspect of Pinterest: the Pins often make use of recycled and simple materials.

Pinterest can be used by librarians working in an academic and special library setting. I found all these subjects on Pinterest: display cases, archival display and manuscript. I was recently looking for a way to clean acrylic display stands, and the suggestion on Pinterest really worked well. Again, Pins are from a variety of sources including vendors and individuals.



There is a link to the AJL Pinterest boards on the left of the [AJL website](#) under "Featured Content" and a linked Pinterest icon at the bottom of the page, along with links to other sites with AJL social media presence. You can also go directly to Pinterest at <https://www.pinterest.com/JewishLibraries/>. We are working on launching AJL's use of this social website and getting our members to use Pinterest. There will be more details to follow in subsequent *AJL News and Reviews*. At the moment, familiarize yourself with the website, and direct any questions to eshare@whctemple.org.

Chapter Chatter

CAPITAL AREA CHAPTER (AJL/CAC)

SUBMITTED BY YERMIYAHU AHRON TAUB

On Sunday, September 22, 2019, independent scholar Jennifer Breger presented a lecture entitled "The Role of Jewish Women in Hebrew Printing" at Beth Sholom Congregation in Potomac, Maryland. The program was sponsored by the Association of Jewish Libraries/Capital Area Chapter (AJL/CAC) and the Beth Sholom Congregation Sisterhood.

Breger began her lecture with some general information about Jewish women, the printing world, and Jewish life. First, many Jewish women were illiterate. However, Jewish women tended to be more

literate than their non-Jewish neighbors. There were also differences in the Ashkenazi and Sephardic realms. It's difficult to find literate Sephardic women who were not of the elite classes. Jewish women printed texts that women did not study. In later years (18th-20th centuries), women printers were largely absent from publishing innovative secular Hebrew and Yiddish literature. Instead, they focused on more traditional religious texts for which there was demand. While the Baraita (Gittin 45b) and the Shulhan Arukh state that the Torah scrolls, mezuzot, and tefilin written by women are invalid, some authorities have ruled that megilah scrolls written by women are valid. Breger gave some examples of megilot written by women, as well as of authorities who attested that a woman can write a megilah. She also pointed to the role of women copyists of Hebrew manuscripts in different societies before the advent of printing. Certainly, there were no halakhic prohibitions against women printing books. Moreover, Jewish women printers did not limit themselves to books that would be read by, or to, women, often printing very important halakhic texts with great care.

Women's involvement in printing was affected by both the events in their own personal lives and larger historical trends. Sometimes, women assumed the helms of printing presses following their husband's death. They often continued the printing work to support their family, or to keep the press going, sometimes as a memorial to their husband and forged, in the process, their financial independence. At other times, they worked, along with other family members, at the press while their husbands were still alive. Their activity took place against the backdrop of restrictions on Jewish involvement in printing. Hebrew books were subject to confiscation, censorship, and burning. Indeed, in the German lands, Jews were not permitted to be printers or join guilds in the early modern period, and Hebrew printing only began in Northern Europe in Prague in 1512. However, in the Italian lands and the Iberian Peninsula, Jews successfully printed numerous books the late 15th century. Over time, Hebrew printing spread throughout most of the Jewish world following demographic, social and economic trends. Nevertheless, changing censorship rules, residence requirements, printing rivalries, and other challenges made printing a highly risky, even perilous profession.

Breger discussed the life stories of numerous Jewish women printers. One example was Dona Reyna Mendes (1536-1599), daughter of Dona Gracia Mendes and wife of Don Joseph Naxos. When widowed and living in Constantinople, Dona Reyna was the first Jewish woman to establish her own independent press. She brought the press into her own homes. She published at least fifteen Hebrew books as well as a scholarly book in Ladino. Breger argued that this was a major accomplishment for a woman, particularly in the Sephardic world. Another prominent Jewish woman printer was Judith Rosanes, who was part of an eminent printing dynasty. In 1782, she moved from Zolkiev to Lemberg/Lvov, where she married the rabbi of the community, Hirsh Rosanes. She succeeded in printing some fifty books. Her daughter-in-law, Havah Grossman and granddaughter, Feyga Grossman followed in her footsteps. A particularly haunting example was Rachel Citron, daughter of the Rogatchover Gaon, Rabbi Yosef Rosin, who was the author of the *Tsafnat Paneah*. Citron came from Petah Tikvah, Palestine to Dvinsk (now Latvia) to deal with the publication of her father's work after his death in 1936. She photographed her father's writings left in manuscript and sent them to the United States to be printed. When Dvinsk fell to the Nazis, Citron was unable to escape and she perished in the Holocaust.

Of course, no lecture on Jewish women in Hebrew printing would be complete without mention of Devorah Romm, often known as the Widow Romm. Romm emanated from a distinguished family. She was the granddaughter of the renowned rabbi, Shemuel Strashun and daughter of the prominent Yosef Betsal'el Harkavy. Devorah and her brothers-in-law took over the Romm Press in Vilna after the death of Devorah's husband, David in 1860. At the time, she was 29 years old and a mother of six children. From 1863-1903, she played an instrumental role in the Press' success--much more than the brothers-in-law. She wisely hired Shemuel FeIgensohn as literary director. One of the crowning achievements of the Press was the publication of the Vilna Shas (1880-1886), which used hundreds of manuscripts and

more than one hundred printers to set what has become the canonical Shas.

Ms. Breger's lecture vividly illuminated the wide-ranging and long-term effect Jewish women had on the development of Hebrew printing. And yet, for all that we know, argued Breger, there is much that we don't know. Jewish women printers did not leave behind memoirs detailing the extent of their professional achievements. Scholars have had to rely on the scant words they left in books and historical documents and reading "between the lines" to recreate their work. The author of numerous articles, Ms. Breger continues her research in this area. Last year, she made a trip to Mantua, Italy, where she looked for more traces of the work of Jewish women in early printing. In particular, she tried to explore old synagogue records with local scholars to obtain information on Estellina Conat, who worked with her husband in Mantua in the 1470s and who, in a famous colophon, declared that she herself was responsible, with a helper, for printing the book *Behinat Olam*.

Special thanks: AJL/CAC thanks Jennifer Breger for presenting her scholarship, Beth Sholom Sisterhood for co-sponsoring and hosting the event, Elisa Elfasi and Nahid Gerstein for numerous organization tasks, and Gail Shirazi for designing the flyer and publicity.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (AJLSC)

SUBMITTED BY ELLEN COLE

At a special late summer gathering, we met in the new home of colleague Barbara Leff to honor her with the commendation from the Supervisors of Los Angeles County. The Supervisors prepared an ornate plaque that explains Barbara's well deserved honor: recognition of her dedicated service to the community and their pride in her many contributions benefitting her fellow county residents.

Barbara worked tirelessly for 48 years helping to establish and run Jewish libraries in day schools and synagogues, teaching other Jewish librarians about our literature, special cataloging system, library administration, policy, advocacy and outreach. As a member, a director, and Corporate Secretary of our local chapter, she called upon her myriad contacts from her far-reaching community work to find us great speakers. In her later years she created, maintained and ran our absolutely fantastic chapter website, now a model for AJL!



Don't forget to connect to [AJLSC on Facebook](#). Look for "AJLSC" and "like" us. For other news, visit our [chapter website](#). We are current and interesting!

JEWISH LIBRARIAN NETWORK OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO (JLNMC)

SUBMITTED BY SHELLEY RISKIN, VICE-PRESIDENT

As hosts of AJL's June, 2020 Conference, "Cooler By the Lake" in Evanston, Illinois at the Orrington Hotel, chaired by our JLNMC members Rachel Kamin and Marcie Eskin, we're now in the midst of planning for what we know will be a great conference!



The JLNMC chapter also enjoyed a variety of interesting programs and good attendance at last year's gatherings. Our 2018/19 year kick-off took place at the Beth Hillel Bnai Emunah synagogue library, featuring writer, translator, and professor Todd Hasak-Lowy. He presented the interactive talk *Experiments in Translating Others' Books and Writing Others' Stories*, with a special focus on his translation of Dror Burstein's *Netanya*. The complexity of high-quality translation was enjoyably explored during this interesting presentation.

Our March, 2019 event was a fascinating trip to Northwestern University's Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies. Many beautiful African artifacts were on view in the largest separate African collection in existence. Through a tour, hands-on examination of materials, and a Q&A, the group learned from Director Esmeralda Kale and her staff about the Jewish people, communities, and writing in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as about the library's university and community outreach to publicize and educate others about their collection.



Our spring, 2019 event, *Let's Collaborate! Public Libraries and Jewish Communities Working Together*, hosted by Skokie Public Library, was a new, useful, and successful collaboration between JLNMC and Chicago area public libraries. It was well attended by both JLNMC members and public librarians. The panel consisted of both Adult and Youth Services librarians from four public libraries. They shared the programs, print, and online resources and services that each offered to their Jewish patrons

and institutions. Many of our members weren't aware of the breadth of offerings for Jewish patrons and institutions at our public libraries and learned a great deal. The librarians also answered questions and listened to ideas and requests from the audience, including opportunities for further collaboration.

Our final program of the 2019 year will be the viewing of a film that is part of the Chicago Israeli Film Festival, followed by a discussion and, of course, food!

LONG ISLAND (LIAJL)

SUBMITTED BY WENDY MARX

Yasher Koach to Long Island's own Sally Stieglitz for taking on this national position as editor of *AJL News and Reviews*! Our LIAJL functions include luncheons and partnering with other groups to know we are a presence for synagogues. Last May, our Librarian Shabbat was a novel and successful service at my synagogue, highlighting the PJ library and local donors of LIAJL. Anyone who would like a copy of my sermon comparing a library to a synagogue, just email me at xmarxts@aol.com.

We are looking forward to November...Jewish Book Month!

AJL ONTARIO

AJLONTARIO.ORG

SUBMITTED BY ANNE DUBLIN

The 39th Holocaust Education Week (HEW) will take place in the Greater Toronto Area on November 3-10, 2019 with the overall theme "The Holocaust and Now." As part of HEW, on Wednesday November 6, AJL-Ontario will sponsor award-winning author, Anne Dublin in an interactive lecture on the topic "Gathering More Threads: The Tailor Project 70 Years Later." After the Holocaust, over one thousand Jewish garment workers and their families were chosen from displaced persons camps to come to Canada through the Garment Workers Scheme ("The Tailor Project"). The Tailor Project is being rediscovered now in various ways, with significant implications for immigrants and refugees coming to Canada. Anne's family were Holocaust survivors who came to Canada through the Tailor Project in 1948.

Anne Dublin is also delighted to announce that her YA historical novel, *A Cage Without Bars* (Second Story Press, 2018), received the 2019 Canadian Jewish Literary Award (Youth) on Sunday, Oct. 27 at York University in Toronto. Now in its fifth year, the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards recognizes and rewards the finest Canadian Jewish writing. For more information, see the CJLA website: <http://cjlawards.ca>

Scholarship Committee Report

SUBMITTED BY SARAH BARNARD, SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBER

The Scholarship Fund needs help. We gratefully accept donations which can be in memory or in honor of someone. We will send a tribute card (or several). Please include the following information with your donation: your name and address, the name(s) and addresses of the recipient(s) of the tribute card, the reason for the tribute and your email address in case there are questions. Send check donations to:

Sarah M. Barnard (sarmarbar68@gmail.com)

5646 Hunters Lake

Cincinnati, OH 45249

AJL Scholarship Donation Form

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Notes:

Keep Up to Date with Hasafran

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.

A keyword-searchable [archive](#) of Hasafran messages posted since June 12, 2003 is now available.

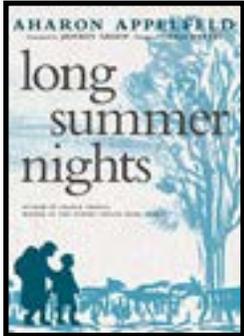
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In The Spotlight



Appelfeld, Aharon. *Long Summer Nights*. Illus. by Vali Mintzi. Translated by Jeffrey Green. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2019. 272 pp. \$18.95 (9781609808983). Gr. 6-10. Reviewed from ARC.

Twelve-year-old Michael Wiener is thrust into the care of a Gentile family friend, Grandpa Sergei, when danger comes. Grandpa Sergei and Michael, now called Yanek, wander through Ukrainian villages. Grandpa, who once served as a master commander in the army, teaches his ward how to become physically and mentally strong. They encounter villagers who are kind and generous, giving them food, as well as those who attack and steal. Yanek learns right from wrong and becomes a caring young man. As the war comes to a close and the sounds of Red Army tanks rumble, Grandpa Sergei dies on impact from a stray bullet. Yanek finds a cart and takes him back to his home village of Ivanov. He then joins refugees from the camps who also have no home and have lost loved ones.

While the publisher compares this narrative with Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, the comparison will have little meaning for young readers. Appelfeld (1932-2018) was a master storyteller, and his approach here resembles that of Isaac Bashevis Singer. But there is also a kind of naivete – Yanek does not quite understand what has happened to his parents and grandfather – that is reminiscent of Morris Gleitzman's *Once* trilogy. While Grandpa Sergei instructs Yanek to wear a cross to protect himself against anti-Semitic harm, the danger they both face is prejudice against wanderers. The illustrations are strong yet stark and add to representation of the wanderers' existence. This book adds a simple yet unexpected depth to the cadre of Holocaust refugee narratives. It offers memorable characters and little-known experiences. It could become a new favorite. Unfortunately, this is Appelfeld's final children's book. He passed away in January 2018. His book, *Adam and Thomas*, earned the Sydney Taylor Book Award for Older Readers in 2015.

