

Chicago is One Town that Won't Let You Down

From Jerusalem to Warsaw, from South Africa to South America, from Baghdad to Bombay, from Birobidzhan to Boca Raton, this year's annual convention took us on Judaic journeys through a variety of topics. Heidi Lerner's "New tools for Jewish Linguistics" covered a number of recent computerized tools for the study of oral and written Jewish languages including audio samples and Web dictionaries. Yaffa Weisman's "Freedom of Speech: Assimilating Slang, Jargon and Other Languages into Current Israeli Hebrew," addressed the new linguistic shorthand in a Hebrew that is largely unintelligible even to native speakers who have lived outside Israel for the last decade. She showed examples of abbreviated expressions peppered with radically transformed words of Arabic, Russian, Ladino, Spanish, and Yiddish origin.

Veronica Belling discussed the demise in 2008 of a South African bookstore—and provisioner—begun 105 years earlier in "The End of an Era: Beinkinstadt, Cape Town's Oldest Jewish Bookstore Closes Down." Henry Hollander provided a blueprint for book dealers and librarians to cooperate in "Jewish Libraries and Jewish Bookstores: Friends or Strangers?"

Yiddish was prominently featured in two presentations, one on theater, the other on publishing. In the former, Zachary Baker discussed "Mahler, Copland, Bernstein ... and Rumshinsky? Reflections on the Yiddish Theater and its Legacy" as he

brought to life a once-thriving era with its myriad characters and intrigues—both on and off the stage. Veronica Belling's second presentation dealt with the rich history of "Yiddish Theater in South Africa," once an important stop on the international Yiddish theatrical circuit. David Chack's "Penetrating Cultures: A Yiddish Theatre Aesthetic and Its Influence on American Theatre and Performance" discussed Yiddish theater moving—in effect—from immigrant culture to center stage in American drama, music, and film.

In the session on Yiddish publishing, Lyudmila Sholokhova disclosed data on the once widely-read "Grosznbibliotek (Penny Library), Series of Popular Biographies Published in Yiddish in Warsaw, 1930-1935." Rita Saccal followed with the colorful history of "Yiddish Publishing in Argentina." This completes our very brief expedition around the Jewish bibliographic world as presented by our erudite colleagues.

Elliot H. Gertel, former RAS Division president



Photo by Yaffa Weisman

We had a wonderful convention in Chicago, and managed to accomplish a tremendous amount while renewing old friendships, making new ones, and eating and working together in a fabulous setting on the Chicago River. School, synagogue, and community center libraries have been particularly hard hit by the recession during the past year and AJL has been a strong advocate on our behalf, writing letters of protest and increasing the budget to help many of our members attend the convention this year.



Photo by Yaffa Weisman

In many communities it will take years to get back to previous levels of support, and we must all do what we can to promote, support and market our work to ensure the future of our libraries. SSC programming was organized with that in mind, so that we could take home new ideas and resources to our patrons and benefactors, which will make us an indispensable part of their lives.

When I wasn't looking up at the marvelous skyscrapers all around me, I was meeting with the board and council along

with my executive members Maureen Reister and Nancy Rivin, or attending the authors' luncheon and book signing, or heading to the exhibits for a coffee break, or running to the schools K-12 roundtable, or listening to keynote speaker Dr. Peter Hayes on myths and misconceptions of the Holocaust, or the special plenary session speaker Barbara Schneider-Kempf on recovering books stolen under the Third Reich.

I always attend the LC session to hear their hilarious 'update' and the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee sessions with award-winning authors and illustrators. From the CEU on digital Judaic resources, to the workshop on fund-raising and PR, to social media, to the Sydney Taylor Book Awards, so many valuable sessions were offered in Chicago. In order to raise our image in our library communities we must first raise ourselves, and that is what makes the AJL Convention so invaluable to us all.

Kol hakavod to the SSC committee chairs as well as to the Chicago Convention Committee. We look forward to seeing you all next year in Seattle!

Marsha Lustigman, SSC Division president

More Chicago convention highlights begin on p. 26.

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President's Message

SUSAN DUBIN

This summer has been extremely busy with all the new initiatives and continuing programs AJL planned at our annual convention in Chicago. Thanks to an incredibly hard-working local convention committee, a beautiful location, outstanding programs, and the warmth of greeting long-time friends and meeting new ones, the convention was an unqualified success. Much to our surprise, the economy did not lessen our turnout. Those who were unable to attend the convention or who missed one of the outstanding sessions will be able to listen to podcasts and read the proceedings on our AJL Web site throughout this year.

The board and council voted to hire a consultant to help update our Web site and to help us develop more of an online presence. Our newsletter will continue to be published in print, but we will mount past newsletters on our Web site after two future issues have been published. RAS will be working on a digitization project, which will serve as a clearinghouse for current digitization projects in Judaica. We also voted to apply for affiliation with ALA. This will give our awards more recognition and give our organization a stronger voice as a representative of Judaica librarianship.

We have established a new technology committee, chaired by Diane Romm and Joyce Levine. Their first initiative is the creation of an AJL wiki to answer FAQs and exchange information more easily. Check it out!

Another exciting development is a new connection with our colleagues in Israel. Thanks to Ya'akov Aaronson, we are planning an Israeli Regional Conference in the fall. Pnina Moed Kass and Anna Levine will be interviewing Israeli authors and writing about them in a new column that will appear in our newsletter. In addition, we are planning two parallel convention sessions to take place in Israel and at the Seattle Convention. One session will be about the digitization project at the National Library of Israel, in English in Seattle, and in Hebrew in Israel. The other will be the Sydney Taylor What's Hot, What's Not, in English in Seattle, and a panel on Israeli children's literature, in Hebrew in Israel. All four sessions will be podcast and available through the AJL Web site.

We will be contacting schools that have library degree and Judaic studies programs to promote interest in Judaic librarianship. The association offers generous scholarships for those studying to be Judaic librarians. We would also like to share everything our organization has to offer with those considering entering the field.

Our mentor program offers a unique opportunity to help those who need some guidance on a one-to-one basis. If you are interested in being a mentor or are in need of mentoring, please contact Sara Leah Gross, our Mentoring Committee chair. Her contact information is on our Web site on the organizational chart.

We will be planning several regional conferences throughout the year as well as some possible webinar sessions for professional development. There is room on several committees for new members. Much of the business of the committees is done over the Internet, so members from anywhere can participate. Look at the organizational chart to see an area where you would like to help.

Shanah tovah.

AJL Scholarship Fund

ELLEN SHARE

The great rabbi and sage Maimonides listed eight levels of charity. The highest level is to prepare a person for gainful employment. You have the unique opportunity to encourage a library student and, at the same time, promote Judaica librarianship by making donations to the AJL Scholarship Fund.

The AJL Scholarship Fund awards \$1,000 cash scholarships to talented library science students with an interest in pursuing a career in Judaica librarianship. For each donation to the fund, an acknowledgment card is sent to the appropriate person. It is a very meaningful way to recognize simchas, remember loved ones, and send wishes for a speedy recovery. Your donation will always be appreciated! Send your contributions now! Please remember to include the addresses of the family of those honored or remembered so that we can send notifications.

Please complete the form below and send it, along with your donation, to Sarah M. Barnard, Serials Librarian, Hebrew Union College-Klau Library, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220.

Recent donors to the AJL Scholarship Fund:

- Ellen & Stewart Share in memory of Janet Fine Rosenblatt
- Ellen & Stewart Share in memory of Morris Klein
- Dennis & Stephanie Cohen in honor of the 40th wedding anniversary of Marc & Susan Dubin
- Pearl Berger in memory of Bernie Rabenstein
- Sarah Barnard in memory of Bernie Rabenstein
- Sarah Barnard in honor of Jenn Quast's receiving her Ph.D.
- Shuli Berger in memory of Dov Klein
- Leo J. & Roslyn L. Krupp Family Foundation

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AJL Scholarship Winners for 2009

The Scholarship Committee had a difficult decision with a number of outstanding candidates applying for AJL scholarships. Two candidates were finally selected. They are both very impressive and express a commitment to continue to pursue work as Judaica librarians.

Alla Markova is an MLS student at St. John's University. She has an extremely wide-ranging education in languages from Leningrad. In the course of her studies, she became interested in Ladino and paleography. This led her to work with a team from

the University of Southern California on preparing a scholarly edition of the Leningrad Codex, an ancient Hebrew Bible. While studying at CUNY in New York, she worked as a Hebrew/Yiddish cataloging assistant. She served a consulting stint at the Library of the American Sephardi Federation. She has written scholarly articles and a recent book, *Beginner's Ladino*, published by Hippocrene books.

Klara Maidenberg is an MLS student at the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Toronto. She received a degree in education from the Jewish Teachers Education Program at York University, where she also completed an Advanced Certificate in Hebrew and Jewish Studies. She has taught at Bialik Hebrew Day School in Toronto, and hopes to continue her involvement in Jewish education as a librarian working in a Jewish day school or Jewish library.

Doris Orenstein Fund Change Will Better Reflect Her Role in AJL

RITA FRISCHER

Who was Doris Orenstein, and why does AJL have a scholarship fund established in her memory? Many AJL members, even those who attended their first conferences with help from the Doris Orenstein Scholarship Fund, know little or nothing about this exceptional woman. But for those of us in SSC whose involvement in AJL ran through the 80s, Doris was a prime reason for going to the convention and a stalwart support and invaluable source throughout the rest of the year. Owner of The Jewish Bookshelf in Teaneck, New Jersey, she had become not just a beloved bookseller and friend, but a knowledgeable and generous Jewish children's literature consultant. She never missed an AJL conference; even when she was gravely ill and in pain, she showed up, smiling and ready to share freely.

Doris Orenstein died in 1987; AJL established the scholarship fund in her memory at the annual meeting on June 23 that year. Initially supplemented by Kar-Ben and the Orenstein family, it was intended to provide partial funding for a single first-time convention attendee. In recent years, income in the fund has decreased, and requests for funding have gone up, resulting in splitting a very small pie among too many deserving attendees. What to do?

AJL's board and council decided we could best honor Doris by updating this recognition of her importance to our organization. We looked for a form that would encourage others to emulate her devotion and contribution. At the midwinter meeting, a change was proposed and, in Chicago, approved. Unanimously, the vote was to replace the scholarship fund with the AJL Doris Orenstein Memorial Award for Outstanding Contributions to Judaica and Jewish Libraries by Booksellers, Exhibitors or Publishers. The Seattle 2010 conference will be the first at which this award will be presented. Now is your chance to nominate your favorite exhibitor, Jewish bookstore, salesperson, or publisher for service and support above and beyond the call of duty. Although no cash award is attached, donations will still be welcome to offset administrative costs.

Doris would be proud.

Whitman Ad

Chapter Chatter

TOBY ROSSNER

News from the Chapter Relations Committee

Submitted by Irene K. Seff and Enid Sperber

The Chapter Relations Committee is pleased to announce that Enid Sperber, librarian at Temple Israel of Hollywood, has joined our team as co-chair with Irene K. Seff of Albuquerque. Judy Greenblatt of Rhode Island joins Amalia Warshenbrot and Sylvia Firschein as a chapter representative. Together with Toby Rossner, our very able "Chapter Chatter" editor, our team is now complete.

We thank former committee members Roz Reisner, Judy Cohn, and Marsha Lustigman for their time and effort on behalf of our chapters. Congratulations to those chapter presidents who were able to attend the convention and thank you to the Chi-

cago Convention Committee, all of the sponsors, and all of those who pitched in to help. Terrific organization! Stimulating sessions! Wonderful networking! Great selection from vendors! Delicious food—beautifully served!

At the convention, we welcomed our newest chap-

ters, Northwest Region, Atlanta, and Israel. We look forward to hearing about what you are doing. Let us know how the Chapter Relations Committee can support your efforts.

New York Metropolitan Area (AJL-NYMA)

Submitted by Sara Marcus, Hallie Cantor, and Rita Lifton

What goes on behind the scenes of catalogs, document repositories and Web sites? Catalogers, systems librarians and others learned the answers at NYMA's annual cataloging workshop, held at Ramaz Middle School on April 22. Attendees were a diverse group of NYMA members and non-members, including some from as far away as Vermont and Rhode Island. Keynote speaker Kevin Reiss, university systems librarian at The City University of New York, spoke on the topic "XML for Catalogers in 2009: Emerging Technologies, Tools and Trends." The group was then treated to a demonstration of XML basics, XML and MARC, and the future of MARC in relation to XML and other metadata standards. A PowerPoint presentation of the workshop with synced audio is available at <http://ajlnyma.org/events/2008-2009/2009%20cataloging%20workshop/index.htm>. The workshop was coordinated by Steven Bernstein.

The love—and future—of books was the topic of NYMA's May 20 spring conference at the Rabbi Arthur Schneier Park East Day School. Guest speaker was Phyllis Chesler—feminist, scholar,

author, and columnist. Ms. Chesler is the author of many noted works including *The Death of Feminism*, *The New Anti-Semitism*, and most recently, *Woman's Inhumanity to Woman*, which describes a radical feminism gone dangerously awry. Ms. Chesler's wide-ranging talk covered such issues as reading as a way of life; the onslaught of non-print technology and its social and intellectual repercussions; and her confrontation with, and activism against, the current liberal agenda which, Ms. Chesler believes, is profoundly anti-Zionist and anti-Israel. Ms. Chesler held an extended Q&A session; there was a lively exchange of information between her and conference participants. Ms. Chesler's blog/website can be accessed at www.phyllischesler.com/blog/.

The conference was coordinated by outgoing NYMA president Leslie Monchar and incoming president Roz Friedman. While Leslie was not able to be present at the conference due to the graduation of both her daughter and daughter-in-law, she sent a warm letter of farewell. Joining Roz at the helm of NYMA's executive board for 2009-2011 is Tina Weiss, who will serve as vice-president/president-elect.

We are happy to announce that NYMA has gone green! The latest issue of our chapter newsletter, *NYMA News*, has just been sent out as a PDF file. Congratulations to newsletter editor Hallie Cantor on a wonderful summer-fall 2009 issue.

South Florida Chapter (SFAJL)

Submitted by Toby Rossner

While browsing the Web site of South Florida Chapter I discovered an outstanding article, *Podcasting for Smarties*, by Heidi Estrin, South Florida Chapter president, published in the spring 2009 issue of *Torah at the Center*, by the Union for Reform Judaism Department of Lifelong Jewish Learning. The following excerpts are printed with the permission of the publisher:

"Everybody's got something to say, right? Especially Jewish educators. What if you had access to a relatively cheap and easy way to broadcast your message? Podcasts are one such method. A podcast, in essence, is a show that you find on the Internet. With podcasts, you can target listeners or viewers with an obscure niche interest, and they'll find you from anywhere in the world as long as they have Internet access.

As with any teaching tool, it's the content that matters. Assuming the presence of compelling content, a podcast makes an especially good teaching tool for a number of reasons:

- Podcasts are convenient to use.
- Old episodes remain available online.
- Podcasts suit a variety of learning styles.
- Any podcast episode can be paused during playback or played repeatedly.
- And because podcasts are accessible at any time, they can be played when learning conditions are right for the user.

Podcast creation can be a great teaching tool. Creating a podcast requires students to plan, organize, research, write, use oral skills, and learn new technical skills. Sharing their knowledge with a world of listeners will engender pride in craftsmanship and a desire to live up to audience expectations by producing quality content.

You can start simply by recording podcasts over the phone (try Gcast.com or Gabcast.com); by plugging a microphone



Irene Seff (left), with leaders of our newest chapters (L-R): Janet Heineck and Toby Harris of Northwest Region, and Janice Levine of Atlanta. Missing from photo: Ya'akov Aronson of the newly revised Israel Chapter.

into your computer and recording through your browser (try PodOmatic.com or Wildvoice.com), or by going the whole nine yards and recording with a microphone into editing software such as Audacity or GarageBand before cleaning up your audio and uploading it to a hosting service (try Libsyn.com or Hipcast.com, which also host video podcasts). All of these services, and many others, will host your audio and create an RSS feed so that listeners can subscribe to your show, some for free and some for a low fee. Detailed tutorials on podcasting are easy to find online; try podcasting-tools.com/podcasting-101.htm or how-to-podcast-tutorial.com, or buy a book such as *Podcasting for Dummies* by Tee Morris. If you'd rather listen to podcasts than create them, then take some time to explore online podcast directories such as jewishwebcasting.com and the Education Podcast Network at epnweb.org, or search for keywords of interest in a general directory like podcastdirectory.com.

Podcasting is still a new technology, so it involves a learning curve for producers *and* consumers. As a podcaster, you'll need to educate people about how to find and listen to your show. You'll also need to set aside time for recording, editing and production, and you'll need to make an ongoing commitment to add new content so that your series doesn't fizzle out. However, the excitement of podcasting, with its limitless scope for creativity and its worldwide audience make these challenges well worth facing."

For the full text of the original article, go to archive.urj.net/educate and select Vol. 12 No. 2, Technology at the Center.

Southern California Chapter (AJLSC)

Submitted by Cathy Ryne

On May 13, Lisa Silverman, director of Temple Sinai Blumenthal Library, received the 2009 Dorothy Schroeder Award. The memorial fund honors AJLSC teacher and mentor, Dorothy Schroeder, and provides AJLSC awards to those who make significant contributions to Jewish libraries or Judaica librarianship. At the celebration Temple Sinai's Rabbi David Wolpe was the keynote speaker. Roberta Lloyd, chair of the Dorothy Schroeder Memorial Committee, announced the names of the 2009 AJL convention scholarship awardees. Lisa presented an enlightening talk on several notable Jewish children's picture books. Lisa Silverman's dedication to Judaica librarianship and her generous devotion of her time to AJLSC and AJL is very much appreciated. Her chapter is very proud to present Lisa with this award.

The large contingent of AJLSC members who attended the Chicago Convention are raving about the programming and ambiance. We are all looking forward to the 2010 convention in Seattle!

AJLSC is honored to announce that two chapter members have joined the National AJL Council. Lisa Silverman is the new Bibliography Bank chair, and she is now accepting bibliographies to post on the AJL Web site. Share bibliographies that you have created for your own institution with your fellow librarians by sending them to Lisa at dir-ls@ajlsc.org. Enid Sperber is the new Chapter Relations Committee co-chair.

Exciting news! Two new libraries are forming in our area: Heschel West Day School and Temple Israel at Long Beach. The Jewish Community Library (JCL) has merged with the American Jewish University (AJU). AJU will be absorbing the Jewish Community Library's collection and will be developing a JCL site at the university.

We are saddened by the loss of Dov Klein, son of Adaire and Manny Klein.

New England Chapter (NEAJL)

Submitted by Ann Abrams

Excerpted from an article by Jeremy Jacobson in the *Hartford Jewish Ledger* of June 24, 2009.

On Friday, June 19, the New England Chapter held its regional conference at Congregation Beth Israel in West Hartford. Librarians, authors, educators, booksellers and administrators from Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York all came to learn how best to "maximize library services through resource sharing," as the conference theme summed it up.

"The sky is the limit," said Sara Leah Gross, a librarian at Yeshiva University in New York and an active member of the Association of Jewish Libraries. During her presentation on social networking Web sites, Gross said that it is important for libraries to utilize sites such as Twitter and Facebook in order to maximize Internet visibility. Gross also suggested Web sites such as meetup.com, which allows people to filter profiles in order to better find what they're looking for.

"These social networking sites not only help make libraries more visible, but also allow for libraries to strengthen their communities," noted Steve Bernstein, a librarian at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain. The concept of the library as a community center, a place where people can connect through books is not new," Bernstein pointed out. "This idea is also not new to Judaism. It is the same idea as the *beit midrash*, or of a *havrutah* (the Hebrew term for learning partner). Using these social networking sites is only bringing all that libraries



Attending the NEAJL regional conference were: (front row, left to right) Barbara Mende, Helene Kress, Susan Fried, Danielle Stordy, Marie Cloutier; (second row, left to right) Bea Brodie, Marian Stein, Lois Koteen, Annette Gavens, Melanie Ullman, Liz Edelglass, Louise Brown, Ann Abrams; (back row, left to right) Cathy Balshone-Becze, Jane Trigere, Solomon Davidoff, Ken Schoen, and Jane Zande. Attending but missing in the picture: Steve Bernstein.

used to offer to the next level, in what is known as Library 2.0. It is evolution, not revolution."

In order to evolve with the times, it is important for Jewish librarians to have conferences such as these. "Our Judaic libraries are rich resources for the Jewish community," said Jane Zande, associate director of lifelong learning at the Ellen Jeanne Goldfarb Community Learning Center at Congregation Beth Israel, which just received advanced accreditation by the Association of Jewish Libraries. "By networking with each other, and learning from each other and other public librarians, we can maximize our resources and keep our skills and knowledge sharp."

Florida West Coast Chapter

Submitted by Sylvia Firschein

Our chapter is growing! In addition to members from Sarasota, Bradenton, Port Charlotte, Palm Harbor, and Venice, we now have members from Sun City and St. Petersburg. We



AJL president Suzi Dubin congratulates Sylvia Firschein on achieving advanced accreditation for her library.

are glad to include as chapter members Esta Blaxberg (formerly of New Jersey), Lillian Schwartz (formerly of Rhode Island), Edie Wolf (formerly of Omaha), and Miriam Miller (formerly of Ohio and Sarasota), all of whom were Judaica librarians and active national

AJL members in their northern and western locations, all of whom were regular convention attendees who became dear friends through the years, and all of whom are now retired and living (at least part-time) in this area.

In July the West Florida Chapter had its annual get-together (one of our four yearly meetings) in a local restaurant. This year a record number of fifteen members attended. Sylvia gave her report on the convention, showed us her certificate for AJL advanced library accreditation, and recommended that other members apply for AJL accreditation.

Long Island Chapter (LI-AJL)

Submitted by Wendy A. Marx

I just returned from the Chicago Convention and was pleased to have the opportunity to meet with a number of chapter presidents. Taking a suggestion from my colleagues as to how to generate higher attendance at our Long Island Chapter meetings, our leadership has decided to plan our upcoming year's programming with a "less is more" approach.

One of our program highlights will be Library 101, modeled after the Freshman Seminar that I attended at the convention. Several of us are members of Long Island synagogues that would like to establish libraries. The notes I took and the handouts I gathered will be invaluable resources for Library 101. Even better, our synagogue librarians will be asked to donate books (duplicates or weeded items) to these new libraries. In this economy, whatever can be shared is a win-win for the libraries involved.

Of course the experience of veteran synagogue librarians will be helpful to those who are entering the maze of temple boards, finances, and personalities. Having attended my first AJL convention in Chicago, I am looking forward to seeing you all again in Seattle in 2010.

Greater Cleveland Chapter

Submitted by Sean Martin

The Greater Cleveland Chapter concluded the 2008-2009 year with an annual meeting at the new location of Temple Emanu El. Chapter members Heather Lenson, Nina Rosner, Linda Silver, and Maureen Weissblatt offered lively reviews of both children's and adult titles from preliminary book lists put together by local AJL members. Summer events included an August ice cream social featuring Wendy Bartlett, fiction buyer for the Cuyahoga County Library System, who spoke on how to display and market books in different library settings.

Programming for 2009-2010 began in September with a presentation on Yiddish folklore by chapter member Esther Hexter. Other programs will include a visit to a local bindery and a discussion on how librarians can make use of new trends in technology, such as social networking.

Capital Area Chapter (AJL-CAC)

Submitted by Naomi Morse

On Sunday, June 7, the Capital Area Chapter held a celebration in honor of Beila Organic, who was presented with the chapter's Life Achievement Award. Beila has had a long and distinguished career as a librarian in the Washington DC area, first at the upper school of the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, and later at the Isaac Frank Library of the Bureau of Jewish Education of the Washington Area. She is currently retired from librarianship, but she participates in and leads book groups, and teaches English to recent Russian immigrants at the Gateways Program at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington.

A large number of appreciative students, colleagues, friends, and family came to honor Beila. Among the refreshments were delectable homemade blintzes prepared by Galina Teverovsky. We are grateful to Judith Mostyn White, who performed musical selections on the harp, and continued to provide lovely background music while guests socialized.

Yelena Luckert, president, and Michlean Amir, treasurer, organized this special event, which was held at Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Potomac, Maryland. Members of this year's nominating committee were Mollie Berch, Naomi Morse, and Gail Shirazi.



Beila Organic, standing beside chapter president Yela Luckert, displays her Life Achievement Award.

Chapter Representatives to the Rescue!

On August 6 San Antonio librarian Lynn Waghalter sent the following query to Chapter Relations co-chair Irene Seff: How many people should be on a library committee? I need to start one up! Irene forwarded the query to the members of her committee. Here are their replies.

Sylvia Firschein. I run an adult library for Temple Beth Shalom in Sarasota, Florida. Heather Miller runs the day school library; the Hebrew School doesn't have a library. We have to fix that! I have about 25 volunteers, and they are my library committee. We have two meetings a year—one at the end of October and one in March—this is to include those who go north for the summer. A few volunteers are very knowledgeable about libraries, and I go to them when I have a problem.

