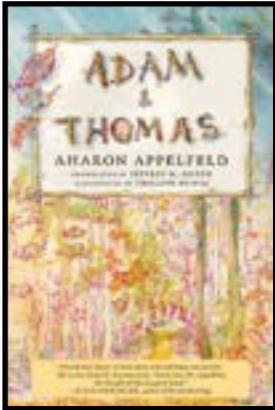


### In The Spotlight



Appelfeld, Aharon. *Adam & Thomas*. Trans. [from Hebrew] by Jefferey M. Green. Illus. by Phillippe Dumas. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2015. 160 pp. \$18.95. (9781609806347). Gr. 9-12.

This is a treasure of a story about two nine-year-old Jewish boys, Adam and Thomas, who find each other hiding in a forest and work together to survive during the last winter of World War II. Emotionally riveting and remarkably well told, it is amazing to read how these two boys manage to survive. Building a shelter for themselves, helping others fleeing from the Nazis, overcoming fear, and giving each other confidence, they manage to circumvent what should have been the inevitable outcome. Mina, a small Jewish girl hidden by a peasant family, surreptitiously brings them food, until she is discovered. She is beaten and cast out into the forest, where she joins Adam and Thomas in their quest for survival. The pencil and watercolor illustrations perfectly support the story, especially since they look like they could have been drawn by either of the two boys. While not explicitly stated, based on the author's biography, this appears to be a novelization of Aharon Appelfeld's actual experiences during the War. More than another Holocaust novel, it is a powerful statement of the resilience of the human spirit.

*Kathy Bloomfield, past member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and [forwardsbooks.com](http://forwardsbooks.com), Washington, DC*

[Editors' Note: *Adam & Thomas* is the 2016 Sydney Taylor Award Winner for Older Readers and a Mildred L. Batchelder Honor Book, the ALA Youth Media Award for books in translation.]

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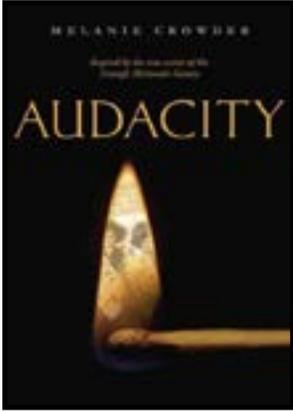


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## In The Spotlight



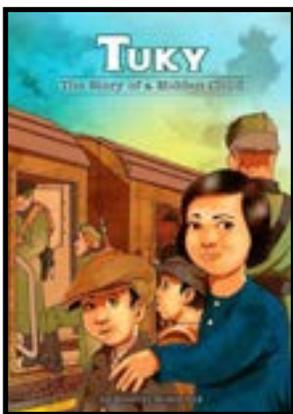
**Crowder, Melanie. *Audacity*. New York: Philomel/Penguin, 2015. 390 pp. \$17.99. HC (9780399168994); \$10.99 PBK (9780147512499). Gr. 7-Adult.**

*Audacity* is “inspired by the life” of Clara Lemlich (1886–1982), an early activist in the labor union movement in New York City. In vivid free verse, Clara tells her story and we come to empathize with her and understand her background: a poverty-stricken, persecuted life in a shtetl in Russia followed by the gruelling journey to America. And even when Clara and her family finally reach the *goldene medina* (golden country), Clara faces hardships of a different sort. She must work in a sweatshop—seventy hours per week for paltry wages under unsafe and oppressive working conditions. All the while, she dreams of an education denied of her because of her gender, class, and upbringing. Her “audacity” grows from Section One (“Tinder”) to Section Five (“Blaze”). With passion and conviction, she persuades other women slaving in factories to join the dressmakers’ union and thus ignites the “Uprising of the 20,000” -- the New York shirtwaist workers’ strike of 1909.

The evocative cover of *Audacity* gives us a striking idea of what this book will be about: A match is lit; a bright flame against a black background outlines a photo of women shirtwaist workers on strike. Crowder movingly conveys Clara’s emotions, for example, when Clara’s father throws her precious books into the fire: “my lungs seize / my eyes water / my throat burns / from the ache of breathing in / all those lost words.” Sharp poetic images abound: “We live at the frayed edge / of our *shtetl*...” Often the shape of the poem and the line breaks reflect the meaning of the words. When Clara discovers the wonder of the free public library, we see five columns of the word “books” standing upright like tall bookshelves. The symbolism of birds is gracefully woven throughout this masterful book—birds wounded, dying, but ultimately flying free. *Audacity* includes an historical note, interviews with Clara’s family, a glossary of Jewish terms, and selected sources. For another inspiring book about Clara Lemlich for a younger audience, see *Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers’ Strike of 1909* by Michelle Markel (Balzer + Bray, 2013).

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

[Editor’s note: *Audacity* was a 2015 National Jewish Book Award finalist.]



**Rosenfeld, Shterni. *Tuky: The Story of a Hidden Child*. Illus. by Jacky Yarhi. Brooklyn, NY: Hachai, 2015. 176 pp. \$12.95. HC (9781929628858). Grades 2 - 4.**

This inspiring, easy-to-read chapter book dealing with the Holocaust is unusual. Not only is it true and beautifully told by the author, but it is completely appropriate for a curious eight-year-old, and fills a need for books about this subject for independent readers who are not interested in reading Holocaust-themed picture books. The author is the daughter of Mrs. Tuky (Gestetner) Treitel, a child survivor from Hungary who moved to Montreal with her family after the war. Rosenfeld deftly reconstructs her mother’s story of growing up in a wealthy, observant Jewish family in Budapest and how she survived the war. and eventually moved to Canada.

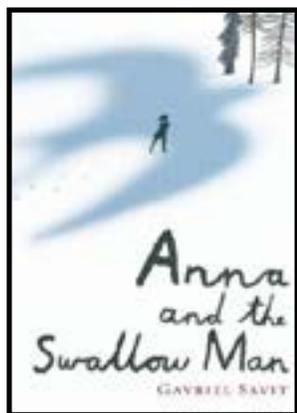
The first pages set the scene well: readers first “Meet the Main Characters” as we would in a play, and peruse a list of Hungarian words that are later sprinkled throughout the text, lending authenticity to this astonishing story of survival. Tuky is then introduced as a happy fun-loving

## In The Spotlight

child with loving parents and two younger brothers. Her family's traditional Jewish levels of observance are not particularly explained, but are easily understood by readers. It takes a few chapters, but when her Papa (Apu) sews a yellow star on their clothes and then presents each child with a silver chain that a *tsaddik* has blessed to keep them safe, the war begins and young Tuky's life changes dramatically. She shows cunning, great maturity and heroism when she goes to live with strangers on a farm (at age six and a half), and is then sent to a detention center alone where she is finally rescued and returned to her family, who all miraculously survived.

An epilogue and author's note at the end of the book, plus an interview with the real Tuky and a glossary of all Yiddish and Hebrew words, show that the author and editor of this book took incredible care to get it right for the intended age group. There are a few black and white illustrations sprinkled throughout which provide an even better entry into the subject as an age-appropriate introduction to the Holocaust.

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



**Savit, Gavriel. *Anna and the Swallow Man*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016. 240 pp. \$20.99. (9780553513349). Gr. 8 and up.**

A mix of horror and naiveté make this dream-like fairytale-like story a standout. It is a journey through time which is difficult to grasp by its edges but which leaves the reader with a renewed understanding of the world and of human nature in its quiet, distinctive tone. Anna, seven-years-old, has been left waiting for her father to return to pick her up but he never does. He has been captured by the Germans during the purge of the intellectuals in Poland in 1939. A man, known to Anna only as Swallow Man, accompanies her through the forest as they both try to stay safe and evade being caught by the Nazis. Why does this mysterious man have no name? Why are names so dangerous to divulge? For a while, the two are accompanied by Reb Hirschl, a Jew who understands the concept of joy even when joy seems so elusive in their complicated world. Issues of loyalty come into play. Animals abound in the forest, as well. What part do they play in Anna's magical journey through time and space with the Swallow Man? And, of course, all journeys eventually end and when they do, the world is different. Who will Anna be in this new, changed world? What will she carry with her from the past? Savit's prose is cadenced, rich and evocative: "Regret is like golden jewelry: at the proper moment it may prove immeasurably valuable..." and "...the massive, thundering sound of the bombers passing overhead, like all the storms the sky had ever seen playing out at once." This most unusual book will stay with the reader long after putting it back on the shelf.

*Michal H. Malen, retired elementary and middle school librarian;  
Editor, Children's and Young Adult Reviews, Jewish Book Council*

## Don't Forget to Check Out AJL News!

The February/March issue of *AJL News* has lots of information about the 2016 Conference, and lots of exciting articles about the activities of our members.

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# Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY RACHEL KAMIN & CHAVA PINCHUK

## BIBLE STORIES

**Rouss, Sylvia.** *King David & Akavish the Spider.* Illus. by Ari Binus. Springfield, NJ: Apples & Honey Press, 2015. 36 pp. \$9.95. PBK (9781927583746). Gr. K-3.

The author who brought us *Sammy Spider*, now provides us with another spider story, this one straight out of Midrash. While using the spider's web for target practice, David learns that he is destroying the spider's home. During a storm, David takes Akavish, which means spider in Hebrew, into a cave. Akavish vows to one day save David's life as David did his. David grows to become a favorite musician for King Saul, but is forced to run from the palace when the King grows jealous and wants David killed. After much running and hiding, David falls asleep in a cave. Soldiers seeing the cave rush to take a look, but when they see a spider web covering the cave's entrance, they "know" that David could not be there. Akavish did as he promised, and David learns the important lesson that "small acts of kindness can make a difference in great and surprising ways." With the exception of Akavish, the spider, the illustrations are expressive and bring the story to life. Unfortunately, the spider looks more like a cartoon character, and in some ways this takes away from the books' powerful message.

*Kathy Bloomfield, past member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and [forwordsbooks.com](http://forwordsbooks.com), Washington, DC*

**Steven, Kenneth.** *Why Dogs Have Wet Noses.* Illus. by Øyvind Tørestad. Brooklyn, NY: Enchanted Lion Books, 2015. 36 pp. \$17.95. (9781592701735). Gr. K-3.

How man's best friend helped Noah avoid a crisis during the flood unfolds in this clever *pourquoi* story. When the dog boards the ark, his nose is soft and black. As the rain falls and the lightning and thunder crash, the ark and its occupants settle in – noisily and hungrily, keeping Noah busy night and day. Then disaster strikes: the ark springs a leak, and Noah must come up with a quick and effective plan to plug the hole. Enter the dog, whose nose fits exactly into that leaking hole - he saves the ark and everyone in it. When at last the ark reaches landfall, Noah rescues his steadfast friend, leaving the dog with a very wet nose. With unusual yet charming stick figure-like pen and ink drawings, the story of the evolution of dogs' wet noses creatively and delightfully unfolds. Despite the abundance of Noah tales, this a wonderful and unique addition to the bible story bookshelf.

*Kathy Bloomfield, past member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and [forwordsbooks.com](http://forwordsbooks.com), Washington, DC*

## BIOGRAPHY

**Conkling, Winifred.** *Radioactive! How Irene Curie and Lise Meitner Revolutionized Science and Changed the World.* New York: Random House, 2016. 227 pp. \$17.95. (9781 616204150). Gr. 9 and up.

Winifred Conkling provides a thoroughly researched examination of the lives and accomplishments of two women scientists, Irene Joliot-Curie and Lise Meitner. Irene Joliot-Curie was the daughter of the famous scientists Marie and Pierre Curie. She and her husband Frederic Joliot-Curie received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for the discovery of artificial radioactivity. Lise Meitner was a physicist of Austrian-Jewish descent, most famous for her work of atom fusion. Meitner was a non-practicing Jew and converted to Christianity in her early 20s. Still, she faced anti-Semitism as Nazism rose in Germany. She was dismissed from her position at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute due to her Jewish lineage. She was forced to flee Germany to Sweden for safety. Conkling describes Meitner's conflicts vividly. First, Meitner was devastated that her work with atom fusion was used to create the atomic bomb. Also, Meitner was angered by her science partner Otto Hahn, because he disregarded their work together and never stood up for her when she was dismissed from the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute. Meitner blamed

her colleagues at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for looking the other way, as the Nazis murdered and tortured millions of Jewish people. Conkling shows the human and personal sides of both scientists, and the scientific explanations are accessible to a reader with little or no science background. The back matter features a timeline, a glossary, an index and lists of recommended readings and web resources.

*Heather Lenson, Librarian at the Mandel Jewish Day School*

**Engle, Margarita. *Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings: A Memoir*. Illus. by Edel Rodriguez. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2015. 194 pp. \$17.99 HC (9781481435222); \$9.99 PBK (9781481435239). Gr. 6 and up.**

Margarita Engle's poetic coming-of-age memoir is aptly titled, as her descriptions of the flora and fauna of Cuba are so bewitching that her readers feel instantly transported to the island, riding on horseback through swaying trees with the sea breeze on their cheeks. Engle vividly recreates her childhood occupying a space between her home in Los Angeles near her father's Ukrainian-born Jewish family, and the landscape for which she yearns in her mother's home country. She struggles to maintain a connection as the Cold War approaches and relations between the United States and Cuba sour. While her father pursues artistic endeavors elsewhere in the world, Engle, her sister, and her mother spend one last summer on the island before the sanctions are enacted that ban travel from the US. The trip is perfectly bittersweet, as Engle feels joy in her return and trepidation toward the many foreboding changes in the country, most notably the soldiers that appear around every corner. As she wonders when she will get another opportunity to visit, readers can't help but ache with her, mostly because they know what lies ahead in the history books. Engle sheds light on an aspect of war that often goes unexplored: that of the people caught between two warring countries who have no say or interest in the fight and who care for both sides equally.

The book ends with a timeline and an author's note that further clarifies the sociopolitical events before, during, and after the Cold War. The addition of these tools makes this title as useful in literary discussions as historic ones, and could potentially have a wide range of uses in classroom settings. Even outside of the classroom *Enchanted Air* is a must-purchase, simply for the beauty of the story and the language within.

*Alex Quay, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA*

[Editors' Note: *Enchanted Air* is the 2016 Pura Belpré Award Winner and was a finalist for the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults. Ms. Engle is also the author of *Tropical Secrets*, winner of the 2010 Sydney Taylor Book Award for Teen Readers.]

**Krull, Kathleen. *Judy Blume. (Women Who Broke the Rules)*. Illus. by David Leonard. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 48 pp. \$16.99. (9780802737953). Gr. 3-6.**

This well designed, short, colorful biography, hews to the theme of the series, delivering Judy Blume's writing goals to young readers. It highlights facts of Blume's childhood and early married life as the reasons for her burning desire to write "honestly": parents and grownups were not honest with her when she was a child, the cultural norm of the time. Struggling to become more than a stay-at-home mom, Blume wanted to be an author who sets new standards for content. She wanted to overcome censorship and controversy, to be a pioneer of stories that frankly handle the topics children and pre-teens want to discuss, but no one will talk about! Blume achieved popularity and hostility publishing books with "no-no" subjects, from the point of view of a girl in one book, a boy in another. As her career developed, this biography cites titles most children will have already read. Contemporary readers will find it strange Blume's printed works were originally considered shocking because they discussed puberty, racial prejudice, sibling rivalry, bullies, divorce, life as unfair, clueless parents, and talking to God. The author's career was not always on an upward arc. The biography mentions her personal failures as well as the

attacks on her professional life when libraries banned her titles, instigating Blume to become an activist for the freedom to read. There is minimal reference to Blume's Judaism - she came from a Jewish family that rarely observed, living as a mainstream Jew, as do characters in her books.

Biographer Krull does an excellent job presenting a real person with a clear goal, who achieves it through hard work and learning from mistakes. The Blume titles listed at the end are for "Young Readers"; they are carefully culled to exclude titles raising Blume's more mature issues. The format presents well selected information interrupted by mobile illustrations which allows readers to absorb and digest rapidly accumulating facts. A person and a theory arrive together nicely, proving breaking the rules can sometimes benefit others as well as yourself.

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

## FICTION – EARLY & MIDDLE GRADE

**Brown, Monica. *Lola Levine is Not Mean!* Illus. by Angela Dominguez. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2015. 88 pp. \$15.00. (9780316258364). Gr. 1-3.**

Lola Levine is a protagonist that any reader could get behind; she's relate-able, lively, smart, creative, and bold. In this beginning chapter book, Lola simultaneously charms her audience as she frustrates her peers with her aggressive soccer playing and lack of interest in characteristically "girly" things. When a poor choice during a soccer game injures a classmate, Lola is forced to stop playing during recess and a group of popular girls begin a "Lola Levine is mean" campaign in their class. Lola triumphs despite the taunts, and, with the support of her best friend, Josh, she owns up to her mistakes and handles her situation admirably, realistically, and without compromising what makes her unique.

The depiction of the Levine family, both in the delightful illustrations by Angela Dominguez and in Monica Brown's storytelling, is particularly enjoyable. Lola has a typically pesky younger brother – even though they still get along and care about each other – and her parents are supportive and attentive. Like the author's real-life heritage, Lola's father is Jewish and her mother is Catholic and Peruvian. While a handful of Spanish words and some aspects of Peruvian culture are represented in the storyline, the mother's religion has yet to come into play in the series. Similarly, the father's Judaism does not extend beyond an explanation of the meaning of the word "Shalom" and eating matzo ball soup. Still, it is refreshing to see a main character that is representing these cultures, as they rarely intertwine in children's literature. Lola and her family doubtlessly make this title a worthwhile purchase for any library with young patrons, and readers will look forward to more adventures with Lola.

