Spotlight on Hanukkah Books


Baby Lullaby Gifts produces a series of board books “that combine beautiful paintings with soothing and culturally authentic lullabies.” Focusing on places in Canada like Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, and Alberta along with Hawaii and Alaska, the series makes a departure by adding Hanukkah Lullaby. The textured, collage illustrations depict a family celebrating the holiday by making dreidels, lighting the candles, exchanging gifts, retelling the story of the Macabees, enjoying “Hanukkah treats fried in oil,” and singing together. The hanukkiah is shown on each page with an increasing number of candles burning. A detailed author’s note (not typically found in board books) includes additional information about the hanukkiah, dreidel, gelt, and the story of the Maccabees though the small, decorative font is a little difficult to read. A “living book” video featuring the lullaby sung by a children’s choir is available from the Hanukkah Lullaby FaceBook page and on YouTube. While the music is pleasant and the melody is soothing, it’s not exactly catchy and the average musically uninclined parent might not be confident enough to sing-along. With so many Hanukkah board books available to families with young children, this one (only available in Canada) is interesting and more sophisticated than most, yet the content doesn’t add anything new or different.

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


On the first night of Hanukkah, twelve-year-old Joel asks God for miracles to appear to make his life easier. Joel’s wish list is short. He’d like to be a part of a family not living on welfare, survive Cantor Grubnitz’s bar mitzvah lessons, and transform from a gawky amateur magician into

CONTENTS

| Titles for Children & Teens | p. 1 | Picture Books p. 9 |
| Bible Stories p. 4 | | Shabbat & Holidays p. 12 |
| Biography p. 4 | | Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults p. 13 |
| Holocaust & World War II p. 4 | | Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults p. 24 |
| Jewish Life & Values p. 7 | | Reviews of Multimedia titles for Adults p. 26 |
| Non-Fiction p. 8 | | Corrections and Comment p. 27 |

AJL Online


To subscribe to Hasafran, AJL’s electronic discussion list, please visit [https://lists.service.ohio-state.edu/mailman/listinfo/hasafran](https://lists.service.ohio-state.edu/mailman/listinfo/hasafran)

AJL is now on Facebook. Become a fan.
Normalman, a superhero whose power is blending into all social situations. However, the biggest miracle Joel requests is not a self-serving one. It involves wanting his father to overcome debilitating arthritis. During the eight days of the holiday, Joel kvetches with God while searching for signs that miracles are just around the corner. Are they hiding in the burning shammes candle? Or coming through the broken barometer? As with many of life’s bigger questions, the answer comes when he least expects it and in the form of a story concerning one perfect orange.

Joel Ben Izzy, a professional storyteller, turns his love for oral tales into a laugh-out-loud “work of fiction...and of friction – the kind that filled [his] childhood.” Lively language, witty sayings, memorable characters, magic tricks, and at least 70 different ways to spell Hanukkah (e.g., Hanikah, Kchannuukkah, and Choinkykah) make *Dreidels on the Brain* a must-read for all seekers of miracles.

*Allison Marks, co-author of The Art Lesson: A Shavuot Story (Kar-Ben, 2017) and A Gefilte Fishy Tale (MB Publishing, 2016)*

---

**Hanukkah Delight!**


Charming bunnies and other animal friends celebrate Hanukkah in this rhyming board book. Inviting friends and neighbors, reciting blessings, lighting candles, eating latkes, spinning dreidels, eating chocolate gelt, and unwrapping presents are all part of the fun.

Appropriately brief text with well written rhymes is clearly placed on full color pages, with engaging animals showing the various actions. A few of the animals look a bit odd, because they are shown in profile, but both eyes are showing on one side of the face. The ‘nun’ on a couple of the dreidels looks more like a ‘bet’ than a ‘nun.’ A sweet addition to the ever growing selection of Hanukkah material, this one will be enjoyed by the youngest book fans.

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

---

**Potatoes at Turtle Rock**


*Potatoes at Turtle Rock* follows a family of four on a walk through the woods with their pet goat and chicken during an especially snowy sixth night of Hanukkah. It is calmly-paced and on the surface is a light, even silly read, with frequent references to the exploits of the goat and punch lines from the goofy, intellectual Dad. Young daughter Annie has planned the night’s events so that each stop on their walk includes a moment to reflect together on a different aspect of the holiday or the people and things that offer protection from the cold and illuminate long December nights.

Much like the authors’ *Tachlich at Turtle Rock* (Kar-Ben, 2010), there is more focus on seasonal themes than Judaism in this tale, and it embraces families who create their own traditions while practicing old ones. For some readers it could encourage an alternative, though thoughtful, approach to the holiday, however, more observant readers may find that it lacks explicit discussion of the purpose of celebrating Hanukkah. Illustrations by Alex Steele-Morgan warmly depict the glowing, friendly faces of the family on their woodsy walk and are inviting for young readers. However, this picture book may be more accessible for a slightly older audience, as the text can be lengthy at times and requires careful reading or listening. This title could be considered by school and synagogue
libraries looking for new takes on Hanukkah for children beyond the usual depictions of latkes and dreidels. It might also be best paired with a discussion about tradition, such as what is specific to one’s family or one’s region, and what may be universal among the Jewish people.

Alex Quay, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA


Misha is a struggling artist in a poor town whose kind heart is revealed when a stray cat wanders into his life. While Misha has very little to offer, he is willing to share what he has with the cat, whom he names Mazel in recognition of her good fortune. It’s Hanukkah and Misha scarpes together the ingredients to make latkes for them both and explains to Mazel that while he has no candles to light on his grandfather’s beautiful menorah, “Hanukkah is a time for hope.” Misha comes up with the idea to paint a picture of the menorah, and “light” the candles each night with what’s left of his paint. When a merchant appears at Misha’s door in need of merchandise, he is impressed with Misha’s artwork and purchases the lot. However, he is also the previous owner of Mazel, but to Misha’s relief, decides Mazel would be better off at Misha’s home. Vavouri’s illustrations, with muted tones and expressive faces, adeptly convey an old world feel. This sweet story of hope and promise, and appreciating simple good fortunes, is a lovely Hanukkah tale and also a year-round reminder of the value of kindness and generosity even in the hardest of times.

Martha McMahon, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles


Richard Ungar takes us back to the village of Chelm to once again share a delightful story of how the fools there try to solve a problem. The Mayor of Lublin has sent the town a marvelous Hanukkah gift – a giant menorah. Each night they light this magnificent sculpture and puzzle over how they can thank the Mayor for his generosity. As usual in Chelm, for every idea, there is an equal set back. Rivka’s latkes – are eaten. Chelm’s special snow – melts. The hand carved dreidel – misdirects the messenger. Throughout all of this, Yitzi keeps asking his father to sing Hanukkah songs after each candle lighting. His father replies, “There is no time for singing, Yitzi!...We must solve the problem of how to thank the Mayor of Lublin.”

As with Ungar’s other Chelm stories (*Rachel’s Gift*, *Rachel’s Library*, *Rachel Captures the Moon*), a child comes up with the obvious answer. Yitzi tells a townsperson to ride to Lublin and “ask the Mayor to climb the big hill outside of town.” What the Mayor sees when he arrives at the top of the hill is his beautiful gift lit up for the eighth night of Hanukkah as the people of Chelm sing Hanukkah songs in its light.

The story is beautiful and well told in language that children and their families will embrace. The watercolor monoprint illustrations are bright and colorful with a Chagall-esque quality to them. And while we have plenty of books in this category – modern and classics - this is a wonderful new addition to the Hanukkah bookshelf.

Kathy Bloomfield, President – SSC, past member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC
BIBLE STORIES


This retelling of the often-told bible story includes all of the familiar elements: Noah, paired animals, the wooden ark, the flood, and a rainbow. What makes this version unique are the book’s graphics, which are all works of art selected from the extensive collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The media span five centuries of artistic expression and include a Currier & Ives hand-colored lithograph, a black-and-white engraving by Giulio Bonasone, a wool and silk tapestry by John Henry Dearle, a gouache and oil painting by Marc Chagall and many more timeless pieces. The text, adapted from the King James Version of the Bible, is framed with a border from a Bible and Book of Common Prayer done by Robert Barker in the 17th century. Five pages following the story provide details about each piece of art, a brief biography of the artist, and accession information. For Judaic collections already well-stocked with Noah’s ark picture books, this one may be considered an optional purchase.

