
The participants of the Second Aliyah—those 35,000 Jews who immigrated to Palestine during the years 1904-1914—are examined here, and the Zionist myth of their exceptionality debunked. By framing this demographic instead within the trend of the over 2½ million Jews who left Eastern Europe during the three decades before World War One, historian Gur Alroey argues that, like their brethren who moved elsewhere within the Diaspora, the majority of the emigrants here had neither religious nor ideological motivations. Rather, they sought to flee the pogroms and poverty of the Russian Pale, which in the late nineteenth century was undergoing tremendous changes. Palestine, then under Ottoman rule, was more accessible than other places, due to lighter travel and immigration laws.

Through an overview of diaries, letters, and media, the author uncovers the backgrounds of mundane people who struggled over a new culture and language and suffered boredom, loneliness, and exploitation. The port town of Jaffa teemed with hotels, brothels, and swindlers on the prowl for naïve arrivals. In spite of local aid, those without money or skills languished and many, including Zionists, ended up returning to Russia or going elsewhere; some even committed suicide. Yet those who stayed eventually contributed to the “New Yishuv,” even joining kibbutzim or acquiring land. Unlike the American Jews, who made assimilation their goal, the Palestinian Jews absorbed Zionism, which gradually became the prevailing ideology. This book provides a fine, albeit disillusioning, insight into Jewish migration to Palestine. Essential for Israel-Middle East collections.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

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**Don’t Forget to Check Out AJL News!**

Elisheva Baumgarten’s new book on Jewish religious practice in medieval Ashkenaz very convincingly uses a study of minorities to glean insights into 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 Halacha 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 proceeded 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, women’s studies, and many other areas. This book is highly recommended.

Michelle Chesner, Columbia University


This book provides a history of the Jewish Diaspora community that established roots in Cuba, flourished, and was then driven into exile. Through first person narratives and reminiscences, Dr. Bejarano offers a fascinating history of Jewish immigration to Cuba and the development of a diverse community. Prior to WWI, Sephardic Jews immigrated from Turkey and Syria, followed by a wave of Ashkenazi immigrants from Eastern Europe in the 1920s, and later by Holocaust refugees.

Each chapter is introduced by an extensive historical background followed by oral histories and personal experiences. The testimonies of the interviewees bring to life the challenges of immigrant life and the realities of adjusting to a new country, as well as the creation of Jewish institutions and Jewish religious life, the growth in prosperity of the community and its collapse and dispersal to new countries after the government of Fidel Castro took power. These personal experiences, written in their own voices, is what sets this book apart from others written on the same subject. Highly recommended for all libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University, Canada


Recently many books have been written by disavowed, disenchanted Hasidim (e.g, Shulem Deen’s, *All Who Go Do Not Return* and Deborah Feldman’s *Unorthodox*) who have denounced and defamed the Hasidic way of life. In *The Pious Ones*, Joseph Berger describes Hasidic life in great detail from the perspective of Hasidim, both men and women, who are comfortable and completely satisfied with belonging to this often misunderstood group. Through enlightening interviews with strong adherents to Hasidism, Berger approaches his subject from a different point of view. We meet the proud daughter of Yitta Schwartz, a woman who survived the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and who is survived by 2,000 living relatives. The reader begins to recognize that Hasidism consists of diverse groups, such as Lubavitch, Ger, Satmar, Belz, Vizhnitz and others, who follow a specific rabbi and live together in one insular enclave. Berger addresses and answers questions such as, why Hasidic men and women dress differently, why the men wear fur hats on Shabbat and holidays, why Hasidic men look at women, why the men study Talmud and not attend college, and these groups sometimes have strong political clout. The book contains a comprehensive glossary of common Yiddish and Hebrew terms. *The Pious Ones* is highly recommended for all libraries, because it explains in clear, comprehensible language everything you wanted to know about Hasidism, but did not know whom to ask.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH
Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

New from Jewish Lights Publishing

- *Walking the Path of the Jewish Mystic*, Rabbi Yoel Glick, $18.99
- *The Rhythms of Jewish Living*, Rabbi Marc D. Angel, PhD, $18.99

- *Jewish Ethical Values*, Dr. Byron L. Sherwin and Dr. Seymour J. Cohen, $19.99
- *Our Religious Brains*, Rabbi Ralph D. Mecklenburger, Foreword by Dr. Howard Kelker, Preface by Rabbi Neil Gillman, PhD, $18.99


- *Prayers of Awe: Avinna Malka: Our Father, Our King*, Edited by Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, PhD, $27.99
- *The Golden Rule & the Games People Play*, Rabbi Rami Shapiro, $16.99

- *New in Paperback from SkyLight Paths, Jewish Lights’ Sister Imprint*

- *Naming God*, Edited by Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, PhD, $16.99

- *From SkyLight Paths, Jewish Lights’ Sister Imprint*

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The well-loved lyric “wonder of wonders, miracles of miracles” might have been expressed by Sholem Aleichem, who during his life struggled with financial problems, had he lived to witness the popularity and financial success of *Fiddler on the Roof*. A musical classic, *Fiddler* has had five Broadway revivals and at least 500 shows performed annually in the U.S. This version of the complete text and lyrics is released to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its Broadway premiere.

As I read the play (and loved every minute of it), I laughed and cried throughout. Being familiar already with the story and songs, I paid closer attention to the actual words in the dialogue and the lines of the lyrics. Reading the text so closely has given me a new appreciation of why the show is so popular and the songs have become standards at wedding ceremonies and camp Shabbat’s. The gifted and unparalleled combination of Stein, Block and Harwick cannot be surpassed!

Reading aloud a play is a great activity for the family; in addition, the play could be used for a program with teenagers and seniors. A recommended complement to this work is Alisa Solomon’s *Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof* (Metropolitan Books, 2013), which supplies interesting and amusing information regarding the production of the show and movie.

*Ellen Share, Librarian, Washington Hebrew Congregation Librarian*


Lucienne Carasso describes her life growing up in Alexandria as part of a middle class Sephardi family from her birth in 1946 until they left Egypt in 1961. She shows how the family’s fortune, together with that of Egypt’s Jewish community, changed following the 1952 Young Officers revolution and especially after the 1956 Suez War. The reader becomes intimately involved with the large De Botton and Carasso families, how through hard work and dedication they reached comfortable middle class life, and the strong family connections, all through the eyes of a young Sephardi girl. Carasso describes the businesses with which they were involved, daily routines, life at home and forms of entertainment. One is walked through the political, economic, and social deterioration of the Egyptian Jews, following the Suez War, when many Jews, including the author’s father and other relatives, were arrested for several months, and later their businesses were gradually confiscated. The book also describes briefly the family’s life after they left Egypt, first in Europe and later in the USA. Carasso’s detailed personal description provides valuable insight into the lives of the well-to-do Sephardi community in Alexandria until most of them left since the late 1950s.

*Rachel Simon. Princeton University. Princeton, NJ*


A combination of movie summaries and *Divrei Torah* (words of Torah), this book is a lot of fun for anyone who enjoys movies and relates to Jewish principles. Connecting movies with Torah elements, Rabbi Herbert Cohen, PhD, presents a unique blend of a lifetime of movie going with Jewish learning. Cohen’s own academic background is eclectic and rich and this aids him in linking the world of movies to the world of Torah. There is a lovely anecdote in the early part of the book about the first time Rabbi Cohen heard Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik at YU, which helps the reader to understand his life and influences. The book is divided into topic areas, which include parenting, improving yourself, growing older, adversity, relationships, sports, decisions, second chances, time, and ethics. The movies referenced include a wonderful blend of old classics and new bolder titles (e.g., Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, Rocky, 127 hours, the Hurt Locker, and Inception, to name a few). An index of movie titles is provided in the back of the book.

This book is well done, and each entry is fairly short making for a quick read. The book can be used in many ways by different groups of people. While Herbert Cohen is an Orthodox rabbi, readers will find his entries quite universal and palatable.

*Debbie Feder, Director, LRC, Ida Crown Jewish Academy*
Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults


A nicely written, easy read that is part personal memoir, part analysis of anti-Semitism, part history of Zionism, and an overall defining statement of why Israel is a necessary component of contemporary Judaism. Cohen, a recognized syndicated columnist for The *Washington Post*, weaves together a beautiful tale of his own upbringing and recognition of his Jewishness with the history of European Jewry under the domination of Christian rule and resulting Judeo-phobia, the origins of political Zionism under the visionary efforts of Theodore Herzl, and how out of the ashes of the Holocaust, Israel developed as a stable homeland for Jews to reassemble as an embodiment of their historic patrimony. Particularly intriguing is the insertion of American anti-Semitism in the context of the country’s unique democratic character and how its Jewish population has flourished in spite of rare outbursts of discrimination, displeasure, and even violence. This book deserves the attention of a wide audience for an appreciation of the subject matter, the opportunity to embark on a discussion of the many themes presented, and the thorough enjoyment of the reading matter.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC


This book, a project of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, provides a useful guide to the aging years. It aims to help readers discover the possibilities for living the years ahead with joy, resilience, and spirit. It includes a variety of spiritual approaches and perspectives on aging, particularly meditative spiritual practices. The authors have studied Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Jewish texts, and include passages for reflection in the book. The book’s nine chapters cover the process of aging, life review, the body, relationships, forgiveness and reconciliation, spirituality, living with loss, conscious dying, legacy and stewardship. Tools for practice are set off in “reader practice” boxes; additional boxes provide reflection questions. Appendices include the bedtime *shema*, ideas for forming a wise aging group, and bibliographic notes for each chapter. Rabbi Cowan, who served as Director of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, developed the Wise Aging Program, and serves as consultant to the Program. Dr. Linda Thal’s work has focused on adult spiritual development. She serves on the faculty of the Center for Mindfulness at the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan. Their book is a valuable addition to the growing literature on “saging and aging.” It is especially relevant for Temple and synagogue, as well as Jewish public library collections.

Susan Freiband, Retired Librarian and Library Educator; Volunteer Temple librarian


In this new book Nissim Dana describes the apparent paradox between the persistent negativity expressed by modern adherents of Islam toward Jews and Judaism and the attitude evident in the Quran and other classical Islamic sources towards the appropriating of the Holy Land for the people of Israel. Indeed, he goes so far as to claim that even in instances where other nations lived in the land prior to the Jewish occupation (i.e., Canaanites or the Arabs), they were destined to be driven from this, the Israelites’ inheritance.

Attitudes towards Jews and Judaism on the other hand, tend to be much more fraught and subject to the whims of the Muslim leaders themselves. A case in point can be seen in the Muslim attitude toward Jerusalem. Although there is no explicit mention of Jerusalem in the Quran, one may infer that during Muhammad’s early activity (610-622), he was instructed by Allah to direct prayer towards Jerusalem. Muhammad was not enthusiastic about this situation, and according to a number of Islamic exegetes, he tried to position himself in such a way that although he faced Jerusalem, he was actually directing his prayers toward the Kaaba in Mecca. Once it was discovered that the Jews there were unwilling to accept the new faith the Prophet received a number of new revelations, among which was one requiring
Muslims to direct their prayers toward the Kaaba alone. As Dana points out: “… turning one’s face … in the direction of Jerusalem is not done except for the purpose of … enticing Jews to adopt Islam.”

