
This book highlights the stories of queer Israeli emigrants and their rationales for leaving the country. Based on fieldwork in New York, London and Berlin, Amit argues that leaving Israel is for these Israelis a way of expressing their opposition to the dominant Zionist narrative. She discusses the pervasive anxiety surrounding Israel’s demographic issues, and she looks at how this anxiety has shaped Israeli policy towards emigration of any kind. Amit makes the case that emigration in general, and especially LGBT emigration, is in direct opposition to the Zionist agenda, which continues to promote the ideology of the strong Jew in the Jewish State. For queer Israelis, this agenda is doubly problematic as it promotes heterosexuality in order to fulfill the perceived necessity to reproduce and increase the Jewish demographic. While the reasons why Israelis leave the state are diverse and deeply personal, queer Israelis still feel unwanted and unwelcome in the larger Zionist project. Finding themselves in such a situation, the fact that many have chosen and continue to choose to leave is not surprising. Amit traces such reasoning through interesting interviews that aim to explicate why each emigrant left Israel, and what connection(s), if any, they still feel to the state.

This book is most suitable for academic institutions that are looking to fill lacunae in their collections on the history of Zionism, Israeli politics, and/or LGBT history and community in Israel and beyond.

*Eli Lieberman, HUC-JIR NY, New York*

## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults</th>
<th>p. 1</th>
<th>Fiction - Middle Grades</th>
<th>p. 24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults</td>
<td>p. 13</td>
<td>Fiction - Teen</td>
<td>p. 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews of Multimedia titles for Adults</td>
<td>p. 17</td>
<td>Holocaust and World War II</td>
<td>p. 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titles for Children &amp; Teens</td>
<td>p. 18</td>
<td>Jewish Life &amp; Values</td>
<td>p. 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spotlight</td>
<td>p. 18</td>
<td>Non-fiction</td>
<td>p. 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Stories and Midrash</td>
<td>p. 20</td>
<td>Picture Books</td>
<td>p. 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>p. 21</td>
<td>Shabbat &amp; Holidays</td>
<td>p. 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Books</td>
<td>p. 23</td>
<td>Books Received</td>
<td>p. 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Credits and Contact</td>
<td>p. 38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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AJL is now on [FaceBook](https://www.facebook.com/ajlreviews). Become a fan.

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This graphic novel memoir chronicles the author’s life growing up in France. From the outset, upset that his parents are separating and told by his father that he should always remain proud to be Jewish (since “all great men are Jewish!”), young Benjamin asks whether Superman is Jewish. His father tells him that Superman’s creators were Jewish; therefore, to be like Superman, Benjamin dons a cape and proclaims that he is Jewish. While not truly understanding what “being Jewish” really meant, Benjamin begins to wonder about the things that set him apart as a Jewish child from other children around him. Episodes within the memoir include worrying about the fact that he is circumcised, attending synagogue with his father, going to Church to see what his Catholic mother does (and learning about interfaith issues), being nervous about becoming Bar Mitzvah, and other stories as he grows up and defines what “being Jewish” means to him, if anything.

The full color illustrations by Boudet are bright and cheerful, even when the characters are angry at each other. The main point of the memoir is to show that, potentially, being Jewish can be defined in any way one chooses. This idea is best illustrated at the end of the book, when due to a death in the family while in college, Benjamin understands that he can choose to be Jewish or not on his own terms.

This book is recommended for synagogue and school libraries as its message will be most appealing for children and young adults.

Eli Lieberman, HUC-JIR NY, New York


This book has three parts: part one deals with the antecedents to European Jewish museums, a French collection, and a London exhibition; part two presents the Jewish museums in Vienna, Prague, and Budapest; and part three covers the Bezalel museum in Jerusalem. Berger wanted to “address the question of the degree to which, as a phenomenon, the Jewish museum beginning with the earliest of Jewish Museums—reflects the complexity of Jewish identity in the modern world.” Thus, for example, she contrasts the motivations and work of the founders and curators of the Jewish museums of Europe who were motivated by anti-Semitism but who did not exhibit anti-Semitic art with the visual representations of the persecution of Jews in the Diaspora that are displayed in Jerusalem.

The Jewish Museum is based upon the author’s doctoral dissertation for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on “the role of the Jewish museum in the crystallization of Jewish identity in the modern era” (2006). In the acknowledgments for this book, Berger thanks the translators of her Hebrew manuscript; notwithstanding, the resulting work is lackluster and comprises long paraphrases of a large number of documents. Thus, reading this work could be quite tedious at times, and in spite of valuable insights here and there, they are oft repeated. The text contains too many typos, erroneous facts, and incorrect spellings for this reviewer to believe that a copy editor went seriously through the manuscript. The index is woefully incomplete. Recommended only to large libraries because of poor value for money.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.


New York City’s Lower East Side has traditionally been a home to immigrants. It has acquired an almost mythical status for Ashkenazic Jews, although African Americans, Germans, Italians, and Irish, just to name a few, have settled there. Sara Blair, a professor of English at the University of Michigan, looks at the Lower East Side from a new perspective: regarding it as an incubator for art. Beginning with Jacob Riis, who used his camera to portray street life as part of his journalistic work, artists and
writers have drawn inspiration from the area. Their works depicted multiple perceptions of people and lifestyles and offered many ideas for social reformers. In addition to Riis, Abraham Cahan, Ben Shahn, Henry Roth, and Walker Evans were among those who wrote, drew, and photographed these neighborhoods. Later, poets Allen Ginsburg and LeRoi Jones broke new ground in poetry there. Black-and-white and color illustrations provide examples of the artists’ work. Copious notes and an extensive bibliography offer readers sources for further research.

This is an interesting book that shows how the Lower East Side has given artists new avenues for expression and historians new ways to examine the past. It is an excellent choice for academic libraries supporting programs in the humanities and social sciences.

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


This is a compilation of 280 first-hand recollections of and stories about Rav Yitchak Zilber. The testimonies speak to Rav Zilber’s modesty, *emunah* (deep faith), love for his fellow Jews, dislike of *sichah beteilah* (empty talk), his striving for simplicity, and to the way he lived Torah in all dimensions.

As the title suggests, Rav Zilber is characterized as one of the “thirty-six hidden Tzaddikim” thanks to his many acts of charity and kindness (*hesed*). These included *bikur cholim* (taking care of the sick), providing pro bono *shiurim* (lessons), and finding employment or procuring financial assistance for those in need. In Israel, Rav Zilber brought hundreds of Russian-speaking Jews back to Torah and mitzvah observance. Avraham Cohen’s book is recommended for synagogues and all other Jewish libraries as the readership for this work is not just the religious, but anyone who wants to learn about and take inspiration from a righteous, saintly, and upright sage.

David B. Levy, Touro College, NYC


Drazin, a multi-talented Rabbi, lawyer, civil servant, and prolific author, asks probing questions about Nachmanides’ life and oeuvre and by doing so shares in this book many fresh insights into this great Jewish thinker. For example, among the points Drazin raises and addresses are questions such as: Did Nachmanides insist that midrashic tales are not parables but true? Did this insistence lead to difficult conclusions? Was superstition and integral part of his life and thinking? Did he suggest that people could read future events from the Torah? In addition, Drazin queries how Nachmanides appraised his rabbinic predecessors like Rashi, ibn Ezra, and Maimonides, and he explores his unique views on the importance of Eretz Yisrael. The work includes a bibliography and index. Highly recommended reading.

David B. Levy, Touro College, NYC


Each painting is accompanied by an elaborate interpretation that adds to the understanding of Judaism in general. The seventh section is the only one which includes (with no biblical summary)
Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

AJL Reviews February/March 2019

several larger views of some paintings that exceeded the limits of the art book. 

The Art of Yannai is a pleasure to look at and to read. Certainly, it is very welcome as a unique book for someone interested in art and in biblical themes. It adds understanding and beauty to the original bible text and it is worthy of acquisition by a broad range of libraries – public and private. 

Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL


The author, Silvia Fishbaum, is the daughter of two Holocaust survivors who returned to their small village in Slovakia where they were the only Jews, and Orthodox at that, to live there for a number of years after the war. This is an interesting book about growing up in the eastern Slovakian village of Porubka where her father was a wealthy owner of a very large vineyard. The family then moved to the city of Kosice where they lived under the rule of Communism. As she matured, this life was unacceptable to Fishbaum and she documents her efforts to escape from the totalitarian regime that did not allow her the freedom she yearned for. The failed experiments to flee are described along with the disappointments and her eventual arrival in the United States and the successful life she was able to build at last. This memoir, originally written in Slovak, includes many very basic explanations of Jewish traditions and beliefs, perhaps due to the co-author’s lack of familiarity with Judaism. The book could be of interest only in large libraries that include Holocaust memoirs and the rare memoirs about Jewish life in post war Eastern Europe.

Michlean Lowy Amir, Holocaust Survivors and Victims Resource Center, USHMM


Surviving time and space, the literary and musical artistic output of the Spanish Jews traveled with them to remote reaches of the world, preserving as a time capsule some of the language and forms from the medieval period. Lyrics of popular Judeo-Spanish traditions preserve much of the framework of those ancient forms, expressing the values and beliefs of the people who sang them. Often, this is in the feminine voice, as poor women had remained illiterate in that culture, they carried with them oral traditions in a unique dialect in which “they talked with local expression understood only by them” being more removed than men from the Hebrew language. This book selects songs from a variety of locations where Spanish Jews settled after the expulsion, tracing and analyzing numerous texts. The author shows how some lyrical features allow tracing due to poetic traditions that remained in place. The author also explains symbols from both the natural and supernatural worlds that recurred in many songs, and explains their meanings in the contexts of the various cultures. The book explores two main themes: lyrics in reference to nature, and those with attributes of women. For anyone interested in Sephardic songs, this book will prove useful for musical interpretations by allowing a better understanding of the meanings and context of those songs. A useful index of first lines of the songs covered in the book is included.

Judith S. Pinnolis, Berklee College of Music/Boston Conservatory at Berklee


Nationalism is by no means passé as is evidenced, for example, by the enactment of the nation state law in Israel; yet it is also controversial. Israeli political thinker Yoram Hazony offers in his latest tome a systematic reflection upon the three ways of politically ordering the world: feudal/tribal, national, and imperial, leading to his argument that the best of these—and the one taught by the Hebrew Bible—is an order of independent national states. At the base of nationalism, Dr. Hazony argues, is
a collocation of clans or tribes who have a common heritage often combined with a shared history of fighting together against enemies. This provides a cultural cohesion that results in a mutual loyalty. He maintains that the prototype of a nationalistic anti-imperialism in the West is the Israel of the Hebrew Bible which inspired some Christians to nationalisms of their own. He notes that the Biblical God does not command Israel to conquer the world and force all to follow the Torah. Rather Israel is given borders and the Torah is proclaimed, not as a universalistic ideology, but as the constitution of the Hebrew nation. While the author is no moral relativist, he argues that nationalism can encourage a recognition that no nation is in possession of all truth. In an order of national states, experimentation is more likely to occur, and nations are able to learn from one another. On the other hand, according to this book, imperialism believes all the important political truths have been discovered and all that need be done is to apply them. Thus, it is inherently salvationist and encourages fanaticism and despotism. The national state, Dr. Hazony concludes, far from being retrograde, offers the chance for humility and tolerance to come to the fore, though not guaranteeing it.

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


The way we currently finance synagogues, with annual dues, High Holidays seats, appeals, building funds, and Hebrew School tuition, is relatively modern. Colonial American synagogues sold pews as permanent property, plus an annual assessment. Richer members bought seats closer to the front. Members were fined for various transgressions including refusing to serve as synagogue officers. Aliyot were auctioned off. Disputes were litigated in court.

The author, Dean of the Rabbinical School at Hebrew College, uses original archival research into little studied synagogue financial records from American synagogues from 1728 to the present, to place synagogue financing in the greater trends of American Jewish history. He enlivens this history with the stories of individual synagogues and their officers.

Judson looks at building campaigns as a tool to finance the increasing number of synagogues in nineteenth century America. He shows how pragmatism was more important than religious appeals, unlike Protestants, who funded churches stressing the obligation to tithe. By the early twentieth century democratic ideas of equality lead away from permanent seats to a movement towards annual dues. The post-World War I period saw a large increase in synagogue building, which was then impacted by the Great Depression. Social justice themes arose in this period. Judson traces the spread of suburban synagogues in the post-World War II period, arguing over charging income based or equal dues, plus school tuition. Judson’s figures for rabbis’ salaries places them as upper middle-class professionals, paid more than Christian clergy.

