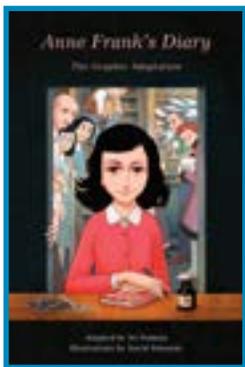


Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY RACHEL KAMIN & CHAVA PINCHUCK

In The Spotlight



Folman, Ari. *Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation*. Illus. by David Polonsky. New York: Pantheon Books, 2018. 149 pp. \$14.95. (9781101871799) Gr. 8-12.

To illustrate every word in *Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl* would have taken years upon years and thousands of pages. Instead Folman and Polonsky abridged the renowned diary into an utterly gorgeous graphic novel. Folman manages to cover all the main events and feelings in Frank's diary such as the hardships of living in the annex, but also discovering love and questioning the world.

Polonsky, a graduate of the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, had created illustrations that enhance the text beautifully. These lush images help to tell the story as much as the text does. He and Folman are best known for the award-winning animated documentary *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) about the 1982 Lebanon War, and are currently producing a movie version of the graphic adaptation, *Where Is Anne Frank?* Although it does not replace the original text, this graphic novel reflects it well, converting the thoughts Anne shared with Kitty (her diary) into conversations and using actual photographs of the residents of The Secret Annex

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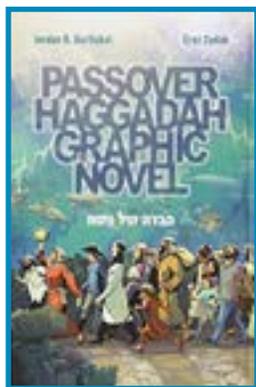
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In The Spotlight (continued)

as reference for the illustrations. Particularly impactful are the comparison of “imperfect Anne” with “perfect Margot” and double spread of a flooded Amsterdam. This would be excellent to read after or in conjunction with the original text. This is also highly recommended for general fans of graphic novel and graphic biographies.

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

[Editors’ Note: *Anne Frank’s Diary: The Graphic Adaptation* is a 2019 Sydney Taylor Notable Book.]

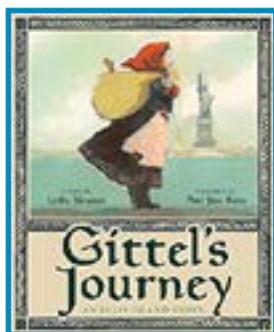


Gorfinkel, Jordan B. and Zadok, Erez. *Passover Haggadah Graphic Novel*. Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2019. 169 pp. \$19.95 (9789657760031). Gr. 6-12.

A brief introduction sets the tone of the Haggadah, with an adult goat explaining to a girl goat why Jews have a Seder on Passover. After the order of the Seder, the entire text is presented in Hebrew with transliteration. The English translation is most often presented in the graphic elements of the Haggadah. Blue and black shaded ‘pop ups’ indicate when to perform a ritual, like hand washing or eating certain foods. The illustrations are detailed, colorful, and very clever, with an interplay of ancient and modern scenes, like a panel depicting Egyptian taskmasters supervising an office full of people in cubicles. The art shows diverse Jews and Jewish experience including biblical scenes, Ethiopians making Aliyah, a secret Seder in the former Soviet Union, the Holocaust, and modern Israel.

Jordan Gorfinkel, known as “Gorf,” managed the Batman franchise at DC Comics, draws JewishCartoon.com and gives Jewish cartoon workshops. Erez Zadok is a well-known Israeli comic book artist, and David Olivestone has edited and translated Jewish texts. The varied formats, the use of color, the different speech bubbles, thought bubbles, and labels all combine for an entertaining and educational resource. The texts are all in clear, readable fonts, and there is a lot of information about the symbolism and customs of the Seder, like the three pieces of matzah and leaning at specific times. While the “Maggid” portion of the Seder is magnificent, some of the later sections, like Grace after Meals and Hallel are accompanied by simple illustrations. The publisher is “thrilled to contribute to the rich legacy of illuminated Jewish manuscripts,” and this “super-fun sequential art” is guaranteed to hold Seder participants’ attention.

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



Newman, Lesléa. *Gittel's Journey: An Ellis Island Story*. Illus. by Amy June Bates. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2019. 40pp. \$17.99. (9781419727474) Gr. 2-5.

In *Gittel's Journey*, readers will experience an emotional journey of loss, hope, fear, and bravery, told beautifully by a master wordsmith. Gittel and her mother are leaving the ‘Old Country’ to sail to America and start a new life, but Gittel’s mother is refused passage because of an eye infection. Gittel is to go ahead to America alone. With the name and address of her American cousin clutched tightly in her hand, Gittel boards the ship. On the journey, she makes new friends, but worries about how she will be received in America. She misses her friend Raisa and her goat Freida, but mostly she misses her mother. When Gittel arrives at Ellis Island, she bravely hands her piece of paper to the immigration officer, but the



In The Spotlight (continued)

address has disappeared, smeared off the paper. As Gittel begins to cry, an interpreter assures her she will be taken care of, which she is, with a great deal of *Gemilut Hasidim*. When a reporter's picture of Gittel is published in the local Jewish newspaper, her cousin recognizes her and brings her home. Months later, Gittel arrives back at Ellis Island to welcome her mother to America.

The accompanying illustrations are astounding. Using watercolor and gouache to create soft lines and muted colors, the artist brings the story to life. Starting with the exquisite jacket (and the amazing illustration on the book's unjacketed cover) and continuing through the book, Gittel's every emotion is depicted. In addition, folk-art style woodcut prints surround the story, the illustrations and fill the beautiful endpapers. An author's note, glossary, and a bibliography enhance the historical basis for the book. Based on the true stories of the author's grandmother and "aunt" (a close family friend), the book is a fitting homage to the courage and determination of those who left their countries, knowing they would never return to family and friends.

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

BIBLE STORIES AND MIDRASH

Koffsky, Ann D. *Creation Colors*. Millburn: Apples and Honey Press, 2019. 24 pp. \$17.95. (9781681155456). Preschool-Gr. 1.

Author/illustrator Ann Koffsky presents each of the first seven days as a day of color, created by God to fill the world with visual delight. Day One, biblically designated as the day of the creation of light and its separation from darkness, is shown here as an all black-and-white world. The divine separation of darkness and light paves the way for a world-to-come filled with color. Day Two, the day of the formation of the oceans and sky, is filled with shaded blues separating into wave-like and cloud-like shapes. For Day Three, the birth of trees and plants is suggested by multiple shades of green which evolve into leafy structures. Each day presents a new color that inhabits the world in its own magnificent way. The creation of human beings is the most colorful day of all, subtly and beautifully emphasizing that people come in many colors. And on the Seventh Day, when God finally rests, the world, in all its complexity, is a bursting tapestry of color and light.

The text is spare and effective, and the illustrations are spectacular. The artwork started as wall panels (currently hanging in the synagogue space of a Jewish day school). Koffsky "created papercuts, which she laid on top of painted acrylic painted canvases. This allows for the vivid textured paint to show through the papercuts, making for a juxtaposition between the precise lines of the cuts, and the rough strokes on the canvas." It is a book about Creation in the traditional sense as it follows the biblical narrative, but it is also a unique and refreshing angle on a story which has been told and retold. It imbues the familiar tale with new excitement and life.

Michal Hoschander Malen, Retired librarian, North Shore Hebrew Academy lower and middle schools; Children and YA editor, Jewish Book Council

Olizky, Kerry. *Where's The Potty on this Ark?* Illus. by Abigail Tompkins. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben Publishing, 2018. 24 pp. \$17.99 (9781512483703) HC; \$7.99 (9781512483710) PB; \$7.99 eBook. Preschool-Gr. 1. Reviewed from ARC.

When the animals board the ark, they are given an orientation by Noah's wife. She explains: "Noah made sure to build rooms for everything we will need. Places to eat. Places to sleep. Places to play.

And a potty room in the bottom of the Ark with plenty of different potties so that everyone will be comfortable.” Suddenly a raccoon starts jumping from one foot to another and announces that he has to go now! Mother hen takes him to the potty. When they return, the owl announces that bodies are special and that animals eat to become strong and extra food needs a way to leave when it is finished being useful. She teaches the animals the prayer to thank God for a body that does its work.

Rabbi Olitzky attempts to answer the young child’s question of “How do animals use a potty?” from a Jewish perspective. The inside cover alludes to modern Midrash about how animal waste was handled on Noah’s Ark. The book concludes with the message that our bodies are special and the prayer that thanks God for our bodily functions. This whimsical tale will delight young children and maybe encourage a few to start their own potty training. The highly stylized illustrations appear to be water color in fun muted tones. The animals display human behavior, but the reader realizes that they are animals and not humans. One could quibble that animals do not say prayers or that the Hebrew prayer is not present. One might question why the Midrash is hard to find on the inside cover and not as part of the text and why Noah is absent from this tale. His is a fun, educational book on bodily functions that is warm and friendly for a young child and puts potty training into a Jewish context.

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

BIOGRAPHY

Baron, Clémentine. *Anne Frank. (Pocket Bios).* Illus. Bruno Wennagal, et al. Trans. Catherine Nolan. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2018. 28 pp. \$14.99. (9781250168771). Gr. 2-4. [Originally published by *Quelle Histoire*, 2017.]

Crété, Patricia. *Albert Einstein. (Pocket Bios).* Illus. Bruno Wennagal, et al. Trans. Catherine Nolan. New York, Roaring Brook Press, 2018. 28 pp. \$14.99. (9781250166098). Gr. 2-4. [Originally published by *Quelle Histoire*, 2015.]

This series includes many people who overcame prejudice and hardship (Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr.). Each book is illustrated in the popular animation style of oversized heads, large black oval eyes, and emotions expressed by varying lines of the eyebrows and mouth. The lives of the subjects are presented in very simplistic terms, with only a few lines per page. The authors do not shy away from lightly explaining difficult subjects. For example, the *Anne Frank* book states, “Hitler made horrible speeches about Jews, accusing them of being evil.” The appeal of the books is their small “pocket” size (7x6 inches) and their dramatic stories along with the illustrations that resemble those of graphic novels for older children. Children fascinated by real life stories will probably be interested in collecting the whole set.

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

Leigh, Anna. *Aly Raisman: Athlete and Activist.* Minneapolis: Lerner, 2019. 48 pp. \$31.99. (9781541542617). Gr. 4-6.

Along with an abundance of awe and inspiration, the full story of two-time Olympic gymnast, Aly Raisman, includes disturbing events, controversy, and scandal, and this well-rounded biography portrays Raisman’s impressive athletic and personal accomplishments, as well as her challenges, in an age-appropriate manner for upper elementary students.

At the age of ten, Raisman established her goal to compete someday as an Olympic gymnast. She achieved that goal in 2012 through tremendous discipline and sacrifice. After taking a year off from competition, she dedicated herself to making the 2016 Olympic team. Raisman worked hard to understand her body, overcome physical injuries, and conquer mental barriers to succeed in qualifying for the team. It was during this same period that Raisman was first questioned about her medical

treatment by the national team doctor, Larry Nassar, who some gymnasts said “had been touching [them] inappropriately.” (Nassar was ultimately convicted of sexually abusing a multitude of young gymnasts and USA Gymnastics, the sport’s governing body, was found to have been covering up the allegations, over the course of many years.) Despite the added stress of this unfolding trauma, Raisman exceeded her previous Olympic performance. Raisman’s own abuse by Nassar is addressed in the book’s final chapter, which notes the publication of her memoir for upper grades: *Fierce: How Competing For Myself Changed Everything* (Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2017) [reviewed in the Sept/Oct 2018 *AJL Newsletter*], in which she publicly reveals her abuse. The book provides further details on the subject, as well as Raisman’s focus on activism and advocacy.

Raisman’s connection to Judaism is referenced in a description of her 2012 Olympic floor routine, performed to “Hava Nagila.” A sidebar page follows, entitled, “Judaism and the Munich Eleven,” recounting how Raisman dedicated her performance to the Israeli athletes murdered at the 1972 Olympic Games, and her realization that she was a representative of the Jewish community in addition to her country. Other sidebars include information on the 1996 Olympic gymnastics team that inspired Raisman, the Karolyi Ranch, and Raisman’s supportive parents. Backmatter includes a timeline, source notes, bibliography, and sources for further reading.

Martha McMahon, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA

Radomski, Kassandra. *Anne Frank: Get to Know the Girl Beyond Her Diary. (People You Should Know)*. Mankato: Capstone, 2019. 32 pp. \$27.99. (9781543555240). Gr. 3-5.

While this volume purports to tell readers more than they already know, it is a rather superficial presentation. It begins with a review of the Frank family’s story, adding useful information about the family’s life before World War II, in Germany and Holland before 1942 and their fate. The letter to Margot that propelled the family into hiding is also included along with a description of their life in the Annex. Much of the narrative is a summary of Anne’s diary. There are numerous photos of the family, as well as other scene-setting pictures. There are also several sidebars (“Did you know?”) about incidents and interesting facts related to the era. The back matter includes a glossary and an index.

It is unclear whether this retelling will add measurably to 8- to 10-year-olds’ knowledge of Anne Frank herself, especially as they will not yet have read the diary itself. Part of a series that includes Cesar Chavez, John Lewis, Ruby Bridges, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Tecumseh, it is best suited to a public school media center for students assigned reports on “history makers and their lasting impact today.”

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Wallace, Sandra Neil and Rich Wallace. *First Generation: 36 Trailblazing Immigrants and Refugees Who Make America Great*. Illus. Agata Nowicka. New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2018. 95 pp. \$18.99. (9780316515245). Gr. 3-7.

In their celebration of the positive impact of immigrants past and present, Sandra Neil Wallace and Rich Wallace’s *First Generation* offers an uplifting and timely message. Each of the featured thirty-six - representing a wide range of nationalities, ethnicities, and religions - receive a brief, easily digestible biography that includes the story of their immigration to America as well how they came to succeed in their chosen field, be it arts, science, politics, sports, or fashion. Full page illustrations, quotes and sidebars with fun facts about each subject help each spread pop. At the book’s conclusion, a list of actionable items guides young readers in ways they can support refugees by showing kindness at school or finding local volunteering opportunities. Most importantly, *First Generation*’s creators offer a unique expertise on the topic, with the authors actively involved in immigrant and refugee-supporting organizations, and one of the authors and the illustrator identifying as immigrants themselves.

Librarians at Jewish schools and synagogues considering this title should be aware that of the thirty-six, three of the subjects are Jewish: Madeleine Albright, Albert Einstein, and Google founder Sergey Brin.

Einstein's and Brin's Jewish identities are covered within their pages, while Albright's is only discussed in the sidebar; multitudes of more thorough biographies on each subject can be found in publication elsewhere. Additionally, some readers may bristle at the inclusion of tennis star Martina Navratilova and activist Pauline Park, who have both voiced criticisms of Israel via social media in recent months. Regardless, this title is worth a look, particularly for those serving large immigrant communities.

Alex Quay, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA

BOARD BOOKS

Cohan, Medeia. *Hats of Faith*. Illus. Sarah Walsh. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2018. \$9.95. (9781452173207). Preschool-Gr. 2.

"Many religious people share the custom of covering their heads to show their love for God." So begins the book, depicting one person on each page with a head covering: a Turban on a Sikh man, a Rasta Hat on a Rastafarian, a Tichel on a married Orthodox Jewish women, etc. The book ends with the message that "learning about each other makes it easier to be more understanding. Being understanding helps us spread love and peace." The final page shows the diverse group, each wearing their traditional head coverings.

The hats are all given in their singular form with the exception of a kippah, which is referred to as kippot. Some readers may differ with the description that Jewish men wear a kippah, without reference to the fact that some women also choose to wear a kippah. Transliteration helps with the pronunciation of some of the more unusual hats, such as a Topi. The illustrations are very simple, almost childlike. This message is slightly mature for the usual board book audience. Yet, a young child can begin to learn the names of the different "Hats of Faith" and the importance of love and peace.

Ellen Tilman, Meyers Library, Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, PA, Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

Membrino, Anna. *I Look Up to... Ruth Bader Ginsburg*. Illus. Fatti Burke. New York: Random House, 2018. 20 pp. \$7.99. (9780525579526). Preschool-K.

