

Halperin, Liora. *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920-1948.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. 313 pp. \$40.00. (9780300197488).

The role of Modern Hebrew in the formation of national identity and character is the focus of this provocative book. Through analyses of early twentieth-century documents, statistics, and media, the author presents the challenges and contradictions facing the “Zionist official discourse” to effect through language a unifying force within Mandate Palestine, a polyglot society pulled in myriad directions – class, gender, and ethnicity.

The author describes the zealous battles to suppress outside influences. The pursuit of vernacular Hebrew, in place of the ancient, became a religion in itself, with fluency a sort of secular piety; the prevalence of European tongues was anathema to purist, Zionist ideology and its promotion of the farmer-warrior. Therefore, Yiddish, the language of the Old World peddlers, was frowned on for its associations with Diaspora passivity and vulgarity. Arabic was even more problematic – authentically Semitic, yet not Jewish; its speakers would be further separated. Within the British administration, Hebrew was eventually integrated. Yet, in spite of cultural wars in immigrant homes, offices, schools, coffeehouses, and cinemas, efforts to suppress foreign languages proved unsuccessful within the emerging Israeli state. Multilingual knowledge became crucial both for international trade and business, and for military security and intelligence. The author’s conclusion: Modern Hebrew was a partial victor. It prevailed among the post-1948 population, yet reconciled with other languages, out of necessity.

Well researched and argued, this book sheds light on a refreshingly new topic. Recommended for all college libraries with Israel/Middle East collections.

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Harran, Don. *Three Early Modern Hebrew Scholars on the Mysteries of Song.* Leiden: Brill (Studies in Jewish History and Culture; 47), 2015. 396 pp. \$135.00. (9789004283022).

This book is an exhaustive examination of three treatises on music by three Renaissance Italian scholars: Judah Moscato, Leon Modena, and Abraham Portaleone. Moscato discusses music from a spiritual viewpoint, Modena considers the propriety of art music in the synagogue service, and Portaleone explains his theories about music in the First Temple. In addition to the translations, each treatise is included in its original Hebrew. In the introductions the author provides for each treatise, the footnotes cite the Hebrew for each work. In contrast, for every musical term in the actual translations of the works, the author provides a note giving the transliteration of the Hebrew term for the original. This is a very useful and insightful way to demonstrate the differences between Hebrew and English regarding musical terminology, although it’s curious that transliteration rather than printed Hebrew was used for the translations. Harrán’s approach is thorough, meticulous, and very readable. His knowledge of this subject is impressive. In addition to a lengthy bibliography and an index, he provides a lexicon of the Hebrew musical terms that he noted in his translations (again, transliterated), and an index of the biblical, rabbinic, and classical sources that the three writers used. Books on Jewish musical theory are rare, and this is an excellent addition to the corpus. Recommended for academic libraries with comprehensive collections focused on Jewish music.

Beth Dwoskin, Library Committee Chair, Beth Israel Congregation, Ann Arbor, MI

Hattin, Michael. *Joshua: The Challenge of the Promised Land.* Maggid Books 2014, 296 pp. \$24.95. (9781592643042).

This is another excellent book in the Maggid Book Studies in Tanach series that focuses on the biblical book of Joshua. The book of Joshua is a continuation of the Pentateuch and recounts the story of the Israelite entry into the Land of Israel. Like other books in the series, it is intended as a study guide to the biblical text. The chapters in the book follow the biblical text by chapter and verse; thus, for example, Chapter 1 is titled “Transitions” and comments upon Joshua Chapter 1, verses 1-9. In