Association of Jewish Libraries Conference 2022: Together Again! Inspires Jewish Librarians

Paula Breger, Chair; Public Relations/Communications
Association of Jewish Libraries

Inspiring. Intimate. Welcoming. Accessible. Collaborative. Energizing. These are just a few of the words used by Jewish librarians to describe the recent Association of Jewish Libraries conference held at the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia June 27 — 29. More than 200 participants — librarians, archivists, authors, illustrators, educators, scholars, volunteers, and guests — gathered to exchange ideas, learn, and network. The conference, AJL’s first in person gathering in three years, featured more than twenty-five sessions by over fifty presenters.

“It was so invigorating to finally connect with friends and colleagues over the last few days,” said incoming AJL president Michelle Chesner. “Zoom is great, but there’s no way to replicate the incidental chats over coffee and follow-ups after a presentation when meeting in person. I’ve learned so much, and am looking forward to further connections and opportunities to work together!”

Popular sessions included discussions by the winners and honorees of the Sydney Taylor Book Awards and the AJL Jewish Fiction Award; LGBTQIA+ Representation in Jewish Children’s Literature; Jewish Books on the Move; Jewish GLAM: Collecting Contemporary Judaica Across Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums; and the 2022 Feinstein Lecture by Dr. Arthur Kiron of the University of Pennsylvania, Who Owns Jewish Cultural Heritage? Participants also raved about the Monday-night concert by Sarah Aroeste, international Ladino singer/songwriter, author, and activist. A hospitality suite and happy hours provided informal settings where attendees could relax together. Tours of the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, the Rosenbach Library and Museum, Jewish Philadelphia, the Rare Book Room at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, and the National Constitution Center rounded out the schedule.

“All of the sessions were fabulous, and it was wonderful to meet so many of the Sydney Taylor Award — winning authors and illustrators plus the AJL Fiction Award winners,” enthused Rachel Kamin, conference chair and director of lifelong learning at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El in Highland Park, Illinois. “I’m coming home with new ideas to enhance my library collection and program offerings. And it was so cool to spend three days in the National Museum of American Jewish History, enjoying the exhibits and the stunning views of Independence Mall.

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Creating the World’s First Yiddish LGBTQ Youth Guide

Jonathan Branfman, Reinhard Fellow, Taube Center for Jewish Studies, Stanford University

When hearing the phrase “Yiddish LGBTQ youth guide,” many people exclaim, “What? Why? Who would read it?” These questions reflect a double misconception: that only Orthodox Jewish communities speak any Yiddish, and that no one from those communities would want to learn about LGBTQ inclusion. I’m glad to say that both assumptions are untrue, as I learned while co-creating the world’s first Yiddish LGBTQ youth guide, ידיעות קהלי ילדי יונקים ולהט bekanנים (Ben Yehudah Press, 2022). This illustrated Yiddish guide makes gender identity, sexual orientation, and family diversity easy to explain to children aged 7-11 — and to adults as well. It is translated from my 2019 English book, You Be You! The Kid’s Guide to Gender, Sexuality, & Family, which in turn grew from my doctoral work in Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies. This Yiddish edition joins 25 other translated editions of You Be You, including Hebrew, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic.

Creating this Yiddish edition involved both special meaning and special challenges. Even before the English edition of You Be You debuted, I knew that I wanted to create a Yiddish translation for three reasons. First, to make LGBTQ education accessible to those who seek it within Orthodox Jewish communities and to those who are off-the-derech (OTD, meaning people who have left Orthodox communities). Second, to support the growing secular revival of Yiddish, which is exemplified by organizations like YIVO and The Workers Circle, and by media like the Vaybertaytsh podcast. And thirdly, to provide LGBTQ-inclusive materials for academic Yiddish classrooms. However, since I don’t (yet) speak Yiddish, I knew that I would need to find a translator who could navigate several key challenges. For instance, the translator would need to bridge two dialects (Hasidic Yiddish and YIVO Standard Yiddish) to simultaneously serve Hasidic, OTD, and secular readers. Likewise, since Yiddish historically has few terms or stigmatizing terms for gender and sexual diversity, the translator would need to choose or coin neologisms that still feel organic and relatable to Yiddish speakers — for instance, when translating intersex, cisgender, and genderqueer.

Given these challenges, the Yiddish edition would never have been possible without the wonderful talent, insight, and care of its translator, Lili Rosen. Alongside her linguistic mastery of many dialects and registers of Yiddish, Lili also brought to the project her own queer OTD Jewish identity. In fact, as Lili has shared in other interviews, she came out as trans and queer over the course of translating You Be You into Yiddish. Lili’s perspectives also highlight that Yiddish LGBTQ resources are indeed relevant to Orthodox communities, and that such resources are not just secular impositions on Orthodox communities. As Lili has told the Yiddish journal In geveb about her own upbringing, “I was a Hasid and read everything I could get my hands on in Yiddish and English on subjects that I wanted to educate myself about.” In turn, Lili notes that although the Yiddish edition of You Be You will never become an “official study guide in yeshivas,” it may well “be used by some Hasidic parents in the privacy of their own homes for their own edification and hopefully for their children’s.” Likewise, both Lili and I hope that many LGBTQ Jewish readers (whether Hasidic, OTD, or secular) will find their own identities reflected and affirmed in these Yiddish pages.

To aid this affirmation and make the whole text as relatable as possible, we also updated a few sentences and images when moving from English to Yiddish. For instance, the Yiddish edition’s section on love and attraction acknowledges both secular practices (like dating) and Orthodox practices (like consulting a shadchan to make a match). We also added a new sentence about a character who is a Satmar Sephardic genderqueer trans-masculine lesbian. Likewise, the Yiddish edition benefits from several new illustrations by the book’s original illustrator: the wonderfully talented Julie Benbassat, who also brings her Jewish identity to this project. For instance, Julie contributed an illustration of a Hasidic wedding. Like in this example, the book always invites readers to envision Orthodox Jewish identity as smoothly compatible with many forms of diversity.

In turn, this invitation supports the book’s broader goal, stated on its first page: Lili, Julie, and I hope that this Yiddish edition of You Be You can help readers build a kinder world, in which more people accept others and themselves.

From the Stage to the PC Screen: The Winding Path to Librarianship of a Veteran AJL Member

Elliot H. Gertel was the 2019 Recipient of the Fanny Goldstein Merit Award. He is the Irving M. Hermelin Curator of Judaica Emeritus at the University of Michigan. Elliot served as the Judaica curator at the University of Michigan Library for 20 years from 1999 to 2018. However, he wanted to be an actor from the time he was six years old.

Elliot was in drama clubs in junior high and attended the High School of Music & Art in New York City. At Marlboro College in Vermont, he majored in theater, French, and writing. After

Continued on page 3
college, he performed in community theater in San Francisco and Paris. However, by age thirty, he realized he wouldn’t be making a living on stage or in front of a movie camera, so he turned to the idea of becoming a Yiddish professor, since he grew up in a Yiddish-speaking home and loved learning and teaching languages. This led Elliot to Oxford University in England to earn an M.Phil. in Modern Jewish Studies.

He found his way to library school at the University of Kentucky, almost by accident. He served as a research assistant for Deborah Dash Moore, then Associate Dean of Research at the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research in New York. He did this job remotely in the Lexington Public Library in Kentucky. Although he was not a library employee, so many library users asked for his help with loading microfilm and finding materials, he said, “I might as well be doing this for a living.” That prompted Elliot to take a post-baccalaureate course on information in society at the University of Kentucky, which led to spending a year earning an MLS at the University of Kentucky.

Elliot started his library career as the Serials Librarian at the Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky. He then held a couple of other positions as General Reference Librarian at the California State University, Fullerton, and Judaica Librarian and Assistant Head of Special Collections at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton before being appointed the first endowed position in the University of Michigan Library as the Irving M. Hermelin Curator of Judaica in 1999, retiring in 2018. That interest in teaching Yiddish was fulfilled when Elliot was able to teach Yiddish at synagogues in Lexington and at the University of Kentucky, Florida Atlantic University, and the University of Michigan.

During his thirty years as an academic librarian, Gertel has been an active member of AJL and the American Library Association (ALA). As both organizations planned holding annual conferences in Chicago in 1995 with a day of overlap, he conceived of the idea of joint AJL-ALA programs. After that first collaborative session, he organized or helped coordinate another eleven such programs as both a longtime Chair and Program Chair of the Jewish Information Committee of the ALA Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table. These were conferences in New York (1996), Washington, DC (1998 and 2010), New Orleans (1999 and 2011), San Francisco (2001), Toronto (2003), Anaheim (2008 and 2012), Pasadena (2012), and Orlando (2016).

Elliot describes being awarded the Fanny Goldstein Merit Award in 2019 as “a high point of my third profession! It may not be an Oscar, a Tony, or an Obie, but a lifetime achievement award from AJL is, as Larry David might say, ‘Pretty, pretty, pretty good!’ It’s been a wild ride and an interesting ‘collection’ of careers,” and while Elliot Gertel’s dream of a thespian’s life didn’t work out, a cameo in an Internet series, ‘An Apartment in New York,’ directed by a high school classmate, allowed him to have an IMDB page.

From the President’s Desk

July 2022

My dear friends and colleagues,

I am sitting down to write this column in the week following the conference, my first week as president of AJL. When I attended my first conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, in 2007, I knew I had found my place and my people. AJL continues to be the warmest, most welcoming association I have experienced, and it is my humble honor to have the opportunity to serve you over the next two years.

I’m still energized and inspired from our first annual conference after such a long break. What a wonderful opportunity to meet and connect (or reconnect) with new and familiar faces. I know that not everyone was able to attend for a variety of reasons, and I look forward to seeing you in the digital world very soon. A huge congratulations to the conference committee, who put in long hours and tireless effort to make sure that “Together Again” lived up to the hype!

Our virtual events will be continuing with Roundtables and professional development events — I’ll be at the demonstration in late July of the new Yerusha Project database featuring archives from all over Europe, and I’m looking forward to learning from and with a new group that has formed to support synagogue archivists.

Even if you did not make it to Philadelphia in late June, I encourage you to download the Socio app (or take a look at the web version); many of our colleagues posted their slides and talks to the conference sessions, and they will of course be uploaded to the Proceedings as well. I strongly encourage you to take a look at the Board Accomplishments document, which tangibly demonstrates how, under the incredible leadership of Past President Kathy Bloomfield, AJL has truly earned its place as The Leading Authority in Judaica Librarianship.

As you know, AJL is a volunteer organization. If you have an idea that you would like to see implemented, please reach out — AJL is YOUR organization, and your efforts will make it a better and more supportive one.

Looking forward to working with each and every one of you.

My very best,
Michelle

Michelle Margolis,
President, Association of Jewish Libraries
Renaissance Torah Press Welcomes AJL 2022 Participants

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Dennis Prager, nationally syndicated radio talks show host, New York Times bestselling author.

Rabbi Zev Bar Eitan is attending the AJL 2022 Conference. All questions and inquiries are welcome.

abravanelsworldoftorah.com | yabravanel@gmail.com
From the Editor

Dear Safranim,

It was a great pleasure to finally see many of you at our June conference; many of us were meeting for the first time in person! What a wonderful experience that was, not just for the meeting and greeting and hanging out in the hospitality suite, but for the wealth of programs on Jewish librarianship, literature, and culture. I learned so much and felt like I only scratched the surface of what we had to offer in our conference sessions. To learn more about the 2022 AJL Conference, please see the article featured on the first page of News & Reviews. In this issue, I’m also excited to offer a Seven Questions With... interview with noted Jewish podcasters Joshua Malina and Rabbi Shira Stutman. After you read the interview, I think you will be eager to listen to their podcast, Chutzpod!

Reviews are once again a mix of great reads for all ages and interests. Thank you to our new Assistant Editor in Chief, Ellen Drucker-Albert, for overseeing reviews!

Our members and our leadership are the core of AJL and the natural focus of AJL News and Reviews. In this issue we welcome the first column by incoming AJL President Michelle Margolis, offer an in-depth interview with Eliott Gertel, a Who Knows Four? feature with Peggy Pearlstein, our AJL member news, and our AJL chapter chatter. I hope you will enjoy this issue!

W armly,
Sally

Sally Stieglitz, Editor-in-Chief, AJL News and Reviews

Who Knows Four? Peggy Pearlstein!

Longtime AJL member Peggy Pearlstein kindly answered four questions for AJL News and Reviews on her membership experience. Thank you Peggy!!

News/Reviews: What is your best experience in AJL?

Peggy Pearlstein: My involvement with AJL began in 1982 when I began work in the Hebraic Section of the African & Middle Eastern Division, a research and reference arm of the Library of Congress. I was privileged to serve on the AJL Council from 1990-2011 and was President of RAS from 2004-2006. My best experience was serving as Co-Chair of the 35th AJL Convention held in Washington, DC in 2000. Sessions were held primarily at the Library of Congress. There were more than 300 attendees who traveled to the nation’s capital. It was exciting and inspiring to host so many librarians working in Jewish libraries. That year we launched the Authors Among Us Luncheon. Author Herman Wouk was our guest speaker.

News/Reviews: What is your favorite memory of Jewish libraries?

Peggy Pearlstein: There are so many marvelous Jewish libraries I have visited around the world! I will always remember the 17-year-old high school student who drove to the Library of Congress from his home in Annapolis, Maryland, in the early 1990s to pursue research in the Hebraic Section at the Library. As a teenager then, he often sat on the floor with the books he requested from our Section. Today he is an Associate Professor of History and Jewish Studies at Emory University.

News/Reviews: What are you reading now?

Peggy Pearlstein: I recently finished Jai Chakrabarti’s A Play for the End of the World: A Novel. This wonderfully written novel takes place in Warsaw, India, and New York, all places where I have lived or visited. In addition to being awarded this year’s National Jewish Book Award for debut fiction, Chakrabarti was an Honor Book Winner for the AJL Jewish Fiction Award.

Another book I read was Lisa Scottoline’s Eternal, a work of historical fiction which takes place in Rome during World War II. The story of the fate of the Jewish community is part of the novel. However, I would have preferred a different ending.

News/Reviews: What is your vision for the future of AJL?

Peggy Pearlstein: AJL is in the hands of wonderful, talented, and devoted professionals working in Jewish libraries. AJL provides members with excellent publications, an annual conference, online resources, podcasts, and awards that promote Jewish books, and endorses the recognition of Judaica librarianship to the general public. AJL has been engaged for many years in efforts to recruit more qualified people to the profession. It has been hard work, but constantly necessary in order for AJL to remain a viable and important organization. The future of AJL is in the hands of the next generation!

Editor’s Note: Who Knows Four is a recently created feature for AJL News and Reviews that offers a brief conversation with AJL members. If you are interested in participating, please email editor in chief Sally Stieglitz at sstieglitz@lilrc.org
PEOPLE OF THE BOOK TWICE BLESSED.

Our membership has dwindled. However, I try to recruit new and YOUNGER members. At 70, I bring the average age of our group down by 20 years. Our super senior members have much to share with those librarians coming up the pike. And they have lots to share with us. As a plus, President Wendy will chant the maftir aliyah Haftorah, Machar Hodeshand will give the sermon. Want to read my sermon, email me xmarxts@aol.com.

SHALOM

Wendy Marx,
President

AJL Capitol Area Chapter Presents
by Ellen Share, Vice-President, Association of Jewish Libraries/Capital Area Chapter

Sephardic Food and Music — From the Old World to America: Presentation by Susan Barocas and Sarah Aroeste was a Zoom program presented by AJL Capitol Area Chapter in conjunction with AJL on Sunday, May 22, 2022. Viewers heard a historical overview of the Sephardim describing the movement of people from Spain and Turkey to America and the new world. The two presenters, Sarah Aroeste and Susan Barocas, both with Sephardic ancestry, are uniquely qualified and brought their passion for the Sephardic culture into the presentation. Susan and Sarah hope, by describing food and music, to create an interest and understanding of the Sephardic world among Jews of all ages.

Susan Barocas is a chef, especially interested in cooking the recipes of the Sephardic people. Susan strongly believes that food shapes our Jewish identity. It is interesting to learn that chickpeas became a main staple in the diet of Jews in Spain because during the times of the Inquisition the kosher butcher was often targeted. Documents from the Inquisition show that Jews were often identified by the food that they ate, and this could add to their danger.

When Jews lived in the Ottoman Empire, they cooked with tomatoes regarded by others as poisonous. The secret Jews in the Southwest would eat pan semita, which is a flat roll. This would be eaten in the spring even among those who were unaware of the festival of Pesach. Between 1912-1913, a large number of immigrants came to America from Ottoman Turkey. The Sephardic immigrants largely settled in Rochester, Atlanta, Seattle, New York, and Los Angeles. The Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America: La Ermandad Sefaradi, a benevolent society, helped keep Sepharadic culture alive and published their own newspapers written with Hebrew lettering in transliteration. Especially if the city of settlement was located on the coast, fish became an important staple in the diet. Popular were fish balls which could be served with egg / lemon sauce. When restaurants serving Ashkenazi foods became popular, Sephardic food was largely served in the home. However, Turkish coffee houses did spring up. Business was often discussed in these establishments and no liquor was served.

Sarah Aroeste is a composer, singer, performer, and writer. She discussed three aspects of Ladino music: 1. Influence of Flory Jagoda. A recommended children’s book is Key from Spain: Flory Jagoda and Her Music by Debbie Levy which is about Flory’s life. The iconic song, “Ocho Kandelikas,” a standard at Chanukah, was composed by Jagoda. 2. Contrafactum. It is substituting one

Congratinations to our members on their recent publications:

• Kathy Kacer, Hidden on the High Wire (Second Story Press)
• Joanne Levy, The Book of Elsie (Orca)
• Jewish Museum and Archives of BC, Looking Back, Moving Forward: 160 Years of Jewish Life in BC (info@ JewishMuseum.ca)

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text for another. For instance, the melody of “Los Bilbicos” is used today in the synagogues when singing “Tsur Mishelo.”

Piyyutim. It is liturgical poetry set to music. Frequently heard in synagogues is “Ein Keloheinu” which is sung with a Ladino melody. Sarah has recently written a book for young children, *Buen Shabat: Shabbat Shalom*, which shows a Shabbat observance and introduces Ladino words on each page. She also has a music album, *Together: Endjuntos*, which is unique because it is the first bilingual Ladino/English holiday album and geared toward American families.