This outstanding board book points out Ruth Bader Ginsburg's key attributes: smart, strong, a leader, a feminist. Full page illustrations in bold colors are whimsical, but clearly convey the main ideas. Ginsburg is always pictured in a black dress, with her signature white lace jabot collar, dark hair pulled back, looking alert behind her big, square glasses. Each attribute is introduced with three or four words, followed by one sentence of further explanation on the next page, and a sentence of explanation in Ginsburg's own words on the following page. This format makes it possible for a reader to introduce the four key attributes to a young child and revisit the explanatory pages as the listener gains more vocabulary and understanding.

This book has no Jewish content, although, of course, it teaches Jewish values and Ginsburg is Jewish. It makes a nice companion for younger children who aren't yet ready for *Ruth Bader Ginsburg: The Case of R.B.G. vs. Inequality* (Abrams, 2017) or *I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark* (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2016).

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

Newman, Tracy. *Simchat Torah is Coming!* Illus Viviana Garofoli. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2019. 12 pp. \$5.99. (9781512421002). Preschool.

The latest addition to this team's board book series on Jewish holidays continues the successful pattern of the previous books about Rosh Hashanah (2016), Purim, and Tu B'Shevat (2018). Bubbly, descriptive rhymes set the scene for the celebration -- making flags, practicing the songs, stuffing

cabbage, and reading and dancing with the Torah. Each rhyme is punctuated with, “*Simchat Torah* is coming!” The colorful illustrations depict a relatively diverse community, including a female rabbi.

Martha McMahon, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles

Scudamore, Angelika. *Noah’s Ark Animal ABCs*. Nashville: Zonderkidz, 2018. \$9.99. (9780310767008). Preschool.

This playful, colorful, cutesy board book introduces the biblical story: “Noah gathered animals, as God told him to do. He built a boat and led them there, marching two by two.” Then, each page features a pair of adorable cartoon animals: anteater, bear, cat, dog, elephant, etc. The text concludes: “God sent rain both night and day, and then a rainbow bright. God loved Noah and the world. Now everything was right.” An oversimplification to say the least, but this is very typical of Noah’s Ark books for this audience. Purchase only where bible story board books are in demand.

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

Stauffer, Lisa Lowe. *Two by Two*. Illus. Angelika Scudamore. Grand Rapids: Zonderkidz, 2018. \$8.99. (9780310762737). Preschool-Gr. 2.

At first glance, *Two By Two* appears to be a telling of the Noah’s Ark story. It isn’t! The book is a rhyming tale of two bored monkeys on the ark. They are mischievous and playful. They interact with well-known animals such as bears and tigers. They play ring toss with the caribou and do an Anaconda limbo. At the end of the book Noah opens the ark doors and all the animals leave, except for the monkeys, who are finally tired. This book is an animal adventure in board book format. The only biblical aspects of the book are the fact that the animals are on the ark, the dove returns, and Noah is in charge. The illustrations are large and colorful. The rhymes are contagious, and the book will delight very young children.

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

FICTION - EARLY READER

Koffsky, Ann D. *Avi for President*. Brooklyn: Menucha, 2018. 32 pp. \$12.99. (9781614656579). Gr. 2-4.

Avi and Yoni, who attend an Orthodox Jewish boys’ school, both want to be elected class president. Rebbe Gold warns them that it’s fine to compete, but they should not say mean things about each other or treat each other with disrespect. Those actions would be committing *lashon hara*. The boys shake hands on it. The campaigns start off fine. Both boys and their teams make posters; both bake yummy treats to bring to class. However, when the campaigns become too similar, Avi and Yoni gradually break their promise. They start passing notes around in class, saying mean things about each other. Come election day, the two boys confront each. They both feel sad about what they did, apologize, and decide to fix their mistakes. They speak in front of the class, explain how foolish and disrespectful their behavior was, and ask their classmates to throw away the notes. The story comes to a satisfactory resolution. Yoni is elected president but graciously asks Avi to be his vice president. Their first project together is a no-*lashon hara* campaign.

The plot of this easy reader moves along smoothly. Here is an author who understands children and knows how to teach an important life lesson in a sensitive and caring manner. Koffsky’s colorful, expressive illustrations help to define the story and add to its meaning. Although the setting is obviously an Orthodox Jewish boys’ school (females are invisible in *Avi for President*), the lesson about *lashon hara* is an important one for everyone.

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

FICTION - MIDDLE GRADE

Adler, David A. *A Pizza Contest for Jelly Eli Z.* (Jelly Eli Z.). Illus. Dena Ackerman. Brooklyn: Menucha, 2018. 60 pp. \$14.99. (9781614653622). Gr. 2-4.

Adler, David A. *Teacher Troubles for Jelly Eli Z.* (Jelly Eli Z.). Illus. Dena Ackerman. Brooklyn: Menucha, 2018. 60 pp. \$14.99. (9781614653615). Gr. 2-4.

This series of books for intermediate readers centers on fourth grader Eli Zipperbaum, known to his friends and acquaintances as Jelly Eli Z. because of his love of and knowledge about jelly in all its forms. He eats jelly sandwiches for lunch and carries jelly beans in his pocket to surreptitiously snack on during school. He and his grandmother play an after-school snack game where Eli guesses what flavor of jelly his grandmother has put on crackers – he is always right. Jelly Eli Z lives in an apartment with his single mother, four-year-old sister, and grandmother. His best friend is Benny who lives on the same block. They walk to and from their Jewish Day School together each day.

In *A Pizza Contest for Jelly Eli Z.*, Eli and Benny are determined to make sure their class wins the pizza party for taking the best care of the neighborhood. They collect trash each morning and afternoon on their way to and from school, but suddenly interesting, and often edible, items are appearing outside one particular window on their block. Is someone spying on them? When Eli and Benny discover the ‘spy’ is a young boy in a wheelchair who cannot attend school, they decide to bring the school to him.

In *Teacher Troubles for Jelly Eli Z.*, Eli is bored with school. After all, how much information does he need to know about George Washington? He is convinced that he is in trouble for not paying attention in class because his teacher is constantly staring at him, and his principal is now spying on him. Sometimes, however, trouble is not what it seems. It turns out that Eli’s good behavior has earned praise for his teacher’s skills in engaging him, and approval from his principal for Eli’s being focused in class.

Reluctant readers may gravitate to the short page count, but the stories do not engage the way Adler’s *Cam Jansen* series does. Even though the books target a more traditional audience, there is nothing in the content to grab and hold their attention. These are too wordy for early readers and not wordy enough for new chapter book readers looking to hone their skills.

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

Bauman, Reuven. *Yanky’s Amazing Discovery.* Brooklyn: Menucha, 2018. 77 pp. \$12.99. (9781614656616). Gr. 3-5.

Yanky Rosen is starting to learn Gemara in yeshiva, and things are not going well. He doesn’t understand the vocabulary and the concepts confound him. To make things worse, he won’t ask for help from his rebbe or his father who are happy to give support. One day after school, when Yanky is supposed to be doing his homework, he visits his familiar get-away spot, the family attic. He comes across a red folder with a typewritten manuscript written by his grandfather. Intrigued, Yanky starts to read about Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky (1891-1986). Each day he reads another chapter about this famous twentieth century *gadol hador* (leader of the generation).

The chapters of the manuscript correspond to *middot* (character traits) that Rabbi Kamenetsky exemplified. From dedication to learning Torah to self-sacrifice, from always telling the truth to never hurting the feelings of others, Yanky learns that Rabbi Kamenetsky went to great lengths to uphold and honor the Torah. Slowly Yanky begins to see how the behavior of this Torah giant can relate to his own. Yanky stops telling lies about his learning and asks for help. Soon the Gemara starts to make sense, and Yanky looks forward to learning and reviewing the text each day.

While the writing in *Yanky’s Amazing Discovery* is pedestrian, the themes are inspiring. The reader is transported into the life of an outstanding individual whose behavior is relatable to the twenty-first century child.

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

Brill, Marlene Targ. *Picture Girl*. Emmaus: Golden Alley Press, 2018. 106 pp. \$7.99 (9781732027602) PB; \$7.99 eBook. Gr. 3-6.

Based on a true story that occurred in 1922, young Luba Dichne's family is no longer able to live with the anti-Semitism and pogroms in the Ukraine, and finally gets the chance to immigrate to the United States, where an uncle who can sponsor them already resides. It isn't easy for Luba to leave everything she has ever known, including a loving grandparent, a dear friend, and the scenes of nature she loves to draw and sketch. After a harrowing journey, the ship docks at Ellis Island and the wait for immigration approval begins. Unfortunately, one of Luba's brothers is ill, and the process will be delayed until her brother's health is restored. By the time he recovers, the legal quota for immigrants has already been filled and the family is told they must return to Europe on the ship which brought them several weeks earlier. The family despairs but sees no choice. Meanwhile, Luba has been entertaining the immigration officials with a demonstration of her drawing talent. She makes perfect copies of portraits which hang on the wall and impressively displays other artistic skills. As a result of this virtuoso performance, the government officials take another look at the family's application and decide that this skilled family will not be a burden on the country's resources; they will be a valuable asset. They are welcomed to America to begin life anew.

The positive, uplifting story will appeal to readers as they begin to understand that bravery, talent, and persistence matter. The time period and Ellis Island, itself, are realistically portrayed. The author appends an afterword describing the life of Louise Dichne Dunn whose Ellis Island experience provided the model for the story. Black-and-white pictures of Louise from childhood through today are included as well as a glossary, questions for discussion, and a suggested reading list, and make this a worthy addition to the American Jewish history shelf.

Michal Hoschander Malen, retired day school librarian (NYC); library volunteer, Efrat, Israel; editor of children's and YA book reviews for the Jewish Book Council

Greenwald, Lisa. *12 Before 13*. New York: Katherine Tegen Books - HarperCollins, 2018. 354 pp. (9780062411778). Gr. 5-8.

In this sequel to *11 Before 12* (Katherine Tegen Books, 2017), Arianna and her best friend Kaylan reprise their idea of a list of things to accomplish before their (close-together) birthdays – but this time, the deadline is Arianna's bat mitzvah. Though they have goals in common (ranging from "Keep our friendship strong" to "Perfect our handstand" to "Tell a boy how we really feel,") Arianna and Kaylan's bond is strained. The novel begins with Arianna finishing up a summer at a Jewish sleepaway camp; Greenwald perfectly captures both the details of Jewish camp (a *Beit Am*, for example) and the general atmosphere. The attachments Arianna forms at camp leave Kaylan feeling resentful, and when Arianna returns, she's equally jealous of the friendships Kaylan developed with other classmates while she was away. Meanwhile, her camp experience plus bat mitzvah lessons with an encouraging cantor lead introspective Arianna to find her strong spiritual side; her connection with her Judaism, and ideas for her religious future, are refreshingly very much her own. A few moments when kashrut doesn't seem to be considered (for instance, the family serves ice cream after meat at a barbeque for Arianna's camp friends) may be oversights, but more likely are simply the norm for this ritually non-observant family. A breezy, entertaining read in which Judaism is naturally integrated into a story of preteen friendship.

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

[Editor's Note: *12 Before 13* is a 2019 Sydney Taylor Notable Book.]



Kosinski, Colleen Rowan. *A Promise Stitched in Time*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2018. 128 pp. \$12.99. (9780764355547). Gr. 5-8.

Maggie McConnell, a thirteen-year-old Irish Catholic girl, lives in New Jersey with her slightly older sister, Patty, and their hardworking mother. The novel is told from Maggie's point of view in first person, present tense. She has only nine days to submit her artwork for a scholarship to the Peabody Summer Arts Academy in Princeton. She promised her father, whose death from cancer three years earlier hugely impacted the family, that she would be accepted. She goes to the Salvation Army Thrift Store, hoping to find some inspiration. She runs into Taj, an old preschool friend, who has recently moved back to her neighborhood, and will stand by her as she tries to work through her problems. Maggie is strangely drawn to a gray tweed coat with fur collar and velvet buttons. She snatches it from another shopper, pays for it, and sprints out the door. Here begin her troubles. On one level, this novel is about a girl trying to find her identity and to stand up against the peer pressure of social groups and appearance. On a deeper level, Maggie begins to feel haunted by the ghost of the girl who previously owned the coat. The "hauntings" become more painful as the novel progresses, and Maggie also has dreams and visions of what the "coat girl's" life was like in a place that makes no sense to her. Maggie gradually realizes that two Jewish girls called Freyda and Gittel were prisoners in Auschwitz, where they were forced to sew dresses for the commandant's wife, Frau Hoess. Adding to the mystery is Maggie's connection to Miss Beck, an elderly resident of a local nursing home. At the end of the novel, various plot threads are woven together in a way that affirms the importance of friends and family.

The author, a visual artist, also knows how to paint with words. Settings are evocative; images are effective; specific colors dominate throughout. Because the "visions" are in italics, the reader can distinguish between present-day events and those occurring in the past. A few problems: The font is rather small and hard to read, and there are several errors in the Yiddish and in transliteration. Most glaring, the novel makes an awkward transition from a theme about ghosts to one about reincarnation. For a related novel about Auschwitz, see Lucy Adlington's *The Red Ribbon* in *AJL Reviews* (February/March 2019, p. 28).

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

Walfish, Miriam. *Bold as a Leopard. (The Chronicles of Meir ben Yaakov)*. Brooklyn: Judaica Press, 2018. 212 pp. \$17.95. (9781607632672). Gr. 4-7.

Speyer, Worms, and Mainz (known as the SHUM cities) constituted the most important locus of medieval Ashkenazi Jewish life, and the Rhineland was famous for being the center of Torah learning. The book is the second in the series, and it would be best for readers to have read *The Hunt* (Judaica Press, 2017), in order to fully understand the characters, setting, and plot. A group of young boys traveling to Paris from Speyer becomes lost in the forest after their wagon driver is assaulted, and the action takes place as they search for food and shelter while attempting to find their way home. Every step of the way, they make blessings and refer to biblical and talmudic teachings. Starving, they figure out a way to catch a fish but before eating it they make sure to check for scales and fins to determine if it's kosher. This is clearly a didactic and moralistic tale spun for boys in a *charedi* educational setting.

In order to grasp the significance of the setting, the reader should have been told exactly when the story takes place (the first book starts in 1242), and with more research into the time period, errors about inventions like the compass and where certain flowers grow could have been avoided. Despite some drawbacks, the novel's strength lies in giving readers a sense of what life might have been like for Jewish boys growing up in medieval times. The characters are strongly formed, and the plot is exciting. The book includes a glossary of Hebrew terms mentioned in the story, as well as helpful footnotes. The poorly drawn black and white interior illustrations should have been left out entirely.

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

Wolner, Tzipie. *Welcome Back, Madame Chamberlaine*. Brooklyn: Menucha, 2018. 144 pp. \$17.99. (9781614659709). Gr. 2-5.

Reminiscent of Mary Poppins with her easy manner and appearance whenever help is needed, Madame Chamberlaine will also give you a lesson in French and in doing *mitzvos*. Sisters Sprintzie and Shuly join Madame as she babysits, helps neighbors, goes camping, and gives a little old lady purpose and enjoyment by providing knitting supplies and chocolate. Several stories address serious topics like bullying and not talking to strangers. There is a short list of words at the end of each chapter, and a “Words to Know” section at the end of the book.

This is the second compilation of stories (see *Meet Madame Chamberlaine* (Menucha, 2016) that were first published serially in the *Mispacha Junior* magazine. Readers will have to suspend belief as Madame Chamberlain’s connection to the family is never made clear, nor why she is always around when she has seventeen daughters and many friends. Adventures like a riding in a purple helicopter car or taking over a dairy farm and milking all the cows, add to the stretch of imagination. Those who read secular books will find the content a little silly, but it is a good, clean read for middle grade girls.

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

FICTION - TEEN

Forman, Gayle. *I Have Lost My Way*. New York: Viking Books for Young Readers, 2018. 272 pp. \$18.99 (9780425290774) HC; \$10.99 (9780425290781) PB; \$10.99 eBook. Gr. 10-12. Reviewed from galley.

Forman’s affecting novel relates the intersecting lives of three nineteen-year-olds in New York City who, over the course of the story, go from being strangers to near-family. Freya, daughter of “a Jewish girl from Westchester and a jazz musician from Addis” is an already-popular singer on the verge of mega stardom when she loses her singing voice. Harun, whose observant Muslim Pakistani parents are planning his arranged marriage, struggles with revealing his true self—he’s gay and in love with a young man whom he keeps pushing away. Nathaniel is a newly arrived tourist from Washington State whose reasons for visiting are slowly revealed. The three meet in Central Park when Freya, lost in thought, falls off a footbridge and lands on Nathaniel, who loses consciousness; bystander Harun helps bring Nathaniel to the hospital.

