In The Spotlight


This is a graphic novel interpretation of three Agnon stories: “From Foe to Friend”, “The Fable of the Goat”, and “The Architect and the Emperor”. While simple to read in this format, the book is filled with depth and wisdom. Each illustrated story has much to say about how we react to the world. The pen, ink and watercolor illustrations are clear and detailed. As with any good graphic novel, they are well connected to the story being told.

“From Foe to Friend” is the story of a man who, through a series of painful learning experiences, finally builds a home impervious to his enemy, the wind. The bully becomes the bullied as the man and the wind learn to live as neighbors. “The Fable of the Goat” is a lesson in awareness and not jumping to conclusions, when a man sends his son to discover the source of the delicious taste of his goat’s milk. The son enters the Land of Israel and, not wanting to leave, sends the goat back to his father with a message to follow the goat. Father does not see the message until it is too late, and his hopes of entering The Land are lost. The final story, “The Architect and the Emperor”, transports the reader into thinking about what is real and what is not. The architect for the Emperor, no longer interested in building beautiful structures, is commanded to build something. The Emperor is euphoric over the new building, until he discovers it is only a painting… or is it?

A 2015 Sydney Taylor Notable Book, this is an excellent addition to any library; each of these stories/fables has specific and subtle lessons to be taught. There are enormous possibilities for discussion when read by a group of teens or adults.

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

The story of Janusz Korczak, his orphanage and his final moments, are fairly well known. Nevertheless, there is much to learn in this profound telling. Simon, an orphan who lived in Warsaw under the care of Janusz Korczak, aka “Mister Doctor”, tells the story of the power and courage of this man who treated everyone, especially children, with the utmost respect. Simon describes life in the orphanage, the move from Krochmalna Street to a new home in the Warsaw ghetto, and how the transition to the ghetto was made as pleasant as possible by Mr. Doctor – discipline continued, school continued, there was order, there was peace within the orphanage walls. When Dr. Korczak goes to the Blank Palace, Gestapo Headquarters, to get back a cartload of potatoes that were stolen as he entered the ghetto, he is laughed at by the guards and thrown into prison for a month. When Korczak returned, visibly the worse for wear, he regaled the children with fantastic tales of his adventures. Simon goes on to tell the story of how Henryk Goldszmit, who could not bury his pet canary when it died, went on to become Janusz Korczak. The end of this story is well known. On August 5, 1942, Dr. Korczak led his group of orphans to their deaths in Treblinka. Legend has it that Dr. Korczak was offered his freedom as he walked out of the ghetto but refused to leave his charges. The four-page spread illustrating their march out of the ghetto with him calmly in the lead is as powerful as any photograph. The concluding page describes these lost lives and how the United Nations based “The Rights of the Child” on much of Janusz Korczak’s work. The charcoal and pencil drawings, in their simple use of black, gray and beige, profoundly convey both the horror of the times as well as the gentle nature of Dr. Korczak. This sensitively written history of this episode of the Holocaust, in picture book format for older children, belongs in all Holocaust collections.

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


Joey loves to collect things as all young children do. But when a new dishwasher is delivered to the house, he wants to keep the biggest box ever, the dishwasher box. Joey has a ball playing with this box using his imagination and traveling to all sorts of faraway places. But the box proves to be too big in his bedroom and Joey must get rid of it. Instead, Joey comes up with a great idea when he sees a similar box at the grocery store filled with food donations for the local food bank. He is inspired to use his box to help others, too. With the help of his classmates, Joey and his friends collect food items for the local food bank. This is a wonderful story about how to make a difference in other people’s lives and the importance of tikkun olam (repairing the world) and tzedekah (charity). With whimsical and cartoon-like illustrations that nicely support the text, young children will be able to relate to Joey and his ideas.

Lisa Katz, Corte Madera Public Library, Larkspur, CA


Devorah is a teenage girl who lives in a Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic Jewish community in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. She has always obeyed the strict rules of her community which include not dating or interacting with the opposite sex especially outside her community. By a chance...
encounter, Devorah gets stuck in a hospital elevator with Jaxon, an awkward, African-American teenager who also lives in Brooklyn. They are attracted to each other and develop a secret relationship after the elevator meeting. Eventually, Devorah’s family discovers her forbidden relationship and intervenes. Although the relationship ends, it makes Devorah realize that she wants other options for her life than those her community offers. The narrative is told in the alternating viewpoints of Devorah and Jaxon. Their voices express the emotions of first love that is filled with hope despite disappointments. A 2015 Sydney Taylor Honor Book for Teen Readers, it is recommended for all pluralistic libraries.

Heather Lenson, Ratner Media & Technology Center, Jewish Education Center of Cleveland, OH


This delightful picture book delivers a life cycle event from the boys’ point of view. Uncle Eli’s wedding robs Daniel of a soccer partner; nuptial plans make him feel left out. Eli and his bride promise Daniel there will be something special they can do together during the ceremony. As traditional customs arrive: ketubah, veiling the bride, holding the chuppah, Daniel is told no, he is too young to help. Daniel despairs he will ever get a part. Unexpectedly, Eli fumbles breaking the glass at ceremony’s end, calls on Daniel to assist, and the happy ending includes the promise of future teamwork between the two. Sweet, active, excellent character-driven illustrations support the story on every page. A short glossary explains new Hebrew and Yiddish words. The stars of this slight volume are the two grandmothers who exclaim in rhyme, their constant running commentary adding humor and emotion. They bring anticipation of a teary service, a swinging party, and a happy life for the new couple as they comment from the audience in dialog that mirrors their personalities. What joy! What fun! This book stands as its own story and as a gender companion to the recent Don’t Sneeze at the Wedding (AJLR Sept/Oct 2013) which is a ceremony from the girls’ point of view. This version does not include the veiling, but does include rings, wine and seven blessings, which are missing at Uncle Eli’s wedding. If boys will read about girls and vice versa, the picture book crowd will be Jewish wedding maven’s in no time.

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


This historical/fantasy novel opens as ten-year-old Franny Katzenback wakes up inside an iron lung in the Children’s Hospital, Pittsburgh 1952. She has been stricken with polio and her life, and the lives of the people around her, will never be the same again. From the summer of 1952 to the fall of 1953, we follow Franny as she struggles to make sense of what has happened and to face her new reality. In the process, we get to know a large cast of characters—Franny’s loving parents, her wise Zadie Ben, her older sister Min, friends in the neighborhood, the kind Mrs. Nelson, Professor Doctor Gutman, the horrible Nurse Olivegarten, but most of all (or least of all?), Fleabrain, an eloquent, erudite, passionate, and compassionate flea. A flea, you say? Indeed! Whether Fleabrain is a figment of Franny’s imagination (or of the author’s), we suspend our disbelief as Fleabrain helps Franny discover that, although she has lost much, she
has also gained in courage, knowledge, friendship, and above all, hope. As the story develops, we see the characters grow in maturity. For example, Franny’s friends are at first terrified of coming close to her, for they fear she’s still “contagious”. Gradually, they push their misconceptions aside and figure out how to help Franny participate in their games and eventually go back to school. And there we are. Friendship is the dominant theme in this novel: friendship between sisters, schoolmates, adults and children, and yes, even between a girl and a flea. Connecting this story arc—almost like the back story—is E.B. White’s Charlotte’s Web. How Charlotte the spider helps Wilbur the pig to survive parallels Fleabrain’s love and compassion for Franny. Told mostly from the third-person point of view, with generous dabs of journal entries and newspaper articles, the story is filled with wit and humor along with an honest telling of Franny’s loneliness, fear, and despair. Jewish content is light but evident, for the Katzenbacks are American, non-religious Jews. For example, they eat oysters (non-kosher food); they don’t go to synagogue on the Sabbath. However, Zaide Ben calls Min’s boyfriend langer loksh (long noodle) and Professor Doctor Gutman remembers his wife and daughter who died in a concentration camp during World War II.

If there is a villain in this novel, it is certainly the polio virus. In her author’s note, Rocklin describes the historical and scientific background of polio epidemics, the race to find a vaccine against the disease (successfully developed by Dr. Jonas Salk and his researchers in 1954), the physical therapies used, and finally, the fight for the rights of disabled persons that continues to this day. In addition to the author’s note are discussion questions and an extensive bibliography. As people around the world continue to be stricken with various diseases caused by lethal viruses, this 2015 Sydney Taylor Notable Book is most certainly relevant today.

Anne Dublin, co-author of Odyssey Through Hell: Escape from the Warsaw Ghetto, Toronto, Canada


This is a love story, a tale of perseverance, and a chronicle of the “American Dream”. Anna and Solomon fall in love and marry in Russia in 1897. When the pogroms begin, Solomon uses what little money he and Anna had saved and purchases a one-way ticket to America. Solomon works as a painter—living, working, saving and praying for the day his Anna will land in America. When the day arrives, Anna’s brother, Label, steps off the boat, not Anna. Solomon, a very understanding man, continues to work, save and pray, building a highly reputed painting business. As he meets each boat carrying his Anna, he is disappointed to find Anna’s oldest brother, and then her mother, and at last… Anna.

This story is based on the lives of the author’s grandparents. The author’s note at the back of the book includes pictures of Solomon and Anna describing a bit more about their life in Brooklyn, New York. The illustrations are simple, looking like a graphic novel’s pen and ink drawings. This fact is not surprising, for the artist is a cartoonist for the New Yorker magazine (as well as the illustrator of the Diary of a: Worm, Spider, Fly series.) Nevertheless, the pictures carry an enormous depth of feeling. The reader, along with Solomon, will search the crowd at the pier for Anna’s face and will feel Solomon’s disappointment when she has not arrived. When at last the couple is reunited, the joy is palpable. A 2015 Sydney Taylor Notable Book, this is an exceptionally told, well-illustrated book that should be on all library shelves.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwardsbooks.com, Washington, DC [Editor’s Note: A 13-minute DVD of the book is available from Dreamscape Media for $38.99 (ISBN 9781633792111).]
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN & RACHEL KAMIN

BIBLE STORIES


The Midrash tells that there are at least 70 ways of interpreting the Torah, and Goldlist’s creative and comprehensive approach to the first books of the Bible add another—using rhyming couplets. The rhymes adhere closely to the Torah verses and the arrangement by both weekly portion and by chapter facilitates reference to the “original” text. But it is often challenging to create rhymes that are not forced and do not sound trite, and there are quite a few that do. For example: “Now, one more day did God create for man / On this day rest He began.” The AB structure of the verses often forces emphasis on the wrong syllable: “God told Moses / ‘To Pharaoh go / I have made his and his servants’ hearts strong / because I want to show / that I can put My signs / within their confines.” Some chapters of Genesis and Exodus are replete with details—Creation, Noah’s Ark, the Ten Plagues; others are rather dry, so the length of the poems can vary greatly. The Song of the Sea (Az Yashir Moshe / Shirat Hayam—Exodus, Chapter 15) is a particularly strong set of couplets. While the rhyming style may help to interest and educate younger readers, certain topics like Judah and Tamar, Joseph and Potiphar’s wife, and Tziporah circumcising her son cannot be fully understood in this context.

The accompanying workbook takes the text of the poems and uses them as a starting point for discussion questions, creative thinking, and activities. Goldlist has done an excellent job composing insightful questions and activities that make the Torah portion more relevant to students.

Because of the narrative details and the story of a Jewish woman that becomes a queen, The Book of Esther lends itself to rhyme more easily and successfully, and the structure of the story results in rhymes of more consistent length and meter. Illustrations would have amplified the text, and this volume can also be used for younger students than the Biblical ones above. These books are meant as classroom materials. As such, the workbook is a worthwhile purchase for Jewish libraries that also serve as teacher resource centers. The Book of Esther is a solid purchase for Jewish libraries, while Genesis and Exodus are optional.

Kathe Pinchuck, Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

BIOGRAPHY


Devra Lehmann’s Spinoza: The Outcast Thinker is a new kind of biography. Exquisitely researched and well written, Lehmann’s treatment offers a considerable amount of context to place Spinoza in his place and time. Born into a Sephardic family transplanted from Portugal to the Dutch “Nation” in Amsterdam, Bento Spinoza bucks tradition in the name of reason and becomes Benedict de Spinoza. He is ousted from the Jewish community and follows his vision, despite a fair number of setbacks, to express free thought. Spinoza does not identify with the Jewish religion or most religions. He picks
up a trade as a lens grinder and leads a somewhat quiet life while writing his philosophies, which are highly contested. As Lehmann writes, “It seemed that there was a personal price to pay for enabling others to see the world more clearly.” He is only forty-four when he dies. Yet, without his beliefs, Lehmann contends, modern democracies would not have had a touchstone.

The highly imaginative, highly intellectual text sports phrases like “most likely” and “must have”. The text closely resembles scholarly works by university presses but lacks the footnotes it demands and deserves; numbered end notes have no reference points in the text. Lehmann’s authorial intrusions will either delight or annoy readers. Illustrations, while plentiful, are difficult to decipher. Back matter includes an informative note on sources, end notes, and an index.

Diehard readers, predominantly adults, interested in philosophy and/or seventeenth-century Dutch life may find this book engaging.

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

FICTION – EARLY & MIDDLE GRADE


Ben Epstein, a boy in seventh grade, feels a lot of responsibility. He desperately misses his father who passed away the previous year. Ben wants to accomplish the master plan that his late father set for the family, a plan which involves his mother’s passing her C.P.A. exam and getting a better job where she can earn more money than her current waitressing job at a diner. Currently, he and his mom face eviction for late rent payments. To further complicate matters, his grandfather, who suffers from dementia, has moved into their apartment. Ben attempts to no avail to raise money for his mother and himself by entering contests and selling candy bars at school. Readers empathize with Ben’s plight. This is a story about loss and disappointment, but contains hope as well as some humor. Gephardt features facts about toilet paper and toilets at the beginning of each chapter. A 2015 Sydney Taylor Honor Book for Older Readers, the Jewish content is evident when Ben’s family sits shiva. Some of the older characters also use Yiddish words and a glossary is included. And, most significantly, the Jewish values of taking care of the elderly as well as honoring parents are prevalent throughout the story.

Heather Lenson, Ratner Media & Technology Center, Jewish Education Center of Cleveland, OH


With a goldfish named Lox, a cat named Creamcheese, and an adopted dog named Bagels, can a book about a Jewish family be far behind? Unfortunately, the only close-to-Jewish things in the book are the family name—Bernstein, a statement by the father, “It’s a good deed to rescue a dog,” and a reference to gefilte fish. Bagels is a dog born for mischief. From stealing bagels from on top of the refrigerator to wildly chasing other dogs around the park to flunking out of Beginner Basic dog school, Bagels is outstanding in his hyperactivity. Some kids reading this book will relate to this level of energy. Finally, Bagels finds his niche—as an actor in the community theater production of Peter Pan. After mistakenly jumping on stage during a performance, his crowd-pleasing abilities demand his presence in every subsequent show.

Geared for the early reader crowd, this engaging, entertaining and exciting story provides a lesson in how difficult it can be to take care of a dog. The value of tza‘ar ba‘alei chayim (proper treatment of animals) can certainly be reinforced by educators and parents while reading this tale.