Susan and Sarah are now working on launching a very special project, SaVOR. SaVOR is the pairing of 10 Sephardic recipes with 10 Sephardic songs. The 10 recipes will be prepared by selected chefs from around the world. They will be matched with music selected by Sarah and relating to food. This unique and special collaboration will be made into a documentary. This synthesis of music and food reflect the Sephardic culture in a novel way.

What can we do to keep the Sephardic recipes, music, and traditions alive before they are lost forever? Suggestions are cooking and serving Sephardic food in our synagogues and homes, including recipes in cookbooks, attending food festivals, reading books on Sephardim, and listening to Sephardic music. These are ways to perpetuate and revitalize the Sephardic culture.

A special thank you goes to Gale Shirazi for all her efforts in organizing this program along with the efforts of Rebecca Levitan and Jackie Ben-Efraim.

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**Member News**

Jackie Ben-Efraim, AJL’s Development Vice President, shared this tribute to her mother, Connie Kamerow z’L.

“I would like to thank my colleagues at AJL for their outpouring of condolences on my mother’s death and their generosity to AJL with donations in her memory.”

**Woman of Valor in Memory of Connie Kamerow**

July 31, 1931 - June 18, 2022

Proverbs 31:10 — 31

(10) A woman of valor who can find? For her price is far above rubies and other baubles in her jewelry box which she allows us to play with so we could feel like princesses.

(11) The heart of her husband safely trusts in her, and my parents love story was truly legendary

(13) She seeks wool and flax, And her handiwork adorns her home as well as many of ours.

(14) She is like the merchant ships; She brings her food from afar... most importantly chocolate

(15) She rises also while it is almost noon And gives food to her household ... often serving dessert first , And a portion to her tender caring nursing aids.

(16) With the fruit of her hands she adorns her *sukkah* which she promised to always build after seeing a deer munch on the first *sukkah* she ever saw.

(17) She girds her loins with strength overcoming the many obstacles in her life.

18: Her lamp goes not out by night- because she's reading or watching old movies.

(19) She lays her hands on the cow honker on her walker.

(20) She stretches out her hand to the poor; Yea, she reaches forth her hands to numerous charities.

(21) She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her nieces called her the Red Aunt.

(22) She makes for herself coverlets; and her grandchildren hang on to her quilts even when they are worn out.

(23) Her husband is known in the gates, and the elders of the land comment about his wife ... true helpmate.

(25) Strength and dignity are her clothing; And she laughs at the time to come. (26) She opens her mouth with wisdom; And the law of kindness is on her tongue, along with occasional quips

(27) She looks well to the ways of her household, And eats not the bread of idleness.

(28) Her children rise up, and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her:

(29) ‘Many daughters have done valiantly, But you rise above them all.’

(30) Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; But a woman that fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

(31) Give her of the fruit of her hands; And let her works praise her in the gates.
The Association of Jewish Libraries Announces the 2022 Fanny Goldstein Merit Award Winner

by Paula Breger, Public Relations Chair

The Association of Jewish Libraries is proud to announce that longtime member Lisa Silverman has been named the 2022 Fanny Goldstein Merit Award Winner. The award, named for the librarian, social activist, and founder of National Jewish Book Month, is bestowed in recognition of loyal and ongoing contributions to the Association of Jewish Libraries and to the profession of Judaica librarianship.

Lisa Silverman began her career as a day school librarian at the Sinai Akiba Academy in Los Angeles and Adat Ari El Day School in Valley Village, California. She spent 15 years as the library director at Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, providing library services and educational programming for the day school, religious school, and synagogue community including teaching adult education classes, facilitating book groups, and hosting author events, family programs, and film discussions. In 2015, Lisa became the library director of the Burton Sperber Jewish Community Library at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles where she designed the new space, built the collection, and provided extensive programming. She also developed and launched a new online digital Jewish Community Library Consortium of California in partnership with the Jewish Community Library of San Francisco.

Lisa’s involvement with the Association of Jewish Libraries began when she attended her first conference in Los Angeles in 1992, and she has made countless contributions to the organization and the profession over the past 30 years. She was the president and vice president of the then Synagogue, Schools & Center Division and served as chair of the Bibliography Bank and on its nominating committee. Lisa served as the national conference chairperson for three years, co-chaired the 2019 conference in Woodland Hills, and was instrumental in the planning of the two online conferences in 2020 and 2021. Lisa has also been a leader in the Southern California Chapter of AJL where she was honored with the Dorothy Schroder Achievement Award in 2009 and co-founded the AJL Western Regional Children’s Literature Conference. AJL President Kathleen Bloomfield remarked, “I am so happy that Lisa Silverman is this year’s Fanny Goldstein winner. Lisa was a huge help to me when I established ForWordsBooks, my Jewish book fair business, back in 1990. She has been an ongoing supporter of my work with AJL, including providing guidance as I moved into leadership positions within the organization. I am honored to have her as a colleague, and most of all as a friend.”

Known nationally and internationally as an expert on Jewish children’s literature, Lisa was recently the co-editor of children and teen book reviews for AJL Reviews and served as the children’s editor for Jewish Book World magazine for six years. She was the children’s book reviewer for the Jewish Journal of Los Angeles for many years and has published numerous reviews in other magazines such as School Library Journal, Catholic Library World, and Five Owls. She has served as a judge for the National Jewish Book Awards for fifteen years and also served as a judge for the Museum of Tolerance Once Upon A World Children’s Book Award. In addition to numerous presentations at AJL conferences, Lisa has presented on Jewish literature at a variety of conferences and settings, including the Charlotte Huck Children’s Literature Conference, California School Library Association, the Mazza Museum of Children’s Literature, the United States Board on Books for Young People, the International Board on Books for Young People Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the International Association of Children’s Literature Conference in Frankfurt, Germany, among others.

Rachel Kamin, award committee chair, commented, “On behalf of the Fanny Goldstein Merit Award committee, we are proud to have the opportunity to honor Lisa Silverman as this year’s recipient of the Award. Lisa has contributed so much to the Association of Jewish Libraries, to the field of Judaica librarianship, and to librarianship as a profession overall. She has been a mentor to so many and gives of her time generously. Lisa truly personifies the values and legacy of the Award’s namesake, Fanny Goldstein, who devoted her life to books and her community.” Lisa will receive her award during a special luncheon at the Annual Conference of the Association of Jewish Libraries on Tuesday, June 28, 2022, at the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia.

Members of the 2022 Fanny Goldstein Merit Award committee are Rachel Kamin, Toby Harris, and Joy Kingsolver.

The Cataloging Forum

Heim A. Gottschalk, Hebraica-Judaica Cataloging Librarian, Washington, DC

This past year, the Cataloging Committee of the RAS division hosted three cataloging and cataloging related sessions: The LC Classifications of BM vs KBM in November 2021; Introduction to Cataloging Hebrew Manuscripts in March 2022; and a session on Genre Terms and Form Headings in May 2022.

The Cataloging Forum is an AJL-RAS roundtable for catalogers, wherein catalogers learn best practices, as well as an opportunity to expand their cataloging skills. Each session followed a basic format of approximately 45 minutes of presentation time followed by approximately 15 minutes of question and answer time. The Cataloging Forum had an average of 20 attendees. On Thursday, July 28, Dr Judith Olszowy-Schlanger will lead an introductory session on Hebrew paleography.
New from Academic Studies Press

Sephardi: Cooking the History
Hélène Jawhara Piñer
2021 | 9781644695319 | HB
“A vibrant scholar and a very talented cook, Hélène Jawhara Piñer has written a brilliant book that is as appealing as it is enlightening.”
— Adeena Sussman, author of Sababa: Fresh Sunny Flavors From My Israeli Kitchen

This Was America, 1865-1965
Gerd Korman
2022 | 9781644696378 | HB
“Elegantly written, exhaustively researched, it will soon take its place on the bookshelves of ‘must’ reads for understanding the American experience.”
— David Ohinsky, Winner, Pulitzer Prize for History, 2006

Like a Drop of Ink in a Downpour
Yelena Lembersky & Galina Lembersky
2022 | 9781644696699 | PB
“Galina and her daughter Aléna ... have painted a vivid portrait — one of life in and escape from a country that now exists only in memories and memoirs.”
— Herb Randall, LA Review of Books

Jews and American Public Life
David G. Dalin
2022 | 9781644698815 | HB
“This learned and lucid volume will unquestionably capture the interest of academics and general readers alike.”
— Gary P. Zola, Executive Director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

A Unique People in a Unique Land
Edward S. Shapiro
2022 | 9781644697399 | HB
“The essays in this welcome volume exhibit a remarkable range of interests and a sustained curiosity, conveyed in engaging prose.”
— Stephen Whitfield, Brandeis University

Leibowitz and Levinas
Rabbi Dr. Tal Sessler
Translated from the Hebrew by Eylon Levy
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Seven Questions with... Chutzpod! Podcasters Joshua Malina and Rabbi Shira Stutman

A JL News and Reviews Editor in Chief Sally Stieglitz recently spoke with Rabbi Shira Stutman and Joshua Malina, the hosts of the weekly podcast Chutzpod! Chutzpod! brings a Jewish lens to life’s toughest questions: Who do I want to be in this one life? How do we work to heal this broken world? And how, dear G-d, did gefilte fish become a thing?

Joshua Malina graduated from Yale University with a B.A. degree in Theatre and made his professional acting debut in the Broadway production of A Few Good Men, written by Aaron Sorkin. Joshua went on to star in critically-acclaimed television series including Sports Night. The West Wing, and Scandal. Joshua can be seen as Arthur Tipping, in the final season of Shameless.

Rabbi Shira Stutman is a nationally known faith-based leader and change-maker with more than twenty years of experience motivating and inspiring groups large and small, most recently as the founding rabbi of Sixt... in Washington DC. She teaches and speaks nationally on topics including growing welcoming Jewish spiritual communities; building the connective tissues between different types of people; and the current American Jewish community zeitgeist. She also is writing a book on the blessing of interfaith couples. She graduated from Columbia University and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, where she was a Wexner Graduate Fellow.

AJL: Thank you for taking the time to chat with AJL News and Reviews! Congratulations on your new Jewish podcast, Chutzpod! How did you two meet and come up with this idea, and then bring it to podcast fruition?

SS: Thanks for having us, Sally! We first met at Sixth & I, when Josh came to help DC Jews celebrate Shavuot. We re-met a few years later on Encounter, a program that brings American Jewish thought-leaders and influencers to the West Bank to learn more about the lives of people living there.

JM: Rabbi Shira and I first met when I did an event at her synagogue at the time, DC’s Sixth & I. We really got to know each other later when we both went on a trip with a group called Encounter which sends so-called “Jewish influencers” to the West Bank and East Jerusalem in order to learn more about the complexities surrounding the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. It was a joyous, troubling, and intense trip, and we became friends. I was intrigued when the Rabbi (and Tim Shovers, Executive Producer of Chutzpod!) wrote to me with their idea for a podcast. We soon began developing the idea together, and a few months later we were in business.

AJL: Your publicity materials say that you are taking on Life’s Toughest Questions. I googled those and one that stood out is, “Why does the line you’re in always move the slowest?” Can you apply talmudic learning to that please?

SS: Oh that’s easy! It’s to teach us patience. As we learn in the Talmud, “A person should always be patient like Hillel and not impatient like Shamai.” If our line was always the fastest line, then we grow to expect special treatment wherever we go, and ultimately lose our ability to see the presence of Gd in other people. But when we find ourselves in the slow line, as we all too often do, we are meant to be grateful for the extra moments of peace and quiet.

AJL: You come from very different backgrounds, professionally, as an actor and a religious leader. What do you each bring to the podcast that complements the other?

SS: Josh is very kind but digresses a lot. Rabbi Shira keeps us on task but sometimes is too cynical for her own good. Together we make one pretty good teacher!

JM: I have no hesitation in admitting that Rabbi Shira is the teacher, and I am the student. I believe I can add a lot by sharing my Jewish journey with listeners, but I am on mic primarily as a way to teach and speak directly to the audience. I have no hesitation in admitting that Rabbi Shira is the teacher, and I am the student. I believe I can add a lot by sharing my Jewish journey with listeners, but I am on mic primarily as a way to teach and speak directly to the audience.

AJL: Rabbi Shira, you are currently writing a book on the blessing of interfaith couples. Can you tell us more about it and when it will be published? And Josh, are you a writer as well?

SS: Oy, only Hashem knows when Rabbi Shira’s book will be published. But yes, Josh is a writer, recently published in The Atlantic. And I am a longtime, enthusiastic reader, and customer at libraries. Libraries are sanctuaries for me.

JM: I do like to write. I have written t.v. and film scripts, and recently had a piece published in The Atlantic. And I am a longtime, enthusiastic reader, and customer at libraries. Libraries are sanctuaries for me.

AJL: As librarians and as People of the Book, we like to ask about favorite books or books that influenced you, whether as a child or as an adult. Can you share some of those with us?

SS: Judy Blume is everything. From her books I learned about...
families (including my first interfaith marriage!), sex, relationships, grief, and more.

JM: I’ve always loved writers whose books are both funny and trenchant. Lifelong favorites include Jane Austen, J.P. Donleavy, Kurt Vonnegut, Martin Amis, Haruki Murakami, and Charles Dickens.

AJL: And what were your experiences with libraries, either growing up or in your scholarly studies? Do you use libraries today to help you research for your work?

SS: I find myself in the Chevy Chase Library at least once a week, if not more. And every Shabbat at some point I’d end up in the library at Adas Israel, the DC synagogue at which I grew up. To this day, no visit to Adas Israel is complete without me stopping into the library there.

AJL: You’re just starting out, but what can we expect from Chutzpod! so far as future content? (We see you have authors as possible guests and we at AJL are happy to be the official Chutzpod! librarians, if our input is ever needed.)

SS: We’re going to continue to try to answer the questions of the day with a little bit of text, a little bit of humor, and a lot of humility.

AJL: Thank you both for your time and best wishes on your new podcast. We’ll be listening!

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
EDITED BY ELLEN DRUCKER-ALBERT AND REBECCA LEVITAN


This beautiful picture book is the third edition of the classic, originally published in 1983, as the first children’s book about the Holocaust. Stunningly illustrated in full and double-page spreads of richer, darker colors than the original, the book tells the true story of the rescue and restoration of a small Torah from Brno, Czechoslovakia.

The Torah’s story is told from the Torah’s point of view as it made its journey from Czechoslovakia to the Solomon Schechter Day School in Chicago. The story tells, and illustrations show how Nazi soldiers closed the synagogues in Brno and ordered that all the Torah scrolls be sent to Prague. It details their transfer to Prague’s Michle Synagogue where they were numbered and left until the war was over. They were sent to London’s Westminster Synagogue for distribution to Jewish congregations throughout the world. The “Little Torah” was purchased and rescued by Arthur Weil for his then 8-year-old son and his school. The story ends with the school’s special service for it.

This third edition is dedicated to the author who was a pioneer in Early Childhood Education and curriculum for young Jewish children. Despite its age, it is still a powerful resource for Holocaust education with young children. In this edition, Hebrew words are printed in italics on their first appearance, but in regular font thereafter, but the text is the same as the original.

There is a glossary of Hebrew words at the end. In addition, the back matter includes a message from the author written sometime before her passing in 2014, as well as a photo montage with pictures at the Westminster Synagogue in London, the neighborhood in Brno from which the Torah came, the 1972 installation ceremony at Solomon Schechter, and the author with her grandson at the school. A portion of proceeds from book sales support educational resources to promote empathy and understanding among all people.

An animated short film of the book, narrated by the late Ed Asner, was created by the author’s daughter and is available at www.thetattooeditorah.com.


This heartwarming story captures the experience of isolation and loneliness during the many months of COVID-19 from the perspective of a sensitive, compassionate young girl, Mira, living in Jerusalem. Author Erica Lyons creates an atmosphere of seclusion and solitude as our world closed down — “the singing stopped, the streets were silent, the shops were shuttered, the Western Wall plaza was empty, and everyone stayed home to be safe from the bad virus.” Mira tries to be understanding and patient as her parents work at home, but she misses the park, her friends, and her art classes. As time passes,
REVIEWS OF TITLES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

her parents encourage Mira to practice the Four Questions for the upcoming Passover seder, but she can't imagine having a seder with just her own family.

Then she goes out on the balcony to practice and find her elderly neighbor also singing. Mira realizes that many neighbors will have to celebrate the seder alone, and she is determined not to let that happen. She organizes the building and approaches those with balconies nearby so that everyone joins together outside to celebrate the seder together — “small voices and large voices, old voices and young voices rang out from balconies and windows.” Mira was happier than she could ever have thought because “no one was together, but no one was alone.”

This beautiful, emotional story focuses on coming together as a community, making the most of a very difficult situation, being creative in problem solving, and overcoming the intense feelings of loneliness. The illustrations are bright and fun and aid the reader to understand and experience the intense feelings and problems brought on by the pandemic.

As time passes and our lives move on to a new normal, we reflect on the beginning and most difficult realities of the pandemic and its profound effects on our children and the elderly. This book chronicles how a child personally and lovingly dealt with a very challenging life situation.

Rachel Glasser,
Retired Librarian, Yavneh Academy, Paramus, NJ


Abe Pearlman is the kind of kid who thinks that nothing happens to him, including his crush seeing right through him as he passes by. Finding a distraction from the anonymity of his life, he wanders into a fortune teller who reveals he’s going to save someone’s life. The next thing he knows, he wakes up as Asher, a poor Jewish boy in Victorian England, right in the middle of the Jack the Ripper murders. As Abe tries to figure out how to get back home, and navigates life in Victorian England, he discovers that his crush, Mitzy, is there as well, except that now she is a blind girl named Maya, living with her mother and an uncle who does not speak English. Together Mitzy and Abe try to figure out how to return to the present day. Abe knows he has to save a life, and Mitzy must take a boat trip, but is Abe supposed to stop Jack the Ripper? How will Mitzy take a boat trip if she is practically destitute?

Mystery, historical fiction, time travel fantasy, antisemitism, poverty, disability, self-identity are all addressed in Ripped Away. Fast paced and tightly written, this slim volume, coming in at just over 100 pages packs a wallop. Great for reluctant readers for its brief length, or fans of true crime, Vernick has created an excellent window into a much lesser known period in time.