The narrative alternates among the teens’ perspective, which itself alternates between first-person and third-person—providing an uncommonly intimate portrait of three extremely well rounded characters at wrenching crossroads. There’s a sense of destiny among them—a feeling that they were fated to meet—which in turn offers a measure of comfort to the characters (and to readers) as they make their difficult decisions. “I have lost my way,” they each think at the beginning of the story, but by the end, with accomplished narrative catharsis: “They find each other.”

Elissa Gershowitz, The Horn Book, Inc., Boston, MA

Green, Gila. *Passport Control*. Purcellville, VA: S & H Publishing, 2018. 353 pp. \$17.99. (9781633200548). Gr. 10-12.

Miriam Gil has been raised in Canada by her Israeli expatriate father. After the death of her mother, her normally taciturn father, Hanan, became even more close-mouthed, especially about his life in Israel and his estranged brother Moshe. When Miriam is in college, she decides to spend a year abroad at the University of Haifa. There she is assigned a suite with Israelis: two Jews, one Druze, and one Palestinian student. While her suitemates each try to determine her political views and urge her to choose sides, Miriam struggles to remain neutral and get to know each of the women with an open mind. Miriam is happy to get a break from the dorm when her uncle Moshe invites her to spend the Sabbath with him and his wife Leah at their kibbutz. Moshe warmly welcomes her, but Leah is a strange mixture of warmth and resentment. The weekend includes meeting Guy, the handsome neighbor. As her class

prepares for a trip to Egypt, Miriam is advised to apply for an Israeli passport, but she is stunned to hear that her application is rejected: according to their records her mother is a Syrian Christian and that there is no record of her father. Miriam must now break down the wall between her and her father and unearth the family secrets which have kept her father and his brother apart. In this process, she learns that her father had a previous relationship with Leah. When the relationship ended, she was so angry with Hanan that she changed his family information in the Israeli records.

In this coming-of-age story, Miriam is a likeable young woman trying to not only figure herself out, but to find a place in her extended family and in Israel. She and Guy begin a relationship which includes some making out sessions. When she visits a gay bar with one of her suitemates, the friend disappears, presumably for an off-camera hookup. While the situation with Miriam's family records seems pretty far-fetched, Green does a good job of weaving many aspects of Israeli culture into this novel.

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

Locke, Katherine. *The Spy with the Red Balloon. (The Balloonmakers)* Chicago: Albert Whitman, 2018. 284pp. \$17.99. (9780807529331). Gr. 8- 12.

Once again, Katherine Locke delivers a fantastic mystery/historical fiction/science fiction/fantasy novel that is an engaging and entertaining prequel to the 2018 Sydney Taylor Honor Book, *The Girl with the Red Balloon*. Living in New York in the 1940s, Jewish sister and brother Ilse and Wolf Klein share a secret: they have magic in their blood. Their magic enables them to levitate, and they spend hours researching the appropriate amount of blood needed to write the mathematical equations required to "rise" in a controlled fashion. Unfortunately, experimenting with a kite in Central Park, their secret is discovered by the United States military who conscripts them, and then blackmails them into developing the atomic bomb. Ilse, a brilliant physicist, is sent to Oak Ridge, Tennessee to work on the Manhattan Project. Her team is focused on developing a magic method for delivering an atomic bomb to Europe. Wolf is sent to Germany as an undercover agent to use magic to find and destroy the labs working on Hitler's atomic bomb efforts. Suspense, sabotage, deceit, and rogue magicians abound as America tries to get ahead of the Nazis in developing the bomb. The "Red Balloon" transport system is developed, and magical time travel is discovered and utilized. Readers meet Ashasher (the individual with the black feathers flying around his head), and learn why Wolf Klein creates Zerberus, the organization that monitors the magicians and transport balloons worldwide. All of this provides background and explanations for the Cold War events of the first book. As the story unfolds, both Ilse and Wolf find themselves attracted to same-sex partners. Their evolving self-realization and unfolding (age-appropriate) sexuality is powerful and realistic.

The writing is fast-paced and vivid. Emotions are everywhere, grabbing the reader by the heart on an historically accurate roller coaster ride through World War II and the race to build the atom bomb. Told in alternating chapters, in the voices of Ilse and Wolf, readers will root for a happy ending even though life rarely provides it and sometimes neither does fiction.

Kathy Bloomfield, AJL President-SSC Division, Seal Beach, CA

HOLOCAUST AND WORLD WAR II

Halahmy, Miriam. *Saving Hanno: The Story of a Refugee Dog.* New York: Holiday House, 2019. 112 pp. \$17.99. (9780823441655). Gr. 3-6. Reviewed from ARC.

In 1938 Frankfurt, Germany, eight-year-old Rudi and his best friend Emil tire of dealing with Hitler Youth and run away from school. All Rudi can think about is his beloved dachshund, Hanno. But in

early 1939, Rudi's parents make the difficult decision to send him and his older sister, Lotte, to England for safety. Rudi is sad that he cannot bring Hanno, but a man promises to bring Hanno to England and will deliver him to Rudi in six months. Rudi adapts to his new living situation and he reunites with Hanno. He keeps a notebook jotting down tips to help his parents adjust to British life if they come. Rudi hears rumors that animals are being put down in preparation for wartime rationing and works with other children to save animals. At the story's conclusion, he and other children prepare to evacuate London for the country.

This narrative raises concerns about historical facts and language use. For example, Jews in Germany did not wear the Star of David in 1938. That was demanded by law in September 1941. Germany did not invade Poland in August 1939; that occurred on September 1, 1939. Further, it was confusing that the German diminutive "Mutti" be used for Mommy, but not "Vati" for Daddy. Also confusing was the use of the Yiddish "Zayde" for "Grandfather," when it's more likely that "Opa" would have been said. And if no butter or eggs were available to make cinnamon cookies, how could they be available suddenly to make challah, unless Mutti is using some other recipe that is not explained? Perhaps the largest concern is that the story leaves the reader hanging at the end. We don't know if Rudi ever sees his parents again. Overall it lacks authenticity and emotional punch.

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

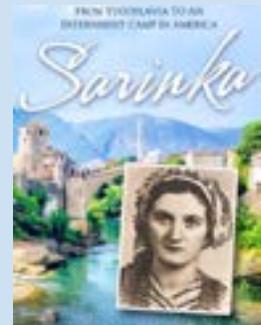
Miller, David Lee and Rubin, Steven Jay. *The Cat Who Lived with Anne Frank*. Illus. Elizabeth Baddeley. New York: Philomel Books, 2019. 32 pp. \$17.99. (9781524741501). Gr. 2-5.

Life in the Secret Annex in which Anne, her family, and friends lived in hiding during the dark days of the Holocaust is seen through the unique vantage point of Peter Van Pel's beloved cat, Mouschi. The reader learns of Mouschi's love for Peter, his fear of the new and scary world he sees unfolding outside the annex, and his recognition of their loss of freedom and safety.

While this story is an unusual and sometimes poignant introduction to a difficult period in Jewish history, it seems to trivialize the seriousness and horror of the Holocaust. The quotes from Anne's diary are moving and meaningful, but the perspective is problematic. The world was introduced to Anne's life in hiding through the sensitive and moving entries in her well-known diary. But the deportations and murders are minimized by a talking cat, views of flowers and green grass, and lit up houses in a time of blackouts. Characters are introduced with little or no explanation. In a 1997 interview with Miep Gies, who risked her life daily hiding the residents of the Secret Annex, she stated that the cat was left in the house after the arrests but never seemed to feel at home there again. Finally, a worker took him in. There is hope in this story and a search for the spirit of goodness in our world, but it is more appropriate for audiences who have a clear understanding of the events leading up to and during the Holocaust.

Rachel Glasser, Retired, Yavneh Academy, Teaneck, NJ

Sarinka, a true story about a young girl set in WW II, is one of perseverance and survival. Her world is suddenly shattered when the running and hiding begin the very day she dreamed of her whole life, her wedding day. Sarinka and her husband face danger and uncertainty as they desperately try to save their lives.



No matter how tough life gets, they never give up hope, even when they find themselves in an internment camp in America, one that many never knew existed in 1944.

(Appropriate for 8th grade to adult)

Questions: Contact flindacohen@gmail.com.

For purchase information:

<http://www.amazon.com/author/flindacohen>

Rosenbaum, Andria Warmflash. *Hand in Hand*. Illus. Maya Shleifer. Millburn, NJ: Apples & Honey Press, 2019. 32 pp. \$17.95. (9781681155388). Gr. 2-5.

Seven-year-old Ruthi promises her Mama that she will take care of her little brother Leib. One day Mama goes out to search for food but does not come back. A neighbor comes to take them to an orphanage. A couple comes and falls in love with Leib's blond curls. Ruthi has to let go of his hand. She survives the war and the Holocaust, immigrating to Palestine, still missing her Leib and his strawberry smile. She receives a call and is reunited with her brother. They hold hands and never let go.

Although the Holocaust is never explicitly mentioned or shown, adults have the opportunity to explain the context to young readers. The narrative packs an emotional wallop through its spare but highly lyrical and effective language. Surprisingly, the illustrations depict bunny rabbits instead of people, but this does not detract or trivialize the characters' experiences.

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

Wilson, Kip. *White Rose*. Boston, MA and New York, NY: Versify/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019. 368 pp. \$17.99 (9781328594433) HC; \$17.99 (9780358049173) eBook. Gr. 7-12. Reviewed from ARC.

Debut author Kip Wilson takes the high school textbook narrative of Hans and Sophie Scholl, anti-Nazi advocates, to a new level. Sophie Scholl is a teenager in Ulm who wants to attend university and to make a difference in the world. Her father is anti-Nazi, and while both Sophie and her older brother Hans perform due diligence in the Hitler Jugend and Bund Deutscher Mädchen, they become increasingly wary of Hitler's Germany and find the war and loss of life—German, Jewish, and Polish—senseless. Together at the University of Munich they band together with some of Hans' friends to form the White Rose, a resistance group. The Gestapo are on their heels and in February 1943, Hans and Sophie are captured, investigated, sentenced, and beheaded by guillotine for high treason.

The strength of the narrative is Wilson's impeccable research and intimate knowledge of German language, culture, and psyche, enabling her to exquisitely inhabit Sophie Scholl. However, the eventual change from Sophie's voice to that of the Gestapo investigator and other Nazi viewpoints is problematic. The organization of these poems, going back and forth in time is jarring, and the epilogue is unnecessary, since it brings the reader to 1932. Nonetheless, Sophie Scholl's story can inspire teen readers to stand up for what they believe in.

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

ISRAEL

Blacher, Ariel Augenbraun. *Gila Makes Aliyah*. Illus. Shana Koppel. Jerusalem: Menorah, 2018. 48 pp. \$8.95. (9781940516783). Gr. 1-3.

The Rubin family is moving to Israel, and Gila and her siblings are anxious about leaving their friends, sports teams, and toys. Gila worries because she doesn't know how to speak Hebrew, but her parents assuage everyone's fears. The contents of the house is packed in a container to be shipped via boat (a lift). The family takes a special charter flight to Israel filled with other people making Aliyah. After the long journey, they are all welcomed with a big party at the airport. They take a cab to their new home, which is dusty and empty without their furniture. Soon the Rubins are finding lizards, going to the *makolet* (small supermarket) for *glida* (ice cream), and making new friends. The school year begins, and although Gila is nervous, she gets to sit next to her friend Nili and her teacher is very patient. Shortly after that, the family enjoys celebrating Rosh Hashana and Sukkot. Gila has so much fun she asserts that "Israel is really my home."

The book is dedicated to Nefesh B'Nefesh, an organization founded in 2002 that has helped over 50,000 people make Aliyah. Some of the illustrations, like the children sitting on the airplane, are clever and make good use of the space on the page. Others, like the view of the Israeli coastline from the airplane and the *chumash* (bible) used in schools in Israel are spot on. There is a nice balance between "before" and "after" making Aliyah, and the outlook is always positive. For those children whose families are moving to Israel, or for kids who have friends and family moving to Israel, this is a helpful resource.

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

Weber, Elka. *Shimri's Big Idea: A Story of Ancient Jerusalem*. Illus. Inbal Gigi Bousidan. Millburn, NJ: Apples & Honey Press, 2019. 32 pp. \$17.95. (9781681155418). Gr. 1-4. Reviewed from PDF.

Shimri's siblings might think he is too little to help with household duties, but Grandma Eliora knows that he is a bright boy with many ideas, which are inspired by such tasks as getting water from the spring, folding sheets, and playing noisily on the roof. One night, Father comes home with big news. King Hezekiah wants to build a tunnel to bring the spring water inside the city walls. That way, if Jerusalem is attacked by enemies, they could still get water. Father tells the family that the king is asking the wisest men for their advice. Shimri decides to share his ideas with the king. He explains that by watching his family work, he learned from them. He suggests digging the tunnel from a large crack in a rock, using two teams of workers starting at opposite ends, and having people above ground make a lot of noise, so the teams will know where to meet. King Hezekiah implements Shimri's idea for the tunnel, which still exists today.

Weber has cleverly combined Jewish history with a universal theme: the little brother whose ideas and efforts are discounted by older siblings. Bousidan's illustrations colorfully capture the feel of ancient Jerusalem, with subtle details like native foods and with various angles, like when Shimri is blocked by the king's guard. A multi-purpose story that combines Jewish history, a male main character and a subtle lesson, this will be a welcome addition to all Jewish libraries.

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

LIFECYCLE AND JEWISH VALUES

Benedict, Devorah. *I Want a Friend! Stories for Learning Essential Social Skills*. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2018. 77 pp. \$19.99. (9781680253177). Gr. K-3.

This collection of stories explores issues and confrontations in the lives of three siblings - Shira, Dovid, and Tamar. Children will experience situations in which the characters will cope with rejection, creating healthy friendships, standing up for themselves, expressing what's bothering them, apologizing and making up after an argument, processing anger, and identifying negative, unhealthy relationships. Each story has an introduction directed at the child which sets the scene and presents the issues, and then outlines the basic goal of the situation. The anecdotes take into account the child's own needs as well as the needs of others and ultimately help to create a sense of belonging to a group and community.

The author/illustrator is noted for her use of art to impart important messages to young children. The illustrations are bright, fun, and truly expressive of the situations. While the characters are portrayed according to Orthodox Jewish standards, the personalities and stories are appropriate for everyone. The lessons, choices, ethical, and moral values are universal in their approach and all children will benefit from reading this collection. The book is also a valuable resource for parents helping them to understand their children's experiences with choices, feelings, problems, and friendships, and partnering in strategies for solutions. Parents will be guided by a list of tips for helping children make friends and acquire social skills.

Rachel Glasser, Retired Librarian, Yaavneh Academy, Teaneck, NJ

Benefeld, Rikki. *I Go to Sleep*. Brooklyn: Hachai, 2018. 24 pp. \$10.95. (9781945560118.) Preschool-Gr. 1.

A brother and sister end their day with a variety of activities described in simple rhyme. There is a strong emphasis on *mitzvos* that are age appropriate, such as preparing *negel vasser* [a cup of water for ritual hand washing in the morning] and reciting the bedtime *Shema*. The book closes with loving thoughts of *Hashem*. A sense of warmth and peace is conveyed throughout, which will surely help children settle down comfortably. This is a delightful bedtime story for Orthodox toddlers and their parents, and little hands can't mar the heavy, glossy pages.

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

Rosenfeld, Dina. *We Can Find a Way: A Hachnosas Orchim Inclusion Story*. Illus. Amy Wummer. Brooklyn: Hachai, 2018. 36 pp. \$18.95. (9781945560156.) Preschool-Gr. 3.

Eli's family is getting ready for Bubby's 70th birthday party, but they keep running into issues while trying to make sure that the whole family can come celebrate. Cousin Bella's twins are allergic to wheat and dairy. Can the family find a way for everyone to eat? Uncle Levi is in a wheelchair after surgery. Can they find a way to get him into the house? Finally, Cousin Shaina gets very uncomfortable in noisy crowded places. Can they find a way to make her comfortable?

In this lovely illustrated picture book, a family shows how, if they just take the time to think about it, or ask someone what to do, it's very easy to accommodate and include everyone. The book includes a note to parents and teachers to think about the importance of *Hachnasat Orchim* (welcoming guests) and being inclusive to everyone. Additionally, there is a brief glossary at the end of the book. Though the few Hebrew words and illustrations clearly indicate this book is from an Orthodox perspective, the message is universal.