Amalia Warshenbrot. I feel that there should be a liaison from each department of the synagogue or school that benefits from the library services. For example, in a synagogue, you would include representation from the religious school, the pre-school, adult education, sisterhood, and program committee. I think that five to seven committee members are enough.

It is best to have people who use the library or are library volunteers. It is also important to have one or more people who are good with fund raising or who are very generous to the library. There is a chapter on library committees in Margot Berman's book, *How to Organize a Jewish Library*. By the way, I asked this question in one of the roundtable

discussions of SSC librarians. Most synagogue libraries do not have a committee.

Enid Sperber. Amazingly I have never had a library committee so I can't speak to this issue. But everything Amalia says makes perfect sense and is sound advice. Start small.

Judy Greenblatt. I would suggest a money person, an idea person, a worker, and a person with connections in the organization. I don't think the exact number is important, but covering constituencies is. I've found that about ten, give or take, works well.

Irene Seff. I don't think there is any one answer. It will depend on your community and the availability of interested members. I'd say a minimum of five and probably not more than ten (and that feels high). Why those numbers? Too many are just awkward to deal with and too few aren't enough. You'll want to vote or designate someone as chair.

A more important question might be: what is the role and what are the responsibilities of the Library Committee. What is your role? I'm not a film/video person, so I asked my library committee to take responsibility for that part of the collection. They organized a Sunday afternoon film series. I didn't even have to show up. At the beginning of the series, I did make an appearance, which was appreciated, and, more importantly, I gave permission to eat popcorn in the library.

Keeping Current

Prospects for Jewish Libraries and Jewish Bookstores

HENRY HOLLANDER

Times are tough all around. Libraries and booksellers are under attack. It would be nice to think that on the other side of this economic meltdown things will return to the way they were in some halcyon time. But don't count on it. Electronic books have arrived, and we are about to experience an existential challenge to our professions and institutions. Now is the time for us to examine what we are doing so that we can explain and defend the value and importance of our institutions to our users, patrons, customers, and the larger Jewish community. If we don't frame the debate early we may not have a second chance.

The electronic book was already on the minds of the technocrats when I began in the book trade in the late 1980s. The prognosis for my survival was never more than five years. However, the grail of the e-books was elusive. Unanticipated problems continually arose. Fifteen years passed before Sony was able to bring to market the first really satisfactory e-reader. Even then, they stumbled on content, delivery, and business model. The

device was clumsy. Books were expensive and selection was limited. Downloading was not easy.

In the fall of 2007 Amazon.com introduced the first version of the Kindle e-reader. It used a more advanced version of electronic paper but otherwise was not a significant technological innovation. Amazon's real innovation was to use the bully-pulpit of its Web site as a virtual billboard for both the Kindle and for the content that could be bought from Amazon to use on it. The business plan was the breakthrough. The idea was to dominate the field and keep the majority of the gross income and profits. The plan addressed problems in Amazon's business model. The first problem was the existence of competitors. By marketing a device that could only receive content from the seller of the device and selling content that would only work on the device, users were subscribing to an absolute monopoly. From a practical point of view, selling tangible things is a nuisance compared to selling virtual things. By setting retail prices and the discount

schedule in a closed market Amazon would turn publishers into share-croppers. Although it is unlikely that Amazon will be able to maintain an absolute monopoly, it aims to dominate the e-book market in the way that Apple dominates the online music market.

As of July 2009 Amazon had sold about one million Kindles. That is about 60 percent of the total market for e-readers (roughly 1.7 million units). Many people have yet to see one of these devices in real life. Although Oprah declared the Kindle one of her “favorite things,” we are still in the early adopter phase. A study recently published by Forrester Research and written by Sarah Potman Epps projects that the adoption of e-readers will follow the standard progression for the spread of successful technologies. As new features are added (such as color, improved graphics, faster data transfer, and additional content and types of content), sales will increase, causing a fall in price, which will result in an increase in sales. Ms. Epps projects that 13-15 million units will have sold by 2011/12. That usership will be composed of the most avid readers, older readers, and students.

I expect a confluence between smart phones and e-readers. As e-reader use becomes a day-to-day thing, smart phones will support direct downloading of e-books and e-reading. There are already early iPhone apps that address these issues. What this means is that e-reading will be available not just to the users of dedicated devices but to just about everyone. In this world, what value will remain in our printed books and the places that we keep them to be consulted, loaned, and sold? Stewart Brand has said, “Information wants to be free.” What is unacknowledged in his argument is that there is a financial cost to the distribution of free information and there are costs to society due to the loss of context and authorial control. The very transmigration of book knowledge into the virtual commodity of information has a cost in loss of simple comprehension.

To look forward, we need to look back at where we have been. Until the 1920s and in large part until the 1950s, Jewish libraries were of two types. The large Reform synagogues like Congregation Emanu-El of New York and Congregation Shearith Israel in San Francisco began to collect Jewish books in the nineteenth century. I speculate that this was initiated by the co-evolution of the Reform movement, with its agenda of adding “dignity” to Jewish practice, and the Wissenschaft des Judentums movement. Simultaneously, Jewish seminaries and Jewish teachers colleges came into existence and with them the libraries that supported their pedagogic purposes.

Jewish bookselling in America before the 1880s was a limited concern centered around the author-editor-publishers Isaac Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise. In the 1880s waves of immigration created the critical mass needed for a real Jewish book market. Jewish bookstores opened in New York, Boston, Philadelphia (probably also Montreal and Toronto), and eventually across the US and Canada. Initially these were seforim stores, but authors such as Alexander Harkavy saw a need to provide materials in Yiddish to help the immigrants succeed in their new homeland. Over the next fifty years these stores became the places where the new Yiddish literature and sheet music and American rabbinica were sold. Suburbanization ended the era, leaving behind only a few remnants, such as the Israel Book Shop in Boston and J. Levine in New York.

In her book *Wonders of America*, Jenna Weissman Joselit describes the type of Jewish bookstore that thrived in the suburbs, the synagogue gift shop. “Sisterhood gift shops, numbering in the hundreds by the mid-1950s, rose to the challenge by carrying an array of handsome, widely priced goods. Typically, these included wrapping paper and napkins with a Jewish motif, dreidels, puzzles, Kiddush cups, candlesticks, mezuzahs, challah covers and matzoh covers, traditional and ornate yarmulkes, tallesim, and tefillin, and newfangled items like a ‘yahrzeit bulb and stand.’ Figurines, etchings, books and ‘Palestinian things’ also crowded the shelves. Surveying this abundance, one gift shop customer proudly observed, ‘We have better facilities to work with than our mothers had’” (p. 160).

Other than Torahs and Tanakhs, non-English books were not part of this business model. English-language book publishing was slow to evolve. Bloch and the Jewish Publication Society began in the nineteenth century. The synagogue gift shop created the market that allowed English language Jewish book publishing to mature. New Jewish publishers started up (some grew out of bookstores, e.g., Feldheim) and mainstream publishers began to pursue the Jewish market. The majority of the Jewish bookstores that exist today are private extensions of the synagogue gift shop model.

Just as the synagogue gift shop was a project of the synagogue sisterhoods, so too was the kind of synagogue library that became common in both Reform and Conservative synagogues in this period. They served the vision of the synagogue-center of Mordecai Kaplan. In an era when women’s opportunities in the synagogue were limited to religious school, library, and gift shop,

Howard Salmon Ad (Shabbat Prayerbook)

the opportunity to work in those environments was attractive. In the postwar years Jewish studies expanded beyond the seminaries and teacher's colleges to the secular academic environment. Quotas disappeared and Jewish institutions found themselves competing with secular institutions for scholars and books.

Joselit cites the slogan, "Educate Through the Gift Shop" (p. 161). In the postwar years, Joselit repeatedly points out, interest in Jewish tradition and traditional practice underwent a renewal. Synagogue gift shops and libraries were vital informal resources for education in this era. Both were sites with low social barriers to entry that served the novice and knowledgeable alike. Between that time and the present, American Jewry and its need for both institutions has changed. The tendency towards synagogue disaffiliation that began in the late 1960s has made libraries and gift shops even more important access points. As opportunities have opened up for women in the work force, cantorate, rabbinate, and synagogue lay leadership, it has become harder to staff the libraries and gift shops.

So should we continue or not? It may be that in the majority culture around us, the consequences of "free information" and virtual books can be tolerated. But we are a minority culture and we need places where our messages are not overwhelmed by the technology or by people with interests other than our own. Jewish bookstores and libraries offer physical places where the physical objects that give tangible substance to who we are as people are best understood.

We know what we do. What problems would arise in our absence? In April of this year Amazon.com removed the gay and lesbian titles from its sales rankings. The books disappeared from some title searching, best-seller lists, and other specialized search lists. Anti-gay books were about all that came up when searches for gay and lesbian materials were made. In "Holt Uncensored" for May 18, Pat Holt quotes Ashley D of Amazon Member Services as saying, "we exclude 'adult' material from appearing in some searches and best seller lists." A Twitter-based furor caused enough noise that within a few days the titles mysteriously reappeared.

The May 18th Holt post recalls a legal case between Amazon.com and the Amazon Bookstore. "In the case the co-owners of Amazon Bookstore, an independent feminist bookseller founded in 1970 (i.e., decades before Amazon.com came along), asserted that their brick-and-mortar store had been losing money in the '80s and '90 because the online book retailer in Seattle had taken the Amazon name. Indeed, vendors, customers, reporters and online readers so often confused Amazon.com with Amazon Bookstore that the co-owners in Minneapolis spent as much time resolving mistakes as they did running their store. Attempts to find a peaceful solution through talks with Amazon.com were rebuffed, so the co-owners sued, citing trademark infringement." Amazon's defense bizarrely consisted of an attempt to identify the owners and managers as lesbians. It is unclear why Amazon pursued this ultimately losing strategy. I don't expect Amazon to treat Jews and Jewish books in the same way, but my point is that they could. To view this from the perspective of librarianship, consider what books are available on Tibet in the Chinese version of Google Books.

I referred to an existential crisis that both Jewish bookstores and libraries are facing. This is a crisis of perception. The mo-

mentum of the popular culture for new technologies that exclude us will lead to a loss in sales and a loss of financial support. For synagogue libraries this may mean the elimination or diminution of library staff. Libraries and booksellers don't need to work together to overcome this trend, but because they have similar goals and similar problems, they are natural allies.

I created a short survey for Jewish librarians about their relationships with local Jewish bookstores. I stressed local situations in order to inquire about the potential for partnerships. (One of my regrettable findings was that for many Jewish librarians, there was no potential partner available.) I received roughly twenty responses from librarians at synagogue, school, community center, and academic libraries. The primary reasons for tepid relationships were the sometimes-limited stock of the booksellers and the bookseller's inability to compete with other sources on price. Amazon did not come up as a source nearly as often as I expected. Among those who did cite Amazon, it tended to be a source of choice for those who bought most heavily on the basis of price alone. Others found better prices through a company that organized Jewish book fairs, through the bargains offered at AJL conferences, and through other used book sourcing sites on the Internet. In general, there was a sense that the effort to

Librarians and booksellers are natural allies.

find the best price was a strongly felt responsibility. There also appeared to be few signs that most stores actively sought the business of libraries and no signs that they were making efforts to understand the needs of libraries. On the plus side, the librarians who did physically visit the bookstores were sometimes able to find items that were self-published or otherwise outside the mainstream of Jewish publishing. Most of the survey responses indicated moderate to sharp cut-backs in library book funds. All library types were similar in this regard. Bookstores have also cut staff and hours, making them less accessible.

As I feel that the booksellers have done less to adjust to the needs of librarians than the reverse, I will address my advice in their direction first. Jewish booksellers need to take their selling efforts on the Internet seriously. They need to use Google optimization on their Web sites. The best of these stores' Web sites are quite limited. While their Web sites don't need to sell every Jewish book, they do need to have a more comprehensive feel to them. The titles that they promote heavily on their sites and in their shops need to be the items that are harder to purchase through Amazon and elsewhere online: books from publishers like Ktav, Artscroll, Feldheim, and Israeli publishers. Their stock needs to go light on the Jewish-interest titles of mainstream publishers.

These stores need to organize as a group to negotiate better discounts from the Jewish publishers and university presses that generally offer only short discounts. They need to stock catalogs from Jewish museums, archives, and institutions. They need to seek out remainders and hurts in order to undercut the prices of Amazon and the chain stores. Their shelves cannot look like the shelves in Borders and Barnes & Noble. Where there is similarity, the Jewish bookstores need to compete on price.

Booksellers need to ask librarians what they need and what terms of sale are most helpful to them. Booksellers need to use blogs and e-mail and paper mailing lists on a regular basis to update librarians on new arrivals and on recent trends in their customer's preferences. Bookstores should set up affiliate buying programs with local Jewish institutions and synagogues and take over the links on their Web sites that direct customers to Amazon and other non-Jewish sites. Bookstores need to set up the facilities for Jewish institutions and synagogues to post wish-lists so that their members and supporters can make direct donations of precisely the books that are sought.

Libraries must find new sources of income that are independent of the overall budgets of their synagogues and institutions. They must draw attention to their efforts through electronic and non-electronic means. Synagogue libraries should work with preschools and religious schools on birthday donation programs. A similar approach could be applied to adult books in conjunction with successful adult-ed or senior-ed programs. For school and academic libraries, such projects could yield positive public relations. Donation book plates serve to provide a sense of "buy in." When making purchases, all efforts should be made to consolidate library and school orders at synagogues. This motivates booksellers to work with libraries. Booksellers who cannot afford to discount single items can usually discount bulk orders.

With the aid of volunteers, libraries should solicit widely for donations of all sorts of books. Such non-Judaica and duplicate Judaica donated can be sold at a library book sale. In order to make a more high-profile event, multiple synagogues and institutions can work together as a group and split profits. Joint events would probably get more and better publicity for the community of libraries and the idea of libraries. The more help libraries can get from volunteers, the better off they will be. A good volunteer effort shows that there is support for the library and also shifts some burdens off the shoulders of the librarian.

Librarians should try to see their libraries more the way booksellers see their stores. They should visit bookstores and compare appearances. People say that they like old books, but few buy them. Even if it does not cost patrons to check a book out of a library, they use the same instincts in selecting books that they use in a retail setting. In a new bookstore look at the physical qualities of the books that are currently popular. Talk to booksellers about which books sell frequently and which rarely. Over time, conversations with booksellers will help librarians see beneath the surface of their patrons' behavior. If librarians and booksellers can talk knowledgeably with their counterparts, both patrons and customers will perceive a larger world of Jewish books. Use is the key word. If we are able to get people into our places and get them to use the books they find with us, we will have no better defense of our cause. Invite the board of your organization to come for a tour of the library. Put some books directly in their hands. Make yourself more real to them than a line in a budget or a flickering page on a screen.

Between now and the time e-reading is taken for granted, things will remain difficult. Some types of books will survive and thrive. Some will survive only because they have a specialized audience. If we succeed in making our value understood, we will survive the crisis and come out on the other side, valued and acknowledged as the important resources we are.

Anton Ad (Rashi's Daughters)

Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY LINDA R. SILVER

In The Spotlight

Bial, Raymond. *Ellis Island: Coming to the Land of Liberty.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2009. 57p. \$18.00. ISBN: 978-0-618-99943-9. Gr. 4-8.

Between 1890 and 1924, millions of immigrants came to the United States. Most of them entered through the Port of New York and its Ellis Island center. In this succinct photo-essay, Raymond Bial provides stories and spectacular photographs and other images that tell about the immigrant experience. He begins with a quick history of the island itself, and follows with a short summary—unknown to many—of New York's immigration history, including some information about who came to America in the early- and mid-19th century. Next, he describes the construction of the complex, including the elegant main building with its French Renaissance architecture, which opened in 1900 after a fire had destroyed the original structure. The bulk of the volume tells about the process of immigration. It includes quotations from numerous oral histories, and dozens of wonderful photographs showing the people who came, the things they brought, and the process of "intake" they underwent in order to become Americans. Historical documents and photographs are interspersed with photos of the Main Hall today, and the many displays seen by thousands of visitors every week.

While this book contains many statements by Jewish immigrants, it is not primarily about them and their particular rigors. The stories, quotations, and photos come from across Europe and over several generations, showing the general conditions of immigrant life and the common threads that brought people across the ocean. This excellent introduction to Ellis Island should be considered by all libraries.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Editor's note: Raymond Bial is also the author of *Tenement: Immigrant Life on the Lower East Side* (Houghton Mifflin, 2002) as well as many other books.

Bogacki, Tomek. *The Champion of Children: The Story of Janusz Korczak.* New York: Frances Foster/Farrar Straus Giroux, 2009. 33p. \$17.99. ISBN: 978-0-374-34136-7. Reviewed from an advance reading copy. Gr. 4-6.

Expressive acrylic illustrations by the author immediately set the tone of this Holocaust biography. The cover art shows Janusz Korczak's concerned eyes, while the eyes of the children gazing at him are hopeful; he is clearly their beloved guide. Preceding the title page is an illustration of a city with red rooftops and verdant vegetation captioned "Warsaw, Poland, before World War II." Turning to the end of the book there is an illustration of a city with blurred and muted gray colors captioned "Warsaw, Poland, in 1945, after World War II." These contrasting and symbolic illustrations frame the text, which begins by explain-

ing how a young Janusz Korczak, born Henryk Goldszmit, was so intensely touched by the sight of underprivileged children that he decided to devote his life to helping them. The illustrations accompanying the account of his happy childhood are cheerful. After Janusz turns eleven and his father becomes ill, the visual background becomes somber. The tone lightens as the orphanages directed by Korczak are described. Readers are given a glimpse of these progressive, humane, and democratic institutions in which the children elect their own leaders, go to the countryside in the summers, and write newspapers. When the Nazis invade Poland, the illustrations again become somber, with darkly-colored German soldiers and gray, sickly ghetto prisoners. Even during this desperate time, the children are still colorful and bright, as Janusz marches with them onto the train taking them to their death in a concentration camp. This biography is recommended for all libraries.

Heather Lenson, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH

Clark, Kathy. *Guardian Angel House. Holocaust Remembrance Book for Young Readers Series.* Toronto: Second Story Press, 2009. 225p. \$14.95. ISBN: 978-1-897187-58-6 Pbk. Gr. 4-8

Guardian Angel House is the nickname given to a convent run by the Sisters of Charity in Budapest that shelters over 120 Jewish children during World War II. Told from the point of view of twelve-year-old Susan, this is the story of Jews who have always lived a secure life in Hungary until the invasion of the Nazis in 1944. Even when rumors of bad things happening to Jews throughout Europe begins, the family still feels secure in Hungary. Susan and her younger sister are sent to the convent against her mother's good judgment, to be kept safe from the Nazis. The tale is one of survival, of growing up without family, of Jewish children living in a protective and loving Catholic environment that is foreign to them, of mutual respect between people of different religions, of a young woman forced to learn courage at an early age. Based on the true story of the author's mother and aunt, it is historical fiction at its best. Historical photographs are included and notes about the author's family and the convent are appended. Recommended for readers ages 10 to 14.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library Englewood, NJ

Davies, Jacqueline. *Lost.* Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2009. 242p. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-7614-5535-6. Gr. 10-12.

Essie, the protagonist in this turn-of-the-century Lower East Side novel, is a young girl who ages from 10 to 16, but the themes of death, denial, unwed pregnancy, crushing work, depression, parental neglect, fire, tragedy, and trauma make one question whether this is truly a teen selection (let alone for ages 12 and up, as suggested on the book jacket). Nonetheless, it is a suspenseful and likely accurate portrayal of the lives of women and girls at home in the tenements or at work at the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. The author skillfully weaves together the fictional story of Essie—along with her widowed mother, her hoodlum brother Saulie, and her high-spirited, spoiled, curious, dramatic little sister Zelda—with a historically-based mystery involving

Essie's new friend, Harriet. This aspect of the novel is based on the experience of a young woman who actually disappeared from her well-heeled Upper East Side life and, in the author's imagination, perhaps shared the tragic fate of Jewish girls from Essie's world in the Triangle fire of March 25, 1911. This well-written story shows the dark side of Jewish immigrant life, with its many losses—of life, dignity, childhood, and Jewish observance—as reflected in the title.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Dublin, Anne. *Dynamic Women Dancers. Women's Hall of Fame Series. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2009. 129p. \$10.95. ISBN: 978-1-897187-56-2 Pbk. Gr. 6-9*

Anne Dublin's newest book is a lovely look at women dancers who were and are leaders in their fields, written as a collective biography. Each chapter covers one dancer and is eight to ten pages long. The dancers—several of whom are Jewish—range chronologically from Anna Pavlova, who danced with Nijinsky, up to Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, who created Urban Bush Women, a dance company that is still performing. They are from Canada, Cuba, India, Russia, Spain, and the United States, representing forms as diverse as Spanish flamenco and the classical Indian Bharatanatyam. Each entry includes biographical information, the subject's dance history, and her attempts to change the world for the better through dance. What really works for young readers is that some of the dancers are still creating new dances. Others continue to choreograph and some are still dancing or are leaders in their fields. Photographs illustrate each chapter, helping to round out the portraits created in the clear, succinct text.

Included are several appendices: a two-page introduction to types of dance; a glossary of terms relating to dance; and a bibliography, called Sources and Resources, on each dancer included in the book. This excellent resource is recommended for middle school students who are doing reports or reading for pleasure.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

Editor's note: Anne Dublin is an AJL member and co-editor of *AJL Newsletter* reviews of books for children and teens. She is the author of several other books, including a Sydney Taylor honor book, *Bobbie Rosenfeld: The Olympian Who Could Do Everything* (Second Story Press, 2004).

Engle, Margarita. *Tropical Secrets: Holocaust Refugees in Cuba. New York: Henry Holt, 2009. 208p. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-8050-8936-3. Reviewed from an uncorrected proof. Gr. 7-9.*

Tropical Secrets is a coming-of-age story and an unusual piece of Holocaust history, told in free verse. A 13-year-old boy named Daniel has been sent away by his German Jewish parents after Kristallnacht. His ship has been turned away from the shores of the United States and Canada before finally being allowed to dock in Havana, Cuba. Daniel's longing for his family and his haunting memories of the night of breaking glass are constant throughout the novel. In Havana he meets and becomes friendly with 12-year-old Paloma, who has discovered that her father is in the business of selling visas to refugees and then exposing those refugees to the Cuban authorities. She and Daniel share a lot of cultural information from their varying backgrounds and decide to help hide a Jewish woman with a non-Jewish husband

who is under suspicion of being a Nazi spy. Their story is effectively told in alternating narratives. Daniel, faced with many new experiences and sensations, is constantly filled with insights mature beyond his years such as, "What a strange twist of fate" and "There but for the grace of God..." The text is short but powerful and is packed with information. The historical reality is that Cuba, over the period from 1938-1939, took in and saved the lives of 65,000 Jews. Highly recommended.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

Frankel, Ellen. *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible. Illus. by Avi Katz. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2009. 256p. \$35.00. ISBN: 978-0-8276-0891-7. Reviewed from an advance reading copy. Gr. 2-6.*

Ellen Frankel has chosen 53 stories from the Tanach for her stunning *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*. Although more than half of them come from Genesis and Exodus, she includes stories from the rest of the Torah, as well as from the Prophets and the Writings. In a book like this, some stories must be excluded, and Frankel gives a clear rationale for why she chose what she did. The language and rhythms of this volume are close to the original Hebrew and, for the most part, come from the 1985 JPS translation. Frankel has made judicious choices, so that a child can delight in the stories themselves, without being detoured by unfamiliar or archaic words and concepts. In the helpful "Author's Notebook" for parents, educators, and rabbis, Frankel elucidates the following thorny issues: diction, translation, Hebrew, editing, commentary, objectionable adult material, and gender. She also lists the stories she included and their order in the Tanach. A comprehensive index of people, places, and things completes the back matter.

Frankel's goal was to create a book that would appeal to "modern American kids." She is always aware of her audience—children of the 21st century—their reading proficiency, vocabulary, cultural literacy, and maturity. She does not talk down to her readers nor does she exclude certain problematic stories that she believes are an important part of the national Jewish story, for example, the binding of Isaac.

Avi Katz's gorgeous illustrations, in pencil, ink, and watercolor, are a perfect complement to these Bible stories. At least one full-page illustration accompanies each story. In addition, like a zoom-in camera, segments of the larger illustrations are placed judiciously within the text. A sense of flow and continuity is provided by the design, for the pages without illustrations have borders that echo the main illustration. My eleven-year-old nephew called the illustrations "cool, awesome, and action-packed." Praise indeed.

Northrop Frye, the eminent literary scholar, wrote in *The Educated Imagination* that "... everything else finds its place inside [the Bible]." *The JPS Illustrated Children's Bible* will surely help children understand themselves, their relationships with others, and with God. This lovely, inspiring book is a treasure that will be passed down from generation to generation. Highly recommended for every home, school, and public library.