Rebecca Levitan,
Co-editor, Children’s and Teen Literature, AJL News and Reviews
AJL SSCPL Division President
Librarian III, Baltimore County Public Library, Pikesville Branch

BOARD BOOKS


Cottage Door Press publishes a bevy of fun “Early Bird Song Books,” tackling all sorts of children’s melodies, including bedtime songs, farm songs, Christmas songs and ABC songs, among many others. Toddlers and preschoolers can push any of eleven sound buttons to hear all the songs, but usually just the melodies, not a singing voice. The inclusion of popular Jewish songs is a welcome addition to the mix, along with a few seconds of the lyrics, sung appealingly by Cantor Lisa Silver, from Congregation Micah in Memphis, Tennessee. The book itself is a large and sturdy board book with delightfully upbeat and colorful illustrations dedicated to one song per page; context and words included. The songs are “Yom Huledet Sameach,” “Zum Gali, Gali,” “The Dreidel Song,” “Dayenu,” “David Melech Yisrael,” “Mayim Mayim,” “Siman Tov u’Mazal Tov,” “Hava Nagila,” “Oseh Shalom” and “Hinei Mah Tov.” There is diversity of all sorts in the charming illustrations. After handing this book to a two-year-old reviewer, she quickly found the buttons for the songs she loves most (“Yom Huledet” and “Dayenu”), pressed them repeatedly, and sang along

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happily. This book is a great gift for a little one that should keep them quite occupied while learning some catchy Jewish tunes.

Lisa Silverman, 
Retired director, Sperber Jewish Community Library Curator, Jewish Journal Streaming Guide


My Hands Make the World is a charming board book which follows the story of creation as it is written in the biblical book of Genesis. The illustrations consist of a child's handprint in a color that is consistent with what was created on that particular day. For example, a black handprint depicts darkness on the first day of creation. On the facing page is a white hand with the accompanying text, “My right hand made light,” which illustrates that dark and light were separated on the first day. The second day handprints are blue for the color of the sky and water. Especially delightful illustrations are for day three where a brown hand topped with greenery representing trees is accompanied on the facing page with a green hand topped with colorful flowers growing out of the fingertips. The text is minimal, but enough to inform the reader of what was created on that day. My Hands Make the World is an excellent introduction to the story of creation. Young children will be able to relate to the small handprints on each page. The book is an excellent choice for a baby gift or a read aloud.

Ilka Gordon, 
Beachwood, OH

Weber, Vicki L. Start the Day! Illustrated by Shirley Ng-Benitez. Millburn, NJ: Apples & Honey Press, 2022. 12 pp. $7.95 (9781681155777); Time for Bed. 12pp. $7.95 (9781681155784); Shabbat Shalom. 12pp $7.95 (9781681155791); A New Week. 12 pp. $7.95 (9781681155807) Board Book. Preschool.

A cast of happy, adorable babies and toddlers in varying skin tones start and end their day and celebrate Shabbat and Havdalah in these playful oversized board books infused with a light Jewish flavor. For example, the text for Start the Day! goes like this: “Yawn, stretch, wiggle toes, sunshine warms each little nose / Good morning all, it’s time to rise, and rub the sleep from rested eyes / Up, up, now — we want to play, Boker tov, let’s start our day.” Time for Bed is similar: “Splishing, splashing, sail along, reading stories, singing songs / One more cuddle, hugging tight, sweet, warm kisses say good night / Nodding, nodding, little heads, Lailah tov, it’s time for bed.” The only Jewish content is the “Boker Tov” and “Lailah Tov” at the end, which is also printed on the babies’ pajamas.

Shabbat Shalom is more specifically Jewish depicting the candles, challah, and the blessing of the children (but no juice for kiddush). “Faces glow in candlelight, challah braids for Friday night / Blessing children one by one, singing songs and having fun / Shabbat comes to our peaceful home / Our wish for all - Shabbat Shalom.” The boys are wearing kippot and the babies’ bibs say “Shabbat Shalom” and “I Love My Saba & Savta.”

Havdalah is not mentioned in A New Week but the braided candle appears prominently in one illustration with the kiddush cup and spice box in the background. “A day of rest, a day of fun, and now it’s ending — good night sun! / Good night Shabbat, goodbye to you / It’s time to start a week that’s new / What hello greeting do we speak? Shavua tov! Have a good week!” The rhyming text scans well and the appealing, colorful cartoon illustrations depict contemporary Jewish families.

A nice addition to any Jewish board book collection in a synagogue, preschool, or other Jewish setting; all four books could be used to enhance toddler storytimes too.

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

HOLOCAUST & WORLD WAR II


These sixty-five riveting oral testimonies, collected by award-winning journalist Svetlana Alexievich, are by boys and girls who lived during the horrors of World War II. The children ranged in age from four to fourteen, so they had varying perspectives and understanding about the events happening around them. They lived in countries affected by the war: Ukraine, Belorussia (now Belarus), Poland, and the Soviet Union. Each personal narrative, no more than ten pages long, is prefaced by the child’s age during the war and

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line of work at the time of the telling. The children recount how the ground suddenly shifted under their feet; how they lost school and friends, home and family. These children were, for the most part, traumatized by their experiences of escape, hunger, disease, and death. They lived with one parent (usually the mother), with relatives, with foster parents, or in an orphanage. The older children often worked on farms or in factories, or even fought as soldiers or partisans. One child survivor recalls, “I’m already fifty-one years old. I have children of my own. But I still want my mama.”

Occasional explanatory footnotes aid the reader to understand the historical or literary references mentioned. A map and glossary are included, as well as an introductory historical context note. Only a few of these eyewitness accounts contain Jewish content. This collection was originally published in 1985. However, given the recent war in Ukraine, the reader will be able to relate to these heartbreaking recollections of children caught in the maelstrom of war and suffering. One of the grown-up children says, “I lose my voice when I tell about this…. My voice dies.” Let us hope that their voices will never die.

Anne Dublin,
Retired teacher-librarian, Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto

FICTION - EARLY READERS


HaChai, an Orthodox publisher, offers a variety of children’s books for differing ages. This title is part of the “Fun-to-Read” series, which comes in paperback, in an appropriate size and shape for young readers’ hands, and with occasional pen and ink illustrations. The font is large and there is plenty of white space, which will entice good readers in second grade, but probably be more likely to be picked up by a third or fourth grader. The books in this series are all intended to instill an interest in Jewish history, are particularly suited for Orthodox children, but can absolutely be enjoyed by any child.

This chapter book takes place in 1946 Toronto. Main character, Shloimie Paporovich, is a responsible ten-year-old who inadvertently shatters a (non-Jewish) neighbor’s car window while playing baseball with his friends. He realizes that he must pay for the damage, and takes on various tasks for the neighbor, like pulling weeds and shoveling snow, which is a difficult job during Toronto’s cold winters. The neighbor gives Shloimie a letter to take to his parents, and his family is relieved to find out that a young cousin has survived the Holocaust and wants to come to Canada. (The subject of the Holocaust is not discussed other than that the cousin needs to get a visa, is waiting in a DP camp, and must have had a difficult time.)

The plot provides tension as Shloimie writes to the cousin, works off his debt, and wonders about the neighbor. Family dynamics and Jewish holidays are celebrated in a way that could remind readers of the All of a Kind Family series — very wholesomely, but with a sense of time and place of the 1940s. The author provides an interesting author’s endnote regarding this story, along with a short chapter on history of the period, and a glossary of terms. This book is a delightful read that should particularly engage children (of all denominations) who enjoy historical fiction.

Lisa Silverman,
Retired director, Sperber Jewish Community Library
Curator, Jewish Journal Streaming Guide


A fun, exciting time-travel story which follows the adventures of two friends, Max and Emma and her pesky poodle, Kelev, as they prepare for the Passover Seder. Max is scared of reciting the Four Questions at his family’s Seder, and to avoid practicing he and Emma travel back in time to the Red Sea as the Israelites are faced with the advancing Egyptians on one side and the dangers of the sea on the other.

They meet Nachshon, the first Israelite to courageously enter the water, Moses, portrayed as a thoughtful, caring, and sensitive leader, and others who help them navigate their way and understand the story of the exodus from Egypt. The account provides a new approach to Bible stories while teaching lessons of courage, faith, and belief in oneself.

The concept of glossophobia, the fear of public speaking and social situations, is introduced by Max’s discomfort of embarrassing himself and not being able to recite the Four Questions appropriately and is also applied to the challenges Moses faces with public speaking. The opportunity created for speaking openly and teaching about this issue is well used with the intent that children will show kindness to others and more confidence concerning this issue.
This early chapter book has fun and bright illustrations throughout the story which add to the narrative. Children are encouraged to look deep within their own personalities to find the courage and nerve to face new challenges and overcome their fears.

Rachel Glasser, Retired Librarian, Yavneh Academy, Paramus, NJ

FICTION - MIDDLE GRADE


There have been several books recently discussing the lives of important, forgotten Jewish women. This volume introduces physicist Lise Meitner to middle school readers.

Meitner was born Jewish in Vienna and grew up just as women were entering the working world. Among her models was Marie Curie, whose work led to the discovery of Radium and the X-ray. As one of the first women physicists, Meitner was a beacon for other young women scientists, many of whom she befriended. She knew all of the great scientists and worked with many of them, including Planck, Einstein and Otto Hahn. After emigrating from Germany to Sweden in 1938, she continued her work. Regrettably, she did not receive a Nobel Prize; but a particle named in her honor (Meitnerium-109) is recognition of her significance.

Meitner’s family was not connected to Jewish rituals, and she never joined Jewish organizations. As an adult, she converted to Christianity and was baptized. However, when Hitler came to power she lost her University position, and later her role at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute.

Jeannine Atkins tells Meitner’s story in free verse. In this way it is reminiscent of “Tropical Secrets,” by Margarita Engle (Sydney Taylor Book Award 2010). Atkins blends real incidents and fictional recreations, which allow the reader to follow her subject’s long and productive career. It also highlights the pressures on women as they gained prestige in the sexist society of the times. Third, the author recreates the uncertainty and terror of Nazi Germany as Lise Meitner experienced them. Finally, Atkins uses the story of Noah as a feminist through-line, asking the question “what was Noah’s wife’s name” to remind her readers that the world can be discovered and saved by all of us.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


Shabbat Sabotage, an engaging fun sleep-away camp mystery, will resonate with anyone who has been a “reluctant” camper, or one that finds certain aspects of sleepaway camp anxiety inducing, whether it be swimming in a slimy lake, playing sports, “scuzzy” showers or snakes!

Maya is not excited in any way about spending her summer at Camp Shalom. In fact, she had hoped the camp would have disappeared into a sinkhole, or otherwise disappeared, before the summer began and would rather spend her summer reading. Her feelings of dread are compounded as the bus to camp pulls up and the lake, which looks “perfect for drowning,” comes into view. Unfortunately, during day camp the previous summer, she had experienced a traumatic episode in the pool from which she had not yet emotionally recovered.

However, when she arrives at Camp Shalom, and meets her counselor and fellow “Team Akko” cabinmates, Dani, Grace, Marisa and even Yael (who is a bit bossy), she gets swept up in the camaraderie and camp spirit. Maya and the rest of Team Akko are selected to lead Camp Shalom’s Shabbat service and are entrusted to safeguard the valuable kiddush cup, candlesticks, candles and challah cover. However, these items soon disappear from their cabin and the girls have to work together to solve this mystery.

Maya and Dani lead the mission, with the help of their friends, but evidence points to Dani. Maya must find the true culprit so her friend is not sent home. Meanwhile, Maya is faced with the challenge of passing a swimming test so she can participate in the big sleepover on Snake Island. Yael helps her get over her swimming anxiety and succeed. However, in the course of her continued sleuthing, Maya discovers the true thief, but also the reason behind the heist, as Yael has her own fears. The friends support each other and through teamwork and honesty, resolve the challenges of the summer for a happy ending for all.

With regard to Jewish content, the campers eat in the chadar ochel (dining hall), an unfamiliar term to some of the campers, the camp is kosher, and Shabbat and Israel are integrated into the camping experience. (The dedication notes Camp Livingston, located in Bennington, Indiana, a Jewish sleepaway camp not affiliated with any specific Jewish movement, upon which Camp Shalom appears to be modeled). However, this story is primarily about friendship, teamwork and supporting one another to overcome one’s fears.

Ellen Drucker-Albert, Assistant Editor in Chief, AJL News and Reviews Co-editor, Children’s and Teen Literature, AJL News and Reviews

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Miriam “Miri” Feigenbaum wakes up on her birthday, the day she becomes a Bat Mitzvah, to find out that she got into the art school that she applied to — the art school that she hasn’t told her friends about. When she gets to her seemingly very pluralistic school, she meets up with her friends David and Avi, and their classmate Judith to go on an outreach trip to Washington, DC. Accompanied by the black-hatted, white-bearded Rabbi Adam Yehudi, the kids set off on their trip only to find out quickly that their minivan is flying and they’re not headed in the direction of DC at all.

Rabbi Yehudi reveals himself to actually be an angel, one who instructs Miri that she needs to finish the “Unfinished Corner,” that small portion that G-d left undone during creation where all the evil and demons live. After some convincing, Miriam and her friends agree that they’re going to finish the universe and set off on adventures to accomplish that which includes trekking through the Desert of Zin where they encounter the “Lost Generation of the Wilderness,” Miriam from the Torah, angels, Nephilim, the Golem, and Lilith. Can Miri finish the universe with the help of her friends? What will happen when they find out she applied to a different school?

Weaving a myriad of Jewish mythology and folklore together to create an epic adventure, The Unfinished Corner will be enjoyable for readers. Minor quibbles with text and artwork, such as people saying yashar koach instead of mazel tov where it would be expected, and the word emet being written in the wrong direction in Hebrew are going to distract only the most eagle-eyed readers. Overall, as the genre of Jewish graphic novels is lagging behind its secular counterparts, even if slightly flawed, The Unfinished Corner is a welcome addition to the field.

Rebecca Levitan, Co-editor, Children’s and Teen Literature, AJL News and Reviews
AJL SSCPL Division President
Librarian III, Baltimore County Public Library, Pikesville Branch


Moving to a new home can be a difficult rite of passage for a seventh-grade girl, especially one of Arab descent. When Yasmeen Khouri’s Palestinian-Lebanese family moves from Detroit, with its large Arab community, to San Antonio, Texas, Yasmeen wants nothing more than to fit in. Of all the girls she meets, it is Ayelet Cohen, a Jewish girl who shares her sense of being “different at school,” with whom Yasmeen bonds most readily.

But there’s a problem. Yasmeen’s grandmother’s Jerusalem home was demolished by the Israelis. Ayelet’s father grew up in Israel, so Yasmeen feels compelled to conceal from her anti-Israeli father the inconvenient fact that Mr. Cohen is her after-school Math Lab coach. The tensions between the families are resolved at the end, when the Cohen family helps the Khouris rescue Yasmeen’s grandmother’s garden in San Antonio from a flash flood.

Wishing Upon the Same Stars presents the two friends as agents of this reconciliation, but the price of the families’ friendship is to distance the Cohens as much as possible from Israel. When Yasmeen’s father accuses Mr. Cohen of being “an Israeli [who] thinks demolishing people’s homes is all right?” Yasmeen protests, “But Baba, Mr. Cohe... isn’t like those people... His daughter, Ayelet, says her dad’s family moved to Israel when he was in high school, but he wanted to raise his kids here in Texas. He’s American, to... just like us.”

So a good Israeli is one who isn’t like “those people,” and who doesn’t want to live there.

Feldman is also not averse to allowing Mr. Khouri’s accusation that Israel is practicing “apartheid” to rest unchallenged by any other character in her novel.

As for home demolitions, Feldman never explains why the grandmother’s home was demolished. Home demolitions in Israel aren’t arbitrary; they must follow strict legal procedures. Homes are demolished because they are built illegally, or to prevent future terrorist attacks.

Feldman reads Israeli history backwards, crediting the Holocaust for Israel’s creation and, shockingly, contriving a fanciful parallel between the Arabs’ “nakba” (“catastrophe”) and the Holocaust: “The Holocaust and the creation of Israel... led to our Nakba,” states Yasmeen. In fact, by the time Theodore Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, the Zionist project was already underway. And the “nakba” meant mass displacement; the Holocaust meant mass murder. It’s only Israel’s enemies who fail to see the difference.

Marjorie Gann, Program Chair of AJL-Canada
Young peoples’ book reviewer, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis


Set in 1955 Spokane, Washington, Melvin Johnson is a high school freshman, one of the few black students in his predominantly white public school. Melvin Johnson is also a stutterer, relentlessly teased and bullied, and spends his days trying not to open his mouth. Melvin’s friend, Lenny, is a fast-talking,
hyperactive, Jewish saxophone player who lives with his mother in an apartment over the racially segregated Harlem Club that was frequented by many racist white people. The Author’s Note includes more information about this controversial and real establishment.

Melvin and Lenny spend their time navigating the highs and lows of high school — girls, grades, and upperclassmen — while leaning on each other to get through each day. They spend time together playing music — Melvin on his accordion and Lenny on his sax. At one point, they decide they are good enough to audition for a local TV variety show and end up winning first prize.

When the Harlem Club burns down, Lenny and his mom are left homeless. That is when the “big reveal” takes place. It turns out that Lenny’s deceased father was a close friend of Melvin’s dad, Pops, and helped Pops buy his home despite the unwritten “restrictive covenants” in place at the time. Melvin’s mom and dad tell the story of how they were harassed by the neighbors when their identity as the home’s owners was discovered.

An accurate representation of the times — Emmett Till murdered, “restrictive covenants” in place so that Blacks (and often Jews) could not buy homes, the subtle segregation and intolerance Blacks, Jews and Asian Americans were subjected to by seemingly tolerant communities — all of these issues and more are part of the plot of this story.

Bits of Jewish information about Kiddush, bar mitzvah, etc. are sprinkled throughout the book, but Judaism is not a main part of the story. Mostly, the story revolves around finding your voice, standing up for what you believe, and supporting your friends even at the worst of times.

The language and story are age appropriate and will be of great interest to students who like historical fiction. The characters of Melvin and Lenny are well fleshed out, and the reader wants to know what happens to them when they grow up.

The author explains in the Author’s Note that the term “Negro” is used throughout the book, because this was how the black population of the 1950s preferred to be called. While times have changed, the author decided to remain true to the historical setting of the book. The author notes that she drew on her own experiences for the historical context which presents an authentic backdrop for the narrative. One note: The “N-word” is used on several occasions in this book, always by racist white people.