Kathy Bloomfield, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and forwordsbooks.com, Washington, DC
[Editor’s note: (From the Orca Books blog) On June 7, 2014, the BC book community lost a very dear, talented and exuberant person, children’s author Joan Betty Stuchner. Joan resided in Vancouver with her family, where she wrote part-time and taught part-time. Joan passed away after a short but spirited battle with pancreatic cancer. One of her great loves was writing stories, which she did with precision and humor, to the delight of many young readers. For more about Joan, see: http://blog.orcabook.com/in-memoriam-joan-betty-stuchner]

**FICTION – TEEN**


The titular question describes fourteen-year-old Annie’s self-discovery when she goes to live with her Aunt Becka in the Catskill Mountains of New York State. Usually accompanying her globe-trotting engineer parents, Annie learns about both community and family. Becka’s artists’ group meets in her house, and Becka’s neighbors are a large Orthodox Jewish family. As the year progresses, Annie and Becka explore their family history and Jewish observance. They learn about and meet relatives they had never met, and they experience the beauty of the Sabbath. When Annie’s parents return for a visit during the winter holidays, Annie learns more about the family background, and her parents decide to cease their travels. Annie decides to attend a Jewish high school, and Becka’s art is inspired by her regular reading of the Bible.

“Where do I fit in?” is a big question for teenage girls, and Annie is mature enough to discern where she feels comfortable and what is important to her. Although there is action, the main focus of the free verse is often reflective or explanatory as Annie discovers her family history, which follows Jewish history in terms of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, and immigrants trying to “fit in” in America. Some themes are more developed than others (there is not much mention of school after the first few chapters), and the use of one line on a page (“What were you told about Auschwitz? The question hangs in the air.”) is more gimmicky than profound. *Who Is Annie White?* is a coming-of-age story and a Jewish story told in thoughtful prose. While geared toward female Orthodox readers, Annie will be accessible to readers across the Jewish spectrum.

*Kathe Pinchuck, Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*


Historical fiction, combined with a travel narrative, moves the action from Portugal to both Constantinople and Ferrara, Italy, in 1546. It is the time of the Spanish Inquisition, a dark and difficult period in Jewish history; the author follows the activities of Don Raphael DaSilva and his daughter, Esperanza, as they are assisted in escaping from Portugal but are separated in their escapes—Esperanza fleeing to Ferrara and Don Raphael to Constantinople. Esperanza, initially, had been locked up in the tower and told by the Cardinal that she has to convert to Christianity. A failure to do that would doom her to the torture chamber. Miraculously, she is helped to flee to Ferrara and is taken in by a charitable and supportive Jewish woman and philanthropist, who both cares for her and gives her the emotional support she needs. Her father, initially, falls prey to depression at the loss of his beloved and talented daughter. Only when he is convinced that he can help other Jewish immigrants who have fled to Constantinople to find their strength again, is he able to start to live his own life. Don Raphael becomes a successful merchant and has the wherewithal to search for his lost daughter. By the time they are reunited, Italy ceases to be the nurturing safe home for Jews it had been and their migration begins
again. The story is told in opposing voices, with father and daughter each having an opportunity to relate his or her narrative in consecutive chapters. An appendix of authentic historical characters that appear in the story follows the book.

The protagonists live a traditional Orthodox lifestyle, spending time daily praying, studying Gemara and Bible, and discussing their studies. As a result, there are many Hebrew terms lacing the narrative that will make it difficult for a reader without familiarity with the Hebrew language to read without seeking explanation.

Shelly Feit, Library Consultant, Teaneck, NJ


Fifteen-year-old Darren Jacobs’ struggles and circumstances are conveyed completely in lists. His challenges include his parents’ recent divorce and his father’s announcement that he is gay. Also, Darren’s brother, whom he idolizes, is away at college and Darren is a little overweight and awkward with girls. Furthermore, his mother is transforming into a career-oriented woman who is more concerned with her physical appearance. Darren’s voice realistically captures the angst of an adolescent boy and the list format is appealing, making this a quick read. However, there are too many irrelevant details which, if edited out, would shorten the 656-page book by at least 200 pages. As with Hasak-Lowy’s previous novel, 33 Minutes, there is little Jewish content aside from a mention that Darren’s mother is becoming more observant in her Jewish practice. Due to drug use and sexual situations, the book is recommended for older teen readers.

Heather Lenson, Ratner Media & Technology Center, Jewish Education Center of Cleveland


Flax and Hiker are tasked with a mission by the leader of the colony, the Teacher. The situation is serious in J-Town. Not all the cats are abiding by the Shargtha Laws, the nine tenets that are the cats’ code of ethics and include “respect your fellow feline” and “beware the canine”. They must go to all the colonies in J-Town and deliver the Teacher’s message to the colony leaders: there will be a grand meeting on the sacred grounds of the Old City junkyard. Flax, the eloquent young cat and Hiker, the huge fighter, must work together as they traverse the city and meet the black and white Deocats (Orthodox?), the vegetarian Climbers, and several other colonies. When the grand meeting convenes, the renegade No-Tail tries to take over and sway the other cats to abandon the Shargtha. With no alternative, Flax leads the cats into battle against No-Tail and her cohorts. Although many die, the colonies realize they must continue to work together, and Flax emerges as their leader.

The Cats of J-Town is very reminiscent of Erin Hunter’s Warriors series. Cats have a world unto themselves where they communicate, live by a code, belong to different clans that often come into conflict, and have interesting and descriptive names. Given the number of feral cats in Israel, feline aficionados will hope that Karp is as prolific as Ms. Hunter. The novel is also reminiscent of Orwell’s Animal Farm in terms of social commentary, with the different cat colonies representing diverse opinions and ideology about society. The dialog can be a little long-winded and preachy at times, for with cats in imminent danger, one would expect more action. But the combination of cats, Israel, and lessons learned makes this a good choice for young adults.

Kathe Pinchuck, Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

[Editor’s note: Rafi Karp tells us that The Cats of J-Town might be the first of a series. Stay tuned….]

*Kissing in America* has everything a teenage girl needs for a satisfying read: boyfriend crush, best friend relationship, conflict with mother, cross-country trip, adolescent angst and true sadness, plus a wonderful message of hope, feminism and personal empowerment. The book is both witty and wise, and will move readers to laughter and tears. Selections of beautiful verse reinforce the theme of writing poetry as a catharsis for grief. The protagonist, Eva, must learn to navigate her way through adolescence after tragically losing her father in a plane crash. Living in Queens and attending an elite high school in the Bronx, she is quite comfortable in the multiethnic mix that makes up New York. When Eva’s boyfriend Will moves to California, she prevails upon her brilliant Korean friend to enter a contest in Hollywood so they can take a bus trip which will enable her to see Will again. While the crush ends in disappointment, Eva and her mom have a rapprochement.

Eva and her family are identified as Jewish when Hanukkah is mentioned as a source of presents. The grandmother, now deceased, was a Holocaust survivor who obsessively cleaned as a response to her difficult past life. The rabbi at her father’s funeral seemed kind but was basically a stranger. Jews are viewed as odd by Texans and almost everyone outside of New York. Eva’s Jewish identity is characterized as more of an ethnicity than a religion in this book, and some readers may be uncomfortable with some of the negative references to Judaism. For example, while visiting Texas, Eva’s aunt “devoured a biscuit and scowled at the bacon”. After she admits to doing her best to keep kosher, even on the road, her hostess (a Jew who had converted to Christianity) states with a grin, “I enjoy it even more knowing that it’s *trayf* (non-kosher), grabbing a slice of bacon barehanded.” Additionally, a few of the Jewish references struck a dissonant chord. What rabbi would say at a wedding ceremony, “Speak now or forever hold your peace”? What Jew with a Yiddish-speaking background would warn someone that a jellyfish’s sting was “a pain in the *tuchas*”? (A real pain in the *tuchas* means an annoyance, not something that actually hurts! Unless you got stung in your rear end, of course.) And *kaddish* should be correctly transliterated, “*Yitgadal v’yitkadash*” not “*v’yitgadash*”.

Joyce Levine, North Shore Hebrew Academy High School, NY and AJL Publications Chair

**FOLKTALES**


Partly derived from the Sephardic oral tradition and partly from contemporary writing by children, this bilingual (English and Judeo-Spanish) collection of five stories seems to have lost its way. Publisher/author François Azar is committed to preserving the Sephardic storytelling tradition. However, the characters in these stories are not the usual ones like King Solomon, Elijah the Prophet, or Maimonides (Rambam) prominent in many Sephardic tales. Nor is the humorous character of Djuha, the trickster-fool, anywhere in this collection. Instead, we meet characters like the wealthy merchant or the water carrier who display distasteful qualities such as greed and cunning instead of commendable Jewish traits like piety, benevolence, or learning. In addition, the painted illustrations are amateurish and lack expression. For a more authentic and accomplished sampling of Sephardic tales, see Matilda Koén-Sarano’s *King Solomon and the Golden Fish: Tales from the Sephardic Tradition* (Wayne State University Press, 2004), or the excellent *Folktales of the Jews: Tales from the Sephardic Dispersion*, edited by Dan Ben-Amos (JPS, 2006). A collection of tales should intrigue, inspire, or entertain. Unfortunately, *The Jewish Parrot* achieves none of these goals.

Anne Dublin, co-author of *Odyssey Through Hell: Escape from the Warsaw Ghetto*, Toronto, Canada
GOD & PRAYER


The late Debbie Friedman’s settings of words and music have transformed American Judaism over the past forty years. This picture book and the accompanying CD continue that tradition. Completely in English, the text reminds the young child of all the things the world has to offer. It contains a review of the day’s activities and a promise that tomorrow will be different, and just as exciting and interesting. It offers the comfort of God’s presence in the child’s life (including protection for loved ones), and invokes the Shechinah as a guard. The companion disc contains the text of the book, set to music and sung by Debbie Friedman. This is a lovely, sweet rendition of a bedtime song. It should resonate with both children and parents, though some readers may be uncomfortable with how the angels are depicted in the illustrations.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


Introducing the Shehechiyanu to children through well-chosen, age-appropriate experiences is a lovely way to share a special prayer they will hopefully internalize, for this emotional prayer resonates, often putting a lump in your throat. This picture book moves through a year, season by season, following religious holidays and a child’s personal and family milestones. The concise text nicely captures the timing of the blessing whether at a first-time event or the return of something that we are ever thankful for. However, the illustrations, featuring figures with oversized heads, fail; they are just too cute for a major, heartfelt blessing. They undercut the message. Furthermore, the layout is inconsistent. Three of the four seasons begin on the left page enabling tot readers to understand the following occasions are tied to that season but then winter awkwardly appears on the right-side page. The little girl through whom children connect with the prayer is energetic, always bouncy and on the move. This is appealingly, accurately, preschool M.O. but where is the time for thought? The art leads readers to wonder if Shehechiyanu / thank you is a conditioned, automatic response or carefully considered sincere gratitude. A marginal purchase for its well-written, useful text.

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

HISTORY


Susan Goldman Rubin, author of *Music Was It: Young Leonard Bernstein* (2011) as well as *The Cat with the Yellow Star: Coming of Age in Terezin* (2006), has produced a nuanced examination of the “Freedom Summer”. The summer of 1964 in Mississippi was given that name because civil rights volunteers from the North came to Mississippi to register African-American voters and open Freedom schools. This book delves deeply into the racial tension and bigotry in the South with a lot of biographical information about the Civil Rights activists who were murdered by Klansmen—the two Jewish young men, Andrew Goodman and Mickey Schwerner, along with James Chaney, an African-American man. The text is supplemented by photographs and drawings of African-American citizens and civil rights workers. A timeline, photocopies of primary source documents, and suggestions for additional resources about the Freedom Summer are appended. This 2015 Sydney Taylor Notable Book for Teens provides an inspiring example of tikkun olam / repairing the world for students and is recommended for all libraries.

Heather Lenson, Ratner Media & Technology Center, Jewish Education Center of Cleveland, OH
HOLOCAUST & WORLD WAR II


Thirteen-year-old Hendrik Varga lives with his parents and housekeeper on the Buda side of the Hungarian capital of Budapest in October 1944. His best friend, Ivan Biro, is the son of an Arrow Cross officer. Hendrik and Ivan constantly engage in adventures and one day Hendrik ventures to the Pest side of the city, where his family once lived. All he knows is that his real name is Jakob Kohn and he is Jewish. While visiting his aunt and cousins in the ghetto, Ivan’s father invades the ghetto. With him is Ivan. Hendrik-now-Jakob chooses to reveal his true identity and he is forced out of the ghetto onto a truck. He vows to seek revenge upon Ivan, who does not have the courage to stand up to his father. Jakob arrives at Auschwitz, alone. He befriends two other Hungarian boys, Aron and Levi, an Orthodox Jew who teaches him prayers and values. After Levi is killed for standing up to a *kapo*, Jakob and Aron get put on a work detail and plan their escape. They are eventually rescued by Russian troops and sent to a displaced persons’ camp in Austria. Jakob returns home and learns Ivan saved his family.

*The Choice* clearly demonstrates the choices that a boy on the verge of manhood had to make during the Holocaust. Readers will not always cheer his choices and once Jakob’s true identity is known, the narrative is all too familiar. Furthermore, at times the dialogue becomes didactic, especially that of the aunt, Levi, and later, Ivan. But the strength of the book lies in the emotional content, the relationship between Jakob and Ivan, and Jakob and Levi. The narrative also effectively relates the despair and rootlessness in the postwar period that is reminiscent of Carol Matas’ *Pieces of the Past*.

Barbara Krasner, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Somerset, NJ


In this historical picture book, Barbara Krasner tells the story of ten-year-old Liesl Joseph from Rheydt, Germany. The book begins on November 9, 1938 — Kristallnacht, the “Night of Broken Glass”. Liesl’s father is arrested but when he is released one month later, he insists that the family leave Germany forever. They obtain visas for Cuba and, on May 13, 1939, are among the more than 900 passengers on the MS *St. Louis*. Fast forward to life on board the ship: Liesl plays checkers with new friends, strikes the gong to announce dinner, eats delicious meals, and strolls wherever she pleases. The voyage passes quickly and the ship arrives in Havana two weeks later. The passengers are refused entry into Cuba and, in spite of efforts by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the ship is forced to return to Europe. Much to the passengers’ relief, they will be allowed to disembark in Belgium, Holland, France, or England. *Liesl’s Ocean Rescue* ends with the ironic words, “Saving us is the best present ever.”

Because this book is aimed at a young audience, the darker aspects of the Holocaust are downplayed. Krasner effectively conveys the emotions of Liesl and the other passengers: worry, fear, despair, and hope. By focusing on one child’s story, Krasner helps the young reader relate to these tragic events. Avi Katz’s black and white pencil illustrations add nuance to the text through his use of varying perspectives and shading. Included in the back matter is an author’s note and selected bibliography. A curriculum/discussion guide is available on the Gihon River Press website. Unfortunately, the back cover makes a poor first impression with its many proofreading errors. For an historical novel for older readers about the voyage of the *St. Louis*, see Kathy Kacer’s *To Hope and Back: The Journey of the St. Louis* (Second Story Press, 2011).