Barbara Krasner, former member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Somerset, New Jersey

BIBLE STORIES AND MIDRASH

Kimmel, Eric A. *Whale of a Tale. (Scarlett and Sam)*. Illus. by Ivica Stevanovic. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2019. 152pp. \$15.99 (9781541522169) HC; \$6.99 (9781541522176) Pbk; \$6.99 eBook. Gr. 3-5.

Scarlett and Sam, the time-travelling twins from *Escape from Egypt* (Kar-Ben, 2015) and *Search for the Shamir* (Kar-Ben, 2018) have returned to experience first-hand the story of Jonah. When they offer to take their Iranian grandmother's priceless antique carpet to the carpet cleaner, they hire a "Loft" driver to get them there and back. During the ride, they learn that their driver, Jon (aka Jonah), is running away from his boss. Upon arriving at the carpet cleaner's store, they realize they have forgotten the carpet in the Loft's trunk. As they run after the car, screaming for the driver to stop, they jump into traffic

and come perilously close to being run over by an oncoming...ox cart! Thus begins their adventure in the ancient Middle East, which takes them from a carpet seller's stall in the Jaffa *shuk* to a ship headed across the Mediterranean where they re-meet Jon(ah), to a rather disgusting ride inside a very large fish to Nineveh. Upon their arrival in Nineveh, they must use every trick in the book to convince the people holding them to take them to the king. Thankfully, a large earthquake provides the impetus for the king's counselor to quickly get them an audience. During the ensuing audience, the king tries to manifest his power but cannot overcome an aftershock that destroys his throne room and their god's temple. Begging for mercy, the Assyrian king, who it turns out is a young boy, agrees to do whatever Israel's God asks of him. Of course, Jonah is less than happy about this turn of events, as he felt God should severely punish the Assyrians. After storming off, the twins find him on a mountaintop, dying of thirst and mourning the loss of his gourd vine. After the twins point out the silliness of mourning over a gourd while wanting innocent people to be slaughtered, they find themselves mysteriously returned to the carpet cleaner's shop, carpet in hand.

The story accurately follows the Jonah tale, while including the twins in the decision making over such events as to how they are going to get out of the belly of the fish or how to convince the Assyrians that God means business. Their resourcefulness, despite their surprising circumstances, is remarkable, always demonstrating that a positive attitude can overcome even the most dire situation. The title is a good addition to the series and provides a supplemental High Holiday story that will be very appealing to younger readers.

Kathy Bloomfield, AJL Vice President/President Elect, Seal Beach, CA

BIOGRAPHY

Hoffman, Amalia. *The Brave Cyclist: A True Story of a Holocaust Hero*. Illus. by Chiara Fedele. North Mankato, MN: Capstone Editions, 2019. 40 pp. \$17.95 (9781684460632). Gr. 3-4. Reviewed from proof.

A new righteous gentile biography offers different ground for young readers. The subject is Italian, a Tour de France winner, a brave man defying the Fascists. This fast-paced picture book starts in Florence with a weak, young, poor boy named Gino Bartali riding a rusty, second-hand bicycle. He practices, he trains, he works in a bike shop; the owner urges him to race professionally. By age 21, the frail boy is a powerful racer who wins Italy's most prestigious race. He next tries the incredibly difficult Tour de France. Despite a spill on Day One, Gino wins; he rides victoriously into Paris as a proud Italian. The new dictator of Italy expects a speech thanking him; Gino does not mention Mussolini and Italy cancels his welcome home celebration. Five years later, the Catholic Church in Florence contacts Gino to deliver papers to create false documents so Jews can flee. They need a bicycle rider to go over 100 miles, passing personal examination at checkpoints. Gino agrees. The Fascist soldiers know him as an Italian champion and he is allowed through. For months, Gino takes forms to the printers and delivers the finished papers. He is finally caught, but arrested for the wrong thing. They let him out of jail. When the war is over, he trains again. In 1948, considered an old man, he wins the Tour for the second time.

The illustrations are modern, mobile and sophisticated, strengthening the message of the text through the expressive faces. The palette is subdued, underlining the woes of war. This courageous hero is recognized at Yad Vashem, and on bike paths named in his honor around Jerusalem.

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

Marsico, Katie. *Genius Physicist: Albert Einstein*. (STEM Trailblazer Bios). Minneapolis: Lerner, 2017. 32pp. \$26.65 (9781512434514) HC; \$8.99 (9781512456295) Pbk; \$8.99 eBook. Gr. 2-5.

The book covers Einstein's childhood and education, the years of his greatest achievements, his receipt of the Nobel Prize, and his later life in America. There is a spread on his work on the Manhattan Project; another describes his life as an exile from Nazi Germany. The core of the book, Chapters Two

and Three, discusses his most important theories in simple terms. The topics include Relativity and its implications, and the concept of a thought experiment. The text is accompanied by excellent images, both photographs and drawings.

Marsico has done a wonderful job of summarizing difficult ideas in easy-to-understand language. But there is a disconnect: the text is meant for third and fourth graders, while the visual work feels like it could be presented to preschoolers. In addition, the combination of life story and theoretical physics primer makes it difficult to see where it would be best located. It includes an index, sources and glossary. In the end, "Genius Physicist" is of mixed value, although the subject is eminently worth a picture book for the very young.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Micklos, John Jr. *Ruth Bader Ginsburg: Get to Know the Justice Who Speaks Her Mind. (People You Should Know).* North Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2019. 32 pp. \$20.99 (9781543555288). Gr. 3-6.

This is an attractive biography, arranged with clear headings, easily read print, plentiful photos – some full page – and a pleasing palette of mint green, brown and dark green for the print and text boxes. There are, however, several instances of statements that will be unclear to readers because critical information is only mentioned in passing or only implied. The many "Did You Know?" boxes and sidebars make it a bit confusing. Two chapters describe Ginsberg's childhood, education, college and law school experiences, and the early years of her marriage. The other chapters deal with her work to support the Voting Rights Act, her work advocating for women, for gender equality, and with the ACLU, and her many influential decisions on the Supreme Court. Organized as a textbook, albeit a fairly easy one, it will appeal to students who really want to learn about Ginsburg in depth; it won't appeal to a more casual reader. The back matter includes a glossary, some suggested books and internet sites for further research, a few "critical thinking questions," and an index. Other "People You Should Know" in the series include Anne Frank, Elizabeth Warren, Ruby Bridges, Irena Sendler, Tecumseh, and Stephen Hawking.

Debbie Colodny, Cook Memorial Public Library District, Libertyville, IL; Former owner Sefer, So Good; former member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

FICTION - EARLY READERS

Adler, David A. *One Yellow Daffodil: A Chanukah Story.* Illus. by Avi Katz. Brooklyn, NY: Menucha Classroom Solutions, 2019. 32 pp. \$14.99 (9781614655220). Gr. 1-3. Reviewed from PDF.

Morris Kaplan owns a flower shop. Every day he goes to the flower market to stock his store, serves his customers, and looks forward to a visit from Ilana and Gabriel, who pass his store on the way to school. He often adds extra flowers to bouquets to brighten people's days or their Shabbos tables. Soon it is Chanukah, and the children invite Morris to join them. The Becker family lights the candles, sings the traditional songs, and the kids play dreidel. As they eat dinner, Morris talks about flowers. But the evening has stirred memories of his own childhood. When he returns to his apartment, he takes a box from his closet and pulls out a menorah, which he places in his shop window. That night, he returns to the Beckers for candle lighting with his menorah. He tells them that his family was evicted and sent to Auschwitz during the Holocaust. When he returned to his home, there were other people living there who gave him a box of things they didn't want, including the menorah. He explains that when he was in the concentration camp, he saw a daffodil growing in the mud, and the bright yellow flower gave him the hope to survive. Although his family perished, the Beckers assure him that he is part of their family now.

Originally published in 1995 (Harcourt) as a picture book, the format has been updated to an early chapter book with new (and fewer) illustrations, which are colorful and complement the text nicely.

The ending has been changed to be more positive than pensive, and it stills presents the Holocaust in a gentle and general way. With a re-issue after 25 years, some of the language is dated (Elana says a test is “difficult” rather than “hard”), and Morris Kaplan would likely be at least in his 80s – probably not driving and working all day. Early readers will need some parental guidance to put the subject matter in perspective. Still, the strong story with both Chanukah and Holocaust themes in the presentation of an early reader chapter book will be a welcome addition to all libraries.

Chava Pinchuck, past chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel

FICTION - MIDDLE GRADE

Greenspan, Sophie. *Masada Will Not Fall Again*. Philadelphia: JPS, 2019. 186 pp. \$17.95 (9780827614697) Gr. 5-8.

What was it like for the Jews under siege by the Romans 2000 years ago? Sophie Greenspan’s fictional description of Masada, first released in 1973, provides a hint. The story begins as three travelers approach the Jewish enclave. Adin and Ohada, a husband and wife, are exiles from Nehardea. Yeshu has miraculously escaped the Qumran community. They are accepted into the community. The story includes information about life among the many refugees, including a profile of Eleazar ben Yair, the group’s leader. There are glimpses of life, including the antics of two boys, Aviel and Iddo; a prayer service; Yeshu’s reading from the writings of Ben Sira; and other vignettes that bring the characters into focus. The tension grows as the Roman legions, under General Silva, approach and lay siege to the fortress. There are scenes in the Roman camp, as Silva prepares to attack and overcome the hold-outs. Finally, the Romans are victorious, but find that the Jews have committed suicide. Only one member, Hulda, has survived to tell the story.

This powerful legend (much of which comes from Josephus) has been cited as an ongoing response to tragedy through the centuries. It remains a core aspect of Israeli life. Although the story is instructive, the text does not feel comfortable for today’s middle-school readers, making it an optional purchase for most libraries.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Patterson, James, and Chris Grabenstein. *Max Einstein: Rebels with a Cause*. (Max Einstein). Illus. by Beverly Johnson. New York: JIMMY Patterson Books, 2019. 306 pp. \$14.99 (978-0316488167). Gr. 5-8. Reviewed from ARC.

In this sequel to *Max Einstein: The Genius Experiment* (2018), the authors take the brainy kids from the CMI (Change Makers Institute) to two projects where they hope to help the world. In both Ireland and India, the team finds reasons for polluted water. They then create technological and social solutions to these problems. All the while, the nefarious (and incompetent) Dr. Zimm and his bot-boy, Lenard, chase after them. Dr. Zimm desperately tries to bring Max over to the “dark side,” that is, the Corp, “a dangerous group of evildoers.” Max resists, for although she is an orphan, she is beginning to build a “family” with the other genius kids in the CMI. Here we learn more about the characters (although they are rather stereotyped), and especially about the mystery of Max’s background (not solved).

Johnson’s black and white illustrations enhance the text by explaining some of the scientific concepts or plot points in an amusing, sprightly manner. Although scientific theories are touched on lightly throughout, what carries the novel forward is its moral core. At the beginning, the authors quote Albert Einstein: “The world is more threatened by those who tolerate evil or support it than by the evildoers themselves.” There is no significant Jewish content, but there are more general quotes from Albert Einstein, the CMI is based in Jerusalem, and making the world a better place is a theme. With fast-paced action and lots of humor – sometimes slapstick – this novel is sure to please young readers. Stay tuned for the next book in the series.

Anne Dublin, author of A Cage Without Bars (Second Story Press, 2018), Toronto, Canada

Tibbits, Tim. *Echo Still: Is There More to Life than Making the Team?* Yorkshire, UK: Green Bean Books, 2018. 178 pp. \$19.95 (9781784383053). Gr. 4-7.

Sports, religion, and family all come together in this sweet and thoughtful coming-of-age middle grade novel. Elijah “Fig” Newton has all the normal seventh grade worries. He’s preparing for his bar mitzvah, trying to get on the travel soccer team, and keeping his grades up. Fig’s worldview starts to shift though, when his dad announces that his maternal grandmother, Gigi, will be coming to live with them while getting medical treatments. Gigi, a loving grandmother, is also more religious than Fig and his non-Jewish father and brings a love of Shabbat and holidays to their home. The three of them come together to support each other while Gigi’s health begins to decline. With Gigi living with them, Fig is able to learn more about his mother, who passed away when he was a small child. He also learns to see beyond himself which is helpful both on the soccer field and with his family and community.

This somewhat bittersweet (though more sweet than bitter) story, a PJ Our Way selection, is a superb intergenerational story with which many kids can easily identify. The narrative chapters alternate with dialogue from Fig’s documentary about his mother, which helps the story unfold.

Rebecca Levitan, Librarian II, Baltimore County Public Library, Pikesville Branch

FICTION - TEEN

Blitt, Natalie. *The Truth About Leaving.* Eagle, ID: Amberjack Publishing, 2019. 294 pp. \$12.99 (9781948705097). Gr. 9-12.