*Alex Quay, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA*

[Editor's Note: *Lola Levine: Drama Queen* was published in January 2016 and *Lola Levine and the Ballet Scheme* will be published in July 2016]

**Goldblatt, Mark. *Finding the Worm*. New York: Random House, 2015. 345 pp. \$16.99. (9780385391085). Gr. 4-7.**

In this sequel to *Twerp* (2013, reviewed on *AJL Reviews*, Feb/March 2014, p. 4), Julian Twerski finds that being a seventh-grader comes with a whole new set of challenges. Over a six-month period, he prepares for his Bar Mitzvah, writes a 200-word essay as punishment for a vandalized painting, deciphers the complexity of boy/girl dynamics, and deals with a good friend's life-threatening illness. Set in 1970's Queens, New York, Julian's world is populated by cheek-pinching mah-jongg players, an obsessive pinball wizard named Shlomo, and an exasperated religious leader nicknamed Rabbi Magoo, who specializes in asking questions and telling parables. When not dodging the ninth-grade bully or obsessing about his favorite baseball player, Julian searches for answers to troubling philosophical issues: the existence of heaven and hell, the reason why God placed the Tree of Knowledge of Good

and Evil in the Garden of Eden, and, most importantly, why bad things happen to good people. The book, written as journal entries, is funny and engaging, while still getting across the message that “memorizing your *haftarah* and living your *haftarah* are two different things.”

*Allison Marks, co-author Og's Ark, Akron, OH*

**Rosen, Lev. *Woundabout*. Illus. by Ellis Rosen. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2015. 278 pp. \$17.00. (9780316370783) HC. Gr. 4-6.**

Cordelia and Connor become orphans after their adoptive gay parents die in a freak accident. Along with their pet capybara, they move in with Aunt Marigold who lives in Woundabout, a strange and static town populated by people who loathe change because “it usually brings pain.” As the siblings explore their new surroundings, they discover clues concerning the town’s long-hidden secret. With the help of new friends, the two uncover the means by which to heal the hurts suffered by Woundabout’s inhabitants, radically changing the town for the better. More than 125 black-and-white illustrations are placed liberally among the pages and usher readers toward the satisfying ending. [Ellis Rosen was a contributor to the Eisner-nominated graphic anthology *Yiddishkeit: Jewish Vernacular and the New Land* (Abrams, 2011).] While the book’s themes of loss and change are universal, its pages contain no overt Jewish content, making it an optional purchase for Jewish libraries.

*Allison Marks, co-author Og's Ark (Kar-Ben, 2016)*

## FICTION – TEEN

**Albertalli, Becky. *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*. New York: Balzer + Bray, 2015. 303 pp. \$17.99. HC (9780062348678); \$9.99, PBK (9780062348685). Gr. 9 and up.**

Sixteen-year-old Simon Spier finds himself in “a giant holy box of awkwardness” after using a library computer to check emails from his pen pal and then forgetting to log out. When a classmate sees the confidential correspondence between the two not-openly gay teenagers, it sets into motion a story that explores the shifting nature of Simon’s personal, sexual, and communal identities. First-time author Albertalli deftly casts Simon in different personas – as a ‘dementor’ for Halloween, a pickpocket in the school production of “*Oliver*,” and as his actual self - first living in the anonymity of the Internet and then as a young gay person coming out in real life.

The Jewish content is slight. There is a passing mention of a character’s Jewish ancestry and a Bar Mitzvah. The pen pal’s father is Jewish, and there is a scene where he celebrates a condensed version of Hanukkah with his son. However, neither reference is relevant to the main storyline, making this book an optional purchase for Jewish libraries.

*Allison Marks, co-author of Og's Ark, Akron, OH*

[Editors’ Note: *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* is the winner of the 2016 William C. Morris Debut Award and was long-listed for the 2015 National Book Award.]

**Attar, M.R. *Elisha Davidson and the Ispaklaria*. (Elisha Davidson Series). Jerusalem: Menorah, 2015. 224 pp. \$18.95. PBK (9781940516301). Gr. 7-12.**

This fantasy and adventure novel takes place in the year 2917, in the Old City of Jerusalem and is filled with time travel and adventures experienced by an unusual cast of characters. A sequel to *Elisha Davidson and the Letters of Fire* (2014), book two follows the occurrences after Elisha finds an enormous shiny stone in the wall of his house during renovations. Several of the young men and women are students in a secret summer program for middle and high school students, which introduces them to otherworldly wisdom. Some of the protagonists have to figure out how to access mystical secrets, to enable them to face the most cataclysmic day on earth, predicted to be coming soon. Over the course

of the book, Elisha undergoes preparatory training sessions, during which rooms catch on fire, a cat grows to become as large as an entire room, windows collapse from their frames, people transform into strange animals and are speaking in language that animals understand. Hebrew and Biblical references abound in the book and a glossary of terms and names, some fictional, is appended.

The adventures -- aimed at the Harry Potter audience -- are slow paced and unnecessarily detailed, containing complex and difficult concepts. The dose of Kabbalah/mysticism will confuse any reader without background. There are scenes filled with violent, blood-filled and disturbing events.

*Shelly Feit, Library Consultant, Teaneck New Jersey*

**Franklin, Emily. *Last Night at the Circle Cinema*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 2015. 194 pp. \$18.99. (9781467774895). Gr. 9-12**

On the cusp of going away to college, three friends – Olivia, Bertucci and Codman – find themselves at a familiar meeting place, the Circle Cinema, which is now boarded up and condemned. Bertucci, the genius of the group, has arranged a night they will never forget...and neither will the reader of this profound, emotion-rattling novel. No spoilers but after reading the entire book, and being completely caught off guard by the ending, it will be difficult not to want to go back and read it again.

Two of the characters are nominally Jewish and there are references to Jewish holidays, traditions and ethics, yet Olivia's and Codman's Jewishness is not the focus of the story. This would make a great book group read, as it will open up a discussion of some of today's most timely issues. If parents are included, all the better.

*Kathy Bloomfield, past member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and [forwardsbooks.com](http://forwardsbooks.com), Washington, DC*

[Editors' Note: *Last Night at the Circle Cinema* is a 2016 Sydney Taylor Notable Book for Teen Readers.]

**Graudin, Ryan. *Wolf by Wolf*. New York: Little, Brown, 2015. 379 pp. \$18.00. (9780316405126). Gr. 7 and up.**

Imagine that Germany and Japan had vanquished the Allies in World War II, and that their empire now reached from Europe through North Africa to Asia. This nightmare world, renamed Germania after the Axis' Great Victory, comes to life in this novel set in the 1950s. It is altogether too real except for certain elements of fantasy that require the reader to suspend disbelief. The concept of skin-shifting (changing one's body to imitate the body of another person) is introduced by means of a cruel Nazi experiment on a young Jewish girl who survives the Holocaust and emerges as our heroine. Yael becomes part of the underground movement working to overthrow Hitler. The wolves tattooed on her arm represent the people she has lost to the Holocaust and whose deaths she strives to avenge. Her mission – to assassinate Hitler in full public view in order to unleash the overthrow of the Third Reich – is undertaken by means of a subterfuge in which she impersonates a German girl, Adele. She must ride to victory in an annual motorcycle race across Europe and Asia to gain access to the Fuhrer. In a contest reminiscent of *The Hunger Games*, Yael must identify which of her competitors are most dangerous, and form alliances with others in order to achieve victory. The action is nail-bitingly fast-paced with many plot twists. Readers will cry for this fierce yet sensitive Jewish warrior and exult in her eventual triumph. This book is a winner on many levels and is sure to appeal to a broad audience.

*Joyce Levine, AJL Publications Chair, North Woodmere, NY*

[Editor's Note: The sequel, *Blood for Blood*, will be released in November 2016]

**Nelson, Susanne. *Serendipity's Footsteps*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015. 360 pp. \$17.99. HC (9780385392129); \$9.99. PBK (9780385392150). Gr. 7 and up. Reviewed from ARC.**

Nelson introduces readers to three young women whose lives are tied together by a special pair of shoes. The book begins dramatically in 1938 Berlin, at the home of fifteen-year-old Dalya's shoemaker family. With the Gestapo at their door. Dalya quickly slips her mother's rings into a hidden

compartment in the shoe she's been making, just as the Nazis burst in to take the family. Flash forward to 1990 New York City and a night of heady romance that leads to the birth of Chopine "Pinny" Miller, born with Down's Syndrome, named after a shoe, and raised in a children's home in Texas. Also at the children's home is Ray Langston, the only survivor of a car crash that killed her parents when she was an infant. Surly Ray has spent her life running, and now she's taking off for New York...shadowed by Pinny, who's on a quest to retrieve her long-gone mama's silver stilettos. The story alternates mainly among Dayla, Pinny, and Ray's perspectives, with a third-person omniscient narrator bringing in other supporting characters' perspectives at key moments in the well-paced plot. There is a good amount of Jewish history included in Dalya's tale – details about concentration camps, young refugees in the U.S. and the ambivalence of World War II-era America. There is also a heart-tugging love triangle involving the boy from home and the prickly polio-stricken son of the rich family who fosters Dalya. Ray and Pinny's stories feature some romance, but it is more about the young women's friendship as they come to depend on each other, like sisters, and forge their own identities. If the way it all comes together (those special shoes!) strains credulity somewhat, it's all in service to a hard-earned happy ending.

*Elissa Gershowitz, Senior Editor, The Horn Book Magazine  
and member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Boston, MA*

[Editors' Note: *Serendipity's Footsteps* is a 2016 Sydney Taylor Honor Book for Teen Readers.]

**Solomon, Carol. *Imagining Katherine*. Montgomery Village, MD: Tova Press, 2015. 179 pp. \$9.99. PBK (0692486488). Gr. 8-11.**

Maryland in the early 1960s is seen through the eyes of Katherine Weinstein, as she participates in desegregation in suburban Baltimore. Entering Junior High School, Katherine wears homemade clothes and wishes to be like the popular girls, dressed in pastel. A few weeks later, blond, bubbly, and curly haired Genevieve Rubin enters the school. The two quickly become best friends. Their friendship is strained following a school talent show only to reconcile months later. In ninth grade Charlotte enters the school. She is the first negro in the school. Katherine realizes that "She has never talked to a negro her own age." Katherine and Genevieve befriend Charlotte. Their suburban community is not pleased with the new negro neighbors. Their house is trashed with toilet paper and hate messages are posted on lockers. Genevieve's father, the real estate agent who sold Charlotte's family their home, is professionally ruined. His business fails and the family is forced to move. The friends join civil rights activists in the march to an Amusement Park demanding that they "Open the gates to everyone." A riot ensues and Katherine is injured.

This coming of age novel has teen angst; first love, friendship, moral dilemmas, and mother/daughter relationships. Using historically accurate details the reader becomes aware of Jewish involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Excellent back notes detail what is fictional and what is fact in the novel. A glossary and list of discussion questions are also included. An enjoyable and informative peak into American Jewish history.

*Ellen Tilman, Director of Library Services - Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel;  
Incoming Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee*

[Editors' Note: *Imagining Katherine* is a 2016 Sydney Taylor Notable Book for Teens.]

## HOLOCAUST AND WORLD WAR II

**Burakowski, Ella. *Hidden Gold: A True Story of the Holocaust*. Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 2015. 228 pp. \$12.95. (9781927583746). Gr. 5-10.**

A vivid portrayal of how the Gold family – owing to a mother's love and courage – survived the Holocaust by hiding in a barn. The story starts with descriptions of their life in Pińczów, Poland where

they ran two general stores, continues through the round-up of Jews by the Nazis, and finally to the location of a hiding place. The reader will have a “you-are-there” experienced. Hanna and her three children, Shoshana, Esther and David attempt to survive perilous circumstances - cramped, crowded, filthy conditions with little to no food, and the fear of eviction. Despite some very near misses, including potential death at the hands of a “trusted” individual, they find a farmer who, for a price, agrees to hide them. His barn is built in such a way that the four of them, plus two other individuals, can stay hidden no matter who visits the farm. With love, strength and some premonitions, they manage to endure. The back of the book contains a glossary as well as pictures of the Gold family before, during and after the war. It is based on the memories of David Gold as told to his niece, the author of the book.

*Kathy Bloomfield, past member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and [forwardsbooks.com](http://forwardsbooks.com), Washington, DC*

**Lowenstein-Malz, Ronit. *Escape in Time*. Trans. Leora Frankel. Illus. by Laurie McGaw. Bethesda, MD: MB Publishing, 2015. 180 pp. \$9.99. (9780990843030). Gr. 5-9.**

Miri Malz has never told anyone what she and her family went through during World War II. When her granddaughter, Nessi, discovers that Miri was in fact a Holocaust survivor, she wants to know the whole story. Thus begins an amazing tale of survival. With skill, cunning and sensitivity, the Malz family manages to “hide in plain sight” in their hometown of Munkács, Budapest, and other parts of Hungary. This story is told from a unique point of view as the family watches in horror as those around them – family, friends and others – are taken away while they, using different names, professions and whatever else was necessary, overcome all obstacles to survival. Throughout it all, the Malz family remains together and manages to find their way out of the most difficult situations.

While not clearly stated, this appears to be a novel based on the actual experiences of the author’s family. As children’s Holocaust literature begins to trend more and more toward stories of resistance, survival and the righteous who assisted, this perspective, of a family who used incredible and creative methods to stay alive, can be a fine addition to the Holocaust shelf. This book was first published in Hebrew in 2008 and won the Yad Vashem Prize for Children’s Holocaust Literature that same year.

*Kathy Bloomfield, past member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and [forwardsbooks.com](http://forwardsbooks.com), Washington, DC*

**Thor, Annika. *Deep Sea*. Trans. by Linda Schenk. New York: Delacorte Press, 2015. 240 pp. \$17.99. (9780385743853). Gr. 7-12.**

In *Faraway Island* (Delacorte, 2009) and *The Lily Pond* (Delacorte, 2012), Stephanie, a Jewish girl from Vienna, along with her younger sister Nellie, is sent away to an island off of Sweden to escape Nazi persecution. While the girls adjust to life on the island, their parents are unable to escape. Stephanie is now a sixteen-year-old and attending school on the mainland. She is happy to pursue her academic goals, but she constantly worries about her parents who are prisoners in a concentration camp in Vienna. Nellie is going through a rebellious stage in which she gets in trouble with her host family and questions her Jewish identity. This story has some mature content as Nellie’s friend Vera acts out promiscuously and faces an illegitimate pregnancy. First-person narration reveals Stephanie’s thoughts as she navigates the “Deep Sea” of world events and teenage emotions. Series followers will enjoy Stephanie’s continuing story and anxiously await the last installment in the series.

*Heather Lenson, Librarian at the Joseph & Florence Mandel Jewish Day School, Beechwood, OH*

[Editors’ Note: *Deep Sea* is a 2016 Sydney Taylor Notable Book for Teens.]

**Wiviott, Meg. *Paper Hearts: A Novel Based on True Events*. New York, NY: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2015. 342 pp. \$17.99. HC (9781481439831); \$9.99. PBK (9781481439848). Gr. 6-11.**

Based on the real life experiences of Fania Fainer and Zulema (Zlatka) Pitluk and eighteen others who were interred in Auschwitz, this powerful and hopeful Holocaust story is told in free verse. Nineteen young women decide to risk death in order to celebrate Fania’s birthday. They make a cake out of small

portions of bread donated from their meager rations. They create a card shaped like a heart with notes of encouragement and hope from each girl. They realize that their participation means death if they are discovered, yet Fania carried that card with her throughout her ordeal and beyond. A photo of the hearts is included in the back of the book, along with a glossary, author's note and bibliography. The actual paper hearts can be seen at the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre. From the many Holocaust-related books, this one deserves a place on the shelf if only to learn that love, hope and faith in others, triumph over hate, despair and selfishness.

*Kathy Bloomfield, past member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and [forwardsbooks.com](http://forwardsbooks.com), Washington, DC*

**Yolen, Jane. *Stone Angel*. Illus. by Katie May Green. New York: Philomel, 2015. 32 pp. \$16.99. (9780399167416). Gr. 2-4.**

A nine-meter- tall statue of an angel attached to the wall of an apartment building stands at 57 rue de Turbigo, Paris. The statue is called "The Lighthouse Angel" – a beacon to those who are in need of help. Using this angel as inspiration, award-winning author Jane Yolen has crafted a moving story about the Holocaust. Told in first-person from the point of view of a young girl, we see how the persecution of the Jews in Paris unfolds: Jews must wear the hated yellow star on which is written "Juif"; former friends and acquaintances turn their backs on Jews; the girl's father loses his job at the observatory; finally, the family is forced to escape, hide in the woods during a hungry winter, make the dangerous journey over the mountains to Spain and then by open boat to England. At war's end, they finally return to their home.

The rhythmic prose is replete with strong images: "We were almost invisible on the moonless tide, / one large shadow on a sea of shadows." Line breaks create a sense of movement and disruption as these refugees seek a safe haven. Recurring references to angels who guide and protect the family bind the disparate threads of the plot together until the family returns to Paris where the angel "was now smiling softly to welcome us home". Using mixed-media illustrations, Katie May Green has captured the emotions of the characters through varying angles and perspectives as well as skillful use of color: light but muted shades of red, green, and blue in the beginning and end sections; dark greys and stark whites in the middle section. The violet-blue endpapers with white stars (including Jewish stars in silhouette) reflect the ultimate sense of hope in this stunning book. Includes an afterword by the author.

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

## ISRAEL

**Balsley, Tilda and Fischer, Ellen. *Shalom Everybodeee! Grover's Adventures in Israel*. Illus. by Tom Leigh. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben Publishing, 2016. 24 pp. \$16.99. HC (9780761375586); \$7.99. PBK (9780761375593); \$6.99. eBook (9781467796064). Reviewed from ARC. Preschool-Gr. 1.**

Grover travels to Israel and enjoys many typical tourist activities. He describes the sights in emails back to his Sesame Street friends. The vibrantly colored illustrations, covering each double page from edge to edge, show him visiting the Western Wall, finding a piece of an ancient jug at an archaeological dig, shopping at Machane Yehudah, working on a kibbutz, climbing Masada, covered with Dead Sea mud, visiting Bedouins, and snorkeling. On his last day, he plants a tree in honor of his Sesame Street friends. Grover teaches the reader/listener and his friends back home Hebrew words and facts about Shabbat and all the locations he visits. The handful of Hebrew words are written in transliterated English and four of them include simple, unvoiced Hebrew block letters. His detailed emails are printed in easily read, black and multi-colored fonts, each beginning with the greeting, "Shalom everybodeee!" and placed attractively at the bottom or top of pages. Grover seems to be visiting an Israel populated with monsters like him, as all those pictured have cute colored noses and magenta, fuchsia, chartreuse, orange, and royal blue skin or fur! Since the emails are appropriately short, the large, clear illustrations

convey details that teach additional facts about the sites. Enjoy your visit to Israel – you’ll learn a lot and smile from cover to cover.