Sanctity was also bestowed upon Jerusalem in traditions claiming that Muhammad made a night ride on a special horse which took him to the El-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem where he conferred with the prophets who had come before him and then “ascended to the heavens” (Hijazi, Tafsir, p. 99). As it became clear that the Jews were not interested in conversion the traditions regarding this night ride began to evolve, such that the ride came to be viewed not so much as a physical journey, but rather as a night vision. From Dana’s evaluation it would seem that the classic Islamic sources are generally supportive of the idea that the Holy Land belongs to the people of Israel. Attitudes towards Jews and Judaism are not so positive. Muhammad and his followers were deeply disappointed with the Jews’ unwillingness to become Muslims. Dana’s analysis of the contrasting opinions is a useful resource for libraries focusing on Middle Eastern studies.

Randall C. Belinfante, Director of Library and Archives, American Sephardi Federation


This bilingual Hebrew and English book is intended to be a companion during the ten-day journey between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Like the author’s previous book, The Book of Blessings, it “re-creates Jewish prayer from an inclusive, nonhierarchical perspective.” It is divided into five parts: the first four comprise the liturgy and the last part is an essay. Parts 1 and 3 contain bilingual blessings and prayers for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; Hebrew and English are provided in parallel passages, rather than translations of each other. Part 2 includes a daily psalm (poem) and a direction of the heart (prose meditation) for each of the ten days of returning. Part 4 is a service for use on Rosh Hashanah and/or Yom Kippur. The fifth part analyzes concepts and ideas of u-Netaneh Tokef Kedushat ha-Yom.

This book is part of the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute Series on Jewish Women, and Marcia Falk is a well-known, widely published poet and translator of Hebrew and Yiddish. The Days Between provides a wonderful alternative or supplement to the traditional liturgy, enriching the high holy-day season. It is an invaluable addition to Judaica collections in all types of libraries.

Susan Freiband, Retired Librarian and Library Educator; Volunteer Temple librarian


This slim volume is filled with wisdom as well as factual information for the non-academic reader. It is a beautifully written and compelling source of inspiration. Rabbi Feinstein manages to communicate on a deep spiritual as well as in a very accessible way. Here we are taken on a journey through the course of Jewish history from Abraham to Tevye. Along the way we are encouraged to feel in a visceral way the struggles and the strengths of our people. As Feinstein says, “the message of Judaism is chutzpah.” The word chutzpah, according to our author, means “moral courage, the revolutionary conception of the human condition and our relationship to God.” Chutzpah is also “the significance of human life, the possibilities of human goodness and the depth of human responsibility.” These are quotes from the introduction but the body of the book is not abstract or philosophical; it is grounded in concrete examples from our tradition that are all carefully documented. The assertion of faith in human possibility is a bold act of chutzpah when it comes from “this tiny people who have been oppressed by the darkest evils promulgated by humanity.” Jews have “the irrepressible courage to assert that human life is not absurd, that human dreams are not futile, and that we yet possess the power to redeem the world.”

By examining the courage (read chutzpah) of the likes of Abraham, Moses, Rabbi Akiva, Queen Esther, and many others, we feel the power of our faith and culture. This book is highly recommended for all school and synagogue library collections as well as academic collections. It should be a best seller.

Marion M. Stein, retired librarian

Dayle A. Friedman, an accomplished Reconstructionist Rabbi, has written a practical self-help book intended for the use of any middle-age person from any religion. Indeed, although the base of her outlook is Jewish, and her reliable sources are the Jewish Torah and all the commentaries, the main aspect of this manual is its humanity.

The book includes three main parts: Facing shatterings as we grow older, Beginning again (and again); Honing and sharing wisdom. Each chapter presents stories of the Rabbi’s personal acquaintances, teachings from the Jewish tradition, and spiritual practice to explore and to use on the way of Growing Whole, as one grows older. A sustaining Blessing, by the Rabbi, concludes each chapter.

Rabbi Friedman offers an appendix for using her book as a guide for book groups and wisdom circles. Notes appear at the end, as well as a list for further learning. There is no index. *Jewish Wisdom for Growing Older* provides a comforting tool while growing old. Rabbi Friedman also shares her website. This book should be part of any synagogue libraries, senior centers, hospices, public libraries, and personal use.

_Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL_


Of the innumerable academic works devoted to the thought of Moses Maimonides, only a small minority deal extensively with his legal code, the *Mishneh Torah*. For the most part, scholars have been content to leave that aspect of the medieval giant’s legacy to Talmudists and legal scholars. A few brave souls have dared to bridge the divide between Halacha and philosophy by trying to unravel the connections between...
the Code and the Guide. In this book, David Gillis does not only rise to this challenge. He aims for the top, offering an approach to the Mishneh Torah that is meant to reveal its deepest secrets and illuminate its conundrums. Grounding himself in close textual analysis of extensive passages from the Mishneh Torah, and using a range of visual aids including tables and diagrams, Gillis suggests that Maimonides' magnum opus should be seen as a work of art, whose very structure conveys its deepest meaning.

Pinchas Roth, Bar Ilan University


Rabbi Sholom Gold has not been in the headlines. His world has been one of learning, teaching and doing Mitzvot, rather than politics or statecraft. In this autobiography, he describes the tumultuous era he has lived in, and his small but influential role in it.

Born in Brooklyn, Rabbi Gold then went to Baltimore’s Ner Israel seminary. In the mid-1950s he spent a year in Israel, where he studied with some of the gedolim (“greats”) of the period. In 1959, at age 24, he was asked to create and lead the first Orthodox high school in Toronto, which he did successfully. Beginning in the late 1960s he was the rabbi in West Hempstead, Long Island, where he created the local eruv and led other important projects. Since moving to Israel in 1982 he has been a leading scholar and teacher, as the founder of the adult education program at the Israel Center. The book joyfully describes his own activities, as well as his encounters with major Jewish leaders, both religious and secular, and his role in creating today’s vibrant and growing observant communities.

The result is a simply-told, touching memoir that has a “You are there” feeling. It contains no grand insights or secrets of statecraft. Rather, Rabbi Gold describes the inner workings of day-to-day leadership and community building in the Orthodox world. It will be of interest to high school and college readers, and synagogue members who want to know “what was it like?” In sum, it would be a useful, but not critical, addition for larger libraries.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


Maimonides’ concise work: “The Guide for the perplexed” has long been viewed as one of the most disquieting books ever written. While Maimonides’ other notable work, the Mishneh Torah, demonstrates his virtuosity in establishing “an astonishing order out of the halakhic unruliness of Talmudic literature,” the Guide seems to be just the opposite, a seemingly chaotic work filled with apparent contradictions and veiled revelations. Such is the difference in character between the works that the eighteenth century scholar Jacob Emden believed that the Guide was wrongly attributed to Maimonides.

Nevertheless, Goodman considers that the disorder of the work is purposeful. Maimonides felt that every individual must acquire an understanding of his ideas through their own intellectual endeavor. Throughout the Guide “intellect is central for the full realization of religious life.” Goodman asserts that the philosopher sought to press the individual towards understanding, because he interpreted “the concept ‘the image of God that is in man’ as being the understanding.”

Goodman acknowledges that the task he has set himself: “…to organize the thoughts of the Guide for the curious, confused or skeptical contemporary reader” is just one of numerous efforts which actually try to circumvent Maimonides’ intentions. Arranging his analysis into three groups, God Torah and Perplexity (wherein lie “the big questions of human existence”), Goodman sets out to determine the intention amidst the disorder by drawing together the threads of diversity from Maimonides’ “storm of ideas.” For example, when considering Maimonides on the question of evil and providence Goodman leads his readers to a resolution of apparent contradictions. The absolute love of God attained through intellectual effort yields freedom from worldly suffering: “…providential protection then is a human cognitive achievement.”

Goodman concludes his study with an evaluation of the significance of doubt. He views the conflicting ideas that confront the reader of the Guide as the means by which Maimonides presents the validity of uncertainty, an intellectual position that Goodman deems relevant for the modern world.
Originally written in Hebrew for an Israeli audience, Goodman’s analysis is useful in understanding the purpose and technique of the Guide. It is a must for those with an interest in Jewish philosophy in general and Maimonides in particular.

Randall C. Belinfante, Director of Library and Archives, American Sephardi Federation


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 Gugenheim’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


This book has a simple organization consisting of introduction, three chapters and conclusion. The author begins by comparing the gospels with Josephus and Midrash with regard to historical accuracy about the life of Jesus of Nazareth and chapter one analyzes discrepancies between the Gospels and accounts in the Mishnah and Talmud. The second chapter reviews the body of literature amassed since the seventeenth century on the historical Jesus. The third chapter explores the dilemma of the historical Jesus and the savior Jesus in Christian literature. In the conclusion, the author discusses contemporary Jewish scholarship on the historical Jesus and its contribution to Jewish-Christian dialogue. The book is well researched and is presented in a way that is accessible to any adult reader. This title would be appropriate for any collection serving an adult population.

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


This is a sociological examination of the attitudes of European Muslims toward Jews in general and their co-residents in particular. Jikeli, a research fellow at the Moses Mendelsohn Center for European-Jewish Studies at Potsdam University (Germany), examines the stereotypes held by European Muslims of Jews from a comparative perspective based on interviews held with 117 Muslim males divided by groups in London (generally South Asians), Paris (primarily North Africans), and Berlin (mostly Turkish). The open ended interviews were measured against the background of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the textual reference to Jews found in the Quran, and other sources of hostility toward Jews. The author takes into account the respondents’ understanding of discrimination, their sense of personal exclusion, and their ideas of self-identification within the context of their country of residence. Four distinct belief patterns emerged from the study: classic antisemitic stereotypes found among European Christians, a conflation of Jews and Israelis related to the treatment of Palestinians, references to Jews found in the Quran, and an almost irrational hatred of Jews with little justification or rationalization. There is a great deal of empirical data in this academic study that will be useful to track general patterns of anti-Semitism, and anti-Jewish behavior in Europe. The specific nature of this book makes its most suitable for an academic audience or groups working with discrimination against Jewish communities.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC
New FROM The Toby Press

THE BLIND ANGEL
NEW OLD CHASSIDIC STORIES
Rabbi Tovia Halberstam,
Translated by Joshua Halberstam
“These stories are at once profound, disturbing, and inspiring…”
-Professor Lawrence Kushner, Hebrew Union College

THE AMBASSADOR
Yehuda Avner and Matt Rees
“Not only an evocative story, but an urgent reminder that decisive actions by courageous people can, in fact, make a profound difference in our world.”
-Rabbi Dr. Daniel Gordis

THE SECRET OF CHABAD
INSIDE THE WORLD’S MOST SUCCESSFUL JEWISH MOVEMENT
David Eliezrie
“You will never see your local Chabad rabbi in quite the same way.”
-Dennis Prager

THE PATER
MY FATHER, MY JUDAISM, MY CHILDLESSNESS
Elliot Jager
“A daring and very personal book on an important subject we rarely get to hear about: Jewish male childlessness.”
-Naomi Danis, Managing Editor, Lilith

Available online and at bookstores everywhere.

www.tobypress.com

This is a collection of humorous texts told by Moroccan Jews. Following an introduction describing methodology, language issues, genres and characteristics, the bulk of the book are the texts themselves, each one preceded by the teller’s name. The texts are divided into some forty sections, covering numerous aspects of daily life, many of them, though not all, unique to Moroccan Jews or to life in Morocco. Thus, some stories relate to religious life, education, family relations, famous rabbis, particular individuals (legendary or real), social life and customs, professions, contacts with gentiles, and life in Israel. Some stories reflect the use of several languages among Moroccan Jews (e.g., Judeo-Arabic, French and Hebrew), which might cause misunderstandings or are the reason for humorous situations. In addition to the enjoyment brought about by these stories and the illustrations, they can serve as a resource on the life of Moroccan Jews.