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

Scheerger, Sarah Lynn. *Mitzvah Pizza*. Illus. Deborah Melmon. Minneapolis: Kar Ben Publishing, 2019. 32pp. \$17.99 (9781541521704) HC; \$7.99 (9781541521711) PB; \$7.99 eBook. Gr. K-3. Reviewed from ARC.

Missy loves to have "Daddy Day." This week is going to be different. Missy has saved her money and she is going to both PAY for the activities and provide the fun. She and Daddy go to a pizza parlor to eat lunch and to decide what to do. Waiting in line, she meets Jane. When Jane gets to the front of the line, she takes two sticky notes off the wall. Missy's Dad whispers that each note is a "piece of pizza that someone has already paid for, like a gift or a treat." The wall is full of sticky notes. When it's Missy's turn she gives the man at the counter \$2 for two slices of pizza. He asks her Dad if he would like to donate to the Piece O'Pizza Fund. He gives the man a dollar and tells Missy that it's a mitzvah. Missy writes a message on the sticky note and attaches it to the wall. She and Jane play in the park all afternoon, and Missy invites Jane to her birthday party the following week. Walking out of the park, Missy decides how she wants to spend her money. She asks to return to the Pizza Corner, where she trades five dollars for 5 sticky notes.

The large colorful illustrations help the story come alive. Multi-ethnic people stand in line at the pizza parlor and at Missy's birthday party. Even a young child can perform a mitzvah, and the recipient can be someone just like you. The author's note explains that the idea of mitzvah pizza originated at Rosa's Pizza Shop in Center City Philadelphia.

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



NONFICTION

Blohm, Craig E. *Understanding Judaism. (Understanding World Religions Series). San Diego: Reference Point Press, 2019. 80 pp. \$29.95. (9781682824672). Gr. 7-12.*

It is no small task to explain Judaism, and this information-dense book manages to cover all the highlights of Judaism past and present in eighty pages. Using succinct language, supported by colorful photographs, art and diagrams, “The Origins of Judaism” through today’s trials are laid out in orderly fashion. The final chapter, “What Challenges Do Jews Face Today?” is quite current, starting with the Charlottesville, VA rallies and moving through the issues with and within Israel. No sides are taken, the facts in all cases are simply reported on in the context of how Jews are impacted. There is a balanced approach to the denominations of Judaism, with all being given their turn to speak with quotes from traditional and liberal Jewish leaders, and representative pictures, including an Orthodox rabbi blowing a shofar, a picture of a bat mitzvah girl and her parents, and an interfaith wedding. For the most part everything is done well especially given the limited space. There are, however, a few places with slight inaccuracies or where a bit more elaboration might have provided additional clarity. For example: God is always “he” or “his,” and the pronouns are not capitalized, and the author uses the term “Old Testament” early on in the book, but much later defines the Tanakh as “what Christians know as the Old Testament.” The back matter includes source notes, a list of books, internet resources and websites, and a full index. While this book may serve as a general, elementary introduction to Judaism in a public or secular school library, it might not serve a Jewish audience in a significant way.

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

Brimner, Larry Dane. *Blacklisted!: Hollywood, the Cold War, and the First Amendment. Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek, 2018. 174 pp. \$17.95. (9781620916032). Gr. 5-12.*

The start of the Cold War saw the emergence of the “Red Scare,” and few moments in our nation’s history better exemplify this sensationalized and manufactured hysteria than the public hearings of the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) investigating the group known as “The Hollywood Ten.” Brimner’s compellingly told exploration of this time in history, *Blacklisted*, puts the Hollywood Blacklist of numerous screenwriters, actors, and directors suspected of Communism into historical perspective. Brimner thoroughly covers not just the events and major players of this investigation but unveils the lasting--and devastating--impact that those investigated faced personally and professionally and the real threat to the First Amendment rights that HUAC posed.

Brimner’s accessible and cinematic approach to writing and the extensive inclusion of artifacts like letters, political cartoons, and photographs help this title feel fresh and real to its young readers. Additionally, his choice to highlight this particular moment in history, wherein Americans were attacked for their beliefs and identities in the name of protecting the presumed ideals of a country, is especially relevant to current events, and he makes a strong case for those parallels in his Author’s Note at the book’s conclusion. Readers searching for a Jewish lens to these events, however, may find *Blacklisted* lacking; Brimner mentions that some affected by the blacklist were Jewish and that many behind HUAC were known anti-Semites, but doesn’t explore this further. Librarians at schools or synagogues where there is a high interest in the film industry or 20th Century history might consider this title.

Alex Quay, Sinai Akiba Academy, Los Angeles, CA

Schonfeld, Rifka. *Social Skills Around the Clock. Illus. Yoel Judowitz. Nanuet, NY: Feldheim, 2018. 49 pp. \$19.99. (9781680250619). Gr. 3-6 and Adult Reference.*

Master social skills expert and veteran teacher Rifka Schonfeld has written a valuable resource for children and parents alike. She identifies 14 common areas of difficulty including executive functioning,

separation anxiety, nonverbal communication, procrastination, ADHD, positive leadership, personal responsibility, sibling rivalry, transitions and personal hygiene among others. She meets the child user of the text through cartoon scenarios that delineate the problem and the solution. Perhaps most valuable of all are the pages in the appendix for parents and educators that provide a clear, user friendly explanation of complex social skills as well as a variety of suggestions that parents can implement.

Although the illustrations depict children in family, school and social situations that are clearly Orthodox (boys all wear *yarmulkes* and *tzitzit*, and the girls and women all wear skirts) the social problems and solutions are universal. A valuable addition to school, synagogue and family libraries with young children, as well as Jewish Family Service resource centers.

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

Unger, Nissi. *Let's Meet a Hatzalah Member. (Our Community)*. Photos Hersh Rosner. Brooklyn: Menucha Publishers, 2018. 23 pp. \$14.99. (9781614653301). Preschool-Gr. 3.

Part of a series featuring helpers such as *sofrim* (scribes) and *chaveirim* (volunteers providing non-medical emergency assistance at home or on the road), the latest volume features a Hatzalah unit from Brooklyn, and explains the mission and accomplishments of the voluntary EMS organization serving Jewish communities around the world. The book effectively describes how Hatzalah works, how members are trained, and the types of equipment used in dealing with medical emergencies. The scenario of a boy falling off his bike, hurting his arm, and needing to go to the hospital is an effective hook to engage early readers or even pre-readers.

For children who often hear the loud sirens of Hatzalah ambulances, the book may help to alleviate some of their fears. The physical format of this book should be mentioned. The glossy, thick pages seem designed for young toddlers, while the content is geared to children in the early grades. The size of the book (10 inches by 10 inches) is quite generous. Eye-catching full color photos, lavishly placed over two-page spreads, also convey plenty of information. Written in 'beginning reader' style with short sentences in large font, the book contains a table of contents as well as a glossary. It should be a useful addition to a classroom collection and a good discussion-starter for teachers.

Joyce Levine, past President of AJL-SSC (Synagogues, Schools and Centers) Division and past AJL Publications Chair, Boynton Beach, Florida

Walder, Chaim. *Kids Speak 10. (Kids Speak)*. Illus. Devorah Benedict. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2018. 224 pp. \$22.99. (9781680253351). Gr. 2-5.

The latest volume in this popular series provides a forum for children to express what is in their hearts. Each story is written in the first person and presents a different social and ethical situation or dilemma. As the author, who received the prestigious Israeli Prime Minister's Magen HaYeled (Defender of Children) Award in 2003 for his writing and extensive work in education and child development, explains in his introduction: "This series tells of a way of life. To Tell. To Talk. To Express. Not to keep things locked inside." The goal is to share with others what is going on inside and become a calmer, happier, stronger, and healthier individual. Important issues include having friends, being accepted by the group, gaining self-confidence, dealing with fears and worries, facing success and failure, and coping with life events. The book is directed at an Orthodox audience containing many Hebrew words, and assumes a knowledge of the holidays, mitzvot, and Jewish life. A glossary explains the Hebrew terms and basic Jewish concepts. The black and white illustrations are very basic and reflect Orthodox lifestyle. While some students in more modern Jewish schools will want to read this series and will definitely gain from its lessons, it will be most popular in Orthodox schools.

Rachel Glasser, Retired Librarian, Ya'oneh Academy, Teaneck, NJ

PICTURE BOOKS

Churnin, Nancy. *Martin & Anne: The Kindred Spirits of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Anne Frank*. Illus. Yevgenia Nayberg. Berkeley: Creston Books, 2019. 32 pp. \$17.99. (9781939547538). Gr. 3-6.

What is the significance of two well-known and oft-quoted individuals being born in the same year? They lived in different places, spoke different languages and had different life paths. But they had much in common. Martin Luther King, Jr and Anne Frank were both born in 1929, and “while they never met...their hearts beat with the same hope.” This beautifully illustrated picture book describes how Martin and Anne lived and died fighting for the freedoms that were often denied them. In words and pictures, we learn that Martin grew up in America surrounded by the hatred of the Jim Crow South, while Anne grew up in Europe with the hatred of the Nazis and their minions. Martin grew up and went to college, while Anne grew up and went into hiding. Both were murdered for their beliefs. Both used their words to help effect change. Both believed people were inherently good at heart.

The muted tones and soft lines of the illustrations are a beautiful complement to the simple and straightforward text. The theme of ‘love is stronger than hate’ runs throughout the book. The concept of “Kindred Spirits” is an important as we reach out to the stranger and welcome the immigrant, finding common ground is an important skill and life lesson. This book is a special gateway into that discussion.

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

Kimmelman, Leslie. *The Rabbi Slurps Spaghetti*. Illus. Sharon Davey. Millburn, NJ: Apples and Honey Press, 2019. 32 pp. \$17.95. (9781681155432). Preschool-Gr. 2.

Every child ponders some of life’s mysteries: Do teachers live in the classroom? Do parents have a life between school drop off and pickup? Can rabbis actually have families of their own? This delightful picture book, filled with humor and insight, addresses the last question in a unique and charming manner. Young Lena decides to find out what her rabbi’s life is like when he is not on the bima leading services. She styles herself “detective” and begins to investigate. Her sleuthing leads her to the following conclusions: Rabbi Max helps other celebrate life-cycle events, bakes challah, sings with Cantor Lori, and – can it possibly be true – slurps his spaghetti! He comforts mourners, helps those in need, builds a sukkah, teaches, and – oh no -- he leaves his socks on the floor at night! What’s more, the dignified and helpful rabbi has a wife who calls him Pookie! Lena’s investigative reporting proves beyond all doubt that even extraordinary rabbis are actually human. The reader discovers that someone who may seem like an imposing and distant figure may be worthy of respect but is still a person just like any other. At the end of the story, Lena reveals the most secret information of all – Rabbi Max is her very own father. As the story ends, they are happily slurping spaghetti together. The comic, expressive color illustrations add to the fun.

*Michal Hoschander Malen, Retired librarian, North Shore Hebrew Academy lower and middle schools;
Children and YA editor, Jewish Book Council*

Rubabshi, Leah. *My Sometimes Feelings*. Illus. Amy Wummer. New York: Hachai Publishing, 2018. 28 pp. \$12.95. (9781945560071). Preschool-K.

“Hashem made me special, as special can be, there’s no one who feels just exactly like me.” With that opening idea, the adorable pages proceed with rhyming couplets to explore a wide range of feelings from happy and sad to excited, brave, shy, angry. With each feeling, the author suggests actions that can cause the feeling to stay and grow – “Sometimes I feel loving ... I look for more mitzvos ...” – or others that help children respond to negative emotions in healthy ways – “Sometimes I feel angry I’m ready to shout! I take some deep breaths till that feeling fades out.” The sentiments are honest, well-worded and appropriate for the preschool audience. The last page reminds readers and listeners that with all the feelings we have, it’s hard to know what one’s feelings will be and that feelings can change.

Wummer's brightly colored illustrations are modern in appearance and tasteful for Orthodox readers -- the little boys are each wearing a cap or kippah and a tallit katan. The illustrator is particularly skilled at capturing facial expressions for the various feelings, as the boy's bravery is palpable as the shot needle is about to hurt him. A note to parents and teachers at the end explains the verse from Ethics of the Fathers (4:1) that the person who is strong is the one who has mastered his emotions. The book suggests that the best way to develop emotional health and spiritual growth is to identify feelings and to express them with words, rather than hands. There is a cute feelings chart on the inside back cover with faces depicting even more feelings than are covered in the book. In this book, only boys express feelings. The woman appears disappointed in the boy on one page, and the little girl is merely the recipient of the anger, kindness, etc. But, with each full-page illustration and well-placed text printed on glossy, laminated pages, this is a book that can be read and reread and taken out again on occasions when a particular feeling may need review.

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

Tarcov, Susan. *Raisins and Almonds: A Yiddish Lullaby*. Illus. Sonia Sanchez. Minneapolis: Kar Ben, 2019. 32 pp. \$17.99 (9781541521612) HC; \$7.99 (9781541521629) PB; \$7.99 eBook. Preschool-Gr.2. Reviewed from ARC.

In this fantasy based loosely on the Yiddish lullaby, "Rozhinkes Mit Mandlen," Annie hears a noise under her bed. She runs to her mother, who says not to worry -- it is only a little white goat with his store under the bed. Annie returns to her room, walking on imagined grass. She meets animals who want to know if the goat has a mezuzah, a kippah with holes for ears, pickled herring, bagels and lox, etc. They come to a clearing and there is a white goat selling raisins and almonds under Annie's bed. The plot ends at this point. Young children will not identify with the nostalgia of the Yiddish song. Nor will they know that almonds and raisins were the most luxurious food one could have in Eastern Europe. The QR code is a very clever device to see and hear the song that was the story's inspiration. Those who know the Yiddish song, may be disappointed that the book does not follow the lyrics. The illustrations are the high point. They have a soft dreamlike quality with dark backgrounds and the featured characters in brighter colors. The pastel and pencil drawings have soft edges and sometimes appear to float on the page. The words and English translation for one verse of the song are on the last page of the book.

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

Zalben, Jane Breskin. *A Moon for Moe and Mo*. Illus. Mehrdokht Amini. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2018. 40 pp. \$17.99. (9781580897273). Gr. K-3.

Moses Feldman and Mohammed Hassan are young boys who live on opposite ends of Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn. They find themselves in the same food market as each accompanies his mother as they shop for the upcoming holidays: Moe's mom is making rugelach for Rosh Hashanah and Mo's mom is making date cookies for Ramadan. The boys, who are mistaken for twins, bounce a ball back and forth and enjoy falafel from Mr. Sahadi, the store owner. As mothers and sons leave the store, they call out, "See you soon." One afternoon they are "helping" their mothers bake, but they are really making messes. Each mother decides to take a break and bring her son to the park. The boys spot each other and run off to play. After some time, the mothers lose sight of them and frantically search together. Soon Moe and Mo are found digging, happy, and muddy. As they are walking home along the avenue, Moe and Mo ask their mothers if they can have a picnic in the park later. At sundown they shared their treats, rugelach and date cookies, under a tree. "Shalom," said Moe's family wishing peace. "Salaam," said Mo's family, wishing peace. In the end, the boys are in their own homes sleeping under the same moon that is looking over them.

The back matter explains the holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Ramadan as well as a bit about the lunar calendar followed by both Jews and Muslims. Recipes for rugelach and date cookies are included. The illustrations by Iranian-British artist Mehrdokht Amini are exquisite. Done in acrylic, markers, ink, photo collage and then digitally assembled in Photoshop, the drawings have depth and layers of interest that reveal more and more upon each reading. Zalben delicately weaves a story of two boys from two different cultures whose chance encounter underscores our similarities rather than our differences.

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

[Editors' Note: *A Moon for Moe and Mo* is a 2019 Sydney Taylor Honor Book.]

SHABBAT AND HOLIDAYS

Barash, Chris. *Wait! It's Friday*. Illus. Christine Grove. Milburn, NJ: Apples & Honey Press, 2019. 24 pp. \$17.95. (9781681155425). Preschool - K.

A happy picture book delivers Shabbat prep and practice in a busy, multiracial family of three generations. This straight forward, sweet tale relies on few words and fine pictures which are mobile, expressive, supportive of the text, and charming. Mom goes off to work while Dad and Grandma care for very young, cute tots as they do the Friday chores: cooking, shopping, cleaning, and gathering special religious symbols. The children find the day one big, endless wait. But the pictures reveal joy in this wait. Joyous anticipation of the coming holy day, joy in working to make it right, joy in the special celebration. The children grow ever impatient, but as they do, their eagerness for Shabbat to begin is catching. By the story's finale readers want the wait to end as well as the characters. Together with a guest uncle, all family members sit down to a table adorned with elegant flowers and a fancy table cloth, and set with challah, a kiddush cup, two candles, and fine china. Soup with fluffy *matzah* balls starts the festive meal. The family is appealing, and Shabbat is warm and enticing.

