Statement From The Association of Jewish Libraries Regarding Recent Antisemitic Acts

DINA HERBERT AND HEIDI RABINOWITZ

The Association of Jewish Libraries is horrified by the recent spate of antisemitic attacks, especially those that took place during the holiday of Hanukkah. The shooting at a kosher market in New Jersey and the stabbing at a Hanukkah party in New York made national news; at the same time, there has been a tidal wave of verbal abuse, physical violence, and widespread vandalism of Jewish spaces. We mourn the tragic loss of life, offer prayers of recovery for victims, and urge all to stand in solidarity with the Jewish community in the face of intimidation.

As an international organization of librarians, archivists, researchers, writers, teachers, and lovers of literature, AJL seeks to educate the public and provide resources to fight this scourge of ignorance and hate. After the 2018 attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, AJL published the Love Your Neighbor series of youth booklists. These recommended titles demystify the Jewish experience for readers, with the aim of helping them grow in understanding and empathy. We will continue to update and add to this series in the new year. We call upon educators and librarians of all backgrounds to share this resource with their communities, and to reach out to AJL for more ways to learn about and support Jewish neighbors. Please contact info@jewishlibraries.org to see how you can help.

We will not allow our communities to accept antisemitic terrorism or any other form of hate crime as "the new normal." We will spread knowledge to fight hate. Please join us.

This statement was originally written in December 2019 as AJL’s response to the recent spate of anti-Semitic attacks. AJL received a number of meaningful responses in support, some of which resulted in further action, including: A new bibliography of adult books on interfaith friendship created by members of AJL’s Fiction Award committee as a companion to the youth Love Your Neighbor lists, and a 5th Love Your Neighbors list created on Orthodox Jews; A petition started by two authors who are members of the Facebook Group, Jewish Kidlit Mavens, entitled Book Community Statement of Solidarity Against Antisemitism. (Jewish Kidlit Mavens is a group created by The Book of Life Podcast.): A social media graphic created for use by allies to show solidarity with AJL and the Jewish community.

To subscribe to Hasafran, the AJL mailing list, please see instructions at https://lists.osu.edu/mailman/listinfo/hasafran
AJL is now on Facebook. Become a fan.
A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This winter issue of AJL News and Reviews welcomes a number of inspiring voices from our Jewish library world. AJL President Dina Herbert and Member Relations Chair Heidi Rabinowitz contributed AJL’s Statement on Recent Antisemitic Acts, along with resources developed in and for our community in response to that statement. Heidi also contributed “Diversity Needs Jewish Books,” an article reprinted with permission from The Book of Life blog. Thank you Dina and Heidi for your leadership!

From our guest contributors, we have an article by photographer Brad Kolodny who shares his journey to capture images of all synagogues, past and present, on Long Island, NY. Scholar Patrick Joseph Stevens writes on Cornell University Library’s new collection of pinkesim (ledger books) that reveal important information about Jewish immigrant communities in the US in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Finally, Melanie Myers, from the American Jewish Historical Society, writes about “The Emma Lazarus Project,” a digital storytelling exhibit on the author of “The New Colossus,” the poem inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty.

As always, we have insightful reviews of the latest Jewish books for children, young adults, and adults, as well as all the “chatter” from our widespread AJL chapters that highlights the latest news from our wonderful and creative members. Thank you to our chapter liaisons for sharing!

I hope you will all enjoy this February/March issue, the third that I have had the privilege of editing alongside our terrific News and Review team. As always, please feel free to reach out to me with comments and suggestions at generaleditor@jewishlibraries.org.

Many thanks, Sally Stieglitz

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

David B Levy was recently featured in the University of Maryland, College Park, Library Science School Alumni Spotlight for Library Leadership and library accomplishments, highlighting his authorship of a ten volume set of books. Four volumes are currently published: (1) History of Judaica Libraries, (2) Halakhic Questions of the Online Environment, (3) Topics in Judaica Librarianship, and (4) Gluskin Family History: Research methods and Strategies in Jewish Genealogical research. The remainder will be published in the near future.

James P. Rosenbloom, former president of the Association of Jewish Libraries and Judaica Librarian at Brandeis University announced his retirement after 43 years at Brandeis! Yasher Koach Jim. We wish you a happy retirement!
Diversity Needs Jewish Books
HEIDI RABINOWITZ

During the 2019 High Holiday season, the image to the right was posted on Facebook by We Need Diverse Books, the nonprofit that seeks to build "a world in which all children can see themselves in the pages of a book." This is a big deal.

It's a big deal because for a long time, the kidlit diversity discussion has mostly left Jews out in the cold. A perfect example happened recently at a major diversity workshop aimed at librarians. A Jewish friend who attended reported that religious diversity was barely touched upon (a single slide referenced Muslim literature) and that Judaic books were completely absent from a discussion that covered a wide range of marginalized groups from African Americans to Latinx, Native Americans, LGBT, and even the neurodiverse community.

While a sense of fairness demands that Jewish titles be included in diversity discussions, there's a more urgent need than that. Quoting the We Need Diverse Books website, children "suffer from not seeing the true nature of the world around them. It can distort the world around them and their connections to other humans." If we want Gentile readers to understand and relate to Jews, we need them to read about authentic Jewish characters. This is especially true for readers who don't have the opportunity to meet real, live Jewish people. Prejudice grows from ignorance, and ignorance is conquered by reading. Introducing Jewish literature to a wide audience is a crucial part of the fight against anti-Semitism in a dangerous world where hate is on the rise.

Why does the sort of erasure described above happen over and over to Jews, when the diversity umbrella offers enthusiastic shelter to so many other groups? Jewish children are lucky to see themselves fairly well-mirrored in literature, but there seems to be some hesitancy among others to use these books as windows. Perhaps it is believed that Jews don't need support because many of us enjoy white privilege or economic privilege. Ironically, other minorities often have the same intersectional privileges but are embraced nonetheless. Perhaps people have unconsciously absorbed ancient falsehoods about Jewish power that make it hard for them to see our vulnerability. Perhaps we ourselves sometimes feel reluctant to ask for a place at the table because we fear reinforcing the stereotype of the pushy, kvetchy Jew. I don't believe that the warm-hearted people planning diversity workshops are anti-Semitic, but I do think they tend to have a blind spot about Jewish marginalization. And that is precisely why I am so pleased to see this acknowledgement from We Need Diverse Books.

How is this change in attitude finally coming about? While I don't know the details, I believe that it is because people are speaking up. Members of the Jewish Kidlit Mavens group on Facebook have mentioned calling board members of We Need Diverse Books and other organizations to request Jewish inclusion, and have spoken of warm responses. In my own experience, offering Jewish title recommendations to diversity bloggers has brought an enthusiastic reaction, even relief, from those who want to be inclusive but don't have the requisite expertise on Jewish kidlit. A high profile success story occurred this January, when a desire by the American Library Association to feature more diverse books combined with many years of advocacy by the Association of Jewish Libraries, resulting in...
the Sydney Taylor Book Award for Jewish children's literature being included in ALA's Youth Media Awards' prestigious press conference.

Rabbi Hillel, in Ethics of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot 1:14), said "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?" These wise words perfectly encapsulate the situation at hand. Jews must advocate for our own inclusion in the diversity conversation (help from Gentile friends is also appreciated). We must continue to be good allies, promoting the literature of other minorities along with our own. And we must do it today and every day. As the Jewish New Year rolls around, reminding us to take stock, I want to thank those diversity warriors who are already promoting Jewish literature, such as Missing Voice, Kidlit These Days, and now We Need Diverse Books; and I look forward to even more Jewish inclusion in future diversity discussions. Happy 5780, and may you all be inscribed in the Book of Life.

NOTE: Thank you to Tzivia MacLeod and Esme Codell for their respective blog posts Dear Diversity (No Jews Allowed?) and You Don't Have to Be Jewish, and to the robust discussions on Jewish Kidlit Mavens, all of which inspired this essay. Another relevant post is On Being Othered: A Jewish Young Adult Author's Look at Jewish Erasure in Kidlit by Stacie Ramey. Joyce Schriebman's essay in the Connecticut Jewish Ledger KOLOT – This diversity conference made me feel more marginalized describes her experience at the workshop referenced above.

This article, originally published on The Book of Life blog, is reprinted with permission of the author. Thank you to Heidi Rabinowitz for sharing her voice on the need to include Jewish books and Jewish authors in conversations on diversity.

My Four Year Journey to Document Every Synagogue on Long Island

BRAD KOLODNY

One night in March 2015 I spent about twenty minutes inside the sanctuary at my synagogue, Midway Jewish Center in Syosset, New York. I was alone with my Canon T5i capturing images of the pews, the bimah and overall room configuration that in less than twelve hours would never be the same. Funds had been raised for a million-dollar renovation and demolition would begin the next day. I wanted to have a photographic record of the worn out fabric on the seats, the rainbow colored doors of the ark and other elements in the sanctuary that were in need of repair or just badly outdated.

Then I began to consider this renovation in a larger context. What memories exist or have faded at other local synagogues that have taken on similar projects? What about all the Long Island synagogues that have closed in recent years and congregations that have merged with their buildings sold off? Who will remember those synagogues beyond the generations that experienced it for themselves? What has already been forgotten? These questions became the impetus for a project I took on that night and four years later it is finally complete.

To document my findings I set up an Instagram account @synagoguesoflongisland where now and then I posted photos I had taken of various synagogues near my home with commentary about...

CONGREGATION BETH DAVID IN LYNBROOK, NEW YORK, BUILT IN 1928 IN THE MOORISH STYLE CAPPED WITH TWO ONION DOMES. IT IS NOW USED BY KINGDOM AMBASSADORS GLOBAL MINISTRIES. PHOTO BY BRAD KOLODNY
their origin, architectural style, decorative artwork, and anything noteworthy that makes each unique. This casual hobby quickly grew into an obsession to uncover little known details or long forgotten historical facts about every synagogue. From Great Neck to Montauk, I found congregations across the religious spectrum but what was more intriguing to me was the diversity of the synagogue buildings themselves. Big and small, old and new, fancy and modest, traditional and modern, some in the living room in a private home and others designed by world-class architects. In an effort to be completely comprehensive, my goal became to identify not just every current synagogue, but buildings formerly used as a synagogue as well. The end result of this journey that took me hundreds of miles to communities all over Nassau and Suffolk counties are photographs of 385 synagogue buildings.

Finding and visiting active synagogues was fairly simple. More challenging was identifying buildings that were synagogues at one time but are now serving other purposes. While many are being used by other religious institutions some former synagogues have been converted for non-religious use as private residences, medical offices, a meditation center, municipal offices, a youth center, a college art gallery, and even a laundromat. Beyond visiting buildings that still stand, there are several synagogues that once were the heart of Jewish life for a community but leave no mark, having been destroyed by fire or torn down to make room for new housing developments, office buildings and a parking lot. Finding photos of these lost synagogues required an investigative search that led me to historical societies, museums, libraries, synagogue office files, and personal collections, scattered and rarely seen, until now.

Seeking Sanctuary, 125 Years of Synagogues on Long Island features over 350 photos and is published by Segulah Press. The hardcover coffee table book is available on Amazon.com.

Brad Kolodny has photographed over 600 synagogues in 13 countries over the last 35 years. His passion for uncovering the past has led to the discovery of many little known or long forgotten facts about the history of the Jewish community in Nassau and Suffolk counties. To see a sampling of images featured in the book you can visit his website at bit.ly/synagoguesoflongisland.

Pinkesim in the Cornell University Library

Patrick Joseph Stevens

On 18 July 2018, ten boxes of pinkesim—ledgers from Jewish communal organizations—arrived at Cornell University and forthwith made their way into the rare book vault of the library’s Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections. A provisional tally recorded 318 individual volumes, all dusty, most fragile, a few with decorative lettering in Hebrew and many with nearly indecipherable notes in Yiddish cursive.

The pinkesim comprised part of the residual collections of bookseller Yosef Goldman, who passed away in 2015. Scholars affiliated with the Jewish Studies Program at Cornell University identified these ledgers as an optimal resource for research into Jewish congregations, landsmanshaftn (fraternal societies), and cemetery associations that sprang up in America during the great migration of chiefly Eastern European Jews to these shores from around 1880 to about 1925.
With invaluable support from Cornell alumni advocating for the next generation of academic and cultural investment in Jewish Studies at their favorite university, the library was able not only to acquire the ledgers, but also to create a term appointment for a cataloguer knowledgeable in both Yiddish and in the intricate rules of online bibliographic description for bound manuscripts. The central goal of this eleven-month project is to produce a coherent, systematic record for all the volumes in the collection, affording the scholarly community the opportunity to research individual volumes and their linguistic and intellectual contents exhaustively.

As records become available online, the project will review each volume for preservation needs. While the written contents of the collection are chiefly intact, the volumes are aged and have traveled through many hands. Often, random insertions appear, seemingly out of context, but with a cultural message of their own.

The collection, catalogued and preserved, will be comprehensively available by early 2021 for research in the reading room of Cornell University Library’s Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections.

These pinḳesim join other collections in the Cornell Library that recall the Jews of Eastern Europe, their migrations, their language, and their cultural and political associations. The number of Yiddish imprints in the library approaches three thousand. Within that number are specialized components, for example some sixty titles published between 1931 and 1949 by Emes farlag (Melukhe-farlag "Der Emes") in Moscow, and approximately two dozen volumes of yizker-bikher memorializing communities exterminated during the Holocaust.

Documentation of labor and associated political movements in Cornell University Library’s Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, located in the ILR School (), inevitably includes source materials in Yiddish, reflecting the considerable activity of Jews among a diverse population of industrial workers, whether born in America or overseas. Examples include the records of the International Workers Order and a related, faculty-directed digitization project focusing on the International Workers’ Order (IWO) and Jewish People's Fraternal Order (JPFO).

The Jewish Studies Program at Cornell, diverse in its faculty membership, includes anthropology and urban geography among its interests as well as language, literature, culture, political science, and history. It seems appropriate to consider that the acquisition of these Jewish communal pinḳesim may prove valuable for research in all these fields of investigation.

Patrick J. Stevens has served as curator of the Fiske Icelandic Collection since 1994, and also as bibliographer for Jewish Studies at the Cornell University Library since 2003. In both fields, he is responsible for acquisition of antiquarian and modern books and works in other formats. He is also managing editor of Islandica: A Series in Icelandic and Norse Studies.
The Emma Lazarus Project: A Digital Storytelling Project

MELANIE MYERS, DIRECTOR OF COLLECTIONS AND ENGAGEMENT, THE AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) was founded in 1892 and collects the history of the Jewish people in the Americas from the 1500s to the present day. One of the most prized collections in the repository is that of the Lazarus family, and within that collection one object in particular is of special importance: the manuscript notebook of Emma Lazarus. Lazarus was the author of “The New Colossus,” the poem that is engraved on the base of the Statue of Liberty and which has been inextricably linked to the Statue for over a century.

Lazarus wrote the poem to aid in fundraising for the base of the Statue, inspired by her activism on behalf of recent Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, but once the pedestal was acquired and the Statue placed in New York Harbor, the poem faded from public memory. It was later added to the base of the Statue in 1903, decades after Emma’s untimely death in 1887 at age 38. AJHS has long associated itself with Emma and her legacy by prioritizing the collecting of materials by Jewish women and by our adoption of her image and ideas as an integral part of our institutional identity, so creating an exhibition about her life and work was a natural fit.

The notebook held by AJHS was written by Lazarus shortly before her death; as her health began to fail, she decided to compile her poems in a journal she purchased in New York City, from a stationer on 6th Avenue. The first poem in the notebook is “The New Colossus,” demonstrating that this poem was, to her, the most significant. This notebook has been in the AJHS collections for many years, but due to the fragile condition it cannot be displayed or handled as often as we would like, which presented a significant challenge in terms of mounting any type of permanent or long-term exhibition honoring her legacy. But with the advances in new technology in general, and digital storytelling in particular, AJHS has at last been able to create an exhibition honoring her legacy, and in December we launched “From Sitting Room to Soapbox: Emma Lazarus, Union Square, and American Identity.”

The exhibition is two parts, the first of which is an immersive re-creation of what Emma’s sitting room (where she would have composed her poems) would have looked like; you may sit on the sofa or chairs, and page through books she would have had on her own shelves. But the centerpiece is a digital folio that displays images as the pages are turned and animates selections from the digitized notebook as well as other publications, photographs, and primary source materials held by AJHS that tell the story of her life, her activism, and her milieu. This type of digital technology allows us to combine dynamic storytelling and access to collection materials for a long term-exhibition; the extended length of the exhibition also provides an opportunity to develop curriculum for students, professional development for teachers, and programs for families over a three-year period.

The second half of the exhibition will open later in 2020 and will focus on Union Square (Lazarus lived in the Union Square area her entire life) and the activism centered in that geographic location. Both exhibitions, when viewed in tandem, will show the different paths to civic engagement and participation in the 19th century. For many activists, it was marching to Union Square, commandeering a soapbox, and unleashing fiery oratory. For Emma, it was picking up her pen and writing a poem that will forever be associated with America- “Give me your tired, your poor....”

Melanie Meyers is the Director of Collections and Engagement at The American Jewish Historical Society. She is also adjunct faculty at Long Island University as part of the Palmer School of Library and Information Science. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband, two children, and rowdy dog.
Our JLNMC group enjoyed celebrating the new secular year of 2020 with a January potluck dinner at the home of our long-time active member Shoshanah Seidman. This was a festive gathering, where we got to know one another better in an informal atmosphere. The food and drinks were delicious, and we played a fun “get acquainted” game called Two Truths and a Lie. Each participant said two true things about themselves, as well as one statement that was made up. The group voted on which one wasn’t true. We learned a lot about each other’s true talents and experiences, in an unexpected and delightful way! This was a good opportunity to come together as a small group before the national AJL 2020 Conference in Evanston, Illinois at the Orrington Hotel in June.