*Allison Marks, co-author of The Art Lesson: A Shavuot Story (Kar-Ben, 2017) and A Gefilte Fishy Tale (MB Publishing,2016)*

BIOGRAPHY


This impressive title from the Britannica Beginner Bios series accomplishes several goals. First, it places Anne Frank in the same ‘must-know’ set of people as Albert Einstein and Malala Yousafzai, keeping her relevant to today’s young readers. Secondly, author Killcoyne manages to produce a grade-appropriate narrative that offers meaningful detail, even revealing the name of the German officer who arrested the Franks. A noteworthy passage explains that it is difficult to imagine an event that affected six million people; Anne Frank’s diary is a personal account. The chapters are logically arranged and cover the diary, the Holocaust, the Frank family’s escape from Germany to the Netherlands, going into hiding, and the Anne Frank House and Anne Frank’s legacy. Illustrations provide excellent context and sidebars give quick, necessary explanations. Although there are several good educational books on Anne Frank, this Britannica offering makes Anne Frank relatable to today’s young readers.

*Barbara Krasner, former member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee*

HOLOCAUST AND WORLD WAR II


Rachel Landesman Fletcher’s first-hand account of surviving the Holocaust and eventually arriving in Palestine chronicles a seminal period in history. As the eleven-year-old and her mother and sister leave France about the S.S. President Warfield (later renamed Exodus 1947), she meets some of the others on the overcrowded ship filled with 4,500 passengers. Each tells their story: Miriam, who was hidden with neighbors in France; Saul and David, who fought with the partisans in Poland; Aviva, a member of the Haganah, who was sent from Palestine to help aboard the ship; and Rachel herself, who survived the war in Budapest. British destroyers accompany the Exodus and attack in international waters. The
British ram the boat and throw tear gas on deck. Soldiers board, and several people are killed and many wounded. The *Exodus* is severely damaged and limps into the port of Haifa in Palestine. The passengers are transferred to three other ships, supposedly bound for Cyprus, but they are returned to France. The boats sit in the harbor as news of their plight spreads around the world. The French offer everyone immediate citizenship if they disembark, but the passengers are adamant about going to Palestine. They are then sent to British-occupied Germany, where they live in DP camps for eight months until they are able to go to the newly established State of Israel.

The Preface notes that this story of refugees braving difficult conditions in order to be free is very relevant in view of current events. Archival photos enhance the retelling. The short chapters keep the pace fast and hold young readers’ attention. There is enough detail to understand the events of the Holocaust and aboard the *Exodus* without graphic explanations. A great story on its own or to add to the series, the book will be an asset to both school and synagogue libraries.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel


In this Holocaust picture book, a young girl, an older brother, and her parents are forced to move from their Polish home to a ghetto. The illustrations provide far more depth than the narrative, which ignores opportunity for dialogue. Instead it tells rather than shows and feels unfinished. The illustrations, also done by Banki, demonstrate the grayness of the experience vis-à-vis the scarce existence of color. They are ghosted in a way that allows readers to see beyond the ghetto wall.

For an illustrated ghetto account, *The War within These Walls* by historian Aline Sax (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2013) provides highly-crafted narrative and illustration and is a far better choice.

Barbara Krasner, former member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee


An incredible story of courage and cunning, a group of medical professionals attempt to escape Nazi-controlled Albania. As the 807th Medical Air Evacuation Squadron (MAETS) flies from Sicily to Bari, Italy, they encounter a severe weather storm. The pilots get lost somewhere over Albania, and the plane is forced to crash land as their fuel runs out and they are strafed by enemy planes. The 30-person crew finds themselves in the middle of nowhere in snow covered, Nazi-controlled Albania with no supplies to get them through their situation. With help from partisans, hospitable villagers throughout the country (who risk their lives to be welcoming), Nazi-supported Albania soldiers and the British and American Military, through horrible weather and frightening treachery, with little to no sleep or food, they struggle to get out of the country. After 135 days, they find themselves on a boat heading toward Bari and freedom.

While not a book with Jewish content, this is an engaging story that will provide students with a unique look of the experiences of people during World War II. The danger and heart-stopping experiences of these men and women will appeal to young kids. For those with a broad collection, this would be an excellent addition.

Kathy Bloomfield, President-SSC, past member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee
and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC


What if American women served alongside men in World War II? In this alternative history, best-selling author Michael Grant tells the story of four very different young women who choose to enlist in the US Armed Services and serve in North Africa. Rio Richlin, a small town California girl, volunteers
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

as a way to avenge the death of her sister who died in the battle of Pearl Harbor. She enlists along with her best friend Jenou, whose main motivation is to meet eligible men and to escape from her dysfunctional family. They serve together in a mixed-company platoon. Frangie is African American and hopes to use the medical training provided in the army as a way to start her career in medicine. She serves as an army medic in an all-black battalion. And, Elisheva “Rainy” Schulterman is a Jewish girl from New York whose mother believes that “a woman’s place is in the home.” Instead, Rainy enrolls in the army intelligence training school. Her brother, Aryeh, is a Marine who impregnates his non-Jewish girlfriend and asks Rainy to help him keep the marriage and the baby a secret from their parents. Rainy uses her fluency in German, French, Italian, and Yiddish to serve as a translator in Tunisia. Her father’s words also haunt her: “...you have a responsibility to the army, to this country that we love. But you also have an obligation to our people.” Chapters alternate between the four narratives, with letters and news bulletins interspersed, along with commentary from an unnamed narrator. At the end of the novel, the women’s stories intersect when they all meet at the Battle of Kasserine Pass.

Grant’s research is exhaustive, providing detailed accounts of battles and the daily life of combat soldiers. And, as would be consistent for the time, the women face discrimination, sexism, abuse, racism, anti-Semitism, and the threat of rape. Each learns in turn that “there is only one way to prevail” and that is to “outwork, outthink, outperform” their male counterparts. At over 500 pages, things can get a bit dense and bogged down and Grant does not whitewash the gritty, bloody, and violent realities of war. However, both major and minor characters are fully developed, the history is fascinating, and the premise is intriguing making this a compelling and satisfying read that will appeal to fans of Code Name Verity by Elizabeth Wein and Wolf by Wolf by Ryan Graudin.

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


When Germany invaded Denmark in April 1940, the Danish Jewish population numbered approximately 7,700. Over the course of the Nazi occupation, 7,220 of those Jews escaped to Sweden and fewer than 475 were captured. By the end of the war, it is estimated that a total of 75 to 120 Jews perished in concentration camps or attempting to escape arrest and deportation. Award-winning author Deborah Hopkinson (Shutting Out the Sky: Life in the Tenements of New York, 1880-1924; Orchard Books, 2003) chronicles how “unlike in many other countries, most of the Danish Jews survived, thanks to a spontaneous, grassroots rescue effort undertaken by ordinary people....Nor were those taken away forgotten by their fellow citizens: the Danes worked to send food and clothing to prisoners and negotiated their early release.” In her well-researched and compelling narrative, Hopkinson focuses on the stories of a number of young men and women who risked their lives to resist the Nazis and to protect their Jewish friends and neighbors. The more than fifty photographs and the author’s reliance on the memoirs of several of the spies, saboteurs and survivors help bring this period of history to life. The book includes a selected chronology, map, bibliography, source notes, and index, and provides young readers with an inspiring example of how a few courageous individuals sparked a resistance movement which saved so many lives.

Marcie Eskin, Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah, Wilmette, IL


In 1936, seven-year-old Esfir lives with her family in Kobrin, Poland. She is sent to Brest to live with her Aunt Perl who runs a boarding house for mostly Jewish girls attending Tarbut (secular Hebrew language school). One girl, Ida, takes her under her wing. For the next few years, even after the death
of her father and the Nazi invasion, Esfir travels between Kobrin and Brest until the Nazis push out the Soviets in 1941. She returns to Kobrin for good with her aunt in 1942 and they face the forced move into the ghetto and the forced removal to Brona Gora where Esfir miraculously survives mass execution.

This novel admirably and passionately attempts to reconstruct the lost world of pre-war Jewish Poland and the experiences of real-life survivor Esfir Manevich. Simon builds on the research of her previous adult family history, Bashert (University Press of Mississippi, 2002). However, the book only comes together in the last section, which is written in the style of a Holocaust memoir as Esfir tells her story ten years later. Throughout the beginning sections, there is a distinct and jarring American sensibility (names of Morris and Hymie, analogy to Buster Brown) and blocks of text pontificating history. Esfir’s voice also vacillates between a young girl’s and an older woman’s, which makes it difficult to resonate with her emotionally. A map would have been helpful for readers to understand and contextualize the border changes between Poland and the Soviet Union that impact the story.