Anne Dublin, Toronto, Canada



Hoffman, Amalia. *The Klezmer Bunch.* Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing, 2009. 40p. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-965-229-447-0. Gr. 1-4.

Off-beat whimsical characters populate a mischievous story that dynamically delivers the definition, uses, and spirit of a klezmer band. The Klezmer Bunch from Stanislavka must travel far to play at a wedding in the village of Tarnopolska, which has no klezmer musicians and desperately needs this music for the nuptials. The instruments are too heavy for the Stanislavka musicians to schlep to their gig. The lady in the group remembers her long unused baby carriage. The carriage is so excited to be in use after so many years that it becomes possessed, rolling off with the instruments at a speed no one can match. How to control the run-away transportation and save instruments and wedding? The surprise solution comes from the instruments themselves. The ending, happy for musicians and bridal party, bursts with wild joy.

The sprightly story is a version of the run-away cart, barrel, you-name-it tale but becomes original in its hilarious, mobile, colorful illustrations. The witty text is as lively as the art. The fast-paced tale includes song lyrics and many Yiddish words. The delightful fiction is book-ended by two fine pieces, one on the definition of klezmer and the other on history of this music. Readers absorb information while the warm, conversational tone keeps didactics at bay. Author/illustrator Hoffman repeats her rollicking style, first noticed in the hilarious *Purim Goodies*. The tale is so much fun, readers will be surprised how much they learn. Highly recommend for the picture book crowd.

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

Wormell, Christopher. *The Animals Came Two by Two: The Story of Noah's Ark.* Philadelphia: Running Press Kids, 2008. 47p. \$19.95. ISBN: 978-0-7624-2718-5. Preschool-Gr. 3.

This version of the biblical tale is more about the pictures than the story. Wormell's wood-cut illustrations of the various animals on Noah's ark are strikingly beautiful. The sophisticated artistry is contrasted by the delightfully simple, yet elegant, re-telling of this familiar biblical story. As Noah sets out to collect the animals for the ark, Wormell draws the reader into the enormity of the task with few words and large pictures. For example, the text reads, "From the small... to the large. The tall... to the short." Each phrase is accompanied respectively by illustrations of mice, elephants, giraffes and weasels. The book presents eight comparisons like this culminating in a three-page centerfold in which all the animals are at the ark's entrance. At the end of the book, each of the 16 animals illustrated is identified with an informative paragraph about them. The story begins with God instructing Noah to save the creatures from an impending flood. From that introduction the text follows the biblical version quite faithfully until the end. Rather than seeing a rainbow and offering thanks to God, the reader is told, "And though all those animals had marched onto the ark two by two, a great many marched off three by three!" As a parent of small children, this reviewer likes that the flood is not about good and evil. The focus on Noah as savior of God's creatures and the complexity of his task is perfectly appropriate for pre-school and school-age children. From a literary perspective, the birth of new animals offers the right closure to the theme of saving God's creatures.

But this same parent could do without the awkward questions that will arise about how a third animal got on the ark! This volume is cloth-bound, non-denominational, and appropriate for Jewish libraries.

Deborah Abecassis, Montreal, QC, Canada

BIBLE

Zediker, Rose Ross. *Wealth in Biblical Times.* Philadelphia: Mason Crest, 2010. 115p. \$14.95. ISBN 978-1-4222-0477-1.

Wealth in Biblical Times is a title that sounds likely to be appropriate for Jewish collections. The subject is certainly out of the ordinary and the format of the book is good, with illustrations that enhance the text. The problem is that it is a Christian book written from that perspective. The quote from Matthew on the first page and the point of view throughout the text clue the reader into that fact. For example, the author uses the phrase "Old Testament" several times and the appended notes and Internet resources in the back are primarily Christian as well. Moreover, interpretations of biblical events and figures are Christian, not Jewish. This may be a decent book but it is not a Jewish book.

Debbie Feder, Ida Crown Jewish Academy, Chicago, IL

BIOGRAPHY

Herweck, Don. *Albert Einstein and His Theory of Relativity.* Mankato, MN: Compass Point, 2009. 40p. \$26.65. ISBN: 978-0-7565-4072-2. Gr. 4-6.

Albert Einstein and His Theory of Relativity is part of the Mission Science Biographies series. It is written in simple language appropriate for students in grades 4-6. Aside from the fact that Einstein was Jewish there is nothing Jewish about this book except for a sentence that mentions that Einstein's parents were Jewish but not traditionally observant. Drawings and photographs illustrate Einstein's theories. The last few pages consist of a one-page summary of Einstein's life, a timeline, glossary, list of other prominent physicists, and an index. Better biographies of Einstein exist—Don Brown's *Odd Boy Out* (Houghton Mifflin, 2004), Marfe Ferguson Delano's *Genius* (National Geographic, 2005), John Severance's *Albert Einstein* (Clarion, 1999), and Devra Speregen's *Albert Einstein: The Jewish Man Behind the Theory* (JPS, 2006)—so this one is not a necessary purchase.

Ilka Gordon, Siegal College of Judaic Studies, Cleveland, OH

Kimmel, Eric A. *A Spotlight for Harry.* Illus. by Jim Madsen. A Stepping Stone Book. New York: Random House, 2009. 112p. \$15.99. ISBN: 978-0-375-85869-7. Reviewed from an advance reading copy. Gr. 1-4.

Eric A. Kimmel's newest book, *A Spotlight for Harry*, exemplifies the author's notable writing talent. Kimmel is a prolific writer of children's books and winner of many prestigious awards including the Caldecott Honor Medal for *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* and the Sydney Taylor Book Award for Younger Readers for *The Chanukkah Guest* and *Gershon's Monster*. This book is the

third written by Kimmel for the *Stepping Stone* series; *A Picture for Marc* was named a Sydney Taylor Notable Book in 2008. It depicts the childhood years of Erich Weisz, who later becomes the famed escape artist, Harry Houdini. In this book, based on true events in the life of Harry Houdini, we are introduced to Harry and his brother, Dash. Dash, who becomes famous in his own right as the magician Hardeen, is Harry's younger and devoted sibling.

What makes this easy fictionalized biography so enjoyable is the focus on Houdini's persistence at imitating the acts that he sees at the circus, sometimes with disastrous consequences. Kimmel engages the reader by making Harry and Dash's characters come alive with believable juvenile antics. Houdini's rise to fame is no accident. It is easy to understand where his lifelong dedication to entertaining the masses is born.

Jim Madsen is a published author and an illustrator of children's books, among them two *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* books and *Adventure Bible Storybook*. A note in this advance copy states, "Interior art throughout is not final." The black-and-white proofs, however, aptly illustrate the story and create a flowing action background. This book is recommended for ages 6-9, but older Houdini devotees will also enjoy reading it.

Tammy Gerson, Congregation Children of Israel, Athens, GA

Koestler-Grack, Rachel. *Elie Wiesel: Witness for Humanity. Life Portraits Series.* Strongsville, OH: Gareth Stevens, 2009. 112p. \$34.00. ISBN: 978-14339-0054-9. Gr. 6-8.

The opening chapter is gripping. In a freight car carrying prisoners to a concentration camp, a usually quiet woman becomes hysterical with visions of fire all around them; she is a seer of their future. Next, a flashback is devoted to Wiesel's happy childhood in an Orthodox Jewish milieu but the text then dives directly into the rise of Hitler and the Nazis and the beginning of the end. "Angel of Death at the City Gates" covers arrival at the camp and Dr. Mengele's selections. Work and life in the camp are discussed without mention of how many of the boys of Buchenwald were protected by the Resistance within the camp and why so many survived. There is a graphic retelling of camp brutality in the larger camp where Wiesel also spent time, which includes his father's death and his own feelings of guilt. "Evacuation and Learning to Live" limns what happens to Wiesel after the war and in his adulthood. The book presents its highlights against bluish and lavender inserts that are not intrusive, and the mood induced by this color scheme is appropriate to the narrative. Large photos, some in color, and significant quotes by Wiesel are boxed. Two chapters—"Witness for the Voiceless" and "Fighting Indifference"—are compelling commentaries on what Elie Wiesel has become to the world. Following the narrative are a timeline, a conversation with the director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum about the meaning and message for youngsters of Wiesel's life, a glossary, sources for more information, a list of Wiesel's books, pertinent Web sites, a bibliography, source notes, and an index.

Marcia W. Posner, Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, Glen Cove, NY



FICTION

Astaire, Libi. *The Disappearing Dowry.* New York: Zahav Press, 2009. 218p. \$9.99. ISBN: 978-156871501-9 Pbk. Gr. 9-12. Distributed by Targum Press.

This is an enjoyable teen novel (fully readable by adults as well), a mystery with Jewish practices and values imbedded in a completely natural, non-didactic way. The narrator, a Jewish girl in 1810 London, tells the "megilla" of her wealthy, observant family's plans for her sister Hannah's wedding, which are suddenly interrupted by the loss of the family fortune through bank failures and theft. Focusing on a button, a coin, and a key, and using Talmudic logic, a wise friend of the family, Ezra Melamed, investigates and solves the mystery, restoring the family's financial means and rescuing the wedding plans. There is a Jewish background (G-d's guiding hand, business ethics, Torah learning) as well as a setting that touches on history, economics, and sociology (bankruptcies, credit, immigrants, orphans, pickpockets). The book is appropriate for any reader, including the most observant Orthodox audience. It is hoped that there will be more in the "Ezra Melamed Mystery" series.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Belasen, Amy, and Jacob Osborn. *Jenny Green's Killer Junior Year.* New York: Simon Pulse, 2009. 284p. \$8.99. ISBN: 978-1-4169-6792-7. Pbk. Gr. 10-12.

After being betrayed by her friend in the JAP (Jewish American Princess) crowd at her Long Island high school, Jenny Green convinces her parents to let her transfer to Molsen Academy, a boarding school in Montreal. Her motivation for choosing Molsen is to follow a cute boy, Josh Beck, who moved to Montreal from Long Island and attends the school. In the past, Jenny has not been above harmless revenge tactics to even scores. Once she arrives at Molsen Academy, she finds Josh and starts dating him. When she discovers that he is not that great, she dumps him; he bursts into her dorm room intoxicated and attempts to rape her. In self-defense, she bludgeons him to death. Afterwards, she cleans up the crime scene and gets away with the murder. Following this incident, Jenny takes on a sort of vigilante role, killing males who mistreat young women. An apt title for the book would have been "Serial Princess." The story is a dark comedy with some funny scenes that remind readers that Jenny is still a teen with adolescent concerns, even though she is on a killing spree. An example is her comment the day after one of the murders, "I freaked and broke out in random sweats that were totally gonna give me acne." Still, stereotypes detract from the story. Jenny's parents are "stereotypical Jewish parents." Her father is a "work-a-holic" with sinus problems and her mother is neurotic and over-protective. Most disappointing is the use of the term "JAP." Haven't we moved past this self-deprecating term? Not recommended for Jewish libraries.

Heather Lenson, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH

Fried, Leah. *Nan's Long Journey.* Illus. by Ruth Beifus. New York: Feldheim, 2009. 259p. \$19.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-287-2. Gr. 3-6.

Nan's Long Journey tells the story of a young German girl who is sent to Switzerland by her non-Jewish father to live with

Jewish Lights Ad

his mother. The story begins in Berlin, Germany, immediately after Kristallnacht in November of 1938. Nan is a rambunctious yet stubborn girl, reminiscent of the character of Heidi. In fact, a brief reference to that book is made in the story. Nan's optimistic outlook carries her through many adventures and perils. Her long journey brings unexpected surprises and maturation; it is not only geographic but spiritual as well. The author has done a great job at conveying the simple desires and thoughts of a young girl who must make critical choices about Judaism, having never lived a Torah life. The characters are memorable and believable, their interactions guided by the terrible times in which they live. Even though some of the characters resemble those in the *Heidi* novel, the themes and settings sufficiently separate them. Ruth Beifus's artwork is descriptive and delightful, adding value to the story while bringing the characters to life. *Nan's Long Journey* is composed of 47 short chapters, and would be appropriate for grades 3-6. Recommended for synagogue and day school libraries.

Tammy Gerson, Cohen Library, Athens, GA

Friedman, Robin. *The Importance of Wings*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2009. 166p. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-1-58089-330-5. Gr. 4-6.

Roxanne is an 8th grader living in a suburb of New York in the 1980s. Roxanne is not her real name, and she is not a typical American. She's an Israeli named Ravit, who yearns to be a real American, and this slim book is her first-person account. She and her sister eat cocoa puffs, watch TV on Saturday mornings, and try to take care of themselves while their Aba is out driving a cab in Manhattan until all hours. Ema is back in Israel, caring for her sick sister. The girls miss Ema terribly, and feel parentless without her. Other than the Hebrew words Ema and Aba there is very little that is Israeli, and nothing that is Jewish in their lives. Their only connection to things Israeli is going to the mall with Aba to eat Middle Eastern food. The girls read Ema's letters, written in Hebrew, with difficulty. Roxanne's preoccupation is with how to fit in, how to survive gym, and how not to be victimized by the meanies at school. She yearns for a hairdo with "wings" (hair carefully waved around the face) like some of the popular girls in her grade. There is lot of talk about a vacant pink house across the street that is supposedly cursed. Big time trouble has come to every family that has lived there so far.

Enter Liat, the new girl who moves into the scary pink house. And surprise surprise, Liat turns out to be Israeli, and she is fine with that. She likes her Hebrew name. She doesn't worry. She's not scared of the pink house. She's not ashamed of her differently dressed father or his girlfriend. She knows how to stick up for herself, and also how to be a friend. She becomes Roxanne's friend and her only meaningful emotional connection in the book. Over the course of the next months she models for Roxanne how not to be so self-involved, so worried about what other people think, and so afraid to defend herself. Liat reveals that her mother was killed in a suicide bomb attack in Tel Aviv. Her stance is that the worst has already happened and nothing scares her now. She's strong. Liat shows Roxanne and Gayle, aka Galit, how to be fine with being Israeli-American.

This book does not express Jewish or even Israeli values. It is limited to the self-conscious thoughts and actions of an adoles-

cent with no larger reach than herself. It may prompt discussion about what is missing in Ravit's life that turns her into Roxanne. It may invite comparison with other young girls' diaries that do have a larger scope. Did the author intend a larger meaning to the word "wings" in the title? It is recommended as easy reading for girls 9-12 and should be considered as an additional purchase for large school and public libraries.

Naomi Morse, Silver Spring, MD

Greene, Jacqueline Dembar. *Meet Rebecca et al*. Illus. by Robert Hunt. Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company/American Girl, 2009. Priced individually at \$12.95 and as a set of six books at \$39.95. ISBN: 978-1-59369-520-0, 978-1-59369-522-4, 978-1-59369-582-8, 978-1-59369-526-2, 978-1-59369-528-6, 978-1-59369-530-9. Gr. 3-7

American Girl's "Rebecca" series of six books was published in connection with the introduction of the new Rebecca doll, described as "a lively girl with dramatic flair growing up in New York City" in 1914. Each of the books in the series follows an identical format: a repeated foreword about Jewish immigrant families of the era; an introduction to Rebecca's Jewish family; the main story; a section entitled "Looking Back," which elaborates on a theme from the story and introduces the reader to an aspect of Jewish life in 1914; a glossary; and a "sneak peek" at the next book in the series. The stories are nicely illustrated with vintage photos and color drawings of the action and specific items as they occur in the story.

In *Meet Rebecca*, the title character comes up with a clever way to raise money to bring her Russian cousins to America, and we learn about immigrant life in New York City. In *Rebecca and Ana*, Rebecca helps her cousin adjust to her new life, and we learn about school days in 1914. In *Candlelight for Rebecca*, Rebecca makes choices about Christmas decorations, and we learn about "Hanukah in 1914." In *Rebecca and the Movies*, she celebrates her 10th birthday with a visit to a movie studio, during Passover, and we learn about the Jewish roots of the film business. In *Rebecca to the Rescue*, she demonstrates her bravery when the Ferris wheel breaks down at her brother's bar mitzvah celebration at Coney Island, and we learn about seaside resorts in 1914. In *Changes for Rebecca*, our heroine visits the garment factory where her relatives toil, later accompanying workers in a labor demonstration, and we learn about strikes, unions, picket lines, and other ways workers fought for their rights.

Throughout the series, Rebecca is spunky, caring, compassionate, and resourceful. Secondary characters such as Bubbie and Cousin Max are also well developed. In her easy-to-read style, the author gently handles the tensions between the old world (speaking Yiddish, keeping Passover, traditional family values) and the new (trying new things, doing what you love, working on Shabbat). One perhaps false note is the motto, "The best we can do in this life is follow our hearts"—not exactly a Jewish message. The stories are full of history lessons (sugar-coated and with occasionally unlikely adventures), very much in the tradition of Sydney Taylor's classic *All of a Kind Family* books, as we get to know and love a Jewish girl with real emotions and authentic experiences. Even without the doll, these books will be treasured.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Greenwald, Lisa. *My Life in Pink & Green.* New York: Amulet Books/Harry Abrams, 2009. 272p. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-8109-8352-6. Gr. 4-7.

The main character in this sweet book has a Jewish name, the JCC (Jewish Community Center) is mentioned in passing, and someone has a bat mitzvah—but that's the extent of its Jewish content. Some libraries or book clubs might want to include it for its Jewish values of tikkun olam, kindness towards others, respect for parents, and making a difference in the world, as well as for its absence of cynicism. The story is unrelentingly positive. Whether fixing a friend's hair problem, advising on make-up, increasing ecological awareness, or trying to save her family's pharmacy business, 12-year-old Lucy Desberg, perhaps best described as a "goody two-shoes," is always empathetic and determined to do the right thing. Another of Lucy's Jewish-flavored characteristics is that she believes that everything happens for a reason. There is no evidence, however, that Judaism informs Lucy's actions or beliefs.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

McDonough, Yona Zeldis. *The Doll Shop Downstairs.* Illus. by Heather Maione. New York: Viking, 2009. 128p. \$14.99. ISBN: 978-0-670-01091-2. Reviewed from an advance reading copy. Gr. 3-5.

Yona Zeldis McDonough, author of *Eve and Her Sisters*, *Hammerin' Hank*, and *The Doll with the Yellow Star*, delivers another worthy staple for Judaic libraries with her latest book, *The Doll Shop Downstairs*. Set on the Lower East Side in the early 1900s, Anna and her sisters live above their parents' doll repair shop. When an embargo on German-made products threatens the family's business, they pull together to solve the problem in a unique and creative way. Anyone who has ever treated a doll as an inseparable friend and close confidant will find the story charming and wish to share it with doll lovers everywhere. Maione's black-and-white illustrations succinctly capture the essence of this period and give the reader a sense of a young girl's innocent world of tea parties, imaginative play, and family outings. A short glossary defines doll making and Jewish terms and a timeline provides historical highlights. Recommended.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel, Akron, OH

Ostow, Micol. *So Punk Rock (And Other Ways to Disappoint Your Mother).* Illus. by David Ostow. Woodbury, MN: Flux, 2009. 264p. \$9.95. ISBN: 978-0-7387-1471-4 Pbk. Gr. 11-12.

Ari Abramson, an 11th grader in a New Jersey Jewish day school, wants to impress popular Sari Horovitz by starting a punk rock band. Surprisingly successful, the quartet of musicians—including egotistical Jonas on bass, Orthodox Yossi on drums, and level-headed Reena as vocalist—spice up their "boring, suburban, anonymous high school lives" by avoiding SAT prep, attempting to write new songs, rehearsing for gigs, performing, and attending an after-concert party where their relationship issues come to a head. The novel has much more Jewish content than the author's 2006 work, *Emily Goldberg Learns to Salsa*, and some readers may be attracted to the occasionally clever, smart-mouth language and intermittent graphic cartoon illustrations. However, there are many serious problems with this book. It tries too hard to be "with it," and the effort is both

transparent and fake. The liberal use of bad language is offensive, especially the repeated use of "f^&*ing." The jokes about Judaism are supposed to be cool but are actually disrespectful. Passover is "those seven torturous days in Spring." Hebrew is a "dead language." Yossi's traditional observances are "this weird, cult-like branch of Judaism. And there is this little gem: 'Are you f^&*ing serious? I nod grimly. Serious as Yom Kippur, man.'" The characters act in an extremely immature and irresponsible way, tricking Yossi into performing on Shabbat, engaging in underage drinking, deceiving parents, leaving the scene of an accident. Editing errors include misspelling of "nieghbors" and the misuse of "discrete" instead of "discreet." Towards the end, Ari redeems himself somewhat with a turning away from Jonas and Sari, a greater sensitivity toward Yossi, and coming clean with his parents. The book could probably be useful in a discussion of upholding Jewish values under the pressures of the high school scene, but it is difficult to recommend.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Sofer, Rachel. *We Need to Talk: What Happens When Looking Thin Becomes an Obsession.* New York: Devora/Pitspopany, 2008. 192p. \$18.95. ISBN: 978-1-934440-30-8. Gr. 9-12

Miri is a young teacher at an Orthodox school for girls, balancing personal, family, and religious life. After her third child, Miri suffers from postpartum depression and shortly thereafter discovers that Risa, a student who has become a close friend, has anorexia. Many interesting issues are presented and it is refreshing to see them through the eyes of a young Orthodox woman. Miri is an authentic character, realistic but not perfect. Religious young women will find much to relate to in Miri's life. Although this book is appropriate for teens, it feels more like an adult novel.

Barbara Bietz, Oak Park, CA

Sheinmel, Courtney. *My So-Called Family.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008. 208p. \$15.99. ISBN: 978-1-4169-5785-0. Gr. 6-9.

Leah Hoffman-Ross moves to New York with her family the summer before 8th grade. She wants to seem like any other kid so she tells her new friends that her father is in Europe, concealing the fact that she doesn't know who her biological father is—he was Donor 730 from Lyon's Reproductive Services. Leah's mother believes that Leah has all the family she needs, but an intense desire to find what she believes is a missing piece of herself drives her to the Internet, where she finds a half-sibling on the Lyon's Sibling Registry. Leah lies to her mother and step-father to go meet her newly discovered half-sister.

The author presents believable characters in Leah, whose stream-of-consciousness narration really sounds like a teenager, and her friends, who have distinct personalities. Leah is basically a good kid, and when her dishonesty comes to light, she apologizes and tells the truth. Warm but realistic relationships between teenage girls and their families are unusual in fiction, and Sheinmel's portrayal of a loving family working through an atypical situation will appeal to readers. This engaging novel also reminds readers that families come in many varieties. Recommended.

Marci Lavine Bloch, Silver Spring, MD

Subar, Leah. *Copycat*. New York: Targum Press, 2009. 132p. \$13.99. ISBN: 978-1-568-71-483-7. Gr. 3-6

A brilliant student in her Orthodox girls' school in Colorado (an odd choice of location), Tziporah is so desperate for a social life that she allows her popular classmate Ricki to copy from her tests and writes a science paper for her, even though she knows that this is wrong. Ricki is not only a cheater and a bully, she is a liar and a thief as well. Her weapon is calling people names and ostracizing them. For some reason, none of the 6th graders have the guts to stand up to Ricki until the crucial moment when Tziporah summons up her own courage. For some readers, perhaps in the frum community, this story will offer a welcome lesson in doing the right thing. Other readers may be put off by the unlikely scenario and the untranslated Hebrew terms. This reader was annoyed that Tzipora's food choices were so unhealthy—cookies, cocoa, chocolate milk, pancakes, doughnuts, chips, latkes, and cheesecake.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Wiederblank, Sara. *Seven Up*. New York: Targum Press, 2009. \$14.99. ISBN: 978-1-56871-498-1. Gr. 4-6.

It's time for color war at the Bais Leah Fruma Ettel girls' school, and most of class 6A is determined to beat class 6B for once. However, three girls in 6A—Shoshana, Ruchama, and a mysterious girl code-named "Blundering Sourpuss"—don't like color war and are planning to undermine their own team's success with bad ideas that turn out to be surprisingly successful. Their efforts constantly backfire, inadvertently winning their team extra points. In a subplot, cartoonish, clueless Mike, the school custodian, wants to save the world from nefarious plots and hopes ultimately to work for the CIA, so he tries to uncover a plot he imagines is underway at the school. The far-fetched dénouement involves the last-minute arrival of an illustrious rebbe and undercover CIA agents.

The story and its characters may appeal to Orthodox girls and those who already know about color war from camp or Jewish day school. Others may be baffled by the skits, songs, and other activities. The author goes overboard with silliness and tries too hard to be clever and cute with supposedly funny teen humor. Those who are unfamiliar with untranslated Hebrew and Yiddish terms such as "kadimah b'berachos," "vort," "chinuch," "machanayim," "zechus," and "zivugim" will be scratching their heads unless they can figure out the meanings from the context of the story. Marginally recommended for ultra-Orthodox girls.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Wolfson, Jill. *Cold Hands, Warm Heart*. New York: Henry Holt, 2009. 241p. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-8050-8282-1. Gr. 6-12.