Eighteen-year-old Lucy is entering her senior year of high school with no boyfriend (he dumped her as he left for college), no extracurricular activities (she dropped out of her ballet classes to spend more time with her now ex-boyfriend), and no plans for college (her parents want her to go to Northwestern, but she is not sure.) Lucy, her two brothers, and her dad all live in Wilmette, Illinois. Her mother just took a job across the country at UC Berkeley. As a result of this new arrangement, Lucy is expected to help her dad with taking care of her brothers and the house.

Enter Dov, an Israeli teen, who is unexpectedly and unusually transferring into Lucy’s senior class at Wilmette Academy, a small exclusive school that rarely accepts twelfth grade transfer students. After Lucy literally runs into Dov in the high school foyer, she is asked to guide him around and introduce him to life at the school. And so, begins an awkward acquaintance that blossoms into a comfortable friendship that blooms into a lovely romance. Lucy and Dov are two teens with lots of baggage, who are both searching for what they want in life. Will Lucy apply to a college far from home? Will she pursue ballet, the one thing she is truly passionate about? Will Dov return to Israel and enlist in the army, even though his older brother had died while in the army (not in a war, but while assisting a stranded motorist) relinquishing him of that obligation? Can Lucy and Dov maintain a very long-distance romance?

There is quite a bit of interesting information about life in Israel and the differences between Israeli and American Jews. Teens will enjoy watching the relationship between Lucy and Dov grow and reading about the difficult decisions they must make. Parents, grandparents, and teachers do their best to provide wisdom and support, but ultimately the teens must make their own plans. This fast-paced novel is engaging and entertaining. Word of caution: there is a lot of talk about sex in this novel. None of it is inappropriate or graphic. It is presented in exactly the way many of today’s teens are experiencing it.

Kathy Bloomfield, AJL Vice President/President Elect, Seal Beach, CA



Shrum, Brianna R. *Kissing Ezra Holtz (and Other Things I Did for Science)*. New York: Sky Pony Press, 2019. 288 pp. \$8.99 (9781510743694) PB. Gr. 9-12.

High school seniors Amalia and Ezra have known one another all their lives but have never gotten along. Ezra, the diligent, serious student, is a rule-follower and is sure that his way is the only effective formula for success. On the other hand, Amalia is a free spirit who loves to party and doesn't believe society's rules should apply to her at all. Her certainty and confidence are jolted, though, when her expected acceptance to art school does not materialize. To her dismay, she has been rejected from every single art program in spite of her talent. Amalia suddenly needs to rethink her plans for the future. If she plans to apply to college late in the year, she must focus on getting outstanding grades and stellar recommendations. When Ezra and Amalia are paired for a research project by their AP Psychology teacher, neither can imagine how they can work as a team to achieve their academic goals. Their personal styles are at odds and it is hard for them to develop the trust needed to complete a challenging assignment together. Their project focuses on intimacy and relationships, making effective teamwork even more of a challenge. As they conduct their research, Ezra and Amalia learn more about true intimacy than they ever imagined. They deepen their understanding of friendship and they learn to understand other points of view. The reader watches them grow and mature as they learn as much about each other as they do about themselves.

Of particular interest to readers is a debate on the relative importance of art versus science. The book has a sexually diverse cast of characters; Amalia is bisexual and Ezra has two dads, one of whom is transgender. There is significant Jewish content throughout the book as both protagonists incorporate their Judaism and observances into their daily lives and thoughts. A fun, breezy story with serious underpinnings, *Kissing Ezra Holtz* is engaging and compelling.

*Michal Hoschander Malen, retired librarian; current library volunteer in Efrat, Israel;
editor of children's and young adult book reviews for the Jewish Book Council*

HOLOCAUST AND WORLD WAR II

DeWoskin, Rachel. *Someday We Will Fly*. New York: Viking, 2019. 368 pp. \$17.99 (9780670014965). Gr. 8 - 12.

In the spring of 1940, Lillia Kazka, her father Bercik, and two-year-old baby sister Naomi make the perilous journey from Warsaw to Shanghai. However, Lillia's mother vanishes before she can escape with her family. The tension mounts in this historical novel as fifteen-year-old Lillia confronts many new problems: poverty, hunger, boredom, loneliness, worry, fear, and humiliation. She must learn to survive and help her father and sister as well, even though by doing so, she must enter a murky world of danger. When Japan and the United States go to war in December 1941, the situation goes from bad to worse. Japan occupies China. All the Jewish refugees are forced to crowd together in Hongkou, the poorest section of the city; the American and British residents are rounded up and taken away to a "camp" on the outskirts of the city. Lillia's longing for a real home and for her mother permeates this moving story of refugees seeking asylum. And still, among the rubble and violence, sickness and despair, Lillia finds a way to create something beautiful – a puppet show and acrobatic display for her family and friends.

DeWoskin's poetic style captures the characters and setting of this unusual book in a masterful way. Variety of sentences, numerous sensory details and images, several languages – all convey the culture shock and disorientation of these desperate Jewish refugees. A map of Lillia's journey to Shanghai, as well as sepia-toned photos in the end papers, add authentic details to the telling. The author has included an extensive bibliography and a detailed note. For two more books for young people on this subject, see Vivian Kaplan's *Ten Green Bottles* (St. Martin's Press, 2004) or Andrea Alban Gosline's *Anyia's War* (Feiwel & Friends, 2011).

Anne Dublin, author of A Cage Without Bars (Second Story Press, 2018), Toronto, Canada

Polak, Monique. *Room for One More.* Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2019. 226 pp. \$8.99 (9781541540439). Gr. 3-6. Reviewed from ARC.

In 1942, twelve-year-old Rosetta and her Jewish Montreal-based family agree to take in Isaac, a Jewish teen refugee from Nazi Germany who's private about what he's endured. While Isaac and the family adjust to each other, Rosetta's understanding of her Jewish identity and of the way her peers relate to it is put into a different perspective. The lessons she learns are often expressed in simpler terms than necessary. Isaac's gradually-revealed backstory, however, is more complex than the Canada-set portion of the narrative; his mother, who resembled "an Aryan goddess" and appeared to side with the Nazis, may have had kinder intentions toward him than he thought. Though the novel could be subtler in places, it should work well as an introduction to a historical period with parallels today.

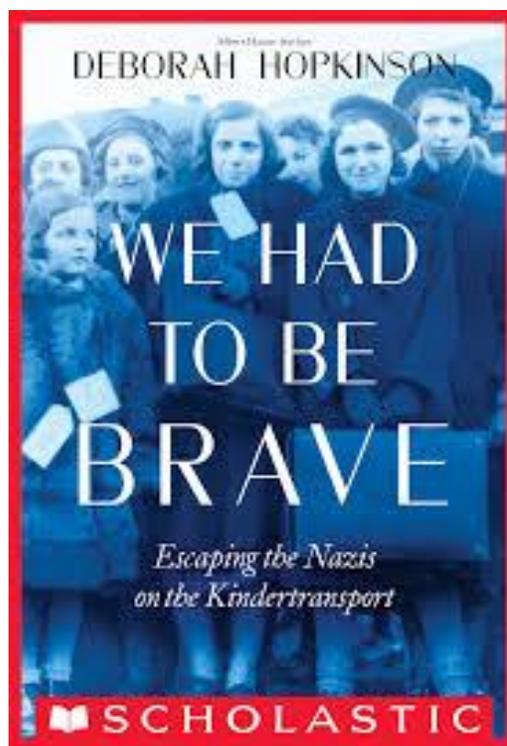
Shoshana Flax, The Horn Book, Inc., Boston, MA

MacWilliams, Bryon. *The Girl in the Haystack.* Florham Park, NJ: Serving House Books, 2019. 80pp. \$9.99 (9781947175099). Gr. 6-12.

A brief but harrowing story, more of a novella than a novel, based on the true experience of one family's survival during the Holocaust. The author begins the book with, "This story was told to me... by the woman who lived through it - as a girl... Voices are recreated, facts are not." After the Nazis invade the Soviet Union in 1941, a pogrom is launched in the Polish/Ukrainian village of Tuchin. All the men and boys of the village have hidden in a nearby forest, but the villagers do not spare the women and girls who are left behind. Seven-year-old Lubyia is beaten and left for dead. She awakens paralyzed, but miraculously recovers. One year later, she and her family are sent to a ghetto in the far end of their town. But when the gates are locked, the Jews rebel by setting fire to houses near the fence and shooting Nazis and villagers. The Nazis murder the Jews as they try to escape. Yet again, Lubyia and her mother survive because of the courage of a local farmer who is hiding them in his farmhouse. The Nazis are everywhere, so the farmer moves them to a haystack in his field and hides them there. The farmer's dog, Brisko, alerts them when unexpected visitors arrive. For three years, they remain hidden until they are liberated in 1944.

The story is broken down into short chapters describing the events surrounding the family's experiences. Periodically throughout the book, Brisko "speaks" in free verse describing his perception of the situation. Lubyia views Brisko as a guardian angel rather than a dog, and the fact that his barking has saved them from danger on more than one occasion tends to prove that fact. The back of the book contains information about and pictures of Lubyia, who is now Laura Oberlender, her parents, the farmer, Pavlo, his wife and children, who have all been named as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem, and Brisko, the dog. Finally, a short piece on the history of Tuchin during the Holocaust is provided. While very short and concise, this is an excellent Holocaust story of how one family survived with the help of good, courageous people. It is not a must-have Holocaust story; rather it is a good addition to a Holocaust collection that is wide in scope and includes many memoirs.

Kathy Bloomfield, AJL Vice President/President Elect, Seal Beach, CA



Available 2.4.20

"Well-crafted, accessible, and essential." – *Kirkus*,
starred review

ISRAEL

Busheri, Devora. *In the Jerusalem Forest.* Illus. by Noa Kelner. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2019. 32 pp. \$17.99 (9781541534728) HC; \$7.99 (9781541534735) Pbk; \$7.99 eBook. Gr. 3-6. Reviewed from ARC.

Inspired by “The Pond,” a Hayim Nahman Bialik poem, this lovely picture book tells of a mother and daughter’s walk in a forest near Jerusalem. As they walk past a small pond, the girl observes their reflections in the pond, looking the same, but upside down. As the wind picks up, the girl becomes wary, wondering where the “upside-down forest” went and asking her mother for a hug. When the sun returns, the world is wonderful again. Illustrated with what appears to be oil pastels and watercolors, the full page and double page depictions of the water’s edge, the trees and flowers, and fish and birds convey a sense of calm that is dispelled as the wind goes whoosh and the upside-down reflections are lost. There is much to discuss in this deceptively simple story: how can you tell that the girl and her mother have become worried? Look carefully at the pictures of the water and sky. Can you tell where each begins and ends? Examine the way the mother’s dress looks like it blends in with the trees, flowers, and grass near the water. Do the mother and daughter “look the same, like two drops of rain?”

The book concludes with an author’s note about Hayim Nahman Bialik, and an explanation of the meaning of the poem upon which the book is based. The statement that the poem “is a beautiful exploration of the relationship between Torah and reality” leaves one wondering if the author read an entirely different poem!

Debbie Colodny, Cook Memorial Public Library District, Libertyville, IL; Former owner Sefer, So Good, former member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

Meyerstein, Israela. *Miracle Nation: Seventy Stories about the Spirit of Israel: A Tribute to Rebirth in the Land of our Ancestors.* Jacksonville, FL: Mazo, 2018. 272 pp. \$29.95 (9781946124487) HC; \$18.95 (9781946124463) Pbk; \$8.95 eBook. Gr. 6-9.

Israela Meyerstein is a well-known therapist whose love of Judaism is embedded in her name. As Israel approached its 70th anniversary (in 2018), Meyerstein noted that young people were less supportive of Israel than their elders. Her book gives dozens of reasons to love and appreciate the place and its people. Each “chapter” begins with a short statement, followed by a series of essays that highlights a range of Israeli culture and people. They include memories of the Shoah and international immigration; environmental studies; various aspects of justice; inclusion; building cooperation; and technological innovation. Many of them highlight non-profits which have led their fields. Some are famous, others less well-known. The intent, in each profile and in the collection as a whole, is to connect the reader to the amazing work that Israel and Israelis are doing every day. The book is sprinkled with photos (and a few drawings) depicting some of the people and ideas presented.

It is not an elegant book, but its accessibility makes it charming. Its spirit and passion are palpable, and the warmth of the stories should make people think differently. It can be read by middle-schoolers, but all ages – including adults -- will learn from it.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

LIFECYCLE AND JEWISH VALUES

Chomer, Malka Nussbaum. *Feeling Better A to Z: A Book About Bikur Cholim.* Illus. by Bill Bolton. Brooklyn: Hachai Publishing, 2019. 32 pp. \$13.95 (9781945560170). Preschool-Gr. 1.

An alphabetical rundown of ways young readers and listeners can fulfill the mitzvah of visiting the sick (or, in some of the cases shown, injured or otherwise infirm). Though some of the suggestions have a specifically Jewish bent (“T: You can say *Tehillim* and ask Hashem to make her well”), many would be

relevant to any audience (“M: Put on some music and sing along!”; “U: Do understand if your friend is tired and needs to rest”). Workmanlike illustrations, a mix of spot art, full pages, and double-page spreads, show presumably Orthodox children visiting a small, somewhat diverse cast of family and friends: a boy with his arm in a sling and a girl using crutches, an elderly woman in a wheelchair, and a mother who has just given birth. A final spread shows a visit to the zoo, where the boy and girl are active while still using the crutches and sling, as is the mother with the baby strapped to her. Though nothing particularly original, *Feeling Better A to Z* offers specific, practical ways to carry out a Jewish value. Back matter includes a note to parents and teachers and a glossary.