Rachel Simon. Princeton University, Princeton, NJ


There is much to be said about Arendt and there’s much that has already been written about her. Born into a middle-class German-Jewish family, she wrote her doctoral dissertation on Saint Augustine and, with the rise of German militarism, escaped from pre-Holocaust incarceration. Rescued by Varian Fry’s in-your-face boldness, Arendt ended up in New York. She was the first woman to teach at Princeton University and brazenly upset many Jewish intellectuals, such as Gershom Scholem, as she honed her own way of understanding and reading of the past as well the future of the Jewish/Israeli political entity. She may have coined the term “totalitarianism” in her best-known work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and she famously articulated the controversial concept of the “banality of evil” based on her observations of the Eichmann trials.

Knott, founder and editor-in-chief of the German edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, uses this concise
work to explore Arendt’s intellectual processes, her influences, and the ways in which she “unlearned” prevailing philosophies and cultural norms in order to establish her own distinctive political theories. This succinct and perceptive study should be in all seminary, university and public library collections.

**Morton Merowitz**


*Geographies of the Holocaust* is the outcome of an interdisciplinary academic collaboration under the auspices of USHMM (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum) Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies Summer Research Workshop in August 2007. The team focused on one country (Italy), one city (Budapest), and one camp (Auschwitz). In six main chapters various collaborating authors deal with the following subjects: mapping the SS concentration camps; spatiotemporal analysis of arrests; spatialities of genocide in the east; spatialities of ghettoization in Budapest; Auschwitz as a geographic problem; representing the evacuations from Auschwitz, January 1945. Each chapter has a highlighted ‘spotlight on methods’ section, a conclusion, and detailed notes. In the afterword, the researchers admit that the sum of the parts does not add up to a comprehensive geography of the Holocaust.

*Geographies of the Holocaust* is a very professionally assembled and beautifully packaged large format album (9.25” x 10.25”) with lots of colorful maps, diagrams, photographs, and digital data. Unfortunately, it is not at all clear that the book increases the social and ethical understanding of the Holocaust and its millions of innocent victims.

Spatial Humanities is a relatively new academic discipline that bolsters and redefines scholarship by introducing geographic concepts of space to questions about human behavior and cultural development. Due to the highly technical approach, readers outside the field of spatial humanities will view the book as cold and detached. *Geographies of the Holocaust* will not interest or significantly enhance the knowledge of general readers on the Holocaust.

**Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL**


The *Koren Mahzor for Yom Haatsma’ut and Yom Yerushalayim* is a unique prayer book in Hebrew with English translation by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks published by the innovative and prolific Koren publishing house. It consists of the daily prayer service in the Ashkenazi mode and includes additional prayers to be recited on Israel Independence Day (established May 14, 1948) and Jerusalem Day, which commemorates the reunification of Jerusalem in June 1967. Inclusion of some prayers, such as Hallel and al ha-Nisim are printed on gray paper to indicate that the particular prayer was added to the service and its recitation on these national holidays has not been accepted by all religious authorities. Copious notes and commentary by modern luminaries, Rabbi Moshe Taragin and Rabbi Binyamin Lau discuss the various prayers and elucidate the debate surrounding the additional prayers. The book is introduced with an inspiring essay written by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, chief Rabbi of Efrat. Included in the prayer book are essays by erudite scholars such as, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein, Rabbi Berel Wein, Dr. Erica Brown and Dr. Yael Ziegler which discuss the philosophical, theological and historic importance of the holidays. The *Koren Mahzor for Yom Haatsma’ut and Yom Yerushalayim* is the first mahzor published that includes additional prayers for Israel Independence Day and Jerusalem. Its purchase is highly recommended for all libraries.

**Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH**


I first heard about Zosa Szajkowski as a man who saved materials in Europe (specifically France) from the hands of the Nazis. I later learned that he was (also) a thief, a man who cut pages out of books in libraries
which he later sold to other collections. Lisa Moses Leff’s book, *Archive Thief*, presents an incredibly nuanced description of the man and his actions before, during, and after World War II, depicting a complicated story of a complicated person. Her attention to detail and her search for facts shows clearly throughout the book. Many footnotes citing information provided by Szajkowski himself include “facts confirmed” in other, neutral sources, highlighting the difficulty of writing a biography of a person who routinely lied about his activities. Notwithstanding these difficulties, Leff eloquently gathers and presents all the evidence to try to understand Szajkowski’s motives for his illicit actions. She does more than just write a biography of one man, however. To me, the most interesting part of the book came at the end, with Leff’s discussion of the libraries that purchased Szajkowski’s materials, sometimes knowing that their provenance was hazy. She unflinchingly discusses ethical questions that relate to archives, no matter how the materials are obtained, such as remove primary sources from their original contexts and organizing them in a method that compromises the integrity of the original source. While these questions are not (and cannot be) answered conclusively, Lisa Moses Leff’s book is an important one for all Judaica libraries both for the history it contains and the questions it raises around collections and collecting.

Michelle Chesner, Columbia University


Grinberg is an Argentinian-born, Israeli academically-trained, sociologist and political economist, who with his training and interest looks at Israel’s political development through the filter of class structure and social dominance by European Jews’ control of the Israel political structure. A wide range of the relevant sociological, economic, and political literature is arrayed to support Grinberg’s theory that there has been a continuous tension between marginalized Jewish and Palestinian groups for a share of the economic forces shaping Israeli society. He approaches the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a twin anti-colonial effort that collided one with the other and compounded by competing ethno-nationalist movements involving regular eruptions of violence. There exists, the author proposes, dominant social groups in the Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli communities that control the economic, decision-making processes and invite confrontation from the remaining marginalized elements to resist and seek a redistribution of power. This is a dense treatment of the socio-economic dynamics of the Israeli polity that is best understood if the reader is reasonably familiar with the cited relevant literature. The audience for this book would be the upper levels of academia with a focus on political economics.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC


More than a decade ago, Mandel published a book comparing the Jewish and Armenian minorities in France (*In the aftermath of genocide: Armenians and Jews in twentieth-century France*, Duke University Press, 2003). In this new book, Mandel studies the “interethnic political disagreements” between Muslims and Jews in France over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These disagreements have caught the attention of the media in the last fifty years and Mandel provides “an examination of how such [media] narratives emerged and in time helped produce the very conflicts they purported to recount.” Mandel privileges special “moments in which conflicts between Muslims and Jews became a matter of concern: Israel’s War of Independence in 1948, France’s decolonization of North Africa, the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the 1968 student riots, and François Mitterrand’s experiments with multiculturalism in the 1980s.” The strength of the book resides in Mandel choosing the Southern port city of Marseille as her main focus for the Jewish-Muslim interaction, where sizeable Muslim and Jewish communities coexist. She goes beyond the official discourses emanating from the French capital and she can “explain when and why certain voices predominated over others and how the combined result created a political landscape so often understood as inevitably polarized.” Based on exhaustive research, *Muslims and Jews in France* condenses half a century of complex inter-ethnic relations in a little more than hundred
and fifty pages of text (with 80 pages of notes!) and succeeds in giving a clear picture of the interaction between these two minority communities in France. Recommended to all academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.


For centuries there were many Jewish communities in Arab countries. Countless studies have centered on the life and times of these communities, with manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah often providing primary documentation. The newest study is by Haggai Mazuz, lecturer on Islamic Studies at Bar-Ilan University, who takes us back to the early years of Islam and its relation to the Jewish communities of Saudi Arabia, and provides a window into the early post-Talmudic years of Judaism. Instead of writing a narrative, Mazuz supplies detailed excerpts from the various primary sources which provide examples of the religious life and culture of the Arabian Jewish Communities. Through these examples, the picture that Mazuz develops is of an emerging Islam based on its encounter with the various Jewish communities and simultaneously the halakhic characteristics of the Arabian Jews. These excerpts are arranged into four main topics: Religious and Social Leadership, Law and Custom, Religious Beliefs, and External Characteristics. The Religious and Spiritual Life of the Jews of Medina is a wonderful reference work for Talmudic study, Jewish history, and Islamic history. A must-have book for every library.

Haim Gottschalk


This collection of polemical manuscripts—107 in Hebrew and Aramaic, with a list of 18 others in Yiddish, 21 in Judeo-Arabic, two in Ladino, and one in Judeo-Persian—represents a satirical, revisionist historical biography of Jesus of Nazareth, clearly with a negative anti-Christian perspective. In these historic texts, Jesus’ birth is presented as illegitimate, he is shown having an unauthorized attachment to the Ineffable Name, he is portrayed as engaged in various heretical activities, and his death is presented as less than honorable. The effort to collect, collate and transcribe all known Toldot Yeshu manuscripts begun in 2008 as the Princeton Toledot Yeshu Project with the ultimate aim of constructing an electronic database to be used as a research tool. The manuscripts edited here are divided into three major groups based on their similar narrative structure and what is presumed to be a chronological order. The highly specialized nature of the subject matter along with what is presumed to be a limited reading audience and an expensive cost relegates this work to a scholar’s library with a definite specialized interest.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC


This is a collection of fifteen papers given at a workshop at Princeton University. The contributors are scholars from a range of disciplines, though all but one are based in the United States. The topics are quite various; for example, there are two essays by Kenneth Seeskin and Menachem Kellner on the messianic thought of Maimonides, another by Shai Held on that of Zvi Yehudah Kook, and yet another by Michael L. Morgan on that of Emmanuel Levinas. Of great personal interest was Annette Yoshiko Reed’s “Messianism between Judaism and Christianity” and “Messianic Religious Zionism and the Reintroduction of Sacrifice: The Case of the Temple Mount Institute” by Motti Inbari. The article “He That Cometh Out: On How to Disclose a Messianic Secret” by Steven Weitzman deals with the fascinating topic of the psychology of messianic claimants, but struck me as a bit disappointing because there seems so little solid information on which to theorize. At least two or three of the essays have explicit political agendas, basically to tame messianic activity and discourage its political manifestations. This book is probably most appropriate for academic collections that are either comprehensive or include a specialization on messianism.

Shmuel Ben-Gad, Gelman Library, George Washington University.
“This substantial and exceptionally well-documented study of Herod the Great will be for a good long time the basic resource for English readers on the grim but brilliantly successful monarch who was one of the shapers of world history. There is no doubt that it is a needed book…. Adam Kolman Marshak shuttles with the ease and assurance of an expert Roman historian between ground level and the bigger picture, carrying the reader with him all the way.”

— Tessa Rajak
University of Reading

“Applying the valuable reference point of self-presentation to Herod, the famous king of Judaea, Marshak has created an excellent vehicle to more fully understand the larger-than-life man in all of his complexity. In this biography we come to appreciate how Herod navigated in his Roman, Hellenistic, and Jewish worlds.”

— Donald T. Ariel
Israel Antiquities Authority

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Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults


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.

The authors 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.

A great deal of history is covered 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. Each section begins with an explanation of a particular issue, but the real delight of the book is in 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.