Barbara Krasner, former member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

JEWISH LIFE & VALUES


This title explores the adventure of having a baby in the house, seen through the eyes of a three-year-old. There is anticipation and excitement before the newborn arrives. Once she comes, her brother learns to wash his hands before holding her. He is also taught that crying is the way babies communicate. He is given chores that provide him with a new role in the family, and he is reminded that he was once tiny. Despite the new responsibilities of the growing family, though, the big brother still gets attention from his parents.

This is a short, sweet volume for young children with new siblings (and not coincidentally their over-worked parents). The illustrations are bright (and not insipid); the simple rhymes convey the message that both the baby and older children need attention.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


A young boy wonders what he would take with him if he were to travel to the moon. He thinks about all that he does during a typical day, and he decides that he needs to bring all the objects that help him to do mitzvos (good deeds). From his washing cup for washing his hands upon awakening to his pushka (charity box) for giving tzedaka (charity), from many different kinds of foods for making brochos (blessings) to a mezuzah (handwritten scroll affixed to Jewish homes and buildings), his suitcase is soon overflowing. He even wants to bring his parents so that he can perform the mitzvah of kibud av va-em (honoring one’s parents) on the moon.

Written in simple rhyming quatrains, the text is accessible to even the youngest lap-sit child: “If I went to the moon/For a year and a day./What would I need/To bring for my stay?” The illustrations by Vasilisa Romanenko and Vitaliy Romanenko are beautifully rendered in bright primary colors. The young protagonist of the story wears a big yarmulke (skullcap) and has his tzitzis (fringes) visible. His parents and friend also convey Orthodox dress in all the drawings. The book is printed on laminated pages that are especially durable and allow for easy cleanup.

Rena Citrin, Library Media Specialist, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School. Chicago

A fresh, delightful picture book presents a gay, Jewish wedding in positive family terms brimming with energy and love. The unexpected propels the plot. The opening of the book thrives on the humor of tots misunderstanding wedding roles. The children do not know what to imagine from the terms ‘flower girl,’ ‘ring bearer,’ and ‘celery dresses’; the illustrations brandish their confusion as the little girl wears actual celery and needs water for her flower from the hairy bear marching with the rings. When the bride and groom turn out to be two brides it is just one more mental picture to be adjusted. The synagogue marriage ceremony includes grandparents and siblings in the wedding party, parents bringing each bride down the aisle, a female rabbi, the chuppah (here called a wedding canopy), ketuba, seven blessings, ring exchange, breaking of the wine glasses to shouts of Mazel Tov, and a hora danced in celebration as the brides are carried on their chairs. The flower girl tells her parents it was a good wedding without real celery, a walking flower, a bear and with two brides. She looks forward to hers when maybe the two brides might have a flower girl or a ring bearer for her big day. Adorable figures fill the dynamic art with the high spirits of the happy event. The art underlines and advances the charming story for readers of all genders.

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

---

**NON-FICTION**


In *Massacre in Munich*, Nardo explains the historical and political background behind the Munich Olympics and, as the subtitle suggests, shows how ripples from the horrendous and botched affair can be felt to the present day. *Massacre in Munich* contains four chapters: “Into the world’s awareness,” “Making up for the past,” “The massacre,” and “Innocence in sports ends.” Nardo describes how eight Palestinian gunmen, members of the Palestinian terrorist group Black September, slipped into the Olympic Village in the early morning of September 5, 1972. They seized eleven Israeli athletes, coaches, and officials. Their demands? To exchange the Israeli hostages for 234 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. By the time the debacle had ended, all the hostages, along with one German police officer, had been murdered.

Nardo has created a compelling account through clear and age-appropriate prose, photographs, and quotes from interviewees. Several insets offer additional fascinating information: “Inside the command post”, “Did German leaders know in advance?”, “Honoring their memory”, and “Tracking down the Munich killers”. The book’s design, with wide margins and generous leading, will help...
young readers understand what happened in Munich on that day. End matter includes: timeline, glossary, additional resources, source notes, select bibliography, Index, and “Critical thinking using the common core.” Because the focus of this series is on one iconic photograph per book, there is more information regarding the journalists and photographers on the scene than one might want. However, *Massacre in Munich* is a balanced and informative account of this tragic event. For another book on this topic, see Liz Sonneborn’s *Murder at the 1972 Olympics in Munich* (Rosen, 2003).

*Anne Dublin, author of Bobbie Rosenfeld: The Olympian Who Could Do Everything* (Second Story Press, 2004) and *44 Hours or Strike!* (Second Story Press, 2015), Toronto, Canada

---

**PICTURE BOOKS**


We first met Avi, the little ambulance, when he went to school and learned the important skills he would need (*Avi the Ambulance Goes to School*, 2015). In his second story, he has the opportunity to practice these lessons. It is a busy day in the garage. First, Avi’s big sister Maya is called; then other vehicles leave to help those in distress. Avi is frustrated at being left behind, but he is sent to headquarters to get supplies for his unit. On the way back to the garage he passes an apartment building where the alarm has gone off. Almost everyone leaves except Yofi the cat, who is stranded on a ledge. Avi drives under the window so Yofi can jump to safety.

This new series highlights the work of *Magen David Adom* (Red Star of David), the Israeli rescue and emergency service. The proceeds of the series will help MDA do its work. The story here, while simple, is a reminder that everyone can play a vital role. The rescue scene is mildly exciting, but not scary. The
illustrations provide female role models in the work of saving lives. The book also makes the point that having (and getting) supplies may not be exciting, but it is necessary.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


Created by a religious school Hebrew teacher, the *Alef-Bet Hebrew Letter Primer* is a board book that introduces each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The alliterated text helps to reinforce each letter’s sound: “Alef is like a leaf falling from a tree . . . as it floats down it glides silently. Bet banks the basketball off the backboard and Vet’s veers off.” The letter is also integrated into the simple, clip-art like graphics. However, it may confuse some Hebrew language learners that the English words used to describe the letter don’t begin with the letter in Hebrew. For example, the Hebrew word for basketball, does not begin with the letter Bet. Chaput includes clever devises for distinguishing between similar letters such as “Kaf caught the baseball” showing a baseball mitt with a ball as the nikud and “Chaf couldn’t hold on” showing an empty mitt along with reminders like the ayin “shouldn’t be mistaken for the sound of the English letter y” and “Koof’s key is remembering it is not the sound of the English letter P.” While some letters get their own page, others are crowded together with four or five letters on a single spread. The table in the back lists each letter with its sound and instructions for writing in block script as well as a chart for the vowels. The companion, *Alef-Bet Hebrew Letter Tracing Book* is a 12-page workbook with re-usable, wipe-able pages for students to practice printing the block letters with dry-erase markers or crayons. The *Alef-Bet Hebrew Letter Primer* is more of a teaching tool. For a more effective and engaging read-aloud that introduces the Hebrew letters, try *Sing-Along Alef Bet* by Mama Doni and Eric Lindberg (Apples & Honey Press, 2016) and *The Hebrew Letters Tell Their Story* (Reudor, 1999).

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


Edwards has transformed her passion for knitting into another delightful book about a child performing a mitzvah. Sophia isn’t very good at knitting. Like every beginner knitter, she drops stitches and makes holes when there shouldn’t be any. However, her friend and neighbor, Mrs. Goldman, makes hats for everyone in the neighborhood. With winter approaching, she even gives her own hat away. Sophia decides to knit “the most special hat in the world” to keep Mrs. Goldman’s keppie (head) warm. With perseverance and lots of red pompoms, Sophia creates a most unusual hat.

Through its warm, gentle telling, *A Hat for Mrs. Goldman* is a perfect book to read aloud on a cold, blustery winter’s day. Karas’ mixed-media illustrations enhance the text and provide extra warmth and expression. He captures Sophia’s emotions nicely — worry, frustration, and finally glee when she completes the hat. The endpapers add a touch of whimsy — at the beginning, a close-up of plain garter stitch; at the end, some colorful pompoms added on top of the stitch. Instructions for knitting a hat and making pompoms are included, although adult help will be needed.

Anne Dublin, author of 44 Hours or Strike! (Second Story Press, 2015), Toronto, Canada


Sophie has two grandmas of different backgrounds -- Bubbe is Jewish and Nai Nai is Chinese. Both make chicken soup with recipes from their respective heritages. Sophie loves and is loved by her grandmas, but trouble brews when she mistakes kreplach for wontons and wontons for kreplach! So, she researches the recipes to understand the differences, in the process recognizes the similarities, and
then hatches a plan to resolve the conflict. Both grandmas are invited over with their soups, which Sophie mixes together to create the “first ever Jewish Chinese Kreplach Wonton Chicken Soup”. The grandmas admit that they each borrow from the other’s culture -- Bubbe uses wonton wrappers for her kreplach and Nai Nai shops at a Kosher market for her chicken. Sophie is pleased that the resulting mix of the two soups is delicious, and, more importantly, is “a little Jewish, a little Chinese - just like me.” Melmon’s characterizations of each side of the family, which could have been overdone, are subtle and endearing, and her illustrative style is perfectly joyful. Recipes for chicken soup, kreplach, and wontons complete this contemporary story that is just right for all kinds of diverse families, and for exploring diverse cultures in general.