One theme throughout is individualism and the role of free market versus communal responsibility. Contending that synagogue expansion and contraction follows economic trends, Judson concludes optimistically that synagogues will adopt to current challenges, including independent minyanim, Chabad, and the revived idea of a free synagogue funding model of voluntary payments. Highly recommended for synagogue and academic libraries.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA


Nora Krug is a complex author—a writer, illustrator, animator, and associate professor. It is therefore not surprising that Klug’s illustrated memoir is also complex, in both content and structure. Klug’s book incorporates prose, illustration, comic pages, and photographs in various combinations. More
than simply a personal biography, Krug’s narrative gives the reader insight into how guilt has become ingrained into the upbringing of contemporary German youth. In an attempt to learn and accept what members of her family did during the Holocaust, Klug goes on a journey of discovery (literally and figuratively) and shares with the reader both the details of how she went about her research (e.g. interviews with historians, family members, witnesses, children of witnesses, visits to archives), as well as reproductions of primary documents she accessed during her hunt for the truth. Although it’s impossible to be objective when trying to uncover family secrets, Klug resists the urge to accept everything at face value and expresses her skepticism when she notices discrepancies. At times, she even seems to be hyper-critical towards her family’s involvement.

Though the post-modern approach may be off-putting for some, Belonging is a fascinating mish-mash which presents histories (present-day, WWII, pre-war ( ), travelogues, popular culture, and genealogy into a colorful collage whose blending is greater than the sum of its parts. Though not a typical Holocaust-themed book (as it mostly presents the point-of-view of card-carrying Nazis and their descendants), it does relate what happened to the Jews of Karslruhe (both collectively and via personal testimony), as well as provide insight into the motivations of Krug’s forebears.

Belonging would make a great addition to a library’s Holocaust collection.

Steven M. Bergson, Jewish Comics blog, Toronto, Canada


The intent of this well-written, original, and important book is to show that there need not be any real conflict between Torah and science. While acknowledging that the Torah does not come to teach us science, it assumes that science can help us understand the Torah long before the Big Bang theory. The book seeks to reconcile and harmonize science and Torah in order to reveal in part the secrets of creation (ma’aseh bereshit). Langer considers questions of dating the universe alongside fossil evidence and Einsteinian theories of time together with the literal reading of the six days of Creation.

The author also draws on the mystical traditions of Ramban, Midrash Rabbah, Rabbi Yisrael Lifshitz; he includes Umberto Cassuto’s encryptions of numerical coding and patterns, and he makes reference to the Zohar to show how the universe inflated from an initial nekudah ketanah (tiny point); how it became tohu (energy) and bohu (elemental particles of matter) with each transforming back and forth into the other. The fluids that would become the Earth (waters below) separated from the rest of the solar nebula (waters above). In the process, Langer reveals the sublime, unimaginable, beautiful diversity that arose out of unity thanks to genetic mutation and natural selection. Recommended highly for academic, synagogue, and all libraries.

David B. Levy, Touro College, NYC


This is a new edition of a book that was first published in 1988. From the first sentence, one is aware just how special this book is. Betty Jean (known to all as BJ) Lifton was a remarkable story teller who weaves the biographical elements of Korczak’s life together with the stories that he himself told into a seamless, rich, and varied whole. BJ, herself an orphan who was then adopted, is able to empathize with the children whom Dr. Korczak cared for in such a unique way. While reading about Dr. Korczak’s own upbringing and his all-consuming interest in the well-being of children, I was struck by the relevance of this book to every aspect of children’s care. Parts of this book could be read by high school and college students doing research into the history of the Shoah. It is equally relevant to students of educational methodology and aspects of Polish/Jewish relations in the interwar years and beyond.

This book should be part of any pedagogy collection in addition to every Judaica collection. In an elementary school, it can be a teacher resource. In middle, high, and college level schools, it is a necessary
part of the general collection. It was a New York Times Notable book of the year 1988 when it was first published. The website Good Reads said about it: “King of Children is now recognized as a classic work for educators, historians, parents, and anyone who lives or works with a child”. I couldn’t put it down.

Marion Stein, retired librarian


The author is an independent journalist who has covered Central America and the Middle East. The Introduction presents the central theme of the book, namely President Roosevelt’s interest in Latin America during the Second World War and its population of ethnic Germans, Italians, and Japanese. The first three chapters describe Germany’s particular interest in Latin America in the aftermath of the First World War to establish air travel, communications, and petroleum supplies. Latin America was also a large supplier of natural rubber which the Germans didn’t need but could prevent other nations from obtaining. Chapter four is of particular note, describing the history of Jews in the Americas and how Nazi policies found their way across the Atlantic. Ethnic Japanese were traded for American hostages being held in China, Japan, and the Philippines during the war. Latin America was also a busy region for Nazi spies and the U.S. deployed its own intelligence agents to counter German espionage through mass media. Operations supplied vital intelligence that influenced battles at sea and U-boat (German submarine) activities. After the war, lines of escape were easily established for Nazis fleeing Europe for South America. During the Cold War, fascist tactics were used by authoritarian regimes all over Latin America to create an enemy within, confiscate books, detain suspects without due process, affecting thousands. Jews were targeted, being accused of communist sympathies. While most of the book focuses on wartime operations and policies in Latin America, Jews were clearly affected, making this book relevant as a supplementary resource for congregations and adult non-fiction libraries.

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


Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), the Rabbi of K’hal Adath Jeshurun in Frankfurt, Germany, founded the philosophy of “Torah with Derekh Eretz” — the idea that a Jew can be both observant and a member of the surrounding society — and was a powerful voice for modern Orthodoxy. Rabbi Dr. Salomon Breuer (1850-1926), a co-editor of this work, was Hirsch’s son-in-law and successor.

In 2017 I reviewed an earlier book in this series (*AJL Reviews*, September-October 2017, Vol.7, No.3, p.7); sadly, the editors have not improved. Selected from the writings of these well-known rabbis, it seems the editors threw paragraphs into each chapter without careful thought. Sometimes one paragraph does not accord with the next. While the title claims this volume is about Hanukkah and Purim, many of the essays have very little connection to the holidays.

The work is lacking bibliographic references and notes that would enable a reader to search the original texts. There is no compelling reason to read every essay and the book is hard to complete. In fact, apart from a few paragraphs with gems of great thought, I found very little new or exciting in these essays. This book is an optional purchase for most libraries. Some libraries that collect books of Orthodox Jewish thought may want to purchase this volume.

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


In this enchanting new biography, Steven Nadler uses a broad brush to paint a vivid portrait of one of the most profound scholars and certainly the most dynamic and influential diplomat in 17th
Century Europe. Born in Inquisition Portugal, Menasseh and his family had been subjected to forced conversion, torture at the hands of the tribunal, and confiscation of their property by that institution. Fleeing the country, they spent ten years travelling before finally finding refuge and community in Amsterdam, where many Sephardic Jews had begun taking up residence around 1600. Menasseh, having undergone circumcision and conversion, immediately began to study Hebrew, the Bible, and rabbinic law.

Nadler explains that while some rabbis in Amsterdam were contemptuous of Jews remaining in Iberia and submitting to the impositions of the Catholic church, Menasseh found a mentor in Rabbi Isaac Uziel, who taught in the Talmud Torah school, and served as the rabbi of the Neve Shalom Synagogue. Menasseh proved to be a precocious student and when Uziel died a few years later, Menasseh had reached such a level of scholarship that he was asked to succeed his mentor at Neve Shalom.

While tracing this extraordinary life Nadler presents Menasseh as a complete character with his struggles, successes, disappointments, and sorrows. He details his financial woes and the poor pay for rabbinical services which led him to concurrently pursue Hebrew printing and publishing. In the process we learn about the rise of Amsterdam as a center of Hebrew publishing and the intellectual, religious, and political landscape of the Netherlands of the seventeenth century. Over the last six years of his life, Menasseh strove valiantly to gain readmission of the Jews to England.

A thought-provoking, and highly personal biography, this work is unquestionably a must for those researching Jews in the 17th Century. With superb bibliography, notes, and index, Nadler’s work is indispensable for libraries detailing the history of the Sephardim.

Randall C. and Anne-Marie Belinfante


This collection of articles is based on a 2015 conference at the new POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. The first section contains articles on how decisions were made on what to include in each part of the exhibit. What aspects of the history of the Jews in Poland should be emphasized? How much space should be devoted to antisemitism? These articles by the creators of the exhibits explain the criteria and modes of display. There are also articles by other scholars that review and criticize the decisions. The remaining two thirds of the volume contain articles on a variety of topics related to Polish Jewish history, from the pre-modern period to post World War II. The overall quality of the articles is excellent, and this reviewer was delighted to learn a lot about what goes into planning a museum. The only subject that has (understandably) been left out is what sort of influence the politics of current day Poland played in some of the decisions of what to include or leave out.

This fine volume belongs in any academic library that collects on Jewish history.

Jim Rosenbloom, Brandeis University


This book is part examination, part expose of anti-Zionist antisemitism. The author—formerly Washington, DC director of the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America—does not deny that anti-Zionism does not invariably entail anti-Semitism, but he is convinced it very often does. He argues that the Palestinian Arab narrative that maintains that colonialist Jews ethnically cleansed an ancient indigenous Arab populace is a lie that relies upon “omission, distortion, inversion, and invention,” and serves as a modern form of blood libel. Vigorously written, this book is full of information and covers big questions, such as the causes of antisemitism, as well as very specific incidents (e.g., the accusation that Israeli forces perpetrated a massacre in the village of Tantura in 1948). Rozenman offers a number of explanations for the existence of antisemitism, some more convincing
than others, but does not bring into his consideration that Hindu and Buddhist cultures have nothing resembling the antisemitism found in Christian and Islamic lands and what that might mean. The book does not have, as far as this reviewer could tell, a discernible order or schema; it often reads like an exercise in stream of consciousness. This is an accessible, informative book on an important topic but a more carefully constructed, systematic approach would have added to the strength of its argument.

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


Shay, a successful businessman and admitted layman, takes on the herculean task of writing a spirited defense of religion in general and monotheism, particularly against the ‘new’ wave of atheism literature ushered in by notable atheists and agnostics such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, and Christopher Hitchens. The central premise of the book is that Judaism and monotheism properly understood is a rejection and battle not so much against atheism, but against idolatry, which in the author’s words is “a lie about the power and authority of finite things, whether elements, animals, or people. This lie is usually used for selfish and unjust aims, it is the root of evil.” The author thereby rejects the direct tension that exists between atheists and monotheists believing that the values held dear by atheists are more closely aligned with monotheists than they may care to admit, and that atheists often confuse monotheism and idolatry.

The book contains six sections that respond to six different “primary” arguments set forth by the “new atheists”. The first section discusses Shay’s (a bit too conveniently) broad definition of idolatry. The second section focuses on the accusation that the Bible is unjust in contradistinction to progressive secularism. Section three addresses the question of good and evil in relationship to God, man, and the Bible. The fourth section concentrates on the complicated relationship between religion and science. Questions of biblical criticism and the accuracy of the Bible are the focus of the penultimate section and the book finishes with a discussion of faith and prayer.

Shay has written a movingly personal and valiant defense of monotheistic Judaism properly perceived and practiced in a secular age where it often feels under siege. As a layman, he should be lauded for the wide range of topics he brings to bear in his defense, even if some of his arguments and evidence fail to convince. The book is clearly written and accessible to the general reader.

David Tesler, Efrat, Israel


Most commentators and scholars agree that the Song of Songs has much deeper meaning than what seems to be a love poem. Twersky’s “life-long fascination with the Song has led her to conclude that the concealed message that is conveyed through the Song’s elaborate metaphor system is that mortal humans, much like the keruvim, possess the innate potential to engage the Divine in a reciprocal relationship predicating upon love and devotion.” In the first section of the book, she looks at “Metaphors and Riddles,” which include references to the Garden of Eden, the fact that the keruvim were in the Holy of Holies, hidden from all but the High Priest, and the placement of the question “Who Is This?” in three places in the Song. In the second part of the book, “Anomalies and Conundrums,” Twersky looks at such textual references as the motif of the royal chariot, the significance of apples and other fruits, and the repeated mention of lilies. The final chapter shows the proposed solutions to the anomalies of the text. There are two excursuses comparing the Song to other biblical texts. The author includes several charts that organize themes and compare lines from the text, and the “Commonalities between the Lovers and the Keruvim” is particularly helpful.