Anne Dublin, co-author of Odyssey Through Hell: Escape from the Warsaw Ghetto, Toronto, Canada

(Originally published in Hebrew as *HaKelev HaYehudi* (Yedioth Anrnonoth, 2007)

Bruriah, the Gottlieb family dog, gives birth to a litter of puppies that the family intends to give away. But “the white one with the black circle around his eye and brown patch on his chest” shows that he is special and becomes Caleb. He loves to play with the children, take walks with their father, and play with other dogs. Caleb particularly enjoys the table scraps from the Sabbath meal and the Passover seder. He also has a “doggy sense” that enables him to understand German and intuit people’s feelings, like fear and happiness. But the tide soon turns in Nazi Germany, where it becomes illegal for Jews to own dogs. Caleb is passed through several owners until he runs away and joins a pack of strays. He is picked up off the streets and trained to be a guard dog. Shipped to Treblinka to assist the Nazis, his dog sense brings him to Joshua Gottlieb, who becomes the caretaker for all the dogs. When the prisoners revolt and escape, they join the partisans in the forest and fight the Germans. After the war, they move to Israel, and sometime after, Joshua and Caleb both die in their sleep on the same night.

As Caleb (the dog) narrates his own story, it is often from a naïve perspective, similar to Morris Gleitzman’s *Once* (Henry Holt, 2010), where his innocent observance of human behavior can be chilling. The epilogue is the weakest part of the book, with Joshua telling God that Caleb must remain with him for eternity, rather than go to “doggie heaven”. This is a Holocaust book, so there are graphic details of concentration camp life, as well as several owners’ sex lives. It will appeal on many levels: a “boy and his dog” story and an historical fiction (with actual events included) with strong characters and a strong sense of place.

Kathe Pinchuck, Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel


Originally published in the Netherlands in 2011, *Hidden Like Anne Frank* tells the stories of fourteen children (seven male and seven female) who, like Anne Frank, went into hiding to escape capture by the Nazis. Each story unfolds individually and with first-person narration. The text includes explanatory footnotes to define terms like “curfew” and “SS” and Dutch-specific nomenclature like “Sinterklaas” and pronunciations. Chapter separators illustrate where the survivor lived in the Netherlands and each chapter has a fair number of illustrations, which punctuate the text with an extra dose of reality. Readers will find the stories simultaneously disturbing and inspiring.

Filmmaker Prins had a personal reason for producing these stories: His mother, Rita Degen, went into hiding to escape Nazi persecution when she was only six years old. Her narrative is the first in the book. Like Anne Frank, many of these children had to rely on others, often people they did not know or know well, for their survival. Unlike Anne Frank’s situation, many of these children in hiding had to move often around the country and were forced to separate from their families.

With the help of journalist Steenhuis and translator Watkinson, these stories of courage, confusion, and conviction highlight the challenges and constant danger these Dutch children faced. Back matter includes photos of the survivors today and a glossary of terms. While these stories do not capture the intimacy of Anne Frank’s diary that only writing in the moment can create, they are nevertheless important contributions to Holocaust literature and deserve attention.

Barbara Krasner, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, NJ

This is the story of the tree that stood in the yard behind Anne Frank’s Secret Annex. Anne wrote about the tree in her diary. It was a source of solace and hope for her. The tree describes prewar Amsterdam and how the arrival of the Nazi army changed everything. The tree tells us about Anne and her family, how they lived in secret, how they distracted themselves from their situation, and ultimately how they were discovered and never returned. The tree describes how it stood, honored and appreciated, for so long and how it fell—due to age, disease and environment—becoming not one tree, but many. Saplings from the tree are planted all over the world serving as symbols of hope for us all. The tree still stands, still remembering.

The descriptive and compelling illustrations are lovely paintings of life during Anne’s time and beyond. The most poignant is the last illustration of Anne and Margot running around the tree’s trunk. This is an attractive addition to the genre of illustrated Holocaust stories; however, teachers and parents will have to decide at what age readers are capable of absorbing and comprehending the depth of the tragedy depicted, even though the story is told through the “eyes” of the tree.

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

The formation of character, becoming a mensch (a proper human being), is among the most important growth and development work of childhood. Chani Altein turns her characters, Benny and his little friend Tzvi, to the task of making a kiddush Hashem—literally, the sanctification of G-d’s name—in public. Told in rhyming couplets, the story follows the path of the two boys as they frequent public venues popular with children: park, zoo, farm, fair, museum, circus, toy store, and playground. In each place, Benny instructs the proper behavior of the younger Tzvi. “We won’t toss our trash in the air and not care / But go find a trash can and stash it in there!” or “In the museum, one fine afternoon / We’re there to see rockets that went to the moon / We won’t push the kids in the line up ahead / But stand and wait nicely for our turn instead!” Altein is not a student of the “show, don’t tell” school of writing. The text is didactic and predictable. However, the characters are charming and well-intentioned, and the welcome message of good behavior in public is explained loud and clear. The illustrations by Marc Lumer and Jovani Olivares are attractive and fully explicate the text. The book is printed on laminated paper for longer wear.

Benny and Tzvi wear black kippot and have their tzitzes showing. They go on field trips with their single-sex classmates; all of the girls shown are wearing long skirts and have their elbows covered. Orthodox readers are the intended audience for this picture book, but the message is universal.

Rena Citrin, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, IL


Shuki doesn’t understand why he has to move out of his room and in with the baby when Aunt Esther comes to visit. He knows he will have to be quiet when his elderly aunt naps and he knows he will have to slow down his quick pace when he walks her to shul (synagogue). He doesn’t see why he will need to show extra patience and go out of his way for an old lady. His parents try to remind him of some basic values he’s been taught but their lessons don’t penetrate Shuki’s annoyed attitude; he’s just not happy about the impending visit and won’t pretend that he is. Then he has a dream in which he is an old man and Aunt Esther is young and full of pep. In the dream, the two have a conversation during which Shuki begins to understand the value of interacting with members of an older generation; that there is much to learn and much to enjoy. Empathy ensues and on the last page, Shuki greets Aunt Esther with a wiser, more mature approach, ready to develop what may become a rewarding relationship. A Torah pasuk encapsulates the lesson which is clear but not didactic and the accompanying illustrations are bright and cheery. The story and illustrations reflect an Orthodox lifestyle but the message is certainly universal and the treatment is respectful of everyone. This is a new edition of a book which was originally published in 1986.

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


Rabbi Jamie Korngold, author of the popular Sadie series, writes about an important life cycle event for the youngest audience. Korngold tackles the birth of a new sibling in this back-to-back inverted volume that follows a little girl’s experience as her family welcomes a new baby. Really two books in one, the charming blond big sister enjoys the birth of brother in one half of the book. Flip it over, and she celebrates the birth of a sister. When will the new brother be big enough to play soccer with me? / She is so small that she can’t play hopscotch or feed herself like me — muses the big sister. Each story
concludes with a celebration: bris for the brother; simcha bat for the sister. The big sister has a valued place in each simcha in the warm embrace of her extended family. The kid-friendly story is supported by luminous photographs by Jeff Finkelstein. Each photo is beautifully composed and creates a synthesis with the text. The comparison of hand and foot size with the new baby is particularly poignant.

Rena Citrin, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, IL


Ruthie Tober and her family raise sheep. The mittens knitted from the gathered wool cover many of their neighbors’ hands. Coming home from market one day, they help a deaf woman and her infant son stranded along the road. Ruthie custom-makes a cleverly designed pair of mittens to connect the mother and child as they sleep. Swarner’s softly rendered illustrations aptly bring the warm spirit of Ruthie’s generosity to life. While there is little overt Jewish content, this PJ Library selection and 2015 Sydney Taylor Notable Book focuses on the Jewish values of hachnasat orchim (welcoming guests), tikkun olam (repairing the world), and V’ahavta L’reyacha Kamocha (love your neighbor as yourself). A glossary of knitting terms and sign language are appended. A touching story to be read—and shared—over and over again.

Allison Marks, Akron, OH


This book from Purple Toad’s series on “Faith in Friendship” is intended to introduce religion in the early grades. Ora and Yehuda are twins growing up in the United States who befriend their new neighbor, Danny. Through the course of the book, they introduce him to the Jewish world. The process begins with Shabbat, and continues with the Torah, the Shema, mitzvot, and God. There are short sections on Kashrut and other concepts as well. The chapter “From Generation to Generation” discusses several people in Jewish history, including ancient stories (King Saul, Ruth, and Esther) and a few contemporary names (Sandy Koufax, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and Jonas Salk). The final chapter discusses both the State of Israel and several important concepts—tikkun olam, Heaven and Hell. Laya Saul (herself an observant Jew) has attempted to translate Jewish concepts into an easy-to-digest format for young readers. Her writing style is friendly, and the text contains only a few small errors. Regrettably, the presentation is not successful. The brightly colored pages and numerous illustrations are widely (even wildly) disparate; while they are relevant topically, there is no stylistic consistency. There are paintings and drawings from Christian sources, mixed with photos of Jewish events (e.g. seder, Hanukkah lights). Judaism by Douglas Charing (DK Publishing, 2003) is a much better choice for introducing young readers, especially non-Jews, to the Jewish religion and culture. Includes: timeline, further reading, glossary, and index.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


Blessings are moments of thanks and knowing when to say the appropriate blessing is important. Geared for preschoolers, the rhyming text in this lift-the-flaps book is primarily in Hebrew transliteration with Ashkenazi pronunciations. Each sturdy page poses a question, such as which blessing is said when washing, before eating bread, cookies, cake, or fruit from trees, with the answer hidden under the flap. The computer-generated cartoon illustrations are colorful and vibrant, depicting an observant Jewish community. A glossary is included with Hebrew block letters and vowels, information that would have been more helpful integrated into the main text rather than appended at the end of the book. While it may not be a necessary purchase in all settings, this is a useful guide for reviewing brachot (blessings) with young children.

Ben Pastcan, Librarian, Shalom School, Sacramento, CA

This book, which follows the day of a kindergarten boy hour by hour, is targeted exclusively for an ultra-Orthodox audience. There are many terms such as *negel vasser*, *parsha* and *kavanah* that are assumed to be part of the child’s background vocabulary, and the setting is explicitly Orthodox. The best feature of the book is the illustrations. Enchanting full-color, double-page spreads depict the boy in his large, loving family and at his Jewish school. A clock face on each page is a graphic reinforcement of the hour. Tips for parents on the last page are helpful for teaching telling time. Ideally, the concept would have generated a book that was both educational and entertaining. However, the entire text is written in rhyme, much of which is uncomfortably forced and strongly didactic: “I say Modeh Ani, / thank Hashem for today, / And jump out of bed, / get today underway” and “I try hard to remember to share and be kind, / It’s a mitzvah to love every friend that is mine.” The book might have been more successful in prose, or even as a wordless picture book.

*Joyce Levine, Librarian, North Shore Hebrew Academy High School and AJL Publications Chair, Valley Stream, NY*


This rhyming book describes most Jewish holidays around the year with *mitzvot* associated with each one alongside vivid, computer-generated illustrations. The layout is a major strength of the book but on the last couple of pages the sentences continue over the spine. Surprisingly, Shabbat, with so many *mitzvot* (good deeds) associated with it, is absent along with Tu B’Av and nationalist Jewish holidays like Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron, and Yom Ha’atzmaut. Ashkenazic Hebrew is utilized and a glossary of terms is not included. A worthy addition for Jewish day school libraries looking for brief explanations about the traditions behind the holidays and their customs.

*Ben Pastcan, Shalom School, Sacramento, CA*

**SHABBAT & HOLIDAYS**


“When spring flowers bloom and grass starts to grow, and the warm sun has melted that old winter snow . . . Passover is on its way.” Charming illustrations depict a contemporary, rosy cheeked family (and their adorable furry and feathered friends), in an idyllic rural setting, getting ready for the holiday. The refrain, “Passover is on its way” is repeated as everybody pitches in to clean the house, set the table, and make the kugel, matzo cake, and *charoset*. But, when the guests arrive, the refrain changes: “When the Seder is ready and candles are lit, And Nana’s shown everyone just where to sit . . . Passover is here!”

Jewish objects and symbols – a *hanukiyah*, *magen David*, *megillah*, *tzedakah* box, *hamsa*, “Shalom” welcome mat, and others - are almost too purposely and intentionally placed but children will enjoy spotting them. Without any background information, the intended audience is clearly those who celebrate Passover, and they will certainly welcome this lovely, poetic addition.

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

Much like the siblings in “The Magic Treehouse” series, twins Scarlett and Sam are magically transported from their Passover Seder on Grandma Mina’s carpet to ancient Egypt. They experience the hardships of slavery, accompany Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh’s palace, befriend Pharaoh’s son, witness the ten plagues, bake Matzah with Miriam, meet the malakhim (the angels), and are among the first to enter the Red Sea before magically returning to their own dining room just in time to ask the Four Questions. Expressive, full page, black and white illustrations are generously sprinkled throughout the text. The narrative loses steam in Chapter 10 when Sam and Scarlett decide to tell the story as a podcast that they record on their cell phone and again in Chapter 14 when Juba, the elephant the twins are riding out of Egypt, tells his story. Despite these flaws, this offering by talented storyteller Eric Kimmel, will be a welcome addition to both the holiday and fiction book shelves. With a shortage of beginning chapter books with Jewish content, let’s hope this is the first in a new series.

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


The protagonist lion is so adorable it hurts to deflate his joy. This bouncy picture book borders on a mess - not typical for this quality publisher with a sterling track record. The cover and title page are horizontal but the reader must rotate the book ninety degrees because it continues with a vertical lay-out, with double-page spreads. A delicious lion is dancing and calling out “Shabbat Shalom” while furry or scaly friends climb, fly, slither around and respond with “Hey!” As they whizz by some readers may notice the Shabbat symbols they carry — candles, kiddush cup and challah — though there is no mention as to when the Shabbat meal takes place. The pace is fast and the aura is silly fun but trying to teach youngsters Sabbath ceremonial items with a Where’s Waldo approach does not work, at least not here in a short book based on sparse song lyrics.

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


Shira learns all about Chanukah at school; the Maccabees, the Temple, the Greeks, and the small jug of oil are all made meaningful for her. She also learns the customs—lighting the Chanukiah, the blessings, songs, and making jelly doughnuts and latkes. The holiday story and observance are clearly explained in an age appropriate manner, and are enriched with Hebrew songs. The centerpiece of Shira’s story, though, is the special present her aunt, Doda Channah, has sent her for Chanukah from Israel, which she is happy to share with her classmates. By Day two of the holiday, however, the gift has disappeared, without any explanation. Shira searches for it all around school, in the Lost and found, the lobby, the gym, and the cafeteria. Her teacher is amazingly supportive and patient as she unhappily searches the building; all the other school employees, including the lunch lady, the coach, and the receptionist, are also extremely caring and nurturing. The story has a happy ending, which Shira shares with her aunt in Israel via Skype; everyone agrees that finding the special Israeli dreidel is a modern day miracle.