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

**Edgar, Sherra G. *Israel. (One World, Many Countries).* Mankato, MN: The Child’s World, 2016. 32 pp. \$19.95. (9781634070492) Gr. 1-4.**

This is another book on Israel published as part of a series on countries of the world. Along with a short glossary and list of “Fast Facts,” its pages feature color photographs along with several sentences of text. This sparse text is sometimes bafflingly foolish (Arabs dress in “togas” and “wrap their heads in turbans,”), harmlessly incorrect (“a dreidel is a top with five sides”), or inaccurate in a truly disqualifying way (“For many years, Israel and its neighbor, Palestine, have been at war. Before 1948, Muslims in Palestine controlled Israel. In 1948, Jews took control of Israel. The two countries have been fighting over the land since then.”)

The author has written series books on other subjects: Ireland, Kentucky, bar graphs, veterinarians, and more. Perhaps she is better informed on those topics than she is about the Middle East. Her credentials for writing the present book, as listed in the author note -she taught primary school and enjoys spending time with family, reading, and watching movies - are non-existent. And it shows.

*Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH*

**Garfinkle, Adam M. *Israel. (Major Nations of the Modern Middle East).* Philadelphia: Mason Crest, 2016. 144 pp. \$25.95. (9781422234433). Gr. 7-12.**

This volume is an update of the 2004 and 2010 editions of this title in Mason Crest’s series on Middle East Nations. It is almost identical to the earlier versions, both of which were excellent, but something is amiss here. Changes include a revised appendix of recommended resources from which the websites of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel Ministry of Tourism, and the Library of Congress have been replaced with the Aljazeera news service and the United Nations websites. Several pages are added to bring the story up to date covering the Netanyahu Era/Obama Presidency and the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict. New content is added seamlessly into the chapter on Society, Politics, and Foreign Policy after 1978, but this new material contains judgmental language departing from Garfinkle’s generally objective tone: “Netanyahu took the opportunity to lecture the President” and “Many supporters of Israel were exasperated.” Regarding the 2014 Gaza hostilities, Israel is cited for a “failure to take steps to protect noncombatants” [sic]. Educators should stick to the earlier editions for information, but use trusted online or print resources for post-2008 events.

*Andrea Rapp, Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH*

[Editor’s Note: This volume names Adam Garfinkle as the author - the only author - but Dr. Garfinkle did not write or approve the additional pages or changes. Per his conversation with the AJL reviewer, he was not aware of any plans to create a new edition.]

## JEWISH LIFE & VALUES

**Goren, Michal. *Mitzvah Kids: Learning and Laughing Throughout the Jewish Year.* Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2016. 92 pp. \$19.99. (9781598261238). Gr. 2-5.**

Starting with Elul and the time to do *teshuvah* (repent), the mitzvah kids learn about holidays, *mitzvot*, and the Torah portions. Many of the panel cartoons rely on corny humor (“What do you think is harder to say: ‘sorry’ or ‘forgive?’ The same. They are both 2 syllables long!”) or puns (“You know the

zoo turned out to be really fun. Yes, *gam ZOO letovah!*"). The boys are warned against speaking *lashon hara* (evil tongue - a halakhic term for derogatory speech about another person), and several verses from Pirkei Avos are illustrated. Customs, like eating fried food on Hanukkah and shooting bows and arrows on Lag B'Omer are explained, and Passover cleaning and Purim are fertile subjects for humor.

These cartoons originally appeared in the *London Jewish Tribune*. Most panels consist of rather basic color illustrations of boys talking to each other, although a *rebbe* and some one's father make their way into the pages. While most of the jokes are easy to understand, some of the Jewish concepts, like *ma'aser* and *kashrut* are a little harder. Libraries whose patrons enjoy the humor of the *Shikufitzky* series will want this one on the shelf, too.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel

## NON-FICTION

**Hoose, Phillip. *The Boys Who Challenged Hitler: Knud Pedersen and the Churchill Club*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2015. 208 pp. \$19.99 (9780374300227) HC. Gr. 5-11.**

While not technically a "Jewish" book, *The Boys Who Challenged Hitler* is the story of "upstanders" – people who stand up to do what is right in the face of wrong. The wrong in this case was the Nazi occupation of Denmark. Many people are familiar with the Danes' heroic evacuation to Sweden of its Jewish population in late 1943. Less well known is the grass roots resistance of a group of middle school boys to sabotage the property of their Nazi occupiers. From the group's first meeting in December 1941 until their arrest in May 1942, the Churchill Club struck more than two dozen times in well-coordinated acts of vandalism and arson. Self-named for the wartime Prime Minister of Great Britain, Winston Churchill, these eight boys were among the first Danes to defy their Nazi occupiers. Their bravery, commitment and sacrifice inspired resistance in the Danish population that had capitulated to the Nazi occupation with no resistance unlike their Norwegian neighbors. All of the boys were eventually captured and jailed for lengthy sentences. Their bravery inspired a nation.

Hoose's work is an outstanding addition to the pantheon of critically acclaimed nonfiction writing for youth that includes Susan Campbell Bartoletti's *Hitler Youth* (Scholastic, 2005).

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

[Editors' Note: *The Boys Who Challenged Hitler* received the 2016 Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Honor Award]

**Pressberg, Dava. *Anti-Semitism: Jewish Immigrants Seek Safety in America (1881-1914)*. New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2016. 24 pp. \$23.60. HC (9781508140542). Gr. 5-8.**

As an overview of the reasons for Jewish emigration from Russia at the dawn of the 20th century, there is much to be desired in this single topic book. Starting with pogroms and ending with a list of modern day descendants of Russian Jews, each short, 2-page chapter uses simple language and pictures to explain a relatively complex issue. The chapters cover such topics as "Fleeing Russia," "Help for Immigrants," and "A Better Life in America." However, the material covered in each chapter is often choppy and disjointed. The chapter titled "Looking Toward the Future," for example, begins with a few sentences about the importance immigrant families placed on their children, veers off into the pleasures of Yiddish theater and ends with "They also practiced their religion together in synagogues." While the writing is appropriate for third grade and up, the content – pogroms, assassination, bigotry – is clearly for older children. Several illustrations depict stereotypical characterizations of Jews. There is a table of contents, glossary, index and additional resources, but even with all that, this title will not enhance a reader's understanding of anti-Semitism or the Jewish immigrant experience.

Kathy Bloomfield, past member Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and [forwardsbooks.com](http://forwardsbooks.com), Washington, DC

## PICTURE BOOKS

**Peet, Amanda and Troyer, Andrea.** *Dear Santa, Love, Rachel Rosenstein.* Illus. by Christine Davenier. New York: Doubleday, 2015. 40 pp. \$17.99. (9780553510614). Gr. K-2.

Rachel Rosenstein is envious of Christmas with its glittery trappings and festive displays that surround her everywhere she goes. While she appreciates the special traditions of her Jewish holidays, she can't help but want to celebrate Christmas. Desperate for Santa to visit her house, she writes him a persuasive letter, explaining, "I've been really good all year and I know you are a fair person and will not mind that I am Jewish." She secretly decorates the house on Christmas Eve and waits, but alas when she awakes on Christmas morning, Santa hasn't come. Rachel is inconsolable. Neither her mother's sentiment that "sometimes...we just have to accept what is," nor a walk in a quiet, snowy park with her dad change her mood. That night, at the family's traditional dinner at a Chinese restaurant, Rachel's despondence is still unrelenting, but then she sees some classmates who explain they also don't celebrate Christmas, but rather Chinese New Year and Diwali. Rachel has a revelation that there are all kinds of people in the world and all kinds of wonderful holidays. The story should stop there, but in the final scene, as Rachel's family exits the restaurant, a parade of exuberant kids with extra-large Christmas gifts reminds Rachel that she is still a little sad (as a matter of fact, the whole family looks a little sad). Examining feelings of "holiday injustice" is a worthwhile concept for children experiencing those sentiments, and Rachel's quest is presented with fun and humor enhanced by wonderfully detailed water color illustrations. However, this story would have benefited from more emphasis on the world's diversity and perhaps revisiting what Rachel loves about her Jewish holidays in its final message.

*Martha McMahan, Sinai Temple Library, Los Angeles*

**Rosenbaum, Andria Warmflash.** *Meg Goldberg on Parade.* Illus. by Christopher Lyles. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben Publishing, 2015. 32 pp. \$17.99. (9781467739061) HC. Gr. Preschool- 3.

Who doesn't love a parade? The excitement, the colors, the sounds? Little Meg Goldberg and her parents are no exception. One Sunday they drive over the bridge into the city to attend the Israel Parade. Although "timid and small," Meg is swept up by the wind "as her dreams held her high." It is here that this lovely story enters the realm of magical realism. In her imagination, Meg inserts herself into every part of the parade - from walking with the mayor to folk dancing, from leading a band as Majorette Meg to humming "Hatikvah" while strutting on stilts. She's named Grand Marshall -- gold crown and all -- at the parade's end. Back home at the end of the day, Meg "remembered the fun, of the things she'd imagined she'd done." The story concludes with a tired Mrs. Goldberg finally sitting down after the hectic day, only to find herself atop "a shiny, gold CROWN!" The reader is left to happily wonder if Meg's perceptions of this important annual event may hold more than a bit of truth. The illustrations by Christopher Lyles are a captivating blend of collage, pencil and crayon. Single and double page spreads bring the reader to the street level of the parade with a wide range of New Yorkers in attendance. The art synthesizes perfectly with the real and imagined. You don't have to be a New Yorker to enjoy *Meg Goldberg on Parade*.

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

**Zasloff, Doni and Eric Lindberg.** *Sing-Along Alef Bet.* Illus. by Rinat Gilboa. Springfield, NJ: Apples and Honey Press, 2016. 32 pp. \$17.95. (9781681155098). Gr. Preschool-2.

*Sing-Along Alef Bet* takes a well-deserved place in the pack of alphabet books that already exist and those that are published every year. The authors have created sprightly rhyming couplets to explain each letter of the Hebrew alphabet—in English transliteration and in Hebrew letters. Rinat Gilboa uses traditional and digital collage techniques to illustrate each letter via the likeable characters of a boy and

girl, along with a bluebird, a dog, and a cat that add interest and inventiveness to the text. For example, on the page “Tzadi’s for tzedakah we give to those in need”, the cat and the bird each put a coin into a tzedakah (charity) box. A double-page spread at the end of the book summarizes all the letters. On the last page, the authors address parents and teachers, and suggest two activities to reinforce the children’s learning. An added (and delightful) bonus is a free app of “The Alef Bet Song” with the Mama Doni Band, available to download from the publisher’s website. Everyone will enjoy singing along while turning the pages of this book.

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

## SHABBAT AND HOLIDAYS

**Barash, Chris. *Is It Hanukkah Yet?* Illus. by Alessandra Psacharopulo. Chicago: Albert Whitman & Company, 2015. 32 pp. \$16.99. (9780807533840). Gr. Preschool-1.**

A snowy winter scene sets the stage for Hanukkah, as a multigenerational family prepares for the holiday. Decorating the house, making applesauce, latkes, and cookies means “Hanukkah is on its way.” Then, lighting the menorah, singing, and spinning dreidels means “Hanukkah is here!” The sweet and simple repetition and rhyming verses, along with cheerful illustrations, beautifully relay the joyful traditions of the holiday. Though there is no deeper explanation of the meaning or history of Hanukkah, this book is a lovely, warm portrayal of family togetherness and celebration.

*Martha McMahon, Sinai Temple Library, Los Angeles*

[Editor’s Note: *Is It Passover Yet?* was published in March 2015, and reviewed on *AJL Reviews*, May/June 2015, p. 16; *Is It Sukkot Yet* will be published in August 2016.]

**Bridwell, Norman. *Clifford Celebrates Hanukkah*. New York: Scholastic, 2015. 32 pp. \$3.99. (9780545823340). PBK. Preschool.**

Elmo, Biscuit, and Corduroy all celebrate Hanukkah so it’s about time that Clifford, the Big Red Dog, got his own holiday tale too. In this slim, staple bound paperback, Clifford joins Emily Elizabeth to visit her friend Melissa and her family to celebrate the eighth night of Hanukkah. Basic facts and symbols are introduced and Grandma provides a very brief synopsis of the Hanukkah story and the miracle of the oil. Latkes and *sufganiyot* are served and the children play dreidel with chocolate gelt. After exchanging gifts (Clifford gets a new bone!), the family walks to the town square to see the giant menorah. But when they get there, the electric menorah is unlit and no one is tall enough to fix it. Of course, Clifford is able to save Hanukkah by twisting the loose bulb back into place. The digitally rendered cartoon illustrations are typical of the series, if a bit flat, but Clifford’s fans will welcome this new addition.

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

**Holzman, Lori. *Chaim Ephraim and the Shabbos Guests*. Illus. by Rachel Edelstein. Jerusalem, Feldheim, 2015. 33 pp. \$12.99. (9781598260755). Gr. K-2.**

Chaim Ephraim looks forward to the *cholent* on Shabbos - it is even an incentive to go to *shul* and pray. But as his father invites guests and guests invite themselves, Chaim starts to worry that there will not be enough *cholent* to go around. As more people arrive, Chaim becomes more nervous, but his parents are happy to welcome everyone with the refrain, “always room for one more! We love every guest who walks through the door.” At last it is time to eat, and Chaim is relieved when he is served a big plate of *cholent*.

The simple rhyme and repeating refrain, and the parade of various guests will hold young readers’ attention, as will the detailed illustrations with Chaim Ephraim’s emotive facial expressions. The illustrator has made creative use of the pages with a mix of headers, footers, colorful double spreads

and pictures of Chaim surrounded by white space. Adults reading the story will wonder if the mother prepared in advance to accommodate so many “last minute” guests, or if the father consulted the mother before extending invitations to all these extra people. A cute way to learn about welcoming guests and sharing, Chaim Ephraim’s tale is most relate-able to Orthodox readers (all the men in the illustrations wear black hats) and those who enjoy a traditional Shabbos lunch of *cholent*.

*Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*

**Koffsky, Ann D. *Kayla and Kugel’s Almost-Perfect Passover*. Springfield, NJ: Apples and Honey Press (Behrman House/Gefen), 2016. 24 pp. \$9.95. (9781681155081). Gr. Preschool-1.**

The girl and her dog from *Kayla and Kugel* (Apples and Honey Press, 2015) are back and it’s now time for their family Seder. The pair welcomes the reader at their front door. After making a cover for Kayla’s Haggadah, the celebration unfolds. The book identifies many aspects of the Seder: the contents of the plate; the Four Questions; the story of the Exodus from Egypt (on one double-page spread); the hunt for the afikomen; and the songs at the end of the Seder. However, these elements are shown but not explained. In this happy story it is the joy of being together (and wondering how Kugel will unintentionally upset the event) that provides some interest. But behind all of it is the serious repetition of the rituals; “Freedom is sweet. Yum! Sweet charoset. Slavery is bitter. Yuck! Bitter maror.” A simple and fun introduction to Passover and its varied meanings for preschoolers. The parent’s note on the last page points to the publisher’s website, where additional activities can be found.

*Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

**Lawrence, Elizabeth. *Celebrate Hanukkah* (Book Worms: Our Holidays). Cavendish Square, 2016. \$16.95. HC (9781502604101). Gr. Preschool-1.**

**Hayes, Amy. *Celebrate Passover* (Book Worms: Our Holidays). Cavendish Square, 2015. \$16.95. HC (9781502602398). Gr. Preschool-1.**

Using high-frequency words, simple sentences, and strong picture/text support, these two books, part of the “Our Holidays” series, explore Hanukkah and Passover for beginning readers unfamiliar with the holidays. *Celebrate Passover* introduces the words “slaves”, “freedom”, “Seder”, and “matzo” and the appended glossary explains their meanings. Eggs and (oddly) apples are listed as the (only) other symbolic foods. Full-color stock photographs depict a contemporary Jewish family observing Passover however some appear rather dated. The picture accompanying the text “After the story we have dinner” prominently includes a large roll, peas, and chicken on the boy’s plate. The table cloth appears to be a red and green Christmas-like pattern and Dad is shown in a red and white snowflake sweater.

*Celebrate Hanukkah* introduces the words “Maccabees”, “Temple”, “menorah”, and “dreidel.” Again, stock photography is used, however, a picture of a father and son wearing *kippot* in a contemporary synagogue accompanies the text “The Maccabees won a war. This let them pray in a building called a temple [sic].” The text also states that the menorah is lit every day of Hanukkah, rather than each night. It is nice that Hanukkah and Passover are included in this series alongside Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and St. Patrick’s Day and as non-fiction early readers in a public library or public school setting they might serve a purpose. However, *Is It Hanukkah Yet?*, a “Step into Reading Step 1 Book” by Nancy Krulik (Random House, 2000) and *The First Night of Hanukkah*, an “All Aboard Reading Level 2” book by Nicki Weiss (Grosset & Dunlap, 1992) both offer beginning readers a more substantial and engaging Hanukkah story. For Passover, *Hooray It’s Passover!* by Leslie Kimmelman (HarperCollins, 1997) and *Celebrate Passover* by Deborah Heiligman (National Geographic, 2007) are better choices for readers looking for a basic introduction.