Twersky uses the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible for English translation, as well as many
Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

sources from other Christian publishers and academic publications. Because her analysis is based on metaphors, as well as similarities and differences in the text, many passages are repeated multiple times through the book. While delving into an aspect of the Song, she will often stray from the original text, for example, explaining the Egyptian influence on the Song. Those who enjoy scholarly analysis of biblical text will revel in this in-depth, detailed and well-referenced exposition, but for most Jewish libraries, it is an optional purchase.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel


This well-written, well-researched, heart wrenching, powerful biography traces the tragic life of Werner Scholem, brother of Gershom Scholem, the famous scholar of Jewish mysticism. It places Werner in the context of his family, the Weimar Republic, a cultural history of German Jewry, the interwar political left, and the politics of survival for Jews. This book may recall for many the poem of Pastor Martin Niemoller: “First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out…”

Werner, like his brother Gershom, rejected the bourgeois, middle-class Judaism of his father Arthur Scholem. Like his brother Gershom, Werner sought a kind of answer to the ‘Jewish Question’ through Utopian communism. His brother Gershom approached it through Utopian Zionism.

The book makes one feel for Werner, regardless of one’s political views. As a communist, Werner was cruelly persecuted both for his left activism by the Nazis, and ironically for being a Jew, despite his being on a path of progressive liberal assimilation. The book makes the reader feel what Amos Elon calls ‘the pity of it all.’ Werner was murdered in Buchenwald in June 1940 after many years of harsh and inhuman detainment in various prisons and concentration camps, and for this all readers must sympathize. Recommended for academic libraries.

David B. Levy, Touro College NYC


This important biography demonstrates that there was even more to Gershom Scholem than simply being the great scholar of Jewish mysticism and pioneer of the academic scientific study of Kabbalah for which he is mostly known. Zadoff also demonstrates how Scholem dwelt in complex intellectual realms, as both a Zionist and German Jewish intellectual. Indeed, From Berlin to Jerusalem and Back demonstrates that although he lived the Zionist dream, Scholem never completely lost the side of his character and soul that represented the highest achievements of German Jewish intellectualism. Furthermore, Zadoff explores how Scholem superseded the limits of the Science of Judaism (“Wissenschaft des Judentums”) movement through his significant role in the rebirth of Israeli culture.

Zadoff also shows us the personal side of Scholem; for example, how he refused to remain silent during the Holocaust; how he wept upon visiting the Prague Jewish cemetery on a mission to redeem Judaica looted by the Nazis; and how he mentored his students (e.g., Chaim Wirzubski, Isaiah Tishby, and Joseph Weiss) with loving care.

The book provides additional insights into Scholem’s deep love for the Jewish people, the extent of his passion for the study of Jewish history and culture, and his insistence on maintaining the highest academic standards in all intellectual pursuits.

Scholars of German intellectual history can only ignore this book at risk. Scholars of the modern Jewish experience and the history of Zionism will find this work an essential reading.

David B. Levy, Touro College, NYC


Who is writing nowadays? What for and to whom? Elana Zaiman explains in this self-help book the
importance of the written words. After long and intensive research, she concludes that personal, forever letters are meaningful to their recipients as well as to their writers. They help human beings grow and change.

The book is divided into nine main chapters: 1. My father’s forever letter to his children; 2. Why write a forever letter; 3. Why we resist; 4. What matters most; 5. How to increase our chances of being heard; 6. What to avoid; 7. Thoughts on the writing process; 8. Writing prompts; 9. Write and edit your forever letter. The book also contains helpful appendixes and an extensive bibliography. *The Forever Letter* is an absorbing readable message from an author with great introspective feelings and care. It should be considered for acquisition by individuals and a broad range of institutions, academic, religious, and public.

_Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL_


All human relationships are hard but when you live with someone and create a home there is also a theological and philosophical bond that goes beyond any contractual relationships. A ketubah is a kind of contract, but the essence or telos of a marriage is a much greater than a legal connection. In a contract, if one party does not fill the requirements, the contract may be voided. In a covenantal partnership even if one party does not follow the agreements, the rules of the covenant are still in force. Zion is an amazing scholar who gives many sides to the story as the subtitle indicates. The marriage in Jewish and other traditions has a common goal, but the philosophical and theological basis is very different. For example, marriage in the Catholic tradition is protection against fornication and called a sacrament. In the Catholic tradition being married to the Church is a higher ideal than marrying and raising a family. In Judaism a marriage is called _kedushin_ (holiness): marriage makes the partners more holy.

This book, one of eight in a series, is hard to read because of the level of scholarship, length and number of the notes. Most readers could use a condensed version without all the notes. Recommended for academic libraries and other collections with readers who have a strong academic interest in marital relationships.

_Daniel D. Stuhlman, City Colleges of Chicago and Temple Sholom of Chicago, Chicago, IL_


Close readings of Talmudic stories have become a virtual cottage industry in the past generation, with academic works of scholarship ripe with literary theory and historical reconstruction competing with popular books of a more accessible nature that aim to find contemporary practical wisdom in these previously under-examined narratives.

The author joins the fray with a multi-volume series of analysis of those Talmudic and rabbinic stories which focus on marital and sexual relationships. Those who expect something more puritanical from the rabbis will be surprised just how open and explicit the rabbis can be in their storytelling about sexual matters, ranging from subtle discussions of the marital politics of rabbis and their wives to a description of a rabbinic judge who is uncontrollably turned on by his friend’s widows.

Zion is particularly sensitive to the ways in which these compact stories can be interpreted in a number of sometimes contradictory ways, and he compares and contrasts these readings, sometimes without taking a side. He is also attentive to how Greco-Roman cultural background can help explain the stories’ working assumptions. With that, his enthusiasm for considering alternative possible readings and a repetitive writing style can lead to overly long chapters that challenge a reader’s attention span. Readers who stay the course, however, benefit from a fine contribution to the growing genre.

_Youel Finkelman, National Library of Israel_
Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

In this striking volume, Nadine Epstein shares her memories of Wiesel and brings together 36 reflections from friends, colleagues and others who knew him—including his son Elisha Wiesel, Michael Berenbaum, Wolf Blitzer, Father Patrick Desbois, Ben Kingsley, Ronald S. Lauder, Bernard Henri-Lévy, Kati Marton, Itzhak Perlman, Natan Sharansky, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Oprah Winfrey, Ruth Wisse. Featuring more than 100 photographs.

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"Elie performed the alchemy of converting pain, injustice and horror into love, compassion and tolerance."
— TED KOPPEL —

"It is absolutely imperative for this legacy of Elie Wiesel’s to continue. It has to, and if it doesn’t, it is our loss, and it will be an unfathomable loss."
— SIR BEN KINGLSEY —

"This book of reflections is a fitting tribute to the legacy of Elie Wiesel. In its pages and through the words of its contributors, you will feel a promise, not just to the souls who perished, but also to Elie and all those who survived Europe’s darkest night."
— RABBI JONATHAN SACKS —

Historical fiction novels about the Jewish underground movements that fought the British in the 1940s are not plentiful (the most notable, perhaps, being *Yair* by Moshe Shamir). This book, the latest addition to the genre, is a translation from the original Hebrew 2016 book. David Gabinsky joins the partisans at age seventeen and eventually becomes the leader of a group. He is physically strong and becomes mentally self-disciplined. After the war he immigrates to the Land of Israel and conducts a personal (“lone wolf”) campaign against the British. He has contact with both the Hagana and Etsel and his reasons for not joining a group are not coherent. The novel relates many incidents and introduces us to a number of characters including two love interests of Gabinsky. The plot is stronger than the prose which is serviceable at best but not polished; and the reader is informed of historical events and circumstances through dialogue and first-person narrative in a sometimes clunky way. Still, a fairly readable addition for collections of Zionist historical fiction.

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


These 77 prose poems comprise short vignettes to “welcome the Shabbat bride not like a weekly visitor but as a long-awaited, yearned-for beloved.” At the Shabbat service, Gottschalk “felt that Shabbat herself was sharing our eagerness for a true reunion,” and she writes how she “began to image Shabbat in various guises, making a unique entrance every week … If Shabbat can be a queen, doesn’t it stand to reason that he can also be a grandparent, a blanket, a jealous girlfriend …hundreds of thousands of facets all taken together might form a reasonable outline of ineffable perfection.” Recommended to all so inclined to experience the Jewish day of rest.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD.


Growing up in a tenement in the West End of Boston at the turn of the century, Miriam had little to brighten her days. Her father worked long hours, and, after a series of miscarriages, her mother struggled with depression, using what energy she had to obsess over Miriam’s sickly younger brother, and to criticize Miriam. Miriam’s one pleasure was to go on Sunday outings with her father; often to the Yiddish theater.

In high school, Miriam’s teacher notices her interest in theater and recommends that she try out for a local production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Involvement in this play changes Miriam’s life. She meets Minerva who will become a life-long friend, and Ethan Levine, the first man her own age with whom she has ever spent time. She and Ethan enjoy what she believes is an easy-going friendship until something changes. When Miriam rejects Ethan’s affectionate gestures, he doesn’t take no for an answer and things turn violent: he rapes her. She becomes pregnant; her parents don’t understand, and her mother blames her. So eventually bowing to family pressure, she marries Ethan in an Orthodox ceremony and gives birth to a healthy boy. But when Ethan becomes increasingly abusive, she flees.

Miriam leaves her infant son with her mother and goes to New York to live with Minerva and pursue an acting career. But even as she finds some success on the stage, she realizes that she wants to do work with more meaning. She works to build a new life and searches for a way to help children through theater. As she opens her heart to children and friends, she also allows herself to find love with another man. Recommended for synagogue libraries.

Sheryl Stahl, Director, Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles.
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While *Megillat Esther* tells the basic story of Purim, Rapoport delves deeply into every aspect. From the ties between the Jews who were exiled when the Babylonians conquered Israel, to Daniel and his friends, to the politics of the time, each facet is explored and explained. After an assassination attempt, Xerxes starts to get paranoid, which is the perfect opportunity for Haman to step in and gain power. Soon Mordechai is on his bad side, and lots are drawn to determine that the thirteenth day of Adar is the auspicious date on which to kill all the Jews of the Empire. But Mordechai and his network go to work and soon realize his ward Hadassah, now Queen Esther of Persia, is the key to the Jews’ salvation. Using the skills she learned in Mordechai’s home, she is able to expose Haman and see to his demise. Mordechai is soon promoted, and together they plan the reversal which will occur on the 13th of Adar -- the Jews will decimate their enemies. With both planning and luck, the Jews are successful. Esther gives birth to the heir to the throne, and when Xerxes is assassinated, she and Mordechai marry.

The author, a practicing attorney and author of several other biblically-related books, has obviously done extensive research, and the background is useful and puts the Purim story in historical context. But the story often gets mired in the excruciatingly detailed descriptions of things like Esther’s preparation for her time with the king and Haman’s lottery method. This makes the book read more like non-fiction narrative than a novel. While the planning and execution of the routing of the Jews’ enemies is fully drawn out, the customs that are observed to this day are summarized rather quickly. Those who enjoy biblical fiction will enjoy the trip through history; those who don’t will take a pass and reread the original on Purim.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel

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**Encyclopedia of Jewish History and Culture**

*Volume 2 just published!*

Editor (German Edition): Dan Diner, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Editors (English Edition): Cornelia Aust, Leibniz-Institut für Europäische Geschichte, Philipp Lehnard and Daniel Mahla, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

From Europe to America to the Middle East, North Africa and other non-European Jewish settlement areas the *Encyclopedia of Jewish History and Culture* covers the recent history of the Jews from 1750 until the 1950s.

Translated from German into English, approximately 800 keywords present the current state of international research and depict a complex portrait of Jewish life - illustrated by many maps and images.

The second volume published in January 2019. All seven volumes are expected to be published by 2024. The Encyclopedia is published both in print and online. The online version includes access to both the English and original German language editions.

Free trial available
Encyclopedia of Jewish History and Culture Online is available for a free 30-day institutional trial. To arrange your trial please ask your librarian to contact our Sales department at sales-us@brill.com (the Americas) or sales-nl@brill.com (Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia-Pacific).

Taaffe ends one of her stories with the words “The language of dybbuks is the third language, An-sky, and it is not a language only of the dead.” Indeed, it is the language of Taaffe. Her stories are filled with dense prose; long run-on sentences rich with details for all the senses. Only after the reader is immersed in the sights, textures, and temperature of the setting does Taaffe introduce her characters or action.

