

Blenkinsopp, Joseph. *Abraham: The Story of a Life*. Eerdmans, 2015. 256 pp. \$29.00. (9780802872876).

Abraham: The Story of a Life is written more as a running commentary on the biblical character of Abraham than as a traditional academic book. The commentary is not presented in a verse by verse manner; instead the book is arranged story by story. The author's approach is labeled as "discursive commentary" which he defines as grounded in the historical-critical method while still incorporating issues of theological and human interest.

Blenkinsopp separates his book into 10 chapters with an introduction that discusses the treatment of Abraham in the historical and prophetic books, as well as an examination of how the story of Abraham can be viewed as a response to the destruction of the first temple. Abraham's journey to Israel and specifically to Shechem and Beit El correspond to the role those cities play for the Jews decades after the destruction and exile. The author also asserts in this introduction that Jacob should be viewed as the "foundational ancestor" and that his stories are chronologically prior to the stories of Abraham.

The ten chapters in the book recount individual stories in the life of Abraham: his journey to Canaan, the covenant of circumcision, and the marriage of Rebekah and Isaac, are just three examples of the topics covered. In the epilogue, Blenkinsopp, himself a Christian, discusses his views on Abraham and Christianity: how Abraham appears in early Christian thought and what Abraham may mean for Christians today.

Although this book is aimed at the academic reader of the Bible, it is free from academic jargon and does not require a deep background in biblical scholarship. The book will be of interest to Jews and Christians alike.

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Buergenthal, Thomas. *A Lucky Child: A Memoir of Surviving Auschwitz as a Young Boy*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2015 (expanded edition). 260 pp. \$16.00. (9780316339186).

In this fluid memoir, Thomas Buergenthal recalls his turbulent youth and an encounter with a Gypsy fortuneteller, who deemed him "*ein Glückskind*—a lucky child." Indeed, luck seemed to carry him. At Auschwitz, aged ten, he was removed from the transport to the gas chambers and placed with the adults by declaring to the officer, "I can work!" He also escaped the selections of Dr. Mengele. He was fed and sheltered at the camp hospital by a Norwegian, a future founder of UNICEF, who later taught him that hate and revenge must be overcome in order to rebuild a better world. This philosophy steered Buergenthal toward legal work at the International Court in The Hague, commitment to social justice, and fight against genocide.

He writes his story "as I remember living it as the child I was, not as an old man reflecting on that life." This accounts for the sketchiness in some parts, although he describes camp and ghetto conditions. He even instills a youthful *naviété*—observing the behavior of fellow inmates and wondering how some, like the Kapos, might have been decent outside of the camp experience. Yet there is no sentimentality, rage, or melodrama—only quiet analysis.

A revision of the original 2009 edition, this book includes, in addition to a new afterword, corrected information about the author's parents' experiences—his mother's postwar search for him and the place where his father perished. Mother and son reunited in a Polish orphanage, where Thomas was residing after a stint as a child soldier and mascot (the cover photo shows him in Polish Army uniform). A Reader's Guide is also supplied. Readable and inspiring, this book is recommended for all libraries with Holocaust collections.

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