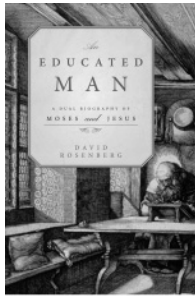


unexpected and intriguing similarities, Kamenetz moves from comparison to contrast and back again, in several cycles, finally putting into focus the unique qualities of each of his subjects, and something of his own unique qualities as well.

Burnt Books is a fascinating and intellectually challenging journey of heart and mind. Bibliography, notes. PKJ



AN EDUCATED MAN: A DUAL BIOGRAPHY OF MOSES AND JESUS

David Rosenberg
Counterpoint Press, 2010. 276 pp. \$26.00
ISBN: 978-1-58243-552-7

In *An Educated Man*, scholar David Rosenberg examines the lives of Moses and Jesus simultaneously, drawing parallels between the education, development, family lives, and leadership of the two men.

Drawing on textual evidence from the Old and New Testaments, as well as historical sources, Rosenberg shows that both men were educated, both encountered opposition from their communities, and both, as we know, became great leaders nonetheless.

What Rosenberg shows, which most accounts of these two men don't even attempt, is the extent to which Moses and Jesus drew on their respective educations to inform their sermons. Rosenberg argues that Moses, having been educated among the royalty of Egypt, was heavily influenced by Egyptian medical litera-

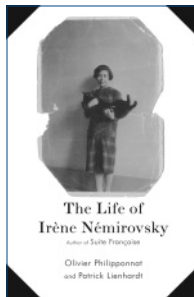
...examines the lives of Moses and Jesus...drawing parallels between the education, development, family lives, and leadership of the two men.

ture and that this education is reflected in Moses' own words and thoughts. Jesus, in turn, knew the Five Books of Moses and, as Rosenberg argues, owed much of his thinking to the knowledge he gained from the Old Testament, and from Moses in particular.

Rosenberg convincingly argues that the value in studying these parallels, and in studying the Bible in general, is that without this understanding we can't properly understand modern civilization. Humanity has been so

influenced by Judeo-Christian thinking that without understanding the source of this thinking we cannot properly understand who we are.

The book is thick with biblical examples and the 134-page chapter covering the dual biographies would have benefitted from further division into smaller chapters. The book is part biography and part biblical scholarship, with a brief introduction into some necessary biblical vocabulary. Overall Rosenberg offers an interesting coupling of two of the most influential lives in our collective history. Bibliography, index. AB



THE LIFE OF IRÈNE NÉMIROVSKY: 1903-1942

Olivier Philipponnat and Patrick Lienhardt; Euan Cameron, trans.

Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. 448 pp. \$36.00
ISBN: 978-0-307-39762-1

Originally published in French in 2007, Olivier Philipponnat and Patrick Lienhardt's biography of Irène Némirovsky explores the author's life from her childhood to her deportation to Auschwitz from Issy-l'Éveque, France, in 1942. From her family's flight from Russia, to her tenuous relationship with her mother, her literary training at the Sorbonne, and her husband's frantic attempts to discover her whereabouts during the war, Philipponnat and Lienhardt examine the connection between Némirovsky's personal life and her writing, as well as the more controversial aspects of her career, from her literary representation of Jews to her publication in journals such as *Gringoire*. The work is written in a literary style, and the authors drew on Némirovsky's novels and short stories, her notebooks, and other archival sources that are housed at the Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine, as well as interviews and reviews in their research. Unlike other recent works on Némirovsky, Philipponnat and Lienhardt's biography does not deal with the post-war reception of *Suite Française*. Instead, by leaving off after her death, they invite the reader to contemplate the complexities of Némirovsky's life, her writing, her legacy, and the period in which she lived. SJ



THE REBBE: THE LIFE AND AFTERLIFE OF MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON

Samuel Heilman and Menachem Friedman
Princeton University Press, 2010. 343 pp. \$29.95
ISBN: 978-0-691-13888-6

This fascinating book by two outstanding scholars of contemporary Jewry is a must-read for those interested in the Lubavitch movement, whether insiders or outsiders.

This book is not simply a biography of a man or even a Rebbe; it is also a social history of a movement. It covers the period from the arrival in America of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Yosef Yitzchok, in 1940 through the ascension and leadership of Menachem Mendel, with particular attention to the focus of both these leaders on "the coming of the messiah." It provides an up-close look at Menachem Mendel as a cultured and educated young man and traces his transformation into the Rebbe of Lubavitch. The authors suggest that his early experience made him uniquely capable of leading his followers in the last half of the 20th century, turning a small Chassidic community into a world recognized Chassidic movement.

Two issues are explored in detail; 1) changes in the Rebbe from a cosmopolitan participant in Berlin and Paris to, however reluctantly, a leader of a Chassidic community who never left Crown Heights, yet became a world leader, and for some, the Messiah, and 2) changes in this community from the typical pattern of chassidic withdrawal from the world to involvement and even immersion in the world.

The authors use two paradigms to gather data and explain their findings; one is a focus on internal Jewish and particularly Lubavitch events, documents, and interviews. The other is a concern with events in the larger society and their impact on the movement and on the Rebbe. It is a difficult task they have set for themselves, for their work describes not only actions, but mindsets, attitudes, and emotions. And, indeed there will be those who will have other views of these personal reflections.

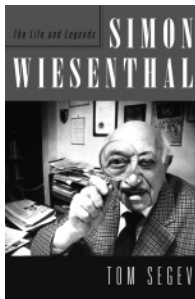
It is puzzling that the authors discuss neither the Crown Heights riots of 1991, nor the movement of return to tradition which occurred in the same period, as both had a substantial impact on the Lubavitch community. Nonetheless, the facts

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marshaled and the theories employed are persuasive. The outside factors impacting on the development of the Lubavitch outreach programs are similar to those that have affected the movement of return to tradition, and similar importance is placed on religious ritual or action, rather than belief, in creating and developing commitment.