The topic of organ transplants is an unusual one for a teen novel. The author weaves a thoughtful story about the unexpected death of Amanda, a teen gymnast, and the aftermath, when her heart is donated to a chronically ill girl named Dani. Readers will follow Dani through her debilitating illness and ultimate recovery because of the heart she received from Amanda. Dani's journey is heartfelt. She is a spunky teen with typical dreams and desires. But the real heart of the story is Amanda's brother Tyler, a sullen, somewhat troubled boy who lived in the shadow of his successful sister. Through her online diary, he

tries to make sense of her death as well as his relationship with her. Amanda and Tyler's family is Jewish, but that does not play a significant role in the story. There is a brief discussion with the transplant coordinator before the family decides to donate Amanda's organs. They ask if organ donation is compatible with their religion. "Yes," the hospital organ coordinator says. "It is considered a blessing." In fact, this is not necessarily the case in traditional Judaism. Although many rabbis today would support organ donation, at the very least it should have been suggested that the family consult their own rabbi. This is a jarring oversight. The family adheres to traditional funeral and mourning practices, which feels somewhat out of sync with the rest of its religious practices.

Barbara Bietz, Oak Park, CA

Zucker, Jonny. *Dan and the Mudman*. London: Frances, 2008. 127p. \$16.00. ISBN: 978-1-84507-851-5. Gr. 4-7.

A family's relocation and a school project instigate adventure, magic, and time travel in a fast-paced modern tale laced with the Golem legend. Dan Bernstein is unhappy about more than moving. In London it did not matter that he was Jewish; his new town harbors anti-Semitic sentiments and officials. The school bully torments Dan as soon as he discovers he is a Jew. Deciding on a clay model for his project, Dan realizes his hands, on their own, shape a huge caveman; the figure glows, then jumps into action. Dan decides to hide the anti-Semitic attacks of the school bully and the Golem from his parents. He faces down tough assailants without adult help and exposes his tormentors in the shocking video report made with Lucy, his new-found friend and classmate. The well-written book, kept lively by British slang and with-it dialog, stars a sound, empathetic male protagonist with a resonant dilemma. Despite modern and historical scenes of violence, the book urges tolerance and peace. The novel arcs over two weeks from class assignment to presentation, divided into chapters by the days of the week, its increasing action and mounting tension delivering a page turner. There is one error: when Dan researches the Golem, the author chooses the version of the legend that is set in Prague but incorrectly calls the river the Danube. Once librarians point this out to students, they can recommend a fine action novel, which incorporates a classic Jewish legend that will appeal to boys and girls.

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

FOLKLORE AND LEGEND

Sher, Steven. *Where the Shouting Began*. Illus. by Shoshannah Brombacher. Millburn, NJ: Montemayor Press, 2009. 60p. \$11.95. ISBN: 978-1-932727-08-1 Pbk. Gr. 3-5.

The five stories in *Where the Shouting Began* fall within the category of "literary folktales:" they are "written in a folktale style but originate in an author's imagination" (Charlotte S. Huck). They tell about life in the shtetl of Slawotich (now Slawatycze). Just as Chelm is a real place in Poland, so too is Slawotich—a town situated between Lublin and Brest. The people of Slawotich face many problems—from the serious one of an impending pogrom to the lighter one of a girl who feels compassion for the

chicken that must be cooked for the Shabbes soup. The residents of the town solve their problems in clever and original ways. Poet Steven Sher brings his stories to life with verve, humor, and affection. One can hear the cadence of his voice spring up from the page: "Maybe yes, maybe no. There's probably truth in all of this." Although he occasionally uses weak or clichéd similes, and although his sentences are sometimes awkward, one can still imagine an enthusiastic parent or teacher reading these stories to young people who will enjoy their exaggeration and wit. However, problems exist in this slim volume. The pen-and-ink illustrations, in the style of Chagall, are vague and muddy. The sans-serif font makes the text difficult to read. The publisher hopes that this book will become "an instant Jewish classic." Unfortunately, it does not fill the bill.

Anne Dublin, Toronto, Canada

HOLIDAYS

Heller, Esther Susan. *Menorah Under the Sea*. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 32 p. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-7386-9. Reviewed from an advance reading copy. Kdg.-Gr. 4.

This true story in photo-essay form follows David Ginsburg, a marine biologist from Los Angeles. He flies to Antarctica, at the bottom of the world, to live at McMurdo Research Center for five months and study underwater life, especially sea urchins. He is there in December, which is summer in Antarctica, and the constant daylight makes him wonder how he can celebrate

Hanukkah. As he dives into the frigid sea to study sea urchins and how they can survive in such cold waters, he gets the idea of forming the sea urchins and sea stars into a living menorah to symbolize the eight days that the oil burned. Working quickly so he won't run out of oxygen, he catches their sparkling colors in the menorah shape with his underwater camera, and later loads the image onto his laptop computer to show to the other scientists back at McMurdo Station. There, they celebrate Hanukkah by using David's traveling menorah to light the shamash and the first candle, and tell the story of the Jewish people's triumph over their enemies. Full-color photos enhance the story and the amount of text is just right for young readers. Children will be fascinated by seeing the diving suits and equipment David and his diving partner use, and by learning how he honors his Jewish heritage in such a creative way.

Andrea Davidson, The Temple-Tifereth Israel, Beachwood, OH

Lehman-Wilzig, Tami. *Hanukkah Around the World*. Illus. by Vicki Wehrman. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 48p. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-8761-3. Gr. 2-5.

Hanukkah Around the World is a gem of a book with a great multicultural approach to the holiday. The author and illustrator take the reader around the world to celebrate Hanukkah through the eyes of different Jews, showing their distinct cultures and holiday traditions. The narrative covers New York City, Uzbekistan, Tunisia, Italy, France, Mexico, Morocco, Australia, Poland, and Israel. Basic facts are given about the origins of Hanukkah, the Maccabees, the number of candles used during the eight nights, and the rules for playing the dreidel-spinning game. The book

Neal Schuman Ad

contains recipes for such unusual foods as fried burmelos and precipizi. The vibrant illustrations are painted in warm earth tones. There are useful maps and a glossary of terms at the end. Did you know that another name for Hanukkah is Chag Ha'or—the holding of light? Or did you know if you store your candles in the freezer they will burn longer? Or that Caesarea, an Israeli town, is home to the largest dreidel in the world? (Built by Eran Greble, it stands 18 feet tall, is made out of a half-ton iron, and spins with the wind.) These are just some of the many facts that are shared throughout the book. You will also learn how Tisha B'Av, a holiday that is observed 133 days before Hanukkah, is connected with Hanukkah in Italy.

Lisa Katz, Lefferts Jewish Community Library, San Rafael, CA

Rosenberg, Tziporah. *Round and Round the Jewish Year: Volume 4: Iyar—Av. Round and Round the Jewish Year Series.* Illus. by Ruth Beifus. Trans. by Sherie Gross. New York: Feldheim, 2009. 100p. \$19.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-376-3. Gr. 1-5.

Originally published in Hebrew in 1977 as *Ma'agal Hashanah*, the fourth and final book in this series takes the reader through the summer months and their observances. Sefiras haOmer, Pesach Sheni, Lag baOmer, Shavuot, the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av are introduced with stories, customs, riddles, and quotes from the Torah and the Talmud. Detailed color illustrations of both modern and ancient scenes complement the text, and a glossary is included. While geared to the Orthodox (all illustrations show men with beards and head coverings or women with head coverings—no men and women together), with the dearth of materials about summer holidays and observances, this book will serve many libraries well. There is also emphasis on days like Lag baOmer and the fast days, which will strengthen the connection with Israel as well as the connection between seasons, harvests, and holidays.

The presentation styles include questions and answers, stories, panel illustrations reminiscent of comic strips, some poems, a chart of the different names of Shavuot, and a creative layout of text and pictures. The text fonts and size, as well as the illustration style remain the same, unlike many of the holiday books available (Kids' Catalog Series; *Jewish Holidays All Year Round*), which have a more eclectic and sometimes distracting layout. Highly recommended for Orthodox libraries and to complete the series, this book is a good resource for all Jewish libraries and appropriate for ages six through ten.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Shalom, Teaneck, NJ

HOLOCAUST

Norton, James. *The Holocaust: Jews, Germany and the National Socialists. Genocide in Modern Times Series.* New York: Rosen, 2009. 64p. \$29.25. ISBN: 978-1-4042-1821-5. Gr. 5-8.

At one time books on the Holocaust were less concerned with format and color than with the dire content presented. This book, one of a series on genocide, has an attractive design that commands attention. Tones of buff and maroon accented with black are handsome indeed, and serve to separate and highlight salient information. The first page of each chapter appears in

maroon and black set against a sepia photograph of Jewish prisoners. Print is larger than usual. Dramatic photographs appear throughout. The graphic scheme is prominent but how about the content? Fortunately, it is accurate, as comprehensive as possible for this age range, and conversational in tone. Contents include an introduction plus chapters named The Rise of Hitler, The Jewish Enemy, The Death Camps, and The Holocaust Today. The volume provides a timeline, a glossary, sources of additional information, and reading lists.

Marcia Weiss, Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, NY

Pushker, Gloria Teles, and Mel Tarman. *Toby Belfer Learns about Heroes and Martyrs.* Illus. by Emile Henriquez. Gretna, LA: Pelican, 2009. 128p. \$14.95. ISBN: 978-1-58980-647-4. Gr. 5-9.

Fifth-graders Toby, who is Jewish, and her best friend Donna, who is Christian, are on a (highly unlikely) class trip to Israel. Their visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum provides the shaky framework for chapters about gentiles who saved Jews at great personal risk to their own well-being. These heroes include many unknown names as well as "Germans Who Defied Orders," "Royalty and Brave Clergy," and "Heroic Diplomats," plus a description of the paper clip project in Whitwell, Tennessee. With its unattractive line drawings of the heroes and its mediocre writing, the book is dated and disappointing. Toby's huge interest in the subject—she spends the summer following the trip doing Holocaust research in the library—seems unrealistic. On the other hand, the biographies of the "righteous gentiles" include but go far beyond the usual people one reads about in such collective biographies (Oskar Schindler, Miep Gies, Varian Fry, Raoul Wallenberg, Senpo Sugihara), and the stories of the heroes' moral behavior in spite of danger and accusations of "Jew lover" from their neighbors may inspire Jewish and Christian children alike.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

ISRAEL

Creiger, Joyce. *Izzy Iguana is Invited to Israel.* Illus. by Raphaella Serfaty. Tanta Tilly's Travel Tales, 2009. \$12.95. ISBN: 978-0-615-23370-3. Kdg.—Gr. 2.

With the juxtaposition of a cartoon iguana family and photos of Israel, this book attempts to interest children in traveling to Israel, and in fact it might be a useful book to share before such a trip. However, the iguana family visits only Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and a forest to plant a tree. They see relatives and vow to return every year. While the story is simple and appropriately enthusiastic, the rhyming text is sometimes a bit forced.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Lehman-Wilzig, Tami. *Zvuvi's Israel.* Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 31p. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-8759-0. Gr. 1-4.

Two houseflies named Zvuvi and Zahava guide readers on a tour of Israel, visiting nearly fifty sites of interest to children and their families. Some are standards on the tourist route—Haifa's

Bahai shrine and Masada, for example. Others may be unknown to even frequent visitors to Israel—these include an alpaca farm in the Negev, a horse farm in the Galilee, the luna park in Tel Aviv, an alligator farm on Lake Kinneret. The inclusion of numerous nature parks, zoos, and venues with special appeal to children along with the more traditional historic sites, makes this book a good choice for children's collections about Israel. The "Where's Waldo" technique of hiding Zvuvi in a dozen of the scenes, and inviting readers to find him is an added plus. (The back page tells searchers where Zvuvi has been "hiding.") The art work is colorful and attractive. The double-page spread on Jerusalem is problematic, though, on two counts. First, the painting of the model of the ancient Temple shows it in greenish, rather than creamy-golden hues for which the city is famous. Second, the Kotel/Western Wall is referred to by the long-outdated term "Wailing Wall." This may have been done to match the headline for this page: "A Wail of a Time in Jerusalem" and is an unfortunate undertone to treatment of the Western Wall.

Andrea Rapp, *Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH*

Tzvieli, Neta. *The Private Eyes and the Mysterious Submarine.* New York: Feldheim, 2009. 149p. \$17.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-286-5. Gr. 5-7.

In 1966, Israel faced the possibility of attack from many directions. This boys' book recognizes the danger, and demonstrates that good literature for young people need not be entirely frivolous or unpalatably dry. Blending humor, serious Jewish teaching, and a fictional retelling of a historical moment, Neta Tzvieli has come up with a winning combination. In the beginning of the novel, four young friends refurbish an abandoned boat that had once been used by ma'apilim (illegal immigrants to Palestine) before independence. When the job is done, they decide to take a day-trip on the ocean. Out at sea, the boat runs out of gas just as it gets dark. Even worse, the boys discover that a tiny submarine from Egypt is transferring a bomb to an Arab fisherman, who will detonate it in Tel Aviv! But the boys take over both the sub and the fisherman's craft, and foil the plot.

Though the story is plenty serious, there are numerous funny scenes that soften the tale. In addition, the boys constantly remind each other of mitzvot and middot, adding another level of teaching to the mix. This tale of heroism, laughter, and "lomedim" is extremely unlikely, but it should appeal to many 10- to 12-year-olds (the characters are 14) who may think only older people can save the world. It might also lead to serious discussion of Israel's past and current plight, and the meanings of heroism, foresight, and other important lessons. Because it so skillfully integrates its disparate parts, this book is recommended for school and synagogue libraries.

Fred Isaac, *Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

Vogel, Carole Garbuny, and Yossi Leshem. *The Man Who Flies With Birds.* Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2009. 64p. \$18.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-7643-3. Reviewed from a galley. Gr. 5-8.

Israel is a flyway for millions of birds during fall and spring migrations, and birds in the air can wreak havoc with military and civilian airplanes. Leshem, an Israeli bird expert, studied migration patterns by combining many techniques, including

bird-watching, radar, and flying with the birds in a motorized glider. By teaching the military how to avoid heavy bird "traffic," he significantly reduced the number of bird-related accidents. Leshem went on to expand his ornithological studies, promoting conservation across Israel and working with nearby countries to coordinate the study of birds that cross borders with no awareness of political boundaries. Illustrated with striking photographs and adorned with interesting sidebars, this book offers well-written nonfiction, solid science, and an appealing human-interest angle. While there is no Jewish religious or cultural content, the Israeli setting is an important factor in the tale and the book showcases positive Israeli achievements as well as a desire for international cooperation. *The Man Who Flies with Birds* will intrigue young nature-lovers as well as those with an interest in science, human flight, the military, or the Middle East. Suggestions for further reading, related Web sites, and organizations for birders are listed at the back of the book, and an index is included.

Heidi Estrin, *Congregation B'nai Israel, Boca Raton, FL*

JUDAISM

Gerner, Katy. *Judaism. Religions Around the World Series.* New York: Marshall Cavendish/Benchmark, 2008. 32p. \$19.73. ISBN: 978-0-7614-3170-1. Gr. 3-6.

Part of a series on world religions, *Judaism* presents a cursory overview of Jewish history, scripture, beliefs, food, dress, and life-cycle events. Color photographs illustrate nearly every page. The description of the essential distinctions among Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism is deftly phrased and non-judgmental. Explanations of a *brit milah*, a Jewish wedding, and other important events are brief, but clear and mostly accurate. Shabbat, too, gets a succinct section, general enough to include most observance of the day. The only holidays described, however, are Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Chanukah. The author makes a common mistake in attributing *Haredi* practices to all Orthodox Jews. She also makes a surprising choice in highlighting only two people in the section on important Jews—Anne Frank and Rabbi Dr. Abraham Geiger. It would obviously be impossible to describe all of Judaism in a single slim volume for children. Katy Gerner's *Judaism* does a reasonably good job of explaining some of the basics, though a list of sources of additional information would have been a welcome addition. Recommended for school and public libraries serving general populations.

Marci Lavine Bloch, *Silver Spring, MD*

Pollack, Gadi. *A Never-Ending Tale: Illustrated Parables of the Ba'al Shem Tov and His Disciples.* Trans. by Yitzchok Kornblau. New York: Feldheim, 2009. 57p. \$21.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-318-3. Gr. 4-6.

A Never-Ending Tale is a difficult book to categorize. Is it for children or for adults? Is it an illustrated book or a graphic novel? Is it situated in an imaginary locale or a real place? The main story line follows poor Fishel as he confronts various problems and learns lessons from his experiences. These moralistic lessons,

printed in a box after each incident, are taken from the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov and other Hasidic masters. Other story lines are threaded throughout the book—a hot air balloon voyage, a stork on the roof, and a man asking for tzedakah. Unfortunately, none of these thin story lines is fleshed out in a satisfactory manner. Furthermore, none of the characters is fully realized but is used only to teach a lesson. For example, Robert the Rogue tricks Fishel out of his humble home. Robert is a caricature of the sly city slicker, from his homburg hat to his shiny shoes, from his thin mustache to his beady eyes. With detailed, exquisitely-rendered illustrations and varying perspectives, *A Never-Ending Tale* should, on first glance, appeal to young people. However, additional flaws mar this book: The long preface of the story is presented in a hard-to-read font. Not one girl or woman is present from the beginning to the end of the book. Finally, the story ends abruptly with a blatant advertisement for Gadi Pollock's other two books. *A Never-Ending Tale* may be useful in Orthodox schools as a discussion starter for Hasidic teachings.

Anne Dublin, Toronto, Canada

Wasserman, Sandy. *The Sun's Special Blessing.* Illus. by Ann Koffsky. New York: Pitspopany, 2009. Unpagged. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-1-934440-92-6. Gr. 2-5.

Every 28 years the sun returns to the position that it was in when the universe was first created. And every 28 years the Jewish people celebrate the return of the sun to its original place by reciting a special prayer, Birkat Hachamah, while looking at the sun. Author Sandy Wasserman has created an engrossing story explaining how this special blessing is recited every 28 years by comparing the length of time to a time capsule that a 3rd-grade teacher, Mr. Jacobs, had buried exactly 28 years ago. He compares the blessing of the sun with life and changes that occurred during those years. Readers get a look back in time to the 1980s when "Raiders of the Lost Ark" was a hot film, the popular video game to play was Pac-Man, and the Internet was introduced. Like the children in Mr. Jacobs's class, they will be amazed at how times have changed. Mr. Jacobs asks his third grade students to think about how the year 2009 will be remembered and encourages them to go home and gather some memorabilia for their own time capsule, which will be opened up the next time the blessing of the sun comes around on April 8, 2037. This picture book story for children ages 7-10 offers a new look at a little-known Jewish ritual. Unfortunately the paper-cut illustrations, despite being cleverly crafted and colorful, fail to enliven the story.

Lisa Katz, Lefferts Jewish Community Library, San Rafael, CA

LANGUAGE

Altein, Chani. *The Aleph-Bais Trip on the Aleph-Bais Ship.* Illus. by Baruch Becker. New York: Hachai, 2009. 22p. \$10.95. ISBN: 978-1-929628-25-4. Preschool-Gr. 2

Like *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault, Little Simon, 1989) for the Hebrew alphabet, Altein's book tells of the Hebrew letters meeting up to go on a ship. Depicted as cards, the letters travel by various modes of transportation, and as each grouping of letters brings a subsequent

group, they eventually realize that the final letter is missing and they must work together to save him. The text is in rhyming couplets, with a few lines less elegant than others. The names of the letters are vocalized in the Yiddish pronunciation (bais, sof), and each variant of the letter—with or without a dagesh and the final forms of the letters—is included in the recitation of the alphabet. While this proffers a complete accounting of the Hebrew letters, it makes the reading of the text cumbersome, and is perhaps unnecessary for a story aimed at young children. The illustrations by Disney artist Becker are bright and colorful, and reflect the haste, movement, and personality of the letters. They are printed on durable laminated pages. The final page of the book has an explanatory note on the order of the letters in the story, a note to parents and teachers with some creative ideas on how to reinforce the letters they meet in the book, as well as a brief glossary. Inside the back cover is an alphabet chart. The book would be most appropriate for ultra-Orthodox school libraries and for children 2 and up.

Deborah Abecassis, Montreal, QC, Canada

Armeland, Gila. *Aleph-Bet Israel.* Berkeley CA: EKS, 2009. 32p. \$10.95. ISBN: 978-0939144-61-7 Pbk. Kdg.-Gr.3.

Aleph-Bet Israel is a Hebrew alphabet book for young children who are learning to recognize Hebrew letters and words. Many of the words that the author has chosen to represent letters of the aleph-bet are difficult to read and possibly unfamiliar to American children. Rikudai am (folk dancing) is not a term a five-year-old may have heard before, and neither is Tivariah (Tiberius) or Vietzman (Weitzman), though these may be familiar to Hebrew-speaking Israeli children. Therefore the book would not be useful to teach word recognition and reading in the United States. The audience for this book has not been well defined. Is it for 5-8-year-olds as the format and illustrations suggest? If so, why aren't the words simpler? While the alphabet and representative words themselves are handsome and clearly printed, the accompanying illustrations are amateurish. Stiff children with huge heads and miniscule hands and feet are ill drawn. These are comic book figures, but rather than relaxed and amusing, they seem rigid and forced. The colors and page layouts are pleasant, but the cutesy figures do not enhance the whole. EKS Publishing has produced some very high-quality books. This one does not measure up, and is not recommended.

Naomi Morse, Silver Spring, MD

PICTURE BOOKS

Cutler, Jane. *Guttersnipe.* Illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009. 32p. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-374-32813-9. Gr. 2-4.

Like many real immigrant children and also many in stories, Ben finds himself a job to help his poor family. The little boy, who lies about his age, is hired to deliver hat linings and as he rides his delivery vehicle—a bicycle—he stops to look in on his older brother setting up pins at a bowling alley, his older sister selling movie tickets, and his mother sewing in a factory while singing Yiddish songs. To ease the burden of pumping the bike

uphill, he does what all the delivery boys do: he hitches a ride on the back of a trolley car. But he lets go a moment too late when the trolley stops and is knocked from the bike, along with all of the hat linings, which are blown by the wind into the air. Fantasy—or more likely Ben’s hallucinations from the bump he’s suffered—takes over the realistic plot at this point because Ben feels himself being wafted into the air, “spinning slowly, then faster ... rising higher—until he was in the midst ...” of the colorful hat linings. As he slowly gains consciousness, “he could not remember a single sad thing ... his body would heal ... there would be other ... chances ... he was only a boy, just starting out ...” Cutler based the story on something that happened to her father and it resounds with optimism. Set in an immigrant neighborhood in Canada in the early 1900s, the romantic pastel illustrations by Caldecott Award winner McCully infuse it with a prettiness and gentility that are not often associated with immigrant neighborhoods or jobs.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

Greenberg, Gail. *No Pig’s Brain Soup, Please!* Illus. by Lauren Forgie. Durant, OK: Kam Publishing, 2009. 32p. \$18.95. ISBN: 978-0-9795474-3-0. Gr. 1-3.

According to the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, some 20% of American Jewry is now non-Caucasian (*Time Magazine*, 6/6/09). For those children who are Chinese and Jewish, this book offers a sweet story about an adopted girl, Tali, who must figure out how to navigate her multiple identities at school, whether it is bringing something for show and tell, or avoiding pig’s brain soup at the international dinner. Tali learns that she can be proud of both her Chinese and her Jewish heritages. This book is an appropriate companion for the 2007 STBA honoree, *Rebecca’s Journey Home*, by Brynn Sugarman, about the process of adopting a Vietnamese baby and integrating her into a Jewish family.

Susan Berson, Denver, CO

Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg. *I Am God’s Paintbrush*. Illus. by Annette Compton. Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths, 2009. Unpaged. \$7.99. ISBN 978-1-59473-265-2 Board Book. For toddlers and preschoolers.

I Am God’s Paintbrush is a board book condensed from Sasso’s *God’s Paintbrush* (Jewish Lights, 1992). Although both the text and Compton’s illustrations are simplified in the board book, the intent is the same: to encourage parents and children of all faiths to explore the meaning of God and spirituality via a multicultural approach and a child’s perspective. In place of the many questions asked of the child reader in the original book, here color and song are used to engage children in discussions about the world. Not specifically Jewish, it is a spiritual guide for the very young of any faith and appropriate for preschool libraries.

Lisa Katz, Lefferts Jewish Community Library, San Rafael, CA.

Tager, Chanah. *Riki Solves the Problem*. Illus. by Mirel Goldenberg. New York: Feldheim, 2009. 32p. \$12.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-285-8. Preschool-Gr. 3.