Shoshana Flax, The Horn Book, Inc., Boston, MA

Uhlberg, Myron. *The Bar Mitzvah Boys*. Illus. by Carolyn Arcabascio. Chicago: Albert Whitman & Co, 2019. 32 pp. \$16.99 (9780807505700). Gr. 2-3. Reviewed from proof.

Grandfather and grandson are preparing for their Bar Mitzvahs. When the grandfather was 13, he was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp. Now at 83, usually the age of your second Bar Mitzvah, his own son suggests he have his first one with his grandson, age 13, in his modern synagogue. Both the young boy and the old man are eager for a joint ceremony. They support each other in the study process. The extended family joyously shares the big day. A four-generation link underlines the life cycle’s tie of past to present and its importance to the future. The tone of the story is sad despite the joyous ending. Actions and emotions of the cruel past are often interjected into the actions of the positive present. The overarching message is love. To project this emotion, the prose is poetic, the art is muted, and the main characters were born on the same day. Every ceremony and Jewish word is explained indicating the book’s intent to appeal to a wide audience. The book says: “ready to be Bar Mitzvahed” rather than “ready to become a Bar Mitzvah.” When the grandfather talks of his Holocaust past, nice art depicts the grandfather as he talks now, rather than the ugly action described in the text. The connection between a grandfather and his grandson is clear and heartwarming. A nice library addition which does not surpass the similarly themed, 1994 Sydney Taylor picture book winner *The Always Prayer Shawl* by Sheldon Oberman (Boyd’s Mills Press).

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

PICTURE BOOKS

Gefen, Shira. *The Heart-Shaped Leaf*. Illus. by David Polonsky. South Yorkshire, UK: Green Bean Books, 2010. English edition, 2018. 32pp. \$21.95 (9781784382629) HC; \$11.38 (9781784384180) Pbk; \$21.95 eBook. Kindergarten - Gr. 4.

A little girl named Alona walks home from school on a windy day. When she finds an apple in her pocket, she sits under a tree to eat it. With each bite, a leaf falls from the tree. When she becomes aware of this, Alona promises to take just one more bite. As she does, a single leaf, shaped like a heart, falls from high up and lands very softly on her head. The wind grows stronger and it begins to rain, but Alona stays clean and dry, magically protected by the leaf. When she arrives home, her father is surprised that she is not wet, but soon discovers the leaf on top of her head. He hands her the leaf and a bowl of hot soup. Alona waits for the soup to cool down, but even after several hours, it is still boiling hot. Carrying the bowl to the sink, she sees the tree reflected in the soup. The tree tells her that if she wants to eat, she must return the leaf. Not the “heart-shaped leaf,” the “leaf-shaped heart,” which the tree needs to thrive and grow. After a bit of negotiation and with reassurance from the tree that “A heart can always find its way home,” Alona blows the leaf back to the tree. She then sits down and enjoys her soup.

This delightful story, is translated from Hebrew and won The Hadassah Prize for Children's Literature in 2003 and The Israel Museum Prize for Illustration in 2004. Polonsky's (*Waltz with Bashir*) stunningly detailed illustrations are masterfully drawn and painted. Alona is as cute as a button, and her range of expressions are vividly portrayed. The book's colors well represent the autumn season during which this is taking place. While the story may need some interpretation for younger audiences (i.e. the translation has made the book a bit wordy), it is a beautifully written and charming fable with a message of respect for the earth and gratitude for all it gives us. It will serve as an appealing Thanksgiving story as well as a nice Tu B'Shvat read-aloud.

Kathy Bloomfield, AJL Vice President/President Elect, Seal Beach, CA

Keret, Etgar. *Long-Haired Cat-Boy Cub*. Illus. by Aviel Basil. Translated by Sondra Silverston. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2019. 51pp. \$16.95 (9781609809317) HC; \$9.99 eBook. Kindergarten - Gr. 3.

In this delightful, laugh-out-loud story, translated from Hebrew, we are introduced to the habits of the rare long-haired cat-boy cub which anyone who has ever been around imaginative children will soon recognize may not be all that rare. A young boy and his "very busy" father visit the zoo to spend quality time together. While there, the father receives a very important phone call involving a "once-in-a-lifetime" business deal. Leaving his son to his own devices - with money for food and a taxi ride home, in addition to an excuse to give to the boy's mother - dad rushes back to his office. Bored, following a two hot dog lunch and getting his face painted like a cat, the child finds an empty cage, writes "LONG-HAIRED CAT-BOY CUB" on the blank sign outside and settles down for a much-needed nap. The youngster wakes up and discovers himself on a giant airship captained by Habakkuk, who eyes him with great interest. Habakkuk kidnaps animals from zoos and sets them free in their natural habitat. He keeps a notebook about each animal he collects. Unfortunately, the notebook for "long-haired cat-boy cub" is empty. The young boy agrees to help with this deficit and soon provides the captain with he needs to know about "*Felis Catulus Humanus* (i.e. long-haired cat-boy)." Some examples: "...they only eat candy...you're not allowed to wash them with water...if you don't play one game an hour with them, they might die...they can only drink chocolate milk and juice, because water can make them throw up and maybe even go blind..." After Habakkuk returns the boy to his natural habitat, he wakes up to the sound of his parents arguing about whether he is a little boy or a big one. He tells them he is neither. He is a long-haired cat-boy. He then hands them Habakkuk's notebook which his dad refers to often to make sure he is raising the child right.

With charming, colorful, and highly expressive cartoon-like illustrations that completely support the writing of this master Israeli storyteller, the traits, needs, and habitat of the long-haired cat-boy cub are presented in fine detail. Parents and children may recognize themselves as they read this story together.

Kathy Bloomfield, AJL Vice President/President Elect, Seal Beach, CA

Trigere, Jane. *What's a Grandparent?* Illus. by Lu Vincent. South Deerfield, MA: Schoen Books; Manchester Center, VT: Shires Press, 2018. 128 pp. \$9.99 (9781605714431). Preschool - Gr. 1.

Walking home one day from kindergarten, Emmet and his mom talk about his day. He tells his mom that his teacher asked if the students have grandparents and Emmet said he didn't have any. Mom is aghast at this response and says "Why did you say that? Emmet, you have six grandparents!" and the reader discovers that young Emmet has never heard the term "grandparent" even though he has an Omi, Poa, Nonny, Poppa, Savta, and Saba. Apparently, none of the other kindergarteners in his class have heard the term either, so the teacher explains what a "grandparent" is the next day. All of the students talk about their grandparents and the different names that they call them, be it from another language or from a made-up word. The class then invites all the grandparents for a special celebration. The story is followed by a list of different languages and the words that are used, for grandmother and grandfather.

While this story's heart is in the right place, it misses the mark. It's very difficult to believe a kindergartener has no idea what the word "grandparent" means. The reader is left wondering why Emmet has six grandparents. The writing could have used some polishing and the illustrations are unappealing. Instead of picking up this book, perhaps seek out *A Grandma Like Yours/ A Grandpa Like Yours* by Andria Warmflash Rosenbaum (Kar-Ben, 2006) to talk about different things families can call grandparents.

Rebecca Levitan. Librarian II, Baltimore County Public Library, Pikesville Branch

SHABBAT AND HOLIDAYS

Berneger, Marcia. *A Dreidel in Time: A New Spin on an Old Tale*. Illus. by Beatriz Castro. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2019. 88 pp. \$17.99 (9781541546721) HC; \$8.99 (9781541552654) Pbk; \$8.99 eBook. Gr. 3-6. Reviewed from ARC.

Devorah and Benjamin can't wait for Bubbe and Zayde to arrive so they can open their Hanukkah presents. How disappointed they are to see their gift of an ugly, old dreidel, until the dreidel magically spins them back to Modi'in to join the Maccabees! The Maccabees think Devorah and Benjamin are spies until the siblings meet Simon and Shoshanah, who listen to Devorah and Benjamin's ideas. They use what they know from learning the Hanukkah story in Hebrew School to help the Maccabees win their battle against Antiochus. They teach the Maccabees how to use slingshots, plan their escape from Antiochus' army, and help them clean up and restore the temple. When Devorah finds a small jar of oil for the menorah, she also locates the missing magic dreidel that spins them back to their present-day celebration at home.

Cleverly relying on a magic dreidel to get the children into and out of the Hanukkah story, the author weaves an exciting, engaging tale that incorporates facts about the holiday along the way. Twelve-year-old Devorah and eight-year-old Benjamin are spunky, fun-loving, modern children who suddenly find themselves back in Biblical history, speaking Hebrew when they know no Hebrew, wearing dusty old tunics and baggy pants, living in a tent, dodging elephants and a large army of men with shields and spears. The book is divided into 18 short chapters, each with a small, black-and-white illustration at the heading, as well as 10 full-page black-and-white cartoon-like illustrations, showing oddly similar characters, all with light skin and large round eyes, whether Biblical or modern. There are very few easy chapter books with Jewish content. This is one that will appeal to any reader, Jewish or not, despite a reference to the Maccabees before their role is fully explained.

Debbie Colodny, Cook Memorial Public Library District, Libertyville, IL; Former owner Sefer, So Good, former member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

Frankel, Valerie Estelle. *Chelm for the Holidays*. Illus. by Sonja Wimmer. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2019. 72 pp. \$15.99 (9781541554610) HC; \$8.99 (9781541554627) Pbk; \$8.99 eBook. Kindergarten - Gr. 3. Reviewed from ARC.

Jewish folklore tells us that when the angels were spreading silliness throughout the world, their bowl accidentally tipped over and all the silliness was spilled into one town – Chelm, known as the Village of Fools. Ten stories about the Jewish holidays and Shabbat center on life in Chelm, a mythical place where screwy things happen. The town's elders, who are even more foolish than the citizens they lead, give advice and try to solve problems while often making matters even worse. We meet Schlemiel who is looking for honey to celebrate Rosh Hashanah and tries to outsmart the bees; the Elders who hide all their food so as not to be tempted to eat on Yom Kippur; and the townspeople who have a competition to see who can invite the most important guest in town to their Sukkah. We follow the Chelmites while they search for a creative solution to finding oil for Hanukkah, try to plant a variety of seeds for Tu B'Shvat, search for the perfect Purim costumes, explore the issue of holes in Passover matzah, organize the perfect Lag B'Omer celebration, try to make the perfect blintzes for Shavuot, and solve the mystery of the challah that goes missing each Shabbat. The characters and their silly names – Fishel the Foolish, Uri the Unwise, Gimpel the Great Fool and others – will delight readers.

Each story is short and independent, only five to seven pages, quick and easy to read, and holds the children's attention. They will work great as read-alouds, but the reader will notice the flaws. The text size and vocabulary seem wrong for the intended age group (Most glaring: "Say, do you think one sneeze per ten people per day is an exaggerated figure?"), and there are no attributions for the adapted stories (the "disappearing Challah" story is a traditional Sephardic folktale).

Rachel Glasser, retired librarian, Yaoneh Academy, Teaneck, NJ

Goldfinger, Evelyn. *Shabbat Treasure*. Illus. by Marcelo Groenman. Torahtron (print on demand), 2019. 24 pp. \$12.73 (9781733516501). Kindergarten - Gr. 3.

Eve is all ready to greet the Shabbat Queen, and she wants everything to be perfect. But her little brother Leo wants to play Pirate. He challenges her to make the preparation fun, and makes her solve three challenges, with a prize (candles, challah, and kiddush cup) for completing each one. As they are finishing, Leo spills the kiddush grape juice, which stains Eve's dress. Their reconciliation finishes the process, just in time for Shabbat. The tale ends with a reminder that "Even the Shabbat Queen needs a Shabbat Pirate to remind her that welcoming Shabbat is a fun treasure."

Reminiscent of Dina Rosenfeld's *Peanut Butter and Jelly for Shabbos* (Hachai, 1991), these siblings are without adult supervision (we only see the parents on the final page, cleaning up after the meal), and the activities are supposed to be joyful. But the story feels forced at times, and the idea of challenges seems divorced from the inherent joy we connect to the Sabbath.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Hoffer, Rinat. *Shani's Shoebox*. Illus. by Rinat Hoffer. Yorkshire, UK: Green Bean Books, 2018. 36 pp. \$16.15 (9781784382483). Preschool - Gr. 2.

Shani's Aba gives her a new pair of shoes "shiny and red" for Rosh Hashanah and thus begins the life of a shoebox. "An ordinary box that had come from the shop, with a pale grey lid and a stripe on top." Told in rhyme, the reader sees Shani prepare and celebrate the holidays and at each one, the seemingly magically indestructible shoebox is there. Shani's activities will give readers different ideas of ways to recycle or craft at the holidays, such as a baby doll bed for her Afikomen present, or planting flowers for Tu B'Shvat, or even using it as a ballot box to vote for the summer vacation destination.