“Not to deal with Zionism as a theological question is to miss how deeply Jewish is the Jewish attachment to the land of Israel.” So writes David Novak of the University of Toronto in in his Zionism and Judaism: A New Theory. Novak’s book provides a systematic theological analysis of Zionism: the selection of the Land of Israel for the Hebrew nation is considered within the context of God’s decisions to create the universe, to create the human race in the divine image, and to elect the People of Israel to a covenantal relationship with the Creator. Since humans are social beings, their relationship to God is not only a private, individual one but is also as a part of a community, and so the covenant includes “the relation of a polity to a particular territory…” (Novak’s own emphasis).

Dr. Novak also discusses the proper nature of a Jewish state including its relationship to the gentiles who dwell within it. In this regard, the author draws upon his previous writings on the seven Noahide laws that are binding upon Hebrew and gentile alike.

The book has elements that some will find controversial, including, for example, the assertion that the Creator makes decisions within time and so is, in a sense, a temporal being; the idea that it is proper to ascribe emotions to God; the adoption of a natural rights political philosophy, and the argument that, in principle, a non-Hebrew state is allowable alongside a Hebrew state within the Land of Israel.

This scholarly work is accessible to the educated layperson. However, the book’s chapters on Spinoza and the Shoah seem extraneous, and the overall quality of editing is uneven.


This latest book by David Patterson, a professor at the University of Texas at Dallas and a National Jewish Book Award winner, is ambitious. It seeks to identify the metaphysical origin of antisemitism—above and beyond contingent, historical factors—through an analysis based upon Jewish sources. These writings include classical texts like the Tanakh and Talmud, but also the works of various Jewish intellectuals. One of those Patterson draws upon most is Emmanuel Levinas, with his emphasis upon the fundamental importance of interpersonal relationships. Dr. Patterson writes, “The soul, therefore, is more an action than an object…To be alive in His Torah is to burn with a devotion to our fellow human
beings…” Dr. Patterson believes the Hebrew nation was created in order to spread God’s message of every human being’s responsibility to all other human beings, and that anti-Semitism is the rejection of this call to responsibility and a retreat to egoism and self-delusion. Though Dr. Patterson’s language is at times opaque (perhaps another influence of Levinas) and his argument occasionally repetitive, his analysis is original and his consideration of the various manifestations of anti-Semitism (e.g. Jihadism, National Socialism, and Anti-Zionism) can be thought-provoking.

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


This book brings the reader to the worktable of leading textual scholars in Jewish studies, allowing him or her to peer over their shoulder as they ply their trade in examining a manuscript. With an abundance of high quality photographs and methodical prose, Jordan Penkower explains the significance of a newly rediscovered manuscript copy of the Bible, copied in the fifteenth century by Moses ibn Zabara, a famed Iberian scribe who specialized in biblical codices. In the seventeenth century, the manuscript passed through the hands of Menahem de Lonzano, who left his mark in the form of marginal comments throughout the book. Lonzano’s interests ranged far and wide, but his basic method remained constant — the close comparison of textual variants among authoritative manuscripts. Penkower locates Lonzano within his historical context, and provides a richly descriptive list of all the other manuscripts and printed copies that Lonzano is known to have annotated. Complementing the volume are chapters on the decoration of the manuscript by Andreina Contessa and on the paleography and codicology, by Tamar Leiter and Shlomo Zucker.

Pinchas Roth

As the moving force behind the development of Yeshiva University and its first President, Bernard Revel must rank among the heroes of American Jewish history. This volume is a re-issue of Rabbi Rakeffet’s book, last released in the early 1980s.

In some respects this is a standard biography. It traces Revel to his birth in Lithuania and his childhood as an *ilui* (boy scholar). It follows his education, his emigration to New York, and his careers as a rabbi, a businessman (he helped his wife’s family in the oil business in Tulsa), and finally as the leader of the Yeshiva for over 25 years. Beyond the life of Revel himself, however, the volume traces the growth of the Observant community and its institutions. The first chapter (“The Orthodox Immigrant Community in 1906”) is a superb description of the confusing situation facing new arrivals in New York. While maintaining a positive tone, Rakeffet-Rothkoff describes the many discussions and disputes both with secular Jews and within the Orthodox community from 1900 until Revel’s death in 1940. Revel was a decisive voice in these fights, and there are numerous extended quotations that make his role clear. Aside from this, the book is a history of the Yeshiva itself, from its beginnings in 1896 on Clinton Street to its flourishing on Washington Heights in the 1930s. Much of this, of course, was due to the work of its *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Revel. The Appendices will be enlightening for scholars; they include a broad selection of Revel’s articles, Responsa and other writings.

Though it is unclear whether the current publication is expanded from earlier editions, it is an important addition to the history of American Judaism. It can serve as a companion to Gurock’s *Orthodox Jews in America* (2009). Revel’s story can also add to the biographical shelf on its own right. It is recommended for academic collections and for larger synagogues across the spectrum.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


This book reproduces the article “Grief and bereavement” which already appeared in *Jewish pastoral care: a practical handbook from traditional and contemporary sources*, edited by Dayle A. Friedman (2nd ed., rev. and expanded, Woodstock, Vt.: Jewish Lights, 2010) pages 400-432. Recommended only to clergy involved in pastoral care.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.


David M. Reifler, an ophthalmologist from Michigan State University, tells the story of Dr. Avraham Albert Ticho (1883-1960), a Jewish ophthalmologist from Boskovice, Moravia, who settled in Jerusalem in 1912 and played a major role in the development of ophthalmology in particular and medicine in general in the region. While most of the book focuses on him, it also deals with his cousin who became his wife, Anna Ticho, a famous artist, best known for her landscape, nature and portrait drawings. The title of the book is based on Israeli Hebrew slang, “*Yeme Tikho*” (Days of Ticho), meaning “ancient times.” Ticho graduated from the Brno gymnasium and then studied medicine in Vienna, where he specialized in ophthalmology. He then became the director of the eye hospital “Lemaan Zion” of the Palästinensischer Hilfsverein in Jerusalem. The book details his life in Ottoman Palestine and under the British Mandatory rule there. It covers not only the lives of the Tichos as individuals, but also the development of medicine in Palestine focusing on Ticho’s contributions in medicine in general and ophthalmology in particular. Ticho was known for his meticulous treatment of his patients, many of them Arabs, and providing quality treatment regardless of the patients’ ability to pay. The book is very detailed, at times describing at length what Ticho *might have observed* while going from one place to another (e.g., from home to the university or from Europe to Jerusalem), though based not on his own memoirs and letters; such additions do not necessarily improve the quality of the biography.
This book is an important contribution on the life of Dr. Ticho and his role in advancing medicine in Palestine, but it could have benefited from stricter editing.

Rachel Simon. Princeton University, Princeton, NJ


Mordecai Kaplan is certainly one of American Judaism’s most influential and significant thinkers. Author of the 1934 book *Judaism as a Civilization* as well as numerous other books, Kaplan articulated a theology and ideology for American Jews who wanted a rich attachment to Jewish tradition without pre-modern metaphysics. Furthermore, he explained the importance of community, certainly a notion absolutely central to the success of American Judaism. Over the course of the 102 years of his life, Kaplan led, built, wrote, preached, thought and taught, and eventually founded the Reconstructionist movement. Few thinkers had more influence on American Judaism than Kaplan.

*The Radical American Judaism of Mordecai M. Kaplan* continues Scult’s lifetime of scholarship on the great American Jewish thinker. In addition to a comprehensive biography authored in 1993, Scult also edited an important compilation of entries from Kaplan’s vast diary, a single-volume collection of Kaplan’s essential writings, as well as collections of essays. In this current book, Scult provides his deepest and richest attempt to date to describe the various influences on Kaplan’s thought of a diverse group of thinkers and ideologues, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Thus, Scult shows that like Spinoza, Kaplan offered a naturalistic philosophy, an approach which saw both excommunicated by elements within the traditional community. Like Mathew Arnold, Kaplan saw education as central to moving people from naïve ignorance to sophisticated and moral faith. Like Felix Adler, Kaplan saw community and ritual as central to moral education, even as Kaplan could never accept Adler’s rejection of Judaism as a particular religious tradition. Perhaps most surprisingly, Scult finds important parallels between Kaplan and Abraham Joshua Heschel, particularly regarding their diagnosis of the crisis of American Judaism and Jewish identity. Despite the appearance of vastly different worldviews and their personal rivalry during their joint years at the Jewish Theological Seminary, they retained a certain commonality.

The book is highly readable—at times almost colloquial in its language and style—and is recommended for anybody with a familiarity with Kaplan but who wants to understand his thought within a broader context.

Yoel Finkelman, The National Library of Israel


The Midrash Project, hosted by the Schechter Institute in Jerusalem, has already published critical editions of lesser known Midrashim. With this volume, it enters the realm of the Rabbot, the exegetical and homiletical works first gathered together by Hebrew printers in the sixteenth century. The Scroll of Esther was a particularly popular biblical book throughout the ages, and several Midrashim were composed around it, but with the advent of print, Esther Rabbah secured its place as the dominant Midrash for the Purim story.

This critical edition is based on all known manuscripts of the work, and informed by other textual sources (similar Midrashim, medieval citations). Full transcriptions of all the manuscripts, arranged synoptically, are available on the Midrash Project website, while the printed edition contains only a selection of the more interesting variants. References are provided to textual parallels within the rabbinic corpus, and a running commentary explicates the midrashic text and its relationship to its biblical prooftext. An extensive introduction deals with the textual, historical and literary nature of the Midrash. This edition sets the benchmark for textual editions of rabbinic literature today, and deserves a place in every Jewish Studies library.

Pinchas Roth, Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought, Ben Gurion University of the Negev.
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The last verses of *Mishlei* (Proverbs, Chapter 31) have been sung every Friday night to Jewish wives for centuries. Rabbi Yosef Tropper has written a very detailed explanation of each of the 22 verses and their relationship to Jewish women.

He begins his work with a six-part introduction in which he talks about the importance of the progression through the entire Hebrew alphabet and discusses that other important prayers are in this format as well, namely the *Ashrei* prayer. He talks about the feminine aspects of the *Aleph* and *Taf* combination and the inherent female traits of the *Eishes Chayil* (“Eshet Hayil” = “woman of valor”) prayer. Each phrase of the *Eishes Chayil* refers to a unique and special woman from Jewish history starting from Sarah all the way through Ruth and Esther.

Rabbi Tropper discusses each verse in its translation, and which woman in the Tanach (Bible) it represents. He also examines the marriage relationship in relation to the verse and gives a detailed *Dvar Torah* (Torah interpretation) about these women.

In his conclusion, Rabbi Tropper conveys that the components to being a good Jewish woman are found in the *Eishes Chayil* prayer and this is the reason why the verses are sung on Friday nights to wives. Recommended for synagogue and school libraries, but not suitable for academic institutions.

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


In this work, Mark Wagner seeks to assess the legal status of Jews in the predominantly Muslim society of early 20th century Yemen. For Wagner, Yemen provides the opportunity to evaluate how living under *Sharia* law impacts a non-Muslim population. Wagner considers whether the Jews of Yemen were treated fairly and with compassion by their Muslim neighbors or whether they were subjected to discrimination and humiliation. He explores whether the Jews were satisfied with their lot or whether they actively sought to effect changes in their legal and social environment. Finally, he seeks to determine how these Jews went about working to reform the law in the face of the prevailing social conditions - especially since the Jews of Yemen were unaware of the enlightenment ideals that had made such a dramatic impact on the Jews of the Occident.