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

**Newman, Tracy. *Shabbat Hiccups*. Illus. by Ilana Exelby. Chicago: Albert Whitman, 2016. 32 pp. \$16.99. (9780807573129). Gr. K-2. Reviewed from a galley.**

Young Jonah has recurring hiccup attacks during Shabbat and afterward, and various family members of his extended family try to help. As his cousin brings challah to the table, she tries to scare them away: no luck. Grandma tries sugar as they sit down: no luck, but her next idea of drinking water is successful. Jonah's hiccups merge with details of the meal and the service. Mom lights the candles; dad kisses the children. The challah remains covered and the wine cup untouched. No one mentions that these items go with blessings. After a day of play on Saturday, the family walks to find the first three stars. As they walk - "Hiccup!" - Jonah is promised another shot at a cure after the Havdalah ceremony. Its customs and objects are clearly named, explained and used: the candle, spices and wine sanitized to "juice". Although water worked the first time, Grandma suggests juice for the new batch of hiccups; it works until - "Hiccup!" - this time from Grandma whom Jonah rescues with water. The story has little tension; hiccups might bother Jonah, but they will not disrupt Shabbat. The book aims to amuse and young readers may enjoy the joke. They will learn, if they are feeling silly enough to read on, about Shabbat's glow that spreads from Friday night to Saturday night. The colorful, mobile illustrations which merge the word 'hiccup' into the art showcase a modern family (grandma does not have gray hair). This new book recalls Pamela Mayer's *Don't Sneeze at the Wedding*, (*AJL Reviews*, Sept/Oct 2013) a more successful merger of Jewish celebration and bodily reflex responses and tension over will she/won't she.

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

**Polak, Monique. *Passover: Festival of Freedom. (Origins)*. Canada: Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 71 pp. \$24.95 PBK (9780996472500). Gr. 3-6. Reviewed from an ARC.**

In four chapters, Polak presents facts about Passover, how Passover was observed before and after the Holocaust, ideas for helping those in need, and a fascinating chapter that explores Passover customs in other cultures and locations. There is an extensive glossary, a list of books and websites for further reading, and an index. The "Origins" series is built upon personal stories illuminating non-fiction subjects, and Polak uses her own memories of Passover celebrations as a child growing up in a household populated by Holocaust survivors to share information and traditions. She highlights two friends, both now in their 90's, to teach about the Holocaust, Passover, and special, long-cherished recipes. She highlights another friend to teach about various ways of helping others in need. Passover traditions in Israel, The Netherlands, China, Nepal, Italy, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Iraq, and Morocco provide interesting settings for more teaching. Appealing photos, engaging stories of Passover traditions around the world, and ideas for helping others, would seem to make this photographic non-fiction title an outstanding selection.

But several errors and a disorganized layout are cause for concern: Dipping twice, the focus of one of the Four Questions, is explained as "washing hands;" "Dayenu" is translated as "we are grateful;" and the biblical text commanding Jews to eat bread without leavening for seven days is attributed to Exodus 12:14, rather than Exodus 12:15. Most Hebrew words are presented in bold font and explained in context and in the glossary, but several key parts of the Seder are unexplained and undistinguished by bold font. The book states that we give thanks before the Seder begins and shows hands clasped in the Christian manner of saying "grace." The Glossary lists the Hebrew word for Passover as "paschal." Numerous sidebars provide excellent information about Judaism, but many are unrelated to the text on the page. While it presents a wealth of information and outstanding use of personal stories to illuminate difficult concepts like the Holocaust and *tzedakah*, it is hard to think about this book being used without explanations or corrections of the misinformation.

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

Vorst, Rochel Groner. *Time to Start a Brand New Year*. Illus. by Shepsil Scheinberg. Brooklyn, NY: Hachai Publishing, 2015. 30 pp. \$10.95. HC (9781929628537). Preschool.

Colorful and cheery illustrations accompany this fun rhyming text for very young children about the Rosh Hashanah holiday. Included are scenes of eating various special foods, blowing a *shofar*, picking apples, making New Year's cards, going to shul, and taking a *Tashlich* trip, among other activities enjoyed by families at this time of year. The author's couplets are indeed a cut above the usual simple constructions that often appear in these types of books for little ones. A rhyme that accompanies a happy illustration of a busy, smiling mother with seven children baking round *challot* in the kitchen reads, "We are Rosh Hashanah baking; See us sifting, mixing, taking? Lots of shaping, brushing, rising — Raisins in it? How surprising!" With so much going on within the illustrations, children will enjoy "reading" the pictures as much as being read to. The people are illustrated as wearing clothing typical of Orthodox Jews, such as *tzizit* and *kippot* for all boys, dresses or skirts for girls and mother, and black hat and *kittel* for the father. Although this book is intended for a more traditional Jewish audience, libraries or homes at any level of observance would benefit from the addition of this new joyful holiday title for children. This is one of the series of books from the publisher with "Laminated Pages for Little Hands" which are sturdy and seemingly indestructible.

Lisa Silverman, Blumenthal Library, Temple Sinai, Los Angeles

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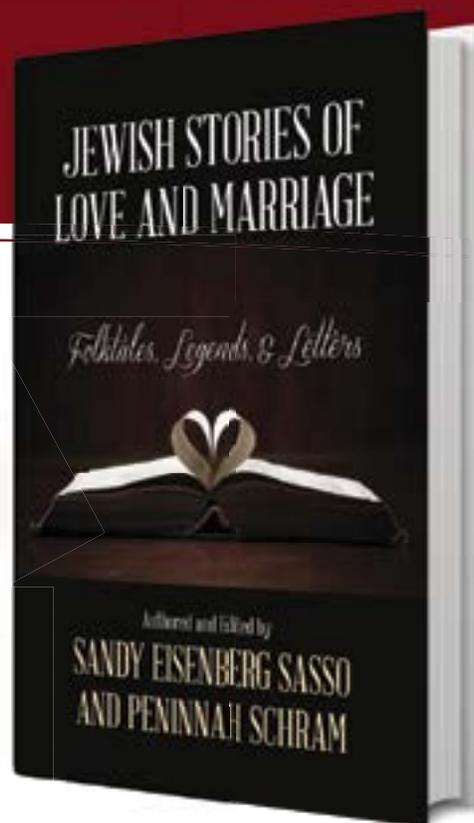
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## Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND REBECCA JEFFERSON

**Adelman, Rachel E.** *The Female Ruse: Women's Deception and Divine Sanction in the Hebrew Bible*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015. 276 pp. \$95.00. (9781909697942).

For the most part, women do not play a large role in the Tanach (Bible); the majority of the heroes are men. However, certain female characters in the Tanach have a profound impact on its stories. Rachel Adelman's *The Female Ruse: Women's Deception and Divine Sanction in the Hebrew Bible* discusses some of these important women, from the matriarchs, to the wives of King David, through to Queen Esther, highlighting in particular how the women's subterfuge impacted the leading male protagonists. Each woman mentioned uses her feminine wiles and deception to achieve her personal goals. The veil plays an important role in the book: either used as a sign of modesty or to create an illusion of sexual deviance.

The book begins with a detailed introduction, which lays out the author's methodology and sequencing. Biblical as well as midrashic and Talmudic sources supply supporting evidence for imparting the significance of these female characters. The book includes a comprehensive bibliography and an index of biblical references as well as the other ancient texts used throughout. A list of abbreviations and a page on transliteration are also supplied. This book is recommended for an academic readership.

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

**Alexenberg, Mel.** *Photograph God: Creating a Spiritual Blog of Your Life*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. North Charleston, SC. 2015. 199 pp. \$15.65. (9781507658895).

Mel Alexenberg is a retired Professor of Art at Columbia University. Since his retirement he has made *Aliyah* (immigration to Israel). In this short self-published book he discusses his present passion: the use of photography and blogging to explore the holiness in our world.

The first seven chapters of *Photograph God* survey the opportunities to capture the *Kedusha* (holiness) around us through photography. Alexenberg links Jewish texts and stories; the places we live and the objects we use; and the *sephirot* (emanations) of the classic Kabbalah. The object is to weave our personal stories, in order to understand that we are intimately connected to everything around us. The author uses his pictures (which regrettably are not included) to link to personal and Jewish stories from the Bible, Midrash, and Chassidic lore and from them to capture and explore the emotions connected to Kabbalah. He asks, for instance, "how can you describe "compassion" in a photograph?" and how can you then use that quality in your own life? After exploring the visual element, Chapter 8 connects the image to text; this ends with the concept of "blogging your life as a spiritual narrative." The last five chapters contain his (and his wife's) year-long *blog-as-weekly-Torah-drash* (exposition), from *B'reishit* to *V'ZotHaBracha* (Genesis to Deuteronomy). The blog is ongoing, and can be found on his [website](#).

*Photographing God* is obviously a very personal project. While the text is not difficult, the use of Kabbalah and complex Jewish terms may sometimes confuse interested but uninitiated readers. Regrettably, not all of the concepts are defined or adequately explored on first use. As a result of the mixture of genres—Midrash, personal story and Kabbalistic learning—the book is very difficult to categorize. It is cautiously recommended, primarily for larger synagogue libraries.

*Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

**Attias, Jean-Christophe.** *The Jews and the Bible*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015. 235 pp. \$75.00. (9780804789073). Also available as an eBook.

Dr. Attias of the Sorbonne has evidently thought long and deeply about the Bible's place in Judaism and Jewish culture. He thinks the "special link" between the Jewish people and the Tanakh is both

ambiguous and unstable, varying, at least in part, according to the circumstances in which the Jewish people find themselves. One of his key notions is that the Tanakh is essential to, but not always sufficient as the basis of Jewish identity. Attias sees the Bible as a product of Jewish culture that always requires interpretation. Although traditionally revered, its practical role in the lives of even religious Jews has varied considerably. The book, in part, explores the relationship of many groups to the Tanakh such as the Talmud-centric Ashkenazi Charedim, the bibliophilic Oriental Sephardim, the Talmud-rejecting Karaites, maskilim, Zionists, and religious settlers – all (except the last) treated with at least some scholarly objectivity. At the same time, the author is not reticent about expressing his own views. An academic but accessible study, the subject of which is so fascinating that it could well justify a much longer book.

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

**Backer, Ivan A. *My Train to Freedom: A Jewish Child's Escape from Nazi Europe to a Life of Activism*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2016. 208 pp. \$22.99. Reviewed from an uncorrected bound galley.**

Ivan Backer was 10 years old when the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939. He was among the 669 children rescued by the Kindertransport organized by Sir Nicholas Winton, a London stockbroker (the subject of the recent film *Nicky's Children*). First raised in a comfortable and assimilated Jewish family in Prague, Ivan was subsequently educated in Christian boarding schools in England and later became an Episcopal priest. He details his childhood in Czechoslovakia, his escape to England, and his family's relocation to America in 1944. One of the remarkable aspects of this lucid account is the relative ease in which he was able to transition from one situation to another. Backer describes how he moved from one country to the next, from one home and school to another, and even from his religion of birth, Judaism, to his adopted religion, Christianity. He became a parish priest after graduating from Union College and later moved to Hartford, Connecticut, where he held a number of positions at Trinity College. In Hartford he became a community activist and headed several grassroots organizations.

In one of the chapters, Backer asks the question, "Why was I spared?" Other chapters include interviews with his mother, who narrowly escaped the Holocaust, and accounts by two other family members who survived the death march. Recommended for large Holocaust collections; optional for others.

*Joyce Levine, AJL Publications Chair*

**Bar-Asher, Moshe and Steven D. Fraade (eds). *Studies in the Culture of North African Jewry*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Languages and Literatures, Hebrew University, 2015. 242 pp. \$40.00. (9789654810562).**

The twelve articles in this volume were presented as daily lectures at a workshop on North African Jewry held at Yale University in 2012. The majority of the lectures have a linguistic focus but research into traditions and sources in the areas of rabbinics, liturgy, sociology and law is also represented.

The keynote speaker, Moshe Bar-Asher, delivers a philological exploration of parallel Moroccan traditions concerning families considered to be tainted as "Worshippers of the Golden Calf" or "Profaned priests". Akun provides a detailed study of phonetics tracing the sources and traditions of pronunciation among Moroccan Jews. She concludes that the "Sephardic tradition derives from the Palestinian tradition of Hebrew." Bentolila draws together material from 19<sup>th</sup> century records from the Jewish community of Tangiers as he prepares a dictionary of Heketia (the Judeo-Spanish of North Africa).

Traditions and sources from the past are considered in relationship to contemporary Israeli language and culture in two articles. One explores the features of piyutim written within the context of the custom of establishing second or local Purims. Early compositions from North Africa are examined and compared with those of present day Israeli poets of North African descent. The other explores the concept of sociolects or social dialects in Modern Israeli Hebrew. Henshke compares Arabic proverbs from the oral tradition of the Moroccan Jews to the language of third or fourth generation Israelis of Moroccan descent.

Two studies provide interesting cultural, legal and religious insights into the functioning of North African Jewish communities. In Marglin's article entitled "Cooperation and competition among Jewish and Islamic Courts," the researcher demonstrates that the Jews of Morocco, while certainly respectful of their own *Batei Din* (Jewish courts), did not hesitate to go outside their community to seek rulings and "notarization" in the Muslim *shari'a* courts, especially if it proved to be to their advantage. Tedghi's paper presents an unpublished *Responsum* by Rabbi Yoseph Messas. He demonstrates that Messas was willing to challenge rabbinical consensus where he felt that it violated *halakhah* (Jewish law).

Each article is accompanied by a bibliography and there is an extensive section of indexes, including a linguistic index. This is a specialized text which would be appropriate for a graduate academic/research collection.

*Randall C. and Hannah Miryam Belinfante, American Sephardi Federation*

**Beizer, Michael. *Relief in the Time of Need: Russian Jewry and the Joint, 1914-24*. Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, Indiana University. 272 pp. \$32.95. (9780893574208).**

The early 1900s was a turbulent time for Jews in Palestine and in central and eastern Europe and Russia. Jews in the different areas grappled with many challenges including starvation, displacement, loss of the primary breadwinner (men were off fighting or looking for work,) lack of skills and education. Social service groups sprang up quickly as needs were identified. In the United States, many of these groups came together to coordinate their efforts. After a bit of shifting and re-organizing, they evolved into the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

Relying heavily on archival materials, Beizer shows how the JDC worked with the main organizations in Russia and with the Russian government to distribute aid. This work is heavily notated and includes a bibliography, glossary, and index. Recommended for academic libraries.

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

**Ben-Shalom, Ram. *Medieval Jews and the Christian Past: Jewish Historical Consciousness in Spain and Southern France*. Trans. by Chaya Naor. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2016. \$59.50. (9781904113904).**

For the many readers of Yosef Hayyim Yerushalmi's *Zakhor*, the idea of Jews studying history—particularly history that does not pertain directly to Jews—seems essentially modern, and they assume that earlier generations of Jews were interested only in the conceptions of Jewish past found in classic rabbinic sources. In fact, many medieval Jews had an abiding interest in history, for a variety of reasons. For some, such knowledge was a tool in their polemical engagement with Christianity. For others, it provided auxiliary knowledge for understanding Jewish history. There were also those who were simply curious.

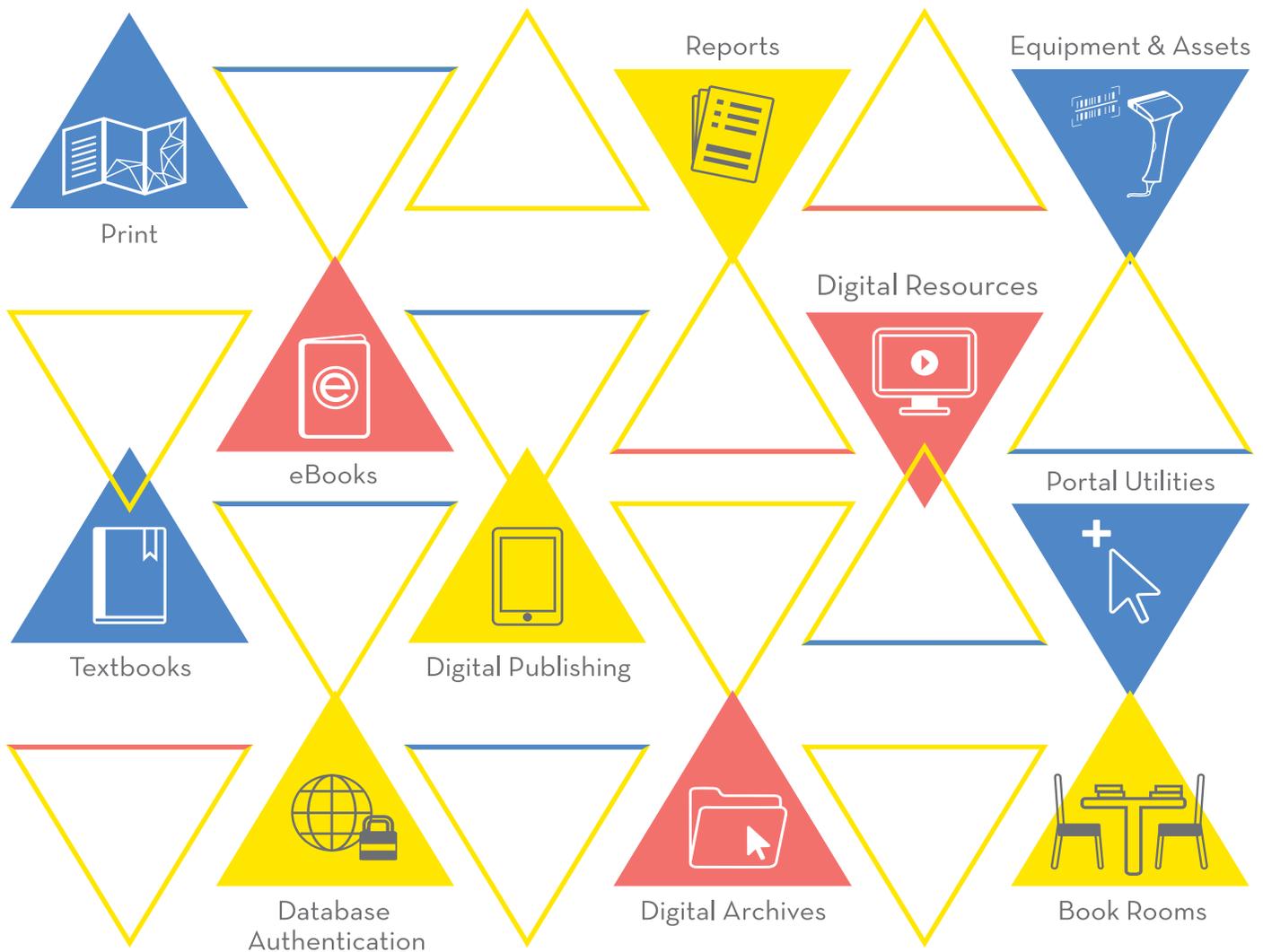
Ram Ben-Shalom's book, published in Hebrew in 2006 on the basis of his doctoral dissertation and now in a fine English translation, dives deeply into these medieval Hebrew historical texts. He studies a wide range of texts – polemical, epistolary, exegetical and straightforwardly historical – written over the course of the Middle Ages. They all originated in the Jewish communities of Spain or Southern France (often referred to as Provence). His careful analysis traces their immediate literary sources as well as the more distant origins of the historical accounts and details they transmit. The guiding question is why these Jews were interested in these histories, and the diverse ways in which these authors put their historical information to use. The chapters of the book are arranged topically, focusing on medieval Jewish discussions of the Roman empire, early and medieval Christianity, and the colorful political history of the Spanish kingdoms.