Bold, cartoonish illustrations serve the text well for this excellent read-aloud choice for homes and classrooms who want to talk about the holidays, the seasons, or recycling.

Rebecca Levitan. Librarian II, Baltimore County Public Library, Pikesville Branch

Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND REBECCA JEFFERSON

Bauman, Mark K. *A New Vision of Southern Jewish History*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019. 587 pp. \$59.95 (97808173202188).

Mark Bauman is a pre-eminent scholar of Southern Jewish history. In this volume he has collected eighteen of his articles, most of them previously published, from the past forty years. Rather than use a chronological approach, the volume is topically organized. Part 1, "Community and Institution Building," examines several notable local figures. Part 3, "Rabbinical Leadership," discusses issues in which rabbis from the region took a leading role in local affairs. Part 4, "International Leadership," points to situations where Southern figures have played a key part on a national and international level. Most of the fourteen articles here are specifically focused on Atlanta, Bauman's primary field of interest. But there are essays on the early years of Baltimore's Har Sinai Verein (a very early Reform congregation) and New Orleans as well. Part 5, "Historiography and Synthesis," completes the book. It contains four overview essays, including a historiography of writing on the South over the past century. The volume as a whole reinforces the author's claim that Southern Jewish

history has been frequently overlooked; and when it has been explored, it has frequently been noted for its exceptionality, rather than its connections to trends elsewhere in the country. The writing is quite scholarly, but all the subjects covered are a worthy read. The book includes extensive notes (180 pages), a list of additional readings, a bibliography of Bauman's own publications, and an index. This is a work worth owning; it should be considered by all academic collections of American Jewish history.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Cardozo, Nathan Lopes. *Cardozo on the Parashah: Essays on the Weekly Torah Portion: The Book of Genesis*. Israel: Kasva Press, LLC, 2019. 272 pp. \$25.00 (9781948403108).

Challenging the conventions of contemporaneous, though "traditional" Torah commentaries, Cardozo promotes an innovative method in his new interpretations of the Torah. Describing the Torah as a divine but "flawed" document, he argues that in order to overcome these flaws one must constantly expand and elaborate on the written text so that it can best be applied to existing circumstances in our modern world.

Cardozo raises two major objections to traditional contemporary Jewish interpretation: 1) that it no longer reflects God's personality and intentions, and 2) that it no longer recognizes the need for innovation in the face of a changing society. A major obstacle, according to Cardozo, is that, to these commentators, God is such an overwhelming, incomprehensible entity that they regard Him as unapproachable. The only way to draw close to Him is to study the massive corpus of traditional Jewish law in order to derive rules to live by. Rarely venturing beyond these texts, the resulting product is restricted largely to compilations and anthologies, with few new insights into the text. Even the most esteemed *Talmud-Haham* (Torah scholar), if he has never moved beyond these boundaries or sought out new applications, is faced with a stagnant rigidity that lacks "relevance" in the modern world.

Cardozo abhors this rigidity, arguing that it is neither good for the Jewish people, nor consistent with the methods of the rabbis of the past. Cardozo asserts that although God's fundamental nature cannot be articulated, God is approachable. He views the Torah as a divine but intentionally "flawed" document which encompasses the high ideals of the divine and the more primitive needs of human beings. In response, the rabbis of past generations recognized the changing landscapes in which Jews lived, and developed new interpretations of the Torah, making it more amenable to changing circumstances. Such intervention was not deceptive, but rather it was the path by which the divine purpose of Torah might be achieved. Their ways were not perverse, but were according to God's own intentions. With this in mind, Cardozo joins the rabbis of the past, to begin developing new insights and interpretations to deal with our ever-changing world.

Reviewed by Randall C. and Anne-Marie Belinfante

Chertoff, Daniel S. *Palestine Posts: An Eye-Witness Account of the Birth of Israel: Based on Letters of Mordechai Chertoff*. New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2019. 529 pp. \$19.95 (9781592645121).

This is a unique collection of historical materials supplementing the materials covering the path of the British mandate over Palestine during the period of early 1947 through the appearance of the State of Israel in 1948 through to the spring of 1949. There is as much information and documentation in the footnotes as there is in the general narrative. The author is the son of Mordecai Chertoff, who left his family with a raft of letters from the time he came to Palestine in 1947 where as a young man he served as a journalist with the *Palestine Post*, a soldier with the *Haganah*, and a resident in Jerusalem during Israel's critical period. Those familiar with the history of Israel during this tumultuous time will find much of the material complementing what has already been recorded. But there are numerous gaps that the letters fill with not only information but also insight. The historical record of the inter-communal violence between the Yishuv and the Palestinian Arab population is generously covered as well as the activities of the UN and the partition vote, the bombing of the Palestine Post, the dangerous attempt to keep open a lifeline between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem is amply communicated. This is a valuable addition to any historical collection covering the early history of Israel.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Fine, Gary M. *Carioca-Bev: The Wartime Record of Major Ralph I. Fine. The Making of a B-24 Liberator Pilot in the Eighth Air Force in Europe During World War II. A Portrait of Courage.* Self-published. 259 pp. \$16.00 (9781792198258).

The author has compiled extensive primary source materials that chronicle his father's military service as a pilot in World War II. Using a videotaped interview, he transcribed the contents and added information from his grandfather's autobiography as well as evidence gathered from other family members. The result is a detailed account of his family settling in Minnesota, his military training and service, starting a business, and serving in the Air Force Reserve. Overall, this is the story of a Jewish family establishing itself in the United States, but the primary audience is the members of that family. The transcribed interviews do not make exciting reading. A section of family pictures accompanies the text. This is not a necessary purchase for libraries.

Barbara Bibel, Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA

Fine, Jonathan David. *A State is Born: The Establishment of the Israeli System of Government, 1947-1951.* Translated by Tamar L. Cohen; edited by Fray Hochstein. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2018. 416 pp. \$90.00 (9781438467979).

This historic study covers the development of the early Israeli state and its transition from mandatory rule to complete sovereignty. The work was first published in 2009, and it has been re-issued in English translation in Jonathan Fine's memory. Fine had drawn on newly discovered archival materials to describe the unique challenges and dynamics Israel faced which differed highly from those of other post-colonial nations. In the wake of the Partition Plan, Zionist leaders had anticipated a smooth transfer of infrastructure left by the British. Events in rapid succession – War of Independence, acquisition of additional territory, and absorption of huge influx of refugees from Arab lands – ordained otherwise, and they scrambled, more reactively than proactively, to create administrative functions. Straightforward rather than overcritical, the author acknowledges their feats which impressively surpassed all the infighting, lack of clarity or professionalism, or clashing personalities and ideologies. Examined are the major parties (e.g. Mapam, Mapai), as well as the ministries of labor and the interior, which evolved with the needs of the new citizens, particularly veterans and farmers. Religious laws and communities, though mentioned, appear here like an afterthought. Ultimately the system that coalesced under overwhelming pressures resulted in a sort of hybrid British-Yishuv – combining idealism and pragmatism. Nevertheless, in spite of its flaws – i.e., bloated bureaucracy and often inefficient economic policies – the government managed to move from survivalist to functionalist. Anyone who needs proof that Israel relies on miracles need look no further than this book. Detailed with a biographical appendix of the key figures, this book is essential for any library with Zionist or Middle East collections, as well as political science studies.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

Fruchter, Yaffa. *Waste Not, Want Not: Kosher Cookbook.* Jerusalem: Ktav Publishing, 2019. 149 pp. \$29.95 (9781602803367).

Waste Not, Want Not: Kosher Cookbook is a wonderful, ingenious cookbook whose cover states, "Creative Ways to Serve Yesterday's Meal." The book consists of imaginative suggestions on how to use leftovers. All the recipes are easy to make. There are multiple recipes for each leftover food; for example, Fruchter lists 31 dishes that use leftover chicken. The added ingredients are staples and spices easily found in most kitchens. Beautiful photographs of the foods accompany nearly all the recipes. The table of contents divides the book into categories such as fruits and vegetables, challah, breads and cakes, cholent, rice and pasta, and chicken and turkey. Fruchter begins the book with important tips on food safety and ends the section with the sage message, "If in doubt, throw it out." The cookbook uses only kosher ingredients and includes many favorites such as chopped liver, kugel, and bourekas. A section

on “Managing Your Pantry,” and general tips are added features. An index of recipes and general index are included at the end of the book. *Waste Not, Want Not: Kosher Cookbook* is practical, informative and useful and therefore highly recommended for all libraries.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, Ohio

Golan, Yvonne Kozlovsky. *Site of Amnesia: The Lost Historical Consciousness of Mizrahi Jewry.* Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2019. 242 pp. \$198.00 (9789004395619). Also available as an eBook.

This book uncovers from the under-represented historical record persecutions faced by North African Jewish and Middle Eastern Jewish communities (Mizrahi Jews) during World War II. It also asks why the Holocaust of North African Jewry (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria), as well as that suffered by the communities in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, is often absent from Israeli and world consciousness and in so doing, it attempts to crack the code of silence surrounding this little-known history.

In addition to using academic resources, Golan captures this history from the margins by utilizing audio-visual and artistic media in addition to evidence recorded on community heritage websites, Facebook, and other online social networks. Golan’s book demonstrates that there is a moral imperative to preserve and transmit these memories of persecution and discrimination, which include recollections of property seizure, rape, forced labor, and the relocation of entire communities to transit, labor, concentration, and murder camps in North Africa and Europe.

The author concludes that future research must document these often-ignored communities “lest they vanish into the abyss of history and become a site of amnesia.” Despite logistical and archival difficulties and the politicization of memory, this book allows some of the silences to break and long-ignored voices to speak and cry out. Recommended for all academic libraries.

David B Levy, Touro College, NYC

Kaplan, Yosef (ed.). *Religious Changes and Cultural Transformations in the Early Modern Western Sephardic Communities.* Boston: Brill, 2019. 616 pp. \$192.00 (9789004367531). Also available as an eBook.

Kaplan’s book examines the religious and cultural changes that occurred in early modern Western Sephardic communities as a result of the resettlement of New Christians in parts of Italy, Holland, and Germany in the sixteenth century and later in London and parts of France. As they resettled, these victims of forced conversions established their own communities and, after finding themselves living in more tolerant atmospheres, they sometimes returned to Judaism en masse. However, this return to Judaism came after a period of alienation and separation from the religion of their Jewish ancestors and thus marked them out culturally and economically, as well as within the religious sphere.

The first section of the book, entitled “Markers of Converso Identities,” comprises essays which treat the unique identity of the conversos from various perspectives. The second section of the book deals with “Discipline, Conflict, and Dispute Settlement” among the Western Sephardic communities, noting the ways and means by which Jewish customs were preserved, social discipline maintained, and disputes settled. The articles in the third section address topics connected with “Economy and Community among Italian Sephardim,” i.e., those Jews who fled Spain for the Papal States. The fourth section, “The Boundaries of Rabbinical Authority” includes essays on questions of discipline and the broadening of rabbinic culture in response to the evolving social climate, particularly with enlightenment and secularization looming on the horizon. Essays in the fifth section focus on the “Varieties of Cultural Creativity” among the members of these communities, who were conspicuously polyglot, and on their large literary output in multiple languages. The final section, “Crossing the Atlantic—Sephardic Communities in the New World,” deals with the socio-economic aspects of converso life in the Americas. With regards to Jewish libraries, the book notes the collections of Joseph Attias (1672-1739) who lived in Livorno and owned 1247 volumes, Rabbi David Nunes Torres (1660-1728), born in Amsterdam, who owned a collection of 2,148 volumes, as well as other bibliophiles. Highly recommended for all academic and Jewish libraries.

David B Levy, Touro College, NYC

Katz, Yaacov. *Shadow Strike: Inside Israel's Secret Mission to Eliminate Syrian Nuclear Power*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2019. 304 pp. \$28.99 (9781250191274).

In mid-2006, Israeli military intelligence discovered what it found to be a Syrian facility devoted to the development of a nuclear reactor in the country's eastern desert region along the Euphrates River, specifically the area of Deir ez-Zor. It was later determined that the facility was supported by North Korean nuclear engineer experts. After an excruciating and detailed analysis of what was initially reported, it was confirmed. It was then almost immediately recognized as an existential threat to Israel's national security and existence. Because the nature of the intelligence bore such importance to the region's security, the intelligence material was shared at the highest levels of the American government and its intelligence assets. In a spectacularly gripping, page-turning manner, Katz, an Editor-in-Chief of *The Jerusalem Post*, with incredible access to the most important and relative decision-makers in both the Israeli and American governments, details the planning and ultimate Israeli military mission to destroy the Syrian facility in September 2007. This covert action of the highest level and held in the tightest secrecy makes this exclusive disclosure so much more exciting to read. The reader becomes enmeshed in the detailed discussions with military and political actors in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Washington and the extraordinary and meticulously collected documented discussions between the leaders of both countries in what was to be a daring and courageous military mission. The reader is truly treated to a fascinating tale that will not allow the book to be set down until completely finished.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Kaufman, Matthew. *Horace Kallen Confronts America: Jewish Identity, Science, and Secularism*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2019. 266 pp. \$70.00 (9780815636236). Also available as an eBook.

Horace Kallen was one of the major American Jewish figures during the first half of the twentieth century. Since his death in 1974, however, he has been almost forgotten. This short intellectual biography attempts to restore his name and reputation.