As with the other books in the Shira series, the story is sprinkled with Hebrew words in dark block letters, with nekudot (vowels). The Chanukah blessings are written in Hebrew, as is a holiday song. The Hebrew is enriching, but some transliteration and translation would have been helpful. The English text, which is also in large letters, is a bit dense for the age it is written for. Lively and colorful full page illustrations accompany the text and help to set the tone.

Shelly Feit, Library Consultant, Teaneck, NJ
YIDDISH


The days when English books were translated into Yiddish are mostly past. So, it’s refreshing to find the 2009 picture book, The Aleph-Bais Trip, with this new Yiddish translation. Here’s the premise: The letters of the Yiddish alphabet—all male—are assembling (in alphabetical order, of course) for a voyage on a sailing ship. However, the last letter (ת) is missing. What to do? The other letters search for him, pray to Hashem, and finally find and rescue him. At last, they’re ready to sail off into the wide blue yonder. (Really, the child’s room). Rhyming couplets—some more effective than others—tell the story. The theme is repeated: Each letter is strong, but together, they’re even better (ober tzuzamen, nokh greser, nokh beser). Becker’s illustrations are vibrant and colorful with bold black letters on white “suits”, jaunty sailor caps, and white socks. The laminated pages are durable, ready for little fingers to touch and turn. The back matter includes a chart of the Yiddish alphabet (the aleph-bais), as well as varied activities that parents and teachers may use to reinforce learning.

Anne Dublin, co-author, Odyssey Through Hell: Escape from the Warsaw Ghetto, Toronto, Canada

[Editor’s note: The English edition of this book was reviewed in the AJL Newsletter, Sept/Oct. 2009, p. 23.]

Don’t Forget to Check Out AJL News!

The May/June issue of AJL News has lots of information about the 2015 Conference, and lots of exciting articles about the activities of our members.

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.

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A keyword-searchable archive of Hasafran messages posted since June 12, 2003 is now available.

*The Bloomsbury Companion to Holocaust Literature*, which continues the well-regarded and extensive Bloomsbury Companion Series, examines the complex and varied field of Holocaust narratives. In her introduction, Editor Jenni Adams suggests the genre embraces a “diverse body of work, from testimony and other writing by survivors through poetry, fiction, drama, and memoir by those who did not experience the events themselves but who nevertheless feel compelled to engage with the long shadow they continue to cast…” With a focus on the short story, the work brings together eleven critical treatises collected into three overlapping “dimensions” of Holocaust literature—“Traces”, “Dis/Continuities”, and “Complicities”. Adams assembled these specially commissioned essays from leading scholars in the field to provide representation from assorted disciplines, literary approaches, and regional perspectives. The essays analyze a variety of topics and critical issues in influential Holocaust short fiction, including language, memory, testimony and representation. The final chapter reviews current and emerging trends in the field. A selective annotated bibliography of English and English translations are arranged by subcategories and cover non-fiction and reference works as well as poetry, drama, children’s literature and Holocaust literature in general. Each section of the bibliography is preceded by an introductory essay expanding upon sources of particular significance. A glossary of major terms and concepts provides further guidance to researchers and students new to the field of Holocaust literature. *The Bloomsbury Companion to Holocaust Literature* serves as a unique analytical literary resource for students and scholars alike and brings together the current state of academic criticism, research, and writing in the field. Recommended for graduate and undergraduate libraries, as well as a useful guide for college-level curriculum development in Holocaust studies.

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


Appelbaum starts this book with a discussion of the century prior to the First World War when Jews were first allowed to serve in the German army. This introduction serves as a background to the bulk of the work, which focuses on the Jewish experience in the German army during WWI. Around 100,000 Jews served in the German Army; approximately 80,000 fought on the front, and 12,500 lost their lives or went missing in action.

The book is mainly composed of translated selections of letters, diaries and later memoirs of Jewish servicemen from various branches of the German army. The book includes eight chapters, four appendixes, a bibliography and an index.

The first chapter examines the period 1813-1914 in which Jews are slowly included in the German army and during which, despite declarations about their legal status, Jews were often discriminated against and felt disappointed regarding the fulfillment of their rights, including military service. Chapter 2 describes the overall atmosphere in Germany when the war broke, focusing on the Jewish attitude, which was generally positive at the beginning, resulting in many mobilized Jews. The 3rd chapter provides two opposing views of the war, based on the memoirs of two Jewish servicemen. This is followed by snapshots from the front, taken from diaries and memoirs of several Jewish servicemen. The next two chapters focus on special groups: the medical corps and the air force. The 7th chapter examines the Jewish census of 1916, which was intended to count Jews serving in the front, resulting from accusations that Jews tried to evade mobilization and avoid service at the front. The census, which was never officially published
and its original data was lost, worsened Jewish-non-Jewish relations and made Jews feel discriminated against. The final chapter provides an analysis and epilogue. Appendixes include German WWI military ranks; Hebrew and Jewish religious terms; place names then and now; and German-Jewish associations.

Much of the text is based on letters, diaries and memoirs, mostly archived at the Leo Baeck Institute. This indeed is the main strength of the book: bringing to light extensive descriptions and views of Jews who served in various roles and branches of the German army during WWI, translated into English. The work is an important source on the condition of Jews in Germany, and especially during WWI, presenting their life and thoughts.

Rachel Simon. Princeton University. Princeton NJ


Elisheva Baumgarten’s new book on Jewish medieval religious practice in Ashkenaz very convincingly uses a study of minorities to glean insights as to the practices of the majority in this time. Baumgarten uses sources regarding the practice of women, children, and the “average man” (as opposed to the rabbis or Pietists) to understand the practice of the everyday Jew. The book describes piety in five situations: the synagogue, fasting, charity, the so-called “time-bound” commandments, and dress. It then moves to feigned piety and a discussion comparing piety in Jewish and Christian contexts during the medieval period. An important aspect of Baumgarten’s study is the emphasis on how halakha was shaped by actual practice. One example of this can be found in a 13th century precept which banned menstruating women from the synagogue, and was preceded by pious women who chose not to go to the synagogue while menstruating.

Practicing Piety is truly a tour de force, covering so much more than just religious practice in the medieval period, including Jewish-Christian relations, social history, womens’ studies, and many other areas. This book is highly recommended.

Michelle Chesner, Columbia University


The first volume of this Protocols of Justice is in English; the second in Hebrew. In volume 1, Jay R. Berkovitz provides an introduction to the protocols of the Metz Bet Din (1771-1789). His study “examines the tensions between communal autonomy and the pressure to conform to French law.” The Bet Din adapted well “to a world of multiple jurisdictions of comparable validity.” Berkovitz shows the internal working of the Bet Din as a Jewish communal institution and how it operated within Metz as a Jewish court in France where the royal power and the local authorities, chiefly the Parliament, struggled for hegemony. He focuses on the role of the Bet Din as a family
court, adjudicating conflicts over betrothal and marriage, inheritance, guardianship, marital property and succession, especially the role of women in credit and commerce. Volume 2 is a critical edition of the manuscript preserved at YIVO (New York), with appendices (places, non-Hebrew words and phrases) and index (personal names). This edition will be of interest to the legal scholar, the linguist interested in Western Yiddish, and the social historian, among others. For academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD


The academic field of Talmudic study has grown more popular in the United States in the past decade. But the trend is focused mainly on literary or cultural approaches to rabbinic texts, while the labors of philology have been left, for the most part, to scholars based in Israel. Technological advances, including the digitization of many manuscripts of Mishnah and Talmud and of vast tracts of the Cairo Genizah, allow researchers to study the textual evidence from their home or office anywhere in the world. Harder to come by, though, is the ability to critically appraise the information conveyed by those manuscripts.

Robert Brody, a highly respected Talmudist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has made a significant contribution to scholarship by publishing this monograph. It is short and written in English, but it is by no means an introductory text. It contains the fruit of deep, careful philological research in rabbinic texts refracted through the perspective of a sharply logical mind. Brody has been laboring for a number of years on a critical commentary on the tractate of *Ketubot* in the Babylonian Talmud. The Tannaitic sources, which predate the Talmud, are obviously crucial to understanding the Babylonian tractate, and it is those earlier sources which form the basis of Brody’s study. His intensive analysis of that limited corpus allows Brody to form sober opinions on large questions that have occupied Talmud scholars for decades—the relative value and significance of different manuscripts, and the nature of the textual relationship between Mishnah and Tosefta. That the entire book, including the many textual examples, is in English makes things a little harder on the reader, forcing him/her to return to the primary texts themselves in order to fully understand the author’s point. That is probably a good thing in itself. But, hopefully, it will also spur a younger generation of students in the Anglophone world to apply themselves seriously to the study of Talmudic philology.

Pinchas Roth


*Tehilim*, meaning praise, is the title of the first book of the biblical grouping known as *Ketuvim* (writings). The English translation of *Tehilim* “Psalms” is derived from the Greek word for “instrumental music.” There are 150 psalms in this complex biblical book of poetry.

The Oxford Handbook of The Psalms contains 41 essays on different aspects of the Psalms. The first section focuses on the ancient Near Eastern background of the Psalms, and its three essays discuss their Mesopotamian, Canaanite and Egyptian context. The second section turns to the language of the Psalms with essays discussing the inter-relationship of the Psalms and poetry, the wisdom language found in the Psalms along with concepts of lamentation and praise. The third section deals with the issue of translating the Psalms, while the fourth section explores the fascinating history of their composition. The fifth section examines the interpretation and reception of the Psalms from a Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspective while the next section explores interpretive approaches to the Psalms ranging from Temple related approaches to Feminist interpretation. The seventh section centers on culturally based interpretations of the Psalms and section eight focuses on the fascinating issue of the theologies of the Psalms (with chapters devoted to both Jewish and Christian theology; each obviously also dealing
with the other. The ninth part focuses on anthropologies of the Psalms and the tenth and final section on religious practice. Chapters in this last section include important ways in which the Psalms are incorporated into practice, such as singing and preaching.

Like most books in the Oxford Handbook series, this is an excellent resource for learning about the Psalms in depth and with sophistication. For the academic reader and knowledgeable student, this is an excellent compilation of essays that shine much light on the historical, literary, devotional, theological and practical aspects of the Psalms and a welcome addition to any library.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY


This book is specifically a work about the jurisprudence of Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan, also known as the Chafetz Chaim and author of the legal work called the Mishna Berura. The Chafetz Chaim was born in modern-day Belarus in 1838 and was one of the most influential rabbis of his era. The Mishna Berura, his most famous work, was a compendium of practical Jewish laws based upon the Orach Chayim volume of Rabbi Yosef Karo’s Shulchan Aruch, perhaps the most authoritative work on Jewish law in the Jewish cannon. The authors contend that the Chafetz Chaim’s methodology for deciding law differed from that of his predecessors and they show how he developed a specific and complex guide to his jurisprudence. The authors remark on how Rabbi Kagan’s jurisprudence closely resembles a modern-day jurisprudential philosophy known as “purposive interpretation” whereby laws are interpreted according to the purpose for which they were established. The authors provide four central questions that reflect the manner in which R. Kagan’s halachic decisions were made. First, what is the common practice of the community and is there more than one custom? Second, what is the spectrum of answers provided by previous rabbinic decisors? Third, what are the minimum legal requirements that one should try to fulfill? Lastly, how can observance be maximized to best enhance one’s relationship with God? To these requirements, the authors provide seven further “second order” guidelines that give additional insight into the breakdown of R. Kagan’s jurisprudence.

The book begins with several introductory chapters about Jewish law and the history of codification that serve as a useful background to the book’s primary topic. The bulk of the book provides detailed examples that back up each and every “second order” guideline with multiple examples.

Any student of Jewish law and codification, and particularly anyone interested in the Mishna Berura, will find The Codification of Jewish Law and an Introduction to the Jurisprudence of the Mishna Berura to be a book worth reading. It is not a book intended for the casual reader.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY


The author, also known as Tovah Miriam Gershom, became Jewish later in life. In her collection of essays, she writes about growing up in the San Fernando Valley of California, studying art and working in advertising, and eventually marrying a Jewish man. Although her husband was neither affiliated nor religious, Tovah Miriam began learning about Judaism and decided to convert. The most interesting essays include where she discusses the significance of the biblical injunction Lech Lecha (go to yourself); where she realizes her yearly ritual to commemorate her mother’s death is similar to observing yahrzeit; where she chooses her Hebrew name, and where she voices her fear of going in the mikvah because she can’t swim.

The other essays round out her life story, but they aren’t particularly Jewish, as when she wonders whether her family ancestors with the name Zimmerman are Jewish (they aren’t) or when a coyote
wanders onto her property and dies there. It is an excellent choice for libraries that serve those who have converted to Judaism or are in the process of converting. Otherwise it is a strong optional purchase.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel


Rabbi Marcus Jastrow is a forgotten star in the story of American Judaism. In his lifetime he ranked alongside David Einhorn, Isaac Mayer Wise, and Samuel Hirsch. Today, we remember him primarily for his wonderful Aramaic-Hebrew dictionary. In this short but expansive biography, Polish scholar Michal Galas examines Jastrow’s career and his role in the reform process.

The first half of the book discusses Jastrow’s career in Europe. His first rabbinic post was at the German synagogue in Warsaw. There he took part in the reform of liturgy and educational modernization. During the revolutionary days of 1861, he was arrested and his writings were confiscated and destroyed. Several years later, he emigrated to America. Part II covers the second act in Jastrow’s life, when he served Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia. During his career he was a leading member of the immigrant generation of rabbis. In this role, Jastrow was one of the founders of the Jewish Theological Seminary, in the wake of the infamous Trefa Banquet in Cincinnati. He also was a partner of Baltimore’s Rabbi Benjamin Szold, creating a siddur that challenged Wise’s Minhag America while modernizing the core of the traditional prayers.

Alongside his wealth of information about Jastrow’s life, Michal Galas provides a wealth of scholarly footnotes, numerous excellent illustrations, and a multilingual bibliography. Though the translated text is serviceable, there are errors throughout. Despite this, the book brings Jastrow back to the limelight. For this reason it is an important addition to the nineteenth-century American Jewish history shelf. Despite its price, it should be in major university libraries with courses on American Jewish history. It should also be considered by larger Conservative movement synagogues, and those interested in the history of the pre-Schechter Historical School.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Garb, Jonathan. מרכים בלב הסערה - רבי משה חיים לוצאטו Kabbalist in the Heart of the Storm: R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto. Tel Aviv, Israel: The Haim Rubin Tel Aviv University Press, 2014. 403 pp. 70 NIS (9789657241622).