A vital corrective to standard accounts of medieval Jewish historiography, *Medieval Jews and the Christian Past* will be of interest to anyone concerned with Jewish history and with Jewish-Christian relations.

*Pinchas Roth*

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**Blenkinsopp, Joseph.** *Abraham: The Story of a Life*. Eerdmans, 2015. 256 pp. \$29.00. (9780802872876).

*Abraham: The Story of a Life* is written more as a running commentary on the biblical character of Abraham than as a traditional academic book. The commentary is not presented in a verse by verse manner; instead the book is arranged story by story. The author's approach is labeled as "discursive commentary" which he defines as grounded in the historical-critical method while still incorporating issues of theological and human interest.

Blenkinsopp separates his book into 10 chapters with an introduction that discusses the treatment of Abraham in the historical and prophetic books, as well as an examination of how the story of Abraham can be viewed as a response to the destruction of the first temple. Abraham's journey to Israel and specifically to Shechem and Beit El correspond to the role those cities play for the Jews decades after the destruction and exile. The author also asserts in this introduction that Jacob should be viewed as the "foundational ancestor" and that his stories are chronologically prior to the stories of Abraham.

The ten chapters in the book recount individual stories in the life of Abraham: his journey to Canaan, the covenant of circumcision, and the marriage of Rebekah and Isaac, are just three examples of the topics covered. In the epilogue, Blenkinsopp, himself a Christian, discusses his views on Abraham and Christianity: how Abraham appears in early Christian thought and what Abraham may mean for Christians today.

Although this book is aimed at the academic reader of the Bible, it is free from academic jargon and does not require a deep background in biblical scholarship. The book will be of interest to Jews and Christians alike.

*David Tesler, Yonkers, NY*

**Buergenthal, Thomas.** *A Lucky Child: A Memoir of Surviving Auschwitz as a Young Boy*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2015 (expanded edition). 260 pp. \$16.00. (9780316339186).

In this fluid memoir, Thomas Buergenthal recalls his turbulent youth and an encounter with a Gypsy fortuneteller, who deemed him "*ein Glückskind*—a lucky child." Indeed, luck seemed to carry him. At Auschwitz, aged ten, he was removed from the transport to the gas chambers and placed with the adults by declaring to the officer, "I can work!" He also escaped the selections of Dr. Mengele. He was fed and sheltered at the camp hospital by a Norwegian, a future founder of UNICEF, who later taught him that hate and revenge must be overcome in order to rebuild a better world. This philosophy steered Buergenthal toward legal work at the International Court in The Hague, commitment to social justice, and fight against genocide.

He writes his story "as I remember living it as the child I was, not as an old man reflecting on that life." This accounts for the sketchiness in some parts, although he describes camp and ghetto conditions. He even instills a youthful *naviété*—observing the behavior of fellow inmates and wondering how some, like the Kapos, might have been decent outside of the camp experience. Yet there is no sentimentality, rage, or melodrama—only quiet analysis.

A revision of the original 2009 edition, this book includes, in addition to a new afterword, corrected information about the author's parents' experiences—his mother's postwar search for him and the place where his father perished. Mother and son reunited in a Polish orphanage, where Thomas was residing after a stint as a child soldier and mascot (the cover photo shows him in Polish Army uniform). A Reader's Guide is also supplied. Readable and inspiring, this book is recommended for all libraries with Holocaust collections.

*Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY*



**Copeland, Mychal and D'vorah Rose (eds).** *Struggling in Good Faith: LGBTQI Inclusion from 13 American Religious Perspectives*. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths. 2016. 212 pp. \$19.99. (9781594736025).

This book contains current essays on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex (LGBTQI) religious inclusion written by experts in thirteen religious traditions.

Each chapter focuses on one religion and follows a formulaic pattern by including sections on history, background, and approaches to the issues at hand. *Laying the Groundwork* discusses the basic history and beliefs of the religion being examined. This section is very helpful if the reader has little knowledge of that particular religion. *Foundational Narratives* explores each religion's textual and oral traditions and examines its key texts. A *Significant Branches* section is provided for those religions (such as Judaism, Buddhism, etc.) that have splits due to theological or other differences and examines variations in the branches' approach to the subject. *Encountering LGBTQI Issues* looks at the history of each religion's approach to LGBTQI people and issues. This section was the most interesting and diverse part of the essays. For example, the section in *First Nations (Native American)* examines the effect of colonization and attempts of forced assimilation on the First Nations' historical acceptance of gender diversity. Each chapter also contains a *Tradition and Transformation* section which discusses the current visibility of and challenges to LGBTQI religious leaders and practitioners. This section often contains information on current key influential theologians, scholars and activists. In *Looking Forward*, each author offers a brief and honest assessment of emerging (or not) transformations. *Suggested Resources* are provided at the conclusion of every chapter.

This book would be a great selection for an interfaith reading group or for readers who would like background on current American political and spiritual dialogue on LGBTQI issues. I highly recommend it for all libraries.

*Suzanne Smailes, Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH*

**David, Ruth F.** *Musical Exodus: Al- Andalus and its Jewish Diasporas*. NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 220 pp. \$80.00. (9780810881754).

This book's seven excellent and interdisciplinary articles explore from an ethno-musicological perspective the resistance to assimilation and acculturation in the context of cultural interaction between Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Muslim conquest of Spain in 711 to the expulsion of Jews in 1492, to the diasporic communities across the Mediterranean and beyond, and in the twentieth century in Israel. Contributors include ethnomusicologists, cultural historians, linguists, and musicians. The book examines (1) the significance of Jewish music as a mode of remembering and forgetting, (2) the dynamics of how Jewish musicians sometimes function as cultural intermediaries in varied diasporic social, political, and historical contexts, (3) how music functions in the construction of ethnic identity, nationhood, and cultural continuity, and (4) the resurgence of al-Andalus as an anti-lachrymose "symbol" in promoting cross-cultural understanding, religious toleration, and secular cross-cultural interaction. Recommended for all academic, Jewish, and music libraries.

*David B Levy, Touro College, NYC*

**David, Saul.** *Operation Thunderbolt: Flight 139 and the Raid on Entebbe Airport, the Most Audacious Hostage Rescue Mission in History*. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2015. 446 pp. \$30.00. (9780316245418).

In June 1976, a group of Arab and German terrorists hijacked an Air France airliner with 253 passengers and crew on a flight from Tel Aviv to Paris, after it made a stopover in Athens, and then flew to Entebbe, Uganda. David, a military historian, expertly records the daily and hourly set of events from the perspective of the main political actors in Tel Aviv, Paris, London, and Entebbe. Supported by extensive research, the background to the planning of the military operation that led to the rescue of almost all the hostages and crew is covered in comprehensive detail. This is a thrill-packed, true-

life adventure reflecting the horrors of terrorism and the bravery and audaciousness of specially-trained counter-terrorist Israeli forces, willing and able to take extraordinary risks in such a long-range mission. Also included is a description of the inner workings of various committees of the Knesset and its corresponding military elements. Anyone interested in the topics of terrorism, Israeli politics and history, or specifically in this hostage rescue story will be enthralled with *Operation Thunderbolt*.

*Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Deitsch, Chaya. *Here and There: Leaving Chasidism, Keeping my Family*. New York: Schocken Books, 2015. 227 pp. \$19.69 (9780805243178)**

A warm, funny and interesting memoir, this book presents the inner conflicts of an Orthodox Lubavitcher upbringing and life in the secular world. Chaya Deitsch is the eldest daughter of Hasidic parents, whose strict adherence to the Jewish religion commands and shapes all aspects of life. From a young age, Chaya started to question some of these practices and limitations. Struggling to fit in her community, and becoming frustrated and unfulfilled, the author slowly abandons the restrictive life of the Hasidim.

In the last few years, several books have been published by Orthodox Jews about their experiences leaving the ultraorthodox way of life and the challenges of integrating into the secular world. Chaya Deitsch's singularity is the support that her parents offered her, even though they couldn't agree with their daughter's choices. This book feels like one is having a long and intimate conversation with a friend over a cup of coffee, and enjoying every bit of the conversation. Recommended for all libraries.

*Sonia Smith, McGill University, Montreal, Canada*

**Elenbogen, Dina. *Drawn for Water: An American Poet, an Ethiopian Family, an Israeli Story*. Kansas City, Kansas: BkMk Press, 2015. 304 pp. \$15.95. (9781886157972).**

In 1984 and 1985, Dina Elenbogen traveled to Israel to work with the recently emigrated Ethiopian Jewish population: the seven thousand Ethiopian Jews who had escaped through Sudan and were flown by the Israeli government to Israel in Operation Moses. Elenbogen writes about her personal experiences working with this unique group of Jews, especially learning about their specific cultural differences and the different foods they ate.

Elenbogen is a poet, who uses poetry to tell her story, introducing every chapter with a poem composed by a famous poet that ties into the chapter that follows it. The book spans a 25 year period that begins with the absorption and acclimation of the Ethiopian Jews brought through Operation Moses, continues through Operation Solomon in 1991 and concludes with a reflection of Operation Moses 25 years later. The book includes photographs and diary entries to tell the personal narrative. A reader's guide is included in the end of the book. Recommended for a general Jewish audience in any library setting.

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

**Elqayam, Avi, Roberto Arbib and Ghassan Manasra (eds).** אדון השלום: לקט תפילות לשלום במסורות היהדות, הנצרות והאסלאם (*Lord of Peace: A Prayer Book for Peace According to Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition*). Tel Aviv: Idra Press, 2015. 116 pp. \$37.90. (9789659245208).

The editors of this collection are founders of *Derekh Avraham, the Israeli Sufi Path*: a group of Jews and Muslims who attempt to create pathways to peace by worshipping together in the Sufi tradition. Between 14-20 prayers are included from each of the Abrahamic faiths, and the book is divided into three language sections (Hebrew, Arabic and English) containing the same prayers in the three "chambers" of faith traditions. "Prayer" in this book is defined loosely, and I would describe several of them as "readings" or "sermons." For example, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (where he enjoins his followers to "turn the other cheek") is included.

This book is not meant to be a grouping of interfaith prayers, but rather an edition of the prayers that are firmly rooted in each tradition. Therefore, the Christian prayers include Ave Maria/Hail Mary; the

Jewish prayers include “There is None Like Our God” (*Ein ke-Eloheinu*), and the Muslim prayers include the invocation of “In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.” Indeed, this is the real point: the book is for those who feel true “heartfelt peace” should be able to cross boundaries. According to the editors, Israeli Jews, Muslims and Christians have lost sight of their respective traditions of peace, and this collaboration is the editors’ way of showing how these traditions can transcend their respective histories of violence and remember together their histories of peace and pray for peace.

Those who live in areas where interfaith dialogue has taken a different trajectory may not need this book. The prayers and readings found in this book are also readily available elsewhere for those who seek them.

*Suzanne Smailes, Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH*

**Epstein, Marc Michael (ed).** *Skies of Parchment, Seas of Ink: Jewish Illuminated Manuscripts*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015. 276 pp. \$60.00. (9780691165240). Also available as an eBook.

This book is the first attempt at a comprehensive survey of the field of Jewish manuscript illustration in more than thirty years and is intended for non-specialists, more a survey of iconography than a detailed survey of individual manuscripts. Its focus is on “which themes are transmitted, comparing and contrasting East and West and the Jewish and non-Jewish use of motifs throughout various time periods.” However, the scope goes beyond the iconography, dealing with the social aspects of the manuscripts, the role of the scribe, illuminator, patron, and audience of the illuminated manuscript; the prevalence or not of the biblical prohibition of the graven image; the interaction with the dominant society under Christianity and Islam; women lives as reflected in or as absent from the Jewish manuscripts; the esoteric aspects of manuscript illumination; the centrality of Palestine and Jerusalem; and the contemporary artists creating Jewish manuscripts. Marc M. Epstein wrote all or most of the text, apart from four of the contributions. The work contains a few errors of attribution, especially in the legends accompanying the illustrations. This reviewer found the detailed analysis of specific manuscripts (the Bird’s Head Haggadah in particular) most interesting, summarizing the research in Epstein’s other publications. Recommended to the interested lay person and to academic libraries.

*Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.*

**Feldman, Rabbi Daniel Z.** *False Facts and True Rumors: Lashon HaRa in Contemporary Culture*. Jerusalem & USA: Koren Publishers/Maggid, 2015. 356 pp. \$29.95. (9781592644414).

Feldman is the executive editor of the RIETS Press and this well-researched book, on a topic of particular relevance to our times, forms part of the RIETS Practical Halakhah Series.

The stated goal of the work is to enable the reader to understand and engage in a more edified discourse. With a forthcoming national election, it seems that the author is correctly concerned with the burgeoning disrespect for linguistic civility.

The body of the work is divided into both a theoretical and an applied part. The first section deals with the structural make-up of *Lashon Harah* (gossip): how one should listen to the speaker and determine whether he/she has honorable motives or if he/she is what can be termed a “hater.” Rabbi Feldman points out that gossip may contain within it a kernel of truth and the context of information must be seen on a micro as well as on a macro level. The author cites a wide range of non-Jewish as well as Jewish writers; for example, Gordon Allport (author of *The Nature of Prejudice*) and Farhad Manjoo, who examines how people see the same events but interpret them differently. The second section looks in detail at the type of “talk” that should be permitted and under what conditions “gossip” may serve a beneficial purpose.

For this reviewer, the author has effectively touched upon a gold vein of vital ethical/philosophical literature which should be given serious discussion in today’s rather harried day and age. Halachic rulings by Rabbis Hershel Schachter and Mordecai Willig (both of Yeshiva University), as well as

several indices and a most interesting bibliography complete this important book.

In an era of impersonal multitasking and a seeming disinterest in deep reading as well as in critical thinking, this is a remarkable book which can be read on multiple levels. It should be on the must-have list of every yeshiva and seminary.

Morton J. Merowitz

**First, Mitchell.** *Esther Unmasked: Solving Eleven Mysteries of the Jewish Holidays and Liturgy*. New York: Kodesh Press, 2015. 242 pp. \$19.95. (9780692375426).

This work is a collection of essays on various themes relating to the Jewish holidays and their origins. The book begins with an introduction from Rabbi Hayyim Angel, who explains that Mitchell First aims to ask forthright questions about several basic traditional assumptions in an attempt to figure out the legitimacy of these assumptions. First has divided his work into sections that follow the chronological sequence of the year, beginning with Rosh Hashana, and continuing through to Pesach. He dedicates multiple chapters to Chanukah and Purim, the two non-biblical holidays, and concludes with the order of the verses in *Tehillim* (Psalms).

Although the premise of the book is well-founded, I found the flow of the narrative confusing, and the writing style impenetrable at times. The title is a misnomer, for although the Esther story is present in the book, a more apropos title would be about the origins of non-Biblical holidays overall. Clearly written for a Torah scholar, this book belongs in an academic or rabbinical library.

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

**Fishbane, Michael.** *Jewish Hermeneutical Theology*. Edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron W Hughes. Boston: Brill (Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers), 2015. 280 pp. \$115.00. (9789004285439).

Fishbane is a multi-faceted scholar. Trained in Biblical studies and the ancient Near East, he also has explored a wide and diverse range of areas in Jewish studies, including rabbinic interpretation, medieval Jewish philosophy and mysticism, Hasidism, modern Jewish philosophy, and Hebrew poetry. This knowledge is the foundation for his more recent constructive hermeneutic theology. This book contains an intellectual biography of Fishbane by Sam Berrin Shonkoff and a selection from his writings. The last section is an interview conducted by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson. In it we learn how participation in Havurat Shalom influenced his scholarship, how the Bible is unique in comparison with other sacred and secular texts, what is the task of Jewish theology, and how text study can insure continuity of Jewish life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Recommended for all academic libraries

David B Levy, Touro College, NYC

**Glickman, Mark.** *Stolen Words: The Nazi Plunder of Jewish Books*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2016. 327 pp. \$29.95. (9870827612082).

The story of the Nazi confiscation of Jewish books and the ongoing story of efforts to restore them to their owners is an extraordinary one, and in recent years, many books have emerged to detail various aspects of this history. Mark Glickman's *Stolen Words* attempts to do that, but is unfortunately so error-ridden that it is difficult to separate fact from fiction.