Riki is bored! She can think of all the things she’d like to do if it weren’t raining, but now she’s stuck inside and “[t]here’s nothing to do.” Her mother suggests that there must be something

and that she should think about it. Riki thinks and thinks and comes up with a number of ideas. Moreover, she decides to make a list of all these ideas so next time it’s raining she’ll know exactly what she could play. The story demonstrates the process of problem-solving, and the idea of thinking about a solution rather than dwelling on the problem. The technique of list-making is practical and concrete. The illustrations are simple, colorful and almost comic-like, and they appropriately reflect the text and the emotions of the plot. Curiously, in the bottom right corner of each folio are illustrations of a frog and a turtle conversing, in rhyme, about what to do in the rain. The rhymes on each page relate thematically to the story plot on that page. The value they add to the storybook as a whole is unclear. As a picture book, its intended audience is more likely to be read to, than to be reading, and these little poems and animal characters interrupt the flow of the main story, and possibly detract from its lessons. However, for an older audience who will “study” the story more closely, the frog and turtle provide a secondary, perhaps more obscure sequence from problem to problem-solving. While the characters in the book are Orthodox in name and dress, the story is appropriate for all denominations and is recommended for school and synagogue libraries.

Deborah Abecassis, Montreal, QC, Canada

VALUES

Adahan, Miriam. *Torah Tigers*. Illus. by Menachem Halberstadt. New York: Feldheim, 2009. 48p. \$17.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-308-4. Gr. 1-3.

The importance of values is emphasized over and over in our educational environment. This new book, by Miriam Adahan, also addresses the issue. It is written in humorous rhyme with the intention of giving children and parents strategies and concepts to help develop good judgment in everyday situations that they may face. The idea of using positive reinforcement is excellent (the author calls it the “victory method”); however the book does not always reach its goals. For example, the layout and illustrations, which are colorful and childlike, appear geared for kindergarten through grades two, but the concepts and both level and length of text are more appropriate for grades three and four. The basic ideas could be explained to younger children but not with the complicated language that the author employs. It is also somewhat moralistic at times. Many Hebrew words are used in conversation, which limits the audience. Recommended for grade one through three classrooms in yeshivas, and as a read-to in Orthodox homes.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

Correction

The author of *Elvina’s Mirror*, reviewed in the May/June 2009 issue, is Sylvie Weil, not Simone Weil. The editors apologize to Sylvie Weil for this mistake.

These titles, reviewed in the Adult Readers section, may also be of interest to teenagers:

BOOKS

Garber, Susie. *Denver Dreams: A Novel*. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Publications, 2009.

Korobkin, Frieda Stolzberg. *Throw Your Feet Over Your Shoulders: Beyond the Kindertransport*. NY: Devora Publishing, 2008.

VIDEO

Grossman, Roberta. *Blessed is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh*.

Beth Ahm Ad

Have You Heard?

LIBBY K. WHITE



AJL extends sincere condolences to Adaire and Manny Klein on the passing of their son Dov during the summer.

AJL has also learned of the passing of Leanne Copes, daughter of Lee Wixman. Lee is very much in our thoughts.

Congratulations to Rachel Kamin and her husband on the birth of a baby boy, Evan Benjamin, on August 8th.

Lillian Steinberg has retired as librarian of HAFTR High School "after 33 wonderful years."

Plaudits to Abigail Yasgur for her book *And Max Said Yes*. Her work has received much favorable attention, including an article in *The Forward*.

Ellen Frankel, the Jewish Publication Society's first female editor-in-chief, stepped down from her position in August in order to pursue writing and scholarly projects. She will continue to serve JPS in an advisory role. Frankel's tenure was marked by the receipt of major NEH grants and publication of many award-winning titles.

Jerusalem celebrated Hebrew Book Week. Large crowds attended the event. For further information, see "A Remarkable Renaissance," in *The Jerusalem Report* (July 6, 2009, p. 44).

Soviet Jewry Movement documents are now online. The American Jewish Historical Society (www.ajhs.org) collected—and continues to collect material. The project received a \$200,000 grant from NEH.

Chicago Convention

The rain pouring down as I exited the subway station with my rolling suitcase and carry-ons did not dampen my enthusiasm for Chicago and the 44th Annual AJL Convention. Even after learning that I had not taken the correct train stop, I was still undaunted in my hike towards the Judaic librarians and resources awaiting me at the Sheraton. Take a cab? Not really—I'd been on an airplane all day! Thus began my second AJL convention adventure and the skies were blue thereafter.

One of the program highlights was Collaborate: Developing Relationships to Enhance Collaboration, presented by Pam Strom and Deborah Lazar. The obstacles and solutions for forging collaborative relationships were very clearly presented with clever PowerPoint images and positive tips. I also enjoyed the Adventures in Book Reviewing session, especially What's Hot? What's Not? and getting to meet Karen Hesse. Adventures in Book Reviewing featured the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee members sharing their opinions about the books they judged. You could count on honest opinions from these reviewers, and good-natured but serious insight.

The sign of a great conference is difficulty choosing among excellent presentations. That was certainly the case for me. Sessions I was sorry to pass up included Yiddish Theatre, Jewish Art, and Jewish Linguistics. Next year I will be immersed in planning, meaningful, and memorable convention for you all. I hope you will join us in Seattle next summer.

Toby Harris

This year was the ninth AJL convention that I've attended. My first was in Jerusalem in 1990. Seven years later in 1997 I resolved that it was time for me to visit the United States for the first time, and the AJL convention in Cleveland was a marvelous excuse to do so. I still remember being so overwhelmed that I asked for somebody to meet me at the airport! If I remember correctly that person was Merrily Hart.

I had to miss the AJL conventions in 2006-2009 and after a three-year break, I was determined to attend the convention in Chicago. I had had a unique experience the previous year when I had been called in to help to dispose of a collection of approximately 3000 Yiddish and Hebrew books belonging to Cape Town's oldest Jewish bookstore, M. Beinkinstadt, which

was closing down after 105 years. I wanted very much to share that experience with my colleagues.

Highlights of the 2009 convention for me were Irving Cutler's excellent tour of Jewish Chicago, Professor Peter Hayes's keynote address on "Myths and Misconceptions" about the Holocaust, Joy Kingsolver's description of the digitization of the *Chicago Sentinel*, and Yaffa Weisman's "Assimilating Slang, Jargon and Other Languages into Current Israeli Hebrew." I was fascinated to hear Marina Goldsmith describe the challenge of integrating

the National Library of Israel's various catalogues into the OCLC database, and I was enthralled by David Chack's "A Yiddish Theatre Aesthetic and its Influence on American Theatre and Performance," something I had often pondered, but had never been able to fathom.

I cannot thank AJL sufficiently for its generous support over the years. The confidence that I have gained from this exposure to international trends and the opportunity to present my own findings in papers, has contributed immeasurably to my professional development and personal growth. With a bit of luck, if not in Seattle, I hope to see you all in Montreal in 2011!

Veronica Belling



Photo by Yaffa Weisman

Every spring for the past twenty years I have looked forward with anticipation to our annual convention. Every year the gathering has lived up to the promise of much learning and camaraderie. It was very true of this year's convention in Chicago as well, and I found more sessions than usual relevant to my work as reference archivist at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Of particular interest was the presentation given by three scholars from the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), who reported on their project to make David Boder's Holocaust oral histories available on the Web.

David Boder was a Latvian Jew, educated in Germany and the United States. (He held a Ph.D. from Northwestern University.) He was professor of psychology at IIT in the 1940s and had the vision and foresight in 1946 to go to Europe with recording equipment to interview Holocaust survivors. Boder recorded more than 100 hours of interviews, copies of which were acquired by the Holocaust Museum in Washington. Transcripts of many of the 131 interviews were completed in 2001 and now the goal is to make it possible to read and hear the interviews (in the original language or in translation) on the Web. Sophisticated searching

Chicago Convention

of the interviews using geographic, historical and biographical terms will eventually be possible. Incredibly, in recent years the museum was able to do follow-up interviews with ten of the survivors and it is hoped that there will be a link to these interviews. The IIT site is at voices.iit.edu/.

There are many large collections of interviews with Holocaust survivors from all over the world, the Shoah Foundation's being the largest one with over 50,000 interviews. But the Boder collection holds the distinction of having been done immediately after the war with survivors' memories and impressions fresh, and that is why it is of such great value to scholars.

Michlean Amir

Three major addresses at the AJL Convention in Chicago dealt with aspects of the Holocaust. Two of them, by Barbara Schneider-Kempf, director general of the Berlin State Library and by Dr. Michael Grunberger, director of the Office of Collections at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, discussed the fate of books confiscated (stolen) during World War II. The third presentation, the first night's keynote address, by Professor Peter Hayes of Northwestern University, was aimed at correcting eight widely held impressions about World War II and the Holocaust.

Hayes disputed that from the beginning of the war, Hitler's goal was killing the Jews and that the Germans directed an inordinate amount of their war effort to that end. He argued against the contention that the Allies could have saved many more Jews. This, he said, was incorrect because most of the killing took place before the tide of war turned in favor of the Allies.

Hayes also challenged the common conception that the Jews could have done much more to save themselves: that those in Europe could have rebelled and those in the United States could have pressured the American government to take actions such as bombing the death camps. About rebellion by European Jews, Professor Hayes said that the massive power of the Germans would have made any attempt at rebellion futile. In regard to pressure by American Jews, he asserted that Jews in the United States were not a major factor in American society and couldn't have accomplished much even if they had attempted to apply more pressure. Hayes also questioned the idea that many more Jews could have been saved by being hidden by non-Jewish Europeans. According to Professor Hayes, no matter how many non-Jews had conspired to hide Jews, the total number saved wouldn't have been very large.

In my opinion those three points do not reflect a Jewish, or even humanitarian, worldview. Judaism has as a basic tenet that *he who saves a single life is as if he had saved an entire world*. In other words, every life in itself is of the utmost importance and in the case of World War II, every Jewish life saved would have made a major contribution to insuring the continuation of the Jewish people. When the evaluation of history is reduced to a mathematical calculation the major benefit that can be derived from its study is abdicated.

Ya'akov Aronson

When I went back to work in the library field after a 30-year absence, I found that "civilians" assumed that quiet, soft-spoken librarians were simply involved in giving numbers to books and checking them out to patrons. If only these civilians could have attended the AJL Convention in Chicago, they would have learned that librarians preserve our cultural heritage and are an integral part of the research that is conducted at universities, often creating important bodies of work for scholars worldwide.

My undergraduate degree is in linguistics, so I was thrilled to see a session on that subject on the very first morning. Heidi Lerner presented a sampling of online resources for studying Jewish linguistics, which will be useful to many at American Jewish University. These Web sites provide a means of preserving dying Judaic dialects. Next we had a lively discussion of modern Israeli slang led by Yaffa Weisman.

In another session, I was fortunate enough to learn from Elhanan Adler and Marina Goldsmith of the National Library of Israel about their digitization plans. This information is vital to me as I have been working on a digitization project for the last year, and I will be delving more and more into the digital world.

At the session on manuscripts and archival collections, Ann Levia discussed the Eisig Silberschlag papers, an archive at Stanford University. She covered digitization, finding aids, and many other aspects of maintaining archives, all responsibilities I will have at the Shub Documentation Center at Ostrow Library. Alice Schreyer told us the tale of two collectors: Ludwig Rosenberger and Harry Sondheim. I got a lot of very specific information on maintaining the archives and ideas on how to manage ephemera I have found left in books in the Maslan Bible Collection here at American Jewish University. Tuesday morning at the LC Cataloging Update I found an energetic bunch of LC staffers and a video version of Jason and the Argonauts.

At the session on Yiddish language publishing Lyudmila Sholokhova of Yivo told us about the Grosh-bibliotek series of popular biographies, which I hadn't known existed. They are at risk of being completely lost as they disintegrate, taking with them the thinking of Polish Jewry from 1930-1936. Don't cry for Argentina: AJU has copies of many of the Yiddish/Spanish books in the bibliography carefully compiled by Rita Saccal from the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano. These volumes also speak of work that is quickly disappearing, as the Jewish community of Buenos Aires is much smaller than



Photo by Yaffa Weisman

Chicago Convention

it was at the height of its golden age. Where else would you find Don Quixote in Yiddish, as well as memoirs of a Jewish Gaucho?

I haven't mentioned the impressive speakers at the larger meetings, like the director general of the Berlin State Library, Barbara Schneider-Kempf, or Michael Grunberger of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Both of these speakers touched on a painful past, but with hope for the future. I also can't forget what an impression the award recipients made on me, both in their speeches and in their achievements, for example, the amount of work that went into the Hebrew manuscripts in the Vatican Library catalogue by Binyamin Richler, Malachi Beit-Arié and Nurit Pasternak just staggers the mind. I was inspired by Dr. Richler to make an effort to do some research while cataloging the Maslan Bible collection here at American Jewish University so that the catalog will be more than just a list of books.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the interaction I had with all the attendees at the convention. Everyone was friendly, and made me feel like I belong. I can't wait until next year to see my new friends. Le-hitra'ot.

Jackie Ben-Efraim

The materials I gathered will be indispensable. The most memorable sessions included the freshman 101 seminar, the presentations on OPALS and social media, both sessions of the Sydney Taylor Book award committee, and the Israeli Film Mosaic by Laurie Herman. The convention was all too short with every minute filled with excitement and learning opportunities.

Wendy A. Marx

AJL's 44th convention was a feast for the intellect, the eyes, the ears, and the palate. The weather was perfect; the scenery was



grand, and the company was wonderful. The convention's high point was the Feinstein Lecture delivered by Dr. Michael Grunberger, director of the Office of Collections at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, entitled "Orphaned Treasures: Libraries and the Disposition of Ownerless Jewish books in the Aftermath of the Holocaust." Dr. Grunberger spoke about what American libraries are doing to memorialize the Jews whose books were stolen by the Nazis. Thank you to co-chairs Cheryl Banks, Shoshanah Seidman, and Rose Novil for an outstanding convention.

Ilka Gordon

Coming from a mid-sized city in the south, I was not accustomed to such a large and diverse Jewish community as Chicago. It was a real treat. Conference headlines are all about learning and advancing careers, but it is really the personal relationships one can build that make a conference a successful event. I can't say enough about how welcome everyone made me feel. At one of the luncheons, Shoshanah noticed I looked a bit lost. She grabbed my hand and led me to her table, where I had the opportunity to meet the Israeli consul to the region. At the author luncheon I met Pnina Moed Kass, whose film *Real Time* won a Sheldon award in 2004. At another meal, I wound up sitting next to Marga Hirsch. Because of Marga, I attended my first Egalitarian minyan two mornings in a row. It was a moving experience that led me to seek out a minyan in my hometown.

The AJL conference was an experience to savor for a long time, and it was the people I met who made it so very memorable.

Nancy Poole

Chicago Convention

As a member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, I was excited to be celebrating the books and authors chosen by the committee this year. The opportunity to meet the authors and illustrators of these extraordinary titles and listen to them describe the creative process made the hours of reading, writing reviews, and considering the “best of the bunch” well worth it. I am grateful to the Convention Stipend Committee for enabling me to spend three days learning, listening, laughing, and sharing with a remarkable group of individuals. I am already counting the days until we meet again in Seattle.

Kathy Bloomfield



Photo by Kathe Pinchuck

I always find that AJL conventions refresh and rejuvenate my commitment to my work. This one was no exception. The sessions I attended were interesting and stimulating. For me the highlight of the convention was the CEU program. Dr. Michael Kay, who led the classes on digital Judaic resources, was a very engaging and enthusiastic presenter, and very knowledgeable about his subject.

Sarah M. Barnard



The Chicago Convention Committee, headed by Cheryl Banks, Rose Novil and Shoshanah Seidman, arranged memorable programs.

Stephanie (Sara Leah) Gross



Scenes from the Banquet

Opposite page

Top: South Florida Chapter members. Standing, L-R: Etta Gold, Sylvia Firschein, Daniel Scheide, Heidi Estrin, and Judith Jagoda.

Seated, L-R: Edith Sherman and Aranka Siegal.

Bottom: New England Chapter members. L-R: Mara Sokolsky, James Rosenbloom, Sara Ravid, Judy Greenblatt, Toby Rossner, Ann Abrams, and Jane Zande.

This page

Top: Elana Gensler, Wendy Marx, and Arlene Ratzabi.

Middle: Chicago convention cochairs. L-R: Cheryl Banks, Rose Novil, and Shoshanah Seidman.

Bottom: Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee members, winners, and honorees. Standing L-R: Debbie Colodny, Rachel Kamin, Kathy Bloomfield, Rich Michelson, Heidi Estrin, Kathe Pinchuck, Barbara Bietz, Raul Colon, and Susan Berson. Seated L-R: Anna Levine, Aranka Siegal, and Karen Hesse.

Chicago Convention

General Membership Meeting Minutes, Chicago, Illinois June 24, 2009

President Susan Dubin called the meeting to order at 10:40 a.m. Minutes from June 2008 meeting were approved as amended.

President's report. Four of the five recommendations of the AJL Strategic Planning Task Force were approved by the council: AJL will become an affiliate of ALA, hire a web design company, establish a technology committee, and engage an administrative consultant. Minor changes to AJL's mission and goals were tabled.

Two new chapters have been formed. A new column from Israel will appear in each issue of the newsletter. Thanks to Anna Levine, Pnina Koss, Ya'akov Aronson, Elhanan Adler, and Jerusalem Books, a one-day workshop will be held in Israel. There will be a coordinated Web presence between Seattle and Israel at next year's convention. A president's blog was established. Letters were sent to administrators of institutions who have let go of their librarians.

Budget. AJL has \$47,774 in its checking account and \$250,000 in savings accounts. The complete budget report will appear in an upcoming issue of the newsletter.

Membership. A total of 1,450 membership renewals were sent out and 619 people have responded. A few members paid for back years.

Publications. The print-on-demand process has worked very well for the two publications in this new format. So far 31 copies have been sold and royalties have been received. The newsletter will continue to be published in print form. Back issues will be posted on the password-protected area of the AJL Web site, with a moving wall of a half-year. A book review index is in the works. We are investigating having our reviews posted on Amazon. *Judaica Librarianship* is behind schedule because not all anticipated articles have been received.

RAS. Michlean Amir will join the Bibliography and Reference Book Award Committee. RAS is looking for a new representative to NISO. Eight AJL participants will be presenting at the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem

The board approved hiring a consultant to create a database for the digitization project. RAS cataloging and digitization committee chairs will become council members. Suggestions for sessions for Seattle include a beginner's workshop, digitization panel, photo collections, American Sephardic culture, and race relations.

SSC. This is the final year of AviChai funding. A new accreditation logo has been approved. The period of accreditation has been extended from three to five years. A new committee has been formed to look at competencies and benchmarks for Judaica information literacy.

Conventions. For the next few years, conventions will be planned by National. There has been no change in AJL convention timing policy; the July dates this year and next are due to hotel availability, pricing, and ALA. A hotel contract for the 2011 convention in Montreal will be signed soon. Israel will host a one-day workshop in the fall. Future convention sites include Los Angeles (2012), possibly Washington, DC (2013), and possibly Houston (2014). A survey may be conducted in the near future to assess the support for holding conventions from Monday to Thursday. First-time convention attendee registration will be discounted.

Mentoring. There were 20 pairs of mentors/mentees this year. Sara Leah Gross is looking for members to join her committee. AviChai librarians are encouraged to become mentors.

Professional Development and Continuing Education. The CEU course this year was on digital Judaic resources. Fred Isaac organized the freshman seminar. Certification via the University of Maryland is not happening at this time. Educational webinars are in the planning stages; contact Leslie Monchar with ideas. NYMA workshops are now posted at ajlnyma.org. The Northeast Chapter's conference is also online.

Advertising. Karen Ulric is looking for a local Seattle advertising person. New prices are now in effect for Newsletter ads.

Constitution. Minor edits to the AJL constitutional amendments regarding administration, slate of nominations, and provisions for write-in votes were approved.

Committees. Nominating committees have been created. If you are interested in running, please let Laurel Wolfson know. New committee chairs are as follows: Diane Romm, Technology Committee; Lisa Silverman, Bibliography Bank; and Sharon Benamou, Scholarship co-chair. Two positions are currently vacant: co-chair for Chapter Relations and co-chair for Mentoring.

Announcements. The Scholarship Award has been increased to \$1,000. A new Doris Orenstein Award was established to honor a bookseller. Podcasts of this convention will be available in the coming months. There will be no joint AJL/ALA program this year. The EMIERT program and JIC meetings to be held on Sunday, July 12, are open to all AJL members.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Elana Gensler
Recording Secretary



Mark Your Calendars for the 2010 AJL Convention

July 4 - 7

Seattle, Washington



Learn, share, meet authors,
connect with colleagues.

Dodge salmon, sample fresh
fruit, go up in the Space Needle,
see Mt. Rainier.

Take the local Jewish history
tour, visit the renowned Seattle Public Library.

Experience the elegance of the
Fairmont Olympic Hotel in downtown
Seattle.

Enjoy the keynote address by
book maven, NPR personality, and
model for the shushing librarian
doll, Nancy Pearl!



Call for Papers and Proposals

AJL is soliciting proposals for workshops, panel discussions or presentations on any aspect of Judaic librarianship or scholarship as it pertains to libraries, archives, museums, schools, synagogues and related institutions. Past topics have included literature and other resources, collection management, programming, reader advisory services, special collections, cataloging and classification, digital and electronic sources, technology, and local Jewish history. A special focus this year will be on advocacy, technology and sustainability.

Submissions should include:

- Author's name, address, affiliation, telephone number, fax number & email
- Brief author biography
- Title of presentation
- Summary of proposal
- Specific technology equipment or access needed

All submissions must be received by December 1, 2009. They may be submitted electronically to ajlseattle@gmail.com or mailed to: Toby Harris, c/o Temple Beth Am, 2632 NE 80th St, Seattle, WA 98115.

Proposals will be reviewed by the Program Planning Group composed of national and local AJL convention committee members. Notification will be made in January of 2010.

Cornell Ad

Podcast on Jewish Social Media

"Why Be Social?" is a four-part podcast mini-series created to encourage lovers of Jewish literature to engage in social media in order to promote and support the genre. The project was inspired by a social media workshop at the June 2009 AJL convention in Chicago, arranged by podcaster Heidi Estrin (bookoflifepodcast.com) and led by podcaster Mark Blevis (canadianpodcastbuffet.ca, justonemorebook.com).

"Mark's session at the convention opened the floodgates of attendees' curiosity about blogs and podcasts, and how these websites can be used to promote Jewish publishing, library use, and reading. I created the 'Why Be Social?' podcast as a way to continue the conversation beyond the convention," says Estrin.

Part 1 of "Why Be Social?" addresses philosophical aspects of the human relationship with technology. Part 2 offers definitions for "blogging" and "podcasting." In Part 3, host Heidi Estrin and guest Alex Block of the Jewish Publication Society suggest relevant blogs and podcasts for Jewish book lovers. Part 4 wraps up by bringing back Mark Blevis to discuss social media participation, or as he calls it, "create, consume, contribute." All four podcast episodes offer extensive show notes, and the series is an excellent resource on getting started in social media engagement. The four episodes of "Why Be Social?" were posted to Estrin's regular podcast, The Book of Life, a show about Jewish books, music, film and web that has been online since 2005. Visit www.bookoflifepodcast.com to listen to the "Why Be Social?" series, and to check out earlier episodes featuring interviews with Jewish authors, musicians, and other creative people.

Technology Committee is Developing an AJL Wiki

What do you do when you get a new job as a librarian? How do you find answers to all of the questions you have? In addition to talking to colleagues and submitting questions to Hasafran, in the future, you'll be able to check the new AJL wiki.

A wiki (which means "fast" in Hawaiian) is a one-stop shop full of information, in this case, on Judaica librarianship. Diane Romm and Joyce Levine, the co-chairs of the new technology committee, are making the development of the wiki their first order of business. Volunteers working in the entire range of the field, from academic libraries to school and synagogue libraries, have already offered their expertise in helping set up the basic outline for the wiki. Wikis are always works in progress. They are the ultimate in collaborative tools because they can be edited and added to by everyone. Diane and Joyce hope that once the outline of the wiki is posted, everyone in AJL will contribute their ideas and expertise so we can make the wiki a repository of our collective knowledge about Judaica librarianship.

If you'd like some idea of how a wiki works, spend three minutes with this YouTube video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dnL00TdmLY.

Reviews of Titles for Adults

EDITED BY MERRILY F. HART AND DANIEL SCHEIDE

FICTION, LITERATURE & POETRY

Bresnick-Perry, Roslyn. *"I Loved My Mother On Saturdays" and Other Tales from the Shtetl and Beyond.* Teaneck, NJ: Ben Yehuda Press, 2009. 170 p. \$16.95 (ISBN 978-1-934730-30-0).