His exploration is based on the autobiographies of three prominent Yemenite Jews who, after leaving Yemen for Israel published their accounts in their old age. Observations of the treatment received by the Jews are subjective of course. In the case of these individuals, their perceptions are clearly shaped by their own sense of self. Salim Sa’id al-Jamal for example, saw himself as a respected Qadi, working in the employ of the powerful and benevolent Imam Yahya. Wagner argues however, that the Imam was in fact an extremely determined theocratic leader who clambered for legislative as well as religious authority, and though he might have seemed tolerant in the eyes of some, his actions were solely intended to suit his own purposes.

Seeing themselves thus as useful agents in the operations of the government, some, like Jamal, began to look to Muslim legal sources to anticipate some sort of equality with the Muslims themselves. Wagner points out however, that no one but the Jews themselves ever contemplated such equality. Moreover, such illusions were possible only where the leadership was either willing to support such an agenda, or at least, grant enough leeway to certain influential Jews that they were able to contemplate it.

A fascinating study indispensable to students and libraries interested in the tentative relationship between Muslims and Jews in the Middle East.

Randall C. Belinfante – Director of the Library--American Sephardi Federation

Laura Schutzman, Hebrew Academy of Nassau County, Nathan and Doris Liebman Memorial Library, Uniondale, NY
Named after the Jewish concept of mending and transforming a fragmented world, *Tikkun* offers analysis and commentary that strive to bridge the cultural divide between religious and secular progressives. The magazine provides rigorous and unconventional critiques of politics, spirituality, social theory, and culture. *Tikkun* is recognized for its coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict, social justice issues, and the environment.


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With a master’s of science degree in nutrition, and as a registered dietitian, Beth Warren presents an informative, useful guide to healthy eating and living while observing the laws of Kashrut.

The book has four parts. In part I, Warren defines (in general terms) what is Jewish Kosher food (brief summary of dietary Jewish Laws), “real-food” (minimally processed), and healthy eating habits that will lead to healthy living (her own seven steps—commandments to follow). Being an Orthodox Jew, Warren believes in following a Middle Eastern/ Mediterranean way of eating (as part of a dieting regime). Part II takes a detailed look into “real foods:” the definition of fat; how to eat meat and milk; how to choose and incorporate grains, fruits, vegetables, and protein. Part III explores eating out and supermarket shopping, including understanding the nutrition facts on food labels, and the various Kosher symbols. Part IV applies the previous learned information to daily living; it includes about fifty recipes.

*Living a Real Life with Real Food* is a helpful tool for an observant Jewish kitchen. It is endorsed with Warren’s own colorful seal of approval: “LiveReal/EatReal,” and offers clear notes and an index. This book will enhance both public and synagogue libraries as part of their contemporary nutritional selection.

Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

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American rabbis are depended upon to lead their congregants when they are lost in the proverbial wilderness. Adept at leading his congregation in fundraising efforts and in building the business which he shares with his brother-in-law, Manny Bloch is unable to help the ones who need his help the most: alcoholic, mentally unstable wife, Maby, and damaged, rebellious daughter, Sarah.

The story of the rise and fall of Manny Bloch, rabbi/businessman, son/husband/father/lover, is told through the narrative of his mother, Minnie, the only stable person in his life. Manny finds comfort in the arms of yet another unstable, damaged soul, Holocaust survivor, Florette, who is haunted by dreams of her persecution. The lives of the Bloch family are mired in tragedy. Manny, Maby and Sarah all have survived horrific events in their lives but, sadly, none are able to come to terms with his or her tragedies.

Cheuse was inspired to write *Prayers for the Living* by a 1970’s New York Times story about a rabbi-turned-businessman who had become the head of an international corporation and later committed suicide by jumping off the 44th floor of a New York City office building after being exposed for having bribed Honduran government officials for special tax credits. Cheuse’s story is a tragically beautiful story written in the conversational style in which the women in Cheuse’s life, mother, grandmother and great grandmother, spoke with one another, telling stories, adding their own commentaries and judgements. Kudos to Cheuse for not only telling a beautiful story, but for doing so in a unique manner. I like to challenge book clubs with books that make one think and re-read; this is one that I will highly recommend.

Yossi Gremillion, Librarian, Broward County Library.


Los Angeles police detective Jacob Lev is burned out and using alcohol to self-medicate. He wakes up one morning to find a strange woman in his home, but he does not remember how she got there. When the police powers that be assign him to the Special Projects Squad, which would appear not to exist, he does not understand what is happening. His assignment is to solve a murder, but the case is far from ordinary. The scene is an abandoned house in the Hollywood hills and all that he finds there are a head and some vomitus. The word *tzedek* (justice) is burned into the kitchen counter. The case will take Jacob on a journey from Hollywood, to London, and to Prague as the complex puzzle unfolds Alternate sections of the book, distinguished by different paper, take
readers back and forth in time from the story of Cain and Abel (they have sisters!) to the Golem of Prague to the present day. Jonathan Kellerman’s talent for depicting the criminal mind and Jesse Kellerman’s intricate plotting combine to take readers on a journey through time as Jacob Lev finds his personal world undergoing major changes. Mystery lovers and book clubs will find much to enjoy here.

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


As a cub reporter for the *Chicago Daily News*, Meyer Levin covered the 1924 case of Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, two young men from wealthy families, who kidnapped and killed a fourteen-year-old boy for thrills. Levin’s *Compulsion* tells the true story of Leopold’s and Loeb’s crime and their trial. Levin’s story is based on his reporting and on expert psychological analysis, but, he changes the names of all parties involved (Leopold and Loeb to Judd Steiner and Artie Straus, respectively), and extrapolates the thoughts and emotions of his characters.

The murder of Robert Franks made no sense. He had no enemies and his killers certainly didn’t need the (comparatively) paltry ransom that they demanded. Steiner and Straus were very sloppy in covering the tracks. Judd leaves his glasses at the place where they left the body, which was an area that he regularly frequented and he types the ransom letter on the same typewriter on which he types his exam notes. Judd and Artie are seen at Judd’s house, by his chauffeur, cleaning Franks’ blood out of the rental car. It does not take long for the two to confess and rat each other out. *Compulsion* is as much about the trial, as it is about the actual murder. In the second half of the book, their fate is determined by a judge who listens to the arguments of prosecutor Horn and defense attorney Wilk, who argue about the sanity of the murderers.

This new edition for a new generation is recommended for fans of crime novels, historical and for book clubs. It also provides discussion points on the merits of the death penalty. Levin’s story is very thorough and engaging.

Yossi Gremillion, Librarian, Broward County Library

Keith Jessup, a graduate student at Oxford, is working on a PhD in English literature. He is studying John Milton. His professor, Thornton Livingston, is one of the foremost authorities on Milton and his masterpiece, *Paradise Lost*. When Professor Livingston fails to appear at a lecture that he was to deliver at Cambridge, Keith is worried. When the police discover the professor’s body in a ravine near his car, Keith is sure that the death was not accidental. The professor was about to present his findings about a newly discovered manuscript offering Milton’s interpretation of the poem. Further investigations reveal that Livingston’s home had been ransacked and his lecture notes are missing. Keith is determined to carry on the professor’s work, but he soon finds that the research will endanger his life. It seems that Milton’s theology is based on Jewish law as well as the New Testament, and some scholars do not want this information revealed. The author, a dentist who also writes plays and lyrics, has done a great deal of research on Milton to create this literary mystery. He provides references and a discussion guide for reading groups. This book will appeal to readers who enjoy historical mysteries and English literature. Fans of *The Da Vinci Code* will be pleased to discover something that is well written. There is plenty of material for book clubs to discuss as well.

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


This book is a moving and powerful collection of stories of Jewish children and teens who survived the Holocaust in a variety of ways. The stories provide a historically accurate sense of what life was like before, during and after the Shoah. Most are based on oral history testimonies. The author, daughter of two child survivors, has included her own parents’ stories in the collection. She has published poetry and short stories in Canadian and American journals, as well as online, and she is currently an Associate Professor teaching English education and writing at the State University of New York, Plattsburgh. The book reads well; it provides a fascinating glimpse into the experience of the Holocaust from the point of view of children and teens, and it is a valuable addition to the literature of testimonies and memoirs of child survivors. *The Saviour Shoes* has broad appeal, and will be an important addition to Temple and synagogue libraries, as well as high schools, colleges, universities, and public libraries.

Susan Freiband, Retired Librarian and Library Educator; Volunteer Temple librarian


In the aftermath of terrorist attacks such as the bombings of the World Trade Center and the multitude of suicide bombings that have rocked the Middle East, society wonders why the disenfranchised and vulnerable are attracted to violent fanatical organizations such as Hamas and ISIS. In his book, *The Book of Stone*, author Jonathan Papernick examines the rationale behind extremist religious groups and why the most vulnerable are attracted to them.

Matthew Stone is a lost soul. Abandoned by his mother at the age of twelve and ignored by his strong-willed bull of a father, Stone loses his grip on reality when he has a nervous breakdown in college, finding comfort in alcohol and drugs. Matthew is from a formidable lineage. Grandfather Julius was a mobster who funneled money to the Irgun. His father, Judge Walter Stone was forced to resign from the bench for allowing a juror, sympathetic to a brutal murder of an innocent Arab shopkeeper, to remain on the jury. After his father’s death, Matthew is attracted to the teachings of Rabbi Zalman Seligman, leader of The Crown of Solomon Talmudical Academy, a yeshiva that is a front for an armed militia planning the greatest attack in United States history.

As in his short story collections, *The Ascent of Eli Israel* and *There is No Other*, Papernick’s protagonists are easily understood and, even in the midst of performing rather questionable acts, are sympathetic. After *The Book of Stone*, the reader will want to know more about the characters and hope for a sequel or prequel. I highly recommend this book for book clubs because Papernick’s story elicits discussion about issues such as religious and political fundamentalism, terrorism and violence.

Yossi Gremillion, Librarian, Broward County Library.
“Aviya Kushner has written a passionate, illuminating essay about meaning itself. *The Grammar of God* is also a unique personal narrative, a family story with the Bible and its languages as central characters.”

—ROBERT PINSKY

“A remarkable and passionately original book of meditation, exegesis, and memoir. . . When I put it down, I wept.”

—ROSANNA WARREN, author of *Stained Glass* and *Ghost in a Red Hat*

In 2011, Reshef received a phone call from a lawyer at Hashava, the Company for Location and Restitution of Holocaust Victims’ Assets, saying that they located a plot of land in his father’s name (Shlomo Finkelman) and that of Mordechai Liebman. But Reshef would need to prove that Finkelman was his father and explain the nature of his father’s connection to Liebman.

This call started Reshef on a genealogical quest to learn more about his family, their life in Poland, their Aliyah to Palestine, and their early years in Israel. Told in “real time” as he navigated through Israeli bureaucracy, historical town records, and genealogical sites this makes an engaging detective story. Recommended for Synagogue and Community libraries.

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

Reviewed from an ARC.

This coming of age story follows Lena Czernitski from age 10, when she arrives in Chicago with her family after fleeing Ukraine in 1922, through her adolescence in 1928. In addition to the typical tween and teen issues of making friends, finding her first boyfriend, negotiating her first sexual experience, and exploring her artistic voice, Lena grapples with several other issues. The dynamics within the family shift when they move to America. Since her father had immigrated to Chicago several years before Lena and her mother and brother, her parents had to re-establish their relationship. Lena’s brother, with whom she had been close, is more interested in exploring his surroundings than in spending time with his sister. The extended family has very different ideas about how to succeed in America and how to live a Jewish life in a diverse community. Lena also finds that while there is not the violent anti-Semitism that she experienced in the Ukraine, she had to deal with more subtle forms from teachers who do not believe that anyone with a Jewish sounding name could succeed in school.