The months after our potluck and before the AJL Conference will be filled with meetings as JLNMC plans, coordinates and delves into the myriad details required for hosting a great conference, all under the leadership of Conference co-chairs and JLNMC members Rachel Kamin and Marcie Eskin. Our chapter will be ready and eager to welcome everyone to AJL’s 2020 Conference “Cooler By the Lake.” See you then!

NYMA’s New Year kicked off to a great start with a Reference Workshop, “Genealogy for Librarians,” held Tuesday, December 10, at New York Public Library and hosted by Amanda Seigel, Librarian of NYPL’s Dorot Judaica Division. Amanda was joined by an outstanding team of colleagues, each of whom presented intensive sessions on genealogy resources. There was also a presenter from the Leo Baeck Institute (division of the Center for Jewish History).

Not surprisingly, New York has an abundance of riches. NYPL is “research heaven,” said Melanie Locay, Associate Manager of NYPL’s Center for Research in the Humanities. Pointing to the beautiful Beaux Arts building’s features – quiet study rooms, shared space – she lauded the biggest asset: the help of librarians to find materials. Carmen Nigro – Managing Research Librarian, Milstein Division, Map Division, Jewish Division – added that all the librarians have specialties, with special degrees.

In his “Introduction to Lionel Pincus and Princess Piryal Map Division,” Curator Ian Fowler showcased NYPL’s massive collection of over 400,000 maps and 20,000 books and atlases. These include densely detailed county and city maps, listing everything: slave ports, places of worship, prominent farms, even livestock. In his “Discovering Old New York with Fire Insurance Maps,” Artis Q. Wright, also of NYPL’s Map Division, displayed historical publications of insurance companies needing to determine the hazards of certain areas. These maps include names of streets, lot numbers, property
buildings – even materials (i.e. stone vs. wood). Maps can be zoomed in and overlaid to compare eras – as well as give a feel for these eras.

How to locate a shtetl on a map? In “Geography 101: How to Use Latitude and Longitude from Gazetteers to Locate Places on a Map,” Nancy Kandoian, also of NYPL’s Map Division, gave a refresher course for those of us who forgot latitude and longitude from back in the fourth grade and needed help in coordinates. She also explained how the Prime Meridian – located in Greenwich, UK – may not necessarily be the focal point when determining location somewhere in the boonies of Eastern Europe.

Amanda Seigel presented an “Overview of Genealogy Resources in the Dorot Jewish Division.” Resources include everything for the Jewish seeker:

- Guides (e.g. Avotaynu, cemetery books)
- Biographical Sources (e.g. memoirs)
- Genealogical Sources (e.g. family histories)
- Name Origins (e.g. dictionaries)
- Registers (e.g. pinkas, Yizkor books)
- NYC Resources (e.g. public records)
- Periodicals (print, microform, digital)
- Unexpected Sources (e.g. cookbooks, postcards, theater bills)

(Dorot has also been covered at length in the 2016 and 2019 issues of NYMA News.)

In “Oral Histories – a Resource for Genealogy,” Anne-Marie Belinfante, also of the Jewish Division, questioned the veracity of historical accounts, which may risk one-sidedness. Researching an era or event requires reading several historical accounts with multiple voices in order to get a fuller perspective. Of notable mention is the 1930s Federal Writers Project, where memories of ex-slaves and other Americans were recorded. NYPL contains a wide range of audio recordings and transcripts, including Dorot’s “Catalogue of Memoirs of the William E. Wiener Oral History Library.”

Yekkies would have enjoyed “Genealogical Resources for the Frankfurt Ghetto,” given by Michael Simonson, Archivist and Director of Public Outreach, Leo Baeck Institute. This famous ghetto (1240-1804) consisted of one long Jewish street (Judengasse), on which were built numerous houses filled with long, unbroken families. These houses even bore names of the families (e.g. Rothschild, or “Red Shield”). Michael described one memorable request from a yichus-seeker wanting to learn if he was descended from Rabbi Nathan Adler, a famed kabbalist. (He wasn’t; the rabbi had no kids.)

For those who, like the Fourth Son, don’t even know how to ask, Susan Kriete – NYPL Reference Librarian, Irma and Paul Milstein Division of U.S. History, Local History and Genealogy – discussed “Helping Patrons Find their Roots.” Instead of asking what a library has, patrons should be asked, “What are you looking for?” They would then find out what they can – and cannot – find. Certain things might be irrelevant; others are scattered throughout other libraries or repositories. Government offices, for example, are the places to go for birth certificates and other vital records, while schools may contain class transcripts. Nevertheless, NYPL has many overlooked finding aids, including history guides, abstracts, directories and archival collections – not to mention webpages. The most overlooked resource? The librarian.

In “Family Stories, Ordinary Lives Documented in Collections at NYPL,” Philip Sutton – Librarian, Irma and Paul Milstein Division of U.S. History, Local History and Genealogy – elaborated on NYPL’s vast collection of contemporary photographs, narratives, and newspaper articles about major events. The 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, for example, featured the obituary of one of the largely immigrant victims, Yetta Meyers, as well as early 20th century photos of the Lower East Side. Published secondary
sources include not only the history of the tragic event but the labor laws of that era. People can view old documents to not only trace their heritage but learn about the societies in the Old Country their ancestors left behind.

But how or when did their ancestors get here? In “Finding Tips for Passenger Lists,” Andy McCarthy, also of the Milstein Division, presented a history of ship manifests, as well as the challenges posed by the influx of populations. Until 1820, immigration was limited to small groups – usually under horrible travel conditions -- and official records were scant. Following the U.S. Immigration Steerage Act, record-keeping was mandatory, although forms were not standardized. The first immigrant processing station, 1855-1890, located at Castle Garden, absorbed some 75% of incoming U.S. immigrants. When Ellis Island (1892-1924) became the center, the years 1871-1910 saw the arrival of 2.3 million Jews from the Russian Empire. Records were highly detailed – i.e. age, race, marital status, previous residence, physical description. Other crucial search tips are alternate names, nicknames, or Anglicized names, as well as names of family members. NYPL provides ancestry databases with keyword searches for names of ships, dates of embarkation/arrival, border crossing, etc. In short, a treasure hunt.

The afternoon concluded with a docent-led tour of NYPL’s landmark lion-clad building, a treasure unto itself.

**AJL Ontario**

[AJLONTARIO.ORG](https://www.ajlontario.org)

Submitted by Anne Dublin

With the backing of AJL-Ontario, on June 1, 2020 Anne Dublin will be speaking at the Liberation75 Conference in Toronto. This interactive session will be about “The Bricha: The Jewish Underground Railroad.”

The Hebrew word “bricha” means “flight” or “escape.” The Bricha was the illegal underground organization in post-World War II Europe that helped Jewish Holocaust survivors escape to DP camps in Germany, Austria, or Italy. Anne will speak about the history of the Bricha, the harrowing journeys of the refugees, and the final dismantling of the organization in 1948 when the State of Israel was established.

Anne is the award-winning author of biographies and historical novels for young people. She has a special interest in the Bricha, for her parents were Holocaust survivors who escaped from Poland to a DP camp in Austria with the help of the Bricha.

Liberation75 will be the largest international event to mark the 75th anniversary of liberation from the Holocaust. As explained on the Liberation75 website, “from May 3-June 2, 2020, in exciting downtown Toronto, Liberation75 will showcase the best-in-class work of innovative individuals and organizations. Liberation75 will explore the past, present, and future of Holocaust education and remembrance through captivating discussions and presentations, interactive workshops, survivor testimony, films, artistic and musical performances, unique exhibits, ground-breaking technology, and more.” Registration is now open for general attendees: [https://www.liberation75.org/](https://www.liberation75.org/)
AJL Biennial Election in May 2020

AJL will hold its regular biennial election May 1-30, 2020. We will be voting by electronic ballot. It’s very important that we have up-to-date email addresses for all members. If your email address has changed, please contact our Vice-President for Membership, Sharon Benamou, at benamou@library.ucla.edu. Ballots will be sent to all current AJL members by email on May 1. You must be a current member to vote. If you do not receive a ballot, please contact Joy Kingsolver at 630-988-4726 or joy.kingsolver@gmail.com. If you need a paper ballot, please call Joy to request one.

MEET THE CANDIDATES FOR AJL BOARD

The Nomination Committee is pleased to present the following candidates for the AJL Board 2020-2022.

Respectfully submitted,
Racheli Leket-Mor, Jim Rosenbloom, Amalia Warshenbrot - Committee Chair

Michelle Chesner, Vice President

Position/Institution: Norman E. Alexander Librarian for Jewish Studies, Columbia University

Past position on AJL Board, Council or committee: President, Research, Archives, and Special Libraries Division

Bio: Michelle Chesner began as the inaugural Norman E. Alexander Librarian for Jewish Studies at Columbia University in 2010. She serves as co-director of the digital humanities project Footprints: Jewish Books Through Time and Place, and is the co-convener of the Northeast Judaica Bibliographers' Consortium. Prior to Columbia, Michelle worked at the University of Pennsylvania and the Jewish Theological Seminary. Her degrees are from New York University, Long Island University, and the University of Maryland at Baltimore County. Her first AJL conference was in Phoenix, and she has been an active member of AJL ever since.

Plans if elected: AJL is an incredible organization, one that has been instrumental in my growth and development as a librarian. I hope to expand our membership internationally, and to strengthen our mentorship and training programs. As the field changes, and more librarians are reaching retirement in the coming years, there is a concerning lack of trained professionals entering the field to fill their places. I would like to work on cultivation of a new generation of librarians who can continue the groundwork laid by our collective predecessors and to commit to the future of our profession, whatever changes it may bring.

Jackie Ben-Efraim, Vice President for Development

Position/Institution: Special Collections Librarian, Ostrow Library, American Jewish University

Past position on AJL Board, Council or committee: Secretary (2019), AJL Ad Manager (2013-2019), Local Conference Chair 2019

Bio: I grew up in suburban Washington, D.C. in a family that has been active in the Jewish community for generations. I graduated from Columbia University with a B.A. and M.L.S. Then I moved to Los Angeles where I ran a successful business for 30 years. Finally I came back to the library world when I started my current position 12 years ago. In addition to my volunteer work with AJL, I have served in numerous positions on my synagogue's Sisterhood board for the last 15 years.
Plans if elected: I plan to assist our fundraiser by creating a committee to support fundraising efforts, organize documents created by the committee, to search for potential donors and maintain relationships with current donors.

Sharon Benamou, Vice President for Membership

**Position/Institution:** Hebraica/Judaica and Music Catalog Librarian, UCLA

**Past position on AJL Board, Council or committee:** RAS Vice President, RAS President, Local Conference Co-Chair, Education Committee, member, Vice President for Membership

**Bio:** Sharon Benamou is the Hebraica/Judaica and Music Catalog Librarian at UCLA. She has an MA in Musicology from UCLA and an MLIS from CSU San Jose. She is active in both AJL and the Music Library Association (MLA). In MLA she is the Jewish Music Interest Group coordinator and a member of the Education Committee.

**Plans if elected:** If I am re-elected as Vice President for Membership I would like to coordinate with Council and Board members to keep members informed about available resources, programs and opportunities.

Holly Zimmerman, Treasurer

**Position/Institution:** Research Editor for AARP Media, AARP

**Past Position in AJL:** Treasurer on Board

**Bio:** I have worked as a copyeditor, writer, editor, and fact-checker for AARP Media for 30 years. I hold an MLS degree from the University of Maryland. Jewish librarianship is a strong personal interest. Mother of three, grandmother of two.

**Plans if elected:** To develop and support ways to eliminate deficit and increase income, to keep careful track of funds; to pass on information about this role to at least one other person.

Eitan Kensky, AJL Secretary

**Position/Institution:** Reinhard Family Curator of Judaica and Hebraica Collections, Stanford University

**Bio:** Eitan Kensky is the Reinhard Family Curator of Judaica and Hebraica collections at Stanford. He previously worked at the Yiddish Book Center as the Director of Collections Initiatives, and at Harvard University as the Preceptor in Yiddish. He co-founded In geveb, the online open access journal of Yiddish Studies, and served as President of the Board of In geveb from 2014-2019. Kensky received his PhD in Jewish Studies from Harvard University.

**Plans if elected:** To diligently serve the needs of the AJL, to learn more about the organization, and to offer advice gleaned from years of working for nonprofit organizations, and as a board member at a second nonprofit.

Amalia S. Levy, RAS President

**Position/Institution:** Archivist and Chair, The HeritEdge Connection

**Past position on AJL Board, Council or committee:** RAS VP & Reference and Bibliography Committee Chair

**Bio:** Amalia S. Levi is an archivist and cultural heritage professional currently residing in Barbados. She is the founding director of The HeritEdge Connection, a non-profit organization dedicated to forging collaborations, connecting people, resources, and
institutions through cultural heritage projects. Currently she is conducting digitization projects funded with grants through the Endangered Archives Programme and the Modern Endangered Archives Program. Previously, she completed the archival processing and digitization of the records of the Synagogue Restoration Project in Bridgetown, Barbados. Amalia holds an MLS with a concentration in Archives, and an M.A. in History with a concentration in Jewish Studies, both from the University of Maryland; an M.A. in Museum Studies from Yıldız University in Istanbul, Turkey; and a B.A. in Archaeology and History of Art from the University of Athens, Greece. She has previously worked in museums, developing exhibits, and conducting archival research, and was the founding curator of the Jewish Museum of Turkey in Istanbul. She is co-editor of the book Identity Palimpsests: Archiving Ethnicity in the U.S. and Canada, and author of the book Evanescent Happiness: Ottoman Jews Encounter Modernity - The Case of Lea Mitrani and Joseph Niego (1863-1923).

For a full CV, please see https://hcommons.org/members/amaliasl/.

Website: www.archiveland.com; twitter : @amaliasl

**Plans if elected:** If elected, I would like to a) conduct more outreach and engage more archivists in AJL, b) involve more non-US based colleagues, c) place more focus on works of digital scholarship, and promote opportunities for continuous professional development at the AJL conference or the website, d) explore possibilities for collaboration, exchange of ideas, event or session organizing with colleagues from other 'ethnic' associations, such as the Middle East Librarians Association etc.

**Anna Levia, RAS Vice President**

**Position/Institution:** Has worked at Stanford University Libraries since 2003 After spending eight years as a librarian for Jewish Studies, I currently serve as Reference and Instruction Librarian; Bibliographer for Linguistics; and Processing Archivist.

**Past position on AJL Board, Council or committee:** In 2017 she served on AJL's Strategic Planning Committee.

**Bio:** BA in Linguistics from the University of Minnesota and a Master of Library and Information Science degree from San Jose State. Her husband and she have three grown children and have lived in Sunnyvale, CA since 1992.

**Plans if elected:** If elected I look forward to chairing the Judaica Reference and Bibliography Awards Committee. I see these awards as an excellent means of highlighting and celebrating outstanding scholarship while promoting AJL as an important professional organization.

**Samara Katz, SSCPL President**

**Position/Institution:** Librarian & Adult Education Coordinator, Temple Sinai Atlanta

**Bio:** Samara graduated from Ohio University with a degree in photojournalism and radio documentary in 2010. This may seem like a far cry from Jewish education, but Samara always gravitated towards good story telling, the research required to tell it, and the personal connections that go into interviewing. And what could be more Jewish than that?!

Samara has worked at many different Jewish organizations the past ten years and has had students as young as three and as old as 83. She has taught Hebrew and Judaica, has been a youth group leader, a camp counselor, a camp counselor, a Resident Assistant at a Jewish boarding school, a Reform minyan leader, a Hillel director, curriculum developer and fundraiser.

Samara has currently landed at Temple Sinai Atlanta where her “Jane-of-all-trades” mindset has been encouraged. Her official title is Librarian & Adult Education Coordinator and her job is a wonderful mishmash of everything from preschool story time to bringing famous authors to speak
to the congregation like Dani Shapiro to working on curriculum development with the religious school teachers.

When Samara is not at Temple Sinai, you can find her doing arts and crafts and hanging out with her dog Gracie.

**Plans if elected:** I would like to help maintain the excellent quality of education opportunities for librarians and educators in the SSCPL division. I would also like to explore new educational experiences for the upcoming conference.

**Sean Patrick Boyle, SSCPL Vice President**

**Position/Institution:** Jewish Day School of the Lehigh Valley; Librarian

**Past position on AJL Board, Council or committee:** Chair, SSCPL Advocacy Committee - Current

**Bio:** Sean Patrick Boyle is the Librarian at the Jewish Day School of the Lehigh Valley, in Allentown PA, and received his MLIS from the University of Pittsburgh. He is the Chair of the Advocacy Committee for AJL’s SSCPL division, and a member of the Leadership Institute for School Librarians for the Pennsylvania School Librarian Association. He is a retired U.S. Naval Officer with over 23 years of service. He also has a certificate of completion from the Turkish Naval War College, an MA in Teaching and Learning with Technology, and a BS in Political Science from the United States Naval Academy.

**Plans if elected:** I am in my second year as the Chair for SSCPL Division’s Advocacy Committee and appreciate the many great opportunities and support that the AJL provides to its members. SSCPL Division provides many great services and practical resources, and I wish to continue serving the Division and carrying on the great legacy left to us by past leaders.

Unfortunately, there is the continued trend of SSCPL division parent organizations as synagogues and centers converting their library spaces into meeting rooms with entire or most of the collections being weeded including items AJL was able to get donated by Avi Chai and other foundations. In schools the recent trend is to convert library spaces into J-STEAM (Jewish-Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) or other Innovation/Technology Labs. These organizations are hiring STEM Educators or other Educational Tech instructors and are not looking at Librarians to fill or enhance these roles.

