

Reverend Katz Library

New Book Reviews

April 2021

This month we have received some remarkably interesting books, some of which have been recommended by our readers. If you have any recommendation for books with Jewish content, please contact the synagogue and we will see if we are able to order the books for our library. Please enjoy our recent reviews and we look forward to you visiting the Reverend Katz library soon. The committee are there on the first Wednesday of each month from 10-12.00 am and we look forward to welcoming you to the library.

Jane Sherron de Hart, Ruth Bader Ginsburg; A life BIO GIN

“A vivid account of a remarkable life.” —The Washington Post

In this comprehensive, revelatory biography—fifteen years of interviews and research in the making—historian Jane Sherron De Hart explores the central experiences that crucially shaped Ginsburg’s passion for justice, her advocacy for gender equality, and her meticulous jurisprudence.

At the heart of her story and abiding beliefs is her Jewish background, specifically the concept of tikkun olam, the Hebrew injunction to “repair the world,” with its profound meaning for a young girl who grew up during the Holocaust and World War II.

Ruth’s journey begins with her mother, who died tragically young but whose intellect inspired her daughter’s feminism. It stretches from Ruth’s days as a baton twirler at Brooklyn’s James Madison High School to Cornell University to Harvard and Columbia Law Schools; to becoming one of the first female law professors in the country and having to fight for equal pay and hide her second pregnancy to avoid losing her job; to becoming the director of the ACLU’s Women’s Rights Project and arguing momentous anti-sex discrimination cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein, How education shaped Jewish History 70-1492 HIS BOT

In 70 CE, the Jews were an agrarian and illiterate people living mostly in the Land of Israel and Mesopotamia. By 1492 the Jewish people had become a small group of literate urbanites specializing in crafts, trade, moneylending, and medicine in hundreds of places across the Old World, from Seville to Mangalore. What caused this radical change? The Chosen Few presents a new answer to this question by applying the lens of economic analysis to the key facts of fifteen formative centuries of Jewish history. Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein offer a powerful new explanation of one of the most significant transformations in Jewish history while also providing fresh insights into the growing debate about the social and economic impact.

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All this, even before being nominated in 1993 to become the second woman on the Court, where her crucial decisions and dissents are still making history. Intimately, personally told, this biography offers unprecedented insight into a pioneering life and legal career whose profound mark on American jurisprudence, American society, and our American character and spirit will reverberate deep into the twenty-first century and beyond.

Elizabeth Caldwell and Donald Yates, When Scotland was Jewish; DNA evidence, archaeology , analysis of migrations and Public and family records show Twelfth Century Semitic roots. HIS HER

The popular image of Scotland is dominated by widely recognized elements of Celtic culture. But a significant non-Celtic influence on Scotland’s history has been largely ignored for centuries? This book argues that much of Scotland’s history and culture from 1100 forward is Jewish. The authors provide evidence that many of the national heroes, villains, rulers, nobles, traders, merchants, bishops, guild members, burgesses, and ministers of Scotland were of Jewish descent, their ancestors originating in France and Spain.

Much of the traditional historical account of Scotland, it is proposed, rests on fundamental interpretive errors, perpetuated in order to affirm Scotland’s identity as a Celtic, Christian society. A more accurate and profound understanding of Scottish history has thus been buried.

The authors’ wide-ranging research includes examination of census records, archaeological artifacts, castle carvings, cemetery inscriptions, religious seals, coinage, burgess and guild member rolls, noble genealogies, family crests, portraiture, and geographic place names.

Elisabeth Gallas, A mortuary of books; the rescue of Jewish Culture after the Holocaust HOL GAL

The astonishing story of the efforts of scholars and activists to rescue Jewish cultural treasures after the Holocaust.

In March 1946 the American Military Government for Germany established the Offenbach Archival Depot near Frankfurt to store, identify, and restore the huge quantities of Nazi-looted books, archival material, and ritual objects that Army members had found hidden in German caches. These items bore testimony to the cultural genocide that accompanied the Nazis' systematic acts of mass murder. The depot built a short-lived lieu de memoire—a "mortuary of books," as the later renowned historian Lucy Dawidowicz called it—with over three million books of Jewish origin coming from nineteen different European countries awaiting restitution.

A Mortuary of Books tells the miraculous story of the many Jewish organizations and individuals who, after the war, sought to recover this looted cultural property and return the millions of treasured objects to their rightful owners. Some of the most outstanding Jewish intellectuals of the twentieth century, including Dawidowicz, Hannah Arendt, Salo W. Baron, and Gershom Scholem, were involved in this herculean effort. This led to the creation of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Inc., an international body that acted as the Jewish trustee for heirless property in the American Zone and transferred hundreds of thousands of objects from the Depot to the new centers of Jewish life after the Holocaust. The commitment of these individuals to the restitution of cultural property revealed the importance of cultural objects as symbols of the enduring legacy of those who could not be saved. It also fostered Jewish culture and scholarly life in the post war world.