Dealing (or not dealing) with the past is a major theme in this book. Lena wants to talk about and understand the events that drove her family out of Ukraine, but her family seems intent on ignoring past tragedies and starting with a clean slate. Similarly, Lena is burdened by discovering aspects from her father’s life in Chicago before she and the family arrived that he is trying to put behind him.

Told in the first person, this is a highly engaging story with a thoughtful and believable protagonist. It would be of interest to adults and older teens. Highly recommended for synagogue and high school libraries.

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

**Reviews of Multimedia**


The Afro-Semitic Experience is an eclectic group of musicians who combine styles of music to create a unique “global” sound. This CD contains a mixture of songs with vocals and just instrumental pieces. Several great solos also appear throughout the CD. This collection is a “tribute to some of the Afro-Semitic Experience’s favorite composers.” The reverence and roots of all this music can be felt when one hears it. There are 10 songs on the CD and each has its own flavor and inspiration. Some of the various “flavors” that can be heard are Klezmer, gospel, and blues/jazz. The images and the beautiful explanations of the inspiration and meaning of each song on the packaging adds quite a bit to the experience of this CD. Libraries that collect music will enjoy adding this CD to their collection.

Debbie Feder, Director, LRC, Ida Crown Jewish Academy

Sad refugee conditions underpin a warm historical fiction highlighting observance and friendship. Marcus and his family escape Berlin, Germany’s life-threatening Nazi Holocaust policies to Shanghai, China, one of the few places on earth welcoming frightened Jews as war looms over Europe. Marcus can tell the difference in the two cities right away, but buoyed by his parents’ attitude to make the best of it, he adjusts to crowded, poor conditions, finds Jewish friends at a yeshiva, then Chinese friends. Still, Marcus grows ever more homesick as Sukkot approaches. There is no way he can attempt to replicate the magnificent sukkah they had in Berlin with lush branches, fresh fruits, and ripe vegetables. He yearns to eat his meals there during the holiday. Marcus convinces his family to let him build a sukkah on the roof. The Jewish and Chinese boys gather bamboo and construct a bare bones dwelling. As they work, Marcus’s Chinese friend Liang explains they will soon have their own harvest holiday with red lanterns and riddles. Liang takes him to their festival; he presents a riddle Marcus cannot solve. The rabbi encourages Marcus to look to the lantern for the answer. When the Jewish family finally approaches the sukkah they find it not barren, but glowing with red lanterns as Liang cries, “Happy Sukkot”! Marcus realizes the answer to the riddle is friendship. The tale ends with tears of joy. The predictable plot is forgiven by the strong historical roots this picture book delivers to youngsters. The mobile, expressive illustrations deliver the fiction and the history, supported by a wonderful two-page spread of photographs from wartime Shanghai. Faces are warm and caring; Jewish noses are the same size as Chinese noses. Friends turn a strange city from hiding place into home in a lovely, multicultural vignette.

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


The third book in this easy reader series about the adventures of best friends, Sam and Charlie, and Charlie’s little sister (also named Sam), upholds the series’ cheery themes of friendship and good values, this time in a summer camp setting. Sam and Charlie are first-time sleep-away campers and each short chapter features a different joy of camp life, including affable counselors, good-spirited competition, teamwork, the bounties of nature, rainy day crafts, campfire songs, and starry night skies. Threaded throughout the story of the friends’ eight days of camp is the parallel story of little sister Sam’s week at home. Too young to attend camp, she misses her sister, but is rewarded by Charlie’s creation of “Camp Bayit” when the two reunite. Simple Judaic concepts and occasional Hebrew words flow naturally into the storyline, from the definition of *yom* (day) and an explanation of *shmirat ha’adamah* (protecting the earth) to braiding challah and celebrating Shabbat.

While the story may not be compelling enough to read over and over, the positive portrayal of sleep-away camp - one that happens to be Jewish - is a perfect introduction for the first time camper. More significantly, the reading level, engaging illustrations, and light sprinkling of Judaic content make this an ideal selection for newly independent readers ready to advance to their first chapter book, and a welcome addition to this category of Jewish children’s literature.

*Martha McMahon, Temple Sinai Blumenthal Library, Los Angeles, CA*
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

FICTION – EARLY & MIDDLE GRADE


Tom Angleberger, the author of the hilarious and acclaimed *Origami Yoda* series has ventured into the pre-adolescent, reluctant reader realm again. These books follow a trio of outsiders who find each other at the end of the nerd lunch table in middle school. They form the Qwikpick Adventure Society to conduct outings that border on the reckless, but are ultimately safe because these likeable kids are intrinsically responsible rule followers.

*Poop Fountain!*, the first book in the series, embraces bathroom humor in the best possible way. The three friends, Lyle, Marilla and Dave, plot to explore their small town’s water treatment plant that reputedly contains a fountain that spews poop. It is scheduled to be replaced by a modern facility, so the friends go to great lengths to see this “wonder” before it is deactivated. Descriptions of poop, smells, etc. abound to the delight of young boys and girls. Great literature? No, but many of your reluctant readers will eagerly take it in hand.

The second book in the series, *The Rat with the Human Face*, finds Lyle, Marilla and Dave secretly traveling to a shuttered research facility to look for a “rat with a human face” that is said to live in the dark, dank basement. While they don’t always use the best judgment, they have fun and some scary moments, too, searching for this weird curiosity.

The Jewish connection in these books is slight, at best. The three friends conduct their adventures during holidays—Christmas and Easter, so far—because their families don’t celebrate these holidays conventionally. Lyle’s parents have to work at the Qwikpick Convenience store (where the trio conducts their meetings) during the holidays. Marilla’s family are Jehovah’s Witnesses and David’s family is Jewish. Lyle and Marilla’s families live in the trailer park near the Qwikpick while David’s family is clearly “well off”. Mention is made of a $40,000 commission David’s real estate agent mother earns on a sale. In the second book, Dave pays $120.00 from the money his grandparents are “always giving him” so that the friends can purchase tickets to get to the research facility. The second adventure takes place during Passover/Easter time. A passing mention is made of Dave not eating anything he shouldn’t. Subtle stereotyping? Perhaps. Not a necessary purchase for any synagogue library, but great books to put in the hands of reluctant readers in the targeted audience.

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


These historical novels from the American Girl conglomerate (established in 1986 and now owned by Mattel) arrived for review in a glossy, bright pink binder/box. Included with the books were promotional materials about the series’ eight “BeForever” characters: twenty-inch dolls, clothing (for dolls and girls), accessories, and furniture. Let us put aside the foregoing information about these various products and examine the three books.

The first two volumes are part of the “Classic” set; these were originally published as a six-book set in 2009 (See AJL Newsletter September/October 2009, p. 17). The third is a “Journey” title where a contemporary girl goes back in time to meet the BeForever character and share adventures with her.

*The Sound of Applause* sets the stage for the story about Rebecca Rubin, a Jewish girl who lives on the Lower East Side in Manhattan in 1914. Nine/ten-year-old Rebecca lives in an apartment with her parents, older brother, two older twin sisters, and a younger brother. Bubbie and Grandpa live upstairs...
in a separate apartment and often offer the “old world” angle. Several plot lines run through this novel: (1) Rebecca wants to become an actor but knows that her family will disapprove, (2) her aunt, uncle, and three cousins try to immigrate to the United States from Russia, but encounter various problems along the way, and (3) Mr. Rossi, the cranky janitor of the building, keeps pigeons (and secrets). How these problems are eventually resolved within a Jewish context (e.g. the holiday of Hanukkah) makes for a page-turning read. Lights, Camera, Rebecca! continues with Rebecca’s story (minus Mr. Rossi), but this time during the Passover holiday. Here, Rebecca not only fulfills her dream of acting in a movie, but also speaks up for workers’ rights at a garment factory. That girl certainly gets around!

The format of the “Journey” books is different: The Glow of the Spotlight is told in first person. A contemporary girl is chosen for a solo part in an upcoming dance recital. But she goes to an antique store, finds a set of Russian nesting dolls, and is dizzyingly thrust back to the year 1914. The reader then makes plot choices for the girl. For example, she must decide if she is Daisy, a vaudeville performer, or Millie, the janitor’s old friend’s neighbor. (Mr. Rossi, who was important in Volume 1, has now reappeared after an absence in Volume 2.) On the other hand, the reader may continue without making choices at this point. This “choose-your-own-adventure” method makes for intriguing possibilities. One may read the book one way, and then re-read it yet another way. Nice. The quick pace of events continues until Daisy/Millie returns back to her own time, having made a friend in Rebecca and learned about tikun olam (repairing the world) in the process.

Greene’s characters are appealing, if at times a bit too perfect; the plots are well-structured and fast-paced. At the end of all three books, the author has written an informative historical note, “Inside Rebecca’s World”. A useful glossary is at the end of the BeForever books. Aside from book covers that seem way too modern, and an occasional lapse in historical fact or Jewish customs, these books are effective and engaging and should appeal to their intended audience. It’s important to note that the “classic” books have been re-packaged with new covers.

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

[Editor’s note: Jacqueline Dembar Greene is a prolific writer of fiction and nonfiction books for young people. The Secret Shofar of Barcelona was a 2010 Sydney Taylor Notable book for Younger Readers; the Rebecca series, 2010 Sydney Taylor Notable book(s) for Older Readers. In addition, Out of Many Waters (1988) and One Foot Ashore (1994) were named Sydney Taylor Honor Books.]


Josephine is a tomboy in Tuscon, Arizona and yearns to wear trousers and ride horses. Feisty and spirited, she rebels against her father’s strict propriety concerning societal norms. A kind and gentle Christian boy named Connie lives nearby and they soon become friends. Jo’s father, a store manager, decides to run for mayor on a “law and order” platform. His family is horrified when they realize that Connie’s father, his opponent in the 1882 mayoral campaign, is using “dirty tricks” and anti-Semitism to win votes. Justice prevails in the end (the opponent is defeated by his own foibles), and familial compromise is reached (split skirts do the trick) in the neat and satisfying conclusion.

According to the afterword, Matas, a prolific author of historical fiction for young readers, was inspired by the true story of Charles Strauss, the first Jewish mayor of Tucson. Readers will learn quite a bit about the history of the Arizona Territory and are likely to be entranced by the idea of a Jewish family from Boston transplanted into such a rough-and-tumble world. Those with no prior knowledge of Wyatt Earp and the O.K. Corral will be puzzled at the peripheral references to this incident, but otherwise they will get a real feel for the time and place which Jo inhabits. They will also learn of some of the great contributions that Jews have made to the settlement of the American West.

Note: This book was a 2014 National Jewish Book Award Finalist in the Category of Children’s and Young Adult Literature.

Joyce Levine, Librarian, retired from North Shore Hebrew Academy H.S., Great Neck, NY and AJL Publications Chair
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Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

FICTION – TEEN


Tamar’s family is facing a crisis. Her father has been going “off the derech (path)”, becoming less connected to his religious community, more apt to stray from strict observance of mitzvoth (commandments), accepted behaviors and social norms, such as style of dress and attitude. Eventually, Tamar’s parents, feeling they can no longer live together while their lifestyles differ, decide to separate. Tamar and most of her siblings decide to stay with their mother but her twin sister, Leah, with whom Tamar has always been very close, decides to follow their father into his new world. Leah moves with her father into a non-religious part of town and enrolls in public school. Each member of the family has to face a series of choices in order to deal with the new state of affairs. How they grow to meet these challenges provides the story line.