Born in Silesia in 1882, Kallen came to America as a child. He rejected his father, an Orthodox Rabbi, and lived as a secular Jew. While studying at Harvard, Horace was one of the founders of the Menorah Society and an early Zionist. He spent most of his life on the faculty at the New School in New York. The book examines Kallen's extensive writings in both books and magazine articles, and explores his influence in such areas as ethnicity and Darwinism. He believed that Jews were mis-characterized as a "Race," and argued that "Hebraism" included social and cultural aspects in addition to religious belief (akin to but different from the argument of Mordecai Kaplan). One chapter examines his fascination with the book of Job, and his attempt to secularize the Biblical story.

Unfortunately, Kaufman does not write about Kallen's personal life at all. This includes his controversial 1915 invitation to Hebrew Union College. The prose is dense and many of the terms are archaic (for example, the concept of "Race" is prominently discussed in its 1920s context, rather than as we use it today). Even so, the volume is a valuable study of a neglected thinker and writer. It should be in major academic Jewish studies collections and may be considered by other large Judaica libraries.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Labendz, Jacob Ari and Shmuly Yanklowitz (eds). *Jewish Veganism and Vegetarianism: Studies and New Directions*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, [2019]. 374 pp. \$90.00 (9781438473611).

This book contains fifteen chapters, comprising a "collection of essays by scholars, rabbis, activists, and community leaders [which] explores the history, contours, and scope of veganism and vegetarianism among Jews." Anti-Kashrut laws in Germany and Poland before World War II, the vegetarianism of Melech Ravitch (1893-1976), Jewish punk musicians, Judaism and ecology, the concept of covenant in Judaism, the Musar movement, Rabbi A. I. Kook (1865-1935), speciesism ("the belief that humans are superior to other animals"), animal welfare and rights,

the Holocaust, secular Judaism, all these topics are studied in their relationship to veganism and vegetarianism. There is good evidence that Jews can be attracted to these diets, but the evidence of Judaism promoting these associated lifestyles is more tenuous. A good index with reference to crucial sources and authors complete the volume. Recommended to any interested individuals and to large academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD

Lieberman, Allan. *We Want Mashgiach Now! Tales From A Kosher Cop*. Self-published, 2018. 131 pp. \$13.00 (9781728966700).

Did you ever wonder what a *mashgiach* does? In this amusing memoir Allan Lieberman provides an inside look of the life of a *mashgiach* (kashrut supervisor). Lieberman works as a *mashgiach* on contract for a Florida kashrut organization. Through broad humor he recounts stories of working in a variety of kosher restaurants, kitchens, catering halls, and synagogues.

Lieberman sees his role as going by the book of rules of his kashrut agency. This results in run-ins with cooks, restaurant owners, caterers, rabbis, and partygoers who either don't see the need for kashrut supervision or have other ideas of what items are kosher. He recalls disputes over how to check fruit and vegetables for bugs and which kashrut symbols are acceptable. As many of the food service workers are immigrants, he runs into language issues. In one example his request to a server to wash the sink is heard as "watch" the sink. When he is not checking for bugs, he is trying to look busy when he really has nothing to do. He also looks for creative ways to sample the food.

Through his stories Lieberman provides a general overview of the rules of producing kosher food. He explains why food needs supervision, why lettuce needs to be checked for bugs, differences of opinions on how to check fruit like strawberries, and why kosher wine served at affairs is *mevushal* (boiled). He provides a glossary of terms used.

This slim memoir is self-published and could have used more editing. Not everyone will appreciate his sense of humor. The book could be suitable for the general reader in a Jewish center or synagogue collection.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA

Lightman, Sarah. *The Book of Sarah*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019. 237 pp. \$29.95 (9780271084732).

In this graphic autobiography, Lightman leads us from her childhood to adulthood, an eventual parent herself. As a child, she had an undiagnosed mental illness. She thought being sad was just the way that people felt. Lightman uses the Biblical books to set apart the stages of her life. In Genesis, we see her growing up in London with her siblings and near her extended Jewish

family. She discovers her love of drawing and journaling. In Exodus, she goes to university, explores Orthodoxy, and begins to discover her voice as a painter. It continues through Bamidbar, Numbers, Leviticus. In Revelations, she discovers Reform Judaism and Jewish feminism. Throughout the narrative, she shows her difficulty in finding a healthy mental state and her struggles to figure herself out before she can find a healthy relationship with a partner.

The images show the easy or complicated relationship she has with the subject. The pictures of places, especially the homes in which she lived, are sharp, clear, detailed drawings. The pictures of people are loose sketches, sometimes appearing only as outlines or with missing parts. Lightman states her interest in Charlotte Salomon's *To Paint Her Life* and Salomon's influence is clearly seen on the colored paintings.

In the end, she reassures her younger self, "There, young Sarah, hang on, see what you'll become." Highly recommended.

Sheryl Stahl, Director, Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles

Mack, Merav and Benjamin Balint. *Jerusalem: City of the Book*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019. 263 pp. \$30.00 (9780300222852).

Jerusalem: City of the Book is not a survey of the libraries in Jerusalem, but rather a book covering a broad range of topics: libraries, Jerusalem history, bible study, linguistics, archaeology, and comparative religions. In viewing Jerusalem through its libraries, the authors seek to answer this question: "How can viewing Jerusalem through its libraries, past and present, shed light on the gap between the abiding real and the fanciful imagined, or on the way the gap has been bridged?" In Jerusalem, libraries have served as the preservers of the sacred scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And as such, their holdings of sacred scriptures and manuscripts have been the target of thievery, greed, and falsification. The break-up of libraries and the selling of books can even bring the governments into the picture. When valuable books that were left to the heirs of Salman Schocken were to be sold, a compromise was reached with the Israeli government. The National Library of Israel would have the right to purchase books before they went to public auction. In the 19th century, many languages were spoken in Jerusalem, and *dragomans* (interpreters) who possessed knowledge of numerous languages (Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, French, Yiddish, and Ladino) could translate text, serve as interpreters, and even be found as tour guides. The authors see the keepers of Jerusalem's libraries as "dragomans who shuttled between languages and interpreted one culture for another." The book contains current research on topics with extensive footnotes. Recommended for academic and special libraries. A good gift for arm-chair traveler and ardent bibliophile who appreciates books and libraries.

Ellen Share, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington D.C.

Mnookin, Robert. *The Jewish American Paradox: Embracing Choice in a Changing World*. New York: Public Affairs Books, 2018. 294 pp. \$28.00 (9781610397513).

American Jews have been well integrated into a mostly secular albeit largely Christian state, but because of their general acceptance, are facing what the author finds as four significant challenges to ethnic and religious identity: an increasing impulse toward intermarriage; a lessening of religious observance; a lack of concern over the ever-present threat of antisemitism; and a division over the extent of support for Israel and its policies. The author, a professor at Harvard Law School, takes on these challenges as a core source for his work here and does a magnificently open and candid job in doing so. He opens for discussion major topics such as the basis for Jewish identity, the principle of an ethnicity closely tied to the birth mother, and the question of whether there is an ethnic blood connection. The issue of the parameters of "Jewishhood" as a people is raised, and the perennial question of "Who is a Jew" as considered in Israel follows soon thereafter. Ultimately, like the four great *pesadicha* questions, the author seeks to address what he considers the four challenges with which American Jews must contend. At first, he seeks to address the issue of how American Jews adjust and adapt to contemporary American social values in an attempt to gain acceptance. Then the question of dual loyalty arises when Israeli and American national security interests collide. Social relations which drive so much of community interaction is another topic examined here and one which clearly relates to the nature of intermarriage. Finally considered is the issue of how to rear a child in a Jewish home. Without doubt, this is a book for the American rabbinate, Jewish social groups of all types, and interested sociologists.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Nakagaki, T. K. *The Buddhist Swastika and Hitler's Cross: Rescuing a Symbol of Peace from the Forces of Hate*. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2019. 199 pp. \$18.95 (9781611720457).

In this book, Buddhist priest and scholar Rev. Dr. T. K. Nakagaki delineates the history of the Swastika as both a positive symbol of peace and through the Nazi usage that has come to represent evil and darkness. As Nakagaki demonstrates, the swastika as understood in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, and specifically as it relates to Buddhist history in Japan and elsewhere, is always used

to represent auspiciousness and good fortune. He surveys the history of its usage around the world as a historical symbol as well, in European and North America, ranging as far as parts of Africa and elsewhere. This survey is used to show that the symbol has had a positive meaning for far longer than the Nazi association with the symbol.

The Nazi usage was built on earlier Eurocentric usages that utilized the now discredited Aryan invasion theory which was used to explain the linguistic connections between European languages and Sanskrit in history. Nakagaki also separates the positive meaning of the swastika from the Nazi Hakenkruz, the term Hitler himself used to connect the Christian cross to his new meaning of the symbol of the swastika as the pursuit of Aryan victory and antisemitism. At the end of his analysis of the meaning of the symbol in the 21st century context and its valences in different communities, both positive and negative, Nakagaki suggests example statements for museums and Hindu and Buddhist temples and other cultural centers. These statements explain the usage and history of the swastika in contexts in which the symbol does not stand for hatred, in order to increase peace and understanding.

This book is recommended for all libraries, especially those that have strong Holocaust collections and collections on interfaith relations.

Eli Lieberman, Judaica librarian, HUC-JIR New York

Newhouse, Alana (ed). *The 100 Most Jewish Foods*. New York: Artisan, 2019. 303 pp. \$24.95 (9781579659066).

The 100 Most Jewish Foods is a beautiful nostalgic trip through Jewish foods of the past and the present. It includes favorites that are not “Jewish” but are Jewish favorites just the same, such as black and white cookies, Chinese food, Entenmann’s, Hydrox cookies, kosher sushi, and deli. Some delicacies are unavailable in the 21st century such as *eyerlekh* (chicken eggs before they are mature), *pipek* (gizzard), and heart. Newhouse includes modern favorites such as chicken soup, *gefilte* fish, *kichel*, and *flanken*. Recipes for Yemenite specialties such as harissa, oxtail soup, *hawaij*, and *kubaneh* (Yemenite bread) are included. A colorful photograph of each food accompanies a description of its origin with some interesting facts pertaining to the food, plus a recipe where feasible. A variety of celebrities contribute recipes and personal anecdotes pertaining to particular foods. Some of the contributors are cookbook authors such as Paola Gavin, Yotam Ottolenghi, and Joan Nathan; others are celebrities, like Dr. Ruth Westheimer and Michael Wex. The book is very entertaining as well as informative. Wayne Hoffman’s amusing entry is “used tea bag” which relates how his parents and aunt shared a tea bag and then left it on the counter to use the next day.

Indexes are included: one “about the contributors,” and the other is a general index of recipes and names. *The 100 Most Jewish Foods* is highly recommended for all libraries; it is entertaining, informative, and beautifully illustrated and photographed.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH

Pessin, Andrew. *The Jewish God Question: What Jewish Thinkers Have Said about God, the Book, the People, and the Land*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018. 262 pp. \$34.00 (9781538110980).

Philosophy professor Pessin (Connecticut College) has written a book dealing with what seventy-two Jewish thinkers have said about certain metaphysical matters. For each thinker there is a two-page essay (though a minority have two or even three such essays devoted to their thought.) The essays are about ideas and almost entirely eschew biography. They are concise and mostly clear, which is quite an accomplishment given the profundity of the subjects. For example, a number of the essays deal with the creation of the universe. Some of the thinkers argue it was *yesh min ayin* (created out of nothing), some think it emanated from the Creator, some think it was not created at all but is eternal. There is a list of primary and secondary sources so the reader can know where to explore a person’s thoughts on a given subject in greater depth. There is also a subject index. This is a fine introduction to Jewish philosophy for a general audience.

Shmuel Ben-Gad, Gelman Library, George Washington University

Schatz, Andrea (ed). *Josephus in Modern Jewish Culture*. (Studies in Jewish History and culture; 55). Boston: Brill, 2019. 360 pp. \$179.00 (9789004393080). Also available as an eBook.

This book of fourteen academic essays looks at the modern reception history of Josephus' writings against the background of the ancient and medieval reception of his oeuvre. It can be read alongside many other important contributions arising from the project at the Josephus Reception Archive (<http://josephus.orinst.ox.ac.uk/achive>). The project and this volume can encourage greater awareness of the complex origins of Josephus' controversial reputation as a Jewish priest, diplomat in Rome, military leader of the first Jewish revolt against the Romans, as an advocate for surrender to imperial forces, as a witness to the Hurban, as a citizen of Rome, and as a historian.

The reception history shows how each diaspora and epoch used the Josephus corpus differently, raising such questions as: (1) how is it possible for a Jewish historian to remain constant and faithful to his people amidst afflictions of exile and entanglements in an antagonistic host culture? (2) How did shifts towards Josephus writings occur differently in various scholarly, religious, literary, and political contexts in Amsterdam, Berlin, London, Vilna, Paris, Breslau, New York, and Tel Aviv at different moments in Jewish history? (3) How was Josephus perceived in literary fiction, sermons, magazines, newspapers, radio, and in Jewish education? (4) How did various modern Jewish political and religious movements, including *Hasklah*, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the Reform movement, Modern Orthodoxy, socialism, Zionism(s) use Josephus in the context of their own problems, concerns, risks, circumstances, challenges, and transformations?