Rabbi Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto (1707-1746), known as the RaMHaL, was born In Padua, Italy, moved to Amsterdam, Holland, and spent his final years in Israel. He is both famous and controversial, especially in the field of the Kabbalah. Kabbalist in the Heart of the Storm is, according to Garb, an “intellectual biography.” Through detailed investigation and close study of the RaMHaL’s works (Hebrew and Italian), Garb tries to understand and explain the RaMHaL’s inspiration, his message, and the stormy reaction of his contemporaries to him and his followers. The RaMHaL experienced his first mystical-messianic revelation when he was only twenty years old. His spiritual encounters enabled him to ask questions and get answers directly from the Torah’s sources. RaMHaL wrote literary poems, and plays in addition to his religious oracles.

A short introduction opens the book, followed by six major detailed chapters: RaMHaL’s life and period; the mystical-revelational experience; the components of the debate between Italy and Amsterdam: ‘leadership secret’; Amsterdam period – methodical writings; ethics; RaMHaL from his generation to our generation. Garb ends his book with a chronological list of the RaMHaL’s writings, an extensive wide bibliography, and a general index.

In this erudite volume Jonathan Garb recognizes RaMHaL’s influence on three modern movements
in Judaism: Haskalah, Hasidism, and Musar (Ethics). He emphasizes the complete rehabilitation and integration of the Kabbalah and the RaMHaL into Orthodox Judaism and Judaism in general.

*Kabbalist in the Heart of the Storm* is an academic-philosophical book that will enhance academic libraries, philosophical collections, and rabbinic schools. Hopefully it will be translated into additional languages.

*Reviewed by: Nira Wolfe*

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Rabbi Glick draws from his rabbinic studies at Yeshiva University, his relationship with Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, and time with a swami in India to expound on the goals, methods and benefits of meditation. The material is divided into four parts: The Fundamentals of Daily Practice, which reviews preparation, the importance of intention, and “forging a connection;” Techniques, which is the main part of the book and covers the different methods of meditation that include stilling the mind, visualization, using a mantra and contemplation; The Life of Meditation; and Broader Meditation Issues that encompass individual versus group meditation and whether meditation is a selfish act or a noble one. The appendices include pronunciation (for mantras and chanting), “Further Reading on the Meditative Life,” and an index of meditation practices. The chapter notes are also included at the end of the book. The meditations in the Techniques section began with a simple breathing exercise and then proceed to the specific meditation method.

While the material is interesting and presented clearly for an esoteric body of knowledge, it seems to this reviewer that the book is sorely mistitled. The actual discussion of “Living the Life of Jewish Meditation” is covered very briefly in Part Three. Glick quotes heavily and equally from Rabbi Nachman of Breslov and other Hasidic masters and from Swami Brahmananda, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Teresa of Avila, often comparing and contrasting their statements. This interplay between Jewish and non-Jewish sources, and the combining of chakras and sefirot many would find blasphemous. Missing is mention of the so-called “modern masters” of the practice, such as Aryeh Kaplan. The chapter on “The Dynamics of Inner Experience,” which draws upon what happens when we meditate from the Kabbalistic teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, is the only purely Jewish material presented. This book is only suggested for libraries whose patrons are interested in alternative paths to spirituality.

*Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*

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This fascinating memoir was written by an accomplished storyteller and teacher, who lives in San Diego, California, but was born in Tunisia, the Land of Bomboloni. She tells the story of how she adapted to living in different countries and cultures, making a contribution to Jewish life in France, Canada, and the United States. Her book illustrates the immigrant experience of living in two different worlds, feeling isolated, misunderstood and discouraged. Drawing on her family values and childhood experiences, her inner strength, she was able to overcome many difficulties and accomplish her goals. The contrast between family life in the United States, the land of Bagel, and in Tunisia, the land of Bomboloni, is clearly seen. There are pictures of her family, and many interesting anecdotes from different periods of her life journey. The book includes an epilogue, a postscript and a glossary. It is recommended for Temple and synagoge libraries, as well as for Jewish community center and public libraries.

*Susan Freiband, retired library educator, volunteer Temple librarian*
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Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults


The third volume in a series of edited diaries and papers, following Advocate for the Doomed (2007) and Refugees and Rescue (2009), focuses on the diplomatic participation of James McDonald on the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry Regarding Problems of European Jewry and Palestine. McDonald had been involved for years in government service and was known to be supportive of Zionist efforts. Through personal efforts with his contacts in government, he arranged an appointment to the Committee of Inquiry. His diary and papers during this critical period from 1945 to 1947 bear witness to his influence on the creation of the Committee and its report, up through to the United Nations decision to partition British mandated Palestine between the Jews and Arabs. Incredibly detailed bibliographic material is included throughout, unfortunately without appending a cumulative bibliography. This excellent redaction of original source material is an important addition to the series and an absolute requirement for use by students and researchers on US foreign policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC


Michael A. Grodin, professor of Health Law, Bioethics, and Human Rights at Boston University, has compiled a fascinating series of articles documenting a little-known aspect of the Holocaust: medical resistance by Jewish physicians and health care workers. Some of the authors are survivors or children of survivors, others use archival materials to provide intimate knowledge of the harsh conditions and the bravery of those who did all that they could to ease the suffering of their families, friends, and neighbors. A forward by Joseph Polak discusses three kinds of medical resistance: providing illness certificates to exempt Jews from transport to the camps, allowing Jews to extend their stays in camp hospitals to avoid deportation, and quietly ignoring or defying Nazi decrees. The articles cover a wide range of topics related to health care: typhus epidemic containment, medical resistance in the ghettos, medicine in the camps, doctors as both victims and resistance heroes, and the afterword: The Ethical and Human Dimension of Jewish Medical Resistance during the Holocaust. These are fascinating to read. They inspire both compassion for those affected and awe of the courage of the health care professionals who risked their own lives to assist and save fellow Jews. Their sanctification of life, the core Jewish value, is duly honored here. Libraries supporting programs in medical history, Holocaust studies, and bioethics will definitely want this book for their collections.

Barbara M. Bibel, Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA.


From January to September 1938 Ernest Gugenheim travelled from his home in France to Lithuania to attend the Mir Yeshiva, one of the most highly regarded seminaries of intensive Jewish study. As the title describes, Letters from Mir is an edited compilation of the letters he wrote to his family and mentor Grand Rabbi Maurice Liber. In his letters he describes his schedule at the yeshiva and the intense pleasure he and the rest of the students receive from their rigorous learning. The letters are peppered with Hebrew and Yiddish phrases which are translated in footnotes at the bottom of each page and also in a lexicon at the end of the book. Black and white photographs of synagogues, Rabbi Guggenheim’s family and famous rabbis add interest to the letters which are at times repetitive. Short biographical sketches of the people mentioned in the letters are provided at the end of the book. Recommended for patrons who want an inside personal glimpse of life in a Lithuanian yeshiva.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH
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I first read Ginzberg’s Legends of the Bible, which is the one-volume version of Legends of the Jews, when I was in high school. I was not able to buy the seven-volume full version until I was in college and the set came to occupy a special place on my bookshelf. However, in recent years I have paid little attention to it, and it seems to have fallen into similar disuse among other rabbis and teachers.

This scholarly volume examines many issues that I could not have known when I was a young scholar in training, including the fact that as a proponent of the Wissenschaft des Judentums, Ginzberg’s intention was to bring the body of aggadah (folklore) to the English speaking audience and prove that Jewish literature was as rich and full as any European culture.

The essays included here were revised from the plenary sessions of the 15th Congress of the World Association of Jewish Studies in August 2009. The essay written by Rebecca Schorsch, who did not participate in the Congress, is based on her dissertation, which focused on the folkloristic aspects of Legends of the Jews. Reading this book was like reading a mystery story because each scholar presented his/her evidence in a way that made me eager to get to the conclusions. I even found myself checking footnotes, reading more about Ginzberg and wanting to know more about what each author was relating. The essay notes are copious and as important as the rest of the text, although I disagree with a comment in the introduction as to the reliability of Ginzberg’s references in volume 6, which were often misleading or near to impossible to find.

Aside from this minor criticism, this book of collected essays is greatly recommended for scholars of Ginzberg, Jewish folklore and Jewish studies. Highly readable, it belongs in academic and personal collections.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Malcolm X College Library, Chicago, IL


The title to this book was a little misleading because I was expecting a book concerning the psychology or sociology of family life. Instead, this book connects seven sefirot of Kabbalah to the 49 days of counting the omer. Each one of the weeks has one of these concepts as a base and each day is paired with each of the other concepts. For example Chesed (loving kindness) is the base for week one. Pairing gevurah (strength/discipline) with chesed recognizes that for health and growth there are times when love is restrained by discipline. The author gives examples and wisdom from the Bible, rabbinic literature and contemporary sources. Then the author connects these ideas to advice for family relationships. Each chapter ends with questions for further discussion and thought.

This book made me think about kindness, strength, truth, eternity, humility, bonding, and leadership and how combinations of these concepts temper and reinforce each other. However, the book is uneven, and the reader has to concentrate carefully on each chapter. In some ways this book is hard to characterize: it has lots of wisdom, but it is not a scholarly book; it has advice, but is it not a “how-to” book. Certainly, it is not a casual read and one is left unsure for whom the book is intended.

For this reason, I give it a weak recommendation for the synagogue or academic library. It may have a place in a personal library if you are familiar with the sefirot of kabbalah and want to apply them to personal growth.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Malcolm X College Library, Chicago, IL


Madam Ambassador is a highly readable “dummies guide” to how the Israeli Foreign Ministry operates, the notion of Israeli diplomacy and diplomacy itself, pieced together with very short
chapters. The author was Israel’s first ambassador to the newly independent Latvia and operated as a representative to Lithuania and Estonia; she was an ambassador to South Africa during the time the World Congress against Racism was held in Durban, and she conducted two tours in Washington, DC as the head of the congressional liaison. Herzl, an Orthodox Jew, had to learn how to represent Israel’s best interests in an extremely hostile anti-Israeli atmosphere in South Africa, which was pervasive in spite of the large resident Jewish community. Keeping kosher was often difficult given the nature of her position and the many festivities she was responsible to give and attend. Her 21 years of service are more than adequate to provide the background for an interesting tale. This is a book that will interest young readers wanting to learn how Israel operates diplomatically in the world; it will provide a source for discussion amongst havura groups, and it will be a good addition to general synagogue collections.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC


Bruce Hoffman, a professor at Georgetown University and director of its Security Studies Program, has written a fine, scholarly, jargon-free history of the Jewish underground resistance movements (Haganah, Etzel, and Lehi) and their fight against British rule over the Land of Israel in the 1940s. Hoffman takes advantage of the great increase in publically available documentation, especially records of the British government. His detailed history is an important advance from the still valuable Terror Out of Zion (1977) by J. Bower Bell.

Hoffman concentrates on the effect of these underground movements upon British decision making and concludes that this type of warfare (especially that of Etzel) played an important role in Britain’s decision to abandon its mandate and leave. He further argues that Etzel’s successful strategy was not only to undermine British prestige but to employ innovative “daring and dramatic acts of violence to attract international attention…” Because the book is devoted to the war against Britain, Dr. Hoffman does not deal with Lehi’s assassination of United Nations representative Count Folke Bernadotte in 1948. Less understandable is why the book contains only a passing mention of the arrangement for the Polish military to train Etzel fighters before the Second World War. There is a minor error in the author’s statement that Lehi radio broadcaster and future MK Geula Cohen followed Avraham Stern when he left Etzel to form Lehi. In fact, she did so after the assassination of Stern (whom she never met). Also, at least one reviewer claims, not without reason, that Hoffman is credulous regarding Churchill’s 1944 partition proposal. Despite these few criticisms, Anonymous Soldiers is an important, well researched history. Highly recommended.

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


The editor of this work was a student and shamash (personal secretary) of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitch and presents in this volume some of Rabbi Soloveitchik’s verbatim teachings on the Passover Haggadah. Holzer provides elucidation and additions (clearly marked) to Soloveitchik’s words.

In addition to commentary, the editor provides beautiful images of art found in medieval Haggadot of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Primarily, the images are culled from Spanish, German, Italian and French Haggadot from approximately the years 1250 to 1583. The illustrations in this Haggadah are sometimes accompanied with explanatory text; the depictions of the ten plagues are particularly fascinating and laid out on a full page.

In addition to the standard Haggadah text, the editor includes a section on Seder Preparation and Matzah Design from 700 years ago, showing medieval pictures alongside current pictures to depict how preparation for Passover has changed (or perhaps better put, stayed remarkably similar).
end of the Haggadah, the author compiled “Insights from the Rav on the Seder” which has Rabbi Soloveitchik commenting on such questions as whether grape juice is sufficient to use for the four cups (the answer is yes) or his custom for eating the requirement of maror/ bitter herbs. This Haggadah will be of interest to anyone studying the teachings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik or to anyone who enjoys viewing beautiful art culled from medieval Hagaddot.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY


One of the beauties of Judaism is that questions and analysis are encouraged. Some questions are harder than others, and Rabbi Jacobovitz addresses a few of them logically and succinctly. The problem with defining good and evil is that “so long as morality is defined by man, it cannot be defined at all.” The question of why bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people is not about the suffering per se, but about its unfair distribution. The narrative flows from these essays to literal versus figurative understanding of Jewish texts, the dignity of man, and free will versus predestination, and balancing humility with self-esteem. From there, the questions are less related but equally important: dealing with non-Jews, the “tough love” of rebuke, the mistake of taking Torah too literally, some differences between men and women, the importance of saying Grace After Meals, and repentance. The chapters often begin with a humorous anecdote that introduces the subject.

Rabbi Jacobovitz, an expert who has been working in Jewish outreach and education for over 30 years, has obviously faced these questions before as the answers are interesting and to the point. The volume is referenced well, and unlike many books on the subject, everything is presented in plain English, so there is no need for a glossary or long footnotes. What stands out is the clarity, the simplicity, and the approachable style which nonetheless is supported by scholarship and depth and breadth of knowledge. With an amazing amount of information distilled in a relatively short book, Torah: Beauty Beyond Belief is very highly recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel


In this new and freshly annotated translation of Rabbeinu Yonah ben Avraham of Gerona’s masterpiece: Gates of Repentance (Shaarei Teshuvah) the translator (Yosef Liebler) and editor (David Kahn) bring an innovative and insightful perspective to this Torah Classic edition. Generally believed to have once been a section of a much larger work entitled Gates of the Righteous (Shaarei Zedek) (the remainder of which has been lost), this work has long been regarded as a profound work of “Musar” (ethics). First published in Fano, Italy in 1505, it became one of the outstanding Jewish ethical works of the Middle Ages, although the classical Musar movement did not develop until the 19th century among Orthodox Jews of Eastern Europe. The Gerondi (died 1264) was known to be an extremely harsh critic of Maimonides, but he is thought to have reversed his opinion and some argue that Shaarei Teshuvah was intended in part to express his thoughts of repentance.

Rabbeinu Yonah’s work appears to have been highly influential among such formidable figures as Rashba and Nahmanides who referred to him as “a holy man of God, the pious Rabbi Yonah.” The impact of the work is felt strongly in later works as well, including Sefer Hasidim and the Chofetz Chaim (by Israel Meir haKohen Kagan, the Chofetz Chaim, 1839–1933). Liebler asserts that Rabbeinu Yonah’s third gate (“Clarifying the stringency of the Mitzvos and Prohibitions”) is full of halachot dealing with lashon hara (evil gossip and talebearing) and that the Chofetz Chaim relied heavily on this text in formulating his own work: “… many times quoting verbatim the words of Rabbeinu Yonah.”