Roslyn Bresnick-Perry takes readers from her childhood in the shtetl to her immigration to New York to her career in the fashion industry. This book is more than simply a collection of short autobiographical stories, or even a transcript of the dynamic family history she has been relating orally to audiences for decades. Writing mainly in the first person, which gives readers the feeling that she is right there in their living room, the author includes stories of her adventures in adjusting to Jewish life in America and ups and downs in her relationship with her mother (as illustrated in the book's title). As the captivated reader will discover, the author's life is storytelling, which she eventually decides to make into her real career, and a very successful one it is. Recommended for all types of Jewish libraries.

Shoshana Hurwitz, Hurwitz Indexing, Ma'ale Adumim, Israel

Eisenman, Tsevi. *At the Edge of Dreamland.* Translated by Barnett Zumoff. Jersey City: KTAV, 2008. 183 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-6-02800-458-0).

This volume of short stories, allegories and poetic prose complements *Pages from a Charred Notebook: The Fabulous Tales of Tsevi Eisenman*, published by KTAV in 2001. Eisenman, who was born in Poland in 1920, survived the Holocaust and settled in Israel in 1948. He never gave up writing and publishing in Yiddish, despite the official stance against non-Hebrew writing and publications as means to gather and absorb the new immigrants into a cohesive Hebrew speaking culture. Zumoff, who has published 12 books of translations from Yiddish literature, once again allows non-Yiddish readers a glimpse into Eisenman's world of sadness, irony, and magic. The book is a collection of short contemplations, a genre familiar to readers of Gershon Shoffman and David Frishman. Recommended for libraries collecting Yiddish literature.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, CA

Garber, Susie. *Denver Dreams: A Novel.* Jerusalem: Jerusalem Publications, 2009. 232 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-0-98155-673-4).

This is the story of Lily, who comes from a non-Orthodox background, becomes attracted to Orthodoxy and goes to study in a seminary. Intended for teenage girls, the book tells the ever-new story of growing up, but also offers real insight into Orthodox values and the environment in which Orthodox girls grow up. The author portrays her heroines as human beings with faults rather than as saccharine sweet, as tends to happen in this sort of fiction.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel



Grunberg, Arnon. *The Jewish Messiah.* Translated from the Dutch by Sam Garrett. New York: The Penguin Press, 2008. 470 p. \$27.95 (ISBN 978-1-59420-149-3).

Arnon Grunberg would be an excellent poster image for a self-hating Jew. The author found the perfect legitimate outlet, a fictional novel, to air all the grievances that he must be harboring in a very tortured and convoluted psychological makeup. In spite of the satiric and ironic style of writing, *The Jewish Messiah* is the product of a mind that is as sick as it is politically correct.

Grunberg employs a garden-variety of anti-Semitic stereotypes. He develops an outlandish plot that conveniently leads to a collapse of all Jewish and human moral codes. Most of the protagonists are grotesque caricatures. A detailed description of a botched circumcision for a non-Jewish teenager by a fanatic blind mohel in the bedroom of his house is one example. Homosexuality, promiscuous sexual relationships, pedophiles, Nazis, communists, nuclear catastrophe, and dishonesty, are some of the additional subjects that Grunberg explores. The end product is ridiculous, vicious, and very superficial. This book is not worthy of purchase.

Nira G. Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Hershon, Joanna. *The German Bride.* New York: Ballantine Books, 2008. 304 p. \$25.00 (ISBN 978-0-34546-845-1).

This historical novel tells the story of the assimilated Jewish community in Berlin, Germany in 1861, and the Jewish immigration from Germany to the American West, primarily to Santa Fe, New Mexico between 1861-1869. The book is divided into three parts: Berlin, Abraham, and America. It follows the footsteps of Eva Frank, who after the death of her sister Henriette in childbirth, felt compelled to marry Abraham Shein from America in order to escape her guilt feelings and to start a new life. Ms. Hershon brings to life the difficult times of the period and the tapestry of cultures—German, Jewish, Native American, Mexican, and Catholic missionary—interwoven with American pioneer life. The book is interesting and the plot is engaging. A synagogue library or a public library could offer its patrons *The German Bride* as an adult fiction of Jewish immigration adventure.

Nira G. Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Isaksen, Runo. *Literature and War: Conversations with Israeli and Palestinian Writers.* Translated by Kari Dickson. Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2009. 222 p. \$18. (ISBN 978-1-56656-730-5).

This book is a translation of interviews with seven Israeli writers and eight Palestinian writers that were done in 2002 and 2003. The interviews were conducted in English by Runo Isaksen, then translated into Norwegian and published as *Litteratur i Krig* in 2005. Then, the "... English-language edition was created by translating the Norwegian book and consulting with the original (English) interviews where necessary."

This is a convoluted history, but there is no other work like this in English. Though necessarily a selective group, the writers interviewed represent the cream of Israeli writers at the time and

at present, and the Palestinians include (in an e-mail interview) Mahmoud Darwish, who is regarded by many Palestinians as their national poet.

The writers talk about the conflict, of course, but also discuss intriguing aspects of publishing their work, the realities of translation and distribution, and the cultural background that informs their writing. We learn that several of the Palestinian writers have been appointed as “Minister of Culture” only to find out that the position is meaningless in the context of the chaotic state of the Palestinian administrative apparatus. Several mention that the only Israelis they ever meet are soldiers, and that, to differing extents, they all feel constrained to avoid writing about sex, religion and politics.

The interviews were done during the second intifadeh—ages ago in Israeli history—but they are not dated. Recommended for critical collections on Israeli literature and in-depth collections about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Beth Dwoskin, *Proquest*, Ann Arbor, MI

Jacques, Paula. *Light of My Eye*. Translated by Susan Cohen-Nicole. Teaneck, NJ: Holmes & Meier, 2009. 260 p. \$24.00 (ISBN 978-0-84191-447-6).

Light of My Eye is preceded by a short introduction from the translator about Jews in Egypt in the modern period, their legal status, and their linguistic specificity. Paula Jacques, a media celebrity in France, has published seven novels. She “writes the very particular, richly hybridized French of Egyptian Jews. Her novel sparkles with Arabisms rendered in French, beginning with the very title of the book, a term of endearment both in Arabic and in the French spoken in Egypt. It abounds in expressions passed down from Ladino-speaking ancestors ... and the recourse to exaggeration.”

The novel is the story of the childhood of Mona Castro, her difficult relationship with her mother, and her romantic crush on a much older, married Polish Jewish refugee, who keeps pornography in his closet. In the background are the events of the 1950s: rioters destroying the cafe Groppi, King Farouk leaving for exile, the nationalization of the Suez Canal, the detention, financial ruin, and death of Mona’s father in 1957. A fun-to-read novel, recommended for college collections in Jewish studies.

Roger S. Kohn, *Silver Spring*, MD

Klein, Zoë. *Drawing in the Dust*. New York: Pocket Books, 2009. 360 p. \$25.00. (ISBN 978-1-41659-912-8). Reviewed from an advance uncorrected proof.

Who can imagine the forbidding prophet Jeremiah arousing the passionate love of a woman? Author Zoë Klein! In her striking first novel, Rabbi Klein weaves Tanach, archeology, and ancient and modern Israel with stirring human desire. She delivers a romantic read rich in interesting biblical information, strong characters with ego and empathy, and lyrical prose. This well-plotted novel starts slowly and builds to a smart pace, with surprising twists propelling the reader through time, place, and adventures to a satisfying end.

Archaeologist Page Brookstone, an American Christian digging in Israel, leaves her tel to help a scorned Palestinian couple whose home is mystically charged by romantic ghosts. With her kooky team Page makes a major discovery: Jeremiah had a muse

and a lover, Anatiya, herself a poetic writer of moving verses. As Page acts to proclaim and protect her work, determined not to repeat the clandestine history of the Dead Sea Scrolls, she finds herself on a voyage of self discovery and in love with an Orthodox Jew.

The novel considers friendship, love, and marriage, the difficulty of juggling intellectual career pursuits, Page’s quest and other subplots. Klein’s lapidary language is the special quality, especially in the fictional scrolls she creates for Anatiya. Klein’s well drawn characters, their failed or fruitful relationships, mirror the interfaith, multinational character of the fiction’s setting: contemporary Israel. Klein skillfully utilizes Israel’s political tensions, religious clashes, and the rules of archeological claims to naturally sharpen her fictional drama. Strongly recommended as a purchase for all libraries despite economic woes.

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

Lapid, Shulamit. *Valley of Strength*. New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2009. 249 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-59264-230-4).

Shulamit Lapid is a well-respected and honored Israeli author of novels, mysteries, short stories, plays, and poems. Her works have been slow to appear in English translation; *Valley of Strength* was first published in Hebrew as *Gai Oni* in 1982. Toby Press must be commended for making numerous works from the canon of Israeli literature available to English readers.

In this excellent historical novel based on extensive research, the author explores the plight of newcomers to Eretz Israel in the last decades before the dawn of the 20th century. Lapid focuses on the life of Fania, a very young woman who arrives from pogrom-stricken Eastern Europe saddled with a baby—the consequence of rape—a mentally ill brother, and an old uncle. Fania’s struggles to create and maintain normal family life during a very difficult period in a pre-state village in the Galilee, now the community of Rosh Pinah, fill this page-turning feminist tome. Lapid manages to create people who continue to inhabit the reader’s mind. One can’t help but wonder how this young woman became a valiant fighter for her family under almost insurmountable circumstances.

This book is highly recommended for all Judaica and academic libraries. It is a very readable lesson in the history of the period and an example of the best in modern Israeli literature.

Michlean L. Amir, *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, Washington DC

Reznikoff, Charles. *By the Waters of Manhattan*. Boston, MA: David R. Godine Publisher, 2009. 170 p. \$17.95 (ISBN 978-1-57423-214-1).

Charles Reznikoff (1894-1976) was an unrecognized poet most of his life. He was educated as a lawyer, but practiced law only briefly. He preferred to write. His novel *By the Waters of Manhattan* consists of two parts. Part one, based on his mother’s autobiography, focuses on Sara Yetta, who immigrates to America from Russia. Part two is the story of her son Ezekiel and his struggles to make a life for himself in Manhattan. When the novel was published in 1930 the *New York Times* reviewer panned it, describing its prose as sounding as if it were a poor translation. Louis Untermeyer, in his introduction to the first edition, wrote that *By the Waters of Manhattan* is “a story so obviously sincere—and

so tellingly simple." This paperback edition is a reprint of the 1930s book. The writing is short and choppy. The ordinary story is not exciting or compelling. Recommended for libraries that collect early-20th-century Jewish authors or libraries that own Reznikoff's other works.

Ilka Gordon, Siegal College of Judaic Studies, Cleveland, OH

Rosen, Devorah. *Lone Star: Based on a True Story*. Jerusalem: Sapir Press, 2008. 411 p. \$26.99 (ISBN 978-1-59826-238-4).

The hero of the book is a secular Israeli working for the Mossad in Iran. The story describes his successful spying, the penetration of his cover, and his relationship with members of the local Jewish community. The book is published by a subsidiary of Feldheim, a religious publishing house, and one is very much aware of the hero's interactions with local religious Jews and the awakening of his Jewish identity. I enjoyed the book and recommend it as a good read!

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

NONFICTION

Bat Meir, Rivkah. *Meneket Rivkah: A Manual of Wisdom and Piety for Jewish Women*. Edited with an Introduction and Commentary by Frauke von Rohden. Translated by Samuel Spinner. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2009. 315 p. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-0-82760-835-1).

Rivkah bat Meir probably wrote this manual of "words of moral instruction (divrei mussar)" and "good biblical interpretations (gute pshatim)" around 1581. The title follows the style of many Jewish works, with the author's name and a related Bible quote—Rebecca's nurse (Genesis 35:8)—appropriate to the subject matter. The author died in 1605, and the book was printed posthumously in 1609 and then reprinted in 1618. After that, it declined in popularity and was considered lost, until copies were found recently in the Jewish Theological Seminary library and the library of the University of Erlangen in Nuremberg.

The purpose of this new edition "is to make the original text and its translation not only accessible to a wide cross-disciplinary audience, but also to a broader audience of readers interested in the history of Jewish women." This work also "examines the relationship between *Meneket Rivkah* and rabbinic literature, the exegetic, homiletic, and narrative traditions the author quotes so extensively." The book includes a list of biblical references: the Yiddish text (Prague, 1609 edition); the Yiddish text of Simhes Toyre Lid (a poem of praise by Rivkah bat Meir); an extensive bibliography; edited primary sources and secondary literature; a scriptural index; a Yiddish subject index; and an English subject index.

This is the product of meticulous research and scholarship. Besides the actual text, translated from old Yiddish, which is fascinating, this edition opens a window to the socioeconomic conditions, the position of women in society, the structure of the Jewish community, and the customs and rituals of 16th-century Prague. Seven chapters detail the ideals of conduct and social practices for married women within their domestic world. The style of writing and the extensive footnotes do not make for light

reading, but for those interested in women's studies, 16th-century Europe, moral literature, or Yiddish, it is highly recommended.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Ben-Dov, Meir. *The Golden Age: Synagogues of Spain in History and Architecture*. Translated from the Hebrew by Shmuel Himelstein. Jerusalem: Urim Publications 2009. 256 p. \$39.95 (ISBN 978-9-65524-016-0).

The Golden Age is as impressive as the synagogues it describes. Ben-Dov's coffee-table-size book discusses the synagogues in Toledo, Seville, Cordoba, and in provincial towns and villages of Spain. In addition, the book describes synagogues that were converted into churches and mosques that were converted into synagogues. Three synagogues outside of Spain that were built in the Spanish tradition are also featured. Each synagogue description is accompanied by drawn floor plans, black-and-white or color photographs. The first chapter and the epilogue focus on the history of Spanish Jewry, but all the chapters are rich in Spanish Jewish history. Extensive notes and a bibliography are also included. This well-researched and esthetically beautiful book is highly recommended for academic libraries and other libraries whose patrons are interested in learning about a glorious then painful era in Jewish history.

Ilka Gordon, Siegal College of Judaic Studies, Cleveland, OH

Ben-Dror, Graciela. *The Catholic Church and the Jews: Argentina 1933-1945*. Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press (Studies in Antisemitism), 2008. 266 p. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-0-80321-889-5).

The author presents a very well-researched study of the Catholic Church in Argentina with respect to the Third Reich and its treatment of Jews, culminating in the Holocaust. A strong nationalist movement had commenced in Argentina in the early 1930s, which emphasized Catholic identity and rejected "foreign" influences, among these, Jews. Catholic newspapers and resources for religious education in Argentina featured anti-Semitic claims, such as the blood libel, host desecration, deicide, and world domination. Jews were associated with Marxism and were therefore considered a threat. When reports of death camps reached Argentina, the Catholic press roundly denounced totalitarianism, racism, and fascism, while remaining silent on the specific atrocities against Jews. While there were Catholic leaders who sought to help Jewish refugees and condemned the violence against Jews, they were exceptions to the mainstream. This resource would be a fine addition to any collection that supports academic research of the Holocaust.

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

Brown, Erica. *Inspired Jewish Leadership: Practical Approaches to Building Strong Communities*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2008. 230 p. \$24.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-361-3).

Is leadership a learned skill? An innate trait that some people have and others don't? What makes Jewish leadership, well, Jewish? Dr. Erica Brown, director of adult education for the Partnership of Jewish Life and Learning, believes that we need only look to our Jewish heritage for the essence of Jewish leadership, for it based on our religious teachings. Our past, according to

Dr. Brown, can enlighten us about how to lead committees or boards and how to initiate change in our management. Using the exercises, stories, and reflection questions in this book, readers can become better leaders and guide their organizations to better leadership. Whether from Genesis, Pirkei Avot, or Viktor Frankel, Dr. Brown uses teachings and stories to illuminate elements of good leadership. Strongly recommended for all synagogue libraries, regardless of size. Every institution can benefit from improved leadership ... and it might as well be yours!

Rachel M. Minkin, Lansing Community College, Kehillat Israel Congregation, Lansing, MI

Cesarani, David. *Major Farran's Hat: The Untold Story of the Struggle to Establish the Jewish State*. Cambridge, England: Da Capo Press, 2009. 290 p. \$26.00 (ISBN 978-0-30681-845-5).

In 1947 sixteen-year-old Alexander Rubowitz disappeared while putting up posters for the Lehi underground. Based upon the evidence in this book, he was abducted and murdered by British policeman Roy Farran. Farran was eventually court-martialed and acquitted. All this was a cause célèbre at the time, though it is little remembered these days outside of Israel. According to the author, it contributed to uniting the Jewish population of Mandatory Palestine against continued British rule.

Professor Cesarani does a good job of putting this incident into context. He discusses the British struggle to defeat the Jewish fight for independence, including the creation of special police units, by importing British army personnel with experience in commando activities behind enemy lines during the Second World War. The book soft-pedals the anti-Zionism of Foreign Minister Ernst Bevin and contains some minor errors (e.g., Doris Katz was a member of the Etzel underground not Lehi). Still, it is a solid work overall. Recommended as a good, though not essential, item for Israeli history collections.

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

Cohen, Isaac. *Acts of the Mind in Jewish Ritual Law: An Insight into Rabbinic Psychology*. Jerusalem and Brooklyn: Urim/Lambda, 2008. 870 p. \$34.95. (ISBN 978-9-65710-883-3).

As any student of Talmud soon learns, the field of ritual law is difficult. This is especially true in the 21st century, when technology and modern life have made our lives more complex. The late Rabbi Isaac Cohen, former head rabbi of Ireland and a noted scholar, developed this encyclopedic summary to clarify the situation. The book's 14 sections move from the general to more specific aspects of our lives. Part 1 is on "Faith, Belief, Trust—Emunah." Other sections include "Repentance—Teshuvah" (part 4); Shabbat (part 7); "Marriage—Kiddushin" (part 9); and "Oaths and Vows—Nedarim" (part 11). In each part Rabbi Cohen begins by exploring the meaning of the term. He then discusses its biblical and talmudic history, including numerous references, and continues with citations from midrash to modern commentators. The final section, "The Rabbinic Concept of Mind and Will," is a summary of his understanding of important concepts in rabbinic literature, including "Kavvanah," "The Rabbinic System of Cosmogony," and "The Universal Mind."

Rabbi Cohen's book may not generate wide interest, but it is relatively easy for a non-scholar to comprehend. Its price makes

it affordable for many institutions that do not have other books on the topic. *Acts of the Mind* is recommended for libraries with limited collections in halakhah, and for larger institutions, which can use it as a handy reference source.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Cohon, Samuel S. *Faithfully Yours: Selected Rabbinical Correspondence of Rabbi Samuel S. Cohon During the Years 1917-1957*. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2008. 407 p. \$29.50 (ISBN 978-1-60280-019-9).

The successor to Kaufmann Kohler as professor of rabbinics at Hebrew Union College, Rabbi Samuel S. Cohon was the foremost Reform theologian in America for over 40 years. During that time he also served as a goad to the movement, and led the editing process of the second *Union Prayer Book* (1940). This is a collection of his correspondence. Each of the book's 14 sections deals with a different topic, including anti-Semitism, synagogue architecture, and interpretations of text. Each group is organized chronologically, so the reader can follow the rabbi's thinking over time as well as across a range of topics. The correspondents include well-known rabbis of the period, other rabbis asking for guidance, and congregants with queries. In all instances, Rabbi Cohon's responses are concise and relatively easy to understand. It is clear that he was a direct but caring "uncle" for many in the movement and across the country.

Faithfully Yours should provide scholars with insight into his mind, and into the world of American Jewry from World War I through the 1950s. Unfortunately, the volume does not include a biography. Even graduate students would need to know something about the author and his importance before venturing into his clear prose and analytic mind. This book is therefore recommended only for seminary and university libraries.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Dobbs-Weinstein, Idit, Lenn E. Goodman and James Allen Grady, editors. *Maimonides and His Heritage*. Albany: State University of New York Press (SUNY Series in Jewish Philosophy), 2009. 241 p. \$75.00 (ISBN 978-0-79147-655-0).

This volume contains papers delivered at a conference on Maimonides at Vanderbilt University in 2004. The first four articles consider Maimonides on his own terms. Three articles examine him in comparison with other Jewish thinkers (Bahya ibn Pakuda, Benedict Spinoza and Solomon Maimon). The last section of the book has three articles on the significance of Maimonides in the 20th and 21st centuries. A bibliography provides information for all the works cited in the different chapters. This practice can sometimes be frustrating, as it divorces each article from its sources, but in this case the combined bibliography provides a helpful overview of works by and about Maimonides.

The third section of the volume, on Maimonides in recent times, sets this apart from the many other books on the great man who died in 1204. Martina Urban's article on the anthologies of Maimonidean writings published by Schocken in Nazi Germany in the 1930s is particularly fascinating. Paying close attention to the passages chosen by the anthologists (Nahum Glatzer, Leo Strauss and Alexander Altmann) and to the German words that they used to translate certain Hebrew concepts, Urban shows the strategies that Jewish intellectuals used to strengthen

Jewish identity and pride without arousing the suspicions of Nazi censors.

Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Drori, Israel. *Foreign Workers in Israel: Global Perspectives.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press (SUNY Series in Israeli Studies), 2009. 242 p. \$75.00 (ISBN-978-0-7914-7689-5).

In an ironic twist of history, Israel, which developed from an ideology of socialist labor Zionism, is now a source of employment for non-Jews from around the globe. Drori, an Israeli academician specializing in business management, engages in an ethnographic analysis of Israeli work-related immigration policy. Israel, he points out, has never implemented a rational regulatory policy for foreign workers. It wasn't until after the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict that Israel, as an occupying power, had to deal more directly with a large Palestinian population. This condition occurred in a state that claims to be reserved for Jews, maintains a Jewish character, is outwardly sectarian, and has an open competition between ethnic communities. As Israel developed it became relatively affluent and, hence, a source for employment for populations from countries with far less opportunity.

Drori develops an elementary history of foreign workers in Israel, focusing largely on Thais working in the agricultural sector, Filipinos who serve as caregivers, and Romanians who are involved in construction. This socioeconomic phenomenon is placed in the context of a globalized world, where Israel provides needed employment and a non-Palestinian workforce reduces the

concerns for security. This work is less substantive than might be expected, relying heavily on highly theoretical sociological perspectives without supportive evidence.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Epstein, Seymour. *From Couscous to Kasha: Reporting from the Field of Jewish Community Work.* Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2009. 171 p. \$22.95 (ISBN 978-9-65524-017-7).

Dr. Seymour Epstein worked with Jewish communities all over the world during an eighteen-year career with the American Joint Distribution Committee. As an educational consultant he helped communities in many countries set up schools and learning programs. His memoirs provide a glimpse of his work as well as a view of Jewish life in contrasting regions. Morocco has a thriving Jewish community with deep roots, but the majority of its members made aliyah, while Jews in the countries of the former Soviet Union have been deprived of the opportunity to learn anything about their religion. Dr. Epstein spent time learning about local cultures so that he could work with community teachers to create programs that were effective. Whether working to discourage corporal punishment, establishing teacher training institutes in the former Soviet Union, or trying to find a way to encourage more student engagement, Dr. Epstein is respectful, creative, and delighted with his work. Students of education as well as those interested in Jewish cultures will enjoy reading this book. It is appropriate for academic and synagogue library collections.

*Barbara M. Bibel, Oakland Public Library, Oakland, CA;
Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA*

Galbut, David L. *My Father's Final Journey.* New York: Devora, 2008. 252 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-9344-045-2).

Dr. David Galbut, a renowned heart surgeon, describes his father's last days and the care and devotion that the family gave him. Hymie Galbut was a navy captain, attorney, philanthropist and devoted father and grandfather. The large Galbut family—David and his wife Gita have six daughters—passes on Jewish traditions, enjoys grandchildren, honors the elderly, gives to tzedakah, and displays affection and respect for one another. Galbut even gives an occasional Torah commentary! This book would be a good choice for a caregiver, someone with a sick parent, or someone working in the medical profession.

Ellen Share, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington, DC

Giller, Pinchas. *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El.* Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 199 p. \$75.00 (ISBN 978-0-19532-880-6).

Pinchas Giller of the American Jewish University in Los Angeles offers an analysis of a contemporary school of kabbalah. Building on the most recent sections of the Zohar as interpreted by Isaac Luria in the sixteenth century, Shalom Shar'abi, in the mid-eighteenth century, developed what is perhaps the most complex adaptation of kabbalah to Jewish prayer practice in existence. Giller describes a school of thought and a daily prayer practice that is a distinctive and vibrant aspect of Orthodoxy in contemporary Israel. In its own way, Beit El prayer is perhaps the most abstract of kabbalistic practices. Beit El is not interested in fostering personal mystical experiences in its individual practi-

Yiddish Book Center Ad

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tioners. What it asks of them is to view the text of the Torah and of Jewish prayers in its words and letters as numerical manifestations of individual divine names designed to effect certain spiritual transformations. The communities themselves include the gamut of the general Orthodox and mostly non-Ashkenazic population in Israel from the very learned to the average Jew. As such they represent an attempt on the part of the various non-Ashkenazic Israeli communities to find a distinct voice within the larger Israeli Orthodox community.