Most of her stories involve some kind of dybbuk, broadly defined as a spirit, demon, or even a personified abyss. But are humans really equipped to deal with such creatures? An artist tries to paint Autumn, which is continually ‘falling’ into the abyss. But what happens when the Abyss looks back at him? In another story a woman tries to work out if the being born a hundred years before her can really be her bashert (soul-mate). While her stories are challenging to read, some intrepid book-clubs may enjoy sinking their collective teeth in them.

_Sheryl Stahl, Director, Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles._

[Editor’s note: due to an error in distribution, the following title, Zion’s Fiction, is reviewed twice by two different reviewers].


While there has been a recent collection of Jewish science fiction short stories (Jews vs Aliens), this is the first collection specifically written by Israeli authors. While this collection is in English, the original stories were written in English, Hebrew, and Russian and translated as needed.

The various stories take us on many different sci-fi adventures. We see reflections of technology taking us to or over the brink of what makes us human. In Lavie Tidhar’s *The Smell of Orange Groves*, biological humans interact with virtual beings and robots. In another story titled *The Slows*, Gail Hareven shows an anthropologist who studies the “Slows,” the last hold outs of people who insist on gestating their own children. In Mordechai Sasson’s *The Stern-Gerlach Mice*, an escaped science experiment threatens humanity. Can technology save us from these super-smart shape-changing mice?

There are also stories which focus on the conscious or unconscious choices we make. In *In the Mirror*, a woman can change outcomes in her world simply by visualizing what she wants in the mirror, replacing that reality with her own. In *The White Curtain*, an oracle searches for a parallel universe with the exact elements his friend seeks. And in *A Man’s Dream*, a man’s chance encounter with a woman has devastating effects on both their lives.

Like most good science fiction, the best stories show how to use special powers and technology to learn about ourselves. This is a unique collection. Highly recommended.

_Sheryl Stahl, Director, Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles._


The seventeen short stories that comprise this collection (plus an introduction that provides a history of Israeli speculative fiction) cover a range of genre (science fiction, fantasy, and horror) and mostly deal with the present or future rather than the past. There is nothing Tolkienian here, neither are there ghosts, though there are robots, angels, magical mirrors, apocalypses, and even a talking donkey (though not Balaam’s). The tone is mostly dark but some of the stories have comical elements. There are a few allusions or references to traditional Jewish religious works or practices.

Perhaps the most powerful (and disturbing) tale is *A Good Place for the Night* by Savyon Liebrecht, in which a number of people, having survived a mysterious apocalypse, take refuge in an inn in Poland. The story with the most traditional Jewish theme (the messiah) is also one of the most intriguing:
Death in Jerusalem by Elana Gomel, wherein various forms of death become incarnate as human beings. Another intriguing tale is White Curtain by Pesakh Amnuel where physics has progressed so very far that the splicing of a person’s potential destinies is possible. The consequences this has for two physicists in love with the same woman forms the plot. Also particularly notable is the time travel story Burn Alexandria by Keren Landsman, that tells of a mission to learn from future civilizations on earth. The variety of approaches, moods, and themes of the imaginative stories in this fine anthology attests to the flowering of Israeli speculative fiction. Recommended.

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


Reggae style Chanukah music? Yes, please. This album is a lot of fun: it’s full of songs familiar to most of us but rendered here with a unique and fun style.

The prayer Sim Shalom is also a great reggae song. Bassist David Solid Gould was struck by this idea while he happened to be in Davis, CA on a tour with the reggae band John Brown’s Body. The notion of Jewish liturgy reggae-style was so appealing to him that he “rented a bike and rode to the nearest synagogue so I could make some photocopies of a few prayer books.”

As the marketing for this album recalls: “What sprang from that harried California ride was The Temple Rockers, a reggae project that embraces the storied Jamaican music’s many offshoots and facets, transforming melodies from Jewish tradition with serious basslines and horn grooves.”

This album has a great pace, rhythm, and tone. The singers, among Jamaica’s strongest vocalists, are excellent, and it was worth the work they put in to creating it. The cover art is simple but conveys its main content. Recommended for large Jewish music collections.

Debbie Steinberg, ICJA, Chicago, IL


Anthony Russell is an African American Jewish singer who specializes in Yiddish songs. In this album, he explores the common themes in both African American and Yiddish music: being strangers in new lands, longing for freedom, honoring the divine. Using his rich bass voice, Russell creates songs that synthesize Jewish texts and the African American experience. “Water” combines the spiritual Wade in the Water with Hafle va-fele by Yedidyah Admon, while Horses pairs the Yiddish lullaby Hayda Liu-Liu with All the Pretty Little Horses. Zion is a mix of the African American spiritual Rockin’ Jerusalem with Ao HaRachanim from the Torah service. By exploring the parallels of two diaspora cultures and discovering common spiritual and historical ground, this beautiful album offers an opportunity for increased understanding and cultural enrichment through music.

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

Keep Up to Date with Hasafran

Hasafran is the electronic discussion list of the Association of Jewish Libraries. It was created in 1991 to provide a forum for the discussion of Judaica librarianship. The list is moderated by Joseph (Yossi) Galron, Jewish studies librarian at The Ohio State University. The views expressed in the list are the opinions of the participants and not necessarily the views of the moderator or of AJL.
A keyword-searchable archive of Hasafran messages posted since June 12, 2003 is now available.

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Golem meets Mary Poppins in an energetic super-hero adventure built on Jewish legend and Victorian England’s social horrors. Developments keep characters constantly on the run, shielded and saved at the last second by a reincarnated Golem. His shape starts differently, but the monster’s facts stay true to tradition. The hulk in the Prague attic is replaced by an ever-growing lump of soot in a London attic. Soot is vital to the support of the oppressed child chimney sweeps who are major characters in the novel. Despite her poverty, Nan, the beleaguered Dickensian protagonist, is lively, smart, thoughtful, full of hope, eager to try and dare. As the escalating mayhem proceeds, the underlying mystery of the girl’s origin surfaces in fragmented clues relayed in moving, poetic passages. These passages and other memories suggest that Nan’s “parenting sweep” and her friend Toby are Jewish immigrants to London from unnamed Yiddish speaking roots. The local climbing sweeps form a gang to help Nan defeat the evil villain sweep bosses. These boys do not understand the Golem is all Nan needs. The children are also helped by a lapsed Jewess, a school teacher seeking to renew her roots. While few characters are Jews, *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) underwrites many scenes. The Golem, who cannot save himself, saves the children, their sense of wonder and their friendship for each other in a beautifully written, emotional novel.

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

[Editors’ Note: *Sweep* is the 2019 Sydney Taylor Book Award Winner for Older Readers, a finalist for the 2018 National Jewish Book Award in Children’s Literature, and was included on the AJL “Love Your Neighbor: Let’s Be Friends” booklist.]


Jewish artist Marc Chagall’s life is presented through vibrant text and gorgeous illustrations and layout. The story of the man and his art moves at a brisk pace: from his observant boyhood in Russia where he is born Moishe Shagal; to his youth wanting no career except painter; to his student days fighting stale professors; to his misfit young manhood where even the great cities of the Czar cannot contain his vision. He moves to Paris to see, to learn, to transform himself and his name into the French, Marc Chagall. This passionate painter is more than modern; he is revolutionary. He returns to Russia where he marries his oft-painted first wife Bella. Once again, he finds the country of his birth stifling. He returns to Paris, then flees the Nazis to New York. He never stops learning; he never stops producing. His greatness lies in his passion, determination and talent to create for his audience what he sees in his head and his heart. His dreams surpass his canvases and stained-glass windows inducing everyone to share his ideals. His life is full, long and productive enriching all who see his works. The illustrations deliver the signature style of Chagall’s art; they capture his flying figures of shtetl Jews, his vibrant new colors, his move into other mediums as clay, fabrics, and glass. The strong, romantic vocabulary is worth the effort for readers.

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

[Editors’ Note: *Through the Window* is a 2019 Sydney Taylor Honor Book for Younger Readers]

The combination of two important elements make this book work so well: a sense of ancient Jewish history and a modern sensibility, that of a young boy trying to be responsible and fulfill his tasks in a manner which is timeless. Itamar’s father is a tailor, and among his many tailoring jobs is the repair of a robe belonging to the High Priest at the Temple in Jerusalem. While Itamar is transporting the robe, he realizes that one of the delicate golden bells that adorn the hem is missing. He hurries to ancient Jerusalem’s version of a lost-and-found, the Claiming Stone, around which those who found an item seek its owner and those who lost an item hope to locate it. Unfortunately, no one at the Claiming Stone has seen the bell so Itamar searches elsewhere. He travels around the city hoping to see the gleam of the tiny bell, but it is not to be found. For the rest of his life, he remembers the beautiful little bell and tells his children about it and about the fine robe from which it came. The surprising twist of the story occurs in 2011 in modern Jerusalem when an archaeologist discovers a small bell and painstakingly cleans and polishes it until it shines. Did it come from the robe of the High Priest? No one can ever really know but the discovery sets the stage for an imaginative tale about a responsible little boy and his heartfelt search for a special object. Well-known Israeli artist Abolafia’s softly colored illustrations evoke Jerusalem, enhancing the story and beautifully anchoring it in time and place.

Michal Hoschander Malen, retired day school librarian (NYC), library volunteer, Editor of children’s and young adult book reviews for the Jewish Book Council, Efrat, Israel.


Charming illustrations and straightforward text deliver the story of the first woman ever ordained as a rabbi. Regina Jonas achieves her goal through clearly demonstrated persistence. The place and time are far away and long ago for the picture book crowd -- Berlin, Germany in the early 20th century, but the gender issue makes this biography relevant now. Regina’s path was hard, lined with obstacles from people who should have been for her, respected people who witnessed her capabilities and knew her worthy, but urged her to cook and sew. Readers can follow the difference between Regina’s 1930’s success story and her earlier memory flashbacks by watching the color illustrations turn to sepia. The illustrations promote the woman and the plot; they are warm, mobile, and attractive with changing fonts as well as changing colors. The apt subtitle of this volume is “An Untold Story.” This is a story that should have been and could have been told earlier. Some say the facts promoting Regina as the first female rabbi were hidden for years because the Holocaust in which she perished and the division of Germany prevented discovery of the written documents, while others fault those who knew of her achievements. This picture book biography of a lovely role model is sweet, sad, and enduring.

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

[Editors’ Note: *Regina Persisted* is a finalist for the 2018 National Jewish Book Award in Children’s Literature, and was included on the AJL’s “*Love Your Neighbor: Synagogues, Clergy & Jewish Ritual*” booklist.]

The award-winning duo of Jane Yolen and Barbara Diamond Goldin have created modern *midrashim* that tell the stories of fourteen Biblical women from Eve to Esther, from Sarah to Hannah, along with eight other female personalities. Each chapter eloquently highlights a different woman. The well, the authors explain, is the place for women to come together to water animals, share news, and make matches. Where the original text is ambiguous, Yolen and Golden provide additional expository information in the form of sidebars. The authors do a superb job of placing each woman in the context of her time. Most important of all, they pose questions on the text and invite the young reader to do the same. For example, “Is using trickery immoral?” and “Why does Sarah laugh?” are just two seminal questions the authors ask the reader to consider.

Israeli artist Val Mintzi’s color illustrations done in gouache add heightened insight into each Torah personality. Yolen and Golden’s interpretations are non-denominational and should find a welcome home in any school, synagogue, or family collection.

_Rena Citrin, Library Director - Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, IL_

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**BIBLE STORIES AND MIDRASH**


These board books for the very young provide some wonderful lap time opportunities for families to enjoy reading stories from the Tanakh. Each story is told in simple, age-appropriate rhyming verse, for example, “Little Miriam, quick to rise, cradles brother, soothes his cries.” “Little Jonah hears God say, ‘Help the people to obey.’” The colorful, cartoonish illustrations support each story nicely. The board book format is sturdy and made for lots of wear and tear from exploring babies. With only one exception, this series would be a helpful diversion for youngsters during Tot Shabbat or regular Shabbat services. *Daniel in the Lion’s Den* illustrates Daniel kneeling in prayer (not the way Jews pray) and an angel with wings and a halo, dressed in a blue gown with matching sandals who fights off the lions. This particular “Tiny Bible Tale” is a bit too loaded with Christian symbology for a Jewish library.