The most significant quality distinguishing this version of Shaarei Teshuvah from earlier versions
is its extensive array of citations. Not only do those found in the earlier 1967 edition appear here, but annotations and references to other works that were never found in the earlier translations have been added. With these additions and its contemporary use of language, Liebler and Kahn’s edition of Shaaari Teshuvah is an invaluable addition to any collection of classic Sephardic texts.

Randall C. Belinfante, American Sephardi Federation


“Halacha ripped from the headlines” would be a great tag line if this book were a TV show. Each chapter in this book starts with a news story and then analyzes and explores the issues of Jewish law connected to the events. The author deals with such current issues as health care policy, saving those in danger, touring the Vatican, agunah problems, Internet filters, synthetic beef, and liabilities causes by computer malware. After presenting the evidence or discussion, each chapter has a summary and clarification of issues. This book is fascinating to read, but it could be improved with more thorough editing. Many of the legal terms only appear in Hebrew; they are not defined and the book has no glossary. Also lacking is an index and bibliography. In addition, there are typographical errors. With these revisions a second edition would have a wider audience.

Lichtenstein is a businessman by day and in his spare time actively involved with the study and analysis of Jewish tradition and halacha. This duality allows him to see how the message of Torah is found in all aspects of life. His erudite understanding of current affairs and how they relate to Jewish law is impressive. While this book will find a welcome place in an Orthodox home, libraries of all kinds should add it to their collections.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Malcolm X College Library, Chicago, IL
Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults


Magid argues in this book that “it was in Hasidism that the transition from logos theology, the fetishization of the Book, to incarnational theology reached its most radical, materialist articulation.” Hasidism grew “largely outside the Christian gaze and had no need to draw the distinctions common in modern Western European Jewish thinking and produced a Jewish theology colored by incarnational thinking.” Magid examines a series of Hasidic texts spanning the entire history of Hasidism and develops a theory of “incarnational thinking.” Chapter 1 focuses on the persona of the Tsadik and its role as incarnating the Divine. The texts reviewed and analyzed are *Likute Moharan* of Nahman, of Bratslav (1772-1811). In Chapter 2, the text is *Peri ha-arets* of Menahem Mendel, of Vitebsk (1730-1788); in Chapter 3, *Sefer Sha’are Gan Eden* of Ya’akov Kopil (?-1740), and in Chapter 4 selected works of Martin Buber (1878-1965) are contrasted with *Shem mi-Shemu’el* of Shemu’el ben Avraham, of Sochaczew (1852-1926) in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 presents texts from Jewish thinkers of the past century, Leo Baeck (1873-1956), Hans-Joachim Schoeps (1909-1980), and contemporary ones, Michael Wyschogrod (b. 1928) and Elliot R. Wolfson (b. 1956). *Hasidism Incarnate* is a very accessible book, presenting evidence and arguments in a clear fashion, summarizing the ideas presented by the various authors and proceeding further and advancing a seductive thesis worth debating intellectually and dispassionately. It could also stimulate an interesting discussion at Jewish-Christian theological encounters. Recommended to all libraries and interested individuals.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD


Twenty-two essays are presented here as a festschrift for the pioneering Israeli anthropologist and ethnographer Alex Weingrod, who also provides an afterword. The anthology is divided into four parts: the focus of the first three sections deal with the substantive themes of coexistence and conflict; immigration, ethnicity, and identities; and religion and rituals. The last sections deal with a comparative analysis of Israeli cultural patterns with those found in other states. Each essay is academically sound and certainly will be of interest to social anthropologists, whether focusing on Israel or the general discipline. Subject areas that might interest a broader audience include the coverage of Jewish communities in southern Tunisia, the integration of Ethiopian Jews into Israeli society, caught between Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities, and how Christian pilgrimages might be studied as a sociological event. Overall this anthology goes a long way towards explaining how Israeli society has evolved since the state’s founding and the devices employed to insure a safe and efficient manner for the ingathering of different Jewish communities from non-regional areas. Recommended for academic libraries.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC


Israela Meyerstein, a leading mental health professional, wrote Bridge to Healing after her own encounter with cancer. This is a useful and detailed self-help book. The book is divided into five main parts: Practical Spirituality; The Illness Journey; A Down-To-Earth Spiritual Toolbox; Guided Reflections and Exercises for Coping and Healing; Notes and References. Each chapter concludes with a list of “Things to Think About and Do.” Meyerstein provides her own illustrations and diagrams whenever needed.

Though Bridge to Healing is principally a Jewish spiritual guide, based on Jewish wisdom and tradition, its insights are universally relevant. A detailed glossary explains unfamiliar terms and the
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Jewish sources can be used to help anyone who needs spiritual support. References to a wide range of care-giving resources are included.

Bridge to Healing is a worthy acquisition for public libraries as well as for medical-related professional libraries. Individuals who want to reinforce their spiritual strength will also benefit from this book. Its message is clear and direct: do not give up! When the physical body fails, the spirit should rise to the occasion and help survival.

Nira Wolfe


Deborah Dash Moore has written widely about American Jewish life. Her topics include World War II (GI Jews) and cultural issues (To the Golden Cities). This volume, originally a series of lectures, analyzes the relationship between Jewish life in America and the urban setting.

Three sections revolve around both locations and images. Chapter 1, “Synagogues” tells the history of American Judaism through its buildings. From the Touro Synagogue through numerous nineteenth and twentieth century structures, Moore describes how synagogues “announced a Jewish vision of urban life that celebrated the city’s manifold opportunities for social mobility.” In Chapter 2, “Streets,” she discusses the city as a landscape. She explores “the neighborhood, where many activities were quasi-public rather than strictly private.” Life included daily business, social communication, and protest, as the immigrants and their children learned how to navigate the American world: “The streets... were the living rooms and the playgrounds, particularly for the poor.” Chapter 3, “Snapshots” analyzes the story through photographs. Using both iconic images and less well-known photos from the 1880s through the post-war era, Moore explores what Jews saw in the developing American experience, and how they changed to meet the new life. The author cannily shows how photography has documented the development of Jewish life from the Lower East Side to the suburbs.

There is no dramatic new information here. Rather, Moore provides an intriguing set of lenses through which to view the American Jewish experience. The bibliography is a trove of useful resources for scholars and lay readers. Recommended for academic libraries and larger synagogues.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


As society became more mobile in the 19th and early 20th centuries, people relied on letter-writing to connect to potential employers, teachers, and of course family members. But many people did not have the skills to compose erudite letters. This engendered a new literary genre of letter writing manuals. Nakhimovsky and Newman examine many of the manuals that were printed for a general audience and then focus on those directed towards Jewish audiences. They compare the content of the sample letters with those of actual letters from this time and letters written in the context of novels.

They found that the manuals provide interesting snapshots of what issues were most pressing at the time, many of which focused on the impact of modernity and mobility on shtetl life. There are examples of letters from parents bemoaning the lack of correspondence from their children in America; responses from the children overflowing with repentance or explaining an illness; examples of children asking their parents for money and others of parents asking their children for support. Some read like a “choose your own adventure” novel where a question is written in one letter and multiple examples of a response are given.

There is a lot of history in this book as the authors discuss the social and economic stresses that Jews faced on both sides of the ocean throughout this time period. They begin each section with an
explanation of a particular issue, but the real delight of the book is reading the letters themselves. This volume includes notes and a bibliography. Highly Recommended.

Sheryl Stahl, Senior Associate Librarian, Frances-Henry Library, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles.


Dr. Natan Ophir has written an extensive and scholarly biography of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach (1925-1994). Ophir grew up on the west side of Manhattan not far from Rabbi Carlebach’s synagogue and therefore had a personal relationship with Reb Shlomo. Rabbi Carlebach fled Europe with his parents and twin brother in 1939. In America Carlebach studied in the Lakewood Yeshiva and later the family moved to Manhattan where he became a follower of Chabad. Under the direction of the sixth Lubavitch Rebbe, Carlebach was sent to college campuses to reach out to unaffiliated Jewish youth. He began composing and performing his original, and intensely moving compositions. His charismatic singing and playing mesmerized audiences. Rabbi Carlebach was the innovator and still most influential composer of Jewish music today. His songs are still sung all over the world and Carlebach synagogue services are very popular. In Dr. Ophir’s book we discover Reb Shlomo Carlebach’s life through the eyes of people whose lives were changed by his love of all humanity and his outreach to all people. Included in the book are copious footnotes, a timeline of his all too short life, an extensive bibliography, sites and Youtube videos where his music can be accessed, a discography in Hebrew and English and an index of all Carlebach songs. Recommended for the music and biography collection of all libraries.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH


Prewar Poland witnessed the secularization of thousands, including Jews who assimilated, intermarried, or converted to Christianity, as well as those of Jewish descent. In 1940 all were lumped together under Nazi racial laws and forced into the Warsaw Ghetto. Based on diaries, memoirs, and interviews, the author describes the tragedy of those adrift in two worlds.

She distinguishes between those who had acculturated but retained some traditional though ambivalent ties, versus the western, cosmopolitan elite who had comprised a large part of the prewar nation’s intelligentsia. Alienated from the Jewish mainstream, this latter group entered the Ghetto only to confront often hostile strangers. Incarceration forced them into two categories: “those who merged with the community around them and those who remained apart from it.” Some reconnected with their Jewish heritage and even assisted in Ghetto welfare. Others, utilizing Aryan friends and relatives, distanced themselves
and formed their own cliques. Many contributed to the Ghetto’s night life or obtained positions among the Jewish Council and police. A Ghetto church catered to baptized worshippers. But in the end, neither their patriotism nor their sophistication saved them. Reduced to poverty and starvation, they were deported, along with the rest of the populace, in the summer of 1942, or following the Ghetto’s uprising and liquidation in the spring of 1943. Some managed to escape or survive in hiding; some participated in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, albeit under Polish identity or alias.

This book, painful but fascinating, brings to light an overlooked but significant demographic and hints at the futility of assimilation. Essential for Holocaust libraries.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY


Organized mostly by courses, Phillips’ book offers traditional foods as well as new twists of old favorites. Most of the recipes start with a short narrative which includes the meaning of the ingredients, their variations, the origins of the recipe, or the place it originated. The ingredients list includes both metric and American measurements; although it could have “translated” some of the ingredient names. This reviewer knew that “aubergine” meant “eggplant” but had to look up “courgettes” (zucchini). Many of the recipes include a “Chef’s tip,” a hint about preparation, storage, or menu pairings. Phillips also included tips on how “To search the stylish way.” The directions are straight-forward and easy to follow and the Moroccan Vegetable Tagine was a hit at my house.

Each recipe is tagged to show whether it is meat, dairy, or parev; its holiday link if any, and its association with special diets (vegetarian, gluten-free, diabetic friendly, etc.). Confusingly, while recipes appropriate for special diets are sprinkled throughout the book, there is also a chapter called “Free From” which collects a few of these special diet recipes together. There is also no definition of what makes a recipe “diabetic friendly” and no nutritional information to help people with health concerns.

Recommended for larger Jewish cookbook collections.

Sheryl Stahl, Senior Associate Librarian, Frances-Henry Library, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles.


In this new study of Yefet ben ‘Eli’s translation of the biblical book of Joshua, James Robinson addresses many of the issues that have arisen in exploring the work of this, the most prolific commentator on the Bible prior to the 11th Century. The 10th century is generally regarded as the “Karaite Golden Era” in terms of literary output, and yet, no other Karaite writer can compare to Yefet ben ‘Eli in the length and breadth of his compilation, translation, and analysis of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible).

Yefet ben ‘Eli was generally a literalist, concentrating on the Peshat (the plain meaning) in the texts as opposed to the homiletical or traditional interpretation. Robinson observes however, that Yefet ben Eli did, in certain instances, employ the 13 hermeneutic principles found in the Mishnah, and occasionally even made use of allegory. Apparently this was an important factor in Yefet’s significant impact on the work Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1167). At the same time, Robinson notes that Yefet reveals an indiscutable influence from Saadia Gaon, the unequivocal antagonist of the Karaites.

Robinson argues that Yefet ben ‘Eli’s greatest importance lies in the way in which he fills in the gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the world in which he lived. Because so much of his material has been preserved (though much still requires publication), we are able to evaluate the writings of those like Saadia Gaon commonly found in Yefet’s refutations and arguments, as well as the writings of others like Anan ben David (founder of Karaimism), some of whose writings are preserved in Yefet’s
acclamations and disagreements. His commentary on the book of Joshua is extremely valuable tool for understanding the world of 10th century scholars and scholarship.

A serious academic work, Robinson’s study of Yefet ben ‘Eli should definitely find its place in research collections supporting biblical, rabbinic and Karaite scholarship.

Randall C. Belinfante, American Sephardi Federation


For most Jews, Zionism is connected with Israel and Israel alone. More knowledgeable Jews may be aware of the efforts of Theodore Herzl and the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1897, but few if any will know of the many efforts of others to create a safe homeland for European Jewry as a solution to their oppression and as an answer to the so-called “Jewish Question.” Rovner, an English and Jewish literature academician from the University of Denver, has pieced together from extensive archival research and personal travels the history and prominent personages of the early Zionists and, more importantly, the many geographic programs and projects in three continents that were proposed for Jewish habitation. He begins with the work of American playwright Mordechai Manuel Noah who sought to develop a Jewish city-state in Grand Island, New York, close to Niagara Falls, between 1818 and 1848. This is followed by what Israel Zangwill, along with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, attempted to get from Great Britain: land in its East African Protectorate (now Kenya), which was a brief effort from 1903 to 1905. Zangwill’s Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO), it is shown, then negotiated with Portugal for a settlement area in Angola. The ITO’s successor, the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonization, began in 1937 to look at the French possession, the island of Madagascar, to have a Jewish colony. Another group of Jewish literati in 1940, under the pressure of what the Nazis were doing in Europe, looked far from Europe, what is now the island of Tasmania, off the coast of Australia. There was then the effort of one Isaac Nachman Steinberg to seek a settlement in Dutch Guiana (now Suriname). This is a great addition to a large synagogue collection, a Jewish studies program at any level, and for the reader interested in a broad reflection on the development of the Zionist idea.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC


In a slim book based on lectures delivered in 2012, David Ruderman introduces us to a now relatively unknown book, Sefer ha-Brit (The Book of the Covenant), first published by Pinhas Hurwitz in 1797. This book was an encyclopedia of scientific knowledge, a manual of moral and social behavior as well as an extended commentary of Lurianic kabbalah. The work, republished in over 40 editions in Hebrew, Ladino, and Yiddish was widely read by all segments of the Jewish community – Maskilim, Hassidim, Mitnagdim, and has been cited even more recently by Agnon, Ovadiah Yosef and Rav Shach.