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

Krohn, Genendel. *Shabbos Treats: Delightful Stories of Devotion to Our Holy Shabbos*. Illus. Tova Katz. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2018. 56 pp. \$15.99. (9781680253221). Gr. K-3.

The fifteen short tales here tell of small miracles that have occurred to and for those who follow the *mitzvot*. Several of them take place in Russia and during World War II. They recount the stories of survivors, their struggles and escapes from the Tsar's army and the Nazis. Others describe difficult times in America -- one is of a girl who escaped the Triangle Factory Fire because she would not work on Shabbat. A couple of them take place in the Holy Land. All of them have belief, commitment to, and observance of the rituals of Shabbat as a shaping and saving element. There is a list of publications where the stories originally appeared, as well as a glossary. The inside back cover has the text of "L'cha Dodi" in Hebrew, but not in English. Genendel Krohn has written many books for Orthodox readers, but this one can be enjoyed by all children. It is intended to instill reverence and commitment, but it is pitched to inspire as much as to teach. It is appropriate for early readers, as well as for bedtime reading.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Meyer, Susan Lynn. *Matzah Belowstairs*. Illus. Mette Engell. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2019. 24 pp. \$17.99 (9781541521681) HC; \$7.99 (9781541521698) PB; \$7.99 eBook. Preschool-Gr. 2.

The "upstairs" human family celebrates Passover and inadvertently leave food around for the mice. The "belowstairs" mouse family also celebrates Passover but relies on extra food dropped from the humans. This year the upstairs family has purchased a new tin for the matzah that the mice cannot "chew through" which causes the mice concern that they will not have any matzah at their Seder.

However, when human Dad hides the *afikomen*, Miriam Mouse is the one to find it. She is about to abscond with it, when Eli, the human boy, finds her, talks to her, and offers to share by breaking it in half. Miriam Mouse then drags her half back to her belowstairs home, and eventually returns the special embroidered napkin it was wrapped in (made by Eli's grandma) as some sort of thank-you gift.

Although the illustrations are colorful, kid-friendly, and appealing, a few seem rushed, as if emphasizing hugeness over detail would work better on a double page spread. The idea of having the mouse family below mirror what is going on above, like Phoebe Gilman's *Something From Nothing* (Scholastic, 1993), is welcome, and begun on the first pages, but is mostly dropped. The choice to make humans have the ability to speak to animals is a fraught concept in general, but the biggest issue with human-mouse communication is that it does not follow logic. The boy is unsurprised that he can talk to the friendly mouse, and he seems to already know her. If so, why is her family worried about getting matzah surreptitiously (can't they just ask for some?) and why do they chew through previous matzah containers so that the family needs to purchase a tin mouse-proof version? Why doesn't Eli care that he gave the mouse his grandma's special napkin? (when she asks where it is after he returns with only half the *afikomen*, he just shrugs.) These disconnects will probably have little impact on children, who may enjoy stories of mice having their own Seders. But it will still be left to the adult to explain the ending.

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

Newman, Tracy. *Around the Passover Table*. Illus. Adriana Santos. Chicago: Albert Whitman and Co., 2019. 32 pp. \$16.99. (9780807504468). Preschool-Gr. 1. Reviewed from uncorrected proof.

This straightforward explanation of what happens at Seder is aimed at very young children. The text rhymes but not in typical couplet form, and therefore has a more appealing rhythm: "We add comfy pillow to chairs where we sit/Like royals reclining/Leaning while dining/At our table for this Seder night." The refrain, "At our table for this Seder night" follows every fourth line on the right-hand page at each page turn. The opening spread provides a hint at diversity in the illustration of a family arriving at Grandmother's house bearing what may be a home baked dessert. (White dad and African-American mom with two kids of color.) Before the meal begins, other family members (plus cat, dog, and fish) appear. All men wear kippot and women are modestly and colorfully dressed. Grandma appears to be lighting one of the two candles - she has already lit the first one, which is on the table - while everyone is talking and greeting each other, and none of the other women or relatives pay any attention. Everyone is happily seated with a pillow at their backs, drinking "yummy" grape juice (no wine depicted in the illustration) and going through most of the rituals most prized by young children. Terms such as "karpas" or "afikomen" are used but not explained within the text. The end glossary provides definitions of key terms. Over all, the book is appealing and upbeat and provides many instances for adults to comment on each ritual or term to offer more context if needed.

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

Simpson, Martha Seif. *Esther's Gragger: A Toyshop Tale of Purim*. (Toyshop Tales). Illus. D. Yael Bernhard. Bloomington: Wisdom Tales, 2019. 28 pp. \$16.95. (9781937786755). Preschool-Gr. 1.

Esther's brother chooses a special noisemaker for her -- his only goal is to make her happy as they celebrate the holiday of Purim together. But an older bully tries to take it away, and Esther stands up to him with courage and ingenuity. Once again, 'Haman' is defeated and there is joy and excitement in the Purim celebration. The illustrations are bright, fun, and appropriately expressive. The lesson of how we should treat others with respect and kindness is clear and decisive. The second book in the series by children's librarian Simpson and award-winning artist Bernhard will not disappoint fans of the first, *The Dreidel That Wouldn't Spin* (Wisdom Tales, 2014). This series presents a positive and fun yet educational look at Jewish holidays which children will want to read and hear again and again.

Rachel Glasser, Retired Librarian, Yaavneh Academy, Teaneck, NJ

Sokol, Leah. *The King's Horse: A Purim Story.* Illus. Joni Aliza Boroda. Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel: Mosaica Press, 2019. 48 pp. \$12.99. (9781722027933). Gr. K-2.

As they say, this one is straight from the horse's mouth, with Achashverosh's stallion narrating. Rather full of himself because of his good looks and speed, he enjoys the prestige of his position, but does not enjoy when the hefty king actually rides him. After Vashti's execution, the new queen's lifestyle is less taxing on the palace horses: Esther does not order wagonloads of clothes, nor does she eat meat. When all the other horses are used to deliver the news of Haman's edict to kill all the Jews, the king's horse remains in the stable. Soon he is fitted so that Mordechai, dressed in the king's clothes and crown, can mount him and be led through the streets by Haman, as a reward for saving the king's life. The next day Mordechai thanks the horse by bringing him a carrot. Mordechai confides in the horse that the Jews have a "secret weapon" in the palace -- Queen Esther. Soon Haman is lead away, and the horse takes credit for the Jews' salvation. A few months later, the stables are full of activity because the news that the Jews can defend themselves against Haman's decree needs to be disseminated throughout the Persian Empire. The king's horse is in a quandary: he wants to help the Jews, but if a messenger rides him, he will no longer be "fit for a king." Caught in the excitement, he gallops as fast as he can to spread the word. Upon his return, his is demoted. But now that Mordechai is the king's advisor, he adopts the horse and feeds him lots of carrots.

On the positive side, one of the important characters from the Purim story looks at the events from a different angle, and he matures from a self-absorbed and vain animal into one who feels compelled to help. Boroda's illustrations, full of vivid blues and purples, add to the atmosphere of ancient Persia. But, unless one is familiar with the *Megillah*, they will not get the full story of Purim until the Afterword. Even there, some of the finer details, like that the king's original decree could not be canceled and had to be remedied with a new decree, are missing. Some may object to the anthropomorphism, with the horse having human feelings, and it would have been nice if he had a name. There is little mention of Queen Esther; Mordechai and the horse are the focus, so Orthodox boys seem to be the target audience.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel; Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee
[Editors' Note: Originally self-published (CreateSpace, 2018) using the name Leah Cypress].

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Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

EDITED BY DANIEL SCHEIDE AND REBECCA JEFFERSON

Ben-Tekoa, Sha'i. *Phantom Nation: Inventing the "Palestinians" as the Obstacle to Peace*. Jerusalem: Gefen, 2018. 2 vols. \$70.00. (9789652299253).

In this monumental work, Sha'i Ben-Tekoa examines in detail the concept of the Palestinians as a distinct political/ethnic entity. From the first chapter, "Palestine for Real," Ben-Tekoa sets the stage for his thesis by reminding the reader that the terms "Palestine" and "Palestinians" were never used formally prior to the 20th century. The book then examines the negotiations between Chaim Weizmann, Prince Faisal (aided by T.E. Lawrence), and the British and French governments that created the political entities of the Middle East after World War 1.

The remainder of this large-scale work comprises a detailed chronological description of the Arab rejection of Jewish political aspirations. Volume 1 includes the period from 1870 to 1967, ending after the re-capture of Jerusalem; during most of that time the anti-Zionists were led by the al-Hussaini family of Jerusalem. The bulk of Volume 2 covers events from 1968 to 1988. An extensive final section moves the narrative to 2001. The set also contains extensive descriptions of the rise of Fatah, Arafat, and the PLO, beginning in the 1950s. The author is meticulous in documenting the continual rejection of Jewish claims, both intellectually and through violent actions, by the Arab community and its leaders over the past century.

Ben-Tekoa has compiled as complete a catalog as anyone could wish. The text is precise but not unduly academic. Unfortunately, there is scant discussion of the past 15 years. Also, regrettably, the index is fairly short (17 pages), and the bibliography is basic. Even so, Ben-Tekoa's work should be in all academic libraries (the price is surprisingly inexpensive). It is probably an optional purchase for synagogues.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Bessner, Ellin. *Double Threat: Canadian Jews, the Military, and World War II*. Toronto: New Jewish Press, 2018. 358 pp. \$20.00. (9781988326047).

This book fills a gap in the literature related to Canadian Jewish Soldiers serving during World War II. Bessner has written a very readable and engaging story on the challenges and obstacles (not the least of which was antisemitism) confronted by the servicemen and servicewomen at home and in the battlefields.

More than 17,000 Jewish Canadians answered the call to join the army in the fight. This number represented about ten percent of the Canadian Jewish population at the time. These soldiers knew that if captured by the enemy, they were risking not only being treated as Prisoners of War but also as Jews.

Double Threat brings to light the heroism and dedication of a highly motivated group of young people that choose to enlist in the fighting to defeat the Nazis despite having to confront antisemitism on many fronts. Recommended for all libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

Boum, Aomar and Sarah Abrevaya Stein (eds.), *The Holocaust and North Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019. 349 pp. \$30.00. (9781503607057).

Based on essays presented at a conference convened at UCLA in 2015, this volume adds to our knowledge and understanding of events in North Africa during World War II and their impact on North African Jews, thanks to the use of additional sources and approaches on the subject. Thus, not only events during the war are examined, but also how they are related to colonialism and are reflected in literature, presenting interesting vignettes of the subject, though not a comprehensive study.

Following an introduction, the book is divided into four parts. Starting with "Where Fascism and Colonialism Meet" three papers examine the relation between the anti-Jewish legislation and Fascism

and colonialism in the Maghreb, Libya, and French West Africa. While the first two papers examine and illuminate regions on which much research has already been conducted and published, the third, on French West Africa, pushes the point even further: despite the extremely low number of Jews there – just 110 – the racial legislation was enforced, highlighting “the obsessive nature of the Vichy regime in the persecution of Jews.” The second part, “Experiences of Occupation, Internment, and Racial Laws” includes three essays examining an internment camp for Algerian Jewish soldiers, the condition of Jews in rural Morocco, and the implementation of the Vichy anti-Jewish legislation in Tunisia. These essays are based on as yet hardly used archival sources, interviews, and memoirs, thus increasing our knowledge of the severe impact of the racial legislation on Maghrebi Jews, mainly in the countryside. The three essays of the third part, “Narratives and Political Reverberations”, examine how the period is reflected in memoirs and literature and how it politicized Jews, namely, not only the immediate impact of the war on the Jews, but also how it reverberated later on and is reflected in literature and memoirs. The closing part, “Commentary” includes six short essays examining new approaches to Holocaust studies, the broadening of their geographical and thematic boundaries and presenting the state of the art regarding the Holocaust and North Africa study based on past research and new tendencies.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ

Brook, Kevin Alan. *The Jews of Khazaria*. 3rd Edition. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018. 356 pp. \$42.00. (9781538103425).

In this new edition of *Jews of Khazaria*, Brook has assembled a wide range of new evidence, including archaeological and genetic data, enabling him to set to rest some of the old legends regarding the Khazars. At the same time, it throws new light on the maneuverings of this nation during the early medieval period. Basing his assertions on a variety of chroniclers, Brook argues that the Khazars derived from Turkic origins, rather than from Israel as did most of the other Jewish groups. Reports suggest that by the beginning of the ninth century they had established a substantial empire based on trade and mercantilism. Originally, they seem to have observed a religion described by Brook as Tengri shamanism which focused on spirits and the sky, a pantheism in which the deities were present throughout nature. At the beginning of the ninth century, however, they appear to have discarded their pantheistic beliefs in favor of Judaism. It is not certain how this came about. Some assert that it was the result of a disputation between representatives of the three Abrahamic faiths, while others argue that the conversion resulted from the immigration of Jews from Armenia driven north by the expanding Byzantine empire. The disputation explanation was advanced by a number of medieval commentators. Brook also notes that the depth of Khazar conversion has been a source of debate: recent discoveries have shown that it did spread among the “commoners” - at least among the sovereign Khazar tribe. Finally, Brook puts to rest the old myth that the Khazars were the primogenitors of the Eastern European and especially the Ashkenazi Jews. Using a growing body of genetic evidence, he firmly asserts that there is little if any link between the two groups. This is a fine analysis of a unique ‘Jewish’ community, adding archaeological and genetic evidence to the extensive array of chronicles and anecdotal evidence found in his earlier editions. With appendices, extensive notes and bibliography, it is an appropriate addition to any Judaica library.

Randall C. and Anne-Marie Belinfante

Fraser, David. *Anti-Shechita Prosecutions in the Anglo-American World, 1855-1913: A major attack on Jewish Freedoms*. Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2018. 258 pp. \$119.00. (9781618117427).

Fraser’s new work on anti-*Shechita* prosecutions is a socio/legal study aimed at explicating the impact of the conflicting values of Victorian Christian philanthropy and the free expression of religion as exemplified in the observance of the Jewish laws of *shechita*. Each chapter is built around a number of case studies from different locales. Although both parties expressed a keen interest in preventing

cruelty to animals, it is clear from these case studies that the two groups possessed quite different conceptions of what constituted kindness and cruelty towards animals. In some localities Jews were among the founders of the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). It was in dealing with the issue of the slaughter of animals for food that the two groups distinguished themselves, with Christians trying to impose their values and methods on the Jewish “other”. According to the Victorian Christian ideal, the most merciful procedure was to stun (by sledge hammer, bolt gun, or in later cases, electrocution) the animal prior to slaughter. Jews considered such a procedure a painfully cruel act that increased the animal’s suffering. In addition, the stunning procedure injured the animal and created a blemish which made it unacceptable for consumption by observant Jews.

In the course of his research Fraser analyzes numerous instances in which the predominant culture sought to prosecute Jews for employing what he refers to as the “Jewish procedure.” He asserts, however, that all of these prosecutions were abuses of local laws with the purpose of promoting Christian morality. In the final analysis, he considers that underlying this morality there existed an unremitting anti-Semitism. His concluding chapter advances the issue beyond 1913 and highlights later legislation which, while requiring that an animal should be stunned before slaughter, provided an exemption for Jewish practice. Thus, argues Fraser, *shechita* (and, with it, Jews) are placed outside the normative legal framework. An outstanding piece of research, Fraser’s work would make a valuable addition to any academic library.

Randall C. and Anne-Marie Belinfante

Friedman, Avraham Peretz. *Setting a Table for Two: Enhancing Relationships, Achieving Intimacy*. Linden, NJ: Compass Books, 2018. 140 pp. \$17.95. (9780986177422).