Luca Crippa and Maurizio Onnis, Auschwitz photographer HOL CRI

The extraordinary true story of Wilhelm Brasse, the Auschwitz prisoner whose photographs exposed the atrocities of the Holocaust and then helped to convict the Nazis at the Nuremberg Trials. When Germany invaded Wilhelm Brasse's native Poland in 1939, he was asked to swear allegiance to Hitler and join the Wehrmacht. He refused. He was deported to Auschwitz concentration camp as political prisoner number 3444. A trained portrait photographer, he was ordered by the SS to record the inner workings of the camp. He began by taking identification photographs of the prisoners as they entered the camp, went on to capture the criminal medical experiments of Josef Mengele, and also recorded executions. Between 1940 and 1945, Brasse took around 50,000 photographs of the horror around him. He took them because he had no choice. Eventually, Brasse's conscience wouldn't allow him to hide behind his camera. First he risked his life by joining the camp's Resistance movement, faking documents for prisoners, trying to smuggle images to the outside world to reveal what was happening. Then, when Soviet troops finally advanced on the camp to liberate it, Brasse refused SS orders to destroy his photographs. 'Because the world must know,' he said.

Jan Eliasberg, Hannah's war; a novel F ELI

A "mesmerizing" re-imagining of the final months of World War II, Hannah's War is an unforgettable love story about an exceptional woman, and the dangerous power of her greatest discovery (Kate Quinn, author of *The Alice Network*) In 1945, Hannah Weiss, a Jewish-Austrian scientist, is removed from her laboratory at the Los Alamos National Lab and taken to Leavenworth Prison for interrogation. Major Jack Delaney, a rising star in the shadowy world of military intelligence, is convinced that someone in the United States has been sharing information with the Nazi party. The captivating, raven-haired, female scientist in New Mexico is his primary suspect.

Across the globe, countries are racing to perfect the atomic bomb—a weapon powerful enough to stop WWII, and, perhaps, all future wars. But for Hannah, who has been sending mysterious postcards to a contact still in Germany, the trouble is just beginning. As Jack questions Hannah about her involvement with the infamous Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin ten years earlier, and her apparently friendly relationships with high-ranking members of the Nazi party, he slowly becomes seduced by her intelligence and quiet confidence. Is Hannah a Nazi spy, or is she protecting a far more personal and dark secret of her own? When Jack finally uncovers the truth about her life in Berlin before the war, Hannah must compromise her political allegiance, and choose between two lovers, and two versions of history.

Joseph Siegman, Jewish sports legends; the international Jewish sports Hall of Fame Fifth Edition SPO SIE

Following the 1972 Olympics one sportswriter referred to Mark Spitz, winner of seven gold medals, as “the first great Jewish athlete.” He couldn’t have been more wrong. As Jewish Sports Legends shows, Jews have excelled at athletics for centuries. This engaging volume illuminates the lives and unforgettable accomplishments of Jews in virtually every major sport played worldwide. Baseball stars Sandy Koufax and Hank Greenberg, basketball’s Red Auerbach and Dolph Schayes, and football’s Sid Luckman and Marv Levy are only a few notable examples.

With photographs accompanying almost every sports personality, this fifth edition introduces some famous and some not-so-famous Jewish sports greats throughout history. More than eighty new entries have been added to the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame since 2005, among them Lyle Alzado, Max Baer, Ira Berkow, Kenny Bernstein, Sasha Cohen, Shawn Green, Donna Geils Orender, Aly Raisman, and Bud Selig. While most of those profiled are professional sport champions and Olympic gold medalists, the book also features great coaches, officials, journalists, and other significant contributors in every major sport.

Michael Posner Leonard Cohen; Untold Stories, the early years. BIO COH

The extraordinary life of one of the world’s greatest music and literary icons, in the words of those who knew him best.

Poet, novelist, singer-songwriter, artist, prophet, icon—there has never been a figure like Leonard Cohen. He was a true giant in contemporary western culture, entertaining and inspiring people everywhere with his work. From his ground breaking and bestselling novels, *The Favourite Game* and *Beautiful Losers*, to timeless songs such as “Suzanne,” “Dance Me to the End of Love,” and “Hallelujah,” Cohen is a cherished artist. His death in 2016 was felt around the world by the many fans and followers who would miss his warmth, humour, intellect, and piercing insights.

Leonard Cohen, *Untold Stories* chronicles the full breadth of his extraordinary life. The first of three volumes—*The Early Years*—follows him from his boyhood in Montreal to university, and his burgeoning literary career to the world of music, culminating with his first international tour in 1970.

Through the voices of those who knew him best—family and friends, colleagues and contemporaries, rivals, business partners, and his many lovers—the book probes deeply into both Cohen’s public and private life. It also paints a portrait of an era, the social, cultural, and political revolutions that shook the 1960s.

In this revealing and entertaining first volume, bestselling author and biographer Michael Posner draws on hundreds of interviews to reach beyond the Cohen of myth and reveal the unique, complex, and compelling figure of the real man.