The book would greatly have benefited from both copy editing and peer review, as instances of blatant errors, both typographical and factual, abound. As a small sample: In his multi-chapter introduction to the work, which attempts to summarize a history of Jewish printing, Glickman writes that the first Hebrew book was printed in 1475, notwithstanding the great work of Moses Marx and Adri Offenbergh, which conclusively prove the Roman imprints to have been printed between 1469-1472 (the first *dated* book was printed in 1475, but the distinction is important). More concerning was Glickman's identification of famed Roman printers Sweynheyn and Pannatz as German Jews, when

they most certainly were not. In a footnote, Glickman cites “50,000 editions of Jewish incunabula,” when surely he meant to write “copies.” The many errors that I encountered throughout the book shed doubt on the accuracy of the entire work.

For someone very interested in this topic, the most interesting point of the book would have been the bibliography, where one could at least find further materials to read on the subject, but unfortunately there is none.

The book essentially summarizes some of the major works on the subject, including Dana Herman’s dissertation, *Hashavat Avedah: A History of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc.; Holocaust and the Book: Destruction and Preservation* (ed. Jonathan A. Rose); David Fishman’s *Embers Plucked from the Fire: The Rescue of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Vilna*; Robert M. Edsel’s *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History* (although there’s a typo in his citation for this book); and others. It would behoove an interested reader to pick up some of the books listed above rather than this one in order to obtain a more accurate view of the incredible story of the “robbery and restitution” of Jewish books during and after World War II.

*Michelle Chesner, Columbia University, New York, NY*

**Golan, John W. *Lavi: The United States, Israel and a Controversial Fighter Jet*. Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books (University of Nebraska Press), 2016. 450 pp. \$39.95. (9781612347226).**

The Lavi (lion in Hebrew) was an Israeli designed fighter jet aircraft prepared to fulfil its defense requirements as determined by the Israeli military establishment in the 1970s. Combined with sophisticated Israeli-developed avionics, the Lavi was expected to serve Israeli national security demands, but, to its detriment, also required American financial support. The quality of the planned aircraft was up against not only opposition from within the Knesset, largely on budgetary matters, but more importantly from the strongly anti-Israeli American Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, supported by an Orthodox Jewish member of the Department, Dov Zakheim. The book is crammed full with aeronautical engineering data, supported by the author who is an aeronautical designer, not only in the basic text, but also in a set of appendices representing more than half of the total length of the book. Ultimately the project was cancelled in 1987, largely because of the American defense establishment’s opposition. The book covers the intricacies of Israeli-American relations during periods of friendship and tensions and complications between US foreign policy demands and Israeli defense interests. A fine contribution to the history of Middle East aviation.

*Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Gold, Azgad. *על הנסים ועל הטבע: עיון פילוסופי בספרות ההלכה* (*On Miracles and Nature: A Philosophical Analysis of Jewish Law*). Hebrew. Mahshavot (A Series for Studies in Jewish Thought). Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University, 2014. 334 pp. \$37.21. (9789652264602).**

What is a “miracle” and what is a “natural occurrence” according to *halakhah* (Jewish Law)? *On Miracles and Nature* examines the relationships between nature, miracles and Divine intervention in the world, for the benefit of human beings, in the context of Jewish Law. The book covers the period from the First and Second Temples through to the writings of contemporary Jewish authorities. Expanding upon his doctoral dissertation, Gold analyzes some of the key points relating to nature and miracles in Jewish Law, using seven chapters to explore topics such as “Petitionary Prayer and the Reality: Reciprocal Relationship” and “The Probability of Miracles in the Past and in the Future.”

*On Miracles and Nature* is a well-organized and interesting volume. It contains many illuminating footnotes, an extensive bibliography of first and secondary literature, and indexes of sources and names. This ambitious and scholarly work should be part of any Jewish Law and Jewish Philosophy collection. It deserves to be translated to other languages.

*Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL*

**Granatstein, Melvin.** *Meditations at Twilight on Genesis*. Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2015. 159 pp. \$24.95. (9789655241679).

*Meditations at Twilight on Genesis* is a commentary on each *parsha* (chapter) in the book of Genesis. The author provides his own insights and wisdom along with a wide range of traditional sources, including the Talmud, Midrashim and various commentaries by Rashi, Ibn Ezra and the Rambam, to name but a few.

This book, by an Orthodox rabbi, is not about ritual, but rather has universal appeal. The chapters are short and provide a good supplementary commentary to the *parshiyot* in the Chumash and ideas for discussion at the Shabbat table. Thus, for example, in *Parashat Vayechi* which is the final *parsha* in Genesis, Granatstein shows how Joseph maintained his Jewish identity by making the Israelites promise that he will be buried in Canaan. In spite of holding high office in Egypt, Joseph never forgets that he is a Hebrew and of the land that God promised our forefathers. Recommended for any synagogue library.

*Ellen Share, Librarian, Washington Hebrew Congregation*

**Harris, Michael J.** *Faith without fear: unresolved issues in Modern Orthodoxy*. London & Portland, OR.: Vallentine Mitchell, 2016. 199 pp. \$89.95. (9780853039099).

Rabbi Michael J. Harris, the rabbi of the Hampstead Synagogue and a Cambridge don argues that Modern Orthodoxy needs the courage to address challenges of faith, without fearing what the ultra-Orthodox will say. He deals with the role and status of women in Judaism, rationalism vs. mysticism, the challenge of academic bible scholarship, views of messianism and Judaism's relationship to other religions.

Harris contrasts Modern and Ultra-Orthodoxy in the first chapter. He shows that Modern Orthodoxy has as much right to claim to be the faithful continuation of pre-modern Judaism as ultra-Orthodoxy. In chapter two he argues that feminist trends in Judaism should be seen as positive, that an essentialism claiming men and women have different natures should be rejected, as well as a separate but equal position. He proposes a gradual development of women's roles with acceptable *halachic* change, praising the rise of women's halachic studies. Chapter 3 presents a view of tradition privileging Maimonidian rationalism over a more mystical mindset but also open to meditation and Rav Kook. In chapter 4, the longest chapter, Harris says that Orthodoxy cannot ignore the challenge of biblical criticism but does not have to accept the documentary hypothesis. A bigger challenge comes from current studies of the ancient Near East and here Harris goes furthest out on a limb in suggesting a greater role for Moses in composing the text of the bible. Chapter 5 argues for a messianism that doesn't seek the defeat of the gentile world and also rejects the reintroduction of animal sacrifice. Lastly Harris does not believe in a religious pluralism that sees all religions as equal but views Judaism as the true faith while allowing for positive values in other religions.

Harris's arguments will not be new to readers of Orthodox blogs but he does provide a thorough overview of these issues with extensive footnotes and current bibliography. Harris will not convince those to his right or those on the left but he is courageous in broaching these topics as an active Orthodox synagogue rabbi. Recommended for academic libraries.

*Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA*

**Hoffman, Lawrence A. (ed.)**, *Naming God: Avinu Malkeinu – Our Father Our King*. Prayers of Awe series. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2015. 308 pp. \$27.99. (9781580238175). Also available as an eBook.

*Naming God* presents a collection of 40 essays, mostly written by rabbis and academics, on the history, melody and theology of the central Jewish prayer, *Avinu Malkeinu*. The essayists also delve into the complexities surrounding the problem of naming the unnamable, of imagining God. Thus, for the translator, the repeated refrain "*Avinu*" (our Father) and "*Malkeinu*" (our King) presents a challenge. For those who use gender neutral English, the words are translated as "our Creator, our Sovereign." Others leave the Hebrew words untranslated at the beginning before translating the rest of the sentence.

All have a concern that the words “Father” and “King” seem to present two different kinds of roles: the “Father” is close and nurturing, while the “King” is distant.

It is unfortunate that these articles are all supplied with bibliographic notes at the end of the book, rather than easy to reference footnotes. This minor criticism notwithstanding, this book is an excellent choice for anyone wanting to acquire a deeper understanding of the history and language of prayer and the practice of *davening* (praying or reciting). It is recommended for personal, synagogue, academic and school library collections.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, Chicago, IL

**Holub, Robert C. *Nietzsche's Jewish Problem: Between Anti-Semitism and Anti-Judaism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016. 271 pp. \$35.00. (9780691167558). Also available as an eBook.**

Nietzsche's attitude towards the Jews has been written about a fair amount and the conclusions have greatly varied. Dr. Holub's study takes into account not only the published writings, but also Nietzsche's notebooks and correspondence, and the writings (public and private) of those who knew him. The result is a convincing though complicated portrait. Nietzsche, as Holub presents him, was a man who absorbed much of the anti-Jewish attitudes of his time and place without obsessing over them. He eventually came to see the Jews as a very clever people, a collective entity with unified purposes and subtle designs on the rest of the world (or at least Europe). He admired what he saw as the toughness and willpower of the Jews, even while he detested what he regarded as the “slave morality” used by Jews as a vehicle (via Christianity) to degrade the Aryan race. Nietzsche favored the assimilation of the Jews and intermarriage with them to create a more vital European aristocracy, and he bitterly opposed the political anti-Semitism of the 1880s. He considered it vulgar, and, ironically, filled with the type of resentment he termed “slave morality.” Highly recommended for academic collections.

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

**Jabotinsky, Vladimir. *Vladimir Jabotinsky's Story of My Life*. Edited by Brian Horowitz and Leonid Katsis. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016. 162 pp. \$31.99. (9780814341384). Also available as an eBook.**

I was startled to learn that this is the first published English translation of Jabotinsky's autobiography, since it was first published in 1936. In any case, its present appearance is welcome. The work covers Jabotinsky's life from his birth in 1880 to just before the events leading to the founding of the Zion Mule Corps as a part of the British army during the First World War (Jabotinsky wrote of this and later related events in *The Story of the Jewish Legion*). Jabotinsky writes with charm and one gets a real sense, for example, of his high spirited happy-go-lucky youth in his hometown of Odessa as well as in Rome, where he studied and also served as a foreign correspondent. The writing reveals a certain amount of self-reflection and introspection, but more would have been better, especially regarding his transition to being a committed Zionist. The translation is mostly very fluent and the editors' footnotes are numerous and informative. The introduction by Dr. Horowitz is a bit disappointing, though, since it mostly eschews the question that has been raised concerning the veracity of the autobiography and instead concentrates on speculating what Jabotinsky hoped to accomplish by writing it. In other words, it deals more with literary criticism than historical analysis. Nevertheless, this is an important addition to English language Zionist history collections.

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

**Jordan, James. *From Nuremberg to Hollywood: The Holocaust and the Courtroom in American Fictive Film*. Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2016. 254 pp. \$89.95. (9780853038740).**

Multiple Hollywood films over the last seventy years and some from as early as 1944 have dealt with the Holocaust; however, only a portion of them have featured the courtroom drama of the accused perpetrators by survivors. James Jordan attempts to discuss the historical significance of these films

and the important role they play in Holocaust filmography as a whole, as well as the role that the courtroom played in the Holocaust narrative itself.

Jordan discusses multiple films that contain Holocaust trials, and divides the book into two sections: the first part discusses movies produced during the war until 1961; the second part looks at movies produced in 1961 following the Eichmann trial, all the way through to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All of the films were produced by Hollywood and therefore present an American perspective on the cases. The earlier films focus on the perpetrator and the accused, while as time passed, more films deal with the victimization of the Jews by the Nazis as the way to remember the Holocaust. After the Eichmann trial, film makers deal more with survivor guilt and trauma and with the survivors' sense of identification as a result of their experiences. The later films show the impact and importance of the Holocaust in contemporary America in reaction to the neo-Nazi movement.

Containing an extensive bibliography and filmography, this book is suited for an academic library.

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

**Kobrin, Rebecca and Adam Teller (eds). *Purchasing Power: The Economics of Modern Jewish History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. 355 pp. \$65.00. (9780812247305)**

This book addresses the nexus between money and power in modern Jewish history, and locates economic activity as central to understanding the Jewish experience in history. It examines forms of Jewish empowerment involving networks of exchange and the creation of economic niches, by examining the ways in which the economic choices made by Jewish businessmen could bring them wealth and influence. The authors consider the Jewish exercise of power in the international arena through the deployment of economic resources, particularly in philanthropy. The discussions reveal how the wielding of power by Jewish organizations on the world stage could shape not only Jewish society but the international arena. A most valuable contribution, highly recommended.

*David B Levy, Touro College*

**Koplik, Sara. *A Political and Economic History of the Jews of Afghanistan*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2015 (Series in Jewish Studies; 54) 278 pp. \$142.00. (9789004288669).**

This study examines the condition of the Jews in Afghanistan during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, focusing especially on the years 1839-1952. Great emphasis is given to general developments in Afghanistan: political and especially economic changes often based on nationalistic tendencies which had major implications on the condition of minorities, including Jews. An important source for this study is the archive of the London based Board of Deputies of British Jews, which has unique correspondence relating to the Jews of Afghanistan. Other major archives were used as well as published works and interviews.

Jews played an important role in local and international trade. One of the major commodities was karakul skins which were very popular in the region and in Europe. Jewish role in this trade decreased and in fact was stopped due to political developments: the wish to strengthen Afghani (namely, Muslim) role in this lucrative business, and the stigmatization of Jewish Bukharan refugees from the Soviet Union who escaped to Afghanistan and were suspected to be Soviet spies. National Afghani organizations were set up to monopolize various economic enterprises, leaving the minorities (mainly Jews and Hindus) out of business. The condition of the Jews further deteriorated during World War II, though mainly due to economic reasons. Attempts to emigrate were blocked by the authorities, though the situation changed after the establishment of the state of Israel. Still, the Jews of Afghanistan felt to be discriminated against by the Israeli authorities regarding the provision of travel and entry documentation. Nonetheless, by the mid-1950s, most Jews left Afghanistan, mainly to Israel.

The study is very detailed, especially regarding Afghani political developments and the state efforts to nationalize the economy, more than one would expect in a study on Afghani Jews. Some

of the romanization of Hebrew titles (e.g., by Itzhak Bezalel, Hilda Nissimi, and Giora Pozailov) are strange, to say the least. Still, this is a serious study, providing much needed information on the Jews of Afghanistan, using important archival and published sources and interviews.

*Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton NJ*

**Kushner, Kim. *The New Kosher: Simple Recipes to Savor & Share*. San Francisco: Weldon Owen, 2015. 198 pp. \$35.00. (9781616289263).**

Kim Kushner is a cookbook author, chef, and cooking instructor. She grew up in a modern Orthodox home in Montreal and learned to cook from her mother, a Moroccan Israeli. Her recipes reflect her background.

*The New Kosher: Simple Recipes to Savor & Share* lives up to its title: the foods featured here are easy to prepare; the ingredients are readily available, and the techniques are simple. The book is divided into chapters by food type: Kim's essentials (basic sauces, challah, pita chips, etc.), soups & dips, salad, fish, chicken and beef, grains and vegetables, desserts. Beautiful color photographs by Kate Sears will entice readers to head for the kitchen to prepare delectable treats such as spinach and feta quiche with heirloom tomatoes; caramelized onion, fennel and mushroom soup; and *Poisson à la marocaine*. Butternut squash chips, quick chicken and vegetables on the stove top, and crunchy-chewy-nutty "health" cookies make an easy dinner when accompanied by an avocado, hearts of palm, edamame and za'atar salad.

Anyone who loves to cook, whether keeping kosher or not, will enjoy this cookbook.

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

**Lasker-Schüler, Else. *My Blue Piano. Poems translated from the German by Brooks Haxton*. Bilingual Edition. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press (Judaic Traditions in Literature, Music, and Art), 2015. 113 pp. \$14.95. (9780815634201).**

Else Lasker-Schüler is a critically important figure in German-Jewish literature, but little of her poetry is available in English. Her lifetime coincided with the modern history of German Jewry, from the assimilationist period beginning when she was born, through to the Holocaust, which ended shortly after she died in 1945. She broke from her bourgeois background as a young woman and immersed herself in the flourishing modernist art scene in Berlin. She was prolific in poetry, prose, and drama, and also created visual art in the form of colored drawings. She lived in Jerusalem after 1939. There, she associated with German cultural exiles like Martin Buber and Salman Schocken, who tried to help support her. She died in penury and was buried on the Mount of Olives. Her work had influenced numerous post-war Germanophone poets, including Yehuda Amichai. This collection gathers examples from several of her poetic collections: *Hebrew Ballads*, *My Blue Piano*, and *Concert*, among others. The book presents the poems in German and English on facing pages, with the German poems dated from the first appearance. There is also an informative introduction. Libraries that focus on German and/or Jewish literature will want to purchase this book even if they already own the few other collections of Lasker-Schüler's work in English: *Hebrew Ballads and other Poems* (1980); *Your Diamond Dreams Cut open My Arteries* (1982); *Concert* (1994). Whatever the merits of Haxton's translations might be, when an important poet such as Lasker-Schüler lacks fame in the English-speaking world, libraries are performing a service not only to their patrons, but to the art of poetry itself by buying a work like this one. Recommended for academic collections.

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

**Marshak, Adam Kolman. *The Many Faces of Herod the Great*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015. 400 pp. \$35.00. (9780802866059).**

Adam Marshak is a history professor specializing in Roman history who has previously published articles on Herod. The book is divided into three sections with eleven chapters and includes maps and illustrations. King Herod is examined strictly from his historical profile without reference to Christian biblical literature. Marshak first presents the cultural context of a Hellenized society and the role of

client kings in the Roman Empire in the first section. He then charts Herod's rise to power through his good relations with Roman authority in the second section. The third section is devoted to Herod's balance between appeasing the Roman authorities and the Jewish population through building projects that accommodated both. Marshak concludes that Herod was a skilled political actor who successfully navigated tensions between Roman authority and Jewish sentiment. The book is well researched and is recommended for an adult audience.