*Mighty Inside* is a well-written and moving read that explores universal themes and issues that are still relevant in today’s world.

Kathy Bloomfield, AJL Immediate Past President, Seal Beach, CA


There are several Jewish time-travel books for children. Most notable is Jane Yolen’s *The Devil’s Arithmetic* (Sydney Taylor Book Award 1988). This is Susie Garber’s attempt at the concept, aimed at middle school students.

We meet Tuvi and Tali, 12-year old twins, as they board a plane to New York, where they meet their Tante Chava and go to her home near the Brooklyn Bridge. Chava warns them not to walk on the bridge in the rain, but the kids are curious and they go to the bridge despite the warning. They are struck by lightning, and are transported back to the 1880s, and are taken in by the Roebling family. The story then follows the building of the great bridge, led by Washington Roebling and his wife. Tali navigates life in old New York and serves as Emily Roebling’s assistant as she directs the project. Her adventures include finding a Jewish friend, Devorah, who lives in Tante Chava’s home nearby. The story includes disease (Devorah survives scarlet fever), life and customs, and lots of factual information about the Brooklyn Bridge. As the task nears completion, the twins return to the present with a greater appreciation of modern life and their own background.

While the time-travel story is worthwhile, it is less compelling than it could be. The adventure begins before we are fully engaged with Tuvi and Tuvi, and it ends abruptly. We feel more strongly about the Roelings and Devorah, who we learn is their ancestor, than about the twins. As a result, the book is more interesting for its real-life characters than its fictional tale. Jewish practice is integral to the twins’ and Devorah’s lives, but there is no discussion of differences between the past and present.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


Middle schoolers, cousins and best friends, Ava, who is Jewish, and Nadeem, who is Muslim, face a bully at school. They turn to their grandmother, Nona Buena, for help. She has a wise Ladino saying for every occasion and is a bit of a mystic. To help them find the path forward, she introduces her grandchildren to the family’s antique button box that has “many stories locked inside...Each button guards the story of the ancestor who wore it,” she says. They pick up a bejeweled button originally belonging to Abdur Rahman, a Muslim prince. There is magic in...


the button, and they soon find themselves transported back 1,000 years to medieval Morocco, to the home of their relative Ester Ibn Evram, a Jewish girl their own age.

Ester’s family are spice merchants who are asked to secretly help the prince travel to Spain for his own safety. Ava and Nadeem help Ester, who is small in stature, but mighty in intellect and courage, to find a way to help the prince. They succeed when the adults cannot. The prince gifts Ester with the valuable button which is eventually passed down through all the generations of Nona Buena’s family until it finally lands with Ava and Nadeem.

The Button Box is engaging historical fiction with two important messages for young people. Authors Bridget Hodder, a Sephardic Jew, and Fawzia Gilani-Williams, a Muslim, skillfully promote tolerance. Nona Buena says: “Our family may be hard to understand from the outside - especially since after your father died, Nadeem, your mother raised you as a Muslim, while Ava and her parents and I are Jewish. Yet while we have our differences, we are bound by belief in the Creator — and by our love and loyalty to each other.”

The reader is encouraged to be an upstander in the face of hatred and bigotry. Prince Rahman counsels the children: “You were bystanders, and now you’ve become heroes. The harm that hatred does in the world will finally stop when all bystanders decide to become heroes instead of onlookers.”

There appear to be several historical inaccuracies in the text that do not affect the substance of the story, but should be noted. Eucalyptus oil was not present in Morocco in 755 CE. Also, the Umayyad Dynasty in that region collapsed in 1031, over 400 years prior to the time period of the story; and the subsequent Islamic dynasties were less favorable to the Jews. Finally, the timeline of events is not consistent with the time travel of the protagonists. The reader is told several times that Ava and Nadeem traveled back 1,000 years to medieval Morocco, to the home of their relative Ester’s family are spice merchants who are asked to secretly help the prince travel to Spain for his own safety. Ava and Nadeem help Ester, who is small in stature, but mighty in intellect and courage, to find a way to help the prince. They succeed when the adults cannot. The prince gifts Ester with the valuable button which is eventually passed down through all the generations of Nona Buena’s family until it finally lands with Ava and Nadeem.

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Of course, posing as someone else quickly becomes complicated, and unforeseen consequences strain the “Frankelstein” friendship to the breaking point.

The challenges of fitting in and being oneself are examined with sensitivity and humor in this charming middle-grade novel. Neurodiversity and physical differences among the characters are recognized as part of what makes each person unique as they come to accept and appreciate one another. Sydney’s growth from the tongue-tied, awkward girl at the beginning of the summer feels realistic and satisfyingly well-earned.

Both the Frankel and Stein families are Jewish, indicated by Sydney’s use of “Bubbe” and “Zayde” to refer to her grandparents, her father’s usual endearment for her (“sheyne meydl’), references to holidays, and Shabbat dinner at the Stein home. Judaism is unmistakably woven into the background, but it is never the focus or a source of conflict. Sydney and Maggie are simply two Jewish girls dealing with the same issues of friendships, crushes, and misunderstandings faced by tweens everywhere, and their story will appeal to a wide range of readers.

Beth Gallego, Children’s Librarian, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, CA

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secret, though, because her aunt and her mom haven’t spoken in years, and no one will tell her why. As the months pass, family tensions mount, and Hannah realizes that what she wants is something much more meaningful than just a party.

The question of what makes a Jew and who gets to make that determination is central to this coming-of-age story. Angry and frustrated by people telling her she isn’t “really” Jewish, Hannah struggles with the ideas about identity that she has internalized. Can someone who practices Judaism but had Catholic parents and never formally converted call herself a Jew? Can someone “born Jewish” declare herself — and her children — not a Jew? How much do the rules matter, who makes the rules, and what exactly are the rules, anyway?

Hannah looks at everything through the eyes of a baker, and rules are important in baking. Interpersed with the narrative are actual recipes and poems that take the structure of recipes, boiling down Hannah’s thoughts to their emotional essence. Lucido surrounds Hannah with characters that represent a variety of perspectives in a way that feels completely natural and smooth. Alongside her spiritual quandary, Hannah cope[s with changing friendships and family relationships, familiar middle-school territory. These issues are presented with skill and sensitivity. Lucido’s novel is a delicious combination of light and serious, sweet and savory, and wholly satisfying.

Beth Gallego, Children’s Librarian, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, CA

Jack and Jillian have opposite approaches to cooking (and pretty much everything else): Jillian’s calm focus is completely at odds with Jack’s brash energy. But then they are forced to team up to represent their schools in a major cooking competition run by the Farnsworth Baking Company. Jack seeks fame and fortune as a chef; Jillian needs the prize money to help her family. But just as they finally learn to collaborate in the kitchen, the contest organizer Phineas Farnsworth starts pressuring them to dance to his tune. Can two kids stand up to a millionaire CEO, even if it costs them everything they’ve been working towards?

_The $150,000 Rugelach_ is a rollicking romp that plays on the current popularity of cooking shows and competitions, but with a side of emotional intelligence (and an epilogue of recipes!). Beyond the rugelach themselves, the Jewish values in this book come through as a love of family, respect for family history, and the importance of doing the right thing. The emphasis on love as a crucial ingredient is reminiscent of the _Talmudic_ story where a Roman emperor learns that _Shabbat_ imparts a flavor of its own. Jillian is grappling with the loss of her beloved mother, who taught her to cook. Jack’s larger-than-life personality is entertaining, but he has to learn to temper his energy and ambition with concern for others. And they both take on issues of corporate greed and being true to themselves in their quest to win. Like Jack and Jillian themselves, this book is a blend of over-the-top zany fun and earnest food for thought that will appeal to a wide audience.

Aviva Rosenberg, SSCPL Division Vice-President Children’s Librarian, Ridgefield Public Library


_Camp Mah Tovu_ is the fourth in a series of books for middle school readers that showcase relationships between young girls and horses written by various authors. Yael Mermelstein sets this tale at a Jewish summer camp where Lila, a young girl with ADHD, struggles to fit in socially. Her tendency to talk too much often leads to ridiculous exaggerations beyond belief which result in the other campers ostracizing her. While left out of a raid on the boys’ side of camp, she meets a fellow “loner,” a horse that has wandered away from her herd. Lila and the horse she has named “Lonny” bond. With the help of a sympathetic counselor, she learns how to tack up and ride Lonny. Lila soon discovers that Lonny and her wild horse herd are threatened by a roundup to remove them from their home. Coincidentally, two of her cabin-mates’ fathers, the rancher and councilman, are involved in this endeavor. Lila helps the rancher’s daughter with her reading, and in exchange she helps Lila to sway the councilman’s daughter, Esme (who is most antagonistic to Lila) and help them to convince the fathers to create an alternative plan. What at first is looking like another miserable and difficult summer for Lila, as her history with summer camps has not been good, ends with her finding common ground with her fellow campers to save mustangs, making friends and gaining confidence.

The author creatively describes the challenges youngsters with ADHD experience connecting with their peers, and differences in how their minds may work, and does not shy away from discussion of the pros and cons of medication for this condition. The

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narrative also includes a character that may be struggling with a form of dyslexia, though that term is not used.

As the setting of this story is a Jewish sleep-away camp, there is significant Jewish content in this book. The campers have daily morning prayers, observe the Sabbath and *Tisha B’av*, on which day the adults clearly are fasting. The author uses the word Kinos and not Kinot for the pronunciation of the *Tisha B’av* elegies. Both Hebrew and Yiddish words are sprinkled throughout the text but are not usually translated. Pekalach is translated however, since Lila’s mother uses it to refer to a “bag of problems” as opposed to its more common meaning of a bag of treats thrown at a simcha.

The reader is drawn into Lila’s world and her love and concern for Lonny helps her navigate both her challenges with ADHD and her relationships with her bunkmates. Although this title may be written with a Jewish audience in mind, values of kindness, understanding and empathy for neurodivergent individuals are universal.

Ellen Drucker-Albert, Assistant Editor in Chief, AJL News and Reviews Co-editor, Children’s and Teen Literature, AJL News and Reviews


This biography takes a close look at physicist Lise Meitner (1878-1968), who as a woman born Jewish in Europe faced oppression ranging from lack of credit for her work to the mortal threats of the Holocaust, and whose work in nuclear fission contributed to the creation of the atomic bomb. A graphic-paneled page opens each chapter; the book is otherwise prose until the back matter, which includes some photos. That prose is engagingly written and provides a close, well-sourced look at the views and interactions of Meitner and the people around her, many of them other well-known scientists of the time. Meitner, who held little attachment to Judaism, converted to Christianity and was baptized as an adult, discussed briefly in the text, was reluctant to leave Berlin despite the worsening situation after Hitler came to power, but finally did so in 1938 with the help of a group of scientists; several fast-paced chapters depict that daring escape. The book, and especially the author’s note, acknowledges “the difficulty of the subject.”

Extensive back matter also includes a timeline, glossary, profiles of scientists mentioned, source notes, select bibliography, and index.

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


Inspired by the 2017 short film *The Pirate Captain*, Arnon Shorr and Joshua Edelglass bring an exciting, kid-friendly version of this story of Jewish Pirates. José can read and write and is called “an educated freak.” He is a kid trying to figure out where he fits in and becomes even more confused when he finds out from his father that he is Jewish. His father fled Portugal to escape the Inquisition. However, the inquisitor has followed them to Santo Domingo and goes after José’s father. In fleeing for his life, José boards the pirate ship the Laqish and discovers that the captain is also Jewish, and he has a vendetta against the inquisitor. Jose stays aboard the Laqish, learning to be a pirate, and helping Captain Toldedano in his quest for revenge. The graphic novel format highlights all the exciting swashbuckling adventures. This title includes a historical note and an author’s note at the end. Readers who liked *Jean Lafitte: the Pirate who saved America* by Susan Goldman Rubin, will also enjoy this title.


Presented as the recollections of the author’s fourth grade year, this delightful story is at turns painful, poignant, heartwarming and consistently laugh out loud funny. Jordan feels he is “a nobody” with nothing that makes him special. He struggles with asthma, anxiety, unkind teachers, bullies, a left hand that won’t play drums like his right, a lack of natural ability in baseball, and staying out of trouble in school. At the same time, he has many passions, including snakes, learning about science, reading comics, making people laugh, playing baseball (despite his lack of ability), and the Yankees, and he yearns to be a drummer. Jordan is self-reflective and works hard to understand the people and the world around him, while navigating the complexities of being a fourth-grader, at one point saying, after an innocent idea to sail paper airplanes with open ketchup packets from upper seats in...
Yankee Stadium goes awry, “I am confused. Sometimes, it’s really hard to figure out when having fun is just fun, and when it is the same as being bad.”

Judaic content is mainly in the background, with Jordan being one of only a few Jewish people in his school, having a Jewish best friend, and making a couple of references to Passover (one is during a school atomic bomb drill when, in typical humor, Jordan poses the question, “Why is this drill different from all other drills?”). In one of the more hilarious scenes, Jordan serves as the rabbi in the marriage between his two snakes.

The pursuit of self-preservation of a fourth-grade boy is perfectly portrayed, and Jordan emerges victorious with his year ending on a most satisfying and hopeful note. Jordan’s story should resonate with middle grade students, while providing a good dose of humor.

Martha McMahon,
Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA

FICTION - TEEN READERS


Difficult to describe, a quick read of this book is not enough, rather years of reading and analyzing the text and the highly detailed illustrations would be in order for this unique work. Written in verse, sometimes rhyming, sometimes free, this is the journal of one young woman’s search for her roots beginning with the Hebrew aleph-bet and moving through her study of Torah, Midrash, Talmud, Kabbalah, archaeology, ancient religions, and more. Hers is a far-reaching journey of exploration and discovery.

While highly illustrated and succinct in language, this is not a book for young people, containing as it does suggestive illustrations of breast-feeding women, the tetragrammaton, Arabic text, explorations of the ancient gods of the Middle East, and lots more intriguing, eye-opening, and question inducing material. Educators should be prepared to delve into deep dialogues should younger students see this book. Best for synagogue libraries with adult Torah, Talmud, and Kabbalah study groups, and those interested in understanding the roots of Judaism.

Kathy Bloomfield,
AJL Immediate Past President, Seal Beach, CA


Who even cares? will appeal to young adults by its zany and unorthodox approach. The illustrations are amusing and resemble a cartoon strip with a robot peeking around the tree, one eyed giants, and a castle with midgets for guards. Rabbi Nachman’s fables are famous for their spiritual depth. This book makes “The Princess Who Was Lost” comprehensible on its deeper level with a commentary and questions that guide the reader into delving into personal issues and decisions.

On facing pages, there appears the original Hebrew of the story, transliteration of Hebrew, commentary on story, and an illustration. The layout is reminiscent of a page from Talmud. The commentary is excellent and truly helps the reader grasp an understanding of the story beyond the level of pshat (literal meaning). Another choice of a Nachman story is Rooster Prince told by Sydell Waxman which is a simple narrative in the form of a picture book.

Ellen Share,
Washington Hebrew Congregation Religious School Librarian,
Washington, D.C.


Tenth-grade protagonists Eliana and Dmitri alternate narration of this sweet friendship-and-love story that is more complex than first meets the eye. Studious Eliana, whose family is Jewish, is the oldest of five children. We first meet her in the guidance counselor’s office trying to talk her way out of physics class (after getting a C) and into film studies. She succeeds, and there meets the charismatic Dmitri with whom (and despite her best efforts) she strikes up a tentative friendship. Dmitri comes from a tight-knit Greek family and is a drummer in a punk band. He’s never had a girlfriend, but he feels drawn to Eliana.

A kiss on the Ferris wheel cements their more-than-friends status, but things soon get complicated, both by familial expectations (his dad: “Nice to meet you...You are Jew girl, yes?”) and Eliana’s seeming withdrawal. As is slowly revealed through the sensitively written narrative, she is living with depression, and the more Dmitri tries to “help,” the greater alienation she experiences.

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“I. Am. Not. Okay. And he has no idea that the more he asks, the worse I feel about not being okay.” The relationship between the main characters is believably heart wrenching, and supporting characters — including Dmitri’s loving grandmother and Eliana’s loyal best friend — are well portrayed.

Secondary story lines include Eliana’s father’s struggles with mental health (and her Harry Potter fandom), Dmitri’s dealings with a jerky bandmate, and jealousy over his flirtation with a family friend. The story’s realistic, somewhat unresolved conclusion will leave readers hoping for a happy ending for this quirky pair.

Elissa Gershowitz, Acting Editor in Chief, The Horn Book, Inc., Boston, MA

Knazan, Primrose Madayag. Lessons in Fusion. Winnipeg, Canada: Yellow Dog (Great Plains Publications), 2021. 233 pp. $11.95 (9781773370682) PBK. Gr. 8-11.

While homeschooling during “the pandemic,” Canadian teen Sarah Dayan-Abed’s fusion recipe blog has become her refuge and main source of enjoyment. When she’s invited to participate in a virtual teen cooking competition, Cyber Chef, she is initially thrilled. But the show’s producers insist that she lean into her Filipinx heritage for the sake of diversity points, ignoring the Ashkenazi half of her background - which is the half she was mainly raised with. For the first time, Sarah delves deeper into both Filipinx cuisine and her mother’s family and upbringing, as she juggles her position in the competition with the reality of being of mixed race in white-dominated spaces.

Sarah pronounces her name the Hebrew way (SAH-rah), but most people assume otherwise, a cause for frequent frustration that many teens with “ethnic” sounding names will relate to. Her experiences in Jewish day schools and spaces read as authentic, and her mother’s reasons for leaning into Judaism (and away from her own Asian background) are understandable, if melodramatic. Sarah’s willingness to cook and eat pork products felt rather cheap under the circumstances. It seemed odd that someone with such a thorough Jewish education who was not at all familiar with Filipino cuisine and its heavy use of pork would have been so comfortable with it, and an exploration of that tension (regardless of which side she ultimately came down on) would have added an interesting layer to the experience of fusing these two disparate cultures.

The pandemic details can be either a draw or a distraction. The logistics of filming Cyber Chef in quarantine are interesting. The popularity of cooking competition shows will automatically draw some readers, and the recipes are a great bonus. Overall, an engaging addition to library, school or synagogue collections where books about Jewish teens of all colors and backgrounds are needed.