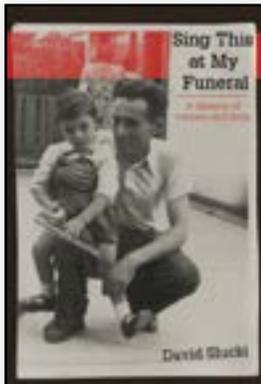
Marriage is one of the most important and, hopefully, most enduring relationships in one’s life, but sadly it is often taken for granted. In this slim volume, Rabbi Friedman gives practical advice from which all marriages can benefit. He begins with “The Legs that Hold Up the Table,” which includes most of the specifically Jewish content of the book in terms of references to marriage and six *hashkafot* (lit. “outlooks”; guiding philosophical principles) for the program he describes. The reader is encouraged to be self-examining and self-critical, but to develop from out of that process a healthy self-image and self-respect. This same love and respect must then be accorded to the spouse. Communication, especially when in disagreement is a key to a healthy marriage. The goal is not to “win,” but to resolve the issue. Marital intimacy should be approached from the Jewish perspective of a total encounter and not just physical release. Finally, Friedman provides “Glorious Opportunities to Shine,” including being respectful of in-laws and bringing your spouse small, thoughtful gifts. He stresses that “the husband’s most important duty to his wife is to communicate his love, appreciation, and recognition of her breathtakingly exalted worth.” The author draws from both Jewish texts (Talmud, Proverbs, etc.) and secular sources, which are referenced at the end of the book.

First published in 1992 as *Table for Two*, the revised and expanded edition comes after seven reprints of the original work. Most of the advice is common sense, which is often not so common in emotional situations. The succinct presentation and the avoidance of absolutes (never say “never”) makes it easy to refer to key points. An excellent gift for the bride and groom, or anyone who wants to improve their marriage, the book is highly recommended, and an essential purchase for libraries serving counseling centers or Jewish Family Services.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel



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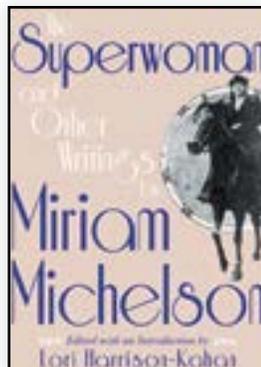
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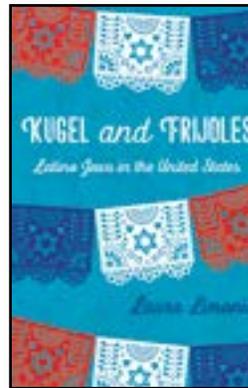
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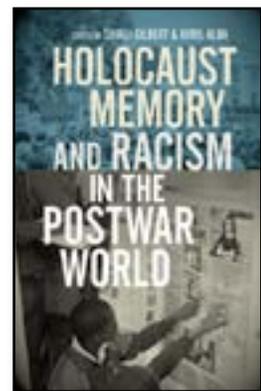
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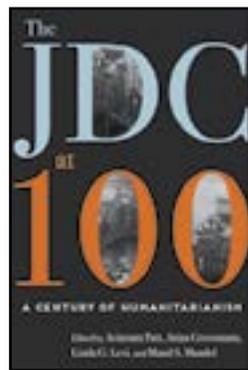
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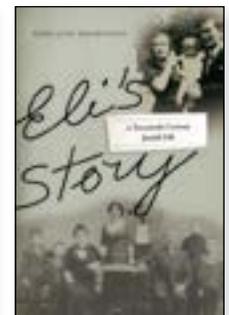
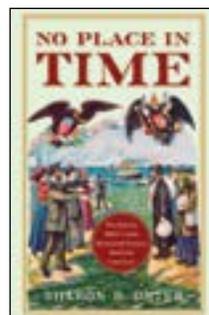
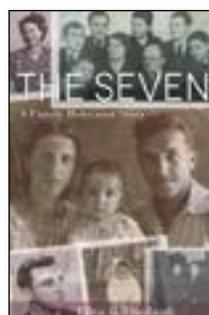
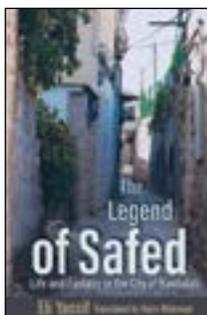
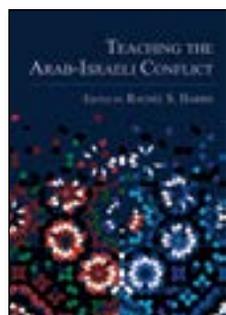
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Golding, Joshua L. *The Jewish Spiritual Path: The Way of the Name*. New York: Urim Publications, [2019]. 272 pp. \$27.95. (9781602803114).

The idea behind this book that “the Jewish spiritual path has four major stages which correspond to the four letters of the [Divine] Name” has led the author to structure his book according to a similar “four-fold” pattern. Thus, he combines a “theoretical presentation of some of the basic elements of Kabbalah with the practical aim of offering a guide that can be used in ‘real time’ to energize and enrich one’s spiritual life.” The four parts further divide in thirty-two smaller chapters each attending to one aspect of the Divine presence; at the end of each part, the author links the Kabbalistic teachings to the four elements of the *Shaharit* (daily morning prayer). Golding states that his intended readership is “anyone who is interested in spirituality, and especially those who are interested in the spiritual path taught by Judaism and Kabbalah.” In this, he includes all religious denominations, male and female alike. He claims to have assumed no prior knowledge of the subject on the part of the audience, and he deals with any technical aspects in the footnotes. The work is not provided with an index.

Not recommended to academic libraries but could interest large synagogue libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD

Gurock, Jeffrey S. (ed.), *Conversations with Colleagues: On Becoming an American Jewish Historian*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018. 270 pp. \$79.00. (9781618118561).

This well-written and engaging book includes essays by sixteen leading Jewish historians including Hasia Diner, Stephen Whitfield, and Jonathan Sarna. The work contains personal reflections on how and why these historians came to the field of American Jewish history, the struggles they faced, and the mentors who encouraged them. The field was expanded in the 1960s with the inclusion of women’s and ethnic group studies, and today the discipline includes not only historians but also sociologists, demographers, and social scientists.

Gurock shows how academics such as Marcus at HUCA, Baron of Columbia University, Davis of the JTS, and Handlin served as pioneers and mentors in the field. However, a number of others relate how their auto-didacticism led to their circuitous entrée into becoming historians.

Davis’s work to create an *Institute for the study of Contemporary Jewry* in Jerusalem is also covered here, as well as some of the historians’ major areas of research interest, such as American Jewish-Israel relations, Jewish American Women’s history, Jewish immigration and Jewish labor history, to name but a few. All in all, the engaging essays in this excellent book demonstrate that the discipline of Jewish American History has truly arrived. Recommended for all libraries, especially those with interests in American Jewish history, American history in general, and Jewish studies.

David B Levy, Lander College for women, NYC

Grunstein, Rabbi Yehoshua C. *Beyond Routine: Turning Ritual into Meaningful Jewish Practice*. Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2018. 362 pp. \$26.95. (9781602803046).

The *Shulchan Aruch*—the Code of Jewish Law (the “Code”)—was authored by Joseph Karo in 1563, and it remains the most widely accepted compilation of Jewish law ever written. Rabbi J. B. Solovetchik, z”l, articulated an “action to experience paradigm,” whereby doing the mitzvahs with intention provides a link to God. Looking at the “Code” through this lens, Rabbi Grunstein shows the reader how to elevate his observance of the commandments by knowing whether obligations are biblical, rabbinic, or custom, knowing the background and historical context, and providing practical suggestions. Starting with Tefillin, Torah Reading, and Shabbat, Grunstein then follows the yearly holiday cycle, starting with Rosh Hashanah and concluding with Tisha B’Av. Each chapter begins with a statement of the mitzvah or obligation, followed by an “And Now What” section that explains the significance of the obligation and how to better appreciate it, and concludes with a “Summary of

Experience.” For example, Grunstein explains why Shavuot is two days and has no major symbols—because we should celebrate the Torah every day!

Rabbi Grunstein, the Director of Training and Placement at the Straus-Amiel and Beren-Amiel Institute of Ohr Torah Stone, draws from his teachers and mentor, Torah luminaries Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, z”l and Rabbi Yehuda Amital, z”l. He brings many interesting points that will enhance mitzvah observance. The source quotes are often lengthy, which document his arguments, but break up the flow of the text. There is (obviously) more content about days like Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah, which involve more mitzvahs, than about Shavuot. The chapters on Counter the Omer and Tisha B’Av shed light on observances that get less attention. Because the book is source heavy and is indexed neither by sources nor themes, it will be a very welcome addition to Orthodox libraries, and a great resource for more traditional congregations.

Chava Pinchuck, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel

Herring, Rabbi Basil (ed.) סדור עבודת הלב Siddur Avodat Halev, Jerusalem: Toby Press, 2018. 850 pp. \$34.95. (9789653019362).

Siddur Avodat Halev is a new orthodox prayer book, according to the Ashkenazi rite, produced under the auspices of the Rabbinical Council of America. It is printed in a clear legible Hebrew font with English translation on the verso. On the bottom of most pages is commentary from Rabbinic sources and sages both ancient and contemporary such, as the Mishnah, Talmud, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Rashbah, Rambam, and Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveichick among many others. The book includes all the traditional prayers for weekdays, Sabbath and holidays, Torah portions for Mondays, Thursdays and Shabbat Mincha, the entire book of Psalms, the five Megillot, plus prayers for life cycle events such as: *brit milah* (circumcision), *pidyon haben* (redeeming the first born) and selected Psalms to be recited in times of special need. *Siddur Avodat Halev* is especially sensitive to women’s prayer needs. Ceremonies such as *zeved habat* (celebrating the birth of a girl), text and laws pertaining to a women’s *zimmun* (invitation to say grace after meals), and blessing for taking hallah (Sabbath bread) are included. For congregants who cannot read Hebrew, the Mourner’s Kaddish and Rabbi’s Kaddish are transliterated. Additional services and laws to commemorate Yom Haatzma’ut (Israel Independence Day), Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day), Holocaust Memorial Day and Israel’s Fallen Soldiers are also included. The Siddur is introduced by an insightful essay about prayer by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik z”l. At the back of the volume are essays on the history, proper *kavanah* (devotion) and laws of prayer written by eminent, contemporary men and women scholars. *Siddur Avodat Halev* is highly recommended for all libraries. All branches of Judaism will find the essays and commentary inspiring, enlightening and extremely interesting.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH

Himsel, Angela. *A River Could be a Tree: A Memoir*. Bedford, NY: Fig Tree Books, 2018. 266 pp. \$23.95. (9781941493243). Reviewed from uncorrected proof.

In this memoir, Himsel describes her life growing up in a Christian cult and her eventual conversion to Judaism. Himsel grew up in rural Indiana as a member of the Worldwide Church of God. The family regularly attended church and sat through long sermons which focused on the end-days, rapture, hell, the evil influence of women, and the latest proclamation of the church’s leader Herbert Armstrong. Himsel enjoyed the tight-knit community and the certainty that she would meet her deceased sister in heaven but questioned the preacher’s criticism of women and his capricious rulings.

When she attended college, she realized how much of an outlier her church really was, but she continued to both attend her church and to question its rulings. Hoping to strengthen her faith, she

decided to do a semester abroad in Israel. She pictured herself among the camels, walking where Jesus and his Apostle's walked. But when she arrived, she was shocked to find a modern country where people carried out their daily business and where the Bible could be studied as a literary text and dissected and discussed.

Upon graduation, she settled in New York, began to date a Jewish man, and subsequently became pregnant. Before she could really process it, she learnt that a beloved brother-in-law had been diagnosed with stage four brain cancer. This led to a spiritual crisis.

At this point, the timing in the book becomes very condensed. Her descriptions of growing up and her young adulthood had been told at a leisurely pace with many humorous or poignant stories. In the last 75 pages of the book, she rushes through having a baby, conversion, getting married, having two more children, and the death of her parents and in-laws. It is very clear what pushed her away from the Worldwide Church of God, but the book would have been stronger if she had been as clear about what drew her towards Orthodox Judaism. Recommended to synagogue libraries.

Sheryl Stahl, Director, Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles

Holmgren, Beth. *Warsaw is My Country: The Story of Krystyna Bierzyńska, 1928-1945.* Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018. 116 p. \$19.95. (9781618117595).

With an examination of cosmopolitan pre-war Poland's capital, Warsaw, the reader learns about the life of a relatively assimilated and acculturated Jew, Krystyna Bierzyńska, who finds herself caught up in the horrors of Nazi Germany's invasion and occupation of her native Poland. The author, a professor of Slavic Studies at Duke University, portrays how the subject of the book was caught in between her liberal Catholic countrymen and the remaining, right-wing, anti-Semitic extremists who collaborated with the Nazis to obliterate the Jewish Community. In spite of the tragic events of the war, Krystyna survived and even as a 16-year old participated in the doomed Warsaw Uprising. After the war, she is reunited with her brother Dolek, a military officer with the Polish II Corps. A brief but interesting contribution to Holocaust studies and a segment of Polish history.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Jarusch, Konrad H. *Broken Lives: How Ordinary Germans Experienced the Twentieth Century.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. 446 pp. \$35.00. (9780691174587).

Konrad H. Jarusch, born in Magdeburg, Germany on 14 August 1941, is an historian and professor of European Civilization at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. His book utilizes about 82 personal memoirs to show how ordinary Germans experienced the 20th century. The German individuals were born around 1920 and wrote their autobiographies once they retired. Jarusch adds several black and white photos to support the texts.

The book opens with a presentation of all the individuals who are mentioned in the text, including their year and place of birth and short biographical notes. It has three main parts: I. Prewar Childhood; II. Wartime Youth; III. Postwar Adulthood. A conclusion section, entitled "Memories of Fractured Lives," is followed by acknowledgments notes, a list of sources, list of abbreviations, and an index.

Broken Lives is one of several trending books attempting to comprehend what went on in Germany during the course of the 20th Century and especially during the Second World War period. Jarusch includes as his sources all kinds of individuals from all walks of life, opponents and supporters of the Third Reich, Hitler Youth, Prisoners of War, Jews (including two born into assimilated or mixed-marriage families), Holocaust survivors, and a variety of individuals from rich & poor backgrounds.

This is a worthy addition to all libraries and will especially compliment a WWII collection.

Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL

Jorisch, Avi. *Thou Shalt Innovate: How Israeli Ingenuity Repairs the World*. Jerusalem: Gefen, 2018. 266 pp. \$27.00. (9789652299345).

Avi Jorisch has written a fine account of the many innovations that Israelis have produced over the life of this young nation. Each essay in this collection is well written and provides the reader with fascinating information that is enough to use for further investigation of the subject. The book has an index, extensive end notes, and a bibliography for the curious. Each essay is written in the form of a story that keeps the reader engaged. They are all very exciting stories and as a result, this book would be appropriate for many if not all Judaica and general collections. The inclusions are not limited to any field of endeavor: there are innovations in medicine, transportation, agriculture, technology, security, and espionage to name but a few. A reader might choose to read only the essay about a particular subject rather than reading all of them. The educational opportunities of this book are vast and diverse, and people from grade 7 through to adults will find this book of great interest.

Marion Stein, retired librarian

Julius, Lyn. *Uprooted: How 3,000 Years of Jewish Civilisation in the Arab World Vanished Overnight*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2018. 340 pp. \$37.95. (9781910383643).

Lyn Julius has two agendas in this book. The first is to tell the history of the “Arab Jews” or “Jewish Arabs” who resided in Moslem countries, in many cases since well before the birth of Islam. Around the time that the state of Israel was established, Jews were forced to leave their homes in Arab lands, and most of them made *aliyah*. At present, their descendants comprise about 50% of Israel’s Jewish population. This overwhelming historical reality is almost completely unknown. The state of Israel made assimilation of these refugees a priority and their existence was never revealed to diaspora Jews, let alone non-Jews. Yet, their community has had a critical impact on modern Israeli history and culture. The author’s other agenda is overtly political. A child of expelled Iraqi Jews, she describes Jewish history in Arab lands in terms that are almost completely unfavorable. With copious research and ample quotes, she draws a picture of oppression, danger, and humiliation that is on a par with Jewish life in the Christian world. She details the insecurities of dhimmitude, the complications of European colonialism, and the substantial Nazi influence in the Arab world before the war. She concludes that Moslems treated Jews at least as badly as Christians did, if not worse. She has even coined a bold term for the Arab expulsion of Jews: the Jewish *Nakba*. The author’s thesis is well-researched and substantiated, but other Jewish witnesses and researchers of this history have a more nuanced and complex view of the narrative. *Uprooted* has an index and a substantial bibliography and notes. Recommended, but libraries should also own *In Ishmael’s House* by Martin Gilbert and Norman Stillman’s *Jews of Arab Lands*.

Beth Dwoskin, ProQuest (Retired), Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

Klein, Reuven Chaim. *God versus Gods: Judaism in the Age of Idolatry*. White Plains, NY: Mosaica Press, 2018. 366 pp. \$31.96. (9781946351463).