The transitioning of Library spaces to J-STEAM Labs is being done through large grants and support from National Jewish Organizations (ex: PRIZMAH, Jewish Interactive, PJ Library) and are receiving local Rabbi board support with disregard to the ‘cost’ of destroying their libraries.

As the Vice President of SSCPL Division, I will work with the SSCPL President and the AJL Board to educate these organizations, both locally and nationally, about the vitalness of maintaining Library spaces, and actively demonstrate at their conferences and during other opportunities on how Librarians enhance J-STEAM programs (Data Management, Problem Research, Copyright, Metadata for project archive, etc.) while still providing ‘traditional’ services. I am my School’s J-STEAM Facilitator and offer programs to the wider community through our Friends of the Library organization. So, I will be able to provide first-hand knowledge on how Librarians enhance instead of hinder these programs.

While AJL stops the trend of eliminating Libraries, I will also work diligently to continue and improve the partnerships with Public Libraries to ensure we are providing Jewish Literature and Judaic Librarianship Support to the larger communities as their local Jewish organizations misguidedely destroy their Judaic Collections.
Association of Jewish Libraries Announces Book Awards

2020 SYDNEY TAYLOR BOOK AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

Winners of the annual Sydney Taylor Book Award were announced by AJL on January 27, 2020 at the Youth Media Awards of American Library Association Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia, PA.

Named in memory of Sydney Taylor, author of the classic All-of-a-Kind Family series, the award recognizes books for children and teens that exemplify high literary standards while authentically portraying the Jewish experience.

2020 is the first year the Sydney Taylor Honor Books have been included along with the winners in the announcements at the American Library Association Youth Media Awards press conference.

The Sydney Taylor Book Awards Committee of AJL is chaired by Rebecca Levitan.

Picture Book Winner


Middle Grade Winner


Young Adult Winner

Someday We Will Fly by Rachel DeWoskin, published by Viking, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers, a division of Penguin Random House

Picture Book Honors


The Key from Spain: Flory Jagoda and Her Music by Debbie Levy, illustrated by Sonja Wimmer, published by Kar-Ben Publishing, an imprint of Lerner Publishing Group

Middle Grade Honors


Anya and the Dragon by Sofiya Pasternack, published by Versify, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Young Adult Honors

Dissenter on the Bench by Victoria Ortiz, published by Clarion Books, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Sick Kids in Love by Hannah Moskowitz, published by Entangled Teen, an imprint of Entangled Publishing LLC
**Picture Book Notables**

*Doctor Esperanto and the Language of Hope* by Mara Rockliff, illustrated by Zosia Dzierzawska, published by Candlewick Press

*A Scarf for Keiko* by Ann Malaspina, illustrated by Merrilee Liddiard, published by Kar-Ben Publishing, an imprint of Lerner Publishing Group

*Parrots, Pugs and Pixie Dust: A Book about Fashion Designer Judith Leiber* by Deborah Blumenthal, illustrated by Masha D’yans, published by Little Bee Books

**Middle Grade Notables**

*Masters of Silence* by Kathy Kacer, published by Annick Press

*A Boy is Not a Bird* by Edeet Ravel, published by Groundwood Books

*Rachel’s Roses* by Ferida Wolff, illustrated by Margeaux Lucas, published by Holiday House

**Young Adult Notables**

*In the Neighborhood of True* by Susan Kaplan Carlton, published by Algonquin Young Readers, an imprint of Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, a division of Workman Publishing

*A Light in the Darkness: Janusz Korczak, His Orphans, and the Holocaust* by Albert Marrin, published by Knopf Books for Young Readers, a division of Random House Children’s Books

**Body-of-Work Award Winner**

Lesléa Newman

**Manuscript Award Winner**

There was no Manuscript Award Winner awarded for 2020.

**AJL 2020 FICTION AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

**Rosalind Reisner**

**Winner: On Division** by Goldie Goldblum (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

**Honor book: The Flight Portfolio** by Julie Orringer (Knopf)

The Fiction Award Committee is delighted to announce the winner of this year’s awards. Committee members this year are: Rosalind Reisner (Chair), Merrily Hart, Rachel Kamin, Laura Schutzman (2020 Chair), and Sheryl Stahl. This is the third year of the award, given to works of fiction published in 2019 with significant Jewish thematic content written in English.

The award will be presented at the AJL conference in Evanston in June. The winning author will receive $1000.00 at the Awards Banquet. We are hoping to have both authors on hand at the conference to speak at the panel program, *Fresh Lit: Recent and Forthcoming Adult Jewish Fiction*, on Tuesday morning. There will also be a discussion about *On Division* at breakfast Wednesday morning, so consider reading it beforehand.

“In *On Division*, Goldblum writes about Surie, a newly-pregnant fifty-seven year old mother, grandmother, and almost great-grandmother living in the Chasidic community of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Still haunted by the death of her son Lipa, Surie finds herself keeping this pregnancy a secret from everyone, including her beloved husband. The author, a member of the Chasidic community, writes with accuracy, authenticity, and respect – celebrating the positive aspects of the community with beauty, warmth and
love while also exposing negative, harmful, and shameful practices. The result is a multi-layered story of how secrets can shake even the most secure and close-knit families that is accessible to readers both familiar and unfamiliar with the insular world of ultra-Orthodox Jews,” notes Rachel Kamin, member of the Award Committee.

“In The Flight Portfolio author Julie Orringer imagines the daring and conflicted existence of the little-known real-life hero Varian Fry as he sets up an audacious rescue operation in Vichy France, helping artists, writers and intellectuals, mainly Jewish, escape from their increasingly precarious existence to safety in America. As the Nazis increase their presence and control, he and his assistants evade German and Vichy authorities, search for new escape routes, work around American governmental indifference, and wrangle eccentric personalities. The author’s gorgeous writing and well-researched historical background plunge the reader into the dangers of life in southern France in 1940 with a love story, a suspenseful escape story, and the ethical question of whom do you save when all are worth saving,” comments Merrily Hart, member of the Award Committee.

For more information about the award and previous winners, see https://jewishlibraries.org/AJL_Jewish_Fiction_Award

We are grateful for the generous support of Dan Wyman Books for underwriting the Award. Submissions for the 2021 AJL Fiction Award (titles published in 2020) are now being accepted.

2019 GRONER-WIKLER AWARD - AN INSPIRATION TO OTHERS
AMALIA WARSHENBROT, PAST CHAIR, GRONER–WINKLER AWARD

Kar-Ben Publishing is no stranger to librarians with Jewish children’s books in their libraries, to parents of young children, or to those involved with PJ library programs. On their shelves are many of the books that Kar-Ben has published for close to 50 years. Most books deserve an award and indeed many titles received one. In 2013, Kar-Ben Publishing’s founders Judye Groner and Madeline Wikler announced their retirement. Joni Sussman, the publisher at Kar-Ben, approached AJL President, Heidi Rabinowitz (2012-2014), and offered to honor these founders with a scholarship for AJL Annual Conference attendance and name it the Groner-Wikler Award.

This scholarship (valued at $1,500) was not a one-time gift. It has been given annually since 2014 to an AJL member who demonstrates dedication to Jewish children’s literature or library services. Heidi Rabinowitz and Amalia Warshenbrot, then Synagogue School Center Division President, were delighted to welcome the thoughtful gift because it was an additional source of support to make it possible for librarians to attend AJL conferences.

As we prepare to honor the 2020 recipient, we are delighted to share with you the acceptance speech of the 2019 recipient Denise Blumenfeld, librarian and teacher in a day school in Panama City, Panama. We believe that her remarks can serve as inspiration to other school or center librarians. SSCPL President, Emily Bergman, wrote to Hasafran about Denise’s passion for libraries, teaching and Judaica when she shared the decision to award the Groner-Wikler award to her.

Below please read and enjoy Denise’s speech:

Good Morning! I would like to thank you all for this opportunity to share my acceptance speech for the Groner-Wikler Award. It is the third time that I have received this honorable commendation, which gives me the opportunity to come and learn, share, and communicate with peers, such as you all, my experience from a Jewish School Library in Panama City, Panama.
The Midrash tells us the story about a man who approaches Hillel since he would like to learn only of the written Torah. Hillel receives him and on the first day teaches the names of the Hebrew letters... Alef, Bet, Gimel.... On the following day, the man comes back for his second class, but Hillel changes the order of his teaching: Kaf, Shin, Resh, Qof. The man says: “But this isn’t what you taught me yesterday… Yesterday you taught me the first letter was Alef.” Hillel responded: “Just as you trust that I will teach you the correct way, you must trust the oral Torah as well.”

When we invite our students to literature, we must do this just as the Chabad do when they fill the Hebrew letters with honey so the children can fill themselves with the sweet and pleasant taste. With this in mind, when we select books for our children, we must do so with the purpose that they can love the letters that form the words and prayers that enable us to express our interior world.

Reading out loud to children allows them to hear how the Mora or the teacher can see the story they are telling and allows the child to understand the necessity of the grammatical rules for giving life to that text. The teacher makes different voices during their readings, making the students able to imagine the characters presented.

To be able to help each student to pick their own book for individual reading is an art. I enjoy the moment in which I can guide a student that comes in to the library, overwhelmed with the teacher’s demands, and I can help them pick a book that will let them enjoy reading according to their individual interests and that is tailored for their academic requirements.

At the moment I’m trying to transmit two concepts: relaxing reading versus challenging reading. The idea is that they can read their books in the language in which they feel most comfortable, on a subject that they enjoy, and with a vocabulary level that they would use for enjoying the reading. But, they have to start incorporating challenging books that can stimulate their intellectual level, either language or content.

Two months ago, a student from 9th grade came in and said “Mora, I have a problem. I have so many books in my nightstand that I read at the same time, that my mom always says it looks messy.” I explained that the majority of the readers read so many things at the same time in different formats... and to be glad that this is a simple issue.

---

**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.

To subscribe to Hasafran, please see instructions at
https://lists.osu.edu/mailman/listinfo/hasafran

To post a message to Hasafran, send your message to: hasafran@lists.osu.edu
You will receive a confirmation message.
Scholarship Committee Report
SUBMITTED BY SARAH BARNARD, SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBER

The Scholarship Fund needs help. We gratefully accept donations which can be in memory or in honor of someone. We will send a tribute card (or several). Please include the following information with your donation: your name and address, the name(s) and addresses of the recipient(s) of the tribute card, the reason for the tribute and your email address in case there are questions. Send check donations to:
Sarah M. Barnard (sarmarbar68@gmail.com)
5646 Hunters Lake
Cincinnati, OH 45249

AJL Scholarship Donation Form

Name of Donor:
_______________________________________________________________________________________

Address and email of Donor:
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________

Donation made in honor/memory of:
_______________________________________________________________________________________

Name of person(s) to receive card:
_______________________________________________________________________________________

Address of person(s):
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________

Notes:

Having recorded his own survivor testimony with the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, this Bulgarian-born Jewish physician has also taken it upon himself to demolish some of the horrendous ideas propounded over the centuries against Jews and Judaism. Judeophobic treatment combined with antisemitic accusations are separated by specific topics: theological attacks (deicide, historic punishment of Jews for their treatment of Jesus, initiating the Black Death and poisoning wells, ritual murder); archaeological interpretations (no real Jewish history in Jerusalem), ugly physical traits, characteristics of Jews (misers, money grubers, cowards, a low race), political arguments (unbalanced criticisms of Israel’s actions, Jewish attempts at world domination and, of course, Holocaust denial). The narrative is supplemented throughout by photographs, artwork and documents. *21 Terrible Lies* provides a simple but relatively informative defense of the many prevarications against Jews and Judaism that have brought hatred to witness.

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


The title of this poignant memoir refers to Panama, and the author’s childhood and young adulthood in the 1950s and 60s as part of a large, loving, close knit family of Sephardic Jews who settled in the capital of this Central American country. It describes the various interrelationships between the author and her siblings, parents, cousins, aunts and uncles; but the mother-daughter relationship is a central focus of the book. Spanish words and phrases are sprinkled throughout the text, which adds to the unique flavor of the narrative. Family photographs are also included. The text is subdivided into short sections, easy to read and follow, lively and interesting. Recommended for high school, public library, community center, Temple and synagogue library collections.

*Susan Freiband, Retired Library Educator, Volunteer Synagogue Librarian, Alexandria, Virginia*


Outside of the High Holidays, Jews don’t talk much about sin or failure. Rabbi David Bashevkin, director of education at NCSY and instructor at Yeshiva University, has written an in-depth but very readable book about sin and failure, tracing how Judaism discusses the topic from the Bible, through rabbinic literature, up to modern times. His sources range from the Talmud to Hassidic masters such as Rabbi Nachman, contemporary rabbinic greats, including Moshe Feinstein, Rav Hunter, social scientists and literary giants, current news sources and pop culture, all fully annotated.

While Inuit people have many words for snow, Bashevkin explicates the nuances of the many words for sin. Bashevkin next discusses the timing of the sin of Adam and Eve, explaining how the midrash places the sin at the end of the sixth day, as part of the process of creation. Sin allows for man to obtain free choice.

The author’s topics range from the language of sin, to “original sin,” levels of intention in action and sin, determinism and the unique view of sin of the Hasidic school of Izbica that free-will is an illusion, “sinning for the sake of heaven,” apostasy, and whether God sins and repents.

Figures treated here include Queen Esther, Jonah, Elisha ben Abuya (Acher), Shabbtai Tzvi, and Brother Daniel in modern Israel. The chapter “Rabbi’s Son Syndrome” explores why the children of clergy have trouble remaining religious. In the final section, letters from contemporary rabbis offer empathy to questioners dealing with difficult issues such as homosexuality and marital infidelity.
Bashevkin has a sense of humor, as seen in his bio: “David has been rejected from several prestigious fellowships and awards.” His message is simple: sin and failure is part of life, along with the struggle for spirituality and redemption. This book is highly recommended for academic libraries.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library


There is a plethora of books, including several recent volumes, on comforting the ill and dying and their loved ones. This volume, edited by rabbi, poet and writer, Rachel Barenblat, contains teachings, readings, and services to guide the mourners.

The editor (named by The Forward in 2016 as one of America’s Most Inspiring Rabbis) has divided the text into several parts, each marking a traditional period from death (including several versions of Vidui) through the first Yahrzeit. The book includes full Mincha and Ma’ariv services, with a variety of alternative readings, including two versions of the Amida prayer. In addition, there are numerous readings and poems directed to mourners at each stage of the journey and throughout the services. Many of them are from well-known names (Jill Hammer, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi); others are from less famous rabbis and authors. Each recitation of the Kaddish has a different interpretive text by a well-known modern thinker. The result is that the process is made accessible to everyone, from observant to non-practicing Jews.

This small book is filled with wisdom, both ancient and modern. It is meant specifically for spiritual leaders, i.e., rabbis, Chevra Kadisha staff, prayer leaders, and counselors. But its readings can provide comfort for mourners at all stages of the process. It should be considered for every Jewish library; we all can use its kind words.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Wow! A treat for the eyes, intellect, and spirit, this facsimile edition of a medieval manuscript, known as the Lombard Haggadah, was prepared for an exhibit of the manuscript at Les Enluminures in New York held in 2019. The rare manuscript, which was last publicly displayed at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900, has been in private hands ever since and thus is not well known, even in the scholarly world. It is the earliest stand-alone medieval Haggadah, and one of three still owned privately. The Haggadah is attributed to the school of Giovannino de Grassi (d. 1398) in Milan, a date which fits in with a period of Jewish immigration into Lombardy under the protection of Duke Gian Galeazzo Visconti. The manuscript was probably commissioned by a wealthy Jewish patron. The Haggadah includes seventy-five watercolor illustrations in Gothic International style in three categories: preparations for the Seder and the Seder itself; Biblical stories from Genesis and Exodus; and the labors of the months, a cycle of illuminations more frequently featured in Christian rather than Jewish manuscripts.

Full-page color facsimiles of the complete manuscript of the Haggadah are included in the book but that is not the only treat in store for the reader since this volume encompasses much more than the Haggadah itself. The book includes essays on Jewish life in late medieval Lombardy, the background and production of the manuscript of the Haggadah, a description of the manuscript, comparisons of the illustrations in this manuscript to other illuminated manuscripts, all written by noted scholars, as well as a bibliography.

This publication makes this hitherto almost completely unknown and marvelous manuscript available in facsimile, both to educate and to be enjoyed by a broad public. Although it is geared to academic Judaica and art libraries, the appealing and accessible nature of the visual material makes it a suitable candidate for inclusion in Judaica collections on all levels.

Shulamith Z. Berger, Yeshiva University, New York, NY


Stripping away the numerous layers of study and scholarship that have accumulated (and often been contested) over the 70 years since the discovery of the Scrolls in the caves of Qumran, Crawford strives to synthesize a new approach to our understanding of the Dead Sea Scrolls. She accepts a number of the traditional claims which have withstood the test of time and combines them with the evidence of recent archaeology and the complete corpus of the scrolls that have recently been published. She has come to recognize some of the errors and missteps of those who preceded her, both archaeological and ideological. She notes for example, that de Vaux allowed his own preconceived notions to guide him in his early archaeological investigations at Qumran. She also observes that although many in the past have tried to use the sectarian scrolls as historical documents, they are actually more metaphorical and ideological in nature. Crawford does consider that the Qumran site and the nearby caves served as a central library (not unlike other libraries at the time) where the Essenes collected, redacted, and stored materials for a future time. Among the texts themselves, she notes a transition from authoritative scriptural traditions to completely new, often sectarian compositions. She suspects, though admittedly without substantiation, that because of the sacredness of their task and the requirements of purity, the Essenes may have denied access to women at this particular site (though there may have been female members of the sect at other locations around Israel). She also asserts that the Teacher of Righteousness, whom many associate with the founding of the Essene sect, was not present at the creation of the Qumran settlement, but rather predated it by at least 50 years. Crawford argues that from the evidence that she has she can make no assertions regarding the founding of the sect, nor of the fate of its members once the Romans destroyed Qumran in 68 C.E., and they deposited the last of the scrolls in the surrounding caves. With an extensive bibliography and footnotes this is an academic text, but it is also a fascinating and accessible read.