Aviva Rosenberg, Children’s Librarian, Ridgefield Public Library


“You an ... didn’t survive / dictators of flesh and blood / so we could live / in fear of ghosts.” Ilana Lopez’s Cuban Jewish mother and Polish (and non-Jewish) father send their daughter to Prague for the summer to live with her aunt and study for the SATs. Ilana is sad to be leaving her best friends in Miami and her beloved violin — all distractions, according to her parents. But Aunt Zofie turns out to be much more laid back; and, given the space to explore, Ilana finds herself in the nearby Jewish synagogue, where she encounters a ghostly presence ... boy around her age to whom she feels a strong connection. She also meets a talented and magnetic street performer, a violinist who does not cast a shadow and who gives Ilana his precious instrument. Unbeknownst to her, the gift comes with a price, and this lyrical verse novel soon turns spooky, and supernatural, as the protagonist battles a vodník for the souls of long-dead Jewish children as well as her very own.

Details from Jewish history, both Eastern European and Cuban, are naturally woven into this contemporary-set coming-of-age story about a girl who is searching for her place in the world as an artist and creator; a descendant of family trauma; and, ultimately, a strong and capable heroine who faces her terrors and bravely takes steps to unburden the souls of others. The story’s fantastical elements are mysterious and menacing, adding atmosphere to the eerie, romantic, and poetic tale.

Elissa Gershowitz, Acting Editor in Chief, The Horn Book, Inc., Boston, MA


During the Second World War, Russo’s mother was living in Italy, separated from her own sisters and mother. Each of the women underwent different kinds of trauma, consequently projecting different expectations on little Marisabina, a child who grew up in Queens, New York, in the 1950s and the turbulent 1960s. In this graphic memoir, Russo takes an unflinching look back, recalling her devout Catholicism (the religion of her estranged Italian father and also her mother who had converted from Judaism) amid the constant disapproval of her Yiddish speaking relatives. Teachers, friends and Russo’s half-brothers are portrayed brilliantly, both in the meticulously rendered expressive illustrations, the authentic dialogue and the deeply moving internal

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thoughts. Embracing her Jewish identity is one outcome of Russo's tumultuous journey through childhood and adolescence, but this life story is about forging an identity woven from many different threads. The chaos evoked in this book — the author’s personal trials as well as the adults’ re-lived Holocaust experiences — makes Russo’s emergence as a clear-minded and creative adult remarkable and uplifting.

Gloria Koster, Retired School Librarian — New Canaan, CT


E very year, the people of New Albion eagerly await the appearance of the hala, a magical, possibly divine, fox-like creature that is the last of its kind. Two-person teams of a sharpshooter and an alchemist pursue it during the annual Halfmoon Hunt. While there is a significant monetary prize, wealthy and powerful New Albions join for honor and glory.

Weston Winters and Margaret Welty are neither wealthy nor powerful. The son of Banvish-Sumic immigrants, Wes wants to become an alchemist, but he has failed out of every apprenticeship he has tried. Master Evelyn Welty is his last hope.

Margaret is fiercely independent and resolutely practical, traits honed by being left alone for months in the isolated Welty Manor. Since her brother died and their father left, her mother has been focused only on her alchemical studies, while Margaret has kept up the house and supported herself with her hunting skills. When she ventures into town, her Yu’adir heritage makes her an instant target for local bullies.

While Evelyn is away on a research trip, two important things happen. First, the hala appears near the Manor, and then Wes arrives seeking an apprenticeship. Margaret and Wes strike a bargain: he can stay and study until Evelyn returns, and he and Margaret will participate in the Hunt as a team.

Saft creates a rich magic-infused 1920s-inspired fantasy world. The main religious groups - Sumic, Kathar, and Yu’adir - are clear analogues to the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths, respectively. Though Margaret doesn’t identify as particularly religious, her treasured memories include “the prayers her father used to say over their Shabbos meals” and when “he told her that all people have a holy duty: tikkun olam, the repair of the world.” When Jaime Harrington, son of the wealthy Kathar Mayor, hurls insults at her, the slurs are based on obvious antisemitic stereotypes.

The romance between Margaret and Wes is a very slow burn, taking them from strangers to grudging allies to friends and, finally, to lovers. Readers looking for a lush, character-driven romantic fantasy will find much to love in this novel, along with an undercurrent that feels very Jewish without ever actually saying the word.

Beth Gallego, Children’s Librarian, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, CA


O ded Burla (1915-2009), poet, writer and artist is considered one of the founders of children’s literature written in the Hebrew language. The Melody, originally published in Hebrew as Hamangina, is skilfully translated by Ilana Kurshan. A beautiful melody searches for a purpose in life and someone to notice and appreciate her. She approaches the trees, stones, the river, and animals such as the horse, the mole, and the crow. None of them want her. Suddenly she sees a mother and her baby. The melody “entered silently into the mother’s loving heart, and right away she started to sing a lullaby.”

The reader experiences the beauty of the melody through Kurshan’s lyrical text and expressive word choices. Softly colored two page illustrations greatly enhance the enjoyment of the book. The melody is portrayed as a wraithlike being. She assumes a different ethereal shape and soft color on each page. Her airy face expresses her hurt and disappointment as each creature refuses to appreciate her. Finally when she is accepted by mothers who will sing her melody to their babies forever, we see by her smile that she is happy.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH


Shirley’s immigrant family owns a grocery store in a diverse neighborhood. But none of the grownups listen to Shirley’s imaginative ideas for drumming up business. After all — she’s just a child! When Aunt Ida must go to the hospital to deliver her baby, the other adults go along, leaving Shirley with a less than attentive Mrs. Gottlieb. This provides Shirley with the much-needed opportunity to try out her ideas, the cleverest being her

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REVIEWS OF TITLES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

Gloria Koster, Retired School Librarian — New Canaan, CT Public Schools Member of the Children’s Book Committee of Bank Street College

Editor’s Note: Sadly, Paula Cohen passed away unexpectedly shortly before the publication of this title, her debut solo picture book. May her memory be for a blessing.


The setting of this picture book is after the exodus from Egypt when the Israelites were traveling through the desert. The story is told through the eyes of the children. Their physical needs were satisfied by God; manna fell from the sky, and their clothes and shoes never wore out. Yet the children were unhappy. They were uncomfortable during the scorching hot days and shivered from the cold at night. They wished the journey would end and complained to Miriam, “Are we there yet?”

One morning Abigail and Zachary are awakened by a “clip clop, clip clop.” A unicorn, which only the children can see, suddenly appears. They call it tachash. The tachash takes the children on an imaginative adventure to a beautiful acacia tree forest where butterflies flutter, yellow birds fly, red flowers grow and leaves rustle in the soft breeze. Forty years pass. Abigail and Zachery now have their own children who lead the way to the “Promised Land.” As they enter the Promised Land, the unicorn “turned, swished its tail…and disappeared.”

According to the authors’ notes The Desert Unicorn is a tale of hope in difficult times. Amberin Huq’s double page colorful illustrations are beautiful. Children and adults wear ancient Israelite costumes. Each character’s unique tunic is a different vibrant color. The wide eyed children’s faces are very expressive and it is easy to tell when they are happy and when they feel sad. This book is a delight to read. An interesting Biblical fact is that in Exodus 25; verse 5, the Bible mentions that the Mishkan (Tabernacle) was covered with the skin of a tachash. The sages debate the meaning of tachash. One midrash says that it was a beast with one horn that is now extinct.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH


Leslie Kimmelman has created several previous books about the Jewish holidays. This one ostensibly focuses on Shavuot. Mr. Mintz is the neighborhood mensch. He knows everyone and is always ready to help. He’s especially fond of cooking for the community and gives his creations freely. His favorite recipe, though, is blintzes, which he makes for Shavuot. When he gets hurt (teaching the kids to skateboard!) just before the holiday, the neighbors come to his house and make blintzes for him, completing the circle of chesed.

This is a sweet tale, but less effective than it might be. The focus is on Mr. Mintz and his communal spirit. The holiday of Shavuot is mentioned in the text and the Author’s note, but not utilized as a primary element in the story.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


Esther the tiny snail sensed that something big was happening — there was pounding rain, and whipping wind … storm was coming. The ground was shaking as the animals rushed toward the vessel, the sky was filled with the frantic noise of the birds, and the river churned with swimming creatures as they all hurried in the same direction. Esther checks on her snail friend Solomon to make sure he is safe and together they ride an orange leaf through the swirling air across the sky to the ark. Many animal pairs are already there when they gratefully arrive. Esther prays throughout the story for safety, for help, and for rescue, and she expresses appreciation when she and Solomon are finally safe.

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This is a story of friendship, perseverance, loyalty, and gratitude as two snails embark on the journey of a lifetime. The lyrical text combined with spectacular illustrations which are hand drawn mostly by acrylic-gouache and digital collages convey the excitement, tumult, urgency, and emotions of the events. The interior of the ark is filled with warmth and care in contrast with the turmoil and commotion happening outside. In each scenario, “Hurry, hurry” is the refrain which alerts the reader to the urgency and necessity of acting quickly. The storm soars and the dark blue tones create a sense of peril and confusion, but the book ends with a calm, serene picture of the ark perched high on a beautiful green mountain. This sweet story explores big issues through small eyes in a sensitive and beautiful way.

Rachel K. Glasser, Retired Librarian, Yavneh Academy, Paramus, NJ


Planting Friendship promotes interfaith understanding among Christians, Muslims, and Jews. The illustrations are colorful and with ritual religious items found in rooms in their homes, you can engage in an I-Spy activity. Three little girls, one Christian, Jewish and Muslim, are in the same class and as school begins they all are nervous about making friends. Each of the girls is given a religious necklace that is intended to give them confidence and “Peace. Salaam, Shalom,” and realize that they have that in common. As they embark on a school project to plant tree seeds in class, even though they follow the directions, the seeds do sprout and grow until they work together. Throughout this growth process, they develop a friendship that is warm and respectful. “The deeper the roots grow, the stronger the friendship.” This title promotes interfaith understanding and can also be used for Tu B’Shevat.


If I Swam with Jonah is written in rhyme. Although the words rhyme, the meter is off in several places which makes it a little challenging as a read aloud selection. A young boy looks at his pet goldfish and wonders what it would be like if he were swallowed by a huge fish as was the Biblical Jonah. The boy takes an imaginary boat out to sea and asks the fish that has swallowed Jonah to swallow him too. The fish replies that Jonah is in “time out,” because he ran away from G-d’s command. The boy knows that Jonah needs a friend, so he enters the fish to cheer him up. Jonah is sadly sitting on a carpet in the fish’s belly. The belly’s wall is covered with framed pictures of sea creatures and a lantern hangs overhead. Jonah complains that he is wet and hungry, so the boy pulls a towel and some bread out of his backpack and makes sandwiches for Jonah. He tells the fish that he is ready to help the people of Ninveh. He now realizes the value of helping others. He spits Jonah and the boy into the ocean where they joyfully frolic and swim until they see a dolphin trapped in a fisherman’s net. They set the dolphin free and return to the fish’s belly. Jonah has learned an important lesson. He now realizes the value of helping others. He spits Jonah and the boy into the ocean where they joyfully frolic and swim until they see a dolphin trapped in a fisherman’s net. They set the dolphin free and return to the fish’s belly. Jonah has learned an important lesson. He now realizes the value of helping others. He spits Jonah and the boy into the ocean where they joyfully frolic and swim until they see a dolphin trapped in a fisherman’s net. They set the dolphin free and return to the fish’s belly.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH


“O ur planet is sad,” this picture book begins. With some information and magical transportation, this picture book shows how to repair the world. The Topsy-Turvy bus takes the town’s children to various sites, explaining how new thinking can help solve our problems. “Recycle, rethink, reuse and renew” is the theme, using well-known places and colorful artwork to make the point.

There isn’t much of a story here. The back matter contains more information about tikkun olam and Hazon, the largest Jewish environmental organization in North America, that has real topsy-turvy buses. The illustrations are attractive, helping transmit the idea of Tikkun Olam. In the end, though, this is a book with a message.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Continued on page 26

This book is a new entry in a series designed to provide very young readers with an early introduction to noteworthy individuals. Surely, the name Albert Einstein is one that should become familiar to children at some point, though the complex nature of his groundbreaking mathematical and scientific theories makes it hard to provide a simple enough explanation. Sánchez Vegara does a reasonably good job of conveying Einstein’s brilliance to the intended audience, and this breezy text with pleasing cartoon illustrations is a stepping stone for later exploration.

The opening line is probably the most compelling. “Once there was a little Jewish boy born in Germany who took four years to say his first words.” Late bloomers and anyone who struggles to master a skill that seems so natural for others can take heart just knowing that little Einstein showed no early indication of his genius. The fact that he was Jewish plays a minor part in this biography, though there is mention of his escape from the Nazis and his role in helping fellow scientists find refuge in America. Also, his work on behalf of world peace and racial justice speaks to Jewish values without being explicitly religious. Back matter, a timeline and reference to additional resources are included.

Gloria Koster,
Retired School Librarian — New Canaan, CT Public Schools Member of the Children’s Book Committee of Bank Street College


A megillah goes missing just before a Purim play, so three hamantaschen detectives — in costume, of course — crash the party where the play is being performed and interrogate the suspects: Beth the lox, who’s playing Vashti; Melvin the matzah ball, a.k.a Ahasuerus, and so on. Readers familiar with Silberberg’s Meet the Latkes and Meet the Matzah won’t be surprised at the wackiness in the text or the bold, cartoonish digital illustrations, though this installment is perhaps more complicated than the previous ones. After the questioning, the show goes on and tells the story of Esther, and its message about “standing up for who you really are” resonates with the hard-boiled, “baked” detectives, and with another mysterious character, who just might have some answers for everyone. Though this would be a confusing starting point for readers new to the Purim story, its inept pastry protagonists — and the silliness of the whole megillah — deliver plenty of fun. A Purim glossary is appended.

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


Sophie wonders how a small person can change a big world. She is sad. She thinks she is too little to make a difference; her deeds are little acts. She wants to make a difference very badly, not just to help the world, but to give grandpa the gift he specifically requested from her for his birthday: that she changes the world.
The relationship between the protagonist and her grandfather is real, loving and uplifting. Sophie’s sense of connection to the wider world at such a young age is inspiring. The art comes skillfully from the point of view of a young child. This lovely picture book with its gentle text and sweet illustrations delivers a strong moral lesson through the warm heart of a wise grandfather. It will make a nice addition to the Jewish values shelf on mitzvot and tikun olam as well as a sense of joy.

The back of the book contains a short description of Passover, a glossary of the Hebrew and Persian words used throughout the text, a narrative about Jews in Persia, and a recipe for Hallag, Persian-style charoset.

Filled with wonderful facts about an Iranian seder, this is a charming Passover story for young people and their families, and a rare look at a segment of Sephardic Jewish life. A great addition to the Passover shelf for home, school, synagogue, and public libraries.

Kathy Bloomfield
AJL Immediate Past President, Seal Beach, CA
"Not yet" is the repeated answer to a little girl’s questions about each aspect of the approaching holiday. Told in the first person, the child’s familiar voice is pitch perfect in this simple early reader about the first night of Hanukkah. Leveled by using the Fountas and Pinnell readability scale, this book offers large font, ample white space and sweet illustrations that depict loving grandparents, a mom, a dad and the young girl.

It can be a challenge to provide sufficient content in such a simple story governed by a limited vocabulary, but this book manages to impart information about the Maccabees, the miracle of the oil, as well as referencing the dreidel game, latkes, and even sufganiyot with the “big glob of jelly” squirting onto the daddy’s chin and adding a welcome touch of humor. The pronunciation key provided will be a helpful tool for the intended audience of newly independent readers.

Gloria Koster, Retired School Librarian — New Canaan, CT Public Schools Member of the Children’s Book Committee of Bank Street College


My Passover Seder begins with a Hebrew alphabet transliteration chart to assist in pronunciations throughout the text. One of the first illustrations is spring, because Passover is also called Hag ha’Aviv which means the spring holiday. The illustration on the facing page is a chick hatching and a flower. A chick is not a Jewish Passover symbol. An interesting coloring page is “khametz” (which correctly transliterated is hameits) where Sper draws examples of foods that contain hameits, such as cereal, cookies and bread. Several different Passover traditions are mentioned, but Sper does not inform the reader who observes the particular tradition. For example, which group of Jews “knocks hard-boiled eggs against each other?”

At least seven pages consist of matzas to color. The coloring pictures illustrating the 4 cups of wine are identical, a cup and a bunch of grapes. Sper calls each cup “kadesh” which is inaccurate. Only the first cup where the “kiddush” is recited is called “kadesh.” The fourteen easy to follow steps of the seder are delineated by a large number at the top of each page. A Passover symbols memory match game is included at the end of the book. Finally at Nirtzah, step 14, Sper has drawn an especially intricate and interesting illustration of the beit ha’mikdash My Passover Seder is a good first book for young children to use at the seder. Since the child has colored the pages they will feel invested in the special Hagaddah that they created.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH


Part of the Here I Come! Series by D.J. Steinberg, Passover, Here I Come! is both a fun and informative reading experience about Passover from start (cleaning the house) to finish (going out for some bagels!). This passover title consists of short humorous poems that introduce facts, terms and traditions of Passover, but from the perspective of a child experiencing the holiday. Using simple language, symbols of the holiday are explained including the items of the seder plate, the Hagaddah, the Passover story (an easy to understand summary in rhyme), the four questions (Ma Nishtana), traditional foods of the seder meal, and the afikomen search. What also leaps from the pages through the text and illustrations is the excitement of being with family to celebrate the holiday together.

The illustrations are colorful, lively, a blend of comical and realistic style, and inclusive of people of color. Kippot are worn by male presenting characters. Corresponding stickers are included in the back of this paperback, and the paperback version may not survive classroom use, which make this title more appropriate for inclusion on a personal family bookshelf than a library or classroom. A recipe for “Mom’s Matzoh Brei” is included, however, the recipe described here includes an eggs to matzoh ratio that appears to be reversed from other versions of this traditional dish. Despite this discrepancy, however, Passover, Here I Come! is an entertaining read that will add to a child’s understanding and appreciation of Passover celebrations and traditions.

Ellen Drucker-Albert, Assistant Editor in Chief, AJL News and Reviews Co-editor, Children’s and Teen Literature, AJL News and Reviews
From the Kyiv Oblast Archive Research Collections Online
Ukraine’s Kyiv Oblast Archive is the principle repository for regional-level records from 1857-1933.

Chronicling Jewish emigration, societies, education, anti-Semitism, and more, these primary sources are preserved and digitized as full-image, text-searchable online files.