Relying mostly upon Jewish classical texts and commentaries this book is mainly about the First Temple period. Rabbi Klein, though a firm traditionalist without much respect for academic biblical criticism, sometimes comes to surprising conclusions. One of these conclusions is that the condemnations of Israel for idolatry that one finds in the Bible are often hyperbolic. Rabbi Klein makes a distinction between worshipping the God of Israel in illicit ways (e.g. venerating the golden calves constructed by Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom) and worshipping a god other than the God of Israel. For this and other reasons, Rabbi Klein thinks Israel’s guilt regarding idolatry is less than often thought. In addition to the theme of minimizing the part idolatry played in the life of Israel during the first temple period, another theme is that idolatry is often accompanied by sexual immorality and murder though he makes no attempt to explore why there seems to be this connection (assuming it is not mere coincidence). Rabbi Klein is unafraid to point out disagreements amongst his sources but remains within the bounds of traditionalist

rabbinical Judaism. He does not totally ignore academic biblical studies but gives them rather short shrift. The book ends with a very informative eighty-two page “Encyclopedia of Gods in the Bible.”

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

Konig, Nanette Blitz. *Holocaust Memoirs of a Bergen-Belsen Survivor: Classmate of Anne Frank. Netherlands: Amsterdam Publishers, 2018. 138 pp. (9789493056053).*

Holocaust Memoirs of a Bergen-Belsen Survivor is another lasting record of a Holocaust survivor. Nanette Blitz, who knew Anne Frank in Amsterdam, describes her friendship with Anne, and seeing her in the concentration camp before she perished. She relates her conversations with Anne and Anne telling her of her dream of becoming a famous writer. She attended Anne’s 13th birthday party and saw her receive the famous diary as a gift.

She dispels any idea that the Dutch were rescuers of Jews when she describes the Dutch police in Westerbork, which was known as a transitional camp. Nanette writes, “Unlike concentration camps, there were few Nazis around and they were only responsible for guarding the perimeter, while the Dutch police were in charge of keeping the order inside.” I could not put the book down because of my interest (like so many others) in learning as much as I can about Anne Frank. Fortunately, Nanette survived the Holocaust, married, and has a family. Recommended for Holocaust collection and for adults and young adults. The book provides lessons about courage, dignity, and resilience. I read the book along with reading the newly published *Anne Frank’s Diary: The Graphic Adaptation* by Ari Folman and found that these two very different books provided for contrast and comparison.

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

Kugel, James L. *The Great Shift: Encountering God in Biblical Times. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 476 pp. \$30.00. (9780544520554).*

The Great Shift, a brilliant exegesis of the Bible, discusses the change in man’s interaction with God. In the Bible, God speaks directly to Man and Man reacts to His words and commands without reflecting on what He has said. For example, when God speaks to Abraham directly and tells him to sacrifice his son Issac, Abraham does not think about what he is going to do. He just reacts and does what has been commanded. Man does not question his belief; God makes the law, not man. In the post-biblical period, man’s perception has shifted. Man decides if he will believe in God or follow his laws. God has become internal: He is inside the soul. Man seeks out God and forges a relationship with Him through prayer. The soul is now where Man meets God, not in the physical Temple or Mishkan. Thus, in the modern age, God has become abstract, ceasing to be the anthropomorphic figure of the Bible.

The volume includes 264 pages of notes, an extensive bibliography, subject index, and a list of verses cited. Recommended for academic libraries.

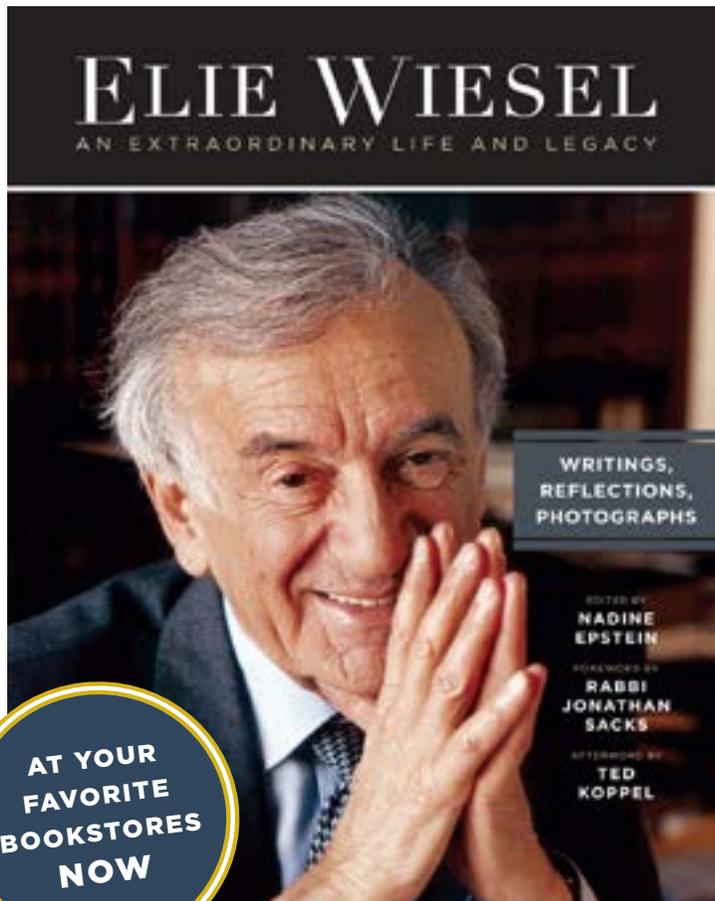
Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH

Müller, Helmut. *The Women of Obernheide: Forced Jewish Women Labourers in Bremen, 1944-1945. London: Valentine Mitchell, 2018. 116 pp. \$19.95. (9781910383599).*

Nazi Germany forced 800 Jewish women from occupied Poland and Hungary to serve as forced labor in the environs of Bremen, Germany during World War II in a relatively unknown labor camp. Written from the perspective of the women themselves, Müller employs the survivors’ notes and diaries, oral accounts, and archival materials to create a picture of the suffering and tragic existence of these women in the camp at Obernheide. What is provided is a collection of brief synopses of elements of the women’s existence, such as how workers were assigned, the camp’s organization, a biography of some of the camp guards and its commandant, the treatment of the sick, and ultimately their liberation by the British. A succinct but well-constructed contribution of Holocaust studies.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

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Munkácsi, Ernő. *How it Happened: Documenting the Tragedy of Hungarian Jewry.* Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2018. 314 p. \$28.95. (9780773555129).

This book is a documentary account of the final stage of the Nazi-initiated plan for the extermination of Europe's Jews that took place in Hungary during the latter part of 1944. This was a critical period during which Nazi Germany occupied Hungary and with its right-wing, anti-Semitic collaborators sought to rid the country of Europe's largest and last-remaining Jewish community, numbering 127,000. The author was the secretary of the Hungarian *Judenrat*, who served as general counsel to the Israelite Congregation of Pest and the Director of the Hungarian Jewish Museum; essentially a prominent member of Budapest's Jewish elite. The narrative, based upon a careful use of documentary sources and personal accounts, is augmented by footnoted, brief biographical sketches of Hungarian and German officials involved with "The Jewish Question in Hungary" under the direction of the infamous Adolf Eichmann. Included are archived photographs and detailed maps. This is an absolute must read for anyone interested in the history of Hungarian Jewry and its fate in the Holocaust.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Riemer, Rabbi Jack. *The Day I Met Father Isaac at the Supermarket: Lessons in how to live from the Jewish Tradition.* New York: KTAV, 2018. 256 pp. \$19.95. (9781602803091).

Rabbi Riemer may be best known for *So that Your Values May Live On*, his wonderful volume on ethical wills. *The Day I Met My Father Isaac...* is a smaller, easy-to-read, and wise book meant for a broader audience. It contains some of his sermons while serving as interim Rabbi at Anshe Shalom Congregation in Florida. The book contains *drashot* (homilies) on thirty-five of the weekly *parashot* (Torah readings). In them Riemer explores both Torah issues and their parallels in modern life using stories, gentle humor, and a touch of irony. Beginning with *Lech Lecha* ("A Sermon addressed to the rich people in this Congregation"), his subjects include *Yitro* ("The Super Bowl and the Sedra"), *Bechukotai* ("Some of my favorite curses"), and *Korach* ("Too much rightness can kill you"). Each *derasha* begins with a story; most of them are contemporary, while others come from the Talmud and the Hasidic literature. They are witty and easy to connect with. He then turns to the Torah and links his introduction to the moral of the *parashah*. Some of his connections are quite powerful, others are sweet. But all are meaningful. The volume concludes with his "Farewell Shabbat" comments: "The lessons you have taught me." In this talk he reminds his audience that, at their best, teachers are also students.

There has been a plethora of books over the past few years to assist B'nai Mitzvah students with their *drashot*. This delightful collection of sermons can be used by 12-year-olds. It would be better employed by adults looking for inspiration, as well as to create their own commentaries. It is a fine (and fun) addition to any synagogue library.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

Simkovitch, Malka Z. *Discovering Second Temple Literature: The Scriptures and Stories That Shaped Early Judaism.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2018. 354 pp. (9780827612655).

The Second Temple Period, from the end of the events narrated in the Hebrew Bible until the appearance of rabbinic texts such as the Mishnah, are often treated by educators and readers as "dead space" in Jewish history. Even those with a good working knowledge of the Jewish past can seem to elide over that period, not appreciating both the diversity of Jewish life as well as its profound influence on the formation of Christianity and rabbinic Judaism. Malka Simkovitch, a professor of Jewish studies at the Catholic Theological Union, has teamed up with Jewish Publication Society to present a serious and scholarly but highly readable and straightforward introduction to that period, its Jewish communities, and their literature. This is not meant to be a rethinking of the period or to offer a new thesis regarding the Second Temple period, but rather to present an intelligent and accessible introduction to the current state of knowledge. While some Jews desired integration into Greek and Roman intellectual

and cultural life, even as they maintained distinct Jewish communities and practices, others worked to isolate themselves to protect spiritual purity from the threats of the outside. What emerges is an image of a surprisingly diverse Jewish life and literature, both inside and outside the Land of Israel.

Yoel Finkelman, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem

Shandler, Jeffrey. *Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age: Survivors' Stories and New Media Practices*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017, 217 pp. \$24.95. (9781503602892).

This provocative book examines the impact of emergent media technologies on Holocaust survivor testimonies. Drawing on the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive (some 100,000 video presentations and 50,000 interviews) the author describes the advantage of camera over print in enhancing viewer experience and historical memory. The author covers the birth of non-print media. i.e. early gramophone in ethnographic – projects, and postwar taped-recorded talks with survivors with psychologists – and computerized metadata, where multiple subject headings, indexing, maps, or cross-references, lend greater accessibility to research on camps or home towns. "Seeing is believing," he insists, and apparently, he sees much under the lens, where every facial expression or vocal inflection is revelatory, even incriminating. Through sound and visual techniques, the camera can heighten rapport, as well as drama, between subject and interviewer – e.g. scars, tattoos. One man opens his shirt to display a bony shoulder broken by a camp guard. Narratives, though delivered in English or other adopted languages, may slip into native Yiddish for coded references to painful moments. Discussed are survivors' reactions to *Schindler's List*, directed by Steven Spielberg (also creator of the Visual History Archive), the digitization that is supplanting videography, and similar representations of recent genocides – i.e. Rwanda. There are photographs, along with a reference list, of the subjects included in this book – date/place of birth and interviews. Readers might appreciate the role of film as both witness and "weapon" against modern atrocity. Recommended for academic libraries with Holocaust or media studies collections.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

Sternfeld, Lior B. *Between Iran and Zion: Jewish Histories on Twentieth-Century Iran*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019. 185 pp. \$40.00. (9781503606142).

This study examines the Jews of Iran during the twentieth century as one of several religious and ethnic minorities and their growing integration in the Iranian nation, based on extensive use of archival sources, newspapers, interviews and published research.

The first chapter, "Shifting Demographics," examines the arrival of Ashkenazi and Iraqi Jews in Iran. The majority of the former belonged to a large group of Polish refugees, which arrived during WWII at the initiative of the British-Russian occupation forces. Though the Polish Jews were welcomed and supported by local Jews, most of the former did not stay in Iran. Iraqi Jews arrived mostly in the late 1940s-early 1950s and out of some 15,000 about 4,000 stayed in Iran and even established their own school. The second chapter, "The Iranian Political Sphere: Shaping a National Identity", examines the growing involvement of educated Jews in Iranian politics, including in leadership roles, mainly in leftist organizations, as well as in journalism, both at the national and communal level; several of the periodicals are examined in detail. The third chapter, "Iranian Jews and Israel: From Indigenous to State-Sponsored Zionism", examines the evolution of the Zionist movement in Iran, what Zionism meant to Iranian Jews, and their attitude towards Israel. With the growing involvement of Jews in Iranian political life, the impact of Zionism became mainly spiritual: praying towards Zion, but feeling Iran to be their homeland. These issues became even more dominant since the 1970s, as examined in the fourth chapter, "Unintended Consequences: The Lead-Up to the Iranian Revolution": individual Jews and some Jewish organizations were involved in the resistance to the monarchy and even were in contact with senior clerics, including Khomeini, who declared that one should not confuse between

Iranian Jews and Zionism and Israel, both of the latter the Islamic Revolution opposed. While Jews were involved in the early shaping of the Islamic State and participated in the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, many started to feel unsafe and left. Still, of over 100,000 Iranian Jews, some 25,000 chose to stay in Iran, making it the largest concentration of Jews in the Middle East and North Africa outside Israel. The "Postscript" briefly examines developments up to the mid 2010s.

This book presents a very thorough study of major issues related to Iranian Jews in twentieth-century based on extensive documentation.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ

Troy, Gil. *The Zionist Ideas: Visions for the Jewish Homeland - Then, Now, Tomorrow*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2018. 539 pp. \$34.95. (9780827612556).

In this well-written, well-organized follow up and update to Arthur Hertzberg's classic and seminal work *The Zionist Idea* (1959), Troy expands the scope of the Zionist vision by selecting a variety of views on the diverse and vibrant forms of Zionist expression and activism.

Troy provides new thoughtful readings demonstrating that the Zionist backstory is complex. He has reduced the number of thinkers included to 26 but has multiplied the number of entries to 169. In addition, he gives voice to over eighteen women thinkers, as well as to Mizrahi Jews from Arab lands.

Like Hertzberg, Troy breaks Zionism down into its political, labor, revisionist, religious, cultural, and diaspora categories. Further, he organizes the book chronologically into: (1) Pioneers founding the Jewish State (until 1948); (2) Builders: Actualizing and modernizing the Zionist Blueprint (1948 to 2000); (3) Torchbearers: Reassessing, Redirecting, and Reinvigorating (21st Century). This book serves as a way for people of different backgrounds and beliefs to consider the nature of Zionism and Israel, how Israel can flourish, and how Zionism can address contemporary concerns about national identities.

Highly recommended for scholars, teachers, educators, students, religious leaders, and activists.

David B Levy, Lander College for Women, NYC

Warburg, A. Yehudah (ed.) *Rabbinic Authority: The Vision and the Reality; Halakhic Family, the Child's Welfare and the Agunah; Beit Din Decisions in English*. Vol. 4. Trans. A. Yehudah (Ronnie) Warburg. Jerusalem; New York: Urim Publications, 2018. 319 pp. \$26.95. (9789655243060).

Rabbi Warburg continues his series on Jewish law in this fourth volume of *Rabbinic Authority*. If you don't have the previous three volumes, you should purchase them because Warburg refers to them so that he does not have to repeat material. This volume deals with issues concerning children within a divorce proceeding as well as issues surrounding the *agunah* (lit. 'chained wife'). When dissolving a marriage without co-operating parties the *Beit Din* (religious court) will on rare occasions declare the initial *kiddushin* (marriage ceremony) was mistaken (called *bittul kiddushin* or *kiddushin ta'ut*). This means the marriage is annulled and was a mistake. Warburg discusses the *Halkhah* and precedent for ending a marriage when both parties don't agree, as well as the definition of marriage and ways of ending a marriage with a coerced *get* or without a *get*.

The second half of the book contains extreme cases concerning end of marriage rulings. In every case the couple was unable to complete the divorce at a civil or religious court. These are cases where the husband refuses to give a *get* (divorce document) or the wife refuses to accept the *get*. All of the cases are extreme and not meant to give a ruling on similar issues to other couples; all of the cases end well with the woman able to get a divorce.

This book, with its detailed scholarly apparatus, is highly recommended for academic libraries and other libraries with patrons interested in understanding modern Jewish law. The book and the previous volumes are recommended for personal collections of rabbis, scholars, and others who can read and understand this kind of scholarly work.