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

**Marty, Eric. *Radical French Thought and the Return of the "Jewish Question."* (Studies in Antisemitism). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. 126 pp. \$70.00. (9780253016720). Also available as an eBook.**

This is a collection of five translated essays by Eric Marty, a professor of literature at the University of Paris. In these essays, Marty considers rarefied forms of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism that have gained currency amongst certain left-wing French intellectuals. The longest essay is on the writer Jean Genet, for whom Marty has a high regard. He sees Genet's anti-Semitism as provoked by his anxiety when confronted by goodness, which in turn arises from his fascination with, even commitment to, evil. Perhaps the most important of the essays is the one on "Saint Paul among the Moderns..." in which he considers the rise of Saint Paul in modern theological and political discourse. Paul's universalism (Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"), which, in a secularized version, is receiving renewed interest in certain quarters, and relates this to the paradox of Christian eschatology: the messiah supposedly arrived but the world continues on as before. Marty is subtle and insightful in analyzing the differences between the Pauline and Jewish stances towards universalism. The remaining three essays (which tend to be brisker and easier to follow) deal with Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, Michel Foucault (as an exception to the anti-Zionism of French intellectuals), and Gilles Deleuze. Recommended for academic library collections.

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

**Merwin, Ted. *Pastrami on Rye: An Overstuffed History of the Jewish Deli.* New York and London: New York University Press, 2015. 244 pp. \$26.95. (9780814760314).**

A gastronomical component of secular Jewish culture has come to be symbolized by the creation of the unique eatery for years only found in New York City: the delicatessen. Typically characterized by smoked and spiced meats and fish, recipes brought to America from Eastern Europe have made their way into the English lexicon. The actual history and culinary contributions of the Sephardic Jews, the first to reach these shores, seems to have been put aside. Merwin is not a professional food historian or critic, as one might expect, but rather a professor of religion and Judaic studies at Dickinson College. In this work of exhaustive research, he brings together the history of the evolution and devolution of the Jewish deli (unfortunately, it was too late for the author to put into print the reopening of the Carnegie and the shutdown of the Stage). For anyone interested in learning about the index for Jewish "food," kosher and non-kosher, other than *haute cuisine*, this is a primary reference. Noticeably absent is mention of Yonah Schimel's Knish Bakery, The Pickle Guys, or Barney Greengrass. Nevertheless, this should be a mainstay for the appreciation of the Jewish contribution to America's food industry.

Sanford R. Silverburg, *Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Sabato, Haim. *Rest for the Dove: Reading for Shabbat.* Jerusalem: Maggid Books (Koren), 2015. 322 pp. \$24.95. (9781592641420).**

What makes a book of essays about the weekly Torah reading stand out from the myriad choices that are available? A combination of literary skill and knowledge of the commentaries and interesting perspective that can focus on a word, a verse, or a theme provide a fresh approach to these portions. The kindness of Abraham and Sarah starts the discussion or *Parashat Vayera*, but their example is

compared with that of other biblical personalities: Lot, Elijah and the woman of Zarephath, Elisha and the *Shunammite* woman, and Ruth. A discussion of Jacob's Ladder in *Parashat Vayetzeh* is based on the midrash that tells where it was located. The essays that cover the story of Jacob's sons and their eventual sojourn to Egypt (*Vayetzeh*, *Vayishlach*, *Veyeshev*, *Vayigash*) are somewhat repetitive, but reinforce *Parashat Vayechi's* message, which "ends with Jacob's and Joseph's instructions, implanting the hope for remembrance and return to the Land before the Book of Exodus begins the story of exile and redemption." For *Parashat Tzav*, a discussion of the prohibition of *chametz* for meal-offerings in the Sanctuary includes insights from Rabbi David Zvi Hoffmann, the Maharal and Rav Kook.

Rabbi Sabato is the author of several novels, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Birkat Moshe, and a former tank gunner in the Israel Defense Forces. Sabato uses many references and commentaries when expounding on the meaning of a particular verse, often relating back (or forward) to other verses in the Jewish canon. For the most part, these essays do not include synopses of the *parshas*, so the reader will need some knowledge of the content of the weekly Torah reading. A little long for sharing at the Shabbos table in their entirety, the essays will provide some points to ponder, often encouraging further research into the sources provided and their connection to the subject. A solid choice for all Jewish libraries.

*Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*

**Schweid, Eliezer. *A History of Modern Jewish Religious Philosophy*. Translated from the Hebrew and annotated by Leonard Levin. Vol. 2: The Birth of Jewish Historical Studies and the Modern Jewish Religious Movements. Boston: Brill, 2015. 330 pp. \$126.00. (9789004290907).**

This second volume of an impressive intended comprehensive 5 volume work discusses Jewish thinkers of Central and Eastern Europe before 1881 and the schools of thought they helped originate, including (1) The Science of Judaism, (2) Reform, (3) Positive Historical Judaism, (4) Neo Haredi ideologies, (5) Eastern European Haskalah, and (6) proto-Zionism. These thinkers are placed in the historical context of general philosophy and Jewish social historical developments. Schweid is a master of synthesis, resulting in a coherent account of the evolution of Jewish thought. The translator Levin has done a good job and offered annotations and a preliminary introduction. The book provides a number of primary source excerpts. There is an excellent bibliography of primary and secondary sources, mostly in English. The Hebrew original can be consulted for additional references. Recommended for all academic libraries.

*David B Levy, Touro College, NYC*

**Silverstein, Adam J. and Guy G. Strousma (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Abrahamic Religions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 617 pp. \$150.00. (9780199697762).**

The Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, share their leading patriarchal figure and have some common elements. They also differ in important ways. The comparative study of these religions is a developing academic discipline. This handbook offers scholars and others interested in the field an overview of the area. The editors and contributors are professors at universities in the United States and abroad. Their goal is to offer an understanding of each religion by placing it in its appropriate social, historical, and spiritual context and to explore how they interact with each other. The articles are scholarly but accessible to interested lay readers.

The book is divided into six sections. Each contains a group of articles exploring a topic: the concept of Abrahamic religions (origins); communities (Islam-Christian civilization, Abrahamic religions in the Mediterranean); scripture and hermeneutics (prophecy, apocalypticism, millenarianism, messianism); religious thought (philosophy, theology, science and creation, political thought); rituals and ethics (prayer, purity and defilement, dietary laws, life-cycle rites of passage); and epilogues. The epilogues are essays by a Jew, a Christian, and a Muslim offering a broader perspective on the comparative study of these religions from the viewpoint of each one.

Although the book covers a great deal of information, there are some topics that are absent. Readers will not find anything about the role of women, gender issues, the family, or the impact of science. There is nothing about splinter groups such as the Samaritans, the Mormons, and the Bahais either. It does, however, offer thoughtful coverage of three of the world's major religions and provide a strong base for continued study. Academic, large public, and synagogue libraries with sufficient funds will want to add this book to their collections.

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

**Siniver, Asaf. *Abba Eban: A Biography*. New York and London: Overlook Duckworth, 2015. 464 pp. \$40.00. (9781468309331).**

Aubrey Solomon Meir Eban, born in South Africa, reared and educated in England, was to become a polyglot orator, an Israeli diplomat, and statesman of outstanding world-wide repute. As a youngster, he was a prodigy ultimately admitted to Cambridge University where he excelled in the classics and achieved fluency in a number of languages. Following his service in the British army, Eban migrated to Israel, Hebraized his name ('Abba' instead of 'Aubrey'), and began a career in the Israeli political establishment from 1950 as a minister of foreign affairs, and a minister of education, then becoming deputy prime minister, and ambassador to the United States and the United Nations. This is only the second full biography (aside from the subject's autobiography and his spouse's biography) of one of Israel's finest spokesmen. More than a biography, the book is also an intense discussion of the inner workings of Israeli party politics. Although Eban was not Israeli-born, he was a life-long Zionist and fluent in Hebrew. But, to his detriment, he was always considered an outsider by the Israeli establishment, in part because of his staid British posture and crisp speech and the fact that he had no eastern European heritage. A great read and story of a fine Israeli diplomat.

*Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Slifkin, Rabbi Natan. *The Torah Encyclopedia of the Animal Kingdom: Vol. One: Chayot / Wild Animals*. Maggid: 2015. 433 pp. \$49.95. (9781592644049).**

Slifkin, a noted Orthodox Rabbi and zoologist (who recently completed his PhD in Jewish history) has published the first part of a Torah Encyclopedia of the Animal Kingdom; a task for which he is uniquely suited (Slifkin is also the founder and director of the [Biblical Museum of Natural History](#) in Beit Shemesh, Israel).

The introductory section to this volume contains five chapters that (1) discusses the Role of animals in the Torah, (2) identifies the animals of the Torah, (3) provides a classification of animals, (4) sets forth a history of Biblical and Talmudic zoology, and (5) describes the wildlife of the Torah. Following this introduction, the book follows a tripartite division of wild animals: predators, kosher wild animals and other wild animals.

The book has a little something for everyone and it is easy to skim the parts that may be of less interest. Each treatment of the 29 animals is approached from multiple perspectives, including sections that (1) review basic zoological information about the animal, (2) explore the process of identifying the animal named in the Torah, (3) survey the symbolism of the animal in the Torah and Rabbinic Literature, (4) discuss the animal in the context of law and literature, (5) focuses on the interplay of theology, philosophy and science with regard to the animal, and (6) view the animal through an historical lens from post biblical times through the present.

This is a beautifully compiled work, replete with photographs, biblical quotes and footnotes for the advanced reader. It belongs in a Jewish library or on the coffee table of anyone interested in animals and Judaism. In the short time that this book has been in my home my four young children (ages 5-10) have been looking through the pictures and (for the three oldest) reading the accompanying text with great enjoyment.

*David Tesler, Yonkers, NY*

**Volozhiner, Chaim ben Isaac, 1749-1821. נפש הצמזום (Nefesh HaTzimTzum=Contracted Soul). Translation and commentary by Avinoam Fraenkel. Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2015. 2 volumes. \$31.00 ea. (9789655241655; 9789655241653).**

A two volume work, this book comprises volume one: *Rabbi Chaim Volozhin's Nefesh HaChaim with translation and commentary* (811 pages), which is the entire text of the *Nefesh HaChaim* (*Living Soul*) with an English translation; and volume two *Understanding Nefesh HaChaim through the key concept of Tzimtzum and related writings* (757 pages), which is a three-part companion volume to the first. The three sections of volume two include "essential concepts" according to A. Fraenkel, texts originally published with the *Nefesh HaChaim* and not authored by Hayim of Volozhin, the writings of Hayim of Volozhin outside of the *Nefesh HaChaim* relevant to the understanding of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, writings of students of Chaim of Volozhin also relevant for the topic of the book, and finally, bibliographic references and indexes.

Chaim ben Isaac Volozhiner (1749-1821) was the student of the Gaon of Vilna (1720-1797), and the leader of the Mitnagdim, the opponents to the emerging Hassidic movement. Fraenkel summarizes Chaim of Volozhin's purpose in writing his book as a "compelling case to balance the pursuit of inspirational fervor in serving God, against the actual performance of Mitzvot and study of Torah." The rabbinical approbations to the publication and English translation stress that the concept of *tzimtzum* is held by both Hassidim and Mitnagdim. Fraenkel finds much in common between the *Nefesh HaChaim* and the *Tanya*, authored by the first Rabbi of Lubavitch.

This book is a considerable accomplishment for a non-academic Jewish scholar, fully immersed in the world of the Torah study for its own sake. It should be a welcome addition to the personal library of any English speaking student in *yeshivot* in the United States, Canada, and Israel, in synagogue and for large academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD

**Woolf, Jeffrey. *The Fabric of Religious Life in Medieval Ashkenaz (1000-1300)*. Leiden: Brill, 2015. 152 pp. \$120.00. (9789004300248).**

This book analyzes the values and ideals of the Jewish communal structure, or *Qehilla*, in Medieval Ashkenaz. In the introduction to the book, the author states that, although there has been much scholarship focused on the structure and legal basis for Jewish communal life, there has been insufficient work devoted to the "values and perceptions that sustain it." Chapter 2 discusses how the Jewish community was granted the rights to establish their own community structure, or *Qehilla*, that would operate according to Jewish Law. In particular, Woolf analyses the community's self-perception as a holy community and delves deeper into three of their animating principles: labor, prayer, and Torah study. In Chapter 3, "The Synagogue," the author contends that there was an understanding that, like the Temple, God's presence was actually present in the Synagogue. Chapter 4 focuses on issues of "purity" and "impurity" and their importance to Medieval Ashkenaz even outside the Synagogue. Chapter 5 tackles the subject of Martyrdom, with Woolf advancing the argument that the "patterns of Jewish martyrdom in 1096 and beyond were a natural outgrowth of the values and perceptions upon which Ashkenazik religiosity was based."

More than simply analyzing specific elements of the Medieval Ashkenazic community, Woolf also depicts the culture and worldview of this society, providing valuable insights into what he aptly calls "The Fabric of Religious Life." This book is well written and highly recommended for the academic and the educated lay reader.

David Tesler, Yonkers, NY

**Wouk, Herman. *Sailor and Fiddler: Reflections of a 100-Year-Old Author*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 2016. 137 pp. \$20.00. (978501128547).**

*Sailor and Fiddler* by Herman Wouk, now 100 years old, is more of a long essay or collection of musings than a memoir or biography. It will be especially interesting to bibliophiles because a large portion of the book is about his published works and the “story” behind his books. However, *Sailor and Fiddler* does not provide any real insights into his emotions or personality, but rather presents a cursory overview of his major life events, briefly mentioning the death of his child in an accident and a long marriage to his wife, who also worked as his literary agent.

Even though Wouk is an observant Jew, this is not at all a religious book, and I would especially recommend the book to a bibliophile or voracious reader. It may inspire readers, as it inspired me, to read his other works.

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

**Zalkin, Mordechai. *Modernizing Jewish Education in Nineteenth Century Eastern Europe: The School as the Shrine of the Jewish Enlightenment*. Leiden: Brill, 2016. 192 pp. \$99.00. (9789004308206).**

Zalkin illuminates how the modern *Haskalah* movement sought to reform Jewish education. The book shows how the *Maskilim* criticized the medieval *cheder*, in which the *melamed* (teacher) often taught in dark and unsanitary conditions. The purpose of study was to inculcate piety. The *maskilim* opened up the curriculum to learning modern languages (including Russian, French, German, and Polish), history, literature, math, and science. They placed an emphasis on the structure, syntax and grammar of the Hebrew language. The focus of this book is the description and analysis of the formulation of *maskilic* educational thinking and the emergence of an ‘Educational Republic.’ This book is highly recommended for all academic Jewish libraries, and libraries of education and pedagogy.

*David B Levy, NYC Touro College*

**Ziv, Guy. *Why Hawks Become Doves: Shimon Peres and Foreign Policy Change in Israel*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014. 183 pp. \$24.95. (9781438453965).**

Ziv, an international relations specialist at the School of International Service in The American University, has chosen to study closely how and why political decision-makers’ personalities disengage from “hawkish” inclinations towards employing aggressive foreign policies and shift towards a “dovish” reliance upon diplomacy to manage political problems.

With this framework, the author focuses on the long-serving Israeli politician Shimon Peres. Placing the study in some kind of a context, a comparative analysis is provided by the examination of the leadership of four Israeli prime ministers: Yitzhak Shamir, Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Rabin, and Shimon Peres. With Peres as the main focus, Ziv outlines his hawkish orientation from 1953 to 1977 and his more dovish position from 1977 to 1987, with a second phase in the following decade. Ziv concludes that such a political shift depends upon several factors, including the main actor’s cognitive style of ingesting information, how the leader perceives the shift in orientation will impact the nation’s national security, as well as the demands that domestic political party pulls have on the leader’s career. The nature of this book is limited to an academic audience interested in foreign policy analysis and the Israeli case study.

*Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*



## Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

**Aarons, Victoria, Avinoam J. Patt and Mark Shechner (eds).** *The New Diaspora: The Changing Landscape of American Jewish Fiction*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, [2015]. 592 pp. \$35.99. (9780814340554).

*The New Diaspora* is a fascinating compilation of stories by American and Canadian authors who have won the Edward Lewis Wallant Award, given annually since 1963, to “an American writer, preferably unrecognized, whose published creative work of fiction is considered to have significance for the American Jew.” The book is divided into two parts: Part one includes award-winning writers such as Joshua Henkin, whose story “Sex on the Brain” tells the poignant tale of a young American woman who had spent time in Israel and fell in love with an Israeli who was killed in battle and her return to Israel on a visit. Edith Pearlman’s story “Purim Night” is about a Purim celebration in a displaced person’s camp after World War II. Other interesting stories in part one include those by Ehud Havazelet, Myla Goldberg, Tova Recich and Curt Leviant. Part Two consists of short stories and book excerpts by writers who have not won the award, but whom the judges consider noteworthy, writings such as Jonathan Safran Foer’s “Here We Aren’t, So Quickly” from *The New Yorker*; Nathan Englander’s story “Free Fruit for Young Widows” from *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank*, as well as compositions by Rachel Kadish and Aryeh Lev Stollman. *The New Diaspora* is highly recommended for school and academic libraries. It introduces readers to an eclectic mix of Jewish writers, who have different perspectives on Jewish history, culture, identity and the Jewish experience.

*Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH*

**Amichai, Yehuda.** *The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*. Edited by Robert Alter. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015. 551 pp. \$25.00. (978037423525).

Many scholars have noted that Yehuda Amichai is a textbook example of a poet whose work suffers in translation to English. The growth of interest in translation as an aspect of comparative literature makes Amichai’s work fertile ground for poets and researchers. As Israel’s most famous poet, his work has been translated extensively, but for this collection, Robert Alter saw fit to retranslate several poems, and to commission new translations from other writers. Regarding this initiative, Alter says, “Though it was scarcely feasible to do a complete edition of Amichai’s poetry in English ... I thought it would be instructive to provide readers with one complete volume of verse as part of the present large selection ...” He also notes: “The splendid collaborative translation by Bloch and Kronfeld of *Open Closed Open* appears here nearly in its entirety ...” This book thus overlaps other collections of Amichai’s work in English, particularly *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, edited and translated from the Hebrew by Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell, which appeared in a new edition in 2013. Libraries that own that work, or a number of other collections of Amichai’s poetry in English, may want to buy this one if they are supporting programs in Hebrew literature or translation studies, particularly if faculty members request or recommend it. Conversely, if a high school or synagogue library is lacking work by Amichai in English, this book is an excellent place to start. In addition to an index of titles and first lines, the book contains explanatory notes for the many references to Jewish tradition, texts, and historical figures that are so critical to Amichai’s poetics. Sadly, the rich tradition of Hebrew poetry is mostly unknown to American Jews, which means demand for this book will probably be limited to academic settings. Recommended.