Martha McMahon, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles


Yosef watches proudly as his younger brother becomes a bar mitzvah at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Then he begins to tell the story of how he got to Israel. “It is a long time since we left our small African village. I was just a boy…” Colorful, eye-catching full-page illustrations add to the vivid description of Yosef’s childhood. The warmth of family and village life in Ethiopia is conveyed through simple language, and such details like how he brushes his teeth with a twig will appeal to young listeners. The reader (or listener) will be enchanted by this tale of a young boy who falls into a pit and imagines various animals rescuing him. Gazelle would take him to far-off places, Hyena would hide him in the shadows, but Eagle offers his wings to fly him to his new home.

Yosef’s life is soon dramatically changed by the arrival of a mysterious visitor. The visitor turns out to be Mr. Ambassador, who has come all the way from Israel to tell the villagers that they could return to the land God gave to the Jews. Yosef’s younger brother is born on the airplane (an “eagle,” like the one he had dreamt about) on the way to the promised land. Yosef ends by describing the successful lives that he and his family have made for themselves in Israel. An author’s note provides a brief description of the Falasha (Ethiopians of Jewish faith) and the role of Ambassador Naim in bringing about their rescue.

This story about Operation Solomon in 1991 is far gentler than another recent picture book, Yuvi’s Candy Tree by Lesley Simpson (Kar-ben, 2011), which tells of a little girl’s terrifying journey from Ethiopia to Sudan and then on to Israel through Operation Moses. An earlier book by Maxine Rose Schur entitled When I Left My Village (Dial Press, 1996) describes the ordeal of Beta Israel in much greater detail and is appropriate for middle school readers.

Joyce Levine (retired), former AJL Publications Chair, North Woodmere, NY


A young Jewish immigrant boy narrates the story of his family’s first Thanksgiving dinner in America. Papa enters a raffle at his workplace, a pocketbook factory on the Lower East Side, and wins a turkey for Thanksgiving. He takes the large, noisy bird home on the J train and walks it home from the station on a leash. “A turkey doesn’t belong in a fourth-floor walk-up!” implores Mama. “He belongs with Mr. Cohen.” But Mr. Cohen, the butcher, breaks the news that the 30-pound turkey is too old to be slaughtered and will be too tough to eat. The boy is relieved, and happy that Mr. Cohen has agreed to keep the turkey in his yard. “But what will we eat for Thanksgiving dinner?” asks Papa. Mr. Cohen’s wise response: “Stick with the side dishes . . . they’re the best part of the holiday.” So Mama makes kugel and stuffed cabbage explaining “it’s our first Thanksgiving, so we’ll make the foods that feel special to us” and be thankful that the whole family is together. The colorful, detailed illustrations depict the vibrant, multi-cultural neighborhood and match the light, comical tone of the text. Not This
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

Turkey! joins Rivka’s First Thanksgiving by Elsa Okon Rael (Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2001) and Molly’s Pilgrim by Barbara Cohen (HarperCollins, 1983) as another Jewish immigrant Thanksgiving story that readers of all backgrounds will enjoy.

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

SHABBAT AND HOLIDAYS


Following the same format as Chanukah Guess Who? (2012) and Purim Guess Who? (2013), each sturdy double page spread provides rhyming clues about the holiday and then poses the question “Who am I?” Children can lift the flap to discover the answer. As expected, matzah, Seder Plate, Haggadah, the Four Questions, bitter herbs, and afikomen are all covered. Only transliteration is used with the Ashkenazi and Sephardi pronunciation when applicable. English translation is included for most terms such as “Ke’arah – Seder Plate,” “Arba Kosot – The Four Cups,” and “Pesach – Passover” within the text but other terms like “Chametz,” “Ten Makkot,” and “Mitzrim” are only defined in the glossary. Colorful, two-dimensional computer generated cartoon illustrations depict a contemporary Orthodox family but all readers familiar with the holiday observances will be delighted by this easy interactive guessing game. A “Pesach by Numbers!” quiz is also appended.

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

We’ve got it covered.

From Dara Horn on Yiddish theater to Yossi Shain and Sarah Fainberg on French Jewry to Elliott Abrams and Amos Yadlin on Israel’s northern border, not to speak of the latest in fiction, history, and Jewish thought, religion, literature, and politics.

Subscribe today for only $39.95 (4 issues) and get
Print + Web + App + Archive + e-Books
Visit www.jewishreviewofbooks.com or call 877-753-0337
For institutional access and rates, please email service@jewishreviewofbooks.com

Jewish Culture. Cover to Cover.

This is a lighthearted, and at times humorous, tour of sexuality in the Talmud through fifty chapters by the author of *Rashi’s Daughters*. Anton shows how the Talmud sages dealt with delicate questions of sex, procreation and the range of human sexuality. For example, the initial chapter (“In the Beginning God Created Sex”) cites the first mitzvah given to Adam and Eve to be “fertile and multiply.” The importance of this is underlined further by reference to Talmud *Brachot* 10a where the prophet Isaiah admonishes King Hezekiah because he failed to have children. Another chapter (“More Bad News...”) deals with restrictions on sexual activity. Throughout the book, Anton provides the reader with copious examples of Talmudic deliberations, cases, and Halacha concerning sexual obligations, actions, and thoughts.

*Fifty Shades of Talmud* entertains and enlightens; it is illustrated with cartoons and amusing quotations from non-Talmud sources, and it is small enough to be read in one sitting. Some of the examples, however, are explicit and to the point and thus this book is not suitable for young readers. Recommended for personal and academic libraries.

Daniel Stuhlman, Chicago, IL


A giant of *Musar* (Jewish ethics), Rabbi Simha Zissel Ziv (1824-1898) is the focus of this biography, which examines his thought and impact on the Torah world, especially within the cultural and intellectual climate of late nineteenth-century Eastern Europe. By comparing him to his contemporaries, most notably Musar movement founder Israel Salant, Claussen argues that what made Rabbi Ziv unique and even controversial was his emphasis on moral conduct, instead of the Talmudic learning of the emergent *kollel* system. It was a philosophy at odds with scholars who emphasized withdrawal from the world, or self-nullification. To Rabbi Ziv, self-humility and empathy for fellow Jews were essential: Torah study must lead to inner transformation, and virtue put into practical action.

The author discusses the range of influences on Rabbi Ziv’s thought: the pietists of medieval Germany; the rationalism of Maimonides; and even the Haskalah (Enlightenment), as well as whatever other philosophy was compatible with Torah, including non-Jewish thinkers like Aristotle. Because Rabbi Ziv’s disciples remained cloistered within the all-male enclave of his yeshiva, the applicability of his brand of Musar to the outside world, or its long-term efficacy, is questioned. Yet even though the Rabbi left no magnum opus or organized body of work, but only a compilation of responses, there is still enough to convey his amazing depth and saintliness. Highly edifying, this book exposes the reader to a diverse spectrum of Torah thought. Recommended for academic libraries with Jewish studies collections.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY


The author has published several books on apocalyptic literature and biblical criticism (see also Shmuel Ben-Gad’s review of Collin’s *The Apocalyptic Imagination* below). This edited volume is a compilation of nineteen previously published essays on apocalyptic literature by various authors in the field. In the introduction, Collins first defines apocalyptic literature and determines its purpose. The book then is divided into five parts, with the first part dedicated to prophetic literature, such as
Captured in Memory: Photographs and Thoughts on Poland

I began visiting Poland in 2004. I’ve been there over a dozen times since then. Between 2004 and 2011, I made four visits mainly to photograph, but also to reconsecrate the Jewish Cemetery in the small village that my mother’s parents came from. The sixty-one black and white photographs presented here are visual reflections of these visits accompanied by thoughts about the photographs themselves, as well as ensuing concerns about Poland and its complex relationship with Judaism.

This is the first of three planned books I hope to present over the next five years dealing with this topic.