_Kathy Bloomfield, AJL Vice President/President Elect, Seal Beach, CA_

It is hard to imagine “something new under the sun” on this topic, but, happily, the combination of Chani Gansburg’s seemingly simple rhyming and Dena Ackerman’s gorgeous paper cut illustrations bring a new understanding of this primary story. The youngest lap-sit reader to the child encountering the first words of the Torah will enjoy *The Creation Book*. The illustrations are lush and beautiful. Painted paper in the spirit of Eric Carle, is carefully cut to create pictures that explain all the days of creation in images that children will long remember. Little hands will want to touch “Crashing waves, rushing past./Splashing rivers, flowing fast./Mountain peaks, winding creeks./Firm, dry land and grainy sand.” The text is lyrical and spare. Like an Emily Dickenson poem, Gansburg’s word choice is minimal. God is referred to as Hashem.

*Rena Citrin, Library Director - Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, Illinois*


Once again, the team of Rabbi Sandy Sasso and Amy-Jill Levine (*The Marvelous Mustard Seed*), esteemed scholars and prolific authors, have co-authored a picture book based on a parable by Jesus. *The Good Samaritan* is found in the New Testament Gospel of Luke. In response to the question “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29), Jesus describes the travails of a Jewish traveler who is robbed and severely beaten. He is unaided by fellow Jews – a priest and a Levite, who simply walk by – but is surprisingly tended to by a man from Samaria (an enemy of the Jewish people.) In this version, we are introduced to the Blues and the Yellows who do not like each other at all. Each group teaches their children “Be careful of the [Yellows/Blues]. We are better than they are. They are not our neighbors.” When Midnight Blue goes for a bike ride and falls, none of his blue neighbors stop to help him. But when Lemon (a Yellow) rides by and sees that Blue is hurt, she decides to stop and help despite her fears about Blue.

The story, while accessible and written in age-appropriate language, is quite didactic. The moral lesson that Blues and Yellows are equally good and kind is hammered in on almost every page. The illustrations are cartoonish with characters represented as shapes in different shades of Blue or Yellow. There is a “Note to Parents and Educators” at the back of the book, which puts this story in the context of its historical times. It also provides questions to keep in mind while reading the story. Flyaway Books, a division of Westminster John Knox Press, the publishing arm of the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, are creating books through a Christian lens, albeit by a denomination that funds Messianic Jewish communities. Rather than this particular title, read through the AJL’s “Love Your Neighbor” Series, a group of book lists compiled in response to the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting. There you will find titles addressing “being a stranger” that are much better suited to a Jewish audience.

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

**BIOGRAPHY**


Moe Berg’s parents were Russian immigrants who settled in Newark, NJ. His father was the neighborhood pharmacist. Berg was a gifted student and athlete who attended Princeton. He became one of the first college graduates to play in the Major Leagues. Never a great player, he carved out a twelve-year career as a catcher. Because he was a gifted linguist and a good photographer, he was recruited by the government. During the off-season of 1934, on a goodwill tour of Japan, he was able to take photos of Tokyo. During World War II he was recruited by the OSS (Office of Strategic Services). His tasks included an encounter with German scientist Werner Heisenberg. Some of Berg’s exploits are recounted here. For his efforts, he was given the Medal of Freedom after the War.
Unfortunately, this picturebook version of Moe Berg’s life is mystifying rather than enlightening. The story is told in a confusing, non-linear manner, and the alternation of color drawings and black and white photographs adds to the chaos. The story begins with his trip to Japan, then backtracks to his childhood. The inset information boxes would be useful for eight or nine-year olds but are inappropriate for early readers. Moreover, there is a great deal left out. This is part of a series on spies; there is a single mention of “Jews” in the description of his parents. *Moe Berg, The Spy Behind Home Plate* by Vivian Gray (JPS Young Biography, 1996) is still a better choice for older readers as well as the new picture book *The Spy Who Played Baseball* by Carrie Jones, illustrated by Gary Cherrington (Kar-Ben, 2018).

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


Wald (1867-1940) grew up in an assimilated Jewish family. While on a summer vacation, she decided to become a nurse, and applied to nursing school in New York City in 1889. After graduating, she served at the city’s Juvenile Asylum, which housed young criminals and neglected children. She was accepted at the Women’s Medical College but left there to serve the poor. With the help of Jacob Schiff and other wealthy donors, she founded the Henry Street Settlement and established the Visiting Nurses Service. Paul Kaplan describes the struggles Wald and her colleagues faced. The book describes the Settlement’s support of health insurance, parks and playgrounds, school lunches, workers’ rights and women’s suffrage, and many more innovations. It also explores its role in improving the status of social work and nursing as careers. The story focuses on the Settlement’s first 20 years, before World War I. The final chapter quickly describes Wald’s last 20 years and sketches the Settlement’s continuing role.

This short book should revive interest in Lillian Wald’s accomplishments. It is directed at middle-school aged children, but adults will benefit from it as well. It is smoothly written and informative, though there are several mistakes and missed opportunities (for example, there is no mention of Clara Barton, the Mother of American nursing). The numerous photographs will help the reader appreciate the conditions under which these women worked, and the back matter includes notes, references, and an index. Finally, the print is both light and tiny (4- or 6-point type), making it difficult to read. Even so, it is a serious profile of an important woman and worth adding to library collections.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


In pre-World War I Europe, there were no schools for Jewish girls; they either attended public schools or stayed at home. Sarah Schenirer, a seamstress with little formal education, started a revolution. Born in Krakow in 1883, her family fled to Vienna during World War I. She was inspired by a rabbi who gave a lecture about Chanukah and spoke of the heroism of women. She and her brother approached the Belzer Rebbe (the leader of the Chasidic sect to which they adhered), and the Rebbe gave his blessing. Although she faced strong and often violent opposition, she started a kindergarten in her sewing studio. The initial student body of twenty-five soon grew, as many were interested in Torah education for girls. Sarah began training teachers and traveling across Europe to establish new schools. She helped create 250 Bais Yaakov schools with more than 35,000 students. An Authors’ Note and glossary are included.

The simple language and repetitive text are suited to young readers, and the black and white illustrations complement the text and give it a feel of photographs from the period. While Orthodox young girls may be interested in the history of their schools, the story of a woman who saw the need for education for girls and established hundreds of schools will inspire all.

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

The layout of this early chapter biography yells textbook with its maps, photos, index, bibliography, glossary, and filmography, but the chatty dialog quickly overcomes the resistance to picking up this volume and the appealing personality of Gal Gadot keeps readers turning pages in a successful, albeit short life story. Short because Gadot rose to celebrity as a teenage model and Miss Israel at 18. She became a worldwide movie star as lead character, Wonder Woman, at 32, two years ago. The slim book does a sound job of delivering a *sabra* making it in the world of acting, which she chose over law school. Her active youth as the daughter of a physical education teacher prepared her for her two-year stint in the Israeli army (the IDF), and for doing her own stunts as a superhero in her movies. Her marriage and motherhood deliver the sense of a reachable person worthy of her popularity, not a phony. Vignettes from other books and articles about the actress are repeated here: the party where she sprayed water to get adult attention and the green screens across her pregnant belly for movie reshoots of earlier scenes. The book explains the character of fictional Wonder Woman and her earthly mission; she dovetails with Gadot’s drive to follow her personal dream to be an independent woman. Gadot wants women to be heroes and actors in the world, not just sleeping beauties. She succeeds at stardom as a genuine person, a proud Israeli and a lovely young woman. Readers would not go wrong emulating her.

_Ellen G. Cole, Temple Isaiah, Los Angeles, CA_

**BOARD BOOKS**


The children in this series of board books actively illustrate the simple, rhyming text. They twirl like graggers, spin like dreidels, and hop like latkes frying in a pan. Preschoolers can join in the action by imitating the hand motions accompanying lines such as “Put in some Tzedakah/For the poor on Purim Day/Wrap *Mishloach Manos* treats/And sweets to give away!” The colors are bright, and the mood is happy as the children celebrate the holidays. Two earlier board books in this series (*Braid the Challah* and *I am a Torah*), originally published in 2004, were reissued in 2014 in the larger, 8 x 8 format of the recent titles.

_Marcie Eskin, Beth Hillel Bnai Emunah, Wilmette, IL_


Based on the Noah’s Ark story, the simple board book *Can You Hear a Coo Coo?* is an exciting offering because of the unusual elements: a palette of animal fur brown and gold tones, animal sounds, and vocabulary Mouse feet go skittering and mice squeak and twitter, geese say “giggle, gaggle and their tails go wiggle, waggle.” Toddlers will soon learn the names of some of the less well-known animals and, thanks to the clever rhyming text, they’ll soon learn to “read” along. An excellent first look at the beloved Bible story for all religions, ending with the welcome message, “They know that in stormy weather friends like these should stay together!”

In *A Hoopoe says Oop!* appropriately brief text with well written rhymes is clearly placed on full color pages, with engaging animals showing the various actions. The book takes toddlers even further into examining the unique animals of Israel. They’ll be intrigued with hoopoes that say “oop,” a hyrax that
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

says “chirrup,” and ibexes that walk on crater ledges. Charmingly plump, friendly looking animals, scenes of a variety of places in Israel – who knew bats squealed in the trees of Tel Aviv and camels walked tall at King David’s wall? – all described in rhyming couplets, make this another nice addition to Kar-Ben’s growing collection for our youngest readers.

Colorful, bubbly illustrations and an interesting variety of sound words make Listen! Israel’s All Around an entertaining board book. Rhyming couplets describe various sound experiences in Israel – matkot (a paddle ball game played on the beach in Israel), crunching falafel, creaking windmill, rumbling kibbutz tractor, splashing in the Jordan River, dancing the Hora, dates falling from palm trees, squishing in Dead Sea mud, and snorkeling in Eilat.

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


Sesame Street’s beloved Grover joyfully addresses the youngest of readers in these two colorful board books. A Seder for Grover introduces the basic elements of Passover, such as the four questions, and reading from the Haggadah. Most importantly, other characters join Grover along the way as he prepares for the occasion, and “even gourches” are welcome. Grover Goes to Israel takes readers on a romp through the country’s hot spots, including a visit to the Kotel in Jerusalem, a climb up Masada and a swim in the Red Sea in Eilat. Maintaining the accessible style, friendly tone, and comforting characters of the Sesame Street brand, these titles will make wonderful additions to any preschool Judaic library.

Martha McMahon, Lainer School, Los Angeles, CA

FICTION - MIDDLE GRADE


In 2012 New York City, Lily is visiting her grandmother, Collette, at her nursing home when Hurricane Sandy devastates the East Coast of the United States. The residents must move from Queens to a temporary shelter in Brooklyn, and Lily decides to stay with Collette and help out as best she can. Collette entrusts Lily with her treasured Mont Blanc fountain pen and a bundle of old letters. During the turmoil of the move, Lily loses the pen. She’s determined to find it before Collette realizes it’s missing. During her quest, Lily gets help in unexpected places: an antiques dealer, a restaurant worker, a fountain pen expert, and an aspiring actress. Most of all, she gets help from her mother, her friend, Johnny, and a nurse named Nicole. Collette’s story is told in alternating flashbacks, where we see how Collette (Wallcreeper) and her friend, Marguerite (Skylark), are drawn into the activities of a French Resistance group in southern France during 1944. The suspense builds until they accomplish the most dangerous of all their missions. Carelli skillfully brings Lily and Collette’s stories together in a satisfying, heartwarming ending. An Author’s Note gives useful historical background to this novel.

Lily’s story is told in first person; Collette’s, in third person. Through friendship and family, the girls gain strength to accomplish extraordinary feats. There is no Jewish content in Skylark and Wallcreeper, but this novel is a well-paced story of courage and fortitude in the present day and during World War II. For a memoir of a young person active in the French Resistance, see Gardens of Stone: My Boyhood in the French Resistance by Stephen Grady and Michael Wright (Hodder & Stoughton, 2013) or Almost Autumn by Marianne Kaurin (Scholastic, 2017), a splendid historical novel about the Resistance in Norway.

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

Seymour Goldfarb is a ten-year-old who is more interested in sedentary activities than athletics. The only child of two doctors, he is happier playing video games than on a ball field. When summer comes, he goes to computer camp, but is dismayed when the afternoons are spent on sports and games. After camp, he expects that he will have time to himself. But unexpectedly, his 21-year-old cousin Pesach arrives from Israel for an extended visit, and Seymour becomes his madrich (guide). On a day trip to New York, the pair visit the Empire State Building, the Museum of Modern Art, and the United Nations, which exhausts and bewilders Seymour. After Pesach leaves on a tour of the US, Seymour decides to try some new things on his own and discovers that the world is not as dangerous as he has always believed. When Pesach returns and needs to go to the hospital, he exposes his own weaknesses, and Seymour helps him recover.