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

Weiss, Judith, ספר טעם הטעמים *Ta'am HaTe'amim or Universal Oral Law: A Hebrew Renaissance Kabbalistic Mission Treatise by Guillaume Postel*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2018. 174 pp. (9789657763124). In Hebrew.

Weiss, a scholar of Kabbalah, has produced an annotated edition of an original 1552 messianic work composed by the French Catholic orientalist mystic, Guillaume Postel (1510-1581). Postel's work, which was previously unknown, was written in Hebrew and aimed at Jewish readers. As a Catholic Hebrew work, it provides a special chapter in the history of Christian polemics and another means of understanding the Jewish-Christian dialogue in the 16th century. Throughout the book, Postel refers to historical events from his unique perspective, which is comprised of apocalyptic millenarianism and Gallic nationhood, based on Jewish Kabbalistic sources. Amongst these is the description of Joan of Arc, the 15th century woman whose image was considered by Postel as the ideal of Gallic feminine nationhood and whose picture adorns the book cover. All these ideas are given messianic significance by Postel.

Recommended for libraries holding Christian polemical literature, the history of Kabbalah and messianism, and Christian Jewish relations in the time of the Renaissance and rise of the Reformation.

David B Levy, Lander College for Women, NYC

Wright, Fiona. *The Israeli Radical Left: An Ethics of Complicity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. 192 pp. \$69.95. (9780812250473).

The ideological premise of the Israeli polity has been historically leftist in its general orientation. Thus, when the analysis is concentrated on the self-referenced "radical" element of the Israeli political spectrum, it is a topic deserving of attention. Wright is a research associate in social anthropology at the University of Cambridge who spent 18 months in the South Hebron region of the West Bank examining the behavior of Israeli activists opposed to their government's policy toward the occupation in general, but heavily focused on the issue of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The challenge faced by these left-wing activists is the conflict of remaining loyal Israeli citizens faced with what they recognize as the brutal reality of military occupation. Militarism and nationalism are mixed to provide a complex social and ethical amalgam that serves as the focus of this ethnographic study. The language employed is not always conveniently clear, making the potential audience narrower than need be. Nevertheless, what Wright provides is a contribution to the understanding of the diversity of Israeli society.

Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College, Salisbury, NC

Zerubavel, Yael. *Desert in the Promised Land*. (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture). Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018. 368 pp. \$29.95. (9781503606234). Also available as eBook.

The author was intrigued by the unresolved tension between the strong attachment to the desert landscape and admiration of its wild nature among trekkers to Masada in the 1940s and 1950s, and the negative approach to desert symbolism that was at the core of the Zionist settlement mission, "to make the desert bloom again." Chapter one presents the concept of desert in Judaism; chapter two examines the desert as seen by European Jewish immigrants to Eretz Yisra'el; chapter three develops the "discourse of settlement and security and its competing interpretation of the desert as a symbolic landscape"; chapter four focuses on the Negev; chapter five is on the Bedouin population of the Negev; chapter six is on desert and the environment, and the last chapter looks at tourism in the desert. *Desert in the promised land* is not an academic exercise in abstract distinctions, but a "metaphorical journey" through the collective Jewish Israeli imaginary drawing from literary narratives, educational texts, newspaper articles, tourist materials, films, popular songs, posters, photographs, and cartoons. Recommended to all academic libraries.

Roger S. Kohn, Silver Spring, MD

Zipperstein, Steven J. *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History*. New York: Liverlight, 2018. 261 pp. \$27.95. (9781631492693).

On April 6, 1903, the Moldavian town of Kishinev broke out in a savage attack on the Jewish populace, resulting in 49 deaths, numerous rapes and injuries, and destroyed property. This pogrom, immortalized in Bialik's poem and Israeli textbooks, became an icon for later, and far worse, tragedies of the twentieth century. The author analyzes this horrific event based on new evidence and provides extensive detail and background—Jewish and Gentile life in Bessarabia, frequent hostile interactions, and that region's poverty and backwardness. The impact of the pogrom was enormous, becoming, as the author writes, "the only significant event embraced by all political sectors of the severely fractured Russian-Jewish scene." News reached worldwide audiences, shocking and humiliating the Tsarist regime. Reactions ranged from Zionists who condemned the victims for passivity (although many did fight back), to African-Americans who were galvanized into organizing a civil rights movement and eventual formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Justification for the attack led to the publication, several months later, of the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* by local anti-Semites, who viewed that area of the Russian pale as the center of a "vast international Jewish conspiracy." Included are photographs, eyewitness accounts (some quite lurid), and sensationalism from contemporary political and literary figures. These included not only Jews, but Irish nationalists and muckrakers whose heightened sympathy for the oppressed paralleled this tragedy to partisan struggles. In spite of the sobering subject matter, this book has a highly wry and breezy style that makes it not only riveting but appealing to general readers in public, as well as Judaica libraries.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, New York, NY

Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

Alexander, V.S. *The Taster: A Novel*. New York: Kensington, 2018. 320 pp. \$19.95. (9781496712271).

V.S. Alexander, author of *The Magdalen Girls*, gives readers a glimpse into a little-known aspect of World War II in this novel based on historical resources. In 1943, Magda Ritter's parents, concerned for her safety during the war, send her to live with relatives in Bavaria. They are Nazi supporters who expect her to do her patriotic duty. The civil service assigns her to Hitler's mountain retreat, the Berghof, high in the mountains. The beautiful surroundings provide a sharp contrast to the sinister events that unfold there. Magda learns that she will be a taster, sampling Hitler's food to make sure that no one has poisoned him. The work is dangerous, but she is in a better situation than the rest of the civilian population. She must remain quiet about her growing misgivings concerning the war. Falling in love with a young SS officer involved in the resistance will draw her into a plot that will threaten her safety while providing a chance at freedom and vengeance. The author captures the bleak atmosphere and desperation of war along with the courage of the resisters. This is an excellent choice for public libraries and synagogue libraries that collect fiction. The presentation of moral dilemmas offers wonderful discussion opportunities for book clubs.

Barbara Bibel, Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA

Gabin, Jean S. *The Paris Photo: A Novel*. Chapel Hill: Wisdom House, 2018. 494 pp. \$18.99. (9780692097519).

In 1943, Ben Gordon is a young man from Brooklyn serving as a postal clerk in the United States Army. His assignment is to organize the postal service for the troops in Paris. He has never been abroad and finds Paris fascinating despite the ravages of war. Before he left New York, a young French woman who comes to the post office asks him to check on her cousins in Paris if he gets there. Ben finds them and, as a result, learns first-hand about the plight of French Jews during the war. Americans, even

those serving in the military in Europe, had no idea of the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis until the camps were liberated. As his friendship with the family deepens, he finds himself attracted to Simone, a young mother, and her son, Guy. Since he is engaged and must return to New York, they part ways. Many years later, Ben's daughter finds a photograph of them and decides to visit Paris to see if she can find out who they are. Readers who enjoy historical fiction will find this heartwarming story very satisfying. It combines mystery, romance, and history to tell a story of trauma and compassion.

Barbara Bibel, Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA

Leviant, Curt. *Katz or Cats or How Jesus Became My Rival In Love*. Ann Arbor: DZANC Books, 2018, 338 pp. \$16.95. (9781945814457).

John, a book editor, meets Katz on a commuter train to New York. Katz pitches his brother's book to the editor during their train rides. Katz has a photographic memory and is therefore able to recite his brother's book word for word (Or is Katz the author?). In his book, Katz recounts his meeting and torrid affair with the gentile young woman, Maria. Maria constantly struggles with her erotic sexual desires and her religious belief that Jesus would not condone her adulterous relationship. Maria and Katz's sizzling lovemaking is described in great detail; not much is left to the reader's imagination. Many chapters detail how Katz and Maria pleasure each other during prolonged sexual encounters. When they are not making love, the protagonists are engaging in playful banter and puns. The author alludes to Biblical stories and peppers his narrative with Yiddish words. The word play is fun to read.

Leviant demonstrates a vast knowledge of literature and Bible. However, this book is not recommended for school or traditional synagogue libraries, because of the graphic sex.

Ilka Gordon, Beachwood, OH

Kestin, Hesh. *The Siege of Tel Aviv*. Ann Arbor: Dzanc Books, 2019. 266 pp. \$26.95. (978195814839).

In this new novel by novelist and former journalist Hesh Kestin, the action begins after the Arab League declares their intention for peace with Israel. Secretly, however, a coalition of Muslim forces led by Iran prepares to launch a strategic attack on Israel that cripples the IDF defenses and destroys the Israeli government. As a result, the unthinkable takes place and Jerusalem is destroyed and occupied, other major centers are ravaged, while Tel Aviv is spared. The reasoning becomes apparent when it is turned into a ghetto where the rest of the surviving Israeli population is eventually concentrated. Those soldiers who have managed to survive attempt to find a way to fight back, alongside others they recruit to the cause. One element of the novel that is important to note is that Kestin discusses issues in the current organizational structure of the IDF and Israeli society which would cause problems in such a scenario. These include the command hierarchy, the fact that weapons are kept in central locations on bases as opposed to in the homes of the soldiers, and the laws that can disqualify a large segment of the Israeli population from owning their own guns.

After the invasion, the world community for the most part abandons the Israelis to their fate. The plausible scenarios that lead to this situation are ultimately results of either the failures of IDF intelligence or the strategic might of the combined Muslim armies. Humorous events that take place during these grim circumstances serve to lighten some of the tension.

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

Mash, Yenta. *On the Landing: Stories*. Trans. Ellen Cassedy. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2018. 186 pp. (9780875807935).

In this extraordinary collection of stories superbly curated and translated from the Yiddish by Ellen Cassedy, Yenta Mash charts a vivid narrative trajectory. The book covers the world of Jewish Bessarabia, expulsion to Siberia, return to Bessarabia post exile (by then part of the Soviet Union), and finally, immigrant existence in Israel.

The specificity of the regional setting is mapped out in the very first paragraph of the opening story of the collection, "The Bridegroom Tree": "Our Bessarabia used to be known far and wide for its roads. They say every cripple has his own unique deformity, and in the same way our roads were one of a kind, unlike those of any region. They were an abomination." In this story, Ester and her family, like Mash herself, are rounded up and deported to Siberia for being "bourgeois elements." From the book's very outset, then, Mash establishes not only the interconnectedness of both the geographic landscape and the polity, but also the power of her unique literary voice: wry, earthy, shrewdly observant.

The harsh landscape plays a determinative role throughout the collection. In the story "Bread," the narrator uses the practice of collecting discarded bread in her new home of Israel to reflect on the devastating consequences of a particular long-ago berry-collecting expedition in the marshes and swamps of Siberia. In the title story, the protagonist seeks to make her way, at great personal peril, out of confinement in Siberia. The central action of the story takes place on the landing as she awaits a boat that may bring her to a life of (greater) freedom.

There is much to praise in this book. Mash deftly portrays the circumstances of Bessarabian Jews in all their upheavals with knowing detail and wisdom. Her characters, both female and male, are never resigned to the situations in which they find themselves. They're always questioning, both the actions of God and the human – often bureaucratic – powers that be.

Ellen Cassedy has done marvelous work combing through Mash's four collections to select these stories and bringing them to life in an English that honors the beauty and texture of the author's vision. Highly recommended for all libraries.

Yermiyahu Ahron Taub, Washington, D.C., www.yataub.net

Popkin, Nathaniel. *Everything is Borrowed: A Novel*. Philadelphia: New Door Books, 2018. 227 pp. \$24.95. (9780999550113). Reviewed from ARC.

Nicholas Moscovitz (with a "c") is an award-winning architect in Philadelphia who is commissioned to tear down a parking lot in an historical neighborhood and design a high rise building to replace it. His usual habit of walking around the property and the nearby streets does not provide him the needed inspiration for the new building so he heads to the library to research the area. In a book, he discovers an account of a Jewish anarchist named Louis Moskowitz (with a "k") who had a peddler's stand across from a synagogue a hundred years earlier. Moskowitz had stood at his stand in white clothing on Yom Kippur reading from anarchist works and so enraging some of the congregants that they attack and beat him. Nicholas becomes obsessed with Moskowitz and researches his life, the history of the anarchist movement, and the members of the synagogue.

Meanwhile his assistant Nadia tries in vein to get him to focus on the building plans. But his interactions with Nadia just slide into memories of Eva, his first love. Eva had been a fan of Kierkegaard, "The dialectic of repetition is easy, for that which is repeated has been – otherwise it could not be repeated – but the very fact that it has been makes the repetition into something new." This is a theme throughout the book. Aspects of Nicholas' relationship with Eva are repeated with Nadia; architecture of other cities is reproduced in Philadelphia; and Nicholas sees parts of his life echoing those of the earlier Moskowitz.

As a librarian, I can appreciate how satisfying it can be to do research and I appreciate the author's illustration of using a library, but Nicholas' increasing scope of research bogs down the narrative. Recommended for large collections only.

Sheryl Stahl, Director, Frances-Henry Library, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles, CA

Reich, Tova. *Mother India*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2018. 253 pp. \$24.95. (9780815611066).

Tova Reich's latest novel is a dark, often humorous depiction of people seeking spirituality in India. It is narrated by Meena, a woman who rebelled against her Haredi upbringing, entered into a lesbian

relationship, and started a tourism business in India. The first section is about Meena's mother who, near the end of her life, goes off to India in the hope of ending her reincarnations. The second section is about Meena's daughter, Maya who early on is influenced by the Chabad's Nariman House in Mumbai that came under murderous attack by Pakistani Muslims in 2008. The third and final section is about Meena herself and also her twin brother, Shmelke, who leads a group of people influenced by Nachman of Breslov and claims that he is a reincarnation of Nachman. The book's depiction of these spiritual seekers and the spiritual leaders to whom they are attracted is merciless. They are involved in manic, grotesque, even repellent forms of spirituality. It is not that the spiritual guides are charlatans or insincere. At some level they all probably believe in the hothouse spirituality they peddle. The problem is that they have no humility and no sound idea of human wellbeing to undergird their religiosity or to provide a sane purpose to their followers. The book is strong stuff, quite effectively nightmarish.

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

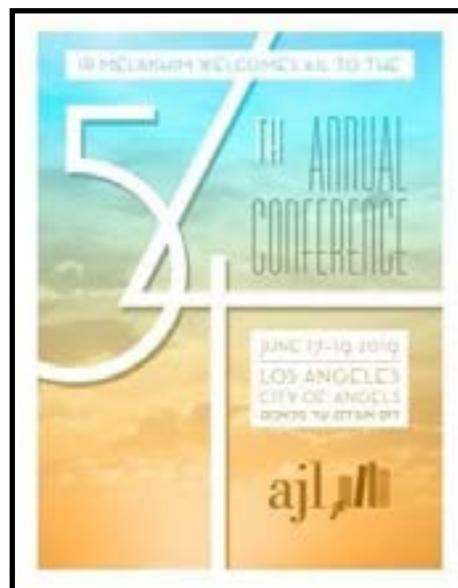
Tidhar, Lavie. *Unholy Land*. San Francisco: Tachyon, 2018. 260 pp. \$15.95. (9781616963040).

Lavie Tidhar is an Israeli-born Science Fiction/Fantasy writer whose previous book, *Central Station* won the prestigious Campbell Award. In this new novel, he creates an eerie alternative Jewish history.

The story Tidhar tells is a fantasy. In its concept, it resembles Michael Chabon's *Yiddish Policeman's Union*, but *Unholy Land* is set in Africa. In this version of reality, the Protectorate of Palestina was established according to the 1904 exploration of Uganda. While there was a Second World War, most of the Jews survived. There are problems, though, and a wall is being constructed to protect the Jewish residents from attacks. The protagonist, Lior Tirosh, travels there to visit his dying father. But for some reason Tirosh is being followed by the Security Police. He encounters an old acquaintance, who mysteriously dies in Tirosh's hotel room. And a strange woman appears in odd places, seeming to know things Tirosh wants hidden. Finally, Tirosh alternately remembers and forgets why he has come, and that he has a wife and baby son at home in Berlin. At one point he is transported into an alternate reality, the State of Israel, which he recognizes but is unable to understand.

Tidhar has created an alternative history based on fact. Its combination of history, re-located facts, shifting narrative voices, and un-resolved story lines make it extremely confusing at times. In addition, knowledge of both early Zionism and current Israeli politics and sociology are at least useful to understanding the plots. Cautiously recommended for adventuresome synagogue libraries and for knowledgeable readers of speculative fiction.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA



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