Randall C. and Anne-Marie Belinfante

Shulamith Z. Berger, Yeshiva University, New York, NY


Stripping away the numerous layers of study and scholarship that have accumulated (and often been contested) over the 70 years since the discovery of the Scrolls in the caves of Qumran, Crawford strives to synthesize a new approach to our understanding of the Dead Sea Scrolls. She accepts a number of the traditional claims which have withstood the test of time and combines them with the evidence of recent archaeology and the complete corpus of the scrolls that have recently been published. She has come to recognize some of the errors and missteps of those who preceded her, both archaeological and ideological. She notes for example, that de Vaux allowed his own preconceived notions to guide him in his early archaeological investigations at Qumran. She also observes that although many in the past have tried to use the sectarian scrolls as historical documents, they are actually more metaphorical and ideological in nature. Crawford does consider that the Qumran site and the nearby caves served as a central library (not unlike other libraries at the time) where the Essenes collected, redacted, and stored materials for a future time. Among the texts themselves, she notes a transition from authoritative scriptural traditions to completely new, often sectarian compositions. She suspects, though admittedly without substantiation, that because of the sacredness of their task and the requirements of purity, the Essenes may have denied access to women at this particular site (though there may have been female members of the sect at other locations around Israel). She also asserts that the Teacher of Righteousness, whom many associate with the founding of the Essene sect, was not present at the creation of the Qumran settlement, but rather predated it by at least 50 years. Crawford argues that from the evidence that she has she can make no assertions regarding the founding of the sect, nor of the fate of its members once the Romans destroyed Qumran in 68 C.E., and they deposited the last of the scrolls in the surrounding caves. With an extensive bibliography and footnotes this is an academic text, but it is also a fascinating and accessible read.

Randall C. and Anne-Marie Belinfante

In his latest book, the world-renowned criminal lawyer and retired Harvard law professor, Alan Dershowitz, discusses his lifelong relationship with the state of Israel. The book begins with Dershowitz’s early memories as a ten-year-old growing up in a Modern Orthodox family in Brooklyn, New York where his family had a strong connection to Israel and Zionism. He was further influenced by the Jewish day school he attended and the Hebrew-speaking Zionist Camp Massad. In *Defending Israel*, Dershowitz provides the history of the world’s changing attitude towards the Jewish state. He relates his many behind-the-scenes efforts to explain Israel to the world; for example, he helped UN Ambassador Arthur Goldberg draft a statement attempting to clarify the often-quoted UN Resolution 242, which proposed “a just and lasting peace” after the Six Day War. Dershowitz discusses his debates with people harboring extreme left-wing and right-wing views, such as Noam Chomsky, Vanessa Redgrave, and Meir Kahane. The last chapter is devoted to his experiences during a trip to Israel which he took with two of his grandchildren. *Defending Israel* is a fascinating and personal account of Alan Dershowitz’s impact on the way Israel’s history is relayed. Included are personal photographs of Dershowitz and important figures in modern Israel; the book also contains an index and notes. *Defending Israel* is highly recommended for all libraries because of the way it tells the story of modern Israel and its struggle for recognition from the personal perspective of a lifelong, passionate Zionist.

*Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH*

---


Richard Eisenberg, who is both an addiction counselor and a rabbi, wants to make the Jewish community more aware of problems of addiction among community members and dispel myths about Jews not being addicts. His book is interspersed with wisdom from traditional Jewish sources. This is not a comprehensive book about addictions but rather, as the author writes, “I hope it will be a new direction in the way we Jews talk and think about addiction.” While Eisenberg acknowledges healing does occur in 12 Step Programs, he believes, from his experience in the field, that there is room for a new model: a Harm Reduction Model. The Harm Reduction Model allows for a person in recovery to be able to move from chronic, excessive drinking to moderate or light consumption. This is quite the opposite of 12 Step programs which preach total abstinence from liquor as the only path to recovery. Without commenting on the validity of these two approaches, 12 Step programs have been known to be successful with many positive testimonies. Along with more awareness in the Jewish community, more research and study need to be done on how to treat addictions and what programs are successful. Relying on testimonials is not necessarily the full picture.

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

---


Kaye has pulled off a *tour de force* in bridging philosophical and theological thinking by applying postmodern Western philosophy to Jewish religious discourse. She provides order, connects dots, and discerns patterns to a wide-ranging body of new trends, ideas, and texts associated with postmodernism. By focusing her attention on the work of two Israeli intellectuals, Tamar Ross and Rav Shagar (Shimon Gershon Rosenberg), Kaye shows how Judaism can be a redemptive source for making meaning out of postmodern relativism, nihilism, cynicism, apathy, and denial of absolute truth claims. Kaye coherently brings together a succinct synthesis of disparate bodies of work by postmodern thinkers. She offers eloquent clarity to a sophisticated body of thought where templates and paradigms are not easily discernible, demarcated, and mapped in intelligible categories. More importantly this allows Kaye to...
offer a constructive way forward inspired by committed Jewish life, theology, and faith. She makes the question of religious belief urgent by turning to concepts of community, belief, language, and revelation, showing how they serve as keys to unlock and solve the postmodern morass. Kaye also demonstrates how this reevaluation of postmodernism can be used to help revitalize and rejuvenate Jewish religious life.  

David B Levy, Lander College for Women, NYC


Tirzah Firestone has provided a book which “combines insights from recent scientific research with the voices of Jewish survivors and their descendants.” She draws upon the field epigenetics to show how genes can be affected through traumatic events and create a kind of “biological memory” that “emerges under stress” in the descendants. As she observes, the second and third generation of trauma survivors can be “prone to depression, anxiety, and other stress responses.” The author calls this phenomenon “Jewish trauma.” Firestone, a rabbi and Jungian psychotherapist in Boulder, Colorado, narrates well what she learned from meetings with Holocaust survivors, Israeli soldiers, parents of victims of terrorism, and activists from the Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization. In a second part of the book, she provides a roadmap for healing to survivors of “Jewish trauma.” Recommended to anyone interested in psychic trauma.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD


This book originated as a set of papers presented at a conference in Sydney, Australia in April 2012 entitled “The Holocaust and Legacies of Race in the Postcolonial World, 1945 to the Present.” The theme was expanded thereafter with meetings in Chicago and in Cape Town, South Africa which provided half the essays contained therein. The materials are covered in several parts; the first is an examination of racism with Jews as the central focus in Great Britain, South Africa, and in the South in the United States. This is followed by a discussion of Jewish attitudes toward racism combined with the idea of how Jews and racism fit into a literary context as portrayed by the Nazis and exhibited in the Caribbean and Australia. The final section looks at the role of discrimination in the way Israeli policies toward the Palestinians is done with the Holocaust as background and an examination of Nazi-inspired racism in South African textbooks. This is a clear contribution to the sociology of racism and racial discrimination in the modern era.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC


Every year, the Haggadah leads us on a path from slavery to freedom. The preparations for the Seder and the transformative path of the Seder immerse us in a flow of Jewish history. Rabbi Goldin has prepared a Haggadah with the complete Hebrew text and commentary named “food for thought” for every aspect of the Haggadah and Seder. This commentary reveals the “big picture” of the celebration. While we sometimes get lost in the details and questions about Passover food, Goldin puts the details in the context of a step-by-step journey through the heart of Jewish history.

Goldin’s book is meant for study and contemplation before the Seder night because there is no time to read, absorb, and understand all the text on that one night. Highly recommended for all libraries and personal collections; readers will gain insights from this book for many years.

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

Heinrich Heine’s *Hebrew Melodies* is a three-part work which he wrote as an expression of his Jewish heritage. In this edition, the first two parts, “Prinzessin Sabbath” and “Jehuda ben Halevy,” are translated from the German by poet Stephen Mitchell and the last part, “Disputation,” is translated by renowned children’s book author Jack Prelutsky. “Prinzessin Sabbath” compares the Jew to a cursed hero who lives his life as a dog except on the Sabbath, when divine favor lifts the curse. The familiar images of the Sabbath fill the poem, along with quirky fusions of Jewish themes and with cultural tropes from the assimilated German-Jewish society that formed Heine’s background. “Jehuda ben Halevy” has the inaccurate “ben” in the middle of the name—is it a mistake due to Heine’s uncertain knowledge of Hebrew, or a deliberate poetic jest? This long, historical poem reflects Heine’s identification with Halevy, whom he calls a “troubadour” — *minnesinger* in German. “Disputation,” the only rhymed poem, is a narration of a people doomed to suffer either baptism or circumcision.

The works are interpreted artistically by Mark Podwal, the famed painter of Jewish subjects. The artwork is the greatest triumph of the book. Podwal offers his familiar style here—representational imagery with soft lines, vivid, contrasting color, and fanciful settings that reflect his creative interpretation. He indulges his imagination with non-standard colors, animation of objects such as *yads*, letters, and musical instruments, and mixing figures from different times and places in one painting, all to great effect. Each illustration has a caption that links it to its place in the text. The book has the heavy paper and large format of a coffee-table product. Recommended for collections of poetry and art.

*Beth Dwoskin, International Studies Cataloger, Hatcher Graduate Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI*


The thirteen chapters in the book contain the writings and words of Raul Hilberg, the late Holocaust historian of great renown. His seminal work, *The Destruction of the Jews*, was one of the first major works of Holocaust scholarship and research. As a result, Hilberg’s name is highly respected in Holocaust studies. His view of the Holocaust as a “bureaucratic phenomenon,” and his writings on the mechanisms of the Holocaust remain both respected and controversial. Among the most controversial opinions he offered were those regarding the lack of resistance among the Jews and the role of the Jewish Council in facilitating Nazi plans.

This book is written in a concise and factual narrative style, with an absence of any judgement or emotion. Chapter 12 provides the transcript of a conversation between different personalities, mainly psychologists, at a conference in which Hilberg outlines the history of Holocaust study and research.

I would recommend this book to both Holocaust historians and general readers alike. The breadth and depth of Hilberg’s research and his particular insights have not yet been surpassed by any other Holocaust scholar.

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


This is a first-rate history of Christian Zionism based upon extensive archival research. Christian Zionism is a complex phenomenon with a number of sometimes conflicting currents and this book reflects that. One of the most important conflicts Dr. Hummel (a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Wisconsin) discusses is the Christian tendency to seek converts versus the decision of many Christian Zionists to refrain from such missionizing of Jews and to oppose those who do engage in it. The reasons for this are manifold: either they see the covenant of God with the Jews to be eternal and salvific, or they
are appalled at the history of Christian antisemitism and want simply to be friendly and of practical assistance to the Jews and the Jewish state in a spirit of interreligious reconciliation, or they want to receive God’s blessings by blessing Israel basing this upon God’s words to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Dr. Hummel’s history covers the stages of development of Christian Zionism and, in doing so, clarifies the variety of theological perspectives that underlie it such as evangelical, fundamentalist, Christian Right, and Pentacostal. This book is an excellent choice for libraries with patrons who are seeking a deeper theological or historical understanding of Christian Zionism.

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

**Heschel, Abraham Joshua. In This Hour: Heschel’s writings in Nazi Germany and London Exile. Philadelphia: JPS, 2019. 199 pp. $29.95. (9780827613225).**

The selection of Abraham Joshua Heschel’s writings in this collection span from his years in Nazi Germany (after he left Warsaw) and during the few months he spent in England before his eventual move to the United States, at a time when he wrote primarily in German. Heschel’s writings, penned in the face of expulsion and extinction, testify to the redemptive power of Jewish learning as an act of sacred memory to counter oblivion (*verlassenheit*) and as a way to sustain the Jewish people into the future if Jews are to prevail and overcome.

These writings are organized into five parts: (1) London: Jewish Learning in Exile; (2) Personalities in Jewish History; (3) Don Yitzhak Abravanel; (4) For the Jewish Holidays in Berlin; (5) Meditations. The section on Personalities provides portraits of the rabbis of the Mishnah and it resounds with great contemporary urgency; like Heschel in Europe, the *tannaim* lived during a period of exile. Likewise, the experience of Abarbanel, who was exiled from Spain and the halls of power, resonates with the experiences of Jews living under Nazi legislative power. The final section of Meditations—on suffering, prayer, spirituality, and God—reveal how Heschel grappled with the horrors unfolding around him regarding the extent of Nazi destruction.

This translation by Stephen Lehmann captures Heschel’s eloquence. Susannah Heschel’s intimate introductory portrait of her beloved father and detailed notes and annotations by Plotkin make the volume accessible to readers of all levels. Highly recommended for all libraries.

David B Levy, Lander College for Women, NYC


During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Jewish artists in Vienna faced a society that viewed them as “different” and “other.” Despite conversions to Christianity by many, exclusionary responses to individual artists continued due to a more “racial” understanding of the Jew in the greater Austrian/German philosophical discourse. Among these areas of difference was the belief that Jews were incapable of possessing “Mitleid,” or as Kita translates this, “compassion.” This book views five different German-Jewish artists and their responses in symphonic, choral, and dramatic works centered around the theme of compassion. The author argues that for the Jewish artist, compassion not only encompassed feelings of sympathy, but also included action that it inspired to relieve the suffering of others. This was a modification of the concept of compassion promulgated by Schopenhauer and Wagner, who felt merely recognizing suffering was enough for personal elevation. Under the influence of Siegfried Lipiner, a Jewish-born poet and librettist, reform of society was a necessary component of compassion. Lipiner’s work became widespread and influenced many artists. To prove this Jewish influence on Jewish-born artists, the author focuses on particular works, including Gustav Mahler’s second and third symphonies; Arnold Schoenberg’s *Die Jakobsleiter,* Richard Beer-Hofmann’s *Jaakobs Traum;* and Stefan Zweig’s *Jeremias.* The book’s chapters neatly describe the artistic reactions, interpretations and
integrations of compassion. Reiterated arguments and threads for each analysis not only reinforce her theories seen in different contexts, but help each chapter stand alone. Given the variety of artistic works examined, this will surely be useful to the likely graduate students who will use this work.

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


Dr. Lipovsky is a scholar of the Near East (his doctoral dissertation at the University of Haifa is on socialism in Turkey) and in this book he undertakes to propose a bold theory of the origins of the people of Israel. He bases his work on the Bible and other ancient documents, as well as archaeology. He thinks the Bible is a mixture of history and legend and so is neither a literalist nor a total skeptic regarding it. He maintains that the Hebrews were descendants of the Amorites and that there was an exodus from Egypt of the northern tribes followed by another exodus of the southern tribes. He thinks these tribes were mostly related to each other but only achieved unity during the unified kingdom led by David and Solomon. It also took a long time, he argues, for the Hebrews to accept the profound monotheism of Moses. There is a selected bibliography at the end of the book but there are no references to the secondary literature. For example, the author says that the Hebrews who returned to Canaan from Egypt made up about a quarter to a third of the population of Canaan but cites no sources. This makes his book of limited value, at least to academic collections, despite its thought-provoking thesis and accessible style.

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


From Forbidden Fruit to Milk and Honey: A Commentary on Food in the Torah is a collection of short essays on each individual Bible parashah (passage of scripture). Biblical scholar Diana Lipton assembled
a diverse group of Jewish scholars, divided evenly between men and women. Each scholar wrote a short essay, one scholar per parashah (with one exception) about food, and Lipton follows up with a verse-by-verse commentary on issues that the essays did not cover. Lipton also explains in the introduction that the book does not address what the ancient Israelites ate, sacrifices being discussed, nor kashrut. The work is not a cookbook. What the work does and does well is give a derash (interpretation) through the prism of food for each parashah (excluding double parashiyot and holidays). The scholars certainly give you plenty of food for thought. This book is a welcome addition to any library, especially a synagogue library and recommended to those who are looking for something different to grace their Shabbat table.

Haim A. Gottschalk, Olney, MD


Those familiar with the original version of this tome published in French in 1981, and later that year in English, will be even more enthusiastic with the second edition since it now includes even more material from the French archives made available to researchers. The authors, Marrus, a Professor Emeritus from the University of Toronto, and Paxton, Mellon Professor Emeritus at Columbia University, have been able to bring more detailed information on the Vichy government’s exclusion of Jews from both the civil administration and general French culture and how a quota system was employed to limit the participation of Jews in the liberal professions. More serious attention is brought to bear on the Catholic Church’s reaction to anti-Jewish legislation. Additional information is offered covering the government’s own discriminating program that went beyond even the Nazi efforts in the remainder of France and how the administrative measures taken were vigorously enforced. This is a major contribution, devoted to modern French history, European antisemitism, and the traditional Christian antipathy toward Jews and Judaism.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

The *Yiddishe Kopf* is explored in this fascinating book devoted to “neurotheology” – the relation between religious thought and the cerebral process. Drawing on interviews with men and women of all denominations, two medical doctors (one also a rabbi) ask: what makes a brain uniquely Jewish? Or drawn to Jewish careers? Readers are introduced to basic anatomy including the areas of the brain (i.e., the amygdala and hippocampus) and neural pathways and plasticity that control emotion, intellect, and memory and which may also store or facilitate higher consciousness. Among sites of spatial or verbal abilities, the superior parietal lobe, it is learned, “is heavily involved in the analysis and integration of higher-order visual, auditory, and body sensory information.” This may include mystical experience. Ritual study and practice may strengthen these areas—e.g., prayer involving an active prefrontal cortex. While all interviewees felt a certain calling, the authors conclude there is no “ideal mind” for Rabbinics; rather, “diversity of brain structures results in different personalities and roles.” Emotionally driven personalities tend to be more extroverted and involved in communal outreach; introverts favor scholarship, legal or otherwise. The authors’ respectful comparison of Judaism to other major faiths provides insights into the human condition; at the same time, their choice of classical commentary, particularly Chabad Chassidism, explores the idea of a Jew’s special soul and, possibly, his or her “chosen-ness.” In the end philosophical questions are raised: in our scientific age, how should spirituality be defined, or reality, free will, and ethics? Simple belief would seem to be more than gray matter. Intriguing, yet possibly troubling to some, this book would appeal to public or modern school/synagogue libraries.