Seymour is not a shut-in; but he’s a klutz, and not particularly likable at the beginning, which will strike chords with readers. His adventures express many common fears children have. They also (unintentionally) open interesting questions about the nature of child-rearing today. There is some underlying Jewish content here, but it is not critical to the plot. At the conclusion, Pesach quotes Pirke Avot: “If I am not for myself....” This summary, with its reference to dependence and independence, adulthood and childhood, is a relevant but not entirely satisfying response to Seymour’s fears. In sum, this reprint of a 1990 book makes a partially satisfying, slightly dated novel for middle-schoolers.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


When Max’s family moves from Washington, DC to Brussels, he doesn’t think things could get worse. But then his parents inform him that he will be repeating 6th grade and attending a Belgian school instead of the American school with his sister. He barely understands French, has never used a fountain pen, and has no friends. But then he discovers a Syrian boy hiding in his basement wine cellar, who lost his mother and sister in the bombings in Aleppo and has been separated from his father, trying to reach freedom and safety in Europe. Max is inspired by the story of his street’s namesake, Albert Jonnart, a righteous gentile who hid a Jewish boy from the Nazis during World War II. Max sneaks food, supplies and books to Ahmed and with the help of two new friends, Oscar and Farrah, forges Ahmed an identity card and enrolls him in school. But with the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels and increased fear and hostility towards Muslim refugees, things become very dangerous for both boys.

This is a beautifully written, well developed, and very timely story of friendship, resilience, and hope. While there are no Jewish characters or content, Max is inspired by the lessons of the Holocaust and it is HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) that comes to Ahmed’s aid in the end. Exemplifying Jewish values, Max and Ahmed both learn that “even in the darkest times and places, there were always good people, people who would help others out of the kindness of their hearts.” Ahmed also questions the power of a single story, like the story of Albert Jonnart. And while he realizes that one story can’t change the world, and maybe one person can’t really either, “no one could be a hero alone.” A perfect companion for *Refugee* by Alan Gratz and a necessary purchase for all school and public libraries.

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


Pinky (Penina) Bloom, “Brooklyn’s greatest kid detective,” spends her days in fourth grade at Ohav Shalom Day School and her free time solving mild little mysteries. The parents of her best friend Lucy
Chang, own the Lotus Blossom Kosher Restaurant, which is losing customers because of suspicious events like bad fortunes in the cookies and a sneaky waiter. With the uninvited help of her pesky little brother Avi and a friendly neighborhood yenta, Pinky finds the missing Kiddush cup and saves the Chang family’s restaurant. Aimed at middle grade readers, especially those who will recognize all of the New York area sounds and sights that pepper the plot, the story’s fast pace and colorful characters obscure the fact that Pinky’s not much of a detective and there’s not much of a real case to solve. The book’s Jewish credentials are established by the Bloom’s practice of keeping kosher and observing Shabbat and with a Yiddish-ism thrown in now and then. While the book is rather dishonest in its blurring of ethnic differences and its emphasis on Jewish cultural stereotypes, it may suit the bill for reluctant readers. The spritely black and white illustrations, in which all of the characters, including the Chinese Changs, look alike, underscore the book’s blandness.

Linda R. Silver, retired librarian, Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Creator - AJL’s Jewish Valuesfinder, former editor, AJL Newsletter Children’s and YA Book Reviews, Lyndhurst, Ohio


Twelve-year-old Charlotte, Charlie for short, loves to look at old photographs of her family. She is especially interested in photos of the woman she was named for, Lottie, her mother’s aunt who presumably perished in the Holocaust. Like Charlie, she played the violin. Charlie receives a school project assignment to research her family’s history and seizes the opportunity to find out more about Lottie, since no one know for sure what happened to her after she left Vienna for Budapest to study music. She deepens her relationship with her grandmother living in Florida while trying to learn more about Lottie and appreciates Lottie’s music diary that her grandmother sends her. On her own, she finds someone in a nursing home who knew Lottie and also befriends a Hungarian man who can translate an important letter. Meanwhile, her pesky older brother turns into an advocate and Charlie develops a romantic interest in a boy in the school orchestra. Ultimately, Charlie finds herself as she unravels the mystery of Lottie’s fate and forges connections with Lottie’s daughter.

Ross based this narrative on her own family history. While that can sometimes be problematic, that is not the case here. The story is poignant and reveals that all we are told about the Holocaust via family stories may not actually be true. An author’s note explains Ross’s family history. Still, the idea of a school project is certainly not a new one and the plot is overcomplicated with the love interest and an out-of-town best friend. For a better constructed mystery involving a school project, see Laura Toffler-Corrie’s The Life and Opinions of Amy Finowitz (Roaring Brook Press, 2010).

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

FICTION - TEEN


Silver Stars, the second installment in the Front Lines trilogy, an alternative history that imagines what it would have been like if women had entered the armed forces during World War II, continues to follow the three protagonists -- Frangie Marr, Rio Richlin, and Rainy Schulterman -- in their military careers. Frangie is an African American medic whose faith is tested as she tries her very best to help wounded soldiers in the field. She finds herself in need of help as well. Rio Richlin, who started this journey in Front Lines as a naive California girl, rapidly develops into a hardened soldier, one who is
quick on her feet, and not afraid of dangerous situations. It seems, the only thing she is afraid of, is her feelings for her boyfriend from home, Air Force pilot Strand Braxton. Rainy Schulterman, a language expert is sent on a half-baked spy mission with devastating consequences. This terribly devised plan puts her in the hands of the SS where she is tortured, more for her being a spy, than for her being Jewish.

*Purple Hearts* is the final installment in the trilogy, bringing the trio of women to Normandy for D-Day. The fighting is brutal, the medicine is frantic, and the slow discovery of the true horror of what the Germans have done is devastating. Rainy, the one Jewish character, while not given as much ‘screen time’ as Rio and Frangie, is one of the soldiers who discovers the concentration camps where she kills several SS officers after they scoff at the prisoners saying “they’re just Jews”. Rainy is described more than once as “tight-lipped” which is helpful for her further career, but not as helpful to the reader seeing the depth of her Jewish identity.

These two books have a lot going for them. They are exciting, and very empowering. The reader can easily envision all of the action in great detail and readers can identify with the characters in many ways. However, the author makes some incongruous choices in writing. The violence and the horror of war and the Holocaust are described quite in depth, but instead of the “f word” as we know it, the characters say “fug” often enough that it is very noticeable. This gives the dialogue an odd sense of inauthenticity and detracts from the veracity of the world that Grant created. At over 500 pages each and with minimal Jewish content, these would make a good optional purchase for a high school fiction collection, or a great purchase for a public library collection.


Winter Halperin is a former National Spelling Bee Champion who plans on attending Kenyon College after graduation and dreams of becoming a writer. After the final round of the annual Scripps National Spelling Bee, she impulsively posts online: “We learned many surprising things today. Like that *dehnstufe* is apparently a word, and that a black kid can actually win the Spelling Bee.” Obviously, she didn’t intend for her comment to be taken as racist and insensitive but that doesn’t matter. Within hours her post goes viral and she becomes a pariah on the internet receiving hateful, hurtful messages, and even death threats. Her friends distance themselves, Kenyon College rescinds her acceptance, and Scripps strips her of her title. Winter starts to experience panic attacks and becomes depressed. Her life is ruined, and she has no clue how to fix it. Winter’s mother is a nationally renowned parenting expert, so it seemed implausible that she would have thought that the ridiculous - and outrageously expensive - reputation rehabilitation retreat facility in Malibu that Winter discovered while surfing the net was the best, or only, option. Wouldn’t trying therapy have made more sense as a first step? Winter attended a Jewish day school, performed *tashlich* with her family on Rosh Hashanah, and went to synagogue on Yom Kippur. However, in no way does her Judaism inform any of her decisions or attitudes. Judaism has a lot to say about repentance and how to achieve *teshuvah* so it is disappointing that the author didn’t expose Winter (and the reader) to any Jewish views, wisdom, or inspiration on this topic. Additionally, the Yiddish banter between Winter and her mom, who peppers her speech with *oy gevalt, kina hora,* and *mishegoss,* seemed silly, unnecessary, and inauthentic. Inspired by a true story, this is a very thought-provoking, well written young adult novel that brings up a lot of important and timely issues without offering pat, superficial solutions.
**HOLOCAUST AND WORLD WAR II**


Sometimes, hope can be as strong or as delicate as a strand of red ribbon. This historical novel opens with the scene where Ella, the protagonist, rushes to get a job in what is called the “Upper Tailoring Studio” in the concentration camp she calls “Birchwood” (Auschwitz-Birkenau). In this workshop, twenty-three seamstresses make garments for Madam H, wife of the commandant, and for officers’ wives and guards. Ella meets Rose and the two develop a friendship where they offer support and hope to each other. As events unfold in six clearly delineated sections, we meet other characters who make choices, for good or bad, as to how they will survive this hellish world. We see brutality and kindness, callousness and generosity. At first, Ella deludes herself into thinking that the workshop is a place where she can create gorgeous dresses of her own design. Only when she visits “Canada”, the gigantic storehouse of stolen goods, does she realize the true horror of Birchwood. At the end of the novel, the two friends are miraculously reunited in Paris.

Adlington gradually adds detail upon gruesome detail about the concentration camp: clothes, shoes, lice, hair shaved, lack of hygiene, roll call, chimneys, watchtowers, barbed wire—the list goes on and on. She uses effective figurative and sensory language, as well as black humor. For example, “My hips were so narrow they’d just about fit in a toaster like a slice of bread.” Although *The Red Ribbon* is beautifully written, the novel is problematic. Because the author is British, the American reader will find quite a few turns of phrase that he or she might not be familiar with, such as “kipper” or “hedgerow”. Secondly, although the people in the camp come from all over Europe, there is not a single word in this novel other than English. However, the most troubling aspect of this novel is the fact that, as Adlington states in the afterword, she has “deliberately chosen not to dwell on specific countries, regimes, or religions”. After reading this novel, will the average young reader—Jewish or not—understand that Ella is Jewish? Will he or she understand that the Jewish people were the principal victims of Nazi ideology and genocide? Probably not. Therein lies the dilemma. *The Red Ribbon* is a remarkable novel of suffering and survival, but it is not a Holocaust novel.

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


The author shares the biography of Gerda Katz, who fled Nazi Germany at the age of 12 and came to America by herself. Like the author’s mother, who befriended Gerda on the boat to America with the One Thousand Children project, Gerda was placed with a sponsoring foster family, and lost contact with the author’s mother. Gerda’s life in Seattle was difficult – missing her family, learning a new language, assimilating into a foreign culture. The rest of Gerda’s family managed to escape to the Dominican Republic where their lives were also very hard. Gerda never stopped longing to be reunited with them. After over 20 years of separation, Gerda’s family was allowed to emigrate. The book ends describing the reunion of Gerda and the author’s mother, after 73 years of separation, arranged by students from an Illinois high school who became engaged in the story. *Three Stars in the Night Sky* deftly illuminates the personal damage caused by racism in Nazi Germany, the Dominican Republic, and the United States during the 1930’s and 1940’s.

Well written information about events in history that impacted Gerda’s life is detailed: explanations of other waves of child immigration, the rise of Hitler, the Jewish school Gerda attended, the Evian Conference, the rule of Trujillo and the reason Jews immigrated to the Dominican Republic, Japanese
internment. A superbly artistic layout of text, photographs, and historical artifacts documents the details of Gerda’s past. End matter includes credits for the sixty photos. Front and back inside covers display correspondence between Gerda and her family. It is a slim, picture book sized volume akin to Chapman’s Like Finding My Twin and Stumbling on History, produced in landscape, rather than portrait direction. Combine this and Chapman’s four other titles – Motherland for adults, Is It Night or Day? for middle school grades, Like Finding My Twin and Stumbling on History for slightly younger for a compelling congregational or community read.