—Alan Metnick

Publisher: Ten Trees Design Group, Inc. (Available: May 15, 2016)
Photographs: 61 printed as tritones
Hardcover and dust jacket: 180 pages
Language: English and Polish
Page size: 31cm x 31cm (12.2 x 12.2 inches)
Printed in Poland on acid-free paper
$60.00

One quarter (25%) of the proceeds of all sales will be donated to The David and Anna Dlugie Kliger Scholarship Fund. This Fund, established through The Jewish Alliance of Rhode Island funds Teachers and Educators in Poland who are working to educate their students about the Holocaust, xenophobia, bigotry, discrimination and anti-Semitism. Awards are made annually.

To order copies: www.alanmetnick.com/book

To order copies: www.alanmetnick.com/book


Apocalyptic literature involves revelation by a supernatural being of a supernatural world and the salvation to come at the end times of our world. Jewish apocalyptic literature, with the notable exception of the Biblical book of Daniel, plays little, if any, role in mainstream rabbinical Judaism; yet these works are of intrinsic interest and historical importance. In this third edition of The Apocalyptic Imagination, Collins, a professor at Yale Divinity School, provides a systematic, rather detailed overview of Jewish apocalyptic and related literature. One of the important points made is that apocalyptic literature is a genre that can, and has, been used in service of a variety of points of view. Some of the apocalypses, for example, seem to propound predestination but affirmation of free will is not absent in the literature. Collins writes clearly, but the audience for this is likely to be fairly specialized. An important book, especially for libraries that collect apocalyptic literature.

Shmuel Ben-Gad, Gelman Library, George Washington University
Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults


Essentially an extended pamphlet, this work is the first of a trilogy documenting the forced migration of 15,000 Jews during the first two years of World War Two from Vichy France, Germany, and German-occupied Europe to New York City and Cuba. Feldman examined the files of New York City ports and the records of American ambassadors to Spain. His primary interest is to partially uncover the role of Spain’s leader, Francisco Franco, in saving European Jewry from the Nazi German onslaught, even though Fascist Spain was an ardent support of the Nazis. Included are important data for genealogists, such as family names, port of origin, the ship’s name on which they traveled, and the port of arrival. This work is an essential tool for all Jewish genealogical specialists who will be grateful for the uncovering of important historical records.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC


The book opens with a very helpful intellectual portrait of Michael Fishbane by Sam Berrin Shonkoff that summarizes and contextualizes Fishbane’s life and thought for the expert and non-expert alike.

Hermeneutics is the theory and methodology of interpretation, and in the Jewish context in particular, it means the interpretation of biblical texts, midrash, myth, and mysticism. Michael Fishbane is the primary exponent of Jewish Hermeneutical theology and has argued that Jewish thought has always been exegetical in nature. Additionally, Fishbane believes that Jewish exegetical theology is revelatory in nature, and he has even stated that the first Jewish exegetes were the biblical scribes and editors themselves. These scribes often added their own commentary and corrections to the text that they inherited. This exegetical tradition continued through the Rabbinic period and throughout the medieval period up to, and including, modern times, expressing itself not only in Jewish thought but also in Jewish ritual behavior as well.

The rest of the book, save the last chapter, presents a selection of important Fishbane essays. For example, the first essay (“Modern Jewish Theology and Traditional Hermeneutics”) offers an introduction to his thought. The next three essays explore the hermeneutics of midrash, myth and mysticism. The final two essays are selections of Fishbane’s work on constructive theology. The final chapter is a fascinating interview with Fishbane, where he answers a myriad of questions, further elucidates his underlying philosophies and approaches, and proves why he is one of the most original Jewish thinkers in academia today. This book is not for the general reader. It is best read by someone with both a deep knowledge of Judaism and Jewish thought as well as philosophy.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

Fishbane, Simcha. *The Impact of Culture and Cultures Upon Jewish Customs and Rituals; Collected Essays (Judaism and Jewish Life)*. Academic Studies Press, 2016. 280 pp. $89.00. (9781618114914).

Fishbane begins with a brief introduction discussing both traditional and more modern and nuanced views of Judaism and its interaction with other cultures; namely, to what degree Jews were affected by their non-Jewish surroundings. The historian Moshe Rosman summarizes the more modern view in the context of his study of Polish Jewry by concluding that “Polish and Jewish cultures were at times separate, at times intertwined, at times embedded, and at times coincident with each other along broad bands.”

This book’s five chapters focus on the impact of cultural practice in religious ritual and custom (and not normative Torah law). The first chapter is on fire symbolism in Jewish law and ritual. The second focuses on the symbolic representation of the rituals and customs of Purim. The third chapter discusses customs on the holiday of Shavuot. The fourth is an analysis of “Holy and licit magic and Halacha”
The fifth and final chapter is about the symbolic representation of the Sefer Torah. Through them all, Fishbane shows that “no matter how high or thick the boundaries erected between the Jews and their surrounding culture, there will be cracks in the walls, and behaviors will filter in and become incorporated into the Jewish way of life. This is not a conscious attempt of the Jew to replicate non Jewish behavior but rather adoption of the existing social reality.”

This book will not be of interest to the general reader and, although I personally found the contents interesting, it appears hastily compiled. The introduction did not provide adequate background or context to the five chapters, each of which appeared to be an academic paper written and/or presented at various points in time.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY


This is a joint biography of Rabbi Steve Foster and his wife, social activist, Denver city councilor, and Colorado State Senator, Joyce Foster. They describe their courtship, marriage, family, and careers. At each stage, they include the challenges they faced.

Joyce describes the isolation she felt as the wife of a rabbinic student. Steven was usually immersed in his studies and Joyce didn’t easily connect with the other wives who were mostly college educated teachers. After settling in Denver, Steven talks about the rabbinic challenge of preaching on topics that were important to him, but that might be controversial in the congregation such as the Vietnam War, school busing, and gay rights. They both speak about the difficulties their children faced growing up under the eyes of the congregation. While Steven was very supportive of Joyce’s political career, he describes the strain that having a two career family put on their marriage and family life. A warm and honest look at a successful marriage, this book is recommended particularly for synagogues and libraries with local Colorado interest.

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


In the first half of the 20th Century, British Judaism had several important leaders. But while some of them remain recognizable figures, Rabbi Israel Mattuck has fallen from view. This biography, by Pam Fox of the Leo Baeck College, returns Mattuck to his deserved place.

Mattuck was born in Russia and immigrated to the US in the late 1880s. He grew up in Worcester, MA, and attended Harvard. After an abbreviated rabbinic education at Hebrew Union College, he was ordained in 1906. In 1912, he was hired as the Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London, where he served for the rest of his career. Pam Fox is an insightful student of 20th century British Jewish life and thought. Her analysis of Mattuck demonstrates his wide-ranging influence in British society and the Jewish place in it. Her study includes the rabbi’s extensive writing and sermons as well as his activities. His involvement in social action included supporting workers in several controversial strikes; during World War II he took in Kindertransport children until permanent homes could be found. He acted with other Jewish leaders—notably Lily Montagu and Claude Montefiore—and other notable figures on Jewish issues and on other critical topics. Finally, he was the leading figure as Liberal Judaism grew to be part of an international movement. Fox also recognizes Mattuck’s failings, particularly his adherence to Classic Reform styles and his failure to support Zionism.

As the book amply shows, Rabbi Mattuck was a major participant in British life and world Jewry. It is regrettable that he is so little remembered. This volume is a readable, comprehensive overview of his life, with three summary chapters and extensive notes. As such, it is appropriate for larger libraries covering 20th century world Judaism.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA
OPALS
OPEN SOURCE AUTOMATED LIBRARY SYSTEM

Open source you can trust
▷ Easy to use
▷ Easy to implement
▷ Easy to afford

ASK FOR A FREE TEST SITE

OPALS Demo Site

The best way to determine whether OPALS is a good fit for your library is to experience it in the familiar context of your library’s data.

▷ Request a demo: info@opals-na.org
▷ Export MARC records from your existing system
▷ Upload data to the OPALS demo
▷ Most demos are ready to evaluate in 24 hours

During the 3 month evaluation period, you will be able to try all of the system’s features and have access to OPALS support staff.