While the writing is clear and the story holds interest, this is more of a morality tale. Instead of painting a picture of a respected community which is nurturing and an ethical role model for all, the author presents us with one which seeks to instill fear and shame when one feels curious about other lifestyles. The often-taught value of lashon hara (not speaking ill of others) is not looked down upon here. Rather, it is used as a tool to “punish” innocent children who are caught in a difficult situation. People are too concerned about how they look to others to worry about being supportive or kind. They mock and point fingers, with only a few notable exceptions, which serves as a cautionary lesson directed at the reader. The twins’ relationship, purported early on to be close-knit and special, crumbles early in its first period of trial and seems to have had no substance after all. Character development seems to have wandered off its own “derech”. Principles such as “giving the benefit of the doubt” and “do not leap to judge another person” are absent. An optional purchase for Orthodox libraries.

Michal Malen, Librarian, North Shore Hebrew Academy, Great Neck, NY

GOD AND PRAYER


Koren, a distinguished publisher of Jewish texts (Tanakh and prayer books) has developed a new series of siddurim (prayer books) with age appropriate content and a focus on “an impactful prayer experience that places God and the user at its center.” The first, aimed at five- to seven-year-olds, includes selected prayers (chosen by their “objective centrality and their relevance to the daily lives of children”) surrounded by adorable collage pictures, which include both boys and girls. All the prayers are in the clear fonts for which Koren is known. A key at the bottom of each page identifies the part of the prayer service, and dispersed through the text are questions for reflection. The Youth Siddur, for ages eight through eleven, follows the format of the Children’s Siddur, with a key at the bottom, selected prayers, and collage illustrations, which are smaller and dispersed throughout the text. Along with the questions are stories that relate to the prayers. All the prayers are in Hebrew with no English translation.

Although the Ani Tefilla Siddur is labeled for “summer camp,” it is appropriate for all year, with explanations of the words and phrases in the text, the deeper meaning behind the prayers, and the ritual requirements. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks’ eloquent translation accompanies the prayers. The “Humash”
is geared for summer camp, with the Torah and Haftara readings for those months. While the siddurim are all nusach Ashkenaz and meant for Orthodox homes, schools and camps, the educators’ companions, with excellent ideas for amplifying the text, can be adapted for use in all Jewish communities.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel

HOLOCAUST & WORLD WAR II


Breendonk was a concentration, not extermination camp, in Belgium. Its first prisoners were interned in September 1940, not really knowing what they had done wrong. Deem, who has painstakingly researched the camp, its prisoners, and staff, writes a comprehensive narrative from its beginnings to Breendonk today. The camp held 3,600 prisoners and about half of them survived. Prisoners of Breendonk is not the type of book to be read from cover to cover. While it strives for dramatic impact by focusing on individual stories, it does not quite achieve a complex entanglement that comprises the camp experience. It is clear that a passion for the subject has driven Deems to write this book, but the passion does not come through enough for the reader to take an emotional journey when so many other books are available.

Photographs by Leon Nolis punctuate the text as do drawings by inmate Jacques Ochs. Both are compelling. However, the choice of a sans-serif font for the text detracts from the 1940s feel and fights against the imagery. While the publisher recommends the book for teens, any interested adult (or college student) would certainly find it useful. An afterword provides mini-narratives of what happened to some of the prisoners and their families. Appendices list deportations, and additional back matter includes source notes and suggestions for further research.

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


Leib Moskowitz’s Shoah memoir begins when Jews from Czechoslovakia were rounded up—around Passover, 1944. At the time, he and Gittel were fifteen years old. He spent time in several camps: Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Melk, and Ebensee. After liberation, he and several family members returned to their village, but were unwelcome and forced to move. He tells the harrowing story of their journey to the American sector of West Germany. After several years in DP camps, Leib made his way to the United States, and began his life again. Gittel’s experiences include her time in Auschwitz, Ravensbruck, and Malchow. After the War, she too returned to Kuzmino but was forced to leave. She eventually reached New York, where she and Leib met again, married, and raised a family. Leib and Gittel’s stories are told in their own voices, which are relatively unfiltered. Their descriptions of camp life are specific but not graphic. There are also insertions by the editor (their son), who explains various aspects of their passage. Many of the citations come from Wikipedia and the U.S Holocaust Memorial Museum website. In addition, the book includes reproductions of numerous documents—identity cards, photographs, Nazi camp lists, etc.—which trace the couple’s lives before, during and after World War II. The inclusion of the wealth of personal data differentiates this book from others. Though apparently written with a young audience in mind, it may be better suited for adult collections, and is recommended with caution.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA
ISRAEL


Avi, an ambulance, teams up with Zack, a medic, for crucial medical missions in Jerusalem. But before hitting the gas pedal, they have to complete training that includes driving and traffic safety and patient assistance. The reader learns about the lifesaving work that Magen David Adom (“Red Shield of David.” Israel’s national emergency medical service) and their ambulances do in Israel every day. There is a glossary with Hebrew words in clear block letters with transliteration.

Carlson works as a graphic designer for Magen David Adom, and the book is featured prominently on their website. Her computer-generated illustrations almost look like they are works of pastel. More Hebrew words for first aid supplies and directions would give a stronger sense of Israel, but other than that, this book is certainly a worthy addition to a school library.

*Ben Pastcan, Librarian, Shalom School, Sacramento, California.*


Two familiar friends from *Aesop’s Fables*, Tortoise and Hare, decide to race through Israel. Similar to the original tale, Hare is boastful and brags that he is as fast as a train. Hare challenges him to race from Tel Aviv to the Dead Sea. Along the way they pass through olive groves, the *shuk* (market), Independence Park, Ben Yehudah Street, the Judean Hills, and a Bedouin tent. Just as Hare sees the finish line, he decides to take a nap. When he awakes, he sees that Tortoise has beaten him. The two friends take a dip in the Dead Sea to cool off and rest their muscles. A map of Israel tracing their route is included at the end of the story.

Critics will notice that the route the animals take is not the most direct across the country, but the intended audience won’t mind. Preschoolers through Kindergarten will enjoy this new spin on a familiar tale. Teachers will appreciate having an age-appropriate book that captures the major landmarks of Israel. But this book isn’t just about Israel. Like the original story, it has the same moral of “slow and steady wins the race.” Sarah Goodreau’s illustrations are colorful and child-friendly. She does a decent job of capturing the culture and landscape of Israel. For example, her depiction of the *shuk* in Jerusalem includes signage in Hebrew and English.

*Aimee Lurie, The Agnon School, Beachwood, OH*


A boy and girl travel to Israel with their parents and explore many of its famous sites, such as Masada, a kibbutz, and the Dead Sea. In the process, they learn that “everyone says shalom”, meaning “hello”, “good-bye”, and “peace.” A tour through Israel can be somewhat overwhelming, but the simple rhyming text moves the family along from place to place (sometimes accompanied by a gecko). The gentle watercolor illustrations enhance the text by helping the reader find the children in each locale and pointing out the variety of people living in Israel. A useful appendix of place names along with thumbnail illustrations is provided at the back of the book. The front flyleaf gives an explanation about the word “shalom” and the revival of Hebrew as a modern language. The back flyleaf suggests that children examine the concepts of “new” and “old” in relation to architecture. A PJ Library selection, *Everybody Says Shalom* is sure to please children, parents, and educators.

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

On a walk in a Jerusalem park, young Jodie and her dog Digger stumble—literally—into a rock-lined pit with an unusual hole. Dreaming of being an archaeologist like her father, Jodie is excited to learn that she has discovered an ancient wine press. As her father explains how, in Biblical times, pickers would stomp on grapes over the stones to make wine, Jodie gets an idea of how to surprise her dad on his upcoming birthday. After filling the press with grapes, Jodie and her friends take off their shoes, wash their feet, roll up their pants, and stomp and squish until enough juice flows into the pool to fill a bottle. “We didn’t buy you something new for your birthday, because the best present you can give an archaeologist is something very, very old!” she tells her father.

Despite the title, there are only minor references to Shabbat in the story. Anna Levine, as she has done in her previous books, *Jodie’s Hanukkah Dig* (2008) and *Jodie’s Passover Adventure* (2012), is more concerned with portraying life in modern-day Israel while introducing young readers to the history of ancient Israel through archaeological sites. The watercolor illustrations—colorful in the present and sepia-toned in the past—complement the narrative. Young children are likely to giggle at the two-page spread of purple-stained, barefoot feet squashing the grapes.

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

**JEWS LIFE & VALUES**


Chavie is missing a shoe, something nearly all children can relate to. Luckily, her neighbor, Mr. Kohn, returns it after a bird drops it down his chimney. Written in rhyme, the story is text heavy using a very small font. The colorful, cartoon illustrations are appealing and readers looking for a specific book about the mitzvah of returning lost items may find value in this rather didactic story. However, *Sarah Finds a Mitzva* by Rebeka Simhaee (Hachai, 2010) and Elka Weber’s *One Little Chicken* (Tricycle Press, 2011) are more polished depictions of performing this mitzvah.

Aimee Lurie, The Agnon School, Beachwood, OH


Five-year-old Rochel and her three-year-old brother live in an apartment with their mother. Their father lives in a house because their parents are divorced. Rochel expounds on how their lives are different: Shabbos is different, as the illustration shows the mother making Kiddush for the family. Although they are invited to the neighbors, “it’s not always fun.” The book also illustrates many of the concerns a young child would have about her parents’ divorce, including that both parents love her and that it’s not the child’s fault that the parents divorced. At the end, Rochel articulates that she is sad sometimes, but is comforted that “Hashem loves us all.”

With approbation from Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski and a note to parents at the end, the book is obviously valuable as a tool for exploring the sensitive issue of divorce with young children and assuring them of their parents’ love. The illustrations are very colorful and include a proliferation of balloons, but with the males all depicted with their tzitzit (fringes) showing and the use of “Tatty” and not “Daddy” or even “Abba”, the book is targeted to a specifically Orthodox readership. The topic of “everyone makes mistakes—some mistakes are little and some mistakes are big,” is a little beyond the scope of young readers, and the “I’m happy that Hashem loves us all” ending is not quite appropriate after the heavy subject matter. The book is recommended for Orthodox libraries and counseling centers.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens


A cute mainstream story presents good deeds as more rewarding than Jewish, despite the fine end note which stresses Judaism’s binding ties to mitzvot (good deeds) through Torah and law. In a straightforward tale, one good deed leads to another. The plot’s chain reaction of kind acts is generated by a youngster named Jake. His good deed impels the older lady he helps to do one; her good deed instigates a helpful deed by the man she aids; and so on and so on through a mixed neighborhood which we know is multicultural from the picture book’s illustrations and last names. One of the families, the Cohens, is Jewish; they get more pages than the others, yet the art misses every chance to show a Jewish symbol in their home—most glaring when a neighbor knocks at the front door and there is no mezuzah. The domino effect of the good deeds turns a gloomy street into a sunny one, yet no one, not even the Cohens, seems to know the impetus behind the change. But empowerment the reader knows: it is the mitzvot! Every kindness is met with delight and a desire to do another one. By the end, everyone is smiling; the sunny street shines from within individual neighbors as well as without. Merry pictures of sweet people in happy colors promote the story line. The mitzvah arrives in a breezy, sprightly, non-didactic way for young readers of many beliefs.