Giller acknowledges that his book is only a beginning and that he expects other scholars to build upon his work. I highly recommend his book to all academic libraries with Jewish studies collections and to anyone interested in understanding kabbalistic prayer practice in one of its contemporary forms.

Daniel J. Rettberg, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, OH

Gold, Shefa. *In the Fever of Love: An Illumination of the Song of Songs*. Teaneck, NJ: Yehuda Press, 2009. 99 p. \$27.95 (ISBN 978-1-93473-026-3).

In the Fever of Love, written by Reconstructionist rabbi Shefa Gold, is a translation of the biblical Song of Songs with added commentary. Rabbi Gold, director of The Center for Devotional Energy and Ecstatic Practice, gives workshops on devotional healing, spiritual community building, chant and meditation. The poems in this book are steeped in spirituality. Interesting pen-and-ink drawings by Phillip Ratner enhance the text. The last chapter is devoted to the “ten commandments” of the Song of Songs. This volume is recommended for libraries whose patrons are followers of Rabbi Gold’s teachings or who are interested in alternative spiritual interpretations of biblical text.

Ilka Gordon, Siegal College of Judaic Studies, Cleveland, OH

Goldberg, Arthur. *Light in the Closet: Torah, Homosexuality and the Power to Change*. Beverly Hills: Red Heifer Press, 2008. 575 p. \$36.00 (ISBN 978-0-96314-789-9).

Narrow-minded, homophobic, ignorant, and bigoted, this book is a mixture of literalist Freudianism and Torah that does a great disservice to both. The author, who seems to be obsessed with “sexual transgression” in Judaism as much as his Christian fundamentalist endorsers, is the founder of JONAH: Jews Offering New Alternatives to Homosexuality. Ignoring a time-honored Jewish tradition of asking questions about Torah texts to allow the society that reads it to glean its own meaning, Goldberg compares “Pro-Gay apologists’” interpretations to “the serpent in the Garden of Eden, [whose] prime objective is to create doubt or disbelief.” In the next paragraph, the author becomes an apologist for the talmudic and halachic death penalty for homosexuals. He has filled 575 pages with biblical and pseudo-psychological statements supporting his ignorance of science, sociology, and the meaning of social justice, in order to convince his readers that being queer is a disease and as such, can and should be cured.

I had to read it, but you can forgo wasting your time. I will even keep a copy in my library—after all, I also keep books by Holocaust deniers—so don’t bother to pay money for it—I will gladly ILL it to anyone who wishes to read the Jewish version of Reverend Phelps’s rhetoric.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, CA

Goodman, Lenn E. *Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 235 p. 256 p. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-0-19532-882-0).

This book philosophically treats the subjects of moral obligation, altruism, and equality in Judaism. Goodman shows the importance of Leviticus 19:18 for constructing a rational morality within the context of the ethics of Jewish thinkers—Rav Saadia Gaon, Rav Bachya ibn Pakudah, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevy, Rambam, Gersonides, etc.—and the moral theories of Christianity and Islam, as well as philosophers Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Bentham, Nietzsche, and Rawls. Goodman may ruffle the feathers of some dogmatists by arguing against the notion that we must fulfill the commandment of love of the neighbor simply because G-d demands it. Rather he urges a rational basis for virtue ethics, with cognitive moral ramifications for premeditated behaviors. While rabbinic commentaries on this commandment exist across Jewish history in the Mishnah, Gemarah, and midrashim, Goodman, the Mellon Professor at Vanderbilt University, weaves in other major philosophical traditions. This book is recommended for Jewish libraries.

Dr. David B. Levy, Brooklyn, NY

Grief, Howard. *The Legal Foundation and Borders of Israel Under International Law: A Treatise on Jewish Sovereignty Over the Land of Israel*. Jerusalem: Mazo Publishers, 2008. 731 p. \$49.00 (ISBN-978-9-65734-452-1).

Grief, a Canadian-born and trained lawyer who now practices law in Israel, makes a powerful argument that Israel deserves *de jure* sovereignty over Mandated Palestine (which is smaller than historic Eretz-Israel) based upon “the San Remo Resolution” (a term Grief created), adopted at the San Remo Peace Conference in April 1920. His argument is based on the Allied Supreme Council’s approval of the substance of the Balfour Declaration, written on November 2, 1917; the post-World War I Treaty of Sèvres in August 1920; and the Preamble to the Charter of the British mandate over Palestine. It is the Jewish peoples’ historic claim to the Land of Israel that serves as the *sine qua non* for Grief, and he is dismissive of all who deviate from this principle, even those who have traditionally been strong supporters of the pro-Israel legal position. This massive tome, based upon 25 years of research, is controversial because its maximalist demand conditioned on a single diplomatic instrument, does not consider other legal, and, more importantly, political and social issues involved in this complex matter. Nevertheless, Grief’s work must be a part of the international legal library on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Herskovics, Esther, ed. *Princes Among Men: Memories of Eight Young Souls*. Translated by Batya Shevach. Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 2009. 309 p. \$27.99. (ISBN 978-1-59826-291-9).

On March 6, 2008, Rosh Chodesh Adar II, an Arab who allegedly worked as a driver for the Mercaz HaRav Yeshiva entered the building, pulled out an AK-47, and started shooting in the library. Eight students from the adjacent high school, Yeshivat Yerushalayim L’Tzeirim (Yashlatz), who were studying there were killed and eleven were wounded. The perpetrator was killed at the scene.

The senior class compiled letters and stories about the young men as a tribute to their memories. A description of the terror attack follows introductory remarks by rabbis associated with the institutions. Eight sections of tributes, one for each of the young men that was killed, appear in age order starting with the youngest. A glossary is included at the end of the book, and there are many photographs of the young men.

Through this volume, the memories of Neriya Cohen, Segev Peniel Avichail, Yonatan Yitzchak Eldar, Avraham David Moses, Yochai Lifshitz, Roei Aharon Roth, Yonadav Chaim Hirshfeld, and Doron Maharate are perpetuated. Through the thoughts of parents, rabbis, friends and siblings, the reader learns about eight very special people. The book is exquisitely sad for the loss of these promising young men and their potential, but hopeful because their peers will remember them by intensifying their efforts in Torah learning and good deeds. This book is recommended for Orthodox libraries and libraries whose patrons are interested in current events in Israel.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom Teaneck, NJ

Katz, Nathan. *Spiritual Journey Home: Eastern Mysticism to the Western Wall*. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2009. 192 p. \$27.50 (ISBN 978-1-60280-116-5).

Nathan Katz has spent his life investigating and practicing Eastern spiritual customs. In this autobiographical and metaphysical study, he tells his story and demonstrates how life can indeed return a seeker to his roots. The book is primarily organized around the many places Katz has lived and studied over the past 40 years and his participation in Buddhist and Hindu religious traditions. He began in the mid-1960s, when he traveled to Kathmandu, Nepal with friends. As a professor in the United States, he has brought this awareness to bear on his increasing Jewish knowledge, and has sought to link it to kabbalah and other Jewish mystical traditions. The book includes his account of the meeting between the Dalai Lama and Jewish leaders in 1989, where he served as an intermediary. The last chapter connects his current Jewish observance to his continued practice of Eastern meditative rituals.

Professor Katz’s book is not for every library. The bulk of the text deals with life in Asian communities. The story is fascinating although it lacks a compelling narrative line. But in the end the reader is won over by the author’s sincerity and his commitment to his search for religious truth, wherever it may be found. The book is recommended for academic libraries that have comparative religion programs. Larger synagogues may also be interested.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Konner, Melvin. *The Jewish Body*. New York: Schocken Books, 2009. 285 p. \$22.00 (ISBN 978-0-80524-236-2). Reviewed from an advance review copy.

Another winner in the Jewish Encounter Series, this book presents a fascinating and readable account of Jewish writing about the body. Konner is an anthropologist and medical doctor. His topics include circumcision, pregnancy, burial, plastic surgery, and physical strength. He contrasts Jewish ideas about the body with the Greek view. In the chapter “Race and Destiny,” he describes how the Germans perpetuated anti-Semitic beliefs

by focusing on the supposed physical appearance of the Jews. The book provides a unique perspective on Jewish history. I recommend it for synagogue libraries. It would also be a good gift book for a college or high school graduation.

Ellen Share, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington, DC

Korobkin, Frieda Stolzberg. *Throw Your Feet Over Your Shoulders: Beyond the Kindertransport.* NY: Devora Publishing, 2008. 182 p. \$21.95 (ISBN 978-1-93444-026-1).

This entertaining and interesting memoir begins as the author and her siblings leave Vienna on the Kindertransport. Korobkin would never see her parents and other relatives again. She writes, "My father's faith in G-d was once again rewarded. This time, help came from a stranger, a young rabbi in England. ... Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld, with the assistance of the Agudah organization in London, was arranging to bring groups of children out of Austria, Germany and Czechoslovakia to the safety of Holland and England. My father ... [was] insisting that we be assigned to a group going all the way to England. He was very clear about not wishing our final destination to be Holland. G-d must have endowed him with prophetic vision, for Pap's foresight probably saved our lives."

Once they reach London, they are separated. In 1939, the author is evacuated to the countryside to avoid the bombing of London. She stays with wealthy gentile families. Later, her sister secretly takes her to join their brother in a Jewish hostel in Cardiff. They live together until they leave for schooling, marriage, and jobs. In 1949, the author emigrates to Israel and some years later makes her way back to London and eventually the United States.

The book is well written, and includes interesting letters between her and her siblings interspersed throughout the narrative. Recommended for high school and adult readers. A good addition to all Holocaust collections.

Martin Goldberg, Penn State University, Monaca, PA

Lieberman, Dovid. *Real Power: Rise Above Your Nature and Never Feel Angry, Anxious, or Insecure Again.* Lakewood, New Jersey: Viter Press, 2008. 154 p. \$15.00. (ISBN 978-0-97863-133-8).

With a catchy title and approbations from Rabbi Dr. Twerski, Rabbi Paysach Krohn, and Rabbi Dovid Cohen, one would think this book would be the answer to one's personality challenges. The author, an "internationally recognized leader in the field of human behavior and interpersonal relationships," presents his strategies in five succinct sections. In "The Truth about Reality" perspective and free will are defined and discussed. "Rising Above Our Nature" probes self-acceptance, ego, and creating structure. The third section is about "Emotional Freedom" and the fourth is about "Reshaping Our Relationships." The last section is entitled "Accessing Real Power," and it discusses developing a relationship with God and exercising free will. The book includes "Biographical Details of Famous Jewish Thinkers and Rabbis Noted in This Work" and a glossary.

In 139 pages of text, there are 194 footnotes, some rather lengthy, which often distract from the narrative; they could have been included in the text. The author concludes that "we are responsible for our satisfaction with life, whether we choose to

accept this or not. If we accept responsibilities for our lives, then nothing can stop us; if we do not, then nothing will move us." It is an astute observation, but there are no concrete suggestions for achieving this goal. Even a section with the heading "A Plan of Action" simply tells the reader he must have a specific plan of how to achieve his goals, but gives no instructions on how to develop this plan.

The combination of Jewish sources and secular sources together with studies about human psychology is interesting, and while the book does not fulfill its title, it does provide food for thought. It is a good choice for libraries whose patrons are interested in self-improvement.

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Milgram, Goldie. *Living Jewish Life Cycle: How to Create Meaningful Jewish Rites of Passage at Every Stage of Life.* Woodstock, VT, Jewish Lights, 2009. 283 p. \$19.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-335-4).

Rabbi Goldie Milgram, founder and executive director of ReclaimingJudaism.org, feels that Jewish life cycle rituals have deep spiritual meaning. She offers ways to make these rites both personal and relevant in today's world. Using stories from her work with congregants and students, she examines rituals associated with life stages: weddings, births, bar/bat mitzvah, death. She adds a modern dimension by expanding the parameters of these rituals: weddings include same sex couples; birth issues include adoption, pregnancy loss, infertility, and C-sections. Since people are living longer, Rabbi Milgram includes rituals for significant birthdays as well as for life's disappointments (job loss) and surviving serious illness and domestic abuse. Preparing for death includes creating an ethical will. Rabbi Milgram provides a framework for each ritual and then encourages readers to customize it so that it fits their needs.

The book includes an appendix with instructions for creating environmentally friendly events, a glossary, and a list of resources for further research. This is an excellent source for those seeking a contemporary perspective when planning life cycle events. School and synagogue librarians will want to add it to their collections.

*Barbara M. Bibel, Oakland Public Library, Oakland, CA;
Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA*

Mosès, Stéphane. *The Angel of History: Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009. 193 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-80474-117-0).

Mosès examines how and why these three great German Jewish thinkers turned away from conceptions of history that were rooted in the Enlightenment, and formulated a view of messianism informed by Jewish beliefs. Mosès writes, "the reflection of those three authors opens out into three different directions, since the beginning of the twentieth century, to Jews who wanted to break the spirit of assimilation: religion (Rosenzweig), Zionism (Scholem), and revolution (Benjamin)." Recommended for university and special collections.

Ellen Share, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington, DC



Olitzky, Kerry M. *Life's Daily Blessings, Inspiring Reflections on Gratitude and Joy for Every Day, Based on Jewish Wisdom.* Woodstock, VT, Jewish Lights Publishing, 2009. 355 p. \$16.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-396-5).

This devotional book presents a wide selection of quotes from traditional and modern Jewish texts and authors, along with a short explanation or discussion of the blessings. Designed to be used "as a lens for daily life," it is organized according to the Gregorian calendar and interwoven with the Jewish calendar and North American cultural events. It is not meant to be read quickly, but rather to be savored and reflected upon, to help the reader see the everyday world as filled with opportunities for blessing. The author, a prolific writer of books in the same category, is executive director of the Jewish Outreach Institute. The book includes a useful glossary of words and ideas, as well as a listing of the authors and sources of quoted texts. There is also a blessings index and a theme index. Although the book is designed for easy reading with large, clear type and plenty of white space, the margins are narrow, especially the inner margin, making photocopying difficult. The book would be most useful for adult collections in Jewish public and community center libraries.

Susan Freiband, Rio Piedras, PR

Oren, Ram. *Gertruda's Oath: A Child, a Promise, and a Heroic Escape During World War II.* New York: Doubleday. 2009. 308 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-38552-718-7). Reviewed from an advance review copy.

I have read and reviewed countless Holocaust-themed books—memoirs, biographies, and fictionalized accounts—and this is the first book I am aware of that chronicles those years from the viewpoint of a Righteous Gentile, detailing the nerve-wracking tribulations challenging her in her role as an angel in disguise. In the late 1930s former Bavarian schoolteacher Gertruda Babilinska, a Catholic, is hired as a nanny for three-year-old Michael, the child of wealthy Jewish parents in Poland. When World War II breaks the boy's father is in Paris on business. His frail mother looks to the nursemaid for guidance, as the three of them are forced to escape their luxurious home and flee to what they hope will be a safer area. Before dying, his mother extracts a promise from the devoted Gertruda to save the child and to see that he remains Jewish.

Michael and Gertruda live for years in Israel in slum-like circumstances. He eventually investigates the one Swiss bank account whose name his late Mother had mentioned to Gertruda. What he finds out is stunning in its revelations about his father's wealth and his personal life. Gertruda's long years of struggle and her faithfulness are an amazing testament to her righteousness. Every library should add this book to its collection.

Muriel Moster, Los Angeles, CA

Perry, T.A. *God's Twilight Zone: Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible.* Peabody: Hendrick's Publishers, 2008. 208 p. \$19.95 (ISBN 978-1-59856-227-9).

Professor Perry's field is comparative literature and he explains that his intention is to offer a number of close literary studies of the Bible. His predecessors, such as Harold Fisch and Robert Alter, are liberally quoted. The term "Wisdom literature"

is normally associated with books such as Job, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, but the author also considers aspects of Wisdom literature in other books of the Bible. The literary approach does yield insights. I was especially impressed with his analysis of Solomon's judgment regarding the two babies. The author claims that the woman who gives up the baby to save its life, may not necessarily be its mother and may not know whether she is its mother or not, but Solomon's judgment is in favor of life. Other stories treated are Judah and Tamar, Samson's riddles, and Saul among the prophets.

I found this a refreshing book. It has something to say to the professional Bible scholar and should certainly please many enthusiastic Bible amateurs.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Pfeffer, Jeremy I. *'From One End of the Earth to the Other': The London Bet Din, 1805-1855, and the Jewish Convicts Transported to Australia.* Brighton; Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2008. 355 p. \$74.50 (ISBN 978-1-84519-293-8 cloth); \$44.95 (ISBN 978-1-84519-366-9 pbk.).

Pfeffer draws on two minute books of the London Bet Din (Rabbinic Court), spanning the years 1805 to 1855, which record hundreds of decisions regarding marriage, divorce, even conversion of British Jews. In part one, "The coming of Jews to England and Australia," Pfeffer deals with "the resurrection of English Jewry" and the "Penal transportation of Jews to Australia." In part two, "The first Bet Din of the Jews of England," he reviews what can be learned about personal status of the Jews who are recorded in the minute books. Part three, "The first Bet Din of the Jews of Australia," exploits the same source for its information on Jews of Australia. One chapter focuses on the Jewish robbers of Sheerness, on the Island of Sheppey (Kent), who were deported to Australia.

Pfeffer is a retired science teacher in England and in Israel. His book contains lengthy and sometimes extraneous discourses extending well beyond the immediate topic of his book. The critical apparatus is haphazard, and statements are often presented with no reference to primary or secondary sources to back them up. The author's personal views, in defense of Orthodox Judaism, allow him to make sweeping statements such as "Jewish divorce law was the most enlightened of all the monotheistic religions." He distinguishes between the social institutions for Jews such as schools for the poor immigrants and the "only truly Jewish institution established in nineteenth century England ... the Bet Din." He accumulates trivial and irrelevant details which sometimes have great genealogical interest but he does not frame them in a significant historical perspective. The book contains typos such as words joined together, double commas, and incorrect numbering of footnotes. Recommended only for large college collections in Jewish studies.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD

Roth, Walter. *Avengers and Defenders: Glimpses of Chicago's Jewish Past.* Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2008. 235 p. \$16.95 (ISBN 978-0-89733-573-7).

Avengers and Defenders is a series of short vignettes about people, famous and ordinary, who lived in Chicago, and about important events in Jewish Chicago's history. The book is di-

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vided into seven parts. Among the events described in part I, "Trouble in the City," are the Haymarket bomb tragedy and the Iroquois Theater fire. Short biographies of businessmen such as Albert Lasker, William Paley, Nelson Morris and Elizabeth Stein are included in part II, "Business in the City." "Culture in the City" and "Science in the City" relate the achievements of Leo Strauss, Martin Kamen, and Meyer Levin. The final part is composed of synopses of talks given in Chicago by prominent Jewish thinkers such as Eli Wiesel and Dr. Erika Fromm. Author and attorney Walter Roth has written a book on a similar theme, *Looking Backward: True Stories from Chicago's Jewish Past*. Although this book provides useful information about Chicago history and individuals, the vignettes are too random and too brief for the serious researcher. Recommended for libraries that collect social histories.

Ilka Gordon, Siegal College of Judaic Studies, Cleveland, OH

Rothschild, Matt. *Dumbfounded: A Memoir*. NY: Crown, 2008. 301 p. \$23.95 (ISBN-978-0-30740-542-5).

This fast-reading, always-interesting autobiography will keep you smiling throughout. The author, who now teaches English and journalism at a high school in Florida, relates his unusual life with very wealthy grandparents (imagine a grandmother who is a combination of Auntie Mame and TV's Roseanne). As a chubby, often-confused child, he grew up in a huge, two-story apartment on Fifth Avenue. "My grandfather was raised in a genteel, aristocratic Europe, where people politely disagreed over a friendly glass of absinthe. But my grandmother was born and raised in New York City, where every walking minute is a potential street fight.... Thirty years after my grandparents settled on the Upper East Sides' Museum Mile, theirs was still the only Jewish name in the most exclusive building in the most exclusive neighborhood." Rothschild only heard from his mother on family birthdays—she lived in Europe with her fourth husband. He yearned for acceptance from his peers at the many exclusive schools he attended, and came to grips with his homosexuality. His love of his grandparents gave him the strength and character to survive in most any circumstance. This debut book is highly recommended for libraries with leisure-reading collections.

Martin Goldberg, Penn State University, Monaca, PA

Safran, Eliyahu. *Meditations at Sixty: One Person, Under God, Indivisible: Kashrut, Modesty, Mourning, Prayer and Love*. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2008, 199 p. \$25.00 (ISBN 978-1-60280-038-0).

This work could be an extended "mussar schmooze." Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Safran, vice-president of communications and marketing at the OU's Kashrut Division, explores how to live a spiritual Jewish life, with essays on kashrut, modesty (tzniut), mourning, prayer, love (and relationships), paradox, honesty and ethics in Jewish law, history, and miracles (in an essay on Chanukah). In each chapter, termed a meditation, Safran explores the relationship between body and soul, the physical and spiritual. He argues that Judaism does not consider the physical and spiritual to be at odds. They are dual aspects of Creation and the Creator. His main question is how we can be holy, maintaining that there is holiness in the physical, in the embrace of the world. He shows how we can integrate the holy into daily life.

As examples, in his essay on kashrut, he explains that hunger is an essential physical drive, which is controlled in a permissible and holy fashion through Jewish ritual. He argues that tzniut means not covering up, but rather displaying what is beautiful and dignified about the body. His discussion of mourning is particularly moving, bringing together the rituals of shivah, kaddish, and Yom Kippur, with teshuvah as the background motif.

The meditations blend religion, philosophy, ethics, and spirituality. The essays, which appear to be compiled from sermons, classes, and letters, do overlap with some repetition. The volume is recommended for yeshiva libraries and for academic libraries with homiletic collections.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA

Salkin, Jeffrey K. *Righteous Gentiles in the Hebrew Bible: Ancient Role Models for Sacred Relationships*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008. 151 p. \$18.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-364-4).

I admit that I was curious as to why a Jew would write about gentiles in the Bible. The answer is given: "Because circumstance and history had trained me to always expect the slap, I came to love the caress ... that I often experienced from gentiles who were, for better or worse, fellow travelers." The book includes 15 chapters, 14 biblical events and one post-biblical figure. The author faces a problem common to most biblical scholars and commentators: having to infer a lot of information from a very few words or sentences. Midrashim are employed liberally, for example, in the case of the daughter of Pharaoh who saves Mo-

Rita Ross
Ad

ses. The midrash supplies a name and two possible biographies. The chapter on the book of Jonah impressed me. The sailors are characterized as “among the finest human beings in the Jewish Bible.” The chapter on Ruth disappointed me. For some reason, the author decided that Ruth seduced Boaz on the threshing floor. I don’t know what source he used and I feel that the statement mars his interpretation of the book.

The author’s enthusiasm for his subject makes the book a pleasure to read. I certainly recommend the book for the general reader.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Sharp, Carolyn J. *Irony and Meaning in the Hebrew Bible*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press (Indiana Series in Biblical Literature), 2009. 376 p. \$39.95 (ISBN 978-0-25335-244-6).

“Universes hang in the balance with every act of reading an ironic sacred text”—this first line of the first chapter is the book’s “White Rabbit,” which instantly seduces the reader to follow the author into a newly-charted wonderland of biblical rhetoric. Examining the gap between the articulated and the unspoken in specific biblical texts, Sharp carefully lays out the theory and the methodologies that lead her quest for the theological implications of narrative clusters about foreign rulers, prostitutes, prophets, and authors of wisdom traditions. Identifying the ironies implied in these stories, the author emphasizes the power of the unspoken as “a many edged tool for the destabilization of the overconfident subject, the problematizing of nationalistic rhetoric, and the subversion of ancient believers’ misunderstanding of tradition.”

Highly recommended for academic libraries, as well as for readers who enjoy a good, scholarly hermeneutic of the ironic gaze at sacred texts. With extensive bibliography, annotations and index.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, CA

Silverman, Hillel E. *The Time of My Life: Sixty Fulfilling Years as a Congregational Rabbi*. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2009. 145 p. \$20.00 (ISBN 978-1-60280-1-196).

This is a kaleidoscopic review of a Conservative rabbi’s life as a naval chaplain and a pulpit rabbi. This position allows for little respite but offers the satisfaction of helping others and of making historical Judaism something that must be personalized and cherished. Rabbi Silverman describes his eventful career as one of the first directors of Camp Ramah and as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy and in various pulpits, as a way of thinking out loud, so to speak, about what’s important if a congregational rabbi is to succeed at his job. Rabbi Silverman often found himself on the cusp of history. Indeed, he was serving a large Dallas temple when John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Jack Ruby was one of Rabbi Silverman’s members!

He refers to his sermons as “rehearsed improvisations” and emphasizes some crucial personality features of a pulpit rabbi: he has to “love people,” have a sense of humor, and not take himself too seriously. This is rather sound advice for anybody in the public eye. This book is delightful reading and particularly useful for rabbis and would-be rabbis. Indeed, it’s a useful book for all students thinking of making public service a career.