Please email us for some targeted reference sites that would be useful for your library needs:
info@opals-na.org

US SERVICE CENTER
Media Flex Inc.
P.O. Box 1107, Champlain, NY 12919
Tel: 873-331-1022

CANADA & INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT
Bibliofiche
245 Labrosse, Montréal, Canada H9R 1A3
Tel: 866-263-4340

Web-based
Lowest Total cost of Ownership
Standards-Compatible
Experienced support
Managed updates
OPAC
Cataloging
Union catalogs
ILL
Circulation
Inventory
Reports
E Book Management
Booking feature
Equipment management
Database Authentication Management
Digital Document Upload & Cataloging
Discovery Interface

help.opalsinfo.net

This book tells the story of Modern Orthodoxy in America during its formative period (1920-1960) through the eyes of one of its primary leaders and representatives—Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung. But this is not a biography: Jung is used as a foil of sorts to tell the story of a particular Jewish denominational strand at a critical juncture. In the 1920s, Orthodoxy in America was struggling due to increasing non observance, pressure of assimilation/Americanization, and lack of institutional infrastructure. Orthodoxy was seen as the last vestige of the ‘old country’ and most immigrants were keenly interested in “becoming American.” By the end of the period, Orthodoxy was on much more solid ground: religious observance was stronger, dual identity was preferred over assimilation and orthodox institutions were growing in number, size and intensity.

The introduction provides contextual background, a biographical sketch of Rabbi Leo Jung, and a look at America through the eyes (and words) of Rabbi Jung. The book is then organized by decades. Chapter 1 tells the story of Modern Orthodox in the 1920s, an amorphous movement with no concrete ideology outside of the belief in the potential to be both observant and American but with the beginnings of institutional growth. Chapter 2 describes Modern Orthodox in the 1930s and deals with the loss of prosperity due to the depression and Hitler’s rise, but also the growth of Orthodox institutions such as the RCA and Yeshiva University and the prestige that it began to confer on American Orthodox Rabbis. Chapter 3 depicts Orthodox life in the 1940s when despite the despair of the Holocaust, Orthodoxy expanded its place in American Jewish life and became more influential and engaged in political affairs on a national and international stage. Rabbi Soloveitchik emerged as a leader during this decade, kashrut became further professionalized and Orthodox Jews became more comfortable expressing their Orthodoxy in public. The final chapter is about Modern Orthodoxy in the 1950s and its movement to the ‘right’ and the “reinvigoration” of Orthodoxy (along with a general American religious revival). The conclusion summarizes the major thesis of the book and provides anecdotes about Rabbi Leo Jung and his involvement during these decades.

This book originated as the author’s PHD thesis originally titled “Trends in Modern Orthodoxy as reflected in the career of Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung.” Thus, it reads more like a thesis at times than an academic or popular book, but that should not deter readers interested in this topic.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY


This book succeeds in conveying the inspiring story of Vichna Kaplan, a pioneer in education for Jewish girls, and how she transplanted the Bais Yaakov educational movement to America.

Kaplan not only brought the vision and the fire of Sarah Schenirer, founder of the movement Bais Yaakov in Eastern Europe, to America, she also inspired a generation of Jewish women who would as *nashim kesherot* (“i.e., Kosher women”), nurture Torah learning and make the necessary sacrifices to ensure that it would continue in America.

One great attribute of this well-written and well-documented book is that it is based on a wide range of rare archival sources such as diaries, letters, postcards, and tombstone inscriptions. These primary sources were gathered from many sources, including a trip to Eastern Europe to Warsaw, Lublin, Lizenzk, Cracow, etc. Another positive attribute of the book is that in the course of telling the Rebbetzin Kaplan’s story, many of the *Gedolim* (luminaries in Torah wisdom) with whom she interacted are also referenced and discussed.

Overall, this book stands as testimony to Rebbetzin Kaplan’s great *mesirat nefesh* (self-sacrifice) and vision. It shows how she “raised the bar for American Jewish girls’ education,” and the ways in which she affected the lives of thousands of Jewish women for the betterment of Judaism. Recommended for all Jewish libraries, history collections, and education libraries.

David B Levy, Touro College, NYC

In this volume, Oksman provides a close reading of the autobiographical works of seven graphic novelists. She looks at the artwork, the placement of characters in the frame, the placement of frames on the page, the text, and how the text and artwork interact. For each memoirist, Oksman determines how she defines Jewish identity, and then how the memoirist relates to that identity.

For Kominsky Crumb, Jewish identity is tied to an assertive temperament (transmitted from her mother), to the body, in particular to the nose, and as a contrast to her non-Jewish husband. Vanessa Davis’s identity is defined by being in a place with a “New York Jewish” feel. Miss Lasko-Gross and Lauren Weinstein, both compose memoirs through the eyes of their younger selves. Their Jewishness is mostly expressed by a feeling of being “other.” Sarah Glidden and Miriam Libicki reflect on the relationship between diaspora Jews and the State of Israel and on the links between Jewish identification and Israeli affiliation. For Liana Finck, the past is very much alive and talkative. The spirit of Abraham Cahan speaks to her out the pages of a scrapbook that her grandfather put together of his favorite Bintel Brief letters. While Cahan seems to assimilate to the modern world, Finck is moved to learn Yiddish.

With the explosion of graphic novels and other graphic works, this is a fascinating look at a new form of memoir, but also of how to analyze and critique this format.

Includes illustrations, color plates, notes, bibliography, and index. Highly recommended for academic libraries.

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


The dualistic concepts of the angelic and demonic figure are prominent in theological arguments that raged among Jews, Christians, and Gnostics in the first centuries of the Common Era. Examining two early pieces of Slavonic pseudepigrapha (namely the “Apocalypse of Abraham” and the “Book of 2nd Enoch”), Andrei Orlov sets out to demonstrate that in early Jewish apocalyptic literature the antagonist(s) (described as demonic) often parallel or mirror features of the angelic figures, and even those of God. As an example of this mirroring (or mimesis), Orlov points to the Yom Kippur Temple ritual involving the “Scapegoat,” wherein the goat for Azazel (the demonic “Other”) is saddled with the sins and failings of the Israelites, while it is matched with “its right counterpart, associated with the eschatological ‘goat for YHWH,’ the patriarch Abraham.”

Orlov argues moreover, that the dualistic imagery found in these two works appears to anticipate a number of later Jewish mystical developments, “… especially reflected in the Castilian Kabbalah and the Zoharic tradition, with their tendency of ‘posing of a demonic realm morphologically paralleling the realm of the divine.’” He cites Isaiah Tishby in asserting that this mirroring (or parallelism-mimesis) can be observed in the “Sefirot,” where the Divine side associated with the angelic is mirrored by the “Other side” associated with the demonic. With further reference to Tishby, Orlov asserts that the parallelism in these elements is so connected, that by studying the “Other Side” element found in the two pseudepigrapha discussed here, one can realize a better “knowledge and understanding of the Divine sefirotic system.”

Though undoubtedly esoteric, Orlov’s Divine Scapegoats is nevertheless informative. It injects new insights into our understanding of the early foundations of the Jewish mystical tradition. It also provides new evidence regarding the development of Castilian Kabbalah in 13th century Spain, and therefore is a valuable contribution to Sephardic studies. With its bibliography and very extensive notes it should find a place in academic libraries.

Randall C. Belinfante, Director of Library and Archives, American Sephardi Federation at CJH
Rabbi Shlomo Pick’s edition of *Moadei HaRav* succeeds in offering the English-speaking, observant reader a better understanding and appreciation of some of Rav Soloveitchik’s ideas, analysis, and methodology relating to halachic (legal) teachings, regarding the *chagim* (holidays). Many of these *shiurim* (lessons) were originally delivered in English or Yiddish. Rabbi Pick provides a clear overview of the topics and offers explanations using the Brisker method of interpretation.

The book comprises an introduction and 17 chapters from the Rav’s lectures organized into three distinct parts. The first section includes an excellent essay describing the Rav’s position on the *peshat* (simple meaning) of talmudic passages, the role of *minhagim* (customs) within Jewish law, the Rav’s understanding of the teacher/student dynamic, and the relationship between philosophy and law. The second part contains *shiurim* on the holidays; for example, setting the date of Shavuot (based on a number of Rishonim). Some of these *shiurim* include an appendix to elucidate particular issues raised by the Rav. Rabbi Pick also provides helpful footnotes that contain references to additional oral remarks or discourses by the Rav and/or other primary and secondary sources by and about him. The third section includes five studies on Jewish law and customs such as the mitzvah of Charoset (the Rav on the Rambam).

Rabbi Pick and his helpers (including Rabbi Shimon Altshul) have made a most positive contribution by sharing many of the Rav’s insights, innovative approaches, and intellectual brilliance in a very clear manner. Highly recommended.

David B Levy, Touro College, NYC

---


*Tzimtzum* (self-contraction) is part of Kabbalistic thought. At the starting point of creation, God is infinite and totally occupies the universe. The infinity of God contracts to allow an empty space for the world to be created. This idea generates the possibility for change that does not reconstruct the previous, but aspires to be something new. Whereas Freudian therapy examines the experience beginning in early childhood of the patient seeking to overcome the past, Rotenberg describes a theory that focuses on the future and adjusting our understanding of the past.