Recommended highly for all Jewish and academic libraries.

David B Levy, Touro College, NYC

Sheer, Charles H. *Maimonides' Grand Epistle to the Scholars of Lunel: Ideology and Rhetoric*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2019. 81 pp. \$90.00 (9781618119605).

While Maimonides, like Aristotle, insists that poetry is below history, and history is below the sciences, of which *ma'aseh Merkavah* (metaphysics) is the highest of the sciences, Sheer reveals, in this first annotated translation, the highly literary aspect of Maimonides' elegantly rhymed epistle to the scholars of Lunel. The epistle served as a header to his responses to the Provencal rabbis of Lunel, France, who objected to twenty-four points in the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*. Sheer unpacks the complex allusions to Biblical and Midrashic sources in Rambam's rhymed letter, and its ideas in the context of Maimonides' oeuvre, so we not only gain a better appreciation of Rambam's genius, but the tensions in Rambam's mind between Torah study and the *hokmah* (sciences). Sheer shows how Rambam viewed Torah as the Queen and the sciences as "non-Jewish wives" who serve the Queen.

While the great Hebrew poets of Spain including HaLevi, ibn Ezra, ibn Gabirol (criticized by the Rambam for reducing the *Taryag ha-mitzvot* into the poetic form of the *Azharot* genre) wrote poetry unabashedly, this poetic epistle is quite unique, unexpected, and atypical of Rambam. Sheer asks why Rambam resorted to poetic form, when he clearly did not have a high regard for poetry. In his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides specifies that imagination, referred to as "the mirror that does not shine clearly," is inferior to law (reason), and for this very reason Moses, whose revelation was primarily in the form of law, is the chief of the prophets.

Sheer provides a careful, detailed, in-depth textual analysis of the 59-line poetic letter. Sheer's thoughtful insights reveal what is at stake for the Rambam with regards to the dialectic between Torah and science, philosophy and poetry, supernatural divine revelation [beyond the mind's limits] and reason. Recommended for all libraries.

David B Levy, Touro College, NYC

Slucki, David. *Sing This at My Funeral: A Memoir of Fathers and Sons.* Detroit: Wayne State University, 2019. 260 pp. \$27.99 (9780814344866).

In *Sing This at My Funeral*, historian and author David Slucki tells a family story – his own that spans generations and continents, from pre-war Poland to twenty-first century Australia. The book is at once slender and epic, intimate and ambitious. While described as a memoir, *Sing This at My Funeral* defies easy categorization. The close connection between Slucki’s scholarly interests and personal commitments – Slucki is Associate Professor of Contemporary Jewish Life and Culture at Monash University – results in a book that offers audiences a readable introduction to historical topics such as the Jewish Labor Bund and debates around the place of USSR-based survivors in Holocaust memorialization. In addition, *Sing This at My Funeral* is an important contribution to a growing body of work by millennial Jews that looks to the Bund for a response to contemporary social ills.

The book is set in motion by David Slucki’s discovery of a trove of Yiddish letters written by his survivor grandfather, Jakub Slucki, whom he had never met. David Slucki found the cache in Los Angeles, the city that, a year earlier, had been the site of his father’s unexpected death. “This is a book about ghosts,” writes Slucki in the Preface to *Sing This at My Funeral*: ghosts of family, the ghosts of the past. But where a straight academic monograph might settle on the term as a handy metaphor, Slucki’s lyrical writing imbues his ghosts with a presence that is rather more profound and complicated. Both in this regard and in the decision to include in the book an unusually large number of family photographs, *Sing This at My Funeral* shares more in common with genre-busting graphic memoirs like Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*, Nora Krug’s *Belonging*, and Michael Kupperman’s *All the Answers* than with traditional history writing or memoir. Highly recommended for academic, synagogue and school libraries.

David Schlitt, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA

Snir, Reuven. *Arab-Jewish Literature: The Birth and Demise of the Arab Short Story.* Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019. 408 pp. \$288.00 (9789004390676). Also available as an eBook.

Rather than paraphrase the context of this extensive and critical review of a literary reality that was suppressed for many years, this reviewer is inclined to cite the author’s own words: “...there was a kind of unspoken agreement between the two national movements – Zionism and Arab Nationalism – to perform a total cleansing of Arab-Jewish culture...The difference between them: one was inspired by European colonialism, and the other was an anti-colonial venture. The canonical Arab-Muslim and the Jewish-Zionist cultural and national systems have both excluded the hybrid Arab-Jewish identity and promoted the ‘pure’ Jewish-Zionist identity against the ‘pure’ Arab-Muslim one.”

This challenging premise leads into a “redemptive analysis” of authors and works rediscovered and re-presented by Snir’s critical reviews. The book also includes translations into English of sixteen short stories written between 1924-2006 in the Appendix.

Highly recommended for academic libraries collecting in the areas of Arab-Jewish cultural history, diaspora and exile studies, and literary identity formations.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Los Angeles

Stavans, Ilan. *The Return of Carvajal: a Mystery.* University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019. 112 pp. \$18.95 (9780271084701).

Luis Rodriguez Carvajal the Younger learned that his family were so-called “New Christians” (that is, Jews who converted to Christianity when facing the threat of expulsion from Spain) when he was fourteen, just before his family set out for the New World. He embraced his Jewish heritage and lived as a Jew as best as he understood Judaism, and increasingly shed secrecy about it. Stavans sees him as a “jazzy mystic.” He was eventually executed in the auto-da-fe. Carvajal is the author of the earliest crypto-Jewish document in the Western Hemisphere, so far as one can tell, and as such, it is of great value. While this book tells a good bit about Carvajal, himself, its focus is the disappearance of Carvajal’s memoir and

some other documents of his from the Mexican national archive and their eventual reappearance. This book will be of interest to crypto-Jewish collections and potentially also to library science collections.

Shmuel Ben-Gad, Gelman Library, George Washington University

Stokes, Ryan E. *The Satan: How God's Executioner Became God's Enemy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2019. 275 pp. \$40.00 (9780802872500).

Biblical scholar Ryan E. Stokes examines the textual history of the idea of ha-satan/satan/accusing/executing spirits in Jewish and early Christian writings, the Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as other pertinent texts of the intertestamental period. His goal is to trace how the different usages of this idea of the accusing/executing angel in God's service changed over time into what eventually became the Christian idea of Satan as the embodiment and reason for all evil in the world. The different stages of the development of this idea serve to explain Biblical episodes such as the story of Job, why King David conducted the disastrous census in the second book of Samuel, as well as other instances where the term satan and its variants were used. Stokes differentiates between the different forms of the word and explains why the author(s) of the various texts under consideration use a specific version of the word.

Stokes spends much more time discussing the Jewish precedents and usages of these terms than he does dealing with the later Christian uses and meanings, due to his emphasis on how and why these terms were readily available for use by the authors of the Gospels and other works. He also treats possible Zoroastrian influence on the Dead Sea Scrolls, given the similarities between the conceptions of the cosmic wars/conflict between Good and Evil, though his conclusion is that this is both unclear and beyond the scope of the book. Tracing the various contours of the idea of how Satan became the ultimate evil in Christianity also sheds valuable light on the differences and reasons around why this idea is not extant in Judaism.

This book is recommended for academic libraries that possess collections on Biblical studies, Jewish-Christian relations and church history.

Eli Lieberman, Judaica Librarian, HUC-JIR NY

Weiss, Avraham. *Journey to Open Orthodoxy*. New York: KTAV Publishing; Urim Publications, 2019. 613 pp. \$29.95 (9781602803183).

This volume contains eight sections: Principles of Open Orthodoxy, Inclusivity, Spirituality, Gender, Faith, Leadership, Conversion, and Mission. Mission is subdivided into three subdivisions, Spiritual Activism, Shoah, and Israel. The 73 pieces in this volume were mostly written in the last decade, and mostly constitute opinion pieces published in Jewish and general newspapers, but a few are "more scholarly in nature." Thirteen articles were written specifically for this volume, three (out of ten) in "Inclusivity," four (out of eight) in "Spirituality," and three (out of seven) in "Faith." Rabbi Avi Weiss, who has been affiliated with the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale since 1973, is a nationally recognized figure of the Modern Orthodox Judaism movement which he prefers to call "Open Orthodoxy." This book contains his views on many topics: Modern Orthodoxy; the role of women in Judaism; his relations with the Rabbinic Council of America (RCA) and the established Rabbinat of Israel around the validity of conversions to Judaism performed by Orthodox American rabbis; his activism for Soviet Jewry, Holocaust memorials, and the State of Israel. Recommended to Orthodox congregations and to large academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD

Werbach, Melvyn R. *Sons of the Lion's Cub: The Horenstein Brothers and Their Fortune*. Tarzana, CA: Third Line Press, 2019. 377 pp. \$22.00 (9781891710049).

This is an essential read for all Jewish genealogists interested in Ukrainian Jewish family histories in addition to the Horenstein family specifically. The history of the family is replete with charts of

descent lines of various members of the largely Hasidic family, members meticulously sourced from the 5th century forward, augmented generously with photographs of family members, memorabilia, and historical documents. Additionally, there is a discussion of Jewish life in the 18th century setting of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The author, a California resident and physician, is a member of the Horenstein family whose interest in the origins of his family led him on the journey to document as well as he has through a fascinating, informative, and educative tract. The reader is entertained with the historical record of a rather large Ukrainian Jewish family, but also what Eastern European Jewry faced with strong Christian-initiated, anti-Jewish treatment. The book's title comes from a statement in Genesis, 49:9: "Judah is a Lion's Cub," attributing the vibrancy of the family to a biblical origin. Quite a contribution to Jewish genealogy and a worthy contribution to any collection suited to Eastern European Jewish history.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Yudkoff, Sunny S. *Tubercular Capital: Illness and the Conditions of Modern Jewish Writing*. Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA, 2019. 241 pp. \$65.00 (9781503607330). Also available as an eBook.

This research on the role that tuberculosis played in the lives and creative output of modern Jewish writers is original and fascinating. Covering texts by authors who were diagnosed with the disease with which they struggled throughout their careers, Sholem Aleichem, Rahel Bluvshtein, H. Leivick, David Vogel, and other Hebrew and Yiddish writers are read through the lens of a disease that functioned as "a critical mediator in the creation, dissemination, and reception of modern Yiddish and Hebrew writing." Each chapter is rich with quotes from the works of these authors, both in the original (Romanized) and English translations, and heavily annotated in the endnotes (85 pages!). A few illustrations throughout the book help in visualizing the people and the places discussed in the book.

Highly recommended for academic libraries collecting in the area of Jewish culture and literature.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Los Angeles

Zion, Noam Sachs. *The Rabbinic Family Disrupted by Love of Torah: Absentee Husbands and Fathers*. (Talmudic Marital Dramas, vol. 4). Cleveland, OH; Jerusalem, Israel: Zion Holiday Publications, 2018. 618 pp. \$29.95 (9780988514171).

In the Greco-Roman and Talmudical periods (40 BCE - 500 CE), there was Jewish hero type whose love for Torah and other sacred texts was the center of his entire life. Love of Torah was like an addictive drug that pushed aside all love for family. Wives were frequently the enablers for their husbands to ignore family relations. This book examines the characters and emotional pain caused by the pursuit of Torah. Some of the stories about families with an absentee husband show marriages that didn't work and other stories had a strong wife-enabler and at the end the struggles were worth it.

Chapter three based on TB *Nedarim* 50a, is the story of Rabbi Akiba whose wife Rachel enabled him to go away and study for 24 years. After that, he was one of the top scholars and teachers of the Jewish world with 24,000 students or disciples. The author examines all aspects of the absentee father in great detail, but he fails to answer why this should be considered virtuous. Why didn't Akiba's wife go live with him and give him support every day? Why didn't she share in his learning and teaching? Why does Akiba get a pass on his obligation for the financial, sexual, and familial rights granted any wife? Perhaps, as the text seems to teach us, the greatness of learning and the gathering of 24,000 scholars is a greater good. Perhaps Rabbi Akiba's influence on the community is worth the sacrifice of a family life. Noam Zion never deals with these questions.

The level of scholarship, length, and number of the notes make this a dense read. One of eight in a series, this book is recommended for scholars and those who have a strong interest in marital relationships.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Chicago, IL, City Colleges of Chicago and Temple Sholom of Chicago

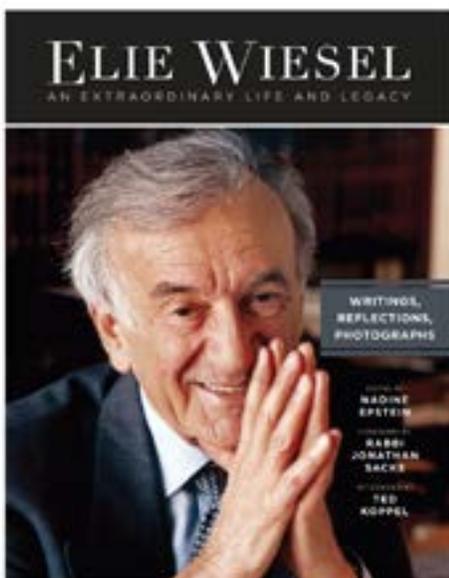
Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

Elkins, Dov Peretz. *Four Rabbis at Lunch: Candid Conversations Among American Clergy*. Brooklyn: KTAV, 2019. 485 pp. \$24.95 (9781602803480).