Ruderman, professor of modern Jewish history at the University of Pennsylvania, argues that the book’s popularity was due to its presentation of the latest scientific advances as a key to understanding the divine working of the cosmos. Hurwitz offered a critique of Jewish traditional sources such as the Talmud and medieval Jewish philosophy as providing an incomplete truth. Kant’s challenge to metaphysics showed that human intellect lacked the means to know what was beyond nature and new scientific discoveries as well “destabilized the orderly system of human knowledge,” leaving only faith based on revelation as explained through kabbalah as truth. Hurwitz also critiqued traditional communal leadership. Ruderman suggests Masonic influences on what he sees as Hurwitz’ most original chapter, “A discourse on the love of all human beings, Jewish and non-Jews alike.”

Ruderman traces what is known of Hurwitz’s biography and his intellectual world. Hurwitz was
born possibly in Vilna but interacted with Maskilic circles in Berlin, traveled to England, and sought out haskamot (rabbinic endorsements) for his book in Eastern Europe. Ruderman sees Hurwitz in the mold of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, who also merged kabbalah and science. This provides one more path to modernity in a more Eastern European and traditional guise. Recommended for academic libraries.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA


Marc Saperstein supplies a selection of essays that address the question of Jewish Leadership in the medieval and early modern periods of Jewish history. While much scholarship of this era centers on the intensive academic and philosophical pursuits of elite Jewish circles (a very small portion of Jewish society), Saperstein shines a light on Jewish society as a whole as reflected in rabbinic sermons and responsa. These mediums provide unique insight into Jewish society because in the case of the former, the sermonizer is addressing a congregation and therefore the topics of the sermon must ring true to the listener and in the case of the latter, the writer of the responsa must address a query about Jewish society and be prepared for its content to become common law to the community asking the question.

The first chapter focuses on a sermon that reflects a crisis in thirteenth century Spain while the next chapter is about a fourteenth century responsa written by the Spanish rabbi, Judah ben Asher that explores how to decide a question of law where the needs of a community may conflict with established legal precedent. Chapter 3 discusses the question of Jewish philosophy and how it affected the larger Jewish society; chapter 4 explores excommunication through an infamous early fourteenth century example, and chapter 5 is about the use of complex and theologically complicated sermons given by preachers and its effect on the congregation. A famous Amsterdam rabbi in the seventeenth century and his use of sermons to his congregation of former conversos is the topic of Chapter 6. The next chapter weighs in on the critique leveled at the generation of Rabbis who lived during the Spanish expulsion, while the subsequent chapter explores a responsa dealing with a Jewish boycott surrounding an Inquisition in sixteenth century Italy. Chapter 9 turns once again to Amsterdam and a sermon that discusses catastrophic events both home and abroad, while Chapter 10 centers on Jewish leaders who tried to restrict the content and expression of Jewish preachers throughout this time period. The final three chapters concern independent topics such as The Land of Israel and Messianic leadership and Rabbinic leadership.

This is a fascinating book about Jewish society in the medieval and early modern era written through the prism of rabbinic sermons and Jewish responsum by one of the preeminent scholars of these mediums. Written clearly, it is accessible to the scholar and the interested general reader.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY


Levin’s excellent clear translation offers the English reader a wonderful glimpse into the profound thought of Eliezer Schweid, a prolific author and engaging Professor of Jewish Philosophy and Zionism at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

The book opens with an autobiographical essay on the Zionist upbringing of Schweid, who was influenced by A.D. Gordon, and on his career at HUJ where he was trained by great scholars such as Gershom Scholem, Nathan Rotenstreich, Yitzchak Baer, and Shlomo Pines. The second essay marks out his method of research and way of teaching Jewish Thought. In the third brilliant essay we are offered a meditation on Jewish identity and the lonely Jewish individual in the context of modern Jewish

These penetrating and insightful essays blend a unique form of existentialism and secular Zionism. Schweid offers a clarion call to return to eternal verities, transcendent principles, the common good, the tradition of virtue and ideals by reformulating Jewish values to rebuild Jewish culture for the lost younger generations, by an ancient vision guided by the moral compass of Jewish ethics, historical consciousness, and philosophic analysis. Recommended for academic libraries.

David B Levy Touro College, New York, NY


This book is a kosher foodie’s dream: a collection of recipes from some of the best kosher restaurants in the world. The restaurants included in this collection span the globe including Israel, Europe, and North America. The level of cuisine, from highly acclaimed and award-winning chefs, is truly astounding.

The authors, Leah Schapira and Victoria Dwek, have previously teamed together to do the “Made Easy” series of kosher cookbooks. The table of contents is very clear and makes finding a recipe easy. There are a few pages of tips, which are wonderful. Each recipe is supplied with a wealth of information, about the restaurant, the recipe itself, and then information on the chef or a particular ingredient. Most of the recipes are 4-6 steps, which even a mildly experienced home cook can accomplish, and most of the ingredients are common enough not to require special shopping. However, there are some special ingredients as this is a gourmet-level recipe collection. The food styling and photography is quite good, with a modern, artsy feel. Readers will enjoy this gourmet kosher world tour. This book is recommended for Jewish libraries.

Debbie Feder, Director, LRC Ida Crown Jewish Academy


Brenner is one of the major figures of modern Hebrew literature, some would say a towering figure. Israel Prize in Jewish History winner, Anita Shapira has written a fine biography of Brenner covering both the public and private spheres. We are shown a Jewish patriot who doubted the practicality of Zionism, a lover of Hebrew who did not think it would ever again be a spoken tongue, a man subject to great depression yet a hard worker, an atheist and anti-clerical who was steeped in the Bible, a socialist who generally refused to identify with any party, a man both subject to self-pity and capable of great generosity to others. While Dr. Shapira discusses many of Brenner’s writings, the literary criticism plays a distinctly secondary role. An interesting, recurring theme in the author’s interpretation of Brenner’s character is a certain contrast between Brenner’s conscious, sincerely held views and the way he lived his life. For example, he was skeptical of Zionism yet, once he moved to the Land of Israel, demonstrated a commitment to the land. Recommended.

Shmuel Ben-Gad, Gelman Library, George Washington University


In this new book Simonsohn ventures beyond Sicily, about which he has carried on a conversation for the last two decades, and embarks on an investigation of the Jewish population of mainland Italy in the early centuries of the Common Era. One of the fundamental issues he discusses is the paucity of evidence about this community. There is nothing similar to the volumes of notarial records found
in Sicily. Even the evidence that one might expect to assist us in building a reliable narrative, such as secular laws and government decrees are not abundant. Moreover, aside from a few tombstone inscriptions, the archaeological record is extremely sparse.

Based on the meager evidence that he was able to gather, Simonsohn has made some preliminary attempts to appraise the mainland Jewish community of this period. He begins by asserting that the population was far smaller than historians have previously suggested—certainly never approaching 10% of the total population described by some. He claims that at its peak in the first two or three centuries C.E., the Jewish population was perhaps as high as 50,000. Simonsohn explains that in the centuries that followed, “…the population of Italy and with it that of the Jews there decreased as a result of economic depression, warfare and other disasters.”

Though little is specifically known about the socio-economic world of this population, Simonsohn surmises that most of the immigrants arrived initially as prisoners of war. Although those that came as slaves were all readily redeemed, they tended to be extremely poor, relegated to the lower echelons of the society. There were few men of letters (Philo and Josephus being the exceptions), but there appears to be some evidence of their legal impact, in such works as Collatio Legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum, which Simonsohn asserts points toward Jewish authorship.

Simonsohn makes it clear that “…there is every reason to believe that the Jews of Italy were affected by the politico-economic upheavals that beset the country,” and more controversially, by the Hellenism that permeated the world in the centuries under review. Yet, although they certainly would have employed the vernacular—Greek or Latin—in daily life, and probably adopted many of social habits of the people around them, they remained apart, worshipping their own God, and adhering to the laws laid down in the Torah and in the interpretations of the Rabbis.

This book is an excellent study of the Jews in Italy in the early centuries of the Common Era, essential for libraries and students seeking to understand the post-biblical history of the Jews.

Randall C. Belinfante, American Sephardi Federation


Haym Soloveitchik is the foremost scholar on the history of Halacha among the rabbinic sages of medieval Ashkenaz (primarily France and Germany). In the first part of this book, Soloveitchik includes eight essays re-evaluating the intellectual history of early Ashkenaz (c. 950-1096) and providing a substantive critique to many reigning scholarly (Bonfil, Ta-Shma and Grossman) approaches to this era. The second part of this collection of essays focuses on martyrdom. In the first chapter of this section, Soloveitchik points to the different self-perceptions of the Jews of Christian Spain and the Jews of Islamic countries in the context of mass conversions that occurred in their communities. The next chapter discusses how the novel circumstances in which the Ashkenaz Jewish community found itself in the medieval era differed from its Babylonian forerunners and the implication that had on the issue of martyrdom and Halacha. In the next chapter, Soloveitchik republishes his famous article about Maimonides and his Iggeret ha-Shemad (Letter of Apostasy) with an afterword discussing some of the critique leveled against the essay and Soloveitchik’s claim that it was primarily a work of rhetoric that conflicted with Maimonides’ early writings. The chapters that follow are responses to various critics of his theory on Iggeret ha-Shemad. The third part of this work centers on Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah and contains two chapters that discuss the classification (arrangement, organization and topical distribution) of the Mishneh Torah.

Soloveitchik’s second volume of collected essays contains nine new essays while the remaining ones have previously been published in Hebrew or English. Reading Soloveitchik is always a delight as his careful writing, perceptive insights and vast scholarship and erudition can be found on every page. This book is intended for the scholar and not for a general audience.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

This book is written from a Modern Orthodox point of view and is aimed at “discerning traditional readers.” As the subtitle indicates, it deals with six discrete topics. Some chapters are drier than others. I imagine the part that will be of most interest to readers is the author’s argument that a modern, religiously motivated, scientific study of the Tanakh—using recent archaeological discoveries and the recovery of ancient languages related to Hebrew, for example—is in accordance with the methods of the mediaeval exegetes even if it sometimes leads to different conclusions. The discussion and comparison of eight exegetes is also quite enlightening. Dr. Sokolow of Yeshiva University is evidently a lover of the Tanakh but I cannot say that this book, for all its information and argumentation, conveys the actual atmosphere of the text. I suppose it might be argued that this can only be experienced by diving into the Tanakh itself, something which this book certainly encourages.

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

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Herman Taube was a medic in the Polish army. Following Germany’s attack on Poland and the Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939, Taube, together with thousands of enlisted Polish men was taken prisoner of war by the Soviets and sent to Siberia. After the German attack on the USSR in June 1941 he was released and made his way to Uzbekistan, where he stayed until early 1943, when he rejoined the Polish army. In Uzbekistan he spent most of his time in a small village, Kyzyl Kishlak, where he served as a medic and came in close contact with the local Muslim population. His vignettes describe his interactions with Soviet officials and especially with the local population as well as with some Jews he encountered there. While some of his descriptions of the Soviets are not that favorable, his memoirs of the Uzbek are warm and positive, providing details on their daily life and customs. This short book is an important contribution on WWII time conditions in a less-studied region. It is especially so regarding Taube’s interactions with non-Uzbek Jews who found themselves there due to the war.

*Rachel Simon. Princeton University. Princeton NJ*

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This excellent handbook fills a gap between general overviews and specialized narrowly focused studies on the work and life of Philo Judaeus. It sheds light on his thought, scriptural exegesis, political thought, and his influence on Christianity, as well as on the influences on him by a variety of schools of Greek thought. This work contains a practical section on reading Philo in the computer age of digitization, internet resources, and databases (such as Perseus).

Among the important questions it raises are: (1) What kind of Jew is Philo? (2) What is Philo’s view of G-d, the Bible, the law, marriage, Temple service, predestination, the Therapeutae? (3) How does Philo differ from the Pharisees and Sadducees? (4) What is Philo’s view on the role of Israel and the diaspora? (5) What is the nature of Philo’s allegorical method? (6) What was Philo’s classical education like? (7) What can we learn from his writings about the Jews of Alexandria and the pogroms the Jews suffered there? (8) The importance of Philo for New Testament studies and Church Fathers, and (9) Philo’s relevance for the study of Jews and Judaism in antiquity. Recommended for all libraries, especially academic.

*David B Levy, Touro College*

Esther Tscholkowsky has created a unique photo journal. Over three hundred photos, accompanied by explanatory text in Hebrew and English, present Jewish historical highlights, life, and important places in Israel according to Jewish Law (Halakah).

Each of the three main sections touches eight chosen subjects with ten to eleven photos. In Holy Times the reader encounters making honey for the New Year, as well as growing Etrogim for the Sukkah, baking Matzah, and welcoming the Shabbat. Holy Work starts with Sofer Stam who writes the text inside the Tefillin and makes the Tefillin boxes. In this section one learns about crafting Atsei Hayim (Holders of the Torah Scroll) as well as the ancient art of Jewish Juggling. Holy Work ends with how the laws of Shmitah (the seventh agricultural year) are adhered to in Israel. Holy Places includes (besides other places) the restoration of the Hurvah synagogue in the old city of Jerusalem, Kever Rachel, Mearat haMakhpehlah, and sunrise at the Kotel (Western Wall).

Tscholkowsky’s work invigorates current Ultra-Orthodox life in contemporary Israel. Sincere Emunah (Belief in God) and love of the country and its people are expressed throughout the pages. An experienced photographer, Tscholkowsky enjoyed the assistance of many of her professional women and men friends in publishing this album. It is a beautiful book, erudite in content and unique in presentation.

Most unfortunately I cannot recommend this book for any mainstream library. Women, including female children, do not appear in this book—not even in the women’s section of the Kotel or by chance in a crowd scene. Esther Tscholkowsky follows a segment, and only a segment, of the ultra-orthodox Jewish community that has decided, totally within their rights, not to show females in their publications, even when dressed modestly. The result is that *Picture This!* will set into motion erroneous comparisons of women in Israel to women in such places as Saudi Arabia. It is unfortunate because it is a book containing excellent information, but it could contribute to destructive generalizations and mischaracterizations of an entire community.

*Nira Wolfe*


The term ‘stam’ has become a highly popular term—indeed, the major tool—for many Talmud scholars in recent years. It is translated from the Aramaic ‘stama de-Talmuda’, an expression used by medieval rabbinic commentators to refer to the anonymous narrating voice of the Talmud which introduces the opinions and stories of named rabbis and comments upon them. In the hands of David Weiss Halivni, Shamma Friedman and others, it became the key to exposing the layered nature of the Talmudic text, marking for them the latest and most significant stage in the redaction of the Talmud. A younger generation has followed in their wake, analyzing the editorial strategies and cultural affinities of the anonymous Stammaim. In much of this scholarship, the Stam is viewed with a degree of suspicion and even recrimination, stemming from the assumption that the Stammaim imposed themselves upon the earlier Talmudic traditions but tried to cover their tracks by maintaining a veil of anonymity.