While the sentences and paragraphs of this book are easy to read, internalizing the concepts is more complex. This is not a recreational read, but it is also not scholarly tome beyond the reach of an intelligent reader. In essence, everyone has an inner light, and the best way to help someone overcome stress is to restructure his/her life story to reveal the inner light.

This book is recommended to those health care professionals and others who encounter people with internal struggles. It is recommended for academic, synagogue libraries and those personal collections with an interest in psychology from a Hassidic point of view.

Daniel Stuhlman, Chicago, IL

---


Rabbi Jeff Roth presents the approach of Jewish mystics to the rift between human beings (and all they have created) and the Divine to explain the origin of this rift and to offer a way to heal it. “It is my belief that the rift is a result of misperceptions created by our conceptual thinking and reinforced by our cultural conditioning.”

Classical teachings of Jewish mystics describe the world we live in as cut off from the so-called higher realms of the Divine. “In psychological terms, we would say that we are cut off from certain parts of ourselves, especially our hearts.” *Me, Myself & God* revisits a few stories from Genesis and from Exodus as interpreted by Jewish mystics to propose a theology based on mindfulness. For all readers.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.

This book explores the intersection between literature and romantic practices, studying the effects of European literary and sexual conventions on Jewish sexual structures, analyzing the literary character of Jewish sexual modernity, and tracing the distinctively literary (that is, erotic) views of Jewish tradition that emerge in modern Jewish literature.” Seidman conducts her exploration by selecting classical Yiddish and Hebrew novels and autobiographies written during the nineteenth and twentieth century and provides us a fine analysis of the ritual of courtship, the role or absence of a matchmaker, the importance of family pedigree, the relation between the bride and her mother-in-law, and the segregation of the sexes. At the end of each chapter, Seidman presents a creative work, a novel, a short story, or a motion picture (Erica Jong, Philip Roth, Bernard Malamud, Tony Kushner, Erica Jong, Mollie Picon, etc.) produced in the Western hemisphere to show “the recovery of traditional Jewish practices and customs” that she previously observed in the Yiddish and Hebrew literary works. Recommended to interested individuals and academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.


This text is a meandering tale that lacks coherence, but tells a tale of the author in prewar Warsaw, his living conditions, his wartime experiences as a junior officer in the Polish army, exile with his father to Siberia, and return to postwar Poland. The author’s story is one of harrowing episodes dealing with the Nazis, Soviet authorities, and Polish antisemitism. Interspersed is his family life, romance with his future wife, and his attempts to get an education. After leaving Poland for England, and then to the United States, he becomes a fairly well recognized biochemist, holding an academic position at New York University. While considering himself Jewish, there is little to gauge his spiritual connection nor communal conditions save for the occasional mention of what he witnessed during the Holocaust. This would be a useful addition to a Holocaust or for a Jewish-Polish collection.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC


In 1997, shortly after the publication of the first edition of this book, Rabbi Twerski, speaking at an overflow Baltimore audience, said that “True Torah observance is not conducive to any kind of abuse, physical, emotional or otherwise....” This is still his message in this revised and updated second edition. Community members have a hard time believing that a “pillar of the community” can be a saint in public and a monster at home. Abuse can be verbal, emotional, and/or physical. Too often an abused wife is naively told to stay in the marriage and preserve *shalom bayis* (domestic peace). Even if the accuser is lying, we have to take an accusation seriously and try to help those involved. Rabbi Twerski, who is both a Chasidic rabbi and a psychiatrist, has many years of experience treating alcohol and other types of substance abusers. He knows that those who are sick, need professional help. Denial does not make the problems disappear.

This book is well written, but it is not a happy book. The case studies presented are sad because too often the person seeking help was not helped in the early stages by the parents, rabbis, or community members. After reading this book, you should be able to better recognize the signs of abuse and help the abused parties get the kind of help to make her or him whole. This book should be read and discussed by every rabbi, parent, teacher, and anyone else who could see domestic abuse. It is highly recommended for every kind of library – personal, synagogue, academic, and community.

Daniel Stuhlman, Chicago, IL

The purpose of the present study is to rediscover the Jews of post-war France, Belgium, and the Netherlands by examining how they reconstructed their communities in the period between 1945 and the early 1960s” and “deal primarily with the major areas of Jewish settlement in the three countries: Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam.” Chapters 1 & 2 examine the aid of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in building efficient and self-sustaining institutions. Chapter 3 evaluates the impact of the creation of the State of Israel; chapter 4 deals with the response to antisemitism; Chapter 5 looks at the influence of the Cold War. Chapter 6 “examines the manner in which the three communities dealt with the unprecedented religious, educational, and cultural needs of their diverse constituents.” Weinberg’s “recounting of the often Byzantine process of bureaucratic decision-making and of the endless internecine quarrels among the representatives and delegates of the myriad of federations, associations, and groups,” allows the reader to have a full understanding of the “impact of the Holocaust on established forms of collective Jewish identity and commitment in the three countries.” The book includes a “resources for further research” separate from a bibliography and an index. Recommended to all academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.

Zakheim, Dov S. Nehemiah: Statesman and Sage. New Milford and Jerusalem: Maggid Books. 2016. $27.95. (9781592643691). Also available as an eBook.

Dov Zakheim is ordained as an Orthodox rabbi, and he has served as Under Secretary of Defense and Deputy Under Secretary of Defense in the U.S. government. Thus his interest in the biblical figure of Nehemiah, governor of Judah under the Persian king Ataxerxes, arises both from his religious studies and experience in government. Zakheim analyzes Nehemiah’s situation, character, and behavior, drawing primarily upon the Biblical book bearing his name and secondarily upon rabbinical and modern scholarly commentaries. While his engagement with the commentaries is not without interest, the strength of the book is in his bringing to bear his own experience and knowledge of politics and government as he deals directly with the Biblical book. Zakheim argues that Nehemiah was a very accomplished, even great, political leader: seriously religious nationalist, compassionate towards the poor, and wise in the ways of politics. He revived the Jewish polity in Judah religiously, economically, socially, and militarily, and accomplished this not only against external enemies, but also in the face of opposition by some members of the Jewish elites who were content with the status quo of oppression of the poor and rife intermarriage. An insightful tome.

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

Don’t Forget to Check Out AJL News!

The November/December issue of AJL News has information about the 2017 Conference, and lots of exciting articles about the activities of our members. Members can find AJL News at jewishlibraries.org

Jacob Dinezon wrote some of the first novels in Yiddish. *Hershele* was first published in 1891. Like many novels of the period in any language, it is filled with dramatic dialogue, sentimentality, and one-dimensional characters, with little attention to modern elements of fiction such as setting and mood. Nevertheless, it is a gripping tale, with a realistic adolescent love story, a complicated plot, and an unexpected ending. Even more important, it is packed with minutiae about life in a typical shtetl which contains a yeshiva whose students eat at different houses in town on different days of the week. The story goes into great detail about everyday customs, including food ways, economic practices, and the manipulations surrounding arrangements for marriages and the conflict for parents about whether to choose a learned man or a rich one. There is a wealth of information about the celebration of Purim and Passover, including a thorough description of the preparation for and performance of the Purim play, “The Selling of Joseph”. There is also lore pertaining to cantors of the period, including the “Vilner Balebasel”, and the lure of secular singing. Most significant for the hero, Hershele, is the “Vilner”, a fellow student who leads him to begin studying books of the Enlightenment. *Hershele* serves as much as an ethnographic resource as it does as a novel. This translation keeps the prose simple and the story moves quickly. Recommended for libraries that collect in Yiddish in translation, or stories about traditional Eastern European Jewry.

Beth Dwoskin, Proquest (Retired), Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI


Divorce can be like the end of the world for a family. The ending of Jacob and Julia Bloch’s marriage in Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Here I Am*, is like the removal of a Band-Aid from a wound: painful in the process and more painful when done slowly, but necessary to do in order for healing to begin.

As son Sam’s bar mitzvah quickly approaches, Jacob and his wife must deal with their quickly disintegrating marriage. A “sexting” affair with a colleague, charges of vandalism against the bar mitzvah boy and the impending death of the family patriarch take a toll on the Bloch marriage. A visit from Israeli cousin, Tamir, does not help. Tamir is everything that Jacob is not: hawkish, arrogant and confident. Jacob’s attitude to the nation of Israel is tested as a catastrophic earthquake rattles Israel, setting the Middle East on fire.