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

The architect Eric Mendelsohn has designed four synagogues in the United States: Park Synagogue in Cleveland, B’nai Amoona Synagogue in Saint Louis, Mount Zion Temple in Saint Paul, and Temple Emanuel in Grand Rapids. His vision was to build unique synagogues that expressed American style and the sanctity of the Jewish religion. To that end, Mendelsohn divided his architectural plans into three units: the house of worship, the assembly hall for adults, and the school for the education and recreation of children. The book is likewise divided into Mendelsohn’s three units. Beautiful detailed, full-page color pictures capture the grandeur of each synagogue. Some of Mendelsohn’s sketches and notes are also included. At the end of the book is a fascinating thirty-six-page biographical essay by Ita Heinze-Greenberg. Recommended for all libraries.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH


Over the course of the last two decades, much research has been done on the study of hereditary cancer and the Ashkenazi Jewish population. The gene that has been recognized as this cancer-causing gene was labeled BRCA.

Amy Byer Shainman’s grandmother, Lillian, died at a young age, and she always wondered what caused her early death. It was not until her sister was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, that she got her answer. What follows is a journey through the ups and downs of BRCA diagnosis, prophylactic surgery, and the aftermath of these decisions. A deeply intimate story of personal discovery, I recommend this book for anyone looking to find out more information about hereditary cancer and the Ashkenazi population. Readers will also find the additional resources and charts useful.

This book is appropriate for a public library, but it is an especially important resource for synagogue libraries to have in their collections as well.

Laura Schutzman, AJL Publications Chair, Jewish Fiction Award Committee Member, Hebrew Academy of Nassau County, Uniondale, NY


Richard Siegel was one of the editors of *The Jewish Catalog* (1973), a best-selling resource in the 1970s, whose work enriched Jewish education until he passed away in 2018. Laura Geller, his wife and a retired rabbi, has been focused on helping people in the 50 plus range for many years. This book is a Jewish catalog for people who are getting older. It has chapters written by Siegel and Geller and many other experts. Topics cover financial health, mental health, social health, and helping others. While most of the ideas and comments are from Jewish sources, much of the advice is universal. Each chapter provides practical tools and resources for putting the advice into action.

This book is written for all readers to understand, providing light reading for a serious subject. Older adults sometimes feel lonely or isolated; friends and family may have passed on, or they may have lost their mobility. *Getting Good at Getting Older* provides solutions for alleviating these problems, including establishing learning programs, making new social connections, and finding new ways to be a part of a community. It also provides guidance on planning for end of life issues. In a nutshell, the book’s advice boils down to three essential ingredients: eat right, be active, and pursue happiness.

A great addition for all libraries but, as we all face the aging process, this book is particularly recommended for personal collections.

Daniel D. Stuhlman, City Colleges of Chicago and Temple Sholom of Chicago, Chicago, IL,
In the first review, Margreet Steiner’s book, "Inhabiting the Promised Land: Exploring the Complex Relationship Between Archaeology and Ancient Israel as Depicted in the Bible," is discussed. Steiner, a Dutch archaeologist, examines how archaeology can be used to understand the social, economic, religious, and political systems of ancient Israel, as depicted in the Bible. She cautions against over-interpreting archaeological findings as direct evidence of the historical accuracy of the Bible. The book is recommended for libraries with an interest in archaeology.

The second review is of "The Steinsaltz Nevi'im (Hebrew and English Edition)" by Adin Steinsaltz. This edition follows the success of Steinsaltz's "Humash" and continues his extensive translation and commentary of the Tanach. The book is highly recommended for Jewish bookshelves.

The third review is of "No Past Tense: Love and Survival in the Shadow of the Holocaust" by D. Z. Stone. The book tells the story of a young Czech couple who met in a ghetto, survived Auschwitz and Mauthausen, and moved to Palestine before moving to America. The author writes in a way that makes every moment personal and highly recommended for all libraries.

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


David Tesler, Efrat, Israel

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

Jonathan Trotter’s excellent, well-researched and well-written book looks at how Jews living in the diaspora during the Hellenistic and early Roman periods related to the Jerusalem temple in thought and in practice prior to its destruction in 70 CE. He examines key writings from the period which mention the temple, such as the *Letter of Aristeas*, Philo of Alexandria, 2 and 3 Maccabees, to see how individuals regarded the temple. He also uses these writings to consider the ways in which Jewish communities connected to it in practical terms through their *minhagim* (customs); for example, through their financial contributions, ritual offerings, the half a shekel tax, and pilgrimages. Descriptions of the grandeur of the Jerusalem temple exemplify the pride with which it was viewed by certain diaspora Jews, as well as the ways in which they desired their non-Jewish neighbors to view it. The work reveals how the Jewish perspective of Jerusalem and its temple developed over time in the diaspora, oscillating between a complicated sense of alienation and an intense sense of belonging. Highly recommended for all libraries.

David B Levy, Lander College for Women, NYC


Chaim Waxman, one of the most renown and astute observers of the Jewish community, has written an excellent work on the social changes and halachic evolution of the American Orthodox community.

Waxman begins his work with a historic overview of the Jewish community from the nineteenth century through the current era and explains Orthodoxy—in contradistinction to the other Jewish denominations. Chapter one describes the subject of the study and describes size, social class, specific religious groupings and political leanings of the Orthodox community. Chapter two focuses on issues relating to the Jewish family and sexuality—discussing issues like marriage, divorce, pre-marital sex, intermarriage, homosexuality, infertility, and abortion. The third chapter details the cultural changes of how Orthodoxy has become a viable life choice for many Jewish Americans that can be practiced openly and proudly. The next chapter discusses the not so recent “shift to the right” or as the author notes “adoption of stringencies” that is commonly found within many sectors of the Orthodox community. Chapter five hits upon hot button issues that divide Orthodox Jews such as the status of women, the extent/value of secular studies within the educational curricula, and the role of the State of Israel should play. The sixth chapter lists different examples of halachic change within the Orthodox community. The last chapter describes the change and evolution in the methods and approach to learning the bible by many groups within the Orthodox community.

This book is highly recommended for anyone seeking to understand the American Orthodox Jewish community. For those Orthodox readers who are middle aged and older, most of the book will be quite familiar, albeit an excellent review and distillation by a fine writer and keen observer of the Jewish community.

David Tesler, Efrat, Israel


The author is a history professor at the City University of New York. In the Introduction, the author discusses the origins of human rights claims in the eighteenth century along with the rise of nation-states as both providers and deniers of human rights. The first of eleven chapters presents the eighteenth-century norm of empires and rulers that controlled all aspects of the economy and society without input from the population. Chapters two through eleven follow a chronological and geographical path discussing the struggles to enshrine human rights in national law and force governments to actually put those laws into practice in a fair and just manner. Chapter nine, entitled “Palestine and Israel,” focuses on the generational tension between the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state and the claims of Arabs.
Librarians ought to review this particular chapter prior to deciding to add this title to their collections. Overall, the volume is a well-researched presentation from a historical perspective and would be a worthwhile addition to an adult collection.

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


Sociologist Philip Wexler dives into over 40 years of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson's writings and discourses to illustrate the original insights and visions of a social and economic system that defies contemporary political categorizations. Wexler explores how the Rebbe's Principle of Reciprocity, based on a Hasidic ethos, can avoid the worst outcomes of unbridled capitalism as theorized in Max Weber's Protestant Ethic, and the socialist ideals of complete egalitarianism that inhibit competition, which the Rebbe sees as a vital element for social progress and individual completeness. The first three chapters set the context and background by discussing relevant sociological theories, the history and philosophies of Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidism, and the personal leadership style of Rabbi Schneerson. The final three chapters present how the Hasidic ethos can be applied to balance individual well-being with the needs of the community and society. Schneerson’s well-known ideas on lifelong education, stressing moral responsibility and respect for diversity as the key to a healthy society, are detailed. Perhaps less widely studied are the Rebbe’s calls for justice and penitentiary reform, alternative energy development, and support for scientific and technological progress as instruments for the betterment of humanity.

This is not a book of feel-good Rebbe stories that can be read in an afternoon; it demands thoughtful engagement and serious consideration. Wexler includes hundreds of citations and references for further study. Not just for Jewish Studies enthusiasts, this is a universal work highly recommended for students, scholars and leaders in the sociological, political, economic, and educational fields as well as social justice activists.

Diane Mizrachi, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA

In her first novel, author Pamela Becker chronicles the story of MiMi, an American Jewish woman who starts her own new religious movement eventually known as the Community of God. The story is told in a combination of flashbacks to events in her life such as her first vision showing that God had a special mission for her, to the present day 2001 where MiMi lies in a hospital recounting her life. The Community is centered around providing emancipation for women from all over the world based on MiMi's interpretations of Biblical and Apocryphal texts and stories, as well as her own spiritual visions. Eventually she moves the growing community to Israel on the basis of these visions.

Throughout the narrative, MiMi doubts her appointed status as prophetess, and once she is declared to be the Messiah by one of her followers, her movement gains many more followers and media attention both in Israel and abroad. This newfound attention leads to rifts in the Community which threaten to change the group in ways MiMi did not intend. The story is deeply emotional and the reader is carried along with MiMi as she relates the events. Themes of freedom, Biblical interpretation, women’s rights, caring for your neighbor, and the eventual Apocalypse are woven into the text. The idea of who gets to claim Jewish identity is also central to the tale, as the movement is eventually recognized as a legitimate Jewish movement towards the end of the tale. This issue of legitimacy is also mirrored in MiMi's journey from the child of interfaith parents to Orthodox Judaism as a teenager as a result of living with relatives after her parents’ deaths, to beginning her own movement in college and afterwards.

This book is reminiscent of Tova Reichs’ *100 Philistine Foreskins*, which also centered on a new religious movement headed by a woman, for the emancipation of women from the religious establishment. Recommended for libraries that wish to maintain or build a collection of popular fiction dealing with issues of Jewish identity and women’s rights, as well as the search for individual and collective spirituality.

Eli Lieberman, Judaica Librarian, HUC-JIR, NY


Alice Stein is a young woman who seems like she should have it all together. She is a graduate student at NYU, teaches creative writing, and lives in a small NY apartment. But she is adrift in her own life. She dips into the lives of others, discovering that some people live with secrets and some tell lies.

The first encounter we see is with Alice’s grandmother, Helen, in hospice. In her fragile state, Helen is more open and warmer than she had been while healthy. But Alice doesn’t pursue a relationship with her and instead lets herself be distracted. After Helen’s death, Alice learns that her grandmother had been institutionalized at some point. At a family wedding, Alice meets Bella, a childhood friend of Helen’s. Again, she is slow to follow up on meeting. She meets Bella once, but by the time Alice looks for her again, Bella has died. Instead of connecting with her own family, Alice spends time with Persephone, the neglected young daughter of her downstairs neighbor. After an improbable cross-country road trip with Persephone, Alice retreats into herself and finds refuge at her mother’s house. Her younger siblings gradually draw her back into the world. With limited Jewish content, this book is an optional purchase.

Sheryl Stahl, Library Director, Frances-Henry Library, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles


What if Anne Frank had survived the Holocaust? How would she cope? David R. Gillham offers readers a challenging novel that deals with these questions. Sixteen-year-old Anne Frank returns to Amsterdam in 1945. She has survived concentration camps and finds that her father, Otto, is the only other member of the family that remains. They are staying at the home of Miep Gies, the woman who
hid them during the war. Otto wants to return to his spice business and get on with life, but Anne cannot do that. She wants revenge and struggles to deal with grief, loss, and horrible memories. She returns to school but wants to find out who betrayed her family to the Nazis. She also explores the conflicting emotions of adolescence and emerging sexuality. Readers will find this story about the path to peace and forgiveness very rewarding. It is an excellent choice for book groups because it raises many important questions. Both synagogue and public libraries will be interested. Mature young adults will enjoy it too.

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


“Occasionally Time likes to play games with itself and chooses a few humans to play with. Turns out Time likes your family, so you’ve won the lottery this time around.”

This book of connected short stories traces several generations of two childhood friends: Chana Krasulka and Sophia Stein. In each story, a character is touched by the supernatural, spirits from the past, present, or future, and occasionally Time itself. The collection is book-ended by a magic grove, which can draw people together from far away. This is where Chana from L’viv meets Sophia who lives outside Munich. The two girls connect and swear to each other that they will meet again someday. Decades later, two friends, Annie and Rachel, go exploring in New York’s Central Park and wander into that same grove. They find messages hidden there and realize that they are the messages which their great-grandmothers left for each other years before.

In my favorite story, nine-year-old Malka wants to invite her new friend David, an African American boy, home to experience a Shabbat dinner. Malka’s father, Abe, approaches David’s father, Sam, and invites him to join them for Sabbath. After they arrive Abe and Sam bond by sharing stories of David’s murder by lynching and Malka’s murder during a pogrom; meanwhile the spirits of their children chat and play on the fire escape.

The characters, mostly Jewish, are engaging and relatable. In each of the stories, the spirits work to bring people together. This collection is highly recommended.

Sheryl Stahl, Library Director, Frances-Henry Library, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles


Pearl Ross, a young rabbi, returns to her native San Francisco Bay Area as the associate rabbi of a large reform congregation. As she settles into her new position, she discovers the joys and problems of life in the rabbinate. She also meets the man who will become her husband, gets acquainted with some colorful congregants, and learns that life may sometimes be strange, but it is usually wonderful. The authors provide colorful characters, good humor, and interesting scenarios that offer insights into the life of a rabbi and a congregation. The book will appeal to readers who enjoy slice-of-life stories and women’s fiction. Book groups will find subjects to discuss as well.

Barbara Bibel, Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA
Reviews of Multimedia


Reb Elimelech of Lizensk was one of the students of the Maggid of Mezeritch. This CD reminds us of the power of his teaching, both in his own time and through the generations.

The story is told in several parts. It begins by describing the lives of the Jews of the 18th century, and the role of the Baal Shem Tov in returning joy to Jewish life. It continues with the naming of Reb Elimelech as the successor of the Maggid of Mezeritch (the Baal Shem Tov’s chosen heir). This is followed by several stories about Reb Elimelech and his brother, Reb Zusya of Hanipol, including some tales about their holiness, and the kindness of the Jews they met toward them. Two aspects of Reb Elimelech’s personality are especially notable: his *Ahavas Israel* (love of Israel), and his desire to elevate the soul of each individual. The disc concludes with an evaluation of the Rebbe’s legacy and its impact on the world.

This CD is directed at the observant community. There are several well-known speakers (e.g., Beryl Wein, Abraham Twersky) who speak sincerely about the subject and his impact. The men speak quickly and softly, so occasionally the text is a bit hard to follow. Ultimately, this is an optional purchase. It will be of interest to religious communities, but it may also provide material for history lessons, and be used as a text study by organizations in crisis.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

JOIN US AT AJL’S 55TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

June 29-July 1, 2020
Evanston, IL

The 2020 AJL Conference will be held at the Hilton Orrington, a 4-star hotel in the heart of downtown Evanston, a block away from the Northwestern University campus.

More information and links to register for the conference and reserve a hotel room at the conference rate can be found on the AJL website.
ASK FOR A FREE TEST SITE...

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

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

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

Please email us for some targeted reference sites that would be useful for your library needs:
info@opalsinfo.net

OPEN SOURCE YOU CAN TRUST!

+ Easy to use
  + Easy to implement
  + Easy to afford

WE OFFER...

Accommodates Dewey, Library of Congress, Elazar & Local Classification Systems
Stores and Searches Hebrew Alphabet Script Bibliographic Records
Features for School, Synagogue, Association, Academic Community Libraries
Z39.50 Access to Jewish Library Cataloging Sources
Web Based
Lowest Total Cost of Ownership
Standards-Compatible
Experienced Support
Managed Updates
OPAC
Cataloging
Union Catalogs
ILL
Circulation
Inventory
Reports
E Book Management
Booking Feature
Equipment
Management
Database Authentication Management
Digital Document Upload & Cataloging
Discovery Interface

US SERVICE CENTER
Media Flex Inc. • P.O. Box 1107, Champlain, NY 12919 • T: 877.331.1022

CANADA & INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT
Bibliofiche • 245 Labrosse, Montreal, Canada H9R 1A3 • T: 866.263.4340

info@opalsinfo.net • www.help.opalsinfo.net

[Editors’ Note: *White Bird* is the 2020 Sydney Taylor Book Award Winner for Young Adult Readers.]