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


Aviva is unhappy with her name. Her classmates tease her and call her “Amoeba” and “Viva La France.” So Aviva decides that, from now on, her name will be Emily. Her parents go along with her notion, but ever so gently explain that Aviva was named after Ada, her maternal great-grandmother. Ada taught Aviva’s mother how to cook delicious chicken soup, to sew, to read, and to recognize the stars in the night sky. When Aviva was born, her parents knew she would be “as brave and smart and talented and kind” as Grandma Ada. At last, Aviva understands the significance behind her name and becomes Aviva once again.

Newman tells this story with her typical lyricism and sensitivity. Ag Jatkowska has captured the love and tenderness of the family through her digitally-manipulated watercolor illustrations using varying perspectives; the characters are likeable with their round eyes and smiling faces. Only one caveat: Because the rabbi at the baby-naming ceremony is a woman, My Name is Aviva may not be suitable for all communities.

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


It is a beautiful Sunday morning and Avi has planned to play baseball in the park with his friends. But his grandfather isn’t feeling well, and bikur cholim (visiting the sick) is a big mitzvah. Both his mother and father discuss the pros and cons of the situation, but they leave the decision up to Avi. His father had mentioned that making a get well card would be a nice gesture, while his mother agrees that it would not be nice to let down his friends. Avi thinks about what to do. He writes a note and leaves it with his baseball on a table in the hallway. His father finds the items and wonders why the note is addressed to “Benny”. When Benny knocks on the door to pick up Avi, everyone realizes that Avi left the baseball for his friends and that he went to visit his grandfather. His parents are very proud.

The book is more about choosing between playing with friends and visiting an ailing grandfather than the actual mitzvah of bikur cholim. The illustrations are colorful and focus on the interaction between the speakers, but they are neither up to contemporary standards nor eye-catching for young readers. All the males are depicted with their tzitzit (fringes) showing, and most young boys would not give up playing baseball with friends so amicably. It is also unclear why the whole family cannot visit together when the father goes in the afternoon. An optional purchase for Orthodox libraries.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel
NON-FICTION


Watch Out for Flying Kids tells the stories of the founders, performers, families, and coaches of two youth circuses: the St. Louis Arches, a troupe of kids from inner city and upscale areas who develop circus acts and give performances with the goal of developing self-esteem and physical skill and to building community among youngsters of different backgrounds; and from Israel, the Galilee Circus, which includes Israeli Jews from the town of Karmiel and Arabs from the nearby villages. This group, too, was formed in the hope that performing circus acts together would engender trust and build relationships among teens of these two communities. The books chronicle their visits to each other’s countries over a period extending from 2005 to 2014.

This could have been a compelling story, if the focus was on three or four individual youngsters and told in fifty pages or less. But at thirteen chapters and two hundred plus pages, it gets bogged down in trivial and extraneous details about the various performers, like issues in their families, problems in fundraising, snafus in housing and travel arrangements, etc., and the issue of menstruating Arab girls going to mosque while visiting America. (In their village back home, they wouldn’t; in America, they did), and more. Reading this book was a bit like watching a reality TV show, where every thought of every character is narrated—all in one endless episode.

It seems to this reviewer that there is also one-sided and extraneous political commentary, especially in the sections on the Galilee Circus. Hezbollah is described not as a terror group, but as a “military, political, and social organization.” Some people in the Arab village “were proud that their Arab ‘brothers’ in Lebanon were taking action against the Jewish people. Jews had confiscated their property—their country ...in 1948 ....” Describing the 2014 visit of the St. Louis circus to Israel, the author notes gratuitously that a week after their return, there were prolonged protests by infuriated citizens over the shooting in Ferguson, Missouri—again described with pertinent facts missing. And in telling of the problems caused by the 2014 Gaza War, there is no context that the war was occasioned by the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens and the rocket attacks from Gaza on Israeli towns.

What could have been an interesting human story about kids of different backgrounds learning to be circus artists together gets lost among the minutiae.

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

SHABBAT & HOLIDAYS


Tamar’s Sukkah was first published in paperback by Kar-Ben in 1988. The story of a young girl who solicits the help of her neighbors and friends to make her sukkah just right was illustrated with flat, three-color paintings in green, brown, and orange by Katherine Janus Kahn. In 1999, Tamar’s Sukkah was re-issued as a board book (again from Kar-Ben) with a slightly abbreviated text and new, more sophisticated full-color illustrations by Shauna Mooney Kawasaki. Now, Kar-Ben has once again breathed new life into the story. In the latest edition, Kahn has updated her original paintings—they are now more detailed, vibrant, stylized, and in full color. With only a few minor, insignificant changes, the text remains the same as the 1988 edition. While the Sukkot bookshelf is more crowded now than it was 27 years ago, teachers, librarians, and parents will welcome this fresh take on an old classic.

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


In Talia and the Rude Vegetables (Kar-Ben, 2011), a young girl misunderstands her grandmother’s instructions to find seven ROOT vegetables for the Rosh Hashanah stew. In this new installment, Talia expects Yom Kippur to be a delicious day that starts with a yummy breakfast. Talia confuses
the break-fast meal with breakfast and thinks that a fast day means it will go by quickly. Many young readers will relate to these misunderstandings; however, her Yom/Yum confusion is a bit farfetched and overplayed. Readers will also wonder why Talia and her grandmother stay home when the rest of the family goes to synagogue on Yom Kippur. Talia spends the day alone reading, playing, and visiting the farm animals. Grandma appears, in the illustrations, to spend the day relaxing in her easy chair as she drinks coffee and knits. [Kar-Ben’s publisher assures these inaccuracies will be corrected when the book is reprinted]. The emphasis in the story is on the break-fast meal with only a simple explanation of Yom Kippur as a day “Jews fast and pray and think about how to be better people” and “a time to ask for forgiveness”. The double-spread acrylic illustrations, depicting a contemporary Jewish family in a rural setting, are cheery and expressive; however, it is puzzling why only Talia, her grandparents, and her mother are shown. Where are her father and brother who were mentioned in the first book? The brief afterword implies that only “adults and children over the age of bar/bat mitzvah” pray in the synagogue and ask for forgiveness on Yom Kippur. A recipe for “Talia’s YUM Kippur Kugel” is appended. While it would be nice to have a yummy new addition to the Yom Kippur picture book shelf, this pun-driven story falls flat and will only leave readers hungry for something that more accurately reflects Yom Kippur customs and practices and enhances a deeper understanding of the holiday.

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


The concept is fun for kids: take two photos, place them on opposite pages, and try to spot all seven differences in the right-hand photo. An added bonus challenge is to try to find the two Shabbos candles hiding in one of each of the photo pairs. Answers are found at the back of the book. Children will enjoy the game aspect and will also absorb some information about Shabbos rituals while viewing appealing, professionally done photos. An example of a typical rhyme placed below the photo of challah and the ingredients used to bake it: “Smell those challahs your mom worked hard to bake? / Let’s not eat them yet. It’s not time to take. / We’ll munch on them later. Now, if you don’t mind, / Can you spot all the differences? Are they hard to find?” Some of the photos require a good deal of looking, and others are easier, but the layout is very attractive. The vocabulary uses the Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew, such as “talleisim” or “Oneg Shabbos”, but this book would be very appropriate in any Jewish household, regardless of denomination. It would be particularly welcome in a children’s area of the synagogue during Sabbath services because the puzzles take time to solve and can quietly engage children of any age.

Lisa Silverman, Sinai Temple Blumenthal Library, Los Angeles, CA

CHAVA (KATHE) PINCHUCK IS THE NEW AJL REVIEWS CO-EDITOR FOR CHILDREN AND TEEN LITERATURE

As was reported on the May-June 2015 AJL News issue, Anne Dublin, AJL Reviews co-editor since 2006, has stepped down from her position as a co-editor for children and teen literature on June 30th, 2015. Thankfully, Chava (Kathe) Pinchuck, a long time AJL member residing in Israel, has volunteered to take on Anne’s position. Chava is the past chair of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and past SSC secretary. She worked at a synagogue library and a public library in the United States, made Aliyah in 2012, and worked for an outsourcing company in Israel for a year. Now she is the ‘cybrarian’ at Michigan Jewish Institute (Detroit, MI), and is consulting for two local Israeli libraries - Machon L’Torah Library and Shirat Chana Book Gemach. In terms of editing, Chava “loves semicolons and yes to Oxford commas!”

Welcome aboard Chava!
Uri Kolodney,
Editor-in-chief
Behrman House and Gefen Publishing announce the formation of Apples & Honey Press, a new joint venture to publish high quality children’s books. Apples & Honey Press will bring together the best authors and illustrators from North America and Israel to create memorable stories that illuminate the values of family, community, having fun, and being the best we can be. The imprint will launch six titles for its first season (Fall 2015) including new works by David Adler, Sylvia Rouss, Karen Rostoker-Gruber, Ann Koffsky and Claudia Carlson. An additional five Apples & Honey Press titles are planned for Spring 2016, and the publishing plan calls for two seasons per year, Fall and Spring.

Editorial direction for the imprint will be provided by Dena Neusner. Ms. Neusner, who took over as Executive Editor for Behrman House last year, has been with the firm for over seven years. Before joining Behrman House Ms. Neusner worked in children’s trade and mass market publishing for more than 15 years, including at Puffin Books, where she managed a beginning reader book program; Golden Books and Scholastic, where she learned the fast-paced world of media-related publishing; and Parachute Press, a small packager.

Behrman House is the leading publisher of books and software for Jewish schools throughout North America, as well as titles for individuals and families seeking to learn more about Hebrew, Jewish history, holidays, values, culture, and religious practices. Earlier this year, Behrman House announced the acquisition of the education and trade titles of URJ Press. The firm’s curricular materials can be found in almost every Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist congregation in North America, and in Jewish communities around the world. Gefen Publishing is an English-language publishing firm headquartered in Jerusalem, Israel, with offices in New York. The firm publishes approximately twenty titles per year on a variety of Israeli and Jewish subjects including history, holocaust, biography, cooking, and religion.

**Fall 2015 List, Apples & Honey Press:**
- *Avi the Ambulance Goes to School*, by Claudia Carlson
- *Farmer Kobi’s Hanukkah Match*, by Karen Rostoker-Gruber and Rabbi Ron Isaacs, illustrated by CB Decker
- *Hanukkah Cookies with Sprinkles*, by David Adler, illustrated by Jeffrey Ebbeler
- *Kayla and Kugel*, by Ann D. Koffsky
- *King David & Akavish the Spider*, by Sylvia Rouss, illustrated by Ari Binus
- *The Littlest Pair*, by Sylvia Rouss, illustrated by Holly Hannon

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**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](https://lists.service.ohio-state.edu/archives/hasafran) of Hasafran messages posted since June 12, 2003 is now available.
The AJL Newsletter (Irene Levin-Wixman z”l, founding editor) was published in print from 1979 to 2010 by the Association of Jewish Libraries to inform members about AJL activities and issues related to Judaica libraries. As of January 2011 it is split into two separate electronic publications – the AJL News and the AJL Reviews. Receipt of these publications is one of the benefits of membership. Please see the AJL website at http://www.jewishlibraries.org for membership rates.

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All links to online resources were checked for accuracy on September 10, 2015. We cannot be responsible for broken links to those resources in the future.

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