Morton Merowitz, Amherst, NY

Soloveitchik, Rabbi Joseph B. *The Seder Night: An Exalted Evening: The Passover Haggadah*. Edited by Rabbi Menachem Genack. New York: Orthodox Union Press, 2009. 203 p. \$25.00 (ISBN 978-1-60280-118-9).

Discussions and conversations around the story of the Haggadah and the Exodus from Egypt are the center piece of the Passover seder. To the rich collection of Haggadah commentaries, Rabbi Genack offers a unique volume based on the teachings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who is broadly acknowledged as one of the preeminent Torah scholars of the twentieth century.

The book is in Hebrew and English on facing pages, with English commentaries at the bottom of the page. At the end of the book there are “Matters Concerning Erev Pesah,” based on Rabbi Soloveitchik’s *Reshimot*. The book concludes with the text of Shir haShirim in Hebrew, and a list of works by Rabbi Soloveitchik quoted in this Haggadah. This is an erudite addition to academic Jewish collections, synagogue libraries, Jewish high schools, and yeshivot. Anyone who would like to enrich the seder experience can find inspiration and new dimensions of spirituality in this Haggadah.

Nira G. Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Tauber, Rabbi Jack. *Divrei Yaakov: Lessons from Shemot*. Jerusalem, New York: Devora, 2008. 395 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-93444-000-1).

This book, a compilation of sermons by Rabbi Jack Tauber (1916-1991), is a sequel to his earlier work, *Yalkut Ya’akov*, which

**Jaywil Ad
(ResourceMate)**

dealt with the Book of Genesis. Here the Book of Exodus becomes a springboard for a highly focused ideology. It is a shame that there are editing errors (there is missing copy on certain pages), because the sermons, which cover the weekly Torah portions and special readings, are literary gems. The late spiritual leader of the Avenue Z Jewish Center of Brooklyn, who had dedicated himself to the furtherance of Torah values, fluidly covered topics running the whole gamut of current events and showed himself to be not only well-read but ominously ahead of his time, as his comments on the then-nascent Islamic movement demonstrate. Unfortunately the licentiousness, materialism, and other secular fads that he deplored, and saw represented by Pharaoh's Egypt, have only become worse. Nevertheless, the Jews will prevail provided there is communal and individual adherence to monotheism and "Divine moral law," given to them on Mount Sinai through the Ten Commandments.

The text is followed by a glossary of common Hebrew terms and a bibliography. The numerous sources, ranging from classical commentaries to newspaper articles, reveal the author's intellectual scope which, together with a love for his people, made for an idealist and realist combined. Recommended for all synagogue libraries and possibly outreach centers.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

Trugman, Avraham Arie. *Return Again: The Dynamic of Reincarnation.* New York: Devora, 2008, 192 p. \$21.95. (ISBN 978-1-93444-015-5).

I came to this book as a skeptic. The book presents a popularization of concepts of reincarnation in Judaism. The heart of the book is a presentation of the system of the Zohar and its expansion in the works of Isaac Luria. Rabbi Trugman directs Ohr Hadash, an Israeli outreach program. Trugman's approach is that of traditional Orthodox Judaism, with a touch of New Age excitement, with attempts to show links to modern science and psychology.

The first chapters provide a conventional overview of the sources of reincarnation found in the written and oral Torah, and in the kabbalah and the Hassidic movement, arguing that reincarnation has always been a part of Judaism.

I became hooked in the main chapter "Dynamics of Reincarnation," which presents an overview of the mechanics of the Zohar and Lurianic systems. The presentation of the complexity of the system is clear and fascinating. Trugman continues with a chapter applying theories of reincarnation to Jewish history, especially the ideas of exile, redemption, and the messianic age. He then follows with an interesting chapter tracing the rebirth of souls of various individuals, including Adam, the patriarchs, Moses, Aaron, Rabbi Akiba, and the Ba'al Shem Tov.

Rabbi Trugman is aware that the idea of reincarnation will seem foreign to most readers. I remain a skeptic, but one with a deeper understanding of the classical kabbalist system of reincarnation. I recommend the book for libraries that collect popular Orthodox works, and works on kabbalah and Jewish renewal.

Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA



Umansky, Ellen M., and Dianne Ashton, eds. *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality: A Sourcebook.* Rev. ed. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2009. 381 p. \$29.95 (ISBN 978-1-58465-730-9).

This anthology of Jewish women's writings, both prose and poetry, was originally published in 1992. This new edition is somewhat expanded, from 347 pages to 381 pages, from including writings by 78 authors to 95 authors. While fiction has been excluded, this volume offers a carefully chosen, rich variety of writings ranging chronologically from 1355 to 1990 and reflects the changing concerns of Jewish women over the centuries. The book is divided into five parts, while the earlier edition had only four. Some selections which appeared in the original edition have been dropped, while some new ones have been added. Some of the recent additions show especially clearly the various directions that Jewish women of all branches of Judaism are taking, as they embrace the opportunity of assuming ever larger roles in Jewish observance, scholarly contributions, and community leadership.

This splendid anthology contains many significant writings that may not be easy to locate elsewhere, and mirror the progression of women's participation in Jewish intellectual and spiritual life in Europe, America and Israel. Libraries that own the 1992 edition of this work may not need to add the revised version, unless their budgets permit.

Susanne M. Batzdorff, Santa Rosa, CA

Unterman, Yael. *Nehama Leibowitz: Teacher and Bible Scholar.* Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2009. 607 p. (Modern Jewish Lives; 3) \$39.95 (ISBN: 978-9-65524-019-1).

Deutsch, Hayuta. *Nehama: Sippur Hayyeha shel Nehama Leibowitz.* Tel-Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2008. (ISBN 978-9-65482-441-5).

In 1930, the newly-married Nehama Leibowitz left Germany and emigrated to what was then Palestine. There she taught Bible in a variety of different frameworks including university, radio, school, and her own one-woman large-scale correspondence course entitled "Gilyonot." She unobtrusively played her part in a number of revolutions. Through her work, the Bible became important and relevant. For many Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox institutions, she was the first woman teacher. She was the recipient of the Israel Prize for Education in 1956.

Two weeks ago, I was at the Herzog Teacher Training College in Alon Shvut. Every summer they have a four-day "happening." Each day some 1500 people come to hear lectures about the Bible. Since most people do not come for four full days, we are probably talking about 3000 people who are willing to travel to a remote spot and sit down voluntarily to listen to lectures on the Bible. This successful institution certainly owes something to Nehama.

Nehama was the subject of Yael Unterman's master's thesis, which she has expanded into a book. To call this book a biography is a mistake. About 40% is devoted to Nehama's life. The author then discusses Nehama's beliefs, her methodology, and her brother Yeshaya Leibowitz, who was an important influence on her life. The book concludes with a discussion of future directions and developments. Nehama's approach to teaching Bible was to start from the classical commentators and to step backwards

and consider what stimulated their comments and analyses. Her approach was primarily literary, treating the text as an independent entity. Hebrew speakers will be pleased to know that Ms. Unterman's book was preceded by a biography in Hebrew. Ms. Unterman mentions that the Hebrew text came out as her work was in press. The two works were written independently.

Hayuta Deutsch has produced a far more detailed biography and pays more attention to Nehama as a young girl and as a student. The author's wealth of information, however, sometimes results in repetition.

I think both books succeed in presenting Nehama's very special personality. Deutsch had an advantage in that she was in contact with the family and had access to Nehama's papers. The Unterman work is better organized. Both authors used available sources liberally and conducted interviews with many of Nehama's friends and admirers. There is inevitably a lot of duplication between the two books.

The Unterman book is highly readable. It is recommended for the so-called general reader, and is a must for educators, feminists, and Zionists. The bilingual reader has a choice of two good works with slightly different emphases.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Yudelson, Larry, and Yori Yanover. *How Would God REALLY Vote? A Jewish Rebuttal to David Klinghoffer's Conservative Polemic*. Teaneck, NJ: Ben Yehuda Press, 2008. 143 p. \$14.95 (ISBN 978-1-93473-019-5).

This critique (some would argue diatribe) is a necessary companion piece to the controversially argued *How Would God Vote?: Why the Bible Commands You to Be a Conservative* by David Klinghoffer (Doubleday, 2008). Both authors are traditional Jews employing a progressive ideological—and theological—interpretation of Judaism and reject Klinghoffer's approach to politics. Diversity and toleration of religious belief and practice are the starting points for Yudelson and Yanover, in stark contrast to Klinghoffer's strict constructionist view of Hebrew biblical stipulations. The authors' view is that the distinctive Jewish approach to law and politics builds upon varied rabbinical interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, leaning on the Talmud, and emphasizing the Mishnah.

The authors deconstruct Klinghoffer's views on the proper role of women in society, examining the issues of abortion and contraception and debating whether or not there is a singularly correct gendered marriage partner. Klinghoffer is a research fellow at the anti-Darwin Discovery Institute, so there is an evaluation of his approach to evolution and intelligent design. Moving on to more politically oriented topics, there are strongly worded-counter-arguments to Klinghoffer's positions on taxation, healing and health care, capital punishment, drugs and other unnatural additives, and even domestic intelligence operations.

The work takes on a nasty character in questioning the "Jewishness" of Klinghoffer, who claims to be an Orthodox Jew, bringing Jewish insight to an Evangelical Christian audience. What is offered is a position where ideology takes priority over differences in opinion among fellow Jews. There then is the ultimate question: How would God vote? The authors' response: On the side of justice and righteousness.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

SOUND RECORDINGS

Aviezer, Nathan. *Fossils & Faith*. Clarksburg, NJ: Alden Films Audio, 2009. www.aldenfilms.com. 6 audio compact discs (7 hours 9 minutes) \$49.95 (ISBN 978-1-877684-78-4).

Nathan Aviezer, professor of physics at Bar Ilan University and an Orthodox Jew, examines how the spiritual world and religious beliefs are confirmed by modern scientific research and discovery. Continuing his first volume, *In the Beginning: Biblical Creation and Science*, Aviezer considers biblical topics such as faith, proofs for the existence of God, free will, miracles, prayer, the extreme longevity of the early generations in Genesis, the spread of languages and the Tower of Babel, and life on Mars. Following the scientific quest for the origins of man, Aviezer analyzes Darwin's theory of evolution. He presents both the non-Darwinian theories of evolution and Darwinian fundamentalism.

Fossils & Faith (the book was published by KTAV in 2001) is read by Michael Jarmus in an appealing presentation. The listener's interest and concentration are maintained by the clear language and the orderly structure of the information. This audio book is a worthy addition to any public, synagogue, or academic library.

Nira G. Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Di Naye Kapelye. *Traktorist*. Berlin: Oriente Music, 2008. 1 compact disc \$28.99 B001J0PMJO.

Bob Cohen, leader of the group Di Naye Kapelye, is a Jewish musician who went to Europe to find the remnants of a rich mélange of European influences that is the basis for the music we know as klezmer. Living in Budapest, he has made it his life's work to find Jewish and gentile musicians who remember or have learned the folk and popular music that was part of central Europe before the Holocaust. Many of his finds are on this unique CD, which features a style that combines klezmer, Romany, and Hungarian and Romanian music with folk instruments.

The CD mixes forgotten gems such as the title cut, a worker's ode to his tractor, with modern works such as "Chernobyl," originally by Brave Old World, which blends topical lyrics with a traditional Carpathian melody. Yiddish folk music is filtered through old instruments that make it new—a Moldavian bagpipe, a shepherd flute, a "resonator violin." Added to this mix are the dance rhythms of the region—the czardas, the zhok. The music is grounded in several vital influences—Hasidic, Romany, Moldavian, Hungarian. The selection reflects them all, making the CD amazingly varied, surprising, and vital. It is deeply reverential toward the music and, at the same time, transformative and modern. The cuts are all so exciting that it's hard to single one out. The liner notes are informative and well written. An outstanding and essential CD for all Jewish music collections.

Beth Dwoskin, Proquest, Ann Arbor, MI

Klezmania. *Shmoozin'*. Ozklez: Klezmania Records, 2008. (A Sixth Millennium Recording). 1 compact disc (41:44) \$18.98. 0ZKLEZ002.

Klezmania's third recording has a mellow jazzy groove quite different from the frenetic tempo and brassy discordance typical of much klezmer music. The first selection, "Dance Me to the End of Love," takes the Leonard Cohen classic and adds Yiddish verses, asking the listener to dance "biz Mashiach du" (until the

TES Ad

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Messiah is here). There are several traditional waltzes, songs about love, and the jazzy "New Orleans Khasene (Wedding)" and "Oy S'iz Git" (Oh, It's Good), which was first performed by Molly Picon.

The inventive Australian group, whose previous songs include "Kangeroo Klezmer" and "Oystralia" (their version of "Romania"), add a unique touch with the didgeridoo in the musical arrangements. Freydi Mrocki's vocals are smooth and sweet, and one can imagine this CD being recorded at a small dance hall or coffee house. *Shmoozin'* is a worthwhile addition to libraries that have large music collections or whose patrons are fans of klezmer or innovative Jewish music. Hanau Hobn! (Enjoy!)

Kathe Pinchuck, Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Taubman, Craig. *Lights: Celebrate Hanukkah in Concert*. Sherman Oaks, CA: Craig 'N Co., 2008. 1 compact disc. \$15.00 B001E44206.

Lights: Celebrate Hanukkah in Concert is a collection of Hanukkah songs recorded live in concert and broadcast on PBS. Some of the songs such as "Mi Yimalel," the blessings over the Hanukkah candles, "Hiney Ma Tov" and "I Have a Little Dreidel" are sung with an untraditional twist, which adds to the enjoyment of this CD. Others such as "Hanukah Gelt," "The Lesson," "Holy Ground," and "A Convert Jig" are new songs. Each talented and professional artist does an outstanding job, and the sound quality of the CD is excellent. The artists include Alberto Mizrahi, The Klezmatics, and Mare Winningham. The performances are outstanding. Highly recommended for libraries that collect music.

Ilka Gordon, Siegel College of Judaic Studies, Cleveland, OH

VIDEO

Gilbert, Joel. *Farewell Israel: Bush, Iran and the Revolt of Islam*. Clarkburg, NJ: Alden Films. DVD 145 min. 2007. Sale \$49.95.

While the subtitle indicates some sort of connection between President Bush, Iran, and an Islamic revolt, the exact theme of the film is difficult to determine. On a positive note, a vivid depiction of the history of Islam with a clearly Western interpretation is provided. The characterization of Islam as a monolithic religious belief system is offset by periodic insertions of hyperbolic speeches by Shia President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran and an occasional statement from President Bush. One central claim that pervades the film is that the Christian West continues to misperceive Islam and its community, whose principle value is a particular demand for justice, while the West values freedom, supported by a liberal understanding of peace. Accordingly, Israel is viewed as abhorrent in the Islamic world, ruled by Jews who, since the time of the Prophet, were never viewed as equal partners with Muslims and were only tolerated with a peculiar status of Dhimmi. In the view of this film, it has been Israel's failure to correctly see Islamic goals for what they are, made worse by President Bush's foolish attempt to introduce democracy in the Arab states, and an Iranian desire to acquire weapons of mass destruction aimed at eliminating Israel, which will ultimately lead to disaster.

Extreme analogies and connections reduce any sense of balance in the portrayal. This will play well to a popular audience if the goal is to incite anti-Islamic sentiment.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Grossman, Roberta. *Blessed is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh*. Beverly Hills, CA: Katahdin Productions and Balcony. 2009. Feature length 85 min. Classroom length 45 minutes. Sale to institutions: \$350 for feature-length version; \$250 for classroom version. Sale to libraries, high schools and middle schools: \$100 for feature-length version; \$50 for classroom version. Home version available in fall 2009.

This gripping documentary, which presents the life of this extraordinary young woman for the first time on film, is a must-have for every library that collects materials on the Shoah. It is appropriate for high school and adult audiences, as part of a course of study, or as a stand-alone film. Hannah was one of a cadre of idealistic young people who realized, after the Nazi imposition of restrictions on Jews in all aspects of life, that the only place for them was their own homeland. After emigrating in 1939 from Hungary, Hannah joined a group at Kibbutz Sedot Yam in 1942 and was one of only three women to be inducted into the Haganah group preparing to parachute into Europe to rescue Jews.

The story of Hannah's life is skillfully integrated into the historical events of the day. We hear and see well-known figures such as Shimon Peres, Martin Gilbert, and Aaron Megged, as well as surviving members of Hannah's parachute unit and her relatives. The result is a rich historical film enhanced by fine acting and beautiful cinematography. This film could serve as a trigger for a study of Israel's role during the Shoah. It is highly recommended for all Judaica collections.

Marion M. Stein, New York, NY

Publishing News

Hiding Edith by Kathy Kacer (Second Story Press, 2006) is the winner of the 2009 Yad Vashem Award for Children's Holocaust Literature. It is part of the publisher's Holocaust Remembrance series.

The Rabbi and the Twenty-nine Witches, retold and illustrated by Marilyn Hirsh, has been reissued by Marshall Cavendish, as part of its Classics series. The price is \$17.99 and the ISBN is 978-0-7614-5586-8.

Second Story Press has published two winners of this year's Canadian Jewish Book Awards, presented by the Koffler Centre of the Arts. Ami Sands Brodoff and her novel *The White Space Between*, are the winners of the award for Fiction. Kathy Kacer and her novel *The Diary of Laura's Twin*, are the winners of the award for Youth Literature.



The AJL Newsletter
editors wish readers
a healthy and joyous
New Year.

!veu,nu vcuy vba

Sefer So
Good Ad

An Israeli Author Speaks

This is the first of a new column that will appear in the newsletter. Two of our members in Israel, Anna Levine and Pnina Moed Kass, have agreed to share their conversations with fellow Israeli authors to give our membership a window into the world of writing in Israel.

ANNA LEVINE

Last night I received a call at around 10:00 pm. "Mom, we're doing maneuvers not far from the house and my commander said it would be fine if you brought over some treats for us during our break."

At around 11:00 pm I drove into an area where there was an abandoned building, my car full of drinks, bags of chips, and cookies. I was met by a group of soldiers (could not really figure out which one was my son until he leaned over and gave me a kiss). They set up a make-shift table from a few rocks and an old plank, and put out the drinks and food. The boys, sweaty and exhausted, all made sure to thank me and say how much they appreciated it. When I got home, I found an email from my other son, studying English literature at Ben Gurion University. "Can you take a look at this paper?" he asked. "It's on time, consciousness, and the writer's manipulation of his world."

Do I dare
Disturb the universe
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse
—T.S. Eliot

Putting together ideas for this column, I thought of how living in Israel, as a writer, I volley between these different worlds trying to distill experiences, and in writing about them and revising them struggle to understand—if not wishing to manipulate—the many facets of this universe in which I live.

Request a Free Yiddish Book

In memory of Chaia Bierstone-Podoliak, family members self-published a book called *The First Song*, a selection of her poems and stories in Yiddish. The goal is to donate these books to Yiddish library collections around the world that are open to the public.

Please request a copy of the book from Ms. Esther Podoliak at epodoliak@yahoo.com. The number of copies is limited, and the donor is therefore interested in knowing:

- The approximate size/extent of the Yiddish collection
- The approximate size/extent of the Yiddish-speaking borrowing audience
- The address and location of the Yiddish collection
- The name of the Yiddish collection and its sponsoring organization
- The name, position and e-mail address of the requester

The donor will cover the cost of shipping. Any questions should be addressed to her.

AJL at the World Congress of Jewish Studies

YA'AKOV ARONSON

Before an audience that filled the room, eight speakers presented papers on a wide variety of topics at two AJL-sponsored sessions at the 15th World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. The audience, as varied as the lecture subjects, included librarians, translators, and scholars.

At each session lecturers included one Israeli and three Americans. The morning session, entitled "Judaica Librarianship: Cultural and Historical Studies," was chaired Roger Kohn of the Library Congress. Rachel Simon of Princeton University discussed the influence of Hebrew printing on the development of a Ladino literature in Istanbul, mainly in the 18th and 19th centuries. Rachel Leket-Mor of Arizona State University spoke about the collection of paperback novels in Hebrew that she has built at her university, and its use for understanding the "unofficial" side of Israeli life. Ms. Leket-Mor noted that the popular literature of suspense, detective, and romance texts—and later on, western stories, science fiction, and erotic literature, has generally been ignored, and the collection at ASU is the only one of its kind. Benjamin Richler, retired director of the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts of the National Library of Israel and recipient of this year's AJL Bibliography Award for *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library: Catalogue* which he edited, described the unrealized plans of a noted German rabbi, Yehuda Leib b. R. Hanokh Zundel (1645-1705), to have his personal library converted into a public library for scholars at his death. Closing out the session, Daniel Scheide of Florida Atlantic University discussed the work of John Zorn, a very talented avant-garde musician and composer who has developed what he calls radical Jewish music. (For a sample see www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ajl28OdWqtc.)

The afternoon session, "Judaica Librarianship: Digitization and Bibliography," was chaired by Yael Penkower, retired librarian of the Yeshiva of Flatbush in Brooklyn. Edith Lubetski of Yeshiva University's Stern College discussed the types of decisions that she and her husband had to make about what to include in their recently published bibliography of works on the Book of Esther. The report on their experience can serve as a useful paradigm for approaching the preparation of any bibliography on a biblical figure. Their work, *The Book of Esther: A Classified Bibliography*,



Lecturers and session chairs at the AJL sessions at the 15th World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, August, 2009. (Left to right): Benjamin Richler, Elhanan Adler, Rachel Leket-Mor, Rachel Simon, Daniel Scheide, Roger Kohn, Yael Penkower, and Peggy Pearlstein. Not pictured: Edith Lubetski.

phy, was recognized with the honorable mention bibliography award this year by AJL. Roger Kohn of the Library of Congress spoke on the making of the second edition of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* using as frames of reference the preparation of the first edition of EJ, the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and *Wikipedia*. Elhanan Adler of the National Library of Israel discussed his library's digitization of unique manuscripts. This project has been expanded to include, in certain categories, manuscripts held in most major libraries in the world, thus making available to a researcher in one database almost all the material in a subject area. For an example see jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/ketubbot/ where *ketubbot* from all major holdings worldwide are collected. Closing out the day was Peggy Pearlstein of the Library of Congress, who introduced the audience to the World Digital Library (www.wdl.org/en/). This is a project of the Library of Congress designed to gather together in a single database materials from many libraries in many languages representing many cultures. The materials are stored in the language in which they were composed, but the catalog records for them are available in the seven official languages of UNESCO. Although the project is only in its infancy, the NLI, one of the contributing libraries, has already sent its map collection representing Israeli material, and the manuscripts of Moses Maimonides representing Jewish material, to be included in the project. As the last two lectures emphasized, the aggregation of material from many sources is steadily expanding and changing many of the habits of researchers as well as presenting a more varied fare for the general reader.

At the conclusion of the sessions a reception was sponsored by Jerusalem Books. Organization of the day was directed by the International Liaison Committee of AJL, whose members are Edith Lubetski (chair), Peggy Pearlstein, and Ya'akov Aronson.

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Rambam Center Dedication at Temple Beth Am

ETTA GOLD

On September 13th we held the official dedication of The Rambam Center Library and Judaic Studies Building and opening of the newly-constructed Courtyard Garden of Temple Beth Am, in Pinecrest, Florida. This dedication event represents the completion of our 14-year Temple Beth Am Home for Our Heritage Capital & Endowment Campaign on the Richard and Janet Yulman Campus.

The community event included celebrity authors in an interactive mini-book fair and an opportunity for guests to purchase books for our library, commemorated with a personalized dedication-day book plate. Featured authors were Jerry Glantz (*The Man who Spoke to God*), the story of his father, Cantor Leib Glantz; Rabbi Jeff Salkin (*The Modern Men's Torah Commentary: New Insights from Jewish Men on the 54 Weekly Torah Portions*); and Laurie Friedman (*The Mallory Series*).



Pinecrest mayor and Temple Beth Am member Cindy Lerner proclaimed Sunday, September 13, 2009 "Temple Beth Am Day" in the Village of Pinecrest. Political and religious leaders, Temple Beth Am past presidents, and others joined approximately 400 guests for the festivities. Rabbi Terry Bookman led the memorable dedication ceremony, and sports-hero-turned-author Alonzo Mourning (*Resilience: Faith, Focus, Triumph*) wrapped up the celebration.

Temple Beth Am, the largest Reform temple in Miami-Dade, has more than 1,300 member families. Our day and religious schools have more than 800 families combined and our award-winning Beth Am basketball league boasts over 1,000 participants. The Rambam Center dedication further emphasizes our commitment to education and higher learning. Our library has a 44-year history in our community; it was founded by the legendary Margot S. Berman, author of *How to Organize a Judaic Library*. The new space consists of a large children's area, a computer lab, an adult reading room, and a teachers' resource center. We look forward to expanded programs for adults and children as we make good use of our new, comfortable space.



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