

## BETH EL LIBRARY – NEW AND INTERESTING TITLES – JANUARY 2012

**The Case for Jewish Peoplehood; Can We Be One?** by Dr. Erica Brown and Dr. Misha Galperin. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2009. **303 B** The authors, a former Soviet Jew and the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, believe, that despite quite different backgrounds, they each have a strong commitment to Jewish peoplehood. They believe there is a deep need to talk about what being Jewish means, and they find that there are many meanings. Whatever definition of peoplehood they offer cannot appeal only to the religiously observant, or to those who are cultural Jews or to those who are Zionists or to those who serve Jewish institutions. “It has to be more and it can be more.” The book has special relevance for those participating in Rabbi Thomas’ Hartman lecture program.

**Islamic Imperialism: A History**, by Efraim Karsh. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. **297 K** Karsh challenges many of our ideas about the Middle East and the nature of Islam. Conventionally the Middle East has been seen as the long-suffering victim of foreign powers, especially Western imperialists. Karsh disagrees, seeing that the Middle East experience is the culmination of longtime trends and behavior, chiefly the region’s imperial tradition. The institutions of empire originated in Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Iran, etc. With the fall of European empires, formerly subject peoples developed their distinct brands of nationalism. Conversely the Arab-speaking populations of the Middle East were indoctrinated to consider themselves members of “One Arab Nation.” This book offers a thorough analysis of Muslim history and culture in the modern world.

**Judaism and the World’s Religions.** by David Bamberger. West Orange, N.J.: Behrman House, 1987. **290 B** This is a good beginner text for Jews interested in some basic information about the other world religions. There are chapters on Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism. Bamberger has included interesting material on “Challenges to Religion,” and a final chapter on “What Makes Judaism Special?”

**Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1; The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939**, by Saul Friedlander. New York: HarperCollins, 1997. **940.4 F** A major historian takes on the challenge of plowing through the events of the Nazi era, excavating and interpreting the collective past while also confronting decisive elements of our own lives. Many researchers disagree on how to define the Nazi regime, how to show its utter criminality and its utter ordinariness, and how to place it in a wider context. Friedlander establishes a readable chronological account, in which the policies of the perpetrators, the attitudes of surrounding society, and the world of the victims can be addressed in an integrated way.

**Not Me; A Novel**, by Michael Lavigne. New York: Random House, 2005. **Fiction Lav** The author presents a strong first novel about the bond between a father and son in a suspenseful story full of family secrets, questions of identity

and moral issues. The father Heschel Rosenheim is a Holocaust survivor suffering from Alzheimer's disease. He hands his son a box of journals which reveal a shocking life... Michael must come to grips with his father's past, figure out where the truth lies and determine his own identity.

**Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Geniza**, by Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole. New York: Chicken Books, 2011. **902.2 H**. About 120 years ago, a cache of manuscripts, mostly fragments, was discovered in the storeroom ("Geniza") of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo. The documents had been deposited there during the 10<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, to preserve and protect the sacred, to conceal what may have been viewed as subversive, and/or to preserve what was no longer useable. This book reads like a novel, as it discusses the individuals who were involved in the discovery, recovery or study of the contents of the Geniza. Discussed is Solomon Schechter, who found himself (in May 1896) at the dining-room table in Cambridge, England, of two widowed twins who invited him to inspect pieces of rag paper and parchment they had purchased during their travels. With that meeting, began the discovery of the Geniza, and it is largely the process of that discovery that this book deals.

**The Torah; A Women's Commentary**. Edited by Dr. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss. New York: Women of Reform Judaism, URJ Press, 2008. **Reference 222 E** From its inception, this book was envisioned as a contemporary Torah commentary written by Jewish women. *Contemporary, Jewish* and *women* are three words which reflect its guiding principles. Women scholars, clergy and poets bring new insights and questions to Jewish sacred tradition while placing their ideas within the ongoing stream of Jewish interpretation. Scholarly approaches such as literary criticism, historical analysis, comparative linguistics, philology, archaeology, anthropology and sociology are applied to clarify and explain the Torah. The women address many issues of concern in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and relate how ancient texts connect to our modern lives.