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


Nazi Germany is not a safe place for a young Jewish girl, especially one orphaned when her mother tried to drive through a checkpoint. Sarah soon crosses paths with “Herr Haller,” and they save each other when the Nazis start checking papers. She learns her benefactor is really “Captain Floyd,” a British spy, who convinces her to use her Aryan looks and acting skills to further his plans. Hans Schäfer has set up a laboratory in his home to develop an atomic bomb. Sarah, taking the name “Ursula Haller,” must befriend Schäfer’s daughter at the elite Nazi girls’ school in which she is enrolled, get to their house, and destroy the laboratory. But her mission is fraught with challenge and danger. The school is horrible, and the staff is more interested in Nazi indoctrination and physical abuse than academics. Sarah/Ursula must outsmart and outfight bullies. She finally connects with Elsa and is invited for Christmas. The contrast between the opulence of the manse and the Nazi party line of “ein Volk” is striking, but something else is off. Hans Schäfer is very attentive, and he gives Sarah a tour of the lab. Soon the horror emerges: Elsa has aged up and pedophile Schäfer needs a replacement. While he is trying to corner Sarah, Elsa shoots and kills him. Sarah tells her to get on her horse and run, which gives Sarah the opportunity to blow up the laboratory. She tells the authorities Schäfer went crazy, and she reunites with Captain Floyd.

Through the twists and turns of the story, the action becomes more improbable, but the setting and pacing create a tautness that holds the reader’s attention. Sarah’s flashbacks of life with a downward-spiraling mother and Kristallnacht enhance the tension and illustrate how she gained the maturity and street smarts beyond her years. She continually questions whether she is becoming as monstrous as the Nazis or just playing a part to conquer them. Mature content and violence make this page-turner best suited to older YA readers.

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


In 1942, Sam’s class engages in a project to knit socks for American soldiers like his older brother. But Sam fumbles with the needles unlike classmate and next-door neighbor Keiko. Since President Roosevelt declared war on Japan, no one speaks to Keiko. Sam watches as even grown-ups throw eggs at her as she pedals her bike home. He sees Keiko’s father’s flower shop closed with a sign nailed over the window, “Go back to Japan.” One day Keiko does not show up for school. Her family must pack to move to an internment camp in the desert. Before Keiko leaves, she leaves a pair of knitted socks for Sam’s brother Mike and her beloved bicycle for Sam. Sam decides Keiko might be cold in the desert at night. He knits her a scarf.

An author’s note, complemented by photographs, explains President Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066 to intern Japanese people in America into camps. Malaspina’s narrative captures the effect of this on the local population. Liddiard’s palette choice and dark, angular lines suit the mood of war
and difficult choices. The Jewish content in this narrative is slight and seems forced with a Shabbat dinner. A Jewish value could have been included to further explain Sam’s decision to knit the scarf and overcome his own insecurities to do so. See *The Princess Dolls* by Ellen Schwartz (Tradewind Books, 2018) for a similar story that takes place in Canada.

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

**Masiah, Tara Lynn. My Real Name Is Hanna.** Simsbury: Mandel Vilar Press, 2018. 208 pp. $16.95. (9781942134510) PB. Gr. 7-12. Reviewed from ARC.

In 1941, teenager Hanna Slivka and her parents have moved across the border from Poland to Ukraine. The *shtetle* they settle in is a combination of Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, and other ethnic groups. As the Germans invade Russia in the summer that year, Hanna and her family make the difficult decision to go into hiding, first in the woods, and then in a series of caves. They emerge in 1944 when the Nazis retreat.

Masiah has organized the narrative into three sections: The *Shtetle*, the Forest, and the Caves, with associated timeframes that ground the reader. Her adult market literary skill works well here with strong imagery. The strength of the story is its pacing and tension and Hanna’s development from a thirteen-year-old to a strong young woman. The story is enveloped in a tale Hanna tells her daughter, admitting, “My real name is Hanna.” Masiah weaves in non-Jewish characters who show that not all were collaborators.

Some historical facts and linguistic principles are ignored, and some transitions are missing, confusing the reader about setting. For a more factual treatment about the cave/grotto experience, see Peter Lane Taylor and Christos Nicola’s nonfiction book, *The Priest’s Grotto: A Holocaust Survival Story* (Kar-Ben, 2014).

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


Search and rescue dog in-training, Ranger, travels back to World War II thanks to a magical first aid kit. He appears in the middle of the chaos, confusion, and terror of the battle in Normandy on D-Day, where he meets Walt, an African American teenager who lied about his age so that he could enlist in the fight. In a farmhouse not far from the beach, Ranger discovers a child named Leo, desperate to protect his sister’s cat from bombs being dropped on their home. Leo is revealed to be a Jewish child whose parents and sister have presumably been captured by the Nazis, who had been living in hiding by pretending to be a member of a Christian family, the Blancs. Ranger uses his training to protect and aid both Walt and Leo, saving them from landmines and other battlefield dangers while bonding with both boys over their desire to help others and for good to prevail.

This title is simultaneously a palatable and a stressful read, particularly for adults who may be more versed in history and wartime horrors. Still, elementary school-aged readers should thoroughly enjoy this book, whether they are history buffs, animal lovers, or looking for action and adventure. The Author’s Note at the story’s end has a particularly meaningful impact. Here, Messner provides full historical context as well as a detailed but engaging explanation of the research she conducted. She highlights the travesties suffered by the Jewish people and the injustices experienced by African American soldiers during the war and later, when the United States government failed to acknowledge the soldiers’ accomplishments. This is the seventh book in the *Ranger in Time* series featuring the time-traveling golden retriever. Messner’s commitment to sharing the stories of real people behind major historical events only strengthens the quality of this beloved historical fiction series.

*Alex Quay, Lainer School, Los Angeles, CA*

In this series title, seasoned Holocaust writer and historian Don Nardo presents four major debates concerning the Holocaust. He questions whether Adolf Hitler was the primary force behind the Holocaust; whether Europe’s Jews could have put up more resistance to Nazi aggression; whether the Allies could have reduced the severity of the Holocaust; and whether the Nuremberg trials were legally and morally justified. The first, in particular, represents a major question of debate among historians: Did Hitler order the Final Solution? Intentionalists believe he did, Functionalists believe the Final Solution developed gradually. The other debate questions reflect questions students may raise but they do not reflect areas of historical debate. These include: Were the Nazis willing executioners or ordinary men (Daniel Goldhagen/Christopher Browning)? Is the Holocaust a hoax (David Irving/Deborah Lipstadt)? Were the Poles perpetrators or victims? Should America have bombed Auschwitz? Are bystanders complicit?

Some facts are oversimplified and in at least one case, just wrong (America’s Great Depression did not spark Germany’s; it was the other way around). Still, this may be a useful volume to discuss some intricacies of the Holocaust and deepen students’ understanding. Back matter includes source notes and further research suggestions.

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


The name Wilm Hosenfeld came to fame in connection with the 2002 movie, *The Pianist*. Hosenfeld, a Nazi officer, saved Polish-Jewish pianist Władysław Szpilman’s life. This edition for young readers is translated from a German book for adults, and it frames Hosenfeld as a caring, passionate Catholic teacher who became disillusioned with Hitler and the Nazi regime although receiving numerous promotions for his organizational abilities. When stationed in Warsaw, Hosenfeld discovered Szpilman in an abandoned building about to become inhabited by the German army (Wehrmacht) in 1944. Vinke effectively shows Hosenfeld as the antithesis to his colleagues who reveled in the tortures perpetrated against Jews and Poles. Through journal entries, Hosenfeld’s letters home to his beloved wife and children, photographs, and gripping narrative, Vinke presents a man out of place in a Nazi officer’s uniform, a man who took it upon himself to learn Polish, hire Polish workers, and save as many Poles and Jews from execution as he could. Hosenfeld was captured by Soviets in Warsaw in 1945 and remained a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union until his death at the age of 57 in 1952. Hosenfeld earned a place in Yad Vashem’s Righteous among Nations in 2008.

The category of perpetrators is a complex one, and it is imperative for young readers to understand that not every Nazi killed, making this an important addition to a Holocaust library. Ample back matter includes a glossary, list of characters, timeline of events, further reading and websites. Note, though, that some information presented as fact, such as the timing of the establishment of the Lodz ghetto, is not correct.

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

**JEWISH LIFE & VALUES**


Rabbi Shammai says, “Receive everyone with a cheerful face” (*Pirke Avot* 1:15). This rhyming
picture book describes how smiles can improve everyone’s day. Bentzy’s morning starts badly when nothing seems to be going right. But when he goes to breakfast his mother’s smile lightens his spirits. On the school bus, Bentzy’s friend Yanky has lost his raincoat and dropped his papers, but Bentzy’s smile helps him. They pass the smile on to Eli, who has mistaken his homework for a grocery list. Through the day each boy’s smile improves the mood of another, until the whole group feels better. When, on the way home, the bus has a flat tire, the boys are willing to wait. But then Bentzy sees his mother’s car and they pile in for the ride home. By passing her smile, all their days have become better. Chaya Kramer’s simple rhyme scheme and Sarah Massry’s bright illustrations should brighten small children’s days. A kind smile can’t hurt, and Ben Azzai’s observation (Pirke Avot 4:2) of one mitzvah leading to another is evident in the day’s events.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


Sylvia Rouss has worked her magic again, bringing the popular Sammy Spider to his first Jewish wedding. Charming full-page color illustrations are sure to delight young audiences. Sammy’s human friends, the Shapiros, are invited to a wedding to which he gets a free ride on top of one of the chuppah poles. Children will learn about such Jewish wedding customs as the bride circling the groom seven times and the ritual of the seven blessings recited at the ceremony. Sammy is enraptured by the events that he witnesses, as surely any child at such an exciting celebration would be. To our great relief, our mischievous little spider has a narrow escape from the glass that the groom crushes with his foot at the end.

The Sammy Spider series, celebrating its 25th anniversary, is a fun and educational way for children to learn about Jewish culture. This new addition to the series will surely prepare a young child for his or her first wedding and add to their awareness of what will happen at the ceremony. For the adult who reads to the child, the final page provides a short explanation of the meaning behind the customs and rituals of the Jewish wedding. An unfortunate grammatical error mars page two, but the publisher caught it too late and will correct it in future printings.

Joyce Levine, past AJL Publications Chair and SSC President, Boynton Beach, Florida

NONFICTION


Confronting Anti-Semitism describes the problem of modern anti-Semitism as a form of discrimination based on religion. It defines Jews as a religion rather than a race and debunks other myths such as the idea that Jews want to take over the world. There is one chapter providing a brief history of anti-Semitism, beginning with the age-old prejudice against Jews by early Christians and working its way through medieval times up to the present day. Readers will learn not only about the Holocaust but about blood libels, massacres during the Crusades, pogroms, and the notorious Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Herzl would be dismayed to read that “modern Zionism emerged after the Holocaust and its horrific genocide of the Jews.” The demonization of and double standards applied to Israel is treated as a clear example of anti-Semitism. Historical maps of Israel at various stages, from the UN partition plan to the present, illustrate the ongoing conflict. Heitkamp describes the conflict as having begun as a battle over land which “has erupted into a religious war, including anti-Zionism.”
Anti-Semitism in schools and on college campuses is one of the themes described in detail, with abundant practical advice on how to deal with the problem. The reader is made aware of the prevalence of jokes and slurs against Jews, which are labeled as hate speech. Both victims and bystanders are called upon to be vigilant, and to document and report any instances of bullying.

The book has already been used by groups of teachers and students in schools where anti-Semitic incidents have taken place, and will surely be important to keep on hand, given the current prevalence of hate crimes. An additional section provides resources for further information, including organizations in the U.S. and Canada which deal with anti-Semitism. A bibliography of online and print publications is also included.

Part of a series entitled Speak Up! Confronting Discrimination in Your Daily Life, the Rosen YA publishing group has filled a niche that is unfortunately much needed at this time. Other books in the series address ableism [discrimination against people with disabilities], class discrimination, discrimination against immigrants, LGBTQ+ discrimination, racism, and sexism. All these titles focus on identifying bias against various groups and what young people can do if they encounter discrimination.

Joyce Levine, former AJL Publications Chair and SSC President, Boynton Beach, Florida


Part of a series that explores the landmarks, landscape and climate, people, wildlife, customs, food, celebrations, and daily living, each section consists of a two-page spread of photographs and brief text which capture the country’s Jewish identity while noting its religious and cultural diversity. There are images of religious Jews, hijab-wearing Muslim women, smiling young soldiers, and beach goers. The descriptions are factual and mostly nonpolitical. Jerusalem is noted as the capital. The country map assigns the same color to the West Bank as it does to the other surrounding countries, but the glossary explains that it is “a territory between Israel and the Jordan River; Israel controls part of the West Bank, and the Palestinian Authority controls the other part.” Although not mentioned specifically, it appears that the author does not consider the Golan Heights to be part of Israel, as Mount Meron is described as Israel’s highest peak at 3,963 feet rather than Mount Hermon which is much higher. A timeline includes nine dates, most of which are appropriately notable. Others are missing, however, such as anything before the first date on the timeline (638: Arabs conquer Jerusalem and the surrounding land, called Palestine) and 1947 (United Nations resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State). Despite these criticisms, this is a good, up-to-date (Gal Gadot is the identified “Famous Face”) introduction to Israel.