The author who wrote the amazing, Jewish-values laden book, *Wonder* (Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2012) and all its subsequent tie-ins, now tells a poignant and captivating story set during the Holocaust and written in graphic novel format. Much like the 2015 Sydney Taylor Book Award winner *Hidden*, by Loïc Dauvillier, Marc Lizano, and Greg Salsedo (First Second, 2014), *White Bird* is based on a grandmother finally agreeing to tell her life story to her grandson for a school project. As Grandmere (nee Sara Blum) tells her story, we are introduced to her desk mate, Tourteau (French for Crab) who suffered from polio as a child and must use crutches to walk. He is ignored by some classmates, including Sara, and tormented by others. We meet Vincent, one of those tormentors and an evil bully, whose father works for the Nazis. Vincent provides Sara with her first personal experience of antisemitism. Soon the school learns that all the city’s Jews have been rounded up; the Jewish children are pulled out of their classrooms to be led to safety by a Resistance fighter; the Nazis arrive at the school to find the children missing; Vincent alerts the soldiers to where the children went; and the Nazis find them, murder the Resistance leader and shove the children into a waiting truck. During all of this, Sara hides in the school bell tower until Tourteau (real name Julien) leads her to safety and a hiding spot in his family’s barn. Despite frightening mishaps and surrounded by suspicious neighbors and friends, Julien’s family bravely hides and protects Sara throughout the war. Sara evolves into a person who finally cares more for the safety of others than for her fancy shoes. Julien and Sara fall in love and dream of a future together, but this is a Holocaust story, and Julien has a disability. Even though Sara and her father eventually reunite, there are no happy endings for the reader. The story concludes with references to the United States’ restrictive immigration policies and images of people marching for refugees. Grandmere says: “Evil is only stopped when good people finally come together to put an end to it. There must be the will. The struggle follows.”

The illustrations in this book are visually stunning and deeply emotional. The reader hurts when Julien is beaten by Vincent. The heart soars watching the developing relationship between Julien and Sara, then crushed by the hatred of the Nazi killing machine. The book’s back matter contains an Author’s Note, a note about Mollie, the author’s mother-in-law, to whom the book is dedicated, a very detailed glossary of the words, places and stories in the book, a “Suggested Reading List,” a list of “Organizations and Resources,” and a bibliography.

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

Ariel Stone, high school senior, has been working his entire life for this moment—when he finally applies to Harvard early decision. He’s loaded up his schedule with AP classes (even skipping lunch to take more classes), volunteering, practicing violin, and cutting all “extra” time out of his schedule—all with the goal of being the “perfect” Harvard candidate. In this final stretch before the application deadline, Ariel pushes himself even harder—eschewing sleep, working harder, and extending his commitments. His loving Jewish family would like for him to relax, but they also reinforce his drive by bragging about Ariel’s accomplishments and goals. All of this is put in jeopardy when Ariel’s grades begin slipping. Embarrassed to need help, Ariel begins working with a tutor—Muslim family friend Amir. Amir and Ariel fall for each other, but the time commitment of a relationship (plus being a supportive brother and playing with a friend’s band) becomes another stressor in Ariel’s life—and each new stressor and time commitment sends Ariel further away from health and balance.

You Asked for Perfect is a worthy exploration of the toll that perfectionism and stress can take on a motivated student, and how that can be furthered by well-meaning school counselors, teachers, and parents. Silverman also explores how this drive can actually hinder a student’s passion for learning—and how that impact can be felt even by younger students. Ariel is a relatable protagonist who is written authentically, although the secondary cast could be more fleshed out. Many readers will see themselves in the progressive Jewish family that uses Yiddish phrases and sits down to Shabbat dinner together every Friday night (with matzo ball soup—recipe included) and is also supportive of their son’s sexuality and interdating. This heartfelt and thoughtful realistic fiction novel will be a worthy addition to any teen-serving library, and will inspire many fruitful discussions.

Susannah Goldstein, The Brearley School, New York, NY

---

**BIBLE STORIES AND MIDRASH**


While this series of books for youngsters is intriguing in its use of Lego® Bricks to tell Bible stories, there are several issues that will make them unacceptable to a Jewish audience. In Noah’s Ark, God is depicted as an old, white man with a flowing beard. God speaks face-to-face with Noah, hovering over them and standing next to them as they do as God asks. In all the books God is referred to as He and Him. Next, there is no reference to the chapters and verses from which the stories are taken, nor is there any reference to which edition of the Bible was used. However, it is clear from the writing (e.g. no reference to the seven pairs of “clean animals,” and illustrations (see above) that it was not a *Tanach*. There are several scenes in these stories that are rather disturbing. In *Noah’s Ark*, the illustrations of people drowning during the flood and skeletons scattered on the ground outside the Ark after the flood...
present frightening scenes of carnage for young people. And in David and Goliath, David carrying Goliath’s head on a pole through the streets of Jerusalem is an unnecessary and gory detail. Finally, in Noah’s Ark, an introductory note by Rev. Wanda M. Lundy, Director of the Doctor of Ministry program at the New York Theological Seminary, refers to the story as being severe, but redemptive, and one that can help parents “reveal the realities of life in an appropriate way that does not traumatize, but helps them to embrace the joy and the pains of life.” It is not clear that this goal is achieved.

The Brick Bible: The Complete Set (Skyhorse Publishing, 2013) specifically notes that “this book is intended for older children, teens and adults.” It is quite remarkable how many Lego® Brick characters, animals, foodstuffs, and weapons are available, combined with the ability of the illustrator to create arks, giants and surrounding scenery out of these ubiquitous toys. Unfortunately, the creativity is not suitable for young Jewish children.

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

[Editors’ Note: Jonah and the Whale and Daniel in the Lions’ Den were reviewed in the November/December 2014 AJL Newsletter. Board Book versions of these books were published in 2019. They may have fewer illustrations or text, but overall, still not recommended.]

BIOGRAPHY


When Amélie Munk was eleven years old, her family was in flight, keeping one step ahead of the Nazis in France. Following the German invasion, her rabbi father was sent to an army base near Albi, in the unoccupied zone. The rest of the family escaped Paris for that city, where her mother sent Amélie on her bike to track down her father. “Amélie was a girl who loved adventure,” so she wasn’t scared. A year or so later, now in Nice, her mother sent Amélie on a more dangerous mission, this time to warn the Jewish families of an impending round-up. Once again the young girl displayed her mettle, setting out at night and not returning home until after midnight. The wartime adventures of Amélie Munk are the stuff of a gripping thriller. After she married Immanuel Jakobovits, who would later become Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth, her warmth, generosity, and sincere interest in the lives of all the people she met were what stood out. She weathered the challenges, confronting a prominent public figure’s wife with total devotion to her task.

It is hard to convey the virtues of character traits like modesty and caring, and characterizations like “Lady J knew just how to make people feel happy and good about themselves,” however true, just come across as preachy. The publisher suggests a reading level of fourth and fifth grades, but the short, choppy
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

sentences pitch the book lower, to a third-grade level. Back matter includes a timeline (which will help readers track events during the war) and a useful glossary of Jewish (and some French and German) terms.

Marjorie Gann, retired teacher, author of *Five Thousand Years of Slavery*, Toronto, Canada


Solomon Schonfeld (1912-1984) was a leader of the Jewish community in London who was instrumental in saving thousands of children from the Nazis. After some background about his family and his father’s determination to open a school for Jewish children in London, his story begins. After Victor Schonfeld’s untimely death in 1930, Solomon was called upon to take over his father’s rabbinitic and communal responsibilities. Schonfeld’s charisma and determination helped him establish a Jewish school system in England, but the Jews in Germany were suffering under Nazi rule. Rabbi Schonfeld worked with Rabbi Michoel Ber Weissmandl to get the children out of Austria and to homes in England. As the situation worsened, Schonfeld petitioned the British government and succeeded in obtaining visas for rabbis and permission for children to go to England. Once World War II started, Rabbi Schonfeld worked tirelessly helping the children, as well as obtaining visas for Jews to leave Nazi-occupied countries and go to Palestine, Mauritius, and South America. After World War II, he went back to Europe to look for Jewish orphans and bring them to England. The remainder of his life was spent as the rabbi of the Adass synagogue and building up the Jewish school system in London.

The author has family connections to Rabbi Schonfeld, and also spent many hours interviewing Rabbi Schonfeld’s son, Jonathan. The rabbi’s accomplishments are well-known in Great Britain, but not so much in the United States and Canada. The details and descriptions, and the use of “Hannah” and “Benny” as examples of refugee children, make this more of a story than a straight biography, which will hold young readers’ interest. At the same time, those looking for a “book report book” will have to delve deeply into the text to get to the facts. Archival photographs are dispersed through the chapters. The back matter includes “A Note from Rabbi Schonfeld’s Son,” a guide to British money, a glossary, a timeline, and a bibliography. There is an emphasis on Orthodox Jewish observance throughout the book.

Chava Pinchuck, past chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel


This well written, biographical graphic novel traces the life of Ruth Bader Ginsburg from birth to her Supreme Court nomination. In 37 short chapters, Levy expands on her picture-book biography *I Dissent* (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2016; AJL Review Feb./March 2017), highlighting relationships with family members and friends and experiences that led to Ginsburg’s intelligence, clarity, and steady determination, enabling her to become the second female (and first Jewish woman) justice on the Supreme Court and the cultural icon she is today. Levy seamlessly weaves historical events into Ginsburg’s life events, although the Jewish content mainly deals with discrimination against Ginsburg, particularly in the field of law. Her key legal cases are explained in terms accessible and interesting to a middle school reader. Ginsburg’s challenges following her Supreme Court appointment are described in the epilogue’s fluid prose: being the sole woman on the bench after Justice O’Connor stepped down, a bout with colon cancer, her husband’s death. Her iconic lace collars and friendship with Justice Scalia, pointing out the need for respect even when disagreeing, are discussed in the epilogue.

The advance reading copy lacks the promised three colors, and the page numbers for the quotation sources. In the final version, illustrations are expressive and engaging, rendered digitally in shades of purple-blue with bright red accents throughout. Ginsburg’s hair style is cleverly changed at each new stage in her life. While she was well known for rarely smiling (her children tallied the times she laughed),
it’s surprising to note that the mouths of most images in the book look angry. Factual information is conveyed in boldly outlined text-boxes; thoughts and feelings are placed in bubbles, which are sometimes difficult to follow on the page. The back matter also includes a detailed timeline, a bibliography, and quotation source notes.

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


Ortiz’s biography of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg interweaves Ginsburg’s life story with examples of cases she tried that are likely to feel relevant for teens and preteens. Though her Jewishness isn’t the main focus, it comes up regularly; the text highlights both positive and negative experiences Ginsburg had with Judaism and their effects on who she became. A few anecdotes show young Ruth objecting to the impact of “rigidity” in Judaism on her family, and to restrictions based on gender, with an implication that these incidents helped her develop her sense of justice. But Judaism, the book argues, also directly encouraged “questioning...challenging, and...disagreeing and dissenting.” Young Ruth loved asking questions at the Seder and stories of persecution and resistance in Jewish history also “gave Ruth a solid foundation in dissent.” Her awareness of the Holocaust, which took place while she was a child, informed her “commitment to equality,” as did the discrimination she faced in her law career as a Jew and as a woman. Ortiz naturally integrates the role of Ginsburg’s Jewishness into her broader story, making thoughtful connections between her experiences as a Jew and other aspects of her life.

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

[Editors’ Note: *Dissenter on the Bench: Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Life and Work* is a 2020 Sydney Taylor Book Honor Book for Young Adult Readers.]


Anne Frank's diary, in which she poignantly documents her personal experiences in hiding as a young teen during the Holocaust, arguably created one of the most resonating and lasting stories from this horrific time in history. While Anne's legendary story continues to captivate audiences of all ages and is constantly being told and retold in various formats and through different perspectives, it's a story that could easily have remained unknown without the bravery and dedication of Miep Gies. Gies was employed for many years by Otto Frank, Anne’s father. When the Nazis invaded the Netherlands, Miep became one of the people who helped the eight Jews, including the Frank family, stay hidden for two years in the now infamous secret annex. Miep seemed to be particularly connected to Anne and, despite her paralyzing despair and fear when Anne and the others were arrested by the Nazis, she risked sneaking back into the annex to find Anne’s red plaid diary. Miep knew Anne’s writing would be something special, though she refused to read it herself until several years after its publication. After the war, Miep continued to lead a life of humanitarianism, and became "the living ambassador of Anne Frank's legacy."

This beautiful rendering of Miep Gies’ important role in Anne Frank’s life is in equal parts heartbreaking and heartwarming, depicting the anguish of Miep's loss alongside the hope and goodness that can come from one woman's courage. Solano's illustrations, both bold and muted, evoke the tone of the era and the mood of the story. Endnotes include further information and a timeline of Miep's life.

Martha McMahon, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens


Starting with Sir Moses’ birth in 1784 and ending with his death at the age of 100, this biography explains his and his wife Judith’s passion for doing maasim tovim (good works) and their decision to devote their lives to the welfare of Jews around the world. It follows the pair on their most important journeys, including their first trip to Palestine, where they saw the squalor of Jerusalem under the Turkish sultan. Zakon also mentions Sir Moses’ important work in freeing the Jews of Damascus after the Blood Libel of 1840. Using both of their diaries as major sources, the book describes the couple’s visit to Hebron, and their work in developing Yemin Moshe, the first significant expansion outside the walls of Jerusalem, including the famous windmill.

Written primarily for eight to ten-year-olds, it will inform many of their parents about the lives of an extraordinary pair of Jews from the nineteenth century, whose impact is still evident. The back matter includes a timeline, glossary and bibliography. The book is a good resource to use at all levels, and can be used in lessons about history, biography, and Jewish values.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

**BOARD BOOKS**


With few words on each page, a modern Sephardic family prepares for and then celebrates Shabbat while introducing a variety of Ladino words. This is a fun and new concept for a board book. The illustrations are charming. All males are wearing kippot. The publisher notes that both author and illustrator are of Sephardic heritage.

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


A toddler (and later his baby brother) eats matzah all day long during Passover. For breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack, he shares the various ways he likes it—with milk, with jam, with cheese, etc. Not a lot here, but this little rhyming story is very useful in sharing the simple treats of Passover with kids who are just learning to like matzah and enjoying different flavors of holiday foods.

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


This is one in a series of board books that “celebrate places and themes in a way that young children can easily relate to and enjoy with their families.” The book follows a multicultural group of children and families (with many men wearing kippot) as they do the usual Hanukkah holiday things. One odd page wishes Happy Hanukkah to the synagogue’s ner tamid, stating it is “always burning above the scripture”, but the other one-sentence pages are informative, albeit somewhat dull. Useful for holiday instruction and vocabulary, not story.

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


Here is a rhyming Passover board book with a funny story that features Jewish alligators in Florida. The seder rituals are highlighted as a large family of alligators celebrates Passover in the swampy
Everglades. They apparently live in a regular house, wear kippot or pearl necklaces and look under their fine furniture for chametz before the seder begins. They also enjoy gefilte fish, of course. Kids will get a kick out of the rhymes and the silliness.

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


A delightful poem is the essence of this adorable board book about how much families love their little ones. With such lines as “You’re the kick in my hora, you’re the potato in my knish, You're the lights on my menorah, and the star on which I wish,” it flows like the old Cole Porter tune, “You're the Top.” A variety of cultures are represented, and not all the wording is skewed toward Jewish themes. Each scene depicts one parent and his or her baby. The poem is universal and full of good feelings.

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


A lovely book with a message of the peace of nature around us includes the Jewish concept of shalom bayit in a successful way. The illustrations will be super appealing to young children and the possibilities for kids to point out various animals and learn about their homes is welcome. The words flow very smoothly and match the text well.

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


This is the ninth in the series, and it provides a good introduction to Havdalah, the end-of-Shabbat ritual that is often overlooked by non-observant families. Different aspects of the ritual are shown: “Braided candle we’ll light to brighten the night. Havdalah is coming.” All males are wearing kippot. Everyone looks like they are having a great time.

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


Yossi & Laibel On the Ball (Hachai, 1998) has been adapted into a board book for little ones. The story consists of rhyming couplets that encourage children to be kind and welcoming when meeting new friends. In particular, the new friend in this simple story is in a wheelchair and is “different” but Yossi and Laibel invite him to play baseball with them and happily introduce him to all the other boys on

A welcome addition to the board book collection, bright, humorous illustrations accompany rhyming text about important Jewish do’s and don’ts. From respecting parents and grandparents and feeding the hungry to telling the truth and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), each page highlights a different *mitzvah* (commandment/good deed). The simple text is clearly written and nicely placed on each page. Some words will be a stretch for the target audience – elders, gratitude, charity – but most can be discerned with contextual cues. Illustrations use a bold and varied palette and enrich the text with appropriate images. There is a nice mix of skin colors throughout the book. A few small issues will bother those who are looking very critically. The word ‘*haggadah*’ is written in Hebrew on a book page, but the ‘*gimel*’ is misprinted to look like a ‘*chaf*.’ While the text refers to the commandment to not wear leather shoes on Yom Kippur, a commandment followed primarily by more observant Jews, there is not a single kippah shown in the book. All faces have rather large red or pink spots delineating cheeks which may seem a bit odd to young children.

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

**FICTION - EARLY READERS**


Elisa Michaels, her older brother, Russell, and their loving parents live in an apartment in New York City. Each of the five interconnected stories describes Elisa’s growing awareness about her world and her place in it. Each has a problem that Elisa solves in a child-appropriate manner. In “The Bathing Suit,” for example, Elisa wants to wear her new bathing suit, even though it’s the middle of winter. Hurwitz describes Elisa’s feelings and how she imagines she’s at the beach and the laundry detergent is sand. In the end, Elisa wears her bathing suit on top of her long-sleeved turtleneck shirt. After it is laundered, it is put away until Elisa can wear it to the “real beach where there was real sand.” These stories about Elisa, Russell, and their friends and neighbors (the Riverside Kids series) have aged well. They retain their liveliness and authenticity, their connection to genuine emotions of young children, and their message that most problems have a solution.