Foer’s long-awaited follow-up to his previous novels, *Everything is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, is well-written and is surprisingly engaging for a lengthy novel (571 pages). Foer has brilliantly woven the tale of the collapse of an American Jewish family, paralleling its demise with the destruction of a nation, like the family, whose presence once seemed eternal. Jacob confronts his ambivalence for his extended family, his wife and the nation of Israel and must accept massive changes in his life. Highly recommended for book clubs and individual reading.

Yossi Gremillion, Librarian I, Broward County Library


Blume Lempel was one of the finest writers of prose in Yiddish of all time. Though the narratives in this book are as much memoirs and impressions as they are plotted short stories, the language is stunning in its stark power and evocative beauty. Lempel came to the United States in 1939. Much of her writing eulogizes the six million. She describes imagined scenarios of unsparing horror, especially
for women, whose suffering she visualized though she never experienced it. Her view of postwar America through the lens of a foreigner whose family and heritage were destroyed is also compelling. On an airplane, in Brooklyn, or in Yosemite National Park, her past is always with her, always casting shadows over the American present, which for her is dark with death, divorce, incest, and the shame of women who can’t outlive their past. Lempel’s themes are strong and difficult, and these translations live up to the force of her words. Here, there is none of the sentimentality that plagues the perception so many readers have of Yiddish literature, and no solemn sanctification of the dead. Rather, this is the work of a brilliant, talented writer with one foot in the prewar world in Europe and the other in postwar America during its period of growth and development as a modern nation. We owe a great debt to Cassedy and Taub for their deft translation of a significant portion of Lempel’s work. Highly recommended for all collections of Jewish literature.

Beth Dwoskin, Proquest (Retired), Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

Hador

The Hebrew Annual of America

This continuation of Histadruth Ivrit of America is the only Hebrew periodical published in America.

Current volume only
$30.00

There are few complete sets of Vol. 1-7 available at the special AJL discount rate of $150.00 instead of $210.00. Back volumes are offered for $20.00 each

Contact: Lev Hakak hakak@humnet.ucla.edu

The following Israeli and American professors contributed to Hador No. 7, 2016

Adina Abadi
Edina Amir-Coffin
Jacob Apelberg
Maya Arad
Aviva Barzel
Osnat Bishko
Shmuel Bolozyka
Zafrrin Cohen
Ronit Gez
Nurit Govrin
Lev Hakak
Esther Hanoch
Nitsa Kann
Rachel Kapen
David Kramer z”l
Dalit Kats
Edith Kokensky Ari
Liberman
Ofra Matso Cohen
Yair Mazor
Reben Namdar
Paul Overland
Yosef Ozer
Moshe Pelli
Dina Ripsman
Yigal Shevars
Roni Somek
Robert Whitehill
Arieh Wineman
Ruth Wolf

During its heyday, Hora 79 was one of the premier folk dance groups in Israel, touring the world. Following a traumatic event, when members Avshi and Janet are killed, the group disbanded. A chance meeting on a commercial set sparks the idea for a 33-year reunion and performance at a dance festival in the Galil. As the group comes together for rehearsals, personal histories come to light. Sharona and Eitan fell in love when they were in the group, but parted as Eitan feared commitment. Rafi, who is homosexual and was closeted when the group performed, reveals his love for Menny. Everyone has deep disdain for Dori, the group’s founder. The group practices and grows closer. But when they arrive in Karmiel for the festival, an old rival in charge of the scheduling switches their performance venue and time (at the same time as a big attraction). The group dances with all their hearts for the small audience, which includes Dori, who is now wheelchair bound.

The groups’ nostalgia for their past evokes nostalgia for the folk dancing, accompanied by accordion, that was an integral part of Israeli culture. There are many personalities in the troupe, and some of the characters get lost. Still, there is both drama and humor, and libraries with large collections of films and/or materials about Israel would want to include this.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel

---


Kroke is a well-established Polish trio with a long history in klezmer music and an extensive discography. In this album, they’ve moved far from their klezmer roots, into explorations of jazz, New Age, and other world music traditions. Nevertheless, there are still a lot of echoes of klezmer in this CD, especially since they can evoke the klezmer sound easily with their instrumentation—accordion, fiddle, and bass. Some of the pieces include New Age style vocals, while others have classic klezmer rhythms. Most fall somewhere in between. They have the experimental quality that a listener might expect from well-trained musicians who have been working together a long time and are familiar with a variety of idioms. This CD will please adventurous listeners, but it will disappoint and annoy patrons who are looking for a traditional klezmer sound. Recommended for comprehensive Jewish music collections.

Beth Dwoskin, Proquest (Retired), Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

---


The performers on this wonderful CD, *Schikker wi Lot* (“as drunk as Lot”) are two young Germans, a singer and an accordionist, who, like many Europeans their age, have embraced the Yiddish culture that their forebears destroyed. The Yiddish of the Jewish underworld is an important area of study for Yiddishists, but its songs are almost never recorded. Though the underworld had its own dialect and slang, here the songs are sung in the perfect, standard Yiddish of non-native speakers who learned their Yiddish in the classroom. Nevertheless, the poignant cynicism of hard-living, alienated Jewish reprobates in the interwar period in Europe is brought out perfectly by the expressive voice of the lead singer, Fabian Schnedler. On most tracks, the only instrumentation is from the skillful accordion of the harmony vocalist, Franka Lampe. One track is embellished by the clarinet of Michael Winograd, and Benjy Fox-Rosen adds his contrabass to two others. The music is taken from the collection, *Ganovim-Lider* (“songs of thieves”), which were gathered by a self-taught folklorist, Shmuel Lehman. Raised as a Hasid in Warsaw, Lehman became a Bundist. He dedicated his life to collecting Jewish folklore and though he was untrained, his work was critically important to the field of Jewish ethnography. His life and most of his work were lost in the Warsaw Ghetto, but reproductions of several pages from *Ganovim-Lider*, which was published in 1924, are included in the liner notes of this CD. The music was recorded live in Weimar, but the technical quality of the recording is excellent. The liner notes are entirely in German, with transliterated Yiddish lyrics to accompany the pages from the original songbook. This CD is both an edifying peek into the Jewish past, and a sheer pleasure to hear. It is a must for any Jewish music collection.

Beth Dwoskin, Proquest (Retired), Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI
The AJL Newsletter (Irene Levin-Wixman z”l, founding editor) was published in print from 1979 to 2010 by the Association of Jewish Libraries to inform members about AJL activities and issues related to Judaica libraries. As of January 2011 it is split into two separate electronic publications – the AJL News and the AJL Reviews. Receipt of these publications is one of the benefits of membership. Please see the AJL website at http://www.jewishlibraries.org for membership rates.

Editor-in-Chief
Uri Kolodney
University of Texas Libraries
The University of Texas at Austin
One University Station S5400
Austin, TX 78712-8916
generaleditor@jewishlibraries.org

Copy Editing and Page Layout
Karen Ulric
Golda Och Academy
1418 Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, NJ 07052
ajlcopieditor@gmail.com

Please send requests for membership and dues information to:
AJL VP for Membership
Sheryl Stahl
Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR
3077 University Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90007
membership@jewishlibraries.org

Please send adult books for review to D. Scheide

Daniel Scheide
S.E. Wimberly Library
Florida Atlantic University
777 Glades Road
Boca Raton, FL 33431-6424
561-297-0519
dascheide@gmail.com

Dr. Rebecca Jefferson
Head, Isser and Rae Price Library of Judaica
539, Library West
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL. 32611-7010
Phone: (352) 273-2650
Fax: (352) 392-8118
jefferson@ufl.edu

Please send children’s and YA books for review to R. Kamin

Rachel Kamin
1054 Holly Circle
Lake Zurich, IL 60047
rach elkamin@gmail.com

and Chava (Kathe) Pinchuck
kpinchuck@gmail.com

Please send children’s and YA books for review to R. Kamin

All links to online resources were checked for accuracy on November 13, 2016. We cannot be responsible for broken links to those resources in the future.

AJL Reviews
November/December 2016
Volume VI, No. 4
ISSN 2160-0910

Advertising:

Advertising Rates
Full page $200 7 1/2 x 9 1/2
Half-page (vert) $110 3 5/8 x 9 1/2
Half-page (horiz) $110 7 1/2 x 4 3/4
Quarter-page $55 3 5/8 x 4 3/4

Ads may include color and hyperlinks.
Dimensions are in inches

All ads must be prepaid. Please submit all inquiries, finished copy, and checks to:
Jackie Ben-Efraim
Ostrow Library
American Jewish University
15600 Mulholland Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90077
(818) 383-9672 (cell)
ajladmanager@gmail.com