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

PICTURE BOOKS


Hannah’s parents are getting ready to move to a new city where her father has a job. She knows she’ll miss her house with the wide porch, her neighborhood with the flat streets that are perfect for bike riding, and her school with all her friends. Her grandmother tells her that she was scared when she and her family left the old country, but they made new friends and a new life. “Definitely some bitter but even more sweet,” her grandmother reassures Hannah. But Hannah has trouble finding the sweet. That is, until a girl called Maya knocks on her door and offers her a bag of cocoa powder. Hannah tries to make cocoa but finds it too bitter. The next day, Maya says that she forgot to tell Hannah that she had to add sugar. Thus, Hannah learns a lesson: You can’t just find the sweet. You must add it yourself.

Soft, expressive collage illustrations add an almost-tactile dimension to this story about home and friendship. The author’s note about bitter and sweet in Jewish tradition helps to ground this story in
authenticity. Orthodox readers should be aware that the mother doesn’t wear a head covering when she says the blessing over the Shabbat candles, and the female characters wear pants. Nowadays, with people moving all over the world for work and other opportunities, it’s not uncommon for a child to be caught up in the upheaval of a move, and this book can help children understand and cope with the challenges (and joys) of moving to a new town.

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


A refreshing take on a Jewish immigrant which exposes youngsters to the idea of Jews involved in agriculture in American history. Pavel, a Russian Jewish immigrant, takes his rabbi’s suggestion to join the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the Great Depression. He and his friend Anatoly travel west and meet men from the Midwest who question their allegiance to America as immigrants. Pavel and Anatoly learn how to plant and nurture trees. They dig ditches and gather rocks. He also learns how to sing “The Star-Bangled Banner” with the other immigrants. On the Fourth of July, the immigrants proudly sing America’s national anthem with hands over their hearts. They are truly Americans.

The CCC is an often-overlooked episode of Great Depression history and Jews did join up and eventually settle in the Midwest as a result. Smith Hyde explains the CCC in an author’s note. But what is unclear is whether Pavel and Anatoly, with very Russian names, were already citizens or became citizens by joining the CCC. Vavouri’s watercolor illustrations match the liveliness of the tree planting and immigrant hope for the future.

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


Winter Wind has worked hard all season long. He has blown away leaves and prepared the trees for their coats of snow and ice. He has even blasted snow across fields and roads, sculpting drifts for children to play in. But now Wind is tired and needs to rest. He tries various places: cozy homes in a town, within a chimney, against a tree, beside a rock, and even inside a country inn. All fail. There is no place that Wind can rest. He becomes angry and blasts “out across the fields, crying like a child, howling like a dog, wailing like a cat.” Finally, a brave and kind girl and boy find the perfect place for Wind to rest—inside a snug cave—while the seasons pass until it’s time to wake up and resume his work.

The cut paper illustrations by award-winning artist, Maëlle Doliveux, create a sense of movement and depth to this book. Doliveux uses paper strips of blues and whites to represent Wind; warm reds, oranges, and yellows for the inside of homes. Children will enjoy finding the little red bird hidden in each illustration. This lovely picture book evokes the question “What is a Jewish book?” In a broad sense, one might call this a Jewish book. The implicit theme / Jewish value is “caring for the environment”. Furthermore, Good Night, Wind was inspired by the Yiddish story, Der Vint, Vos Iz Geven in Kas, a tale written by Moyshe Kulbak and first published in 1921 in Vilna, Lithuania. However, Good Night, Wind depicts neither Jewish time, nor setting, nor characters. It would therefore be a worthwhile addition to a public or school library collection.

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

This ode to diversity and presumably immigration offers children a sense of belonging with the repetition of the words, “All are welcome here” after each three lines of rhyming verse. It begins with a big welcome sign featured at a school attended by an ethnically diverse classroom full of kids. The verses consist of statements such as: “No matter how you start your day. What you wear when you play. Or if you come from far away. All are welcome here.” Of course, the brightly colored artwork depicts many children with various skin coloring, head coverings (including a boy with a kippah), and clothing. All the featured parents and teachers also are diverse – not just ethnically, but also regarding family structure. (The Jewish boy with the kippah has two dads, one without a head covering.) One interesting spread shows all the children at lunch eating different varieties of foods and breads that identify their culture. The Jewish boy is eating a bagel. Large numbers of flags hang all over the school gym at the final large fold-out spread, which depicts a potluck gathering with people bringing international varieties of foodstuffs. (There is a prominent Israeli flag.) Everyone is happy and everyone feels welcome. The setting appears to be New York since a number of the kids seem to live in brownstones, but it could be any big city. It would be a bit more realistic if the book stated that it depicts a United Nations school for diplomats or a similar multi-cultural institution, because most American schools do not reflect the diversity shown in the illustrations. All in all, an appealing book with a message that can be shared at the beginning of the school year that should help children feel comfortable about attending school if they feel different in any way.

Lisa Silverman, Library Director, Burton Sperber Jewish Community Library, Los Angeles, CA

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**SHABBAT AND HOLIDAYS**


Bunny, a new immigrant from Mexico, is inspired over Purim to set a goal: “Someday, I’m going to eat Nana’s hamentashen in the White House kitchen.” This will help her feel at home in her new country. Six months later, a White House field trip just before Thanksgiving provides the perfect opportunity. Her class’s visit provides readers with peeks into, and background about, a few rooms of the White House before Bunny sneaks away. Eventually, a delicious encounter with “Ms. Tall Chief / Our president...yay!” ensues. There’s lots of welcome diversity in the imagined White House and Bunny’s class, and the intersection of Bunny’s identities is treated casually, as is her pride in her heritage in this peppy, mostly rhyming tale. Many readers, however, may find that there’s a little too much information to absorb, from the two holidays to the presidential trivia–even if they’re able to suspend disbelief about White House comings and goings. Still, the humorous, cartoonish illustrations (despite the title character’s first name, the cast is human with one notable, feathered exception) are well-suited to the story’s cheerful tone. Front and back matter include a multilingual glossary; notes for parents and teachers; historical and linguistic background, a “Dream Diary,” and of course, a hamentashen recipe.

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


At the heart of Rachelle Burk’s *The Best Four Questions* is a celebration of the breadth and depth of a child’s natural curiosity. Young Marcy has newly developed her ability to read, which means she will take over the Four Questions this Passover from her brother, Jake. Although he expresses disappointment and doubt in Marcy’s ability, this does little to dampen her excitement over the task. By the time it is her turn to ask the Four Questions, she instead asks unrelated questions about the world around her. Her bemused family addresses her questions before returning to the ones proscribed by
the Seder, which Marcy is able to complete with assistance from Jake.

Burk’s endearing story is paired with illustrations by Mélanie Florian, who depicts every character as wide-eyed and rosy-cheeked through a mixture of watercolor and pastels. The final product is sweet but teeters on the edge of saccharine. Young children—and their parents—will appreciate the humor behind Marcy’s mix-up and will benefit from seeing the adults in Marcy’s life treat her curiosity as having value despite how it temporarily derails the holiday. It does seem slightly far-fetched that Marcy would be so clueless about the Four Questions just because she could not yet read the Haggadah, especially since she admired her brother’s participation. That issue is minor when comparing this book’s substance to similar, but much older picture books like *Penny and the Four Questions* by Nancy Krulik (Scholastic, 1993) and *Four Special Questions: A Passover Story* by Jonny Zucker (B.E.S. Publishing, 2003). Most importantly, *The Best Four Questions* is the only title that fully addresses the four questions, their purpose at the Seder, and their answers (all in English) clearly and age appropriately. Perfect for patrons preparing to make their Four Questions debut.

Alex Quay, Lainer School, Los Angeles, CA


Pippa Mouse is getting ready for her Passover Seder, but where is her special Seder plate? Despite searching throughout the house, her plate is nowhere to be found. She must go outside and ask her scary neighbors, cat, snake, owl, and fish, if they have seen her Seder plate. As she approaches each one, “Quiver!/Shiver!/Quaver!/Shake! [They] make Pippa cringe and quake.” Overcoming her fear, she asks each animal, “Have you seen my Seder plate?/Sun sets soon—it’s getting late.” But no one has seen it. When she falls into the water to talk to Golda Fish, she spots her plate on the bottom of the lake. Special Seder plate in hand, Pippa invites all her friends to join her at the Seder.

An energetic, engaging, rhyming text, with several repeating themes, makes this a delightful read-aloud/read-along story. Alliterative and rhyming action words – “hustle, bustle,” “weeble-wobble,” “stumble, tumble” to name a few – demonstrates Pippa’s fear as well as her determination to find her Seder plate. In the end, all of her interactions with mouse predators, turn into friendships, a wonderful example of *shalom ben adam l’chaverot* (peace between people). The gauche and crayon artwork is charming, brightly colored and deftly illustrates Pippa’s desperation, fear, and ultimate joy over losing then finding her Seder plate. The final illustration shows a Seder plate with an explanation of each traditional item – *Beitzah*, *Zeroah*, *Maror*, *Charoset*, *Chazeret*, and *Karpas*. A fun new addition to the array of Passover picture books.

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


“Where are you going for Seder? Each spring, this question connects our families.” Thus begins this slim, easy to read, cross between a chapter book and a guide to celebrating Passover. In three sections – Preparing for Passover, The Seders, A Passover Journal – the author turns her childhood memories into a reminder that, without them, there is no Seder. Often poetic, the steps to creating a Seder are clearly described: “Wine stains married finger smudges on the worn Haggadah pages. Their babies were tiny droplets crawling across the paper.” Touching anecdotes engage the reader, making the steps in the Seder memorable, such as the description of Grandma Miriam’s *maror* being tested by government scientists to send rockets into space. The last ten pages, the section called “A Passover Journal” are blank pages inviting the reader to record his/her own memories, as well as “Hurray Haroset,” a two-page description of various styles for the Seder staple. A two-page glossary of Hebrew words used in the book is included. Approximately 20 black-and-white line drawings enliven the book. A bit difficult to keep in a library collection without allowing use of the journal pages, but it makes a fun host/hostess
gift when invited to a Seder. [A portion of the money received for every copy sold goes to the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, MA.]

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


“Even youngsters will be able to add something to the Seder” using this “fully illustrated Haggadah, with the complete text, simplified translation and comments.” With more than fifty illustrations and clear headings and section breaks, this is an attractive haggadah that can appeal to older children. The commentary consists of traditional explanations and stories which, for the most part, are age appropriate (one exception being the inclusion in the section commenting on the four different kinds of children the midrash that “there was a time when Pharaoh used to kill Jewish babies to bathe in their blood”). An excellent gift, this haggadah may be a worthwhile addition for Orthodox day schools and libraries serving a traditional population.

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

BOOKS RECEIVED

These titles will not be reviewed in the AJL Newsletter for reasons of space, scope, or date of publication. They are listed here as a courtesy to the publishers and a service to AJL readers. The materials themselves were donated to libraries.

Burton, Jeffrey. The Itsy Bitsy Dreidel (Simon & Schuster, 2017)
Chasin, Robert and Matt Roussel. Meeting Moses (Self-Published, 2017)
Citron, Serna. The Miracles of Elisha (Kehot Publication Society, 2017)
Glick, Shifra. Shikufizky Street (Feldheim, 2017)
Krohn, Genendel. Tishrei Tales (Feldheim, 2016)
Solomon, Sharon K. Ride High with the Wave (Self-Published, 2017)
Spinelli, Eileen. Nora's Ark (Zonderkidz, 2013)
Walder, Chaim. Team Taryag: The Fire-X Flashlight Mystery (Feldheim, 2017)
The AJL Newsletter (Irene Levin-Wixman z”l, founding editor) was published in print from 1979 to 2010 by the Association of Jewish Libraries to inform members about AJL activities and issues related to Judaica libraries. As of January 2011 it is split into two separate electronic publications – the AJL News and the AJL Reviews. Receipt of these publications is one of the benefits of membership. Please see the AJL website at http://www.jewishlibraries.org for membership rates.

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All links to online resources were checked for accuracy on January 29, 2019. We cannot be responsible for broken links to those resources in the future.

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