Moulie Vidas takes a fresh look at the nature and goals of the Stam, and concludes that is not a tactic but an ideology. The Stammaim, whom Vidas does not necessarily consider to be later than the other figures in the Talmud, made a conscious effort to distinguish their own words from those of received tradition in order to emphasize and valorize the creative role they were playing in reconsidering and recasting those traditions. The first three chapters of *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud* provide textual analysis of Talmudic passages to flesh out the claim that the Talmud as a whole creates a “critical gap” between tradition and creative discussion. The second half of the book proposes a cultural context for this gap, suggesting that the scholars of the Babylonian Talmud stood apart from other streams both within rabbinic Judaism and in other intellectual groups in Sasanian Babylonia, including Christians and Zoroastrians. Vidas’s book
is eloquent testimony to the high level of conceptual sophistication that has been achieved in the academic field of Talmud study in recent years. It bodes well for the future of the field in American academia.

*Pinchas Roth*


This translation gives English-language readers access to a significant and rare primary source by a Jewish woman of Eastern Europe in the 19th century, a time of great change. The second volume covers Wengeroff’s life as an adult. Raised in a wealthy, traditional Jewish family in Brisk (Brest-Litovsk) she entered an arranged marriage and subsequently moved around throughout Lithuania, Finland, St. Petersburg, Vienna, and Minsk with her family. Wengeroff wanted to maintain a traditional Orthodox lifestyle, while her husband, raised Hasidic, was conflicted about his religious beliefs and rejected many Jewish customs. This conflict played out both in their family life (where she felt a loss of her maternal authority to uphold kashrut and other religious practices) and in the larger Jewish community, which was grappling with modernity, assimilation, anti-Semitism, and issues of education and economic opportunity. It’s a fascinating account, and the footnotes and introduction were extremely helpful, although I was confused by some of the spellings in the text. Some transliterations of Yiddish and Hebrew words were inconsistent and not standardized (perhaps reflecting the original spellings?), and more clarification would have been helpful. This is an important and worthwhile historic work and I recommend it for all libraries.

*Amanda Seigel, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library*


A story about two girls, one in war-torn Europe and the other in comfortable Brooklyn, NY, *The Sweetness* by Sande B. Berger is a beautifully written novel about the struggles of family and its effect on personal success. The primary character, Mira, is a young Jewish Brooklynite, the child of clothing manufacturers, and has aspirations for a fashion career of her own. The other protagonist, Rosha, is a young Jewish girl in Vilna, who is taken in by a Gentile candle maker after the Germans invade and begin to deport and mass execute the Jews of Vilna. Rosha is Mira’s first cousin and Mira’s aunts and uncles, who live with her in New York, are told of the supposed tragic fate at the hands of the Nazis of her father’s brother’s family, including his niece Rosha. This tragic news turns Mira’s family upside-down and the family business is affected.

Due to her family’s rapidly deteriorating emotional state, Mira is forced to quit design school and join the family business. As the war progresses, Mira’s family falls more into emotional distress, as different ailments befall the family. In the years immediately after the war, the family moves out of its Brooklyn cocoon and begins to live the American dream in the more rural areas. Rosha’s war journey is mentioned as well in the book, but does not have as much emphasis in the main story. The author attempts to weave the two stories together, but is not entirely successful in giving both characters equal weight. While the two girls are connected through family, the main character Mira is used as a catalyst for the whole story.

An engaging read; recommended for public and synagogue libraries.

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

This collection of short stories by Leonard S. Bernstein, an executive in New York’s apparel industry, offers readers a portrait of that city’s garment district during the 1950s. The stories present quirky, colorful characters, often obsessed with some aspect of life. *Navy Blue Forever* documents a man’s attempt to simplify his life by wearing only one style and color. *Y-S-L* is the story of Ricardo’s search for the perfect tie. The title story, *Death by Pastrami*, will make readers reconsider their desire for pastrami sandwiches. These stories allow readers to discover life in the factories, bars, and delis of old New York, getting a taste of the work and play of our immigrant ancestors. The author portrays work, schemes, relationships, and food with humor, elevating the ordinary and entertaining the reader in the process. Fiction readers will enjoy the tales and book clubs will find many things to discuss.

*Barbara M. Bibel, Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA.*


Judith Gallanter, thirty-two years old, is back in Canada after spending ten years in Israel as a social worker helping mentally disabled children and working with Jewish-Arab coexistence groups for adolescents. A committed left-wing Zionist with a visceral love of Israel, she leaves only to nurse her father in his final illness. (She has no siblings and her mother is dead.) She promises her father to pursue a master’s degree in social work in Canada because he thinks this will make her more economically self-sufficient. After he dies she enters the MSW program in (fictional) Dunhill University. The novel, which largely takes place in 2002 and 2003 during the second intifada when Israel suffered many terrorist attacks, has two major plot strands. One is Judith’s experience at university and her discovery of the anti-Zionism of much of the academic left. The other is her ambivalent relationship with her ex-high school boyfriend, Bobby Kornblum, now an attorney in a major Toronto law firm. The ambivalence arises from their political differences (he is much more conservative than she) and also from his total lack of interest in making aliyah (though he is supportive of Israel). Judith is well-drawn, her situation intriguing, and the tone serious. The novel ends on an exilic note of uncertainty and yearning. Definitely recommended (with the caveat that there are more than a few sexually explicit scenes).

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


Lieutenant Peter Decker has retired from the LAPD, and he and his wife Rina Lazarus have moved to Greenbury, a small town in upstate New York. Peter has joined the police force in his new home and is bored with his uneventful life in Greenbury. His new partner is a young Harvard graduate who has joined the force as a summer diversion before going to law school. Peter regrets leaving the excitement of the LAPD until two Tiffany windows are stolen from a family mausoleum and replaced by forgeries. Soon after, Angeline, the young art student who created the forgeries and her boyfriend are found brutally murdered. Decker and his new partner Tyler McAdams find a connection between the forged Tiffany windows, the murders and some rare Russian icons. Recommended for all Kellerman fans.

*Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH*


After the publication of her story about murdered Israeli poet, David Bellen, Hannah Groff is contacted by Gila, her former Hebrew school teacher and her father’s former mistress, who tells her about her affair with Meyer Lansky, in Israel, while he petitioned the Israeli government for sanctuary. Hannah discovers parallels between Gila’s story and Bellen’s essay, in which he compares the founding of Israel with that of Las Vegas by gangsters Lansky and Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel. In his essay, Bellen considers what Lansky’s

Kat Knopman thought that she had the perfect life. She worshipped her bohemian parents, the mild-mannered Misha and the unpredictable, moody Anechka, and was going to start first grade in the school where her parents were idolized. However, a diagnosis of scoliosis changed Kat’s fate. Instead of joining her parents, Kat is sent to a special school for children with scoliosis, where she is an outcast, rather than the perfect girl that she longs to be seen as. As her mother battles depression and suffers numerous miscarriages, Kat realizes that she and her family are far from perfect and that she may never be the perfect girl.

Kat’s life turns out to be the opposite of what she expected. Instead of being part of her parents’ theatrical clique, Kat is forced to wear braces that would, eventually, help her body, but, which presently, makes her a freak. As her mother battles depression and suffers numerous miscarriages, Kat is forced to grow up without the supervision of mature parents.

I recommend *Mannequin Girl* for Young Adult and Adult readers, who will relate with Kat’s struggle with growing up and her feelings about her body and self-worth.


Sarah is a young American woman, growing up in the height of the struggle for peace, love and equality in the 1960’s-70’s. Danya lives in Israel, in the Messianic Age, in which war, famine, pestilence and suffering are no more. The two women connect via Danya’s dreams in which she witnesses Sarah’s struggle and her creation of the Princess of Dan manuscript which defines the qualities of the virtuous woman known as The Princess of Dan.

Because of its density of Kabbalistic and Messianic themes, this book, unfortunately, will only be fully appreciated by a few, namely those Baalei Teshuvah who are returning to the Orthodox way of life. However, Nadborny-Burgeman writes a good Fantasy story and I enjoyed reading about the women’s travels to get to a higher spiritual realm in their lives. Unfortunately, overall, the narrative is boring and trite. The idea is good, but it fails to maintain a reader’s interest.


Susan Fisher, the daughter of two secular Jewish professionals, is a student at a small Christian college when a series of tragedies (the deaths of both her parents, and that of her only remaining family member) leave her feeling lost and disconnected. When she travels from her home in Moline, Illinois to New York City to attend her Aunt Rachel’s funeral, she is shocked to learn that she is main beneficiary of her Aunt’s vast fortune. With the help of her Aunt’s lawyers, she learns about her financial holdings, meets the family of her Aunt’s deceased husband, and decides to move into her Aunt’s penthouse apartment in the building Susan now owns. She quickly meets one of the tenants, a handsome Jewish doctor and starts a relationship with him.

Part *bildungsroman* and part romance, the novel sadly fails at each. From the beginning the Jewish lawyers impress upon Susan the importance of Judaism to her Aunt’s family and take it upon themselves to educate her. In anticipation of Susan’s spiritual journey, the reader might expect discussions of God, Maimonides, Buber, tales of the Hasidim, etc., but instead Susan and the reader are subjected to long lectures on how estates and trusts are set up and run. When the author gets around to addressing philosophy, she focuses on Nietzsche, Sartre, and the characters in *Les Misérables*. Sarnoff’s treatment of Judaism is mostly limited to

The fourteen stories in this book are written by an acclaimed Russian-American writer and physician, who immigrated to the United States in 1987. He has published over twenty books in Russian, as well as two other collections of short stories in English. The three collections are part of the Library of Modern Jewish Literature published by Syracuse University Press. The stories are set in the former USSR, Western Europe and the United States. They describe ways in which Russian Jews grapple with issues of identity, acculturation and assimilation. They deal with aspects of anti-Semitism, problems of mixed marriages, dilemmas of conversion and survival of Jewish memory. The stories were translated by the author’s son, a professor at Boston College, a Guggenheim Fellow, and author of two books. They are striking, arresting, and hold the reader’s attention. They are an important contribution to Jewish-Russian fiction, and a valuable addition to Temple and synagogue, academic, high school, Jewish community center and public library collections.

Susan Freiband, retired library educator, volunteer Temple librarian


*Kaplan’s Quest* is the story of a young Israel academic who embarks on a personal journey to discover the fate of the great-uncle who bears his own name, a German-Jewish athlete who disappeared during the Second World War. Under mysterious circumstances, Shmulik’s uncle Samuel had managed to get out of Germany in 1935 only to return to Berlin, where he was last sighted before he vanished into thin air, strangely managing to fall through the loop of the fanatical bureaucratic record keeping of the Nazi regime.

The story remains engaging throughout as the protagonist takes his quest from Jerusalem, to Berlin and then to France. The search involves uncovering forgotten materials in the archives of Nazi-occupied France (an element of the story that had particular appeal for this librarian-reader) and unearthing archaeological clues with his Canadian cousin, Jack, at Mont St. Michel. Shmulik and Jack, together with Yael, an American Jewish girl who volunteers at the Maccabi Sports Museum in Ramat Gan, pursue the mystery to its end and ultimately uncover a hidden tale whose exposure provides answers for many Jewish families with missing relatives. There’s a touch of romance in the adventure, all set against the backdrop of a carefully-researched historical narrative. Well-written in an uncomplicated, approachable style, this is an absorbing and thought-provoking novel recommended for all libraries.

Rebecca Jefferson, Head, Isser and Rae Price Library of Judaica, University of Florida


It’s hard to be an adolescent boy. It’s even harder to be a payes-wearing Jewish adolescent boy in Coalbanks, Alberta, where there are only a handful of Jews. The Levkes family, like their Jewish neighbors, are strangers in a strange land. However, they are “strangers among strangers” because they are the only Jews to maintain Orthodox Jewish customs. Yoine and his family eat only kosher foods, observe Shabbos and all other Jewish holidays and maintain even the minutest of laws. When his father dies, Yoine learns how his parents sacrificed to escape the Nazis.

Book clubs, unfortunately, will eschew this book and many readers will fail to appreciate Wex’s horny adolescent Talmud boychik. Many conservative readers will be offended by the story’s bawdiness. However, the reader who appreciates edgy stories will LOVE Wex’s book. The plot is pretty weak but Yoine Levkes is charming, a real rapscallion.

Yossi Gremillion, Librarian, Broward County Library, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Life is stranger than fiction and much more complicated in this documentary movie. In Acre (Akko), an Arab man and a Jewish woman fall in love. Much to the disappointment and anger of both families, they marry, and the wife joins his family. Soon they have two children - a boy and a girl. The man is Fauzi Nimer, whose deep pan-Arab nationalism was shaken by the Israelis’ stunning victory in the Six-Day War. Shortly after the war, he turned his attic into an arsenal and in 1971, was sentenced to 22 years in prison for the 22 terror attacks he carried out against Jewish targets. He was released in 1985 in a prisoner exchange, and immediately joined the PLO in Tunisia.

The film focuses on Fauzi Nimer’s son, first called Momi (short for Shlomo), then Salomon, and finally Nimer Ahmad. His sadness is palpable as he recounts being sent to boarding school, moving to Montreal and being enrolled in an Orthodox Jewish school, then going to public school. He reconnects with his father, meets his family in Acre, and eventually marries his Arab cousin and goes by the name Nimer Ahmad. In the meantime, his sister, who had been writing letters to the father in jail and also visited Tunisia, becomes a religious Jew and moves to Israel and has nothing more to do with her father.

The pace is extremely slow, and the camera often rolls on an empty seat as Nimer excuses himself when his emotions are too raw, as when he discusses depression and loneliness. Mother and sister are never mentioned by name and their faces are blacked out in photos. Pair this with another story of Arab/Israeli marriage, Love during Wartime, for a film series. With universal themes of belonging and identity, this film is recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel


After the kidnapping of Gilad Shalit (2006) and the subsequent takeover of Gaza by Hamas (2007) the flow of goods from Israel into the area was severely curtailed, especially items that were considered “luxuries.” David Ofek documents this situation’s impact on both importers and exporters and what happens to these goods when they are not allowed to cross the border.

If the situations were not real, the film would make for a comedy of the absurd. There is a mysterious “government operations coordinator” who decides what will be permitted into Gaza, but there are no official criteria: between the time calves are ordered from Australia and the time they are delivered, fresh beef is banned. There is a change in permits so that roasted chickpeas and peanuts are defined as snack foods, and they cannot enter, left to rot in a storage area. By the end of the film, a human rights group finally gets a document that defines the quantities that can be exported in vague mathematical formulas like X=Y-Z*.70, and the calves, now full grown bulls and a little tough for anything but ground beef, are allowed to go to Gaza.

The other storyline documented in the films is “Project Zebra.” When the news reported that the zoo in Gaza could not afford zebras and painted stripes on two donkeys, the zoo/safari in Ramat Gan offered to donate two zebras. After much pleading and speaking with “the coordinator,” the zebras ended up in a zoo somewhere else.

Despite a rather abrupt ending, with David Ofek still waiting to interview “the coordinator,” the film captures real life and true human emotion. Given that Shalit was released in 2011 and the situation in the Middle East is even more tenuous, the film is no longer timely, but is a good example of the challenges in Israel and Gaza. An optional choice for most Jewish libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel
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