Index to Hebrew Periodicals
A bibliographic index of articles from periodicals and monographs dating from 1977. Content is in Hebrew, English, and other languages, and covers Judaica, archaeology, literature, education, arts, law and current Israel affairs (politics and society).

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REVIEWS OF TITLES FOR ADULTS

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND LAURA SCHUTZMAN

FICTION


In *The Hidden Saint*, author Mark Levenson creates a richly detailed Jewish fantasy world of wonder-working rabbis, demons, and golems. The plot revolves around Rabbi Adam, a well-known character from Jewish folklore, whose children are kidnapped by Lilith. Another major theme of the story is the idea of the broken wedding vow and its repercussions, a standard motif in Jewish folktales from Eastern Europe. Levenson uses this novel to provide an origin story for the famous character who is imagined as potentially being one of the “Lamed Vavniks.” The Lamed Vavniks are the thirty-six righteous and holy people on whom the existence of the world depends. The story is full of the depth of Jewish folklore, ritual practice and history, including underground synagogues (among other nods to S. Ansky’s *Dybbuk*), passageways to the realm of the demons, werewolves, amulets as well as golems. Rabbi Adam creates a golem to assist him in the search for his children. The golem serves as Rabbi Adam’s protector from many beasts and demons throughout their travels and clashes with Lilith and other creatures.

As the afterword explains, the novel was written partially in response to the question posed in an issue of the *Jewish Review of Books* regarding why there has never been a Jewish counterpart to stories like Lewis’s *Narnia*. Levenson explains that at least to him, a story such as his that is profoundly Jewish, can only happen in a world where “…the future can only be in doubt when man exercises the power that God gave him to put that future in doubt.” This will hopefully not be the only book to feature these characters.

This book is recommended for all Jewish libraries, as all readers may enjoy and benefit from this tale of Rabbi Adam and his adventures.

*Eli Lieberman, Assistant Librarian, HUC-JIR NY*

NONFICTION


Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner (1906-1980) was the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin and the author of the eleven volume *Sifrei Pachad Yitzchok*. He developed a style of celebrating the Sabbath and Jewish holidays by delivering a *ma'amor*, a presentation that combined Talmudic discourse, philosophical lecture and group singing. But these discourses were delivered only to his students, and Rav Alster felt they deserved a wider audience. They are the basis for this book that covers so many aspects of the Sabbath, most importantly, “why Shabbos is and always was the cornerstone of Yiddishkeit [Judaism].” Explanations of the *zemiros* (traditional songs sung on Shabbos), the relationship between the Shabbos of Creation and the Shabbos of Matan Torah (the giving of the law), blessing the children, greetings, the structure and words of the prayers throughout the day and much more are presented in a clear, logical manner.

Rav Alster was a close student of Rav Hutner, zt”l, at Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin, and now lives in Israel, where he established a Kollel. He is the author of several other books. Those without the Hebrew and Yiddish skills to delve into Rav Hutner’s vast knowledge can now enhance their experience of Shabbos by studying this volume. It is packed with information and insight, with footnotes for all the references. “It is a sefer, not a book,” as, and such, is perfect for Orthodox libraries, both home and institutional.

*Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*


This author gathered name-related (onomastic) evidence from many kinds of historical and contemporary sources to create a narrative, a listing of names and an extensive bibliography on Romanian Jewish names. The historical narrative puts all of the name research into perspective. Most of the books, scholars, and rabbis that we study came from other

*Continued on page 30*
countries. According to the author’s analysis 92% of the Jewish names in Romania are of German or Yiddish origin. Only 7.8% or of Romanian or Romanized sources.

This book is recommended mostly for scholars who want to learn about names and the connections for Jews in Romania. Those who want to understand the linguistic and semantic features in Romanian family names will find it an interesting read. This title is recommended for academic collections and genealogy collections.


Originally published as Yirmiyahu be-tzion: Dat u-politika be-ol-amo shel Yehudah Magnes [Ben Gurion Research Institute, 2018], this pathbreaking intellectual biography of Judah Magnes sheds new light on the complex, intriguing, often misunderstood, and enigmatic figure of Magnes as an American Reform Rabbi, Zionist leader, socialist, pacifist, pragmatist, first chancellor of Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and political proponent of bi-nationalism.

The book focuses on assessing the interconnectedness between Magnes’s religious worldview and its evolution, and his political outlook and activity.

This scope of this survey of Magnes’ thought and work spans five decades from 1896 to 1948, and is organized in three parts, corresponding with the main developmental phases of Magnes’ religious and political perspectives. Part I is titled “Mending the World: Religious and political foundations,” Part II “for the Sake of Zion,” and Part III “the Eclipse of God: War, Holocaust, and the Founding of the State.”

The book draws on Magnes’ publications, journals, and primary correspondence and surveys the range of conceptual thought that shaped Magnes’ worldview along the religious and political axis. The book helps the reader gain a broader perspective not only on Magnes’ life, but a window into the early peacemaking efforts in Israel, the American-Jewish role in the history of the state, bi-nationalism as a political ideology, and the charged political circumstance of Israel today and glimpses of the tinder box complexities into the future.

With any intellectual biography, some things will not be included due to scope and page limits. For instance, this reader would have liked at least a footnote to Judah’s cousin Rabbi Mordecai Magnes. Mordecai’s landing fee was paid by a cousin, Dr. Yehuda Magnes. Thus, the magnanimous Judah Magnes in a sense did the mitzvah of redeeming the captives (pidyon shvuyim) and asked for no compensation.

Author Barak-Gorodetsky is a visiting fellow at the University of Chicago Divinity School and director for the Ruderman Program for Jewish-American studies, University of Haifa.

Daniel D. Stuhlmans, Temple Sholom Library, Chicago, IL


This book is respectful, but also an honest reflection on the complex relation between Judaism and Islam. Throughout the book, Bar-Asher pulls text from scriptures and looks at the similarities and the differences between these two ideologies. This title will serve as a good means for both Jews and Muslims to increase understanding and dialogue between the two religions. The author, Meir Bar-Asher, explores how Jews are depicted in the Islamic literature, providing critical text that can appeal to apportion Muslims and Jews. Bar-Asher represents crucial analogies between Jewish religious law and the Shari’a law. This volume is well executed and is recommended for all academic as well as religious institutions.

Moshe P. Weisblum, PhD. iGlobal University

Berdichevsky, Mikhah Yosef. From a Distant Relation. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2021. 387 pp. $34.95 (9780815611363) PBK.

Berdichevsky was a leading figure in the renaissance of the Hebrew language. He also wrote in German and Yiddish, and this collection of sixty-nine compositions includes monologues, retellings of Jewish folk tales, and short stories. According to Avner Holtzman, whose revised version of a 2007 journal article, serves as the foreword to the book, “Berdichevsky did not believe that Yiddish literature had the power to become a modern literature in the sense of a vehicle for distinctively modern ideas and experiences.”

There is little or no rebellion against the Jewish religion in these writings, though some characters reflect upon the sufferings of innocent people. The preoccupations of the characters are largely the ordinary preoccupations of ordinary people: earning a living and making good matrimonial matches. There are some more

Continued on page 32
florid fantasies (“The Dream”) and murder (“The Smith”); and some characters go into a personal exile (“Tainted”). The tones of these writings range from comic to tragic.

In his introduction to this volume, its translator and editor, James Adam Redfield, says, “Berdichevsky’s minor Yiddish corpus stands to illuminate his major Hebrew fiction.” Therefore this is an important purchase for any Hebrew literature collection which serves an audience that includes non-Hebrew and non-Yiddish Anglophone readers. (Complete collections of Berdichevsky’s Yiddish writings and Hebrew translations of them are available.

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


This title is written for those readers engaged with rabbinic texts focusing on feminism or those following Israeli intellectual life. Each midrash has a short contextual summary, the midrash itself, and a detailed commentary. Classical rabbinic subjects include: Creation of the World; Matriarchs and Patriarchs; Exodus; Israel in the Desert; Prophets and Writings; and Holidays. Feminist midrashists elaborate more than the rabbis on these: Sexuality, Love, and Marriage; Fertility and Parenthood. Modern struggles include: Rape and Incest; Inequality in Jewish Law and in the Rabbinic Court; and Post-Holocaust Theology.

The two Hebrew volumes came out in 2009 and 2018. Some readers found Dirshuni redemptive; others found it heretical. A few examples illustrate why: rabbinic advocate Rivkah Lubitch’s haunting evocations about those with problematic ritual statuses unable to marry and women unable to divorce; gynecologist Etti Rom’s solution for infertile observant women whose timing of ovulation causes the infertility; Ziva Ofek and Yael Oryan’s framing of who exactly her father was and the reasons behind marrying a half-sister. After decades of investigation, the unsolved mysteries about the mysteries surrounding her very different parents and their marriage. Her father, K. Harold Bolton, a descendant from an assimilated Ashkenazi immigrant family from Ukraine that had changed its name from Bolotin, is a Yale graduate, and served as a Naval Officer in the South Pacific during World War II. Her mother, Matilde Alboukrek Bolton, a Cuban woman 17 years his junior, was a Sephardic beauty queen. With the help of old family friends, Judy is able to trace clues about her father’s possible involvement in Latin America politics. There is also the enigmatic Ana Hernandez, a Guatemalan exchange student that was a frequent guest at their house who Judy suspects could be her half-sister. After decades of investigation, the unsolved mysteries of who exactly her father was and the reasons behind marrying a Cuban 17 years his junior are still not clear.

Wonderfully written, and using phrases and imagery from Spanish and Hebrew into the text, this page turner memoir would be enjoyed by a wide audience. Recommended for synagogues, libraries and as a Book Club pick.

Sonia Smith,
McGill University, Montreal, Canada


Judy Bolton-Fasman’s memoir, Asylum: A Memoir of Family Secrets, recounts Judy’s search for answers about the mysteries surrounding her very different parents and their marriage. Her father, K. Harold Bolton, a descendant from an assimilated Ashkenazi immigrant family from Ukraine that had changed its name from Bolotin, is a Yale graduate, and served as a Naval Officer in the South Pacific during World War II. Her mother, Matilde Alboukrek Bolton, a Cuban woman 17 years his junior, was a Sephardic beauty queen. With the help of old family friends, Judy is able to trace clues about her father’s possible involvement in Latin America politics. There is also the enigmatic Ana Hernandez, a Guatemalan exchange student that was a frequent guest at their house who Judy suspects could be her half-sister. After decades of investigation, the unsolved mysteries of who exactly her father was and the reasons behind marrying a Cuban 17 years his junior are still not clear.

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Jonina Duker,
Certified Book Discussion Facilitator and Judaic Educator


This book, a compilation of eyewitness testimonies, archival documents, photographs, and researchers’ investigations, debunks a Holocaust myth that not only were the Jews of Bulgaria spared but it was thanks to a sympathetic government. By giving voice to the formerly unheard and marginalized, the author,
whose Bulgarian-Jewish parents followed the mass post-1948 immigration to Israel, paints a different picture.

This book might have benefited by better editing as it contains excessive repetition, awkward prose, and poorly integrated quotes. Nevertheless, the author provides ample background of a minority that was largely middle class and assimilated, and of a region long embroiled in ethnic dispute. Of nearly 50,000 Jews, over 11,000 “non-citizens” ended up bargaining chips in exchange for the adjacent territories, Thrace and Macedonia, and offered to Bulgaria, which was part of the Axis powers. For this King Boris III eagerly implemented anti-Semitic policies; only his sudden death in August 1943 stopped them.

Survivors and historians describe the trauma of deportations, propaganda, labor and transit camps, and brutality at the hands of police, guards, or neighbors. Family members were murdered at Treblinka or turned away and left to drown while attempting to sail to Palestine. The author has actively campaigned to discredit the glorification, and exoneration, of that era’s leaders as well as the “humanitarian” history rewritten by the postwar Communist regime. Although many citizens were indeed kind and helpful, in the author’s view, Italy or even Hungary, did a far better job in protecting their Jews. Despite its flaws, this book provides a fresh perspective on that time and place. This title is recommended for all Holocaust collections.

Hallie Cantor, Acquisitions Associate, Yeshiva University, New York, NY


Above Us Only Sky: The Diaries of Ilan and Asaf Ramon is a fascinating behind the scenes look at Israel’s first astronaut, Ilan Ramon, who tragically died in the spaceship Columbia, when it exploded on reentry. In this beautiful coffee table sized book, the reader gets to know Ilan Ramon, the driven man, the devoted father and the loving husband.

Ramon chronicles his four and a half years of training in the U.S. Some of the details are little known by the public, such as that there was an Israeli backup astronaut in case Ramon was unable to make the flight. The chosen astronauts had bonding activities, and wilderness training where they had to practice working as a team and had to help each other survive in the wilderness. The reader experiences Ilan’s excitement while waiting for takeoff and the disappointment when the flight was delayed. His emails to his wife and children from space are poignant. Emails which were marked, “not for the media” are love letters between Ilan and Rona, his wife. Ilan talks of his expectations when he returns to earth and how he hopes to make a difference for the country he loves, Israel.

The narrative was heartbreaking when Ramon revealed his aspirations for the future, in light of the fact there would not be a future for him. The full page color photographs of Ilan Ramon, his family, and the other Columbia crew members are breathtaking. Every Jew will feel a sense of pride when he or she looks at the official NASA photographs with the Israeli flag sitting prominently on Ramon’s sleeve.

The second part of the book records Asaf, Ilan’s oldest son’s, diary. Asaf followed his father’s path and also trained as a fighter pilot. His diary entries express how much he missed his dad. Tragically Asaf died in a training accident at age 21. Every reader will be touched by these two very special human beings who died very young and were not given the years to fulfill their potential.

Ilka Gordon, Cleveland, OH


Alma Rachel Heckman, the Neufeld-Levin Chair of Holocaust Studies and assistant professor of history and Jewish studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, examines in this book the Communist movement in Morocco, the involvement of Jews in its leadership, its role in the national struggle for independence, and how it evolved over time. The study benefits from extensive archival sources, including private collections and interviews.

The Communist movement in Morocco started as an offshoot of the French Communist Party, focusing at first on the fight against Fascism and Nazism during World War II. These aims attracted Jews to the party, in addition to the fact that other political groups in Morocco had a strong Islamic tendency. As a result of the decade’s long existence in Morocco of the educational network of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, many educated Moroccan Jews were Francophone. Members of this latter group (as well as Algerian Jews who moved to Morocco) joined the party, which was strongly influenced by French Communists and their writings.

Following World War II, the Moroccan Communist Party was involved in the anti-colonial struggle for independence and it supported the new regime following Independence. Nonetheless, once
the regime became more authoritarian under King Hasan II, the party was outlawed and many of its members were imprisoned or went on exile. With political relaxation and changes within the party and its off-springs, the character of these Leftist groups became more socialist and national, to the extent that the regime of King Muhammad VI did not regard them as a threat, but as legitimate national political parties who participate in the national elections, getting votes of tens of thousands. It is difficult to tell the size and actual influence of Communism in Morocco whose membership numbers fluctuated between five hundred and a few thousand. The party held meetings (possibly also attended by non-members), and published leaflets and papers, and under independence, some party members reached local and administrative positions, but it did not reach a major position. The study examines in detail five Jews who held prominent roles in the party and at times had to pay a heavy price for it: being rejected by the majority of Moroccan Jews (who at first supported the French Protectorate regime and then the monarchy); several of them were imprisoned and exiled. They emphasized being Moroccan, resisted Zionism (although the majority of Moroccan Jews left for Israel as well as France and Canada: out of some 250,000 in the early 1950s, only some 2,000 remain in the twenty-first century), advocated relations with Moroccan Arabs (although being Francophone and not knowing Arabic, several professionals, especially lawyers, could not continue working in their profession following Arabization and moved to France). The book provides a detailed examination of Communism in Morocco and the role Jews played in it. It focuses on a small group of Jews who viewed themselves first and foremost as Moroccan and how over time their political views evolved and became more acceptable by the regime.

Rachel Simon,
Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ


Dara Horn's provocative thesis has already garnered significant discussion in print and on social media. She looks carefully at the ways in which Jews are celebrated around the world and discovers that so much involves memorializing murdered Jews or destroyed Jewish communities, without much attention paid to how they died or why their communities ended. Jews and Judaism in world discourse become shrouded in nostalgia. While nostalgia may feel good in the moment, it is a thin gruel when compared to the real lives of historic Jewish communities, and well as the thick, demanding, questioning, culture that occupied Jews for millennia.

Horn is, of course, correct, that Anne Frank provides inspiration and even optimism; her innocence helps avoid direct confrontation with horrors of what happens after the diary ends. She is correct that American Jews' belief that their Americanized last names were an innocent bureaucratic mistake helps protect them from thinking about the implications of their grandparents' desperate attempt to fit in despite American anti-Semitism. She is right that detailed digital “reconstructions” of Syrian and other Middle Eastern synagogues is a majestic project, but also that agnosticism about why these synagogues no longer exist is downright bizarre.

In the end, Horn suggests less emphasis on antiseptic presentations of the Jewish past and more investment in the Jewish now, particularly through study, practice, activism, and involvement. This suggestion should be applauded, and the readers most likely to pick up this articulate book, will skew toward those willing to make that investment.

Yoel Finkelman, Librarian, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel.


Ish-Shalom brings to light the practical meditative techniques regarding the five dimensions of the soul, transmigration, and other esoteric dimensions taught by Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572) in Tsefat in the sixteenth century, as transmitted via his disciple Rabbi Chaim Vital, to help the mystical pilgrim soul achieve in one lifetime what could take many lifetimes via reincarnation. Through deep intricately researched brilliantly sleuthed, eloquently revealed analysis, Ish Shalom illuminatingly guides us in penetrating a most complex corpus of mystical texts associated with the Lurianic oeuvre to take the careful reader on a scholarly journey into the realm of mystical teachings and practices never before available to English readers in amazingly a clear lucid manner.

This book is important and groundbreaking for many reasons, one of which is its brilliant comparison of Jewish mystical understandings with those of far eastern religions, noting parallels between Vajrayana teachings of Tibetan Buddhism tantric of the Bon School, Hindu Tantric tradition of Kashmiri Shaivism and
Muktananda’s lineage of the Hindu tantra, and Lurianic Kabbalah in terms of the relationship between sleeping, dreaming, and the journey beyond the waystation of “death.” These similarities, while not coterminous, may point to common mystical insights that arose across cultures and wisdom streams. The text encourages one to consider the possibility that certain dimensions of human mystical experience share a common core archetype (Jung) across traditions, cultures, and religions.