What do rabbis talk about? In this book the distinguished Rabbi Elkins takes us behind the scenes, as a group meets every week. The volume records a series of weekly (fictional) conversations among friends: one is Orthodox, one is Conservative, and two are Reform. One of the discussants (who joins in week 5) is a woman. In every session each of them gives thoughts, personal anecdotes, and opinions. There is no story here, just an extensive discussion. The topics vary widely, from “should I take part in a wedding when the Ketubah is not Halakhic?” to issues of Jewish education. It can be read as both a conversational novel (think of the film “My Dinner with Andre”) and a thoughtful, well-researched exposition of contemporary Jewish thought on a range of subjects. Each chapter/meal covers several topics, and the group returns to some issues, analyzing different side-issues and questions of Halacha each time. There are occasional lectures, but they are limited in length, and meant to inform the reader rather than lecture. The author is respectful of his participants, and accurately reports the opinions of each movement and their different views. Rabbi Elkins is both knowledgeable and comfortable, and the book moves well. But without a through-line it feels like a series of responsa and opinions. It is a novel, but the ideas it presents are very real. Because there is no index or bibliography (though some book citations and websites are provided in the text), its reference or scholarly value is limited. It would be best used by working rabbis or rabbinical students, but it’s difficult to imagine as a “fun” read, even for knowledgeable congregants.

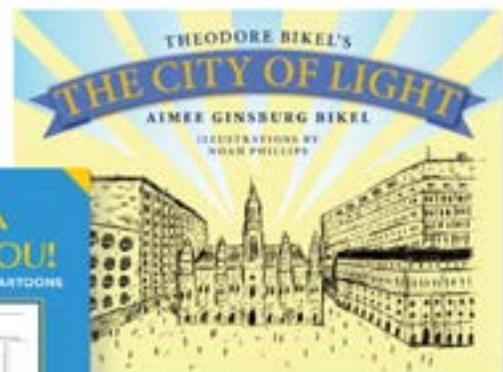
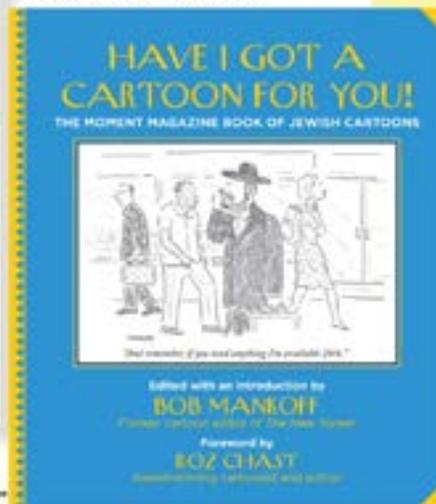
Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

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Feuerstein, Malcolm. *Jewish Renaissance: A Voice from the Chorus*. Self-Published, 2019. 3 vols. \$12.99 (9781791851071).

This trilogy consists of six books in three volumes. A seriously wounded Israeli Army colonel is in a coma. His survival is in question. If he survives, no one knows how his injuries will affect him. The author, a journalist and screenwriter, has created a tale of time travel that takes readers through Jewish history. His wounded soldier dreams of past lives that he may have lived. Readers will journey from Beitar, Palestine, and Caesarea to Rome, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv. They will visit ancient Alexandria, Gaza, and a Tuscan slave farm as well as New York, Los Angeles, and the West Bank. They will hear from Jews, Muslims, and Christians as the historical panoramas unfold. Did the colonel really live all those lives? Readers who enjoy fantasy and time travel will appreciate these tales. Keeping track of all the characters can be complicated, but the stories are colorful and engaging.

Barbara Bibel, Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA

Flamm, Eric. *Portland Zionists Unite! And Other Short Stories*. Portland, Oregon: Inkwater Press, 2019. 223 pp. \$18.95 (9781629015989).

Eric Flamm explores the relationship mainly Jewish Americans have with Israel in this linked story debut. Three of the stories are by IDF soldiers. Yoni Tager, an American volunteer, describes his monotonous duties in Hebron while recalling haunting memories from a previous tour in the Golan. David Ostrow, a South African who immigrated to Israel, also describes his work in the West Bank. The two along with another soldier named Yehuda Alkana celebrate the end of their service by aimlessly partying through Thailand.

While the soldier narratives take place in the 1990s, a second storyline is unfolding in Portland, Oregon from 2014 to 2015. Sarah Gutman, a retiree who spent time in her twenties on a kibbutz, clashes with an older Yoni Tager on how the occupation of the West Bank should be discussed. Aaron Slovit, who works at the synagogue Sarah Gutman attends, gives his perspective on the community drama. Gary, a 21-year-old uneducated on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, hears Yoni Tager speak at an event.

Flamm uses highly descriptive language to set the scene for each story, devoting copious time establishing the characters' backgrounds and approaches to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The portrayal of soldiers' daily lives as highly boring and listless with sprinklings of violence no doubt reflects the author's own service in the IDF. As a collection, the stories are markedly male; there is only one female narrator out of six. Socially conservative communities may disapprove of the use of foul language, hard drugs and sexual content. Recommended for fiction collections and public libraries.

Taylor Dwyer, Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles

Gelagotis Lee, Donna J. *Intersection on Neptune*. Hollywood, The Poetry Press, 2019. 106 pp. \$15.00 (9780996777995).

Intersection on Neptune is Donna J. Gelagotis Lee's second award-winning book of poetry. The book is divided into two sections. The first section, which is twenty-eight pages long, is a collection of poems about New York. The poems accurately capture life in New York and Brooklyn in the fifties, sixties, and seventies. The poems are truthful, warm, and nostalgic (for anyone who grew up in New York and Brooklyn at that time). They speak of a time and place that has changed drastically. The reader is transported to Jewish life in New York and Brooklyn by poems that remember the teenagers meeting on Kings Highway, at grandmother's house on Coney Island where she made mouth-watering challah, sponge cake, and brisket from scratch. The reader can almost smell the lemon pierced with cloves that grandmother gave her to smell on Yom Kippur. "Tea at the Plaza" is another fond memory. The second part of the book is a collection of poems about New Jersey. There is no Jewish content in this half of the book. It describes rural New Jersey, its pig farms, chicken farms, and egg farms. The immigrant experience is the theme that connects the two parts of the book. With only half its content relating to

Jewish themes, this title may be better suited for libraries with collections of materials about immigrants or collections that pertain to New York and Brooklyn in the fifties, sixties and seventies.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH

Gentin, Reyna Marder. *Unreasonable Doubts*. Berkeley, CA: She Writes Press, 2018. 313 pp. \$16.95 (9781631524134).

Part legal thriller and part romance, this novel is a fun read with some serious issues thrown in for good measure. The setting is New York's very Jewish Upper West Side. Liana Cohen, a New York City public defense attorney, faces doubts about the importance of her work. She has deliberately chosen her demanding field despite her ability to gain much more prestige and money in corporate law, like her boyfriend Jake. But she has become jaded by a system in which criminals often go through the revolving door of recidivism. She hopes to defend and exonerate a truly innocent prisoner, and finds the perfect candidate in Danny Shea, who has been accused of rape. Danny is appealingly intelligent, articulate and handsome. Inevitably, Liana ends up falling under the dangerous spell of her new client.

A major conflict that Liana faces is whether she should break up with her workaholic boyfriend who neglects her in favor of his all-consuming drive to climb the corporate ladder. Thoroughly confused, she receives advice from the rabbi of a nearby synagogue which she and Jake attend sporadically. Though Liana and Jake seem to have rather limited interest in Judaism, the rabbi has a profound influence on the path they take. Readers who love Susan Isaacs, especially those familiar with New York City, will find this an enjoyable read.

Joyce Levine, North Shore Hebrew Academy High School (retired), Past Chair of AJL Publications and Past President of AJL-SSC, Boynton Beach, Florida

Simon, Andrea. *Floating in the Neversink: a Novel in Stories*. Texas: Black Rose Writing, 2019. 157 pp. \$17.95 (9781684333493).

While Simon calls this a "novel in stories," it is more a collection of snapshots in the life of Amanda Gerber. We meet Amanda, "Mandy," in 1955 as a feisty imaginative nine-year old who lives with her argumentative parents and older sister in Brooklyn. As one of the few Jewish families in a predominantly Catholic neighborhood, Mandy has a hard time finding her place and making friends. When she does find a friend in Francine, she holds on to her fiercely.

It's hard for Mandy to leave Francine each summer when Mandy's family goes to their family bungalow near the Neversink River in the Catskill mountains, but once there, she is reunited with her extended family, including her cousin Laura. The chapters bounce between the banal and the traumatic, extended play with Laura in the countryside and then descriptions of a sexual assault by a family friend.

While Mandy is an engaging character, the book as a whole just doesn't gel together. Appropriate for larger synagogue libraries.

Sheryl Stahl, Director, Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles

Sivan, Miryam. *Make it Concrete*. Brooklyn, NY: Cuidono Press, 2018. 230 pp. \$16.00 (9781944453084).

Isabel Toledo is a haunted woman, beset by her many worries and anxieties. As a successful ghostwriter for Holocaust survivors, Isabel has helped survivors release some of their pain by telling their stories. But after twenty years of writing about the Holocaust, Isabel finds that she has internalized the survivors' fear and anxiety. An American ex-pat living in Israel, Isabel also worries about her daughter who is in the army and her younger son as he plays in the neighborhood. She frets that after her divorce, she will never be comfortable in a stable relationship. For years she has tried to convince her mother, Suri, to divulge her own Holocaust experiences, but Suri refused, focusing instead on the joys of the present.

Isabel copes with all this anxiety through sex, with her boyfriend and with other lovers. But details from her latest book-in-progress, the life of Jaim Benjamin, make all her worries converge into a perfect

storm and sex is no longer enough to ground her. Jaim tells Isabel about his experience in Greece where the landscapes mirror those of her Israeli neighborhood and of her father's historical Spanish home. These details connected to her home life and her lack of knowledge about her mother's experience, lead Isabel to a mental breakdown. Suri flies to Israel from her home in the US and tells Isabel about her childhood traumas during the Holocaust. Now that Isabel can fill in that chapter of her mother's life, she is able to take the first small step toward putting her own life back together. A new take on the generational effects of the Holocaust, this book is recommended.

Sheryl Stahl, Director, Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles

Wolas, Cherise. *The Family Tabor: a Novel*. New York: Flatiron Books, 2018. 381 pp. \$18.99 (9781250081452).

In this family reunion novel, the Tabor family is gathering to support the patriarch, Harry, who is about to be named "Man of the Decade" by the city of Palm Springs for his work in settling both Jewish and non-Jewish refugees from around the world. As is typical for this genre, the family members are each harboring secrets and resentments. Daughter Phoebe, a successful lawyer, has always wanted a partner and child. Since she is unable to admit to her family that she been having trouble meeting men to date, she made up a paramour. Her sister Camille, a social anthropologist, just came back from an extended stay on the Trobriand Islands. But she feels lost back in the United States, unable to decide what to do next professionally or where her romantic relationship with Valentine is going. And lastly, son Simon is struggling with insomnia. He worries that his wife Elena is pulling away. He hides his concerns about his marriage from his family and hides his interest in learning more about his Jewish heritage from his agnostic wife.

But the biggest secret of all is held by Harry. Since being told of his upcoming honor, he is haunted by memories which he had successfully stifled for decades. As a young man, he had used insider information to make illegal trades. When he admitted this to his wife, Roma, she said that he must give away all these ill-gotten gains. He claimed that he did, and the family moved to Palm Springs to start their life over. Harry learned that a colleague, Max Stern, the only other Jew in their firm had been convicted of the insider trading which Harry had done.

In the midst of the party, when the master of ceremonies calls for Harry to begin the presentation, the family realizes that he has disappeared. After the police get involved, they learn that he has flown to Israel to track down Max Stern.

While the tropes of the family reunion novel are familiar, the characters are well-drawn and believable and the Jewish values of family and forgiveness run throughout. Highly recommended.

Sheryl Stahl, Director, Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles

Zuckerman, Julie. *The Book of Jeremiah: A Novel in Stories*. Winston-Salem, NC: Press 53, 2019. 190 pp. \$17.95 (9781941209981). Review based on Advance Reading Copy

In the first chapter, we meet Jeremiah at age eleven. He is a bright child whose mind is more occupied with planning his next prank than studying at his Jewish day school. This leads to much exasperation on his mother's part and amusement and sometimes admiration on his father's. The next chapter leaps forward to the publication of the festschrift written in honor of Jeremiah's eightieth birthday. He is angry and dismayed to read the dedications which extol his academic achievements but portray him as a judgmental and volatile man. The following chapters go back and forth in time focusing on seminal moments in his life: his wife's birthday, his daughter's wedding, a family trip to Israel, and a faculty party. In each circumstance, it is clear that it is important to Jeremiah to connect with the family that he truly loves, but somehow he always comes up a little short of empathy and his efforts end up misdirected or misunderstood. Recommended for larger collections.

Sheryl Stahl, Director, Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles

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