The book is scholarly in approach and thoroughly footnoted. Overall, it examines a mystery that compels the reader's interest. Glossary, illustrations, index, notes. **MHD**



**SIMON WIESENTHAL:
THE LIFE
AND LEGENDS**

Tom Segev

Doubleday, 2010. 448 pp. \$32.50
ISBN: 978-0-385-51946-5

Segev, widely acclaimed for his coverage of Israeli history and politics, now offers readers a biography of Simon Wiesenthal covering both the man and the movement he created, Holocaust Studies. With access to a wide range of archives, including Wiesenthal's private papers, Segev has pieced together an enormously readable account of this unique man's life and legacy. While the saga of Wiesenthal's survival of the Nazi death camps has been told and retold, and the stories of how he tracked down various war criminals has been the stuff of novels and movies, Segev adds a vital dimension to our understanding by exploring the more controversial episodes—Wiesenthal's relationships with Bruno Kreisky and the Austrian Jewish establishment, his bewildering entanglement with Joachim Waldheim, his ambivalence towards Elie Wiesel, and his late-life relationship with Albert Speer. Segev explores both Wiesenthal's point-of-view and those of his detractors, not to arrive at a final verdict, but to understand Wiesenthal's approach to questions of responsibility, guilt, and the possibilities of forgiveness. Readers might expect to be awed by Wiesenthal's lifelong dedication to tracking down war criminals, especially without the aid of the internet. After reading Segev's account, however, they may realize something more—that this one man's insistence on the importance of memory, on the principle of individual responsibility, has shaped the post-Holocaust world for all of humanity. Index, notes. **BEB**



This Is a Soul
The Mission of Rick Hodes
Marilyn Berger

**THIS IS A SOUL:
THE MISSION
OF RICK HODES**

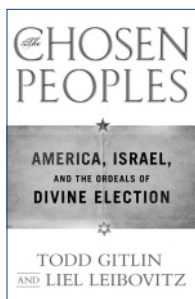
Marilyn Berger

William Morrow, 2010. 265 pp. \$25.99
ISBN: 978-0-06-175954-3

Sometimes chance encounters have the ability to transform our lives. One such occurrence forever altered the life of Marilyn Berger. Originally in Africa to write about Dr. Rick Hodes, *This Is a Soul* is her story about how her life is forever changed as it becomes intertwined with the poorest children of this continent.

Hodes has been in Ethiopia for 20 years, ministering to the sickest, most vulnerable children on earth. Originally drawn to Africa from suburban New York because of the famine, he eventually made it to Rwanda and then Ethiopia. He found his true calling, caring for children, at Mother Teresa's mission. His life is about what Yehudah haNasi describes as the proper path that a person should choose, performing both "minor" and "major" mitzvot and seeking no financial reward. His approach to medical care is often lost in western society, as he tends to the soul as well as the flesh. Berger describes his story with warmth and humanity. Hodes's life serves as an inspiration to physicians and laymen alike, and the reader will find this volume an uplifting experience. **PMA**

CONTEMPORARY JEWISH LIFE



**THE CHOSEN
PEOPLES: AMERICA,
ISRAEL, AND THE
ORDEALS OF DIVINE
ELECTION**

Todd Gitlin and Liel Leibovitz

Simon and Schuster, 2010. 272 pp. \$26.00
ISBN: 978-1-4391-3235-7

Todd Gitlin and Liel Leibovitz thought at first that the whole notion of chosenness is a "scourge." Then they took a close look at the

dual histories of the Jews' covenant with God and America's sense of its own special destiny. With mingled regret and respect they came to the conclusion that the idea won't go away, but they are still uneasy about it.

That ambivalence pervades their book. Starting with Abraham, they wonder why God picked him to be the progenitor of His Chosen People and what that means. Reluctant to accept that Abraham's obedience or piety might explain it, unsatisfied that God's ways may be mysterious, Leibovitz and Gitlin find an explanation they prefer: "to bring righteousness into the world."

Universal values and personal decisions are their touchstone. When they cite a proof-text (Genesis 18:19) that says Abraham "will command his children and his household after him," they see its significance not for Abraham's descendants but for the world. And they elide the language of commandment into personal initiative and "righteousness," as in Abraham's challenge to God at Sodom. "He is the model of an Enlightenment hero," they say admiringly, "in his willingness to stand up for people who are not his own flesh and blood." To Gitlin and Leibovitz such Enlightenment values are the only way to justify chosenness, which "cannot come through a one-time command; it must be a two-sided process permitting dubious humans to take the initiative."

They count America's founders as Enlightenment men—deists who, in citing the Biblical Israelites as their model for America's destiny, deliberately echoed the language of the religious movement known as the First Great Awakening without embracing it themselves. The Zionist leadership likewise was secular, and similarly used the religious language of chosen nationhood and redemption. The parallel breaks down, though, because the United States has always fundamentally subscribed to European Enlightenment values, albeit with an overlay of millenarian rhetoric, while Israel's sense of being chosen has stayed stubbornly singular.

The return of the Temple Mount to Jewish hands for the first time in 1900 years made that even more apparent. For some Jews that event has transcendent and even messianic meaning—but only for Jews. While America's sense of divine mission evolved into a global quest for values like peace and justice, Israel had a new reason to believe its destiny is separate and distinct.

Leibovitz and Gitlin lament that "revolutionary universalism contracted into Manifest

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