How is this edition different from the original 1991 edition? “Elisa’s Secret,” about the time that Elisa traded her homemade mittens for her classmate’s tooth, is omitted (it mentions the tooth fairy). The font and leading are appropriate for an early reader, but this new edition has narrower margins and shinier paper. Some may prefer Lillian Hoban’s soft palette in watercolors, pencil, and pastels (1991 edition) over Maione’s digital illustrations in starker colors and broader strokes. There is no overt Jewish content; universal values of family and friendship play heavily in the stories.

Anne Dublin, winner of the Canadian Jewish Literary Award (Youth) for *A Cage Without Bars* (Second Story Press), Toronto, Canada
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

FICTION - MIDDLE GRADE


Sometimes life just sucks! And at others it just gets weird. Danny is a thirteen-year-old living in Brooklyn. He has been living in a large closet (don’t start with the Harry Potter jokes), leaving the bedroom for his older brother Jake. When Jake goes to college, Danny thinks the room should be his. His mother, though, decides to rent the space on “AirHotel” to help pay for college. Problems arise, though, when a ghost appears in the apartment and odd things start happening. Danny’s best friends, Gus and Nat, are skeptical at first, but they realize the strangeness of the situation. Together, and with the help from a variety of adults, the kids resolve the mystery and put the ghost to rest.

This is a fine novel featuring a culturally Jewish New York family (assimilated but knowledgeable) written for a general audience of pre-teens. The Jewish content involves Shabbat at Danny’s Bubbe Ruth’s, where a critical question is answered, and the introduction of the Jewish legend of the dybbuk, a possessing spirit believed to be the soul of a dead person. Danny’s voice feels true (sincere and snarky in the right places) and the story moves at a steady pace. In addition, the reader learns about life in today’s New York, with its many ethnic and cultural groups living side by side.

*Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

FICTION - TEEN READERS


Rachel inherited the gift of prophecy. It emerges as her senior year in high school is starting and when she has multiple distractions: Chris, the cute, Catholic, football-playing neighbor, friends Lauren and Maya, college applications, Jake from Poetry Club, her sister Beth’s increasing moodiness and diminishing weight, and dealing with the loss of her beloved Zaide, with whom she had a special relationship. Her family continues to attend the Orthodox synagogue for the High Holidays, and there Rachel is drawn to a man praying with fervor. She approaches him at the break-the-fast after Yom Kippur, and she soon learns that the flashes of light she is seeing are not migraines, but visions. With Yonatan’s guidance, she develops the skills to tap into her gift. Rachel goes to Israel over winter break with her friend Maya’s youth group. Yonatan is there, and she meets Devorah, the woman she has been seeing in her visions, who is the head prophetess. After this meeting, Rachel goes to Tzfat for Shabbat, where she meets a group of prophets and prophetesses, including Noach, the head prophet. She returns to Baltimore and continues to meditate, and through her visions is able to help Jake, Beth, and eventually Noach. Jake and Rachel become closer, but soon she is called back to Israel. Devorah is dying, and Rachel will take over as “the Gedolah.” Rachel returns to Baltimore for her high school graduation, but then goes back to Israel to study there.

There is an interesting mix of “YA content” (fitting in, but trying to define one’s uniqueness, boys, clothes, etc.) and Jewish content (Israel, Holocaust, observances and customs), with Rachel learning more about Judaism and eventually observing mitzvot like Shabbat and kashrut. The foreshadowing and back shadowing through Rachel’s visions add a subtle tension throughout the story, but often distract from the main action. The back matter includes a glossary (which is not necessary - the terms are footnoted throughout the book), a list of books and websites about meditation and Jewish spirituality, and discussion questions for book clubs. A good choice for most Jewish libraries with teen patrons (some may object to the idea of modern-day prophecy).

*Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel; past chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee*

FOLKTALES


Akiva was a simple goat herd, relatively content with his life. At the age of forty, he has almost giving up on learning to read, but when he sees that water can wear away stone, he realizes that if he dedicates himself to the task, he will slowly acquire the skills and knowledge to become the great Rabbi Akiva. Beautiful, detailed woodcuts illuminated with one or two colors complement the text, and give the book either an older or “retro-hip” look, depending upon taste.

Originally published in Hebrew in 2013 (*Ot Ba-Be’er* by Kineret Publishers), words like “etched” and “decipher” will have to be explained to younger readers. The story and the message are universal: one should not give up and it is never too late to learn. Use this and Jacqueline Jules’ *Drop by Drop* (Karon, 2017) for a compare and contrast lesson with older readers.

*Ellen Tilman, Meyers Library, Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, PA; past chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee*
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

HOLOCAUST AND WORLD WAR II


Based on the true story of Stefania Podgórńska and her sister Helena, named Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in 1979, the novel begins with their arrival Przemyśl, Poland (southeastern Poland). Stefania finds employment working in a small market run by a Jewish family. Albeit a Catholic, she is soon embraced by the entire family, even falling in love with the eldest son, Izio, who tells her he wants to marry her someday. When the Nazis invade Poland and begin rounding up the town’s Jewish residents, Stefania does everything she can to help the family -- selling the family’s possessions to buy food when the laws restrict where and when Jews can shop and getting them necessary provisions when the family is moved into the ghetto. She tries to help Izio escape from a labor camp but with tragic results. Eventually, the family is transported out of the ghetto to a concentration camp, where they perish. Izio’s brother, Max, jumps from the train, escaping back to town, and he asks Stefania to hide him for just a couple of days while he figures out where to go. Before too long, more frightened Jews arrive at her door. Her attitude is, “I’ll hang just as easily for eleven as for ten.” Ultimately, Stefania and her sister hide 13 Jews in their home from 1943 until 1944, when the Russians liberated the area. During this time, the Nazis requisition their house for some nursing staff of the nearby hospital. So, while the Jews hid in the attic, and the nurses entertained Nazi officers in their bedroom, the sisters crept around waiting for the inevitable death sentence—which never came. These young girls face every challenge with a courage few could, or would, muster.

The remarkable bravery and extraordinary resourcefulness of these true heroines is exhibited on every page of this can’t-put-it-down book. The writing is fast-paced, gripping, and thoroughly researched providing details of living under Nazi occupation that elicit every emotion. As Stefania shares, “Przemyśl…had taught me that people like to divvy one another by names. Jew. Catholic. German. Poles. But these were the wrong names. The wrong dividing lines. Kindness. Cruelty. Love and hate. These are the borders that mattered.” A message as real today as it was back then. The Author’s Note at the back of the book provides information about what happened to each of the people the sisters saved, including the fact that Stefania married Max, but her family disowned her and her sister for saving Jews. Because of its portrayal of individuals who went above and beyond risking their lives to save Jews, this is an excellent addition to the Holocaust bookshelf.

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


Rena Finder’s memoir of her experience growing up during the Holocaust, becoming a prisoner at Auschwitz before being selected and subsequently saved by Oskar Schindler, is both contemplative and harrowing. Born in 1929 in Krakow, Poland, Finder summarizes her childhood in the initial chapters, describing fun family vacations before the war. However, even as a child she experienced antisemitism, telling of a schoolmate spitting on her and yelling, "dirty Jew." The author conveys well her lack of understanding of these actions, which naturally increase with her terror as the Germans invade Poland in 1939 and the rights of the Jewish population are slowly stripped. Separated from her entire family save for her mother, the two are taken to Auschwitz, and then miraculously chosen to be included on a list of workers ordered for Oskar Schindler’s factory. There they are treated humanely, given food and medical supplies, and manage to survive the war. In a tender moment, Rena describes Schindler’s interference when she was treated badly by a fellow worker, and his subsequent protectiveness of her, stopping by her station each day to ask, "How are you, little one?" After the war, Rena describes the journey with
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

Her mother back to Krakow, and then Rena's eventual marriage and emigration to the United States. Her story is recounted in a blunt style from the recollections of the 90-year-old author, as she simplifies the narrative and events for young readers. While the content of this memoir is serious and alludes to frightening circumstances, including the execution and torture of Jewish people, the prevailing tone is one of hope, humanity, and remembrance. Rena Finder assures the reader again and again that her objective with telling her story is to educate and memorialize, with the hope that a genocide such as the Holocaust will never again be possible.

Chloe Noland, Assistant Librarian, American Jewish University, Los Angeles, CA


While following the experiences of three particular survivors, Professor Leslie Baruch Brent, Ruth Oppenheimer David, and Marianne Josephy Elsley, the author also inserts specific examples from the lives of many other Kindertransport children and provides a history of the Holocaust’s beginnings in Germany. The stories delve into deeply held memories: the fear of Hitler’s rise to power, the destruction and desecration during Kristallnacht, the frantic nature of getting children on the Kindertransport, and the experiences of the children once they arrived in England. Deep emotion runs through every recalled experience. As with all Holocaust books, these stories are sad and rarely end well. Most of the Kindertransport children never saw their parents again.

Throughout the book, black and white photographs visually expand on the text. Also, at the end of each chapter is a highlighted “Look, Listen, Remember” box that provides links to interviews with survivors and sources of additional information. The back of the book contains short biographies of each person quoted, a timeline of WWII, a glossary of words used, a list of “Look, Listen, Remember: Resources to Explore,” a bibliography, and source notes. The voices of the survivors used throughout the book makes it a good addition to a Holocaust collection.

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


School is out for the summer and twelve-year-old Friedrich Weber finds comfort in his secret place by the river in his hometown of Hannover, Germany. Here he can escape the obligations of the mandatory Jungvolk group and its fierce leader, Guenter. But someone else has co-opted the spot: a pudgy, marble-loving Jewish boy, Emil Rosen, who once beat Guenter at the game. In alternating chapters, Voigt Kaplan tells the story of how the lives of these two boys intersect during the summer and fall of 1938. Through their knowledge of each other, they rise to the occasion. Emil brings bottles from home to help Friedrich with his minnow-catching experiments that earn Friedrich the respect of his Jungvolk group. He also saves him from a beating by his comrades. Against the risks, Friedrich brings sustenance to the Rosen family in hiding during Kristallnacht. He also arranges for transport of the Rosens to the train station so they can board the Hamburg ship to South America. In an era of betrayals, Voigt Kaplan shows there can be acts of humanity and compassion—and there can be family secrets.

Voigt Kaplan has created a clever novel with clever plotting and characterization. It’s also well-paced—especially the scenes of Kristallnacht and the Rosen family’s escape. Back matter provides an author’s note. A narrative involving one Jew and one Christian during turbulent times in the Nazi regime is not new. But Voigt Kaplan delivers a fresh voice and deep characterization, even to the animals. Crushing the Red Flowers is a worthwhile addition, especially for boy readers.

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

The Boon family and their many quirks were introduced to English speakers in the Batchelder Honor book *Nine Open Arms* (Enchanted Lion Books, 2014). While it is not necessary to have read the first novel to enjoy this sequel, the incredible mix of Dutch, Yiddish, and German language and characters, makes for a slow, somewhat boring, start -- even with the detailed “Slang Words & Character List” provided at the front of the book. Nevertheless, keep reading! Despite being encouraged to continue in school to become a teacher, with a full scholarship, Fing’s (short for Josephine’s) grandmother has other ideas. Fing soon finds herself working in the home of the town’s richest man, The Cigar King. Her job is to be a companion to his mysterious and mischievous niece. However, Fing’s small town on the border of Holland and Germany is soon involved in the horrors of WWII. At that point, what had been a cute, somewhat tedious story about a young girl’s travails, turns into a Holocaust story with all its twists and turns, heroes and villains. As the town’s Jews are rounded up, the townspeople’s true selves are revealed, long-held secrets are divulged, and daring plans are put into place. It all works out in the end, but what a rollicking, roller coaster ride we go on to get there.

More than another Holocaust story, *Fing’s War* provides an excellent setting for the Jewish values of honoring one’s elders, welcoming the stranger, taking care of the sick, and more. If adding this title to your Middle Grade library collection, be sure to add the first book as well. What Nine Open Arms lacks in Jewish content will be more than made up for in getting to know this eccentric cast of characters and their strong family ties.

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


The story of renowned Polish-Jewish pediatrician Janusz Korczak has been told many times. Despite an offer to escape the Warsaw ghetto to the relative safety of the “Aryan” side of the city, the renowned educator and humanitarian accompanied his orphanage’s children onto the train that would lead them all to the gas chambers of Treblinka. Historian Albert Marrin’s exhaustively-researched book takes a unique approach, interweaving Korczak’s unusual life story with an in-depth history of pre-war and wartime Warsaw and an even deeper probing of the demonic mindset of Adolf Hitler. Calling Hitler “the anti-Korczak in every way,” Marrin highlights the contrast between the Old Doctor’s enlightened philosophy of child-rearing and Nazi ideology. Relying on eyewitness accounts, he demonstrates how the Nazis saw the child as merely a “useful tool,” an “instrument” for creating a brutal culture. One chilling example (which, like other details of Nazi brutality Marrin reveals, will be hard for some readers to stomach) describes the training of an SS officer: “After he became attached to a puppy he’d been ordered to raise, an instructor would tell him to shoot the animal or kill it with a knife.” In contrast, Korczak’s Orphans’ Home cultivated respect for each child’s individuality and fostered cooperation and fairness.

Unusually for a Holocaust history, *A Light in the Darkness* also provides a moving picture of the Warsaw Uprising that followed the Ghetto Revolt of 1943, deftly navigating the shoals between Polish victimhood and Polish collaboration. Marrin also exposes the nefarious influence of wartime Nazi propaganda upon today’s Middle East, citing vitriolic anti-Jewish Arabic-language broadcasts by Palestinian collaborator Muhammad al-Amin Hussein as the taproot of contemporary Middle Eastern anti-Semitism. The footnotes give the book scholarly heft, and the list of sources is aimed at an adult audience.

*Marjorie Gann, retired teacher, author of Five Thousand Years of Slavery*, Toronto, Canada

[Editors’ Note: *A Light in the Darkness: Janusz Korczak, His Orphans, and the Holocaust* is a 2020 Sydney Taylor Book Notable Book for Young Adult Readers.]
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens


Based on the wartime memories of the author’s beloved teacher, the book recounts how its fictional narrator, Natt Silver, experienced the Soviet invasion of Bukovina, his father’s arrest, and the family’s deportation to Siberia. Two forthcoming books will track Natt’s experiences in Siberia and his escape at war’s end. The story Natt has to tell is terrifying: the Soviets come in with their full apparatus of control, taking over schools, commandeering homes, and arresting potential political opponents. Intent on deporting Natt’s mother, they hold Natt himself hostage in prison. Young Natt doesn’t really understand what is happening. His wide-eyed description of the long train journey to Siberia -- the cramped quarters, the bugs, the shortage of food, the barrel-toilet, the stench – is delivered in a voice that rings true to his age (eleven), but attenuates the political horror. Much of Natt’s narrative requires the reader to understand this political context. For example, when a party apparatchik awards Natt a book for his “outstanding revolutionary spirit” his reaction (“I almost give a little bow as I thank her, but just in time I remember that Communists don’t bow”) - will draw a smile from adult readers, but be lost on the book’s intended audience. Later, Natt’s sensitive teacher is reduced to tears upon discovering that Natt’s prize book is a distorted presentation of a poem by a revered poet. Although the Historical Background note at the end might help an adult explain Stalin’s ruthlessness to a young reader, without knowledge of how a totalitarian system of informers and secret police works, few middle grade readers will understand the teacher’s tears – or his fears. In our day, when names like Solzhenitsyn are no longer common currency, the story of Soviet oppression needs to be told – but it’s not an easy one to communicate in all its ironic complexity. Sydney Taylor Book Award Winner *The Endless Steppe* (Harper & Row, 1968), Esther Hautzig’s YA memoir of her family’s exile to Siberia, did this beautifully. With an older narrator and an older target audience, Ravel’s story would have been equally effective.

*Marjorie Gann, retired teacher, author of Five Thousand Years of Slavery, Toronto, Canada*

[Editors’ Note: *A Boy Is Not a Bird* is a 2020 Sydney Taylor Book Notable Book for Middle Grade Readers.]


Fourteen-year-old Renia Spiegel began writing a diary on January 31, 1939. She lived in Przemysl, Poland. Through her pages, aspiring poet Renia shares her daily struggles and triumphs as Germany invades Poland and World War II starts. Against the backdrop of Soviet and Nazi occupation—as the USSR and Germany divide Przemysl, Renia details her school life, friends, and her emerging romance with Zygmunt. Her mother is in Warsaw to promote the film career of Renia’s younger sister, Ariana (who later becomes Elizabeth Leszczynska Bellak and joins her mother as a Catholic in Warsaw). Her father lives on his own, too, away from the girls. Renia longs for her mother. Renia and her grandparents, with whom she lives, enter the Przemysl ghetto in the summer of 1942, Zygmunt tries to save her by placing her in hiding with his parents. Sadly, they are betrayed, and just before Renia’s eighteenth birthday, she is shot.

This diary becomes a loving tribute to a sister. Although *Smithsonian* has hailed this diary as “the new Anne Frank,” it lacks the emotional intensity and Otto Frank’s shaping. The geography is difficult to follow despite the many footnotes and endnotes. Renia did not write this diary to serve as public memory. Context is missing in many cases, although the diary does provide insights into the geographic confusion in Galicia/Poland/Ukraine in the years leading up to and during the war. Renia’s sister provides helpful notes and her own compelling story that explains her own survival through Zygmunt and how the diary was found and published. The book features a foreword by Holocaust scholar Deborah Lipstadt, a preface, afterword, and notes prepared by Elizabeth Bellak, along with three maps. *Renia’s Diary*, punctuated by Renia’s own verses, may frustrate young adult readers interested in history, but it may intrigue those interested in a love story and poetry.