This is not all Ish-Shalom brilliantly achieves. He casts new light on what some consider an “untranslatable” and mostly impenetrable demanding obtuse Borjean labyrinthine body of esoteric texts. A must read for anyone interested in Kabbalah studies, mystical texts and traditions, and Jewish thought. While an outstanding example of academic excellence or rigorous analysis, the book also provides entry to the seeker generation on the path via translations of esoteric practices that have not been made available to the English reading world before.

This outstanding book, that is a tour de force, is recommended for all libraries and includes scholarly bibliographical references and indexes, with learned footnotes.

David B. Levy, 
Chief Librarian, Lander College for Women, New York, NY


This interdisciplinary book challenges the Straussian premise, also in Harry Wolfson and Lev Shestov, of the dichotomy between Athens (philosophy) and Jerusalem (revealed religions). “Philosophy and Bible are the alternatives or the antagonisms in the drama of the human soul. Each of the two antagonists claims to know or to hold the truth, the decisive truth, the truth regarding the right way of life.” (Strauss, Leo, “The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy,” Independent Journal of Philosophy, 3 (1979) 114).

For Strauss religion replaces: reason with faith, piety for theoria, obedient love for free quest, and a God who acts in history for a distant Aristotelian god (see Kenneth Siskin’s A Distant God). In philosophy, questioning is the piety of thought while in religion, questioning is to serve the higher foundation of religious belief, to demonstrate revelation before the tribunal of reason.

Shalom Carmy and David Shatz also resist the Bible as containing philosophy arguing that “much of what the Bible has to say about subjects of manifest philosophical importance seems primitive to later philosophical sensibilities” (“The bible as a source for philosophical reflection” in History of Jewish Philosophy, Routledge, 1997).

Against Strauss-Carmy-Shatz, Johnson argues that Hebrew and Christian scripture argue philosophically and how Biblical literature bears the distinct cues of philosophical style about the nature of reality and our place in it. Johnson’s work is dedicated to and builds upon Yoram Hazony’s, The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture (Cambridge University Press, 2012). Johnson’s book attempts to demonstrate that there is such a thing as a Hebraic style of philosophy that extends from the Hebrew Bible (Hazony’s scope) into the New Testament.

Johnson backlights this Hebraic style with neighboring culture-Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome. He argues there is a Hebraic philosophy of Christian scripture and attempts a basic argument to show how Hebraic philosophy drives the rhetorical and communitarian aims of the New Testament. Johnson’s thesis is in keeping with opening up the philosophical canon to ancient religious texts and the globalization of the intellectual tradition beyond the Anglo-Western Enlightenment.

This title will be of interest to ecumenical discussions between Jews and Christians.

David B. Levy,
Chief Librarian, Lander College for Women, New York, NY


This book, originally published in 2015 by Warszawa University Press, is a highly scholarly volume, the product of meticulous and painstaking research, for the most part conducted in archives in Israel. The subject is an interesting and important one: addressing the larger questions of the path of emigrants toward integration and assimilation in a new host culture through the medium of foreign language media in their native language. The host culture here is Israel and the emigrant communities under study are Jews from Poland who have made aliyah to Israel in different waves and under different circumstances in the period from 1948-1970.

Israel’s multiple political parties engaged in contests for the newcomers’ votes. They were attuned to the important role media in the first language of the olims (those who made aliyah) could play in gaining their political allegiance, and consequently undertook publication of foreign language newspapers. This volume explores this effort with regard to the Polish language.

The author is exquisitely aware of the multiple ironies here at play: calling on a native tongue, with its rich evocations of another

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life and time, now in the past, to ground the reader in their new reality with its very different concerns, ways of being and behaving. Following an introduction and a very illuminating overview of “Foreign Languages in Israel,” the author devotes the book’s subsequent chapters to a deep dive into the specifics of Israeli political party Polish language newspaper production, including their organization, content, staff, interplay with their readers and the sponsoring party. She concludes her study in 1970, a time when the earlier Polish olim had successfully acclimated to the larger Israeli culture, and the Polish language press, both supported by political parties or otherwise funded, was not seen as of social or political significance.

This is a volume whose natural home would be a research library. With its extensive bibliography and detailed footnotes, Polish Jews in Israel is an invaluable reference source. At times its format, with occasional pages a block of type unrelieved by paragraph indentation, and footnotes sometimes taking up more than half a page, make Polish Jews in Israel, a formidable reading endeavor. But for the student of the role of media in furthering emigre integration, and the singular history of Israel in this regard, this volume will be well worth the reading effort.

Mindy C. Reiser, Ph.D.
Vice President, Jewish Study Center, Washington, D.C.


Devar Sefatayim [A word of two lips] is a chronicle written in Hebrew by David Lekhno (died 1735), the Rabbi of the Crimean Rabbinate community, who apparently lived in Qarasub and based on his name, was of Polish origin. The chronicle derives from his own observations and information provided to him by Muslims from the Crimean Khanate, which he translated to Hebrew. There are four known manuscripts of the text in Russian libraries. This book includes the annotated English translation of the chronicle. The edited Hebrew text was presented by Aviezer Tutian in his Master’s degree thesis (2012).

The book opens with an extensive introduction about the work, its author, the history and society of the Crimean Khanate and the Mongol states, as well as Crimean-Ottoman and Crimean-Russian relations. An overview of the chapters precedes the translated text. Lekhno used numerous Biblical, Mishnaic and Talmudic phrases in his text, and these are followed in the translation with bracketed references, which due to their extremely high number makes the reading somewhat cumbersome.

The text includes important information not only on Crimean Jews but also on the Crimean Khanate itself and its relations with its neighbors, mainly the Ottomans and Russians as well as the Habsburgs, Venetians, Caucasians and Safavids. It presents Crimean, including Jewish, points of view on events, namely, the view from the periphery, not from the centers of political power. This is really one of the main contributions of this chronicle: deriving from a region poorer, as far as archival documentary material is concerned, than imperial capitals. Similarly, local sources can provide richer information on the Crimean Jews. Thus, we get the local perspective on Crimean internal and foreign affairs and in particular data on the Jewish community. The editors/translators did a very thorough work in identifying personalities and events, adding much valuable information. This is an important contribution to Ottoman, Crimean, and Jewish history told from a Jewish Crimean perspective.

Rachel Simon,
Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ


This book brings to light some of the differences between the rationalist father Moses Maimonides and his mystical son Abraham Maimonides. It compares the Aristotelian Andalusian Arabic context of Moses Maimonides versus that of the son Abraham Maimonides living in Cairo with influences from Sufi mysticism. It asks, how do the rational commitments of the father and Sufi mystical leanings of the son, illuminate differences between rationalism and mysticism? The book explores how the mystical son Abraham integrates but creatively departs from the rational approach of his father. Ultimately the book arrives at understanding the differences between the father and son.

Two different modes of ascent to a vision of God are illuminated, one (the father’s) grounded on a sublime understanding of all sciences as a prerequisite that dazzles the divine mind and order with intellectual love, and the other (the son’s), a mystical reliance on God through piety, purity, and ethical devotion that lead to an infusion and influx of pleromatic emanated mystical light causing

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REVIEWS OF TITLES FOR ADULTS

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the neshama (soul) to be carried into the ecstatic state of prophecy.

Thus, the book differentiates between very different ways the father and son depart with regard to how to attain prophecy: one (the father) via sciences as a prerequisite to metaphysics and the other, (the son), via mystical meditation to ecstatic states. The book achieves its mission to delineate how the father and son envision differently the encounter with the divine based on their respective rational and mystic commitments.

This clearly written book draws on primary and secondary sources along with knowledge of Judeo-Arabic. Bibliographical references and indexes are included. This title is highly recommended for libraries with related academic collections.

David B. Levy,  
Chief Librarian, Lander College for Women, New York, NY


The goal of this book is to tell the story of Jewish and Christian relations focusing on instances of goodwill, cooperation, and teamwork, primarily in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The book adopts a thematic approach, in rough chronological order. It uses the concept of deep equality as a conceptual framework.

The twelve chapters are divided into four parts: reading scripture anew, complex identity, transformations after the Holocaust, and present prospects. The author, Professor Emerita at San Diego State University, aims to interpret and report on important scholarship over the past fifty years in a way that lay readers can understand and appreciate. The book includes a useful table of terms, extensive footnotes and bibliography of works cited. There is a source index, as well as a subject index. The book is an important contribution to contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue. It is recommended for Judaica collections in academic and research libraries, as well as for public, community center and synagogue libraries.

Susan Freiband  
Volunteer Synagogue Librarian, Alexandria, VA


Professor Nunhauser’s stated objective in this two-volume work is to determine how archaeology might be used to examine the Jewish presence in Iberia during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. He notes that most scholarship in the past has concentrated on the three centuries before the expulsion (Late Middle Ages). The earlier period, deficient in written documentation (other than epigraphy) has also suffered from a lack of exploration of the Jewish material remains.

Nunhauser’s main focus is on one particular site with a Jewish history predating that presented in either Ashor’s Jews of Medieval Spain or Baer’s Jews in Christian Spain. The Ilici Basilica, excavated by Nunhauser, is now located within the precincts of the larger Catholic Alcudia de Elche in the southeast corner of Valencia, Spain. Using classic archaeological methods, he examines closely the stratigraphy and epigraphy found at the site. He demonstrates the persistence and success of Jewish culture from its earliest beginnings following the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century C.E. up to the Jewish expulsion in 1492. Meticulously, he combs through the stratigraphic evidence to describe the material culture found at the site providing the evidence that clearly confirms that a flourishing Jewish community was present throughout the period.

As Nunhauser points out, much evidence of this type was overlooked in the earlier investigations at these sites, handicapped as they were by politics and the assumption that the Jews were foreigners and had not been an integral element of society. He asserts that as early as the fourth century C.E., there was an attempt to keep the Jews apart from the Christian community.

Nevertheless, the preponderance of evidence found by Nunhauser suggests that over the 1000 years leading up to the expulsion, Jews were as much a part of the local community as non-Jews.

This is a monumental contribution to our understanding of the history of the Jews in Spain, providing extensive and meticulously cataloged data, and perceptive analysis of that data. With illustrations and drawings in addition to an extensive bibliography, indexes (including an index of Hebrew words in Hebrew), and exacting references throughout, this work would be an invaluable addition to an academic library.

Randall C. and Anne-Marie Belinfante


A Jewish Bestiary, updated from the 1984 version, is a book truly for all ages. The book is a compendium drawn from the Torah, Talmud, midrash, Tehillim, and other sacred Jewish sources about creatures — real, imaginary, kosher, and non-kosher. The colored illustrations beautifully executed by the
REVIEWS OF TITLES FOR ADULTS


The subject of opium in the Holy Land might be uncomfortable, but this well-researched book documents the Levant as a major historical link for the smuggling of hashish, particularly between Lebanon and Egypt. Before 1948, lack of borders allowed for freedom of trade among Bedouin traders, who often stored hashish inside camels. After 1948, the Negev and Israeli towns became theaters of operation. Also discussed is the drug culture, which became somewhat romanticized.

Hashish, ubiquitous in the Middle East since the medieval era, is the root word of “assassin,” implying a drug-induced violence, and rampant addiction reinforced stereotypes of Arabs as evil, cunning, and sensual. The tone veers sharply left-wing, and the author makes hashish the springboard for issues of racism and colonialism. The Ashkenazi Zionists eschewed consumption, which ran counter to their agenda and carried an association with “primitive” societies—not only Palestinians but Mizrahi Jews, who imported the custom from their host countries. Ironically many of them smoked out of idleness and frustration within the transit camps.

The Six-Day War enabled greater contact with dealers, resulting in lowered prices of hashish and wider availability. After 1967, Israel became a mecca for psychedelic seekers; the author mentions a hilarious B-movie about Americans hippies in the Galilee. He also covers governmental drug warfare, achieved partly with the aid of Egyptian and Israeli soldiers. The drift toward “Stoner Nation” has been abetted by a softening public opinion of drugs, particularly cannabis, which has mainstreamed in all walks of Israeli life. Informative, though (pun intended) sobering, this book is suited for academic libraries.

Hallie Cantor
Acquisitions Associate, Yeshiva University, NY


While this volume fits very neatly under the rubric of academic study with a focus on a particularly delineated area — third party Peacemakers in Judaism — still the terrain covered and the perspectives presented on a subject of importance beyond a circumscribed scholarly community may well be of interest to a larger audience. The author, Daniel Roth, is both a rabbi and holder of a doctorate from Bar-Ilan University’s Conflict Resolution, Management and Negotiation Program. Rabbi Roth, interested in looking at mediation and conflict resolution within the context of Jewish tradition and culture, was able to find his intellectual home at Bar Ilan University where he wrote his doctoral dissertation on “The Tradition of Aaron the Pursuer of Peace Between People as a Rabbinic Model of Reconciliation.” It is the research and thinking on this subject that forms the groundwork for this book in which Rabbi Roth sets out relevant rabbinical teachings on third party peacemaking and reconciliation, both by rabbis and laypersons.

Of particular value in this book, both for readers specifically focused on successful strategies for conflict reconciliation and peacemaking, as well as people interested in gaining a richer appreciation for the wisdom and teachings of rabbinic sages and commentators, are the many excerpts Rabbi Roth includes in the text of the council of rabbis across the centuries as preserved in the Mishna, Talmud, Responsa and other documents. Rabbi Roth, utilizing a fine social science lens, sets out through tables presented in the text the diverse approaches toward third party reconciliation put forth by these diverse commentators. He goes so far as to designate specific issues (he terms them “case studies”) considered by the rabbis, indicating an array of social science variables useful to consider in pondering the ultimate success or failure of the approaches taken.

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Rabbi Roth is current Director of Mosaica — The Religious Peace Initiative, and a lecturer in religion and conflict resolution at Bar Ilan University, with involvement in several other peace-making projects.

Mindy C. Reiser, Ph.D.,
Vice President, Jewish Study Center, Washington, DC

Schiffman, Lawrence H. and Andrew D. Gross. The Temple Scroll 11Q19, 11Q20, 11Q21, 4Q524, 5Q21 with 4Q365a and 4Q365 frag. 23. Leiden, The Netherlands ; Brill, 2021. 519 pp. $227.00 (9789004433038) HC.

Professor Schiffman’s research that led to this work began in 1997. Schiffman and Gross, in addition to translating and filling in textual gaps to the Hebrew texts, provides a review of Dead Sea scrolls studies. The footnotes make frequent mention of the work of Yigal Yadin, the archeologist who was the first translator. The Temple Scroll describes in great detail the furniture and utensils of the temple, the sacrifices offered, and the festivals. Schiffman devotes more than half of the pages to scholarly apparatus including bibliographic notes, commentaries, textual notes, scholarly comments, a catalog of all the photographs of the scrolls, a concordance of all the words, and an index of Biblical and rabbinic sources. The bibliography was prepared by Marlene Schiffman, AJL member, librarian at Yeshiva University, and wife of the author.

This book is recommended mostly for scholars who want to learn about the Dead Sea scrolls or want to use the extensive scholarly tools Schiffman and Gross supplied. This book is a highly recommended addition to a collection of ancient (pre-Talmudic) Judaica. The price may discourage the addition of this title to the home collection, but institutional libraries should consider purchasing this book.

Daniel D. Stuhlmans,
Temple Sholom Library, Chicago, IL


Legal systems must make assumptions or reach conclusions about people’s intentions. Yet, determining people’s intentions is at best a kind of guesswork. Lawmakers try to develop language to determine levels of responsibility and culpability based on an individual’s state of mind. In cases of torts, criminal law, or financial relations, judges do their best at imaging the intentions of an actor based on context and that actor’s actions or speech. A religious law, like halakhah, makes the challenge of determining intentions more difficult by accounting for intention in ritual law, as well.

In a tightly written book, Shana Strauch Schick looks at historical and geographical layers of rabbinic literature and asks how the Rabbis thought about the legal implications of intention and the ways of determining what an actor’s intentions are. Schick argues for a gradual drift over time from a doctrine of more strict liability, a person is responsible for their actions or the outcomes of their actions regardless of their intentions, to no strict liability. If earlier strata from the Land of Israel argue that a person is responsible for damage they cause no matter what they thought they were doing or planned to do, later strata, particularly from Babylonia, add exceptions, other considerations, and shared responsibility to the mix. As this thinking about intentionality changed, rabbis either had to dispute earlier sources or reinterpret them. Talmudic sages were masters of both strategies.

Moreover, this book argues that there is a relationship, though often not one-to-one, between the thinking about intentionality in torts and ritual law. The halakhah’s developed categories in the areas of Sabbath laws, for example, distinguish between intentional outcomes and intentional actions, while categories related to the prohibition of idolatry distinguish between differing attitudes and thoughts on the part of the person performing prohibited rituals.

Intention in Talmudic Law is concise and articulate, though it is written for scholars of Talmud and law, rather than lay people or the passingly curious. While clearly written, it is a book for slow, careful study, rather than light reading.

Yoel Finkelman
Librarian, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel


and written sermons by Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapiro (1889-1943), a Hassidic Tsaddik and mystic, were among the clandestine documents found in the buried Ringellblum Archives. This volume edited by Don Seeman, Daniel Reiser, and Ariel Evan is a compilation of articles written by contemporary scholars analyzing Rabbi Shapiro’s early sermons after World War I and his words of encouragement delivered to the tormented Jews trapped in the Warsaw Ghetto during the horrors of World War II.
Before the Holocaust, Rabbi Shapiro’s articles were primarily occupied with improving the education of scholars and his Hasidic followers. The Rabbi focused on the challenges of modernity and the influence of the secular world on his insular community. Rabbi Shapiro’s later sermons were delivered in the Warsaw Ghetto as he observed and was a part of immeasurable suffering and death. They include 100 handwritten pages of sermons (Derashot mi-shnot ha-z’a’am translated as Sermons from the Years of Rage), edited and reedited by him to make them good enough for publication after the war.

The editors present a broad discussion of Hasidism, Neo-Hasidism, and Hasidic Modernism in the introduction. Copious notes follow each chapter which is written by a different scholar. A brief biography of each of the contributors is included as is an index at the end of the book. Contributors include Zvi Leshem, National Library of Israel, Ora Wiskind, professor at Michlalah College in Jerusalem, and Shaul Magid, Professor at Dartmouth College. The discussions are scholarly and philosophical. Quotes are in Hebrew with English translations. Academic library patrons will benefit from reading this book.