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

**Avner, Yehuda, and Matt Rees.** *The Ambassador*. New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2015. 339 pp. \$24.95. (9781592643882). Reviewed from an uncorrected ARC.

What if the state of Israel had been established in 1938 instead of 1948? And what if that state had sent a representative to Nazi Germany? These questions are explored in a “fiction/alternative history/political thriller” that keeps readers on their edge of their seats. Dan Lavi is asked by Ben-Gurion to be Israel’s ambassador to Berlin. His deputy is Willhelm Gottfried, a noted violinist who longs to return to

the culture and art of Germany. Dan's staff also includes several Mossad agents, including Shmulik and his wife. While Dan files endless forms and submits them to Adolf Eichmann, the head of the SS Central Office for Jewish Emigration, Shmulik and the Mossad are planning to assassinate Hitler. The Furher survives two attempts on his life. Soon it is January 1942, and Dan's idealism has changed. Working with several Germans, they learn of the Nazis' nefarious plans (discussed at the Wannsee Conference), kidnap Eichmann and take him to Israel, then bring him to Cairo to show to Roosevelt and Churchill and convince the Allies to bomb the crematoria at Auschwitz. In the meantime, Anna has been deported to Auschwitz. Dan returns to rescue her and make sure the targets are bombed, losing an arm in the process, but saving the lives of almost 5 million Jews. When they return to Israel, Dan becomes the second president of Israel.

Yehuda Avner (1928-2015) served as a speechwriter and secretary to Golda Meir and Levi Eshkol, as well as an advisor to Rabin, Begin, and Peres. His book *The Prime Ministers* is based on his experiences. Matt Rees is a Welsh journalist working in the Middle East. This posthumously published novel mixes fictional and real characters, but the sense of place and most of the events are very real. As many of the main characters die, the suspense builds to the climatic allied bombing. A great choice for all Jewish libraries.

*Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*

**Birstein, Yossel. *And so is the Bus: Jerusalem Stories*. Translated from Hebrew by Margaret Birstein, Hana Inbar, and Robert Manaster. Washington, DC: Dryad Press, 2016. 146 pp. \$15.95. (9781928755234).**

*And so is the Bus* by Birstein contains 21 vignettes which are enticing, charming, and told like a Japanese Haiku with the sparsest of details and economy of words. As the introduction states, these vignettes can be called "Palm of the Hand stories" or "fingernail stories." The author uses the vignettes to record his travels through Jerusalem by bus, observing along the way the broad spectrum of the city's inhabitants – speaking to some and listening to others, but always with great awareness. All kinds of situations are also presented here, including the loss of a spouse, funerals, infertility, and adoption. Each vignette is so short that it brings a sense of completion and beauty to this unique form. For this reason, *So is the Bus* will make a perfect gift to select for the sick or for a very busy person with little time to read.

*Ellen Share, Washington Hebrew Congregation Librarian, Washington, DC*

**Dean, Arthur. *My Two Cents: A Collection of Short Stories*. New London, CT: Little Red Tree Publishing, 2015. 232 pp. \$19.95. (9781935656401).**

Dean's collection of stories focuses on everyday conflicts among family members, with a handful of sports-related stories included into the mix. Most of the characters are Jewish and many of the stories are set around the Jewish holidays. The mood runs from amusing to wistful and wry to hopeful. The overall impression is that it is never too late to reconnect with a family member or make amends for a wrongdoing. Most of the stories were previously published over the past 15 years in the *Jewish Leader* or the *Waterford Times*. Recommended for synagogue collections.

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

**Enszer, Julie R. *Lilith's Demons*. New York: A Midsummer Night's Press, 2015. Fabula Rasa 06. 64 pp. \$14.95. (9781938334177).**

The demonic figure of Lilith has featured consistently, if not always prominently, in Jewish sources over the ages, including the Bible, Talmud, Midrash, and Zohar. Lilith was said to have been the wife of Adam before Eve and banished for claiming equality with and refusing to submit to him. As punishment, Lilith gives birth at twilight to one hundred baby-killing demons that die at dawn. Understandably, feminists have recently sought to portray Lilith in more sympathetic terms, reclaiming her as a symbol of resistance to normative patriarchy.

This collection of poems by Julie R. Enszer, editor of Lambda Literary award finalist *Milk & Honey: a Celebration of Jewish Lesbian Poetry*, can be located within this tradition of feminist reclamation. The book is divided into three sections – Lilith, Lilith's Demons, and Lilith's Angels – and a deep empathy and

attention to paradox is apparent throughout. For example, Lilith describes the birth of the demons from her body yet she asserts “I am no mother.” And even as humans despise and fear her, Lilith stakes her bond with humanity through shared conditions of loss and isolation. Lilith proclaims her aloneness and loneliness with a kind of determination and pride and maintaining ignorance of “sisterly camaraderie.”

Each of the poems in the second section is in the voice of a particular demon, and so we meet Ada, Zohara, Rivka, and Dimona, among others. The demons describe their missions of death directly yet dispassionately, without self-judgment or condemnation. As they search for their victims, as they enact their end, the demons know they are following the imperative of Lilith, a drive beyond themselves. Enszer masterfully paints the specific circumstances of each demon – their methods for locating their victims, their relationship to the victim, and sometimes their relationship to Lilith herself.

In the final section, with the emergence of the angels, the tone lightens somewhat. All too aware of Lilith’s troubled relationship with God, the angels still protect her while recommitting to their own divine service. In one of my favorite poems, “Lilith’s Garden,” the garden is visualized as her home terrain, a dark but vibrant alternative to Eden.

This is a brief but visionary book about a figure that has haunted our consciousness for centuries and her offspring who have received considerably less attention. In a letter to this reviewer, Julie R. Enszer noted that the poems arose from a brief period of insomnia when she imagined Lilith’s demons were speaking to her. And indeed *Lilith’s Demons* has the feel of a hallucinatory conscious dream state, a place outside quotidian reality. How fortunate we are to have such fine poems as testament to that communication. Recommended for academic, community, and synagogue libraries.

*Yermiyahu Ahron Taub, Washington, DC, www.yataub.net*

**Samson, Polly. *The Kindness, a Novel*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 293 pp. \$26.00. (9781632860675).**

This is a story about relationships and families, and a love triangle between friends. It takes place in England between August 1989 and August 2012, beginning when the protagonists are in their twenties. The action jumps back and forth with scenes taking place during this time. Themes of love, grief, regret, betrayal and reconciliation run through the story, which sometimes is hard to follow. However, there is no Jewish connection or relation with any of the characters in the story. The author, whose father, Lance Samson, arrived in Britain on the Kindertransport, has written two acclaimed short story collections and a novel.

*Susan Freiband, Retired library educator; Volunteer Temple librarian, Arlington, Virginia*

**Tidhar, Lavie. *Central Station*. San Francisco, CA: Tachyon Publications, 2016. 252 pp. \$15.95. (9781616962142).**

Less a novel and more a series of connected short stories, this work takes place in the same world and time period as Tidhar’s earlier work *Martian Sands*. Central Station is located outside of Jaffa-Tel Aviv and is home to a wide variety of inhabitants. Jews and Arabs who have lived there for millennia, live alongside immigrant communities from China and Nigeria. But religion and ethnicity are not the only differences among the inhabitants. Most humans are enhanced in a way which allows them to connect to the “conversation,” a constant stream of communication. A handful of people forgo these enhancements and live in partial isolation from the community. Then there are the robotniks, humans who had long ago been given robotic parts to fight in wars, but who now struggle to remember their humanity and to find spare parts for their aging bodies. Some people choose to bond to alien intelligences and others live or work in virtual worlds.

It is into this setting that Boris Chang finds himself when he returns to Central Station from Mars. He comes back to be with his dying father who has lost himself in family memories. Boris encounters his former lover Miriam Jones, who is raising a child created in the labs; Carmel, a data vampire; Ibrahim the junk man, who is raising a unique orphan, Motl, the robotnik mohel, and an assortment of other characters. The stories bring up issues of what it means to be human, the role of religion in people’s lives, and how much memory is too much. Highly recommended for literary collections.

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

## Reviews of Multimedia

**Alpert, Michael and Julian Kytasty.** *Night Songs from a Neighboring Village: Ballads of the Ukrainian and Yiddish Heartland.* RIENC86. Oriente Musik, 2014. Sale (MP3) \$9.99.

Michael Alpert and Julian Kytasty, two international world music masters, present a CD of ballads from a co-territorial center of both Jewish-Yiddish and Ukrainian life. For nearly a thousand years these different cultures mixed, sharing history and, at times, difficult relationships. Here are songs evoking a common past and past differences. The music is pure, simple and true to the two traditions; accompaniments are sparse or even absent. Language can shift from Yiddish to Ukrainian within a single song, as in "A Shpay in Yam." Some songs are newly composed, like "Chernobyl" written in Yiddish by Alpert to honor the disaster of the 1980s. Stylistically others reach back in time: the hurdy-gurdy evokes the Middle Ages in "Adam and Eve" or the 19<sup>th</sup> century text of "Buhai" (Young Bull). Some tunes are clearly identified with Yiddish music, such as "Nukh Havdule" (After Shabbes Closes), while others honor the Ukrainian heritage as in "Two Brothers." The eponymous song comes from the Bessarabian town Caprești: "Night songs from a neighboring village/ Come drifting at times to my balcony/ They caress my loneliness/ Quench my sorrow/ Flow like liquid honey/," and the words speak to the delicate relationship between the physical proximity and the spiritual/cultural distance of the two peoples. Welcome, joy and celebration end the CD with well-known songs from each culture. The last song listeners will recognize as an American folk song... set to a new Ukrainian text—lauding, of course, rye whiskey.

*Judith S. Pinnolis, Brandeis University, retired*

[Editor's note: Usually, the *AJL Reviews* does not publish reviews of works older than one year, but this review was accidentally omitted from one of our 2014 issues. I thank Ms. Pinnolis for her patience and understanding and apologize for the inconvenience]

**Bernstein, Leonard.** *Symphony No. 3 'Kaddish'.* American Classics, NAXOS, 2016. 60:10 min. Sale (CD) \$13.97.

Marin Alsop conducts three compositions by Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990): *Missa Brevis* (1988), *The Lark* (1955/2008/2012), and *Symphony No. 3 'Kaddish'* (original version, 1963). *Missa Brevis* and *The Lark* were recorded in Brazil, November 2012; 'Kaddish' was recorded in concert at Baltimore, Maryland, September 2012.

The music and words of the three pieces on this CD blend together modern music with spiritual content. The compositions contain liturgical verses in Latin from the New Testament and in Hebrew from the Siddur (the Jewish prayer book). Lillian Hellman adapted, into English, Jean Anouilh's *L'Alouette*, on the life of Joan of Arc, and Bernstein wrote the words of the Speaker in *Kaddish* (the words are recited here by Claire Bloom). The spoken words in *Kaddish* express Bernstein's ambivalence towards this traditional prayer written in commemoration of the dead: is it for his own immediate end? Does he believe in God or does God believe in him? What is the comfort and the promise that they bring each other?

The performers of the CD include Claire Bloom, Narrator; Kelley Nassief, Soprano; Paulo Mestre, Countertenor; and music is supplied by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra; The Washington Chorus; The Maryland State Boychoir, and The Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra and Choir.

One should listen and absorb *Symphony No. 3 'Kaddish'* several times to appreciate both the meaning of the music and the words. This CD will enhance any music library or personal collection.

*Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL*

**Grobman, Svetlana.** *The Education of a Traitor: Growing Up in Cold War Russia.* Columbia, MO: Musings Publishing, 2015. 299 pp. \$12.99. (9780692312285).

Editor's note: we would like to draw our readership's attention to the review of Svetlana Grobman's book *The Education of a Traitor: Growing Up in Cold War Russia* (Musings Publishing, 2015), posted on *AJL Reviews*, February/March 2016, p. 11. Unfortunately, when we received the book for reviewing, we were not told that the book was a pre-publication copy, and thus, the copy in hand was a "typo-laden copy," as was rightly stated by the reviewer. Regrettably, this statement has marred the otherwise positive review. More information about the book and its author is available at <https://svetlanagrobman.com>.

**Seidenberg, David Mevorach.** *Kabbalah and Ecology: God's Image in the More-Than-Human World.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 397 pp. \$99.00. (9781107081338).

Editor's note: the following are a rebuttal letter by Rabbi David Seidenberg regarding the review of his book *Kabbalah and Ecology: God's Image in the More-Than-Human World*, (*AJL Reviews*, November/December 2015, p. 31), together with a response letter from the reviewer, Dr. David Levy.

[April 1, 2016]

Dear Editor,

I appreciated that David Levy thought well enough of *Kabbalah and Ecology: God's Image in the More-Than-Human World* (Cambridge, 2015) to give it a positive review, but he does not mention major subjects of the book – midrash, Maimonides, and Kabbalah – that will be important for AJL members. In contrast, the Jubilee year is the focus of nearly half of his review. While Dr. Levy correctly limns that Jubilee is profoundly important for Jewish ecotheology, the Jubilee year is discussed on only a handful of pages. He also identifies the theme of the book to be stewardship, whereas several sections are devoted to critiquing the idea of stewardship. In fact, the book is entirely focused on going beyond the standard ideas that have constituted Jewish environmentalism up until now.

Here are some details about what can be found in *Kabbalah and Ecology*:

- 1) The entire book – all 400 plus pages – is about 'tselem Elohim', the divine image, and the ways that rabbinic and Kabbalistic texts have extended 'tselem' to include more than human beings – the "more-than-human world" of the title.
- 2) 135 pages are about Kabbalah, the main focus of the whole book. Many texts are translated into English for the first time, and the book proposes a new framework for their analysis. It also traces the evolution of concepts like 'komah shleimah' that have never before been analyzed in the scholarly literature.
- 3) Over a third of *Kabbalah and Ecology* surveys midrashic literature to uncover the intellectual history of ideas like soul and imitatio Dei. This survey includes data that establish a new basis for dating midrashim like Tanhuma.
- 4) The book proposes a new interpretation of Maimonides that thoroughly re-envision the purpose of the *Guide for the Perplexed* in line with the Maimonidean rejection of anthropocentrism.

5) *Kabbalah and Ecology* also contains significant material on several modern Jewish thinkers, most especially Buber, and evaluations of the ecotheologies of Arthur Green and Arthur Waskow. This should be especially relevant to AJL members.

In short, *Kabbalah and Ecology* is a significant work on the history of Jewish thought that also deals with some very contemporary issues raised by ecology. As such, AJL members may find it to be a valuable addition to their collections. Indexes, bibliographies, and the introduction to *Kabbalah and Ecology* can be found online at [kabbalahandecology.com](http://kabbalahandecology.com).

### David Levy's response

[April 14, 2016]

Thank you Rabbi Seidenberg for a wonderful book, and the AJL for the chance to respond respectfully to the rejoinder. Due to AJL word limits a reviewer is sometimes unable to raise complex concerns. For example:

1) Rabbi Seidenberg claims that Kabbalah teaches ecotheology but according to scholars such as Wolfson and Tirosch-Samuels- the popularizing of ecotheology cannot be found in Kabbalah, is closer to pantheism, and may be at odds with ethical monotheism.

2) The sections critiquing stewardship and claiming to supersede it are not fully convincing. Why should not our being commanded and entrusted to safeguard, protect, conserve, and cherish G-d's Creation still be today timely and relevant? Recycling, developing cleaner alternative energy sources, reducing pollution, eliminating acid rain, toxic dumping, and ozone deterioration, and halting global warming – all are motivated by care for G-d's planet.

3) The book should have devoted more attention to the essential relationship between *shemitah and Yovel* and its significance for ecotheologies. The doctrine of sabbatical worlds is inextricably bound to the cosmological “grand Yovel” developed by Nahmanides. For Ramban, each of the seven worlds is destined to exist for seven millennia based on the Gemara relating each creation day likened to 1000 years from a verse in Tehillim. Each of the seven worlds parallels the Kabbalistic seven lower sefirot, from *Hesed to Malchut*, representing the “natural world” figuring in Ecotheologies.

Rambam's rationalistic teaching of ‘be-tselem Elokim,’ means the potential to develop one's mind via the ‘*sekhel hapoel*’ (active intellect) which is the link between humans and Hashem. Rabbi Seidenberg asserts: “that specific earthly non-human creatures including animals, plants, and rocks are in God's image” (37). This is NOT ‘in line’ with Rambam's insistence of the incorporeality of G-d and philosophic understanding of anthropomorphism. Ergo Rambam forbid learning *Shiur Komah*. In *Hilkhot Teshuva* the Rambam insists that reward in incorporeal realm of *olam ha-ba* is directly proportional to the wisdom understanding and knowledge gained in *olam ha-zeh*, where the souls of the righteous bask in the *ziv* (radiance) of the shekhinah.

To uncover the full history of concepts of the soul and imitatio Dei, one must not look only to Midrashim but also to Aristotle's *De Anima*, Plato's *Phaedon*, and in Jewish philosophy, for seminal tracts such as Rambam's *Igrot Tehiyat ha-metim*, Rabbi Menaseh ben Israel' *Nishmat Hayim*, Rabbi Lifshitz' *Or ha-hayim*, Rabbi Chaim Vital's *Shaar HaGilgulim*, *Sefer HaGilgulim*, and *Sefer HaHezyonot*, and Mendelsohn's *Phaedon, or On the Immortality of the Soul*.

Readers should decide for themselves if Rabbi Seidenberg's book is their “cup of tea.”

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