*Barbara Krasner, Somerset, New Jersey; former member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee*
LIFECYCLE AND JEWISH VALUES


Accidents happen. What do you do next? There are three easy examples of situations that need verbal apologies. Anyone can make a mistake and cause harm. The children in this family are prone to err, and when they do, they are quick to take steps to repair the damage. “Saying sorry is first; help to fix it, and then, find a way to make sure it won’t happen again.”

The message here is clear, and delivered with easy words that young children know and can repeat. Despite the simplicity of the message, these are the steps suggested for the Rambam for doing teshuva (repenting and asking for forgiveness). The bright colors will be attractive, and the situations will be familiar to everyone (even adults).

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


Rabbi Meir Shapiro is credited with instituting Daf Yomi – the daily study of one page of Talmud. Rabbi Shapiro’s inspiration came from several places. When his tutor’s arrival was delayed, his mother lamented that “every day that goes by without Torah learning is a big loss.” As Rabbi Shapiro grew older and continued to learn, he had an insight: different commentators who lived in different countries during different times all discussed the same pages of Talmud. He went to a meeting of important rabbis from all over Europe, and while he was anxious to present his idea for daily learning, others were not so enthused. Fortunately, he enlisted the help of the Chafetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan), and the rabbis agreed that daily learning was an important idea. After the meeting, Rabbi Shapiro publicized the project and printed a calendar. Starting on September 11, 1923, people all over the world learned the same page of Talmud on the appropriate day. After seven and a half years, all 2,711 pages of Talmud had been learned, and there was a big celebration (Siyum Hashas). And then, they started the cycle again.

The book is more about the history of the Daf Yomi than a biography of Rabbi Meir Shapiro, but it is very timely, as the thirteenth cycle was completed (and the fourteenth cycle started) on January 1, 2020. The illustrations are lively – everyone looks happy, and they break up the text nicely. There is an author’s note and a glossary, but readers should have a basic knowledge of the Daf Yomi project and Talmud commentators, making it most appropriate for Orthodox readers.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel; past chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

NONFICTION


The Jews in Iran thrived and prospered through many generations (since the destruction of the First Temple), succeeding in business and raising families until 1979, when Islamist Iranians rebelled against the Shah. The Jews of Iran no longer felt safe or secure. Leaving the country legally in order to settle in Israel or the United States was forbidden, so many turned to smuggling groups in order to surreptitiously escape or to sneak family members out of the country in a bid for freedom. This true story recounts the experiences of twin sisters Pari and Maheen, who wanted to emigrate from Iran and rebuild their lives in Israel. They had to leave their close, loving family behind and embark on a journey filled with danger and the fear of capture. The twins traveled mostly by foot over rough, mountainous terrain until they finally reached Pakistan. While living there in uncomfortable conditions, they faced the uncertainty of getting the documentation they needed to continue the journey toward Israel and a
better life. When they finally reached Israel, they had to learn a new language, acquire job skills, and acclimate to a completely new way of life far from the support of parents, siblings, and old friends. They succeeded in accomplishing all this despite the challenges, and eventually their parents and sister are able to join them, as well.

The twins’ story is presented with clarity as well as suspense; readers can feel the hardship and fear of the unknown at every stage of their harrowing journey. It is accompanied by maps which aid in the understanding of the physical terrain and which help the reader follow their progress. Numerous photographs which add to the sense of time and place. An epilogue brings the story of the family up to the present day, highlighting their successful absorption into Israeli life. The appended author’s note, timeline, and glossary help keep events in historical perspective and educate readers about a piece of Jewish history with which they may be unfamiliar.

Michal Hoschander Malen, retired New York area day school librarian; current library volunteer in Efrat, Israel; editor of children’s and young adult book reviews for the Jewish Book Council


*Let’s Meet a Sofer* provides an age appropriate look at what a scribe does and the tools he uses. The table of contents provides a clear outline for this brief volume. How does a person learn to be a sofer? What does a sofer write on? What happens if a sofer makes a mistake? Everything is answered by following how the sofer writes a mezuzah for a family. The book covers the most basic information, but still leaves the reader hungering for some answers. For example, the book says “the sofer uses special ink. The ink is always black.” Is that all that is special about the ink? There is a two-page spread of equipment that a sofer uses, but the most interesting looking tools are not labeled. Additionally, the sofrim in their black hats and coats were shot against a very dark background, the images could have benefited from having a brighter background to more prominently feature these learned men.

Clearly geared for an Orthodox audience, this slim volume is a great choice for someone doing a lesson specifically on sofrim and writing a Torah/mezuzah. Otherwise, consider this an optional purchase.

Rebecca Levitan. Librarian II, Baltimore County Public Library, Pikesville Branch


Volodya Raiz’s ancestors had lived in Ukraine and suffered from the rampant anti-Semitism for generations. Fast forward to 1969, and Volodya and his wife Carmela want to live in Israel. Many obstacles stand in their way because the harsh Soviet government did not allow anyone to leave. When Carmela’s sister is able to emigrate, the Raizes decide to move from Moscow to Vilna, hoping the Lithuanian authorities will be less strict than the Russian ones. But when the couple goes to the government office to find out about the status of their paperwork, the official tells them their request had been denied because they know “government secrets” (even though they did not). Thus, they became refuseniks – their apartment was bugged and they were constantly followed. But they also became more interested in their heritage and began learning about Torah and mitzvot. As the 1980s progress, Mikhail Gorbachev becomes head of state of the Soviet Union and starts to bring freedoms to his country. With the help of influential American Jew Ronald Greenwald and Canadian businessman Albert Reichman, the Raiz family is finally able to make aliyah in 1989, and their son Moshe has his bar mitzvah at the Kotel.

From Chapter Three (1969) to Chapter Thirteen (1989), time is not marked, making it necessary to refer to the “Timeline of Events” at the back of the book to follow the Raiz’s story. While their experience was typical of refuseniks, the book emphasizes the sacrifices they made to be observant Jews, likening the family to the Israelites in Egypt and the Jews who resisted Hellenism. The political climate and KGB activity are somewhat complicated to explain for this grade level, and the photographs of cars and
airplanes are only tangentially related to the story. The back matter also includes a glossary, a glossary of political terms and a bibliography. The book is an interesting way to present modern history to young readers by means of one family’s story. Appropriate for all libraries, but best suited to Orthodox readers.

Chava Pinchuck, past chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel

PICTURE BOOKS


What a delight that Green Bean Books has brought this prolific Israeli author to an English-speaking audience! Originally published in 2016 (Agur Publishing and Modan Publishing), Abas revisits one of the most popular stories about the “fools” of Chelm. Because the hapless Chelmites bump into things on the nights when there’s no moon to light their way, they decide to collect money so that their “smartest” people will find a place where they can buy the moon. They go here, they go there. They go hither and thither. Finally, they meet a sly innkeeper who sees an opportunity to make a fast buck. He shows them the reflection of the full moon in a water barrel and the Chelmites hand over every last zloty they collected. The barrel is closed, loaded onto their wagon, and the happy customers make their way back home. Much to their dismay, when they open the top of the barrel all they see is water. Oy vey! They come to the conclusion that “the innkeeper must have stolen the moon when we weren’t looking!” Nothing can be done. The Chelmites enjoy the nights when the moon is full. On the other nights, they continue to fumble around in the darkness. “Either way, the moon looks down on them and smiles—just as it does on us all.” A sweet ending to an amusing story.

Award-winning illustrator, Omer Hoffman, has created colorful, detailed illustrations in an almost cartoon-like style, stamping lots of personality onto the foolish Chelmites. This book will be sure to please young and old alike. For another version of the story, see Steve Sanfield’s *The Feather Merchants & Other Tales of the Fools of Chelm* (Orchard Books, 1991).

Anne Dublin, winner of the Canadian Jewish Literary Award (Youth) for *A Cage Without Bars* (Second Story Press), Toronto, Canada


This weak parody of a children’s classic does not always work; it may be joyful, as the subtitle notes, but it is diffuse in its telling and confusing to youngsters by dropping in and out of Yiddish or English. The delivery is not sure if it is making fun “with” or fun “of” the old folks who crowd the room with their Yiddish words, foods, attitudes. Many objects for the ready-for-bed bunny are tied specifically to Hanukkah, others are secular and seem to appear as they are needed to complete a rhyme. All the characters are rabbits, thus the ending use of the word ‘mensch’ to a bunny as a sign of endearment feels creepy. The author is true to Goodnight Moon as this picture book highlights objects in the room, then bids them all goodnight, although not in exact reverse order as in the original. The relatives leave under the stars. The baby bunny sleeps with his new toy, a gorilla. The illustrations are busy; they shine in the crowd scenes. Many spreads have amusing word bubbles that comment on the action. The book contains an excellent Yiddish glossary and a nice author’s note on the Yiddish language, although her choice of the word “historic” belies its comeback, for example, see the recent picture book *Yiddish Saves the Day* (Apples & Honey Press, 2019). A recipe for latkes that includes olive oil ends the book and the creator of this “exclusive” recipe gets credit on the cover. Goodnight Moon has attracted a lot of fun parodies; it is gratifying to have one incorporating Yiddish, even if it is not strong.

Ellen G. Cole, retired librarian, Temple Isaiah, Los Angeles, CA
Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens


In 1938 Detroit, two things are important: cars and boxing. Every Friday night people would listen to the “Fight of the Week” on the radio. The great depression is having a major impact on the Detroit auto industry. Workers are losing their jobs. The situation in Germany is becoming precarious for Jews. Many are immigrating to the United States. The “Fight of the Century” between African American boxer Detroit-bred Joe Louis and the German, Max Schmeling, is on the calendar. To many, this is a symbol for a fight between good and evil, between the United States and Nazi Germany. Gordy’s father loses his job in the auto industry. His mother takes in sewing from a local Jewish tailor in order to feed her family. Ira accompanies his father as he drops off the sewing for Gordy’s mother. The two boys are sent outside to play, so that the adults can work. They quickly learn that they both enjoy listening to boxing and pretending to be professional boxers, especially Joe Lewis. Every week they practice their boxing while the parents work. The boys are in the same class at school. One day, the class bully confronts Ira on the playground. A teacher stops this confrontation. The next time this happens, Gordy steps up to protect his new friend from the bully. He imagines that Joe Lewis is instructing him. Gordy is able to get in one punch that sends the bully to the ground. The night of the big fight arrives. Both fathers and both sons listen together. The radio broadcast is thrilling. Spoiler alert: Joe Louis wins the fight.

The beautiful watercolor illustrations add depth and meaning to this emotional tale. This picture book has minimal Jewish content. The message is subtle and pervasive in this charming story of cross-cultural friendship between an African American and Jewish boy. This book uses a historical event to highlight cultural diversity, bullying, and friendship. These lessons are still relevant today.

*Ellen Tilman, Meyers Library, Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, PA; past chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee*


Your body is unique and it is all yours. “You are in charge of your body,” Dr. Ruth says as she helps several animals learn to be more comfortable and confident “in their skin.” She helps an octopus learn to be more assertive, a crocodile accept its bumpy, lumpy body, a cat express its feelings, and a rabbit, turtle, and ant discover and appreciate their individual strengths. With some humorous touches, she shares lessons about body image, confidence and standing-up for oneself. A quick, fun activity follows each animal story. For example, “Try this! Move all the parts of your body at once. Ready, set, go!” “Try this!” activities involve stretching, drawing, talking, jumping, and dancing. An author’s note at the end explains that being short sparked Dr. Ruth’s dedication to helping people understand that everyone is in charge of their own body and they should appreciate their strengths.

The illustrations are whimsical, cartoon-like drawings in pastel shades. Dr. Ruth is particularly endearing in her oversized glasses, extremely short body, and bouffant hairdo. Text is presented as dialogue among the animals and Dr. Ruth, printed in conversation bubbles. While well-meaning, Dr. Ruth comes across as pedantic, repetitious, and rather boring. There is no Jewish content.

*Debbie Colodny, Cook Memorial Public Library District, Libertyville, IL; former owner, Sefer, So Good; former member, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee*
SHABBAT AND HOLIDAYS


Readers are greeted with the familiar rhyming text and the soft illustrations Psacharopulo and Barash have made the signature of this series. Although the trees are bare, a family starts preparing for the holiday with mail from cousins in Israel, fruits and nuts that grandma brought, some tikun olam activities of cleaning up the nearby park and planting new seedlings. The people in the book are diverse in gender and appearance and there’s an adorable nod to previous books in the illustrations.

The book is geared more toward people with a prior knowledge of the holiday than newcomers. For example, why did grandma specifically buy dates, pomegranates, and olives? What is the significance of arranging the fruits on the plate in the shape of trees? Why is there a menorah, especially without the shamash set apart? That said, this book would be an excellent addition to the Tu B’shevat read alouds or to complete the series.

Rebecca Levitan, Librarian II, Baltimore County Public Library, Pikesville Branch


As his family gets ready for Shabbat, Ezra has a lot of questions. He knows that he’s not supposed to clean his room on Shabbat but he wonders, “... what’s considered work? Drawing? Building with blocks? Making knots?” He asks his two sisters and his brother if they know if you can tie a knot on Shabbat? When they can’t answer him, he turns to his mother who is busy cooking Shabbat dinner. She doesn’t know either but promises to look it up later. When his Dad rushes into the house just before candle lighting, there isn’t enough time to ask him his big question. After his mom lights the Shabbat candles, the family enjoys Shabbat dinner together and plays board games until bedtime. The next morning Ezra’s family attends synagogue where he asks the Rabbi his big question. The Rabbi answers, “... Jewish law and tradition allows knot tying on Shabbat as long as the knot is temporary ... Some Jews are strict about the rules. Some are not. Everyone practices Judaism a little differently.” Of course, this answer doesn’t really satisfy Ezra; it just leaves him with even more big questions like “why aren’t we all the same?” and “how do I know what I’m supposed to do?” and “what counts as temporary?” Colorful, cartoonish, computer generated illustrations depict a lively contemporary Jewish family of color. A helpful glossary of Jewish terms and their pronunciations is included. Like Ezra, most kids are literal, concrete thinkers who don’t like things to be ambiguous. The fact that Ezra’s question about tying a knot on Shabbat is never really answered will leave readers disappointed and confused. However, the book shows, especially in the illustrations, the diversity of the Jewish community and demonstrates that Judaism allows for different answers to big questions.

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


Grover invites his Sesame Street friends to a Passover Seder. They eat crunchy matzoh, haroset, hear the Passover story and hunt for the afikomen. Grover likes that there is room for everybody at the Seder table. His Mommy explains that the Haggadah teaches we are to let all who are hungry come to eat. The bright and colorful illustrations will attract young children. The book includes stickers, a card game, and a poster. It is both a simple storybook and a game book. The series of “Media Tie-In” books includes Pokemon and Barbie (no Jewish content), as well as Grover’s Eight Nights of Light (2017).

Ellen Tilman, Meyers Library, Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, PA; past chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

Adorable pictures show children playing dreidel, singing, lighting the menorah, and decorating cookies and donuts with multi-generational families celebrating: “So glad we’re all together.” The “board book” is made out of durable paper, rather than heavy cardboard. All males - adults, young children and babies - wear simple black kippot. All children have rather large red spots delineating their cheeks which may seem a bit odd to young children. The text is very simple, printed in a clear, white or pink easy-to-read font. This “chew proof, rip proof, nontoxic, one hundred percent washable, new type of ‘board book’” will be enjoyed by young babies who can chew on it and easily hold it, but it will, unfortunately, get lost between other books on any library shelves because it is so thin.

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

**FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020 BOOKS RECEIVED**

These titles will not be reviewed in AJL News and Reviews 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.


Gewirtz, Adine Rishe. *Blue Window*. (Candlewick, 2018)


Hopkinson, Deborah. *D-Day: The World War II Invasion that Changed History*. (Scholastic, 2018)

Hurt, Avery Elizabeth. *Arab Nationalism and Zionism*. (Cavendish Square, 2018)


Mankowitz, Rachel. *Yeshiva Girl*. (Self-published, 2018)


Pearlmutter, Ruthie. *Foundling*. (Menucha, 2018)

Petroff, Shani. *Airports, Exes, and Other Things I’m Over*. (Feiwel & Friends (Macmillan), 2018)


Rylant, Cynthia. *Ecclesiastes: To Everything There Is a Season*. (Simon & Schuster, 2018)

Sheinmel, Alyssa. *A Danger to Herself and Others*. (Sourcebooks Fire, 2019)

Shoup, Kate. *Israel-Palestine Border Conflict*. (Cavendish Square, 2018)

Skrypuch, Marsha Forchuk. *War Below*. (Scholastic 2018)


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. From January 2011 through August 2019 it was split into two separate electronic publications – the AJL News and the AJL Reviews. As of September 2019 it is published digitally as AJL News and Reviews. Receipt of this publication is one of the benefits of membership. Please see the AJL website at http://www.jewishlibraries.org for membership rates.

Editor-in-Chief
Sally Stieglitz
Communications and Marketing Librarian
Long Island Library Resources Council
627 N. Sunrise Service Road
Bellport, NY 11713
generaleditor@jewishlibraries.org

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

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

Please send adult books for review to D. Scheide

Children and YA Review Editors
Lisa Silverman
Sperber Jewish Community Library
American Jewish University
15600 Mulholland Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90077
(310) 440-1264
lisa.silverman@aju.edu
and Chava (Kathe) Pinchuck
kpinchuck@gmail.com

Please send children’s and YA books for review to Lisa Silverman.

All links to online resources were checked for accuracy on February 7, 2020.
We cannot be responsible for broken links to those resources in the future.

AJL News and Reviews
February/March 2020
Volume I, No. 3
ISSN 2688-8661