Ilka Gordon, 
Beachwood, OH


Rabbi Hayim of Volozhin (1749-1821) was among the closest students of the Gaon of Vilna (1720-1797). His most famous work, published posthumously, is Nefesh ha-Hayyim, also addressed to his students. As part of the curriculum of his Talmudic academy, the Rabbi strove to teach ethical behavior, mixing Jewish law (Halakhah) and ethical principles; these teachings are called hanhagot in Hebrew. The editor, Raphael Shuchat, is a specialist of the Gaon of Vilna, about whom he wrote his dissertation at Bar-Ilan University in 2003.

The book is divided into two parts: the first one contains two chapters of analysis; the second part contains a critical edition of the work based on manuscripts and printed editions. In his first chapter, Shuchat replaces the hanhagot of R. Hayim of Volozhin within the context of the other works of the Rabbi; in the second chapter, he tells us how these teachings reflect his world view. The detailed table of contents allows the reader to focus on interesting topics, such as “attitude to[w ard] Revelation in modern times,” Hasidim, or astrology, for example. For the second part, Shuchat, has three sections: the teachings presented from all the sources he could find (here again the detailed table of contents is a key to locate the topics), a second section containing the teachings found in one main manuscript and missing from the others, the third section, the teachings not found in the editor’s main manuscript.

This book should be a welcome addition to the personal library of any Yeshivah student fluent in Hebrew in the United States, Canada, and Israel, in synagogue and large academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, 
Silver Spring, MD

Spinner, Samuel J. Jewish Primitivism. Stanford, CT: Stanford UP, 2021. 251 pp. $64.33 (9781503628274) HC.

Primitivism was a twentieth century artistic movement that regarded conventional western art as having lost contact with fundamental aspects of the human condition. While western modernity had a certain sort of sophistication, primitivism regarded it as essentially arid. Primitivism offered a solution to this critique, claiming there had been, in the words of Johns Hopkins professor of Yiddish Dr. Spinner, a “discovery of alternative aesthetic and epistemological models in the art of so-called primitive peoples” and that western artists could revivify western art by making use of these models, for example, Picasso’s cubism.

The book is a series of analytical essays on a number of Jewish artists and writers who were confronted by Jewish primitivism. European primitivism posited strong differences between Europeans and the non-European primitives who presented alternative artistic models. Dr. Spinner argues that Jewish primitivism is quite different, because “Jews were plausibly primitive but also plausibly European.” Much of this book is devoted to discussing the consequences of this difference.

Shmuel Ben-Gad, 
Gelman Library, George Washington University


It is hard to classify Judah Benjamin. But James Traub’s short biography goes a long way toward explaining his extraordinary life. Benjamin was born in the Caribbean in 1811. The family later settled in Charleston, South Carolina. Benjamin was a brilliant child, and went to Yale at age 14, but was expelled. He moved to New Orleans, where he became a noted attorney.

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He married into a wealthy gentile family and purchased Bellechase, a large plantation. Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1852, he was known as an orator and a major proponent of the Southern cause, including vocal support for slavery. After the 1860 election he joined the Confederate cabinet, and became the best-known aide to President Jefferson Davis throughout the Civil War. After Appomattox, he was the highest-ranking Confederate official to escape to England, where he again became a well-known solicitor.

While Benjamin’s life story is fascinating, his ethical world may be even stranger. He was one of the largest slave-owners in the South prior to the Civil War. His wife and daughter left him and moved to Paris, but he supported them throughout his life. He was a brilliant lawyer, recognized in both New Orleans and London. He was widely known to be Jewish, but never publicly identified with the religion. Traub uses these elements, and descriptions of the places he lived, to explore Benjamin’s life. Much of the book is devoted to the social and political worlds of New Orleans, Washington, Richmond and London.

Libraries that have Eli Evans’ biography of Benjamin do not need this one. But Traub’s accessible study is valuable as an examination of one of the most famous, and elusive, American Jews of the nineteenth century.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA


Wolfson is one of the most creative interdisciplinary scholars today in philosophy and Jewish studies, particularly Jewish mysticism, while casting a net to all of the humanities, essentially providing a unified field theory of fundamental philosophical and kabbalistic ideas. Wolfson’s depth and broad scope offers a speculative orchard (Pardes), into which thoughtful readers are invited to drink the waters of wisdom streaming from the philosophical and mystical sources cited and discussed therein. Some of the mystical texts that provide a springboard for Wolfson’s explorations include the work of Abraham Abulafia, the Maharal, Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav and other Hasidic sources, and a host of mystical concepts such as Simsum in the teaching of Rabbi Shlomo ben Hayyim Eliashiv.

This book is a result of Covid quarantine that allowed the scholar to gather together several of his academic essays on the nature of time, revising older studies, and writing a new introductory chapter to the collection. The reader comes away with a better understanding of time as the perpetual retrieval of what has never been and the saying again of what is always left unsaid in what is spoken. We gain a better appreciation of Koheleth’s remark, “That which hath been is that which shall be, and that which hath been done is that which shall be done.” (Mishnah, Eruvin 5:18). Wolfson understands Koheleth’s insight not as Nietzsche’s “eternal recurrence of the same,” and although no one theory of time is pursued in these insightful essays, in focusing on time from his own analysis he trumps Heidegger’s Being and Time (Sein und Zeit). The Zeitgeist hermeneutical axiom which has informed Wolfson’s scholarship is justified by the cadence of time as the constant return of what has always been what is yet to be. Wolfson applies Kabbalistic notions of “times we serve” as a linear circularity or a circular linearity. This volume includes learned footnotes, bibliography, and index. This title is recommended for libraries supporting philosophical studies, Jewish studies, and culture in general.

David B. Levy, Chief Librarian, Lander College for Women, New York, NY


Objectively the Mishna, comprises six orders, sixty three tractates, redacted by Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi in 200 CE, and described as “the iron pillar” of the Oral Torah (lev rabbah 21), “the helpmeet of man” (Zohar bereishit 1:27b), the core upon which the Gemara elaborates. However, in spiritual terms, as the title of the book suggests, inspired by the words of the Maggid Mesharim (Rabbi Yosef Karo) the Mishna is the celestial entity that revealed itself to the author of the Shulhan Arukh. The Rabbi Karo merited the revelations of the Mishna in his recorded dream life that appeared to him metaphorically as a woman whose voice is that of the beloved knocking (Shir HaShirim) clearing up sitrei torah (secrets of the torah) as a manifestation of the shekinah herself. As the soul is beyond objectification, so to love for the soul of the Mishna allows one to cleave their souls to the root of the Mishna - God Himself beyond limit.

In this book Rabbi Nagen intends to uncover the inner spirit of this foundational text, reveal the ideas that underpin its laws,
uncover nuanced layers of meaning, fish up its treasures, and elucidate their existential implications making the text most relevant and timely today. Never does the author lose sight of the forest for the trees. Yet through at times contemplating the minutiae of the law, he unearths important principles relating to God’s presence in the world, the connection between halakhab and life, the relationships between parents and children, between husbands and wives, social justice, the Beit HaMikdash, Eretz Yisrael, and more. The author allows the reader an awareness of the halakhab’s spiritual implications so we can encounter the soul of the Mishna. His literary method looks at wordplay, parallels, and the structure of the Mishna. In several places the author diverges from the principles elucidated above and adopts a more personal anecdotal tone.

A goal of the book is to increase the Jewish people’s love for the Mishna and to reveal its riches, to deepen their love for Mishna learning. This volume includes bibliography and index to mishnayot by letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

David B. Levy,
Chief Librarian, Lander College for Women, New York, NY


This excellent, well written with depth, riveting, and well researched work will be the benchmark in its field for offering a scholarly biographical sketch of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi’s life as an individual. It sheds light on his colleagues, students, interlocutors, while along the way incorporating elements of the makloket and halakhic decisions that compose the core of the Talmud, drawing on both Jewish and Roman sources, that is timely and relevant to our times. Readers obtain a holistic portrait of Rabbi Judah the Prince, and are afforded insight into the human and historical context that shaped his times as a redactor of the Mishna, as well as a diplomat engaged in hishtadlut on behalf of the Jewish community.

The book shows that the Rebbe is a role model for Jews who wish to be immersed both in their religion and the world around them. This book indicates that such a leader was not only a brilliant Torah scholar, but also educated in secular knowledge, manifesting a gift as a first-rate jurist, talented administrator, and accomplished statesman. As a statesman, the Rebbe developed a modus vivendi which reached its apogee under his leadership, who helped restore Judaism to a religio licita (recognized religion).

The book draws knowledge of Roman history, Zakheim is able to show how the Rebbe interacted on favorable terms with an emperor named Antoninus, and postulates that Antoninus was a blending of Emperor Severus and his son. It draws on Talmudic references to explore parallels between the Prince and the emperors in terms of their lifestyles, leadership, politics, attitudes, and beliefs. The book demonstrates not only Rabbi Judah’s great contribution to the development of rabbinic Judaism but also the worldliness and openness to ideas, concepts, and practices in the secular world. The book succeeds in providing the Rebbe as a model for contemporary Jewry as he has been for Jews throughout the ages. This title is highly recommended for all libraries that collect biographies of rabbinical scholars.

David B. Levy,
Chief Librarian, Lander College for Women, New York, NY

_Sanctified Sex_ is a comprehensive and fascinating account of Jewish thought on the subject of love and marriage. In addition to the survey of Jewish thought on this matter, the author also seeks to answer what can Jewish law contribute to the intersection between sanctity and intimacy in loving and erotic relationships.

Like nearly every matter in Rabbinic thought, there is robust debate on any given topic and this certainly holds true on issues of sexuality and eroticism in Jewish tradition. The debate occurs between two poles. On one side is the position that the sacred takes precedence over the sexual. These Rabbis wished to “minimize spousal intimacy in order to suppress the anarchic sexual passion, especially in males.” On the other side were those Rabbis who want to “enhance sexual passion to bring harmony to interpersonal relationships, to achieve mystical unition and to repair the cosmos.” These Rabbis championed a tradition that views sexuality (properly sanctioned within the context of marital intimacy) as not only highly complementary of sacredness - but perhaps among some Jewish traditions, a necessary goal that both foreshadows and mimics the mystical union of God and the people of Israel.

The book primarily follows a chronological format. Part One details the laws of marital and sexual duties and responsibilities as set forth in the Mishna. Part Two follows with three case studies about sexuality as described in the Talmud. Part Three focuses on sexuality and marriage in medieval law and mysticism. Part Four on historical and contemporary treatment of these topics among Haredim, both Hasidim and Litvaks/ Misnagdim. Part Five on the North American context and how American Rabbis navigated this thicket in the context of confronting the sexual revolution and changing sexual mores.

This book is highly recommended for any reader, novice and expert alike, wishing to familiarize themselves with the Jewish tradition's polyphonic views and positions on matters of sexuality and marital intimacy.

David Tesler, Efrat, Israel


_Poet Aviya Kushner is a student of language, specifically Hebrew and English. In this book, she focuses on the language of the Book of Isaiah, the prophetic book that reverberates in Jewish and Christian literature and culture. Kushner used both the original Hebrew and a 1973 translation of Isaiah by H.L. Ginsberg, as well as traditional commentaries._

She engages with Isaiah through a personal lens: her life as a resident of Israel, New York, Chicago, and Iowa, where she earned an MFA at the University of Iowa. In each place, she finds commonalities that link Isaiah to the present including bombed cities, and the wolf conquering the lamb. These are dense, challenging poems with surprising turns of phrase “how can anyone expect the infinite from the finite? “ “I will look into the desert of my life and wish for water,” and most striking, “to live is a form of music.” Kushner is in conversation with the Hebrew language and the timeless relevance of Isaiah, as well as the sound of Isaiah in English in iconic phrases such as, “all flesh is grass.” This is a book for lovers of language and the juxtaposition of ancient and modern.

Beth Dwoskin, Beth Israel Congregation Library Committee Chair, Ann Arbor, MI


_This debut poetry collection was selected as a finalist and semifinalist in several poetry competitions. The author, from the Washington, D.C. area, has published in numerous poetry journals. The title of this collection comes from Jewish tradition, where the Shomer serves as watchman, guardian, witness, in the context of daily routines and significant life events. The poems are grouped in three sections, “The Family Body,” “The Body Sanctuary,” and “The Body Corporeal.” Most of the poems are short, and one page. They deal with a range of family matters, lives and deaths, parents, Jewish traditions, and one’s own body. They are powerful and moving, intimate, honest and authentic._

Beth Dwoskin, Beth Israel Congregation Library Committee Chair, Ann Arbor, MI

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few black and white photographs, along with acknowledgments indicating where some poems originally appeared, are included. The book is recommended for poetry collections in Jewish public and community center libraries, synagogue libraries, as well as Judaica collections in academic libraries.

Susan Freiband,
Volunteer Synagogue Librarian, Alexandria, Virginia

FILM


Tewfic Hanania was a Christian Arab entrepreneur in Mandate-era (1917-1947) Jerusalem who built and owned several large buildings and had many Jewish friends, including the Israeli painter Pinchas Litvinovsky (1894-1985). In the 1930s, he met Haya Schreiber, a kindergarten teacher, and they began their romance. He visited the family residence often and even cooked vegetarian dishes for them. Their relationship grew amid the growing nationalism of the Arab population of Palestine, and several historians describe the political and economic situation during the era.

When the State of Israel was declared and the war started, Hanania went to Cyprus. He returned after the war and was able to reclaim his property, but he felt like a stranger in his own city and moved to Florida. Haya visited him briefly in 1965, and moved there permanently in 1968. They were legally married, and lived there happily until Hanania died of cancer in the summer of 1971. At that point Haya returned to Israel, with advanced stage cancer, and died a week later. At the end of the film Haya’s relatives speak about the great romance and love between Haya and Hanania, but that the relationship was private, and while Hanania was the love of Haya’s life, they are buried on different continents, and she had a “private death.”

The documentary includes many archival photographs and video, as well as narrations by Haya Schreiber’s nephews and friends. Many of the photos and videos are shown repeatedly. The presentation of Hanania and Haya as star-crossed lovers is a little uneven, with the beginning of the film about their meeting and relationship, the majority of the film about Mandate-era Palestine and the nascent State of Israel, and the end of the film about their brief time together and their deaths. Still, the film provides an interesting chronicle of both a personal and national story, and it is recommended for those with an interest in the history of the modern State of Israel.

Chava Pinchuck,
Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel


This documentary, in Hebrew with English subtitles, is the latest film of the prestigious ha-’Ivrim series (The Hebrews). By now, the series includes 16 films about prominent Jewish/Israeli authors and poets. It weaves together a biographical story, audio-visual interpretation of the author’s or poet’s textual work, and commentary by scholars.

In February 2021, the Israeli radio and TV host Kobi Meidan (channel 11) interviewed Yehoshua on the occasion of the publication of his latest book (The Only Daughter, 2021). The title of that interview was “Abraham B. Yehoshua comes to terms with cancer and bids farewell.” (Excerpts from that interview also appear in the film).

Luckily, as of the time this review is being written (April 2022), the 85 years old beloved and celebrated author, essayist, and dramaturge is still with us. He refers to this notion of getting closer to the end of his journey right at the first few minutes of the film, ‘teasing’ the director that he had decided to create this filmic portrait about him only “because all other ones are already dead.” Indeed, this is the only film in the series discussing a living individual.

Qedar had created a compassionate, humorous portrait about Yehoshua, and with his active participation. As opposed to previous films in the series, this one includes a very few and short commentaries by other scholars; the final result is indeed more of a ‘love letter’ to a prominent public figure, than an academic analysis of his work. Although Yehoshua has insights and contemplations about his deteriorating health condition and his looming departure, he keeps his spirits high. He jokes around, argues passionately with his friends about politics and life in general, and keeps a full schedule with lectures, zoom interviews, and talks.

Qedar has managed to create a touching biographical portrait, with a few ‘artistic’ glimpses to Yehoshua’s rich body of work; the film is dotted with narrated literary text accompanied by graphic background and melodic music. Yet, as this is a relatively short (55 minute) film documenting Yehoshua’s own personal “epilogue,” with not much academic discussion about his work, This film is recommended only to libraries that already holds the other films in The Hebrews series, or if there is a special interest in Yehoshua’s work. For others who collect Israeli literature this is merely a “nice to have” addition.

Uri Kolodney,
The University of Texas at Austin Libraries

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This film opens with sweeping landscapes of Africa as Rabbi Dr. Sharon Zaude Shalom of Bar-Ilan University relates the great love for Jerusalem that was instilled in him and the burning desire to go there. An exploration of the history and customs of Ethiopian Jews reveals that they are likely descendants of the tribe of Dan who migrated south after the destruction of the First Temple and that their observances are from that period, with no Mishnah or Talmud, and no Purim or Hanukkah. They are not descendants of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. This common Christian-Ethiopian myth includes the basis of the Solomonic Dynasty that ruled Ethiopia and its last emperor, Haile Selassie, known as the Lion of Judah.

When the State of Israel was established, Ben Gurion set up a strategic alliance with Ethiopia, but the question of the Ethiopian Jews, or Beta Israel was not addressed. The film goes on to explore some of the politics involved in the fight to save Soviet Jewry versus the 28,000 Beta Israel, who were also suffering anti-Semitism and persecution. Things changed after 1977. Menachem Begin was elected prime minister and made Beta Israel a priority. Ethiopia was under Marxist rule and there was civil war. Ferede Aklum fled Ethiopia, went to Khartoum, Sudan, and asked the Israeli government to send a plane ticket. Israel recognized that this could be the Ethiopians’ escape route. Soon the Mossad set up plans, and several participants described how the operation unfolded and continued through the 1980s. Ethiopian-Israelis narrate the development of the community in Israel to the present day, and the challenges of racism and discrimination.

Archival footage and testimony from both Mossad agents and Ethiopians make the story come alive. A riveting film full of action and emotion, it is highly recommended for all Jewish libraries.

Chava Pinchuck,
"Riveting and fast paced, this novel holds your attention from the first to the very last page."

ROBIN ROSEN CHANG, AUTHOR
THE CURATOR'S NOTES

A STORY ABOUT THE EVER-EVOLVING MESSINESS OF FRIENDSHIP AND MARRIAGE, AND THE WONDER OF SURVIVAL

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