

## REVIEWS OF TITLES FOR ADULTS

Bruck, Edith. *Lost Bread*. Translated by Gabriella Romani and David Yanoff. Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2023. 142 pp. (9781589881785) PBK.

This book is a strong message about the power of memory and human resilience. Because of books like *Lost Bread*, the story of the Holocaust will never be forgotten. Bruck's memoir offers a detailed and harrowing account of day-to-day life in and after the war—the starvation rations prisoners were fed, the freezing barracks in which they slept, the days spent as slave laborers, and the constant brutality of the guards and even fellow prisoners and more in the aftermath.

The message is lucid: there will be suffering—it's how we react to suffering that counts and we always retain the ability to choose our attitude."

**Rabbi Dr. Moshe P. Weisblum,**  
Faculty, Washington University of Science and Technology



Cohen, Richard W. *Haftarah and its Parsha*. New York: Mosaica Press, 2022. 209 pp. \$26.12 (9781957579337) HC.

There is a perennial question about the relationship between *Torah* and *haftarah* readings. This short book will help begin to unravel that connection.

The volume is divided into sections by books of the *Torah*, and then by *haftarah*. Each essay has a title (*Bo*—"Remember This;" *Shelach*—"Hanging by a Thread"). Each one is four or five pages long, and describes both the *Torah* reading and the *haftarah* portion, before linking them. The text is easy to follow. Regrettably, there are no references to talmudic or later commentaries, and no index. The reader is left to find further relationships. Also, it does not include the Holy Day readings or the books related to the various other festivals (Ruth, Esther, etc.)

Despite its deficiencies, Cohen's book will serve as an introduction to study of the *haftarah*. It can be used by newcomers to biblical analysis, and by adult *Torah* study participants and those wanting to learn beyond the weekly *parsha*. Its price makes it accessible for synagogues and schools.

**Fred Isaac,**  
Oakland, CA



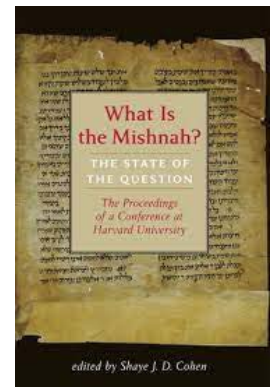
Cohen, Shaye J.D., editor, *What Is the Mishnah?: The State of the Question*. Boston: Harvard UP, 2023. Jewish Law and Culture Series. 544 pp. \$39.95 (9780674278776) HC.

The *Mishnah* is the first Rabbinic book, an expansive anthology of Jewish ritual law composed around 200CE. In January 2021, the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University and the Program on Jewish and Israeli Law at Harvard Law School co-sponsored a conference on the theme of "What is the *Mishnah*?" The Covid era zoom conference brought together leading scholars of the *Mishnah* to present papers on all aspects of this topic.

The book is subdivided into five sections with a series of essays in each section. Part I tackles the question of the *Mishnah* and its legal predecessors, including chapters detailing antecedents of the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Law, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the *Tosefta* (a compilation of Jewish oral law). Part II contains chapters contextualizing the *Mishnah* with then current Roman Law. Part III details different topics, styles and ways of reading the *Mishnah*, such as its rhetorical style, relationship to *Halacha* (Jewish law), attitude towards holiness or the *Mishnah's* philosophically "utopian" vision. Part IV focuses on the presentation of different groups discussed in the *Mishnah*, such as women, Priests, Gentiles and heretics. Part V turns to the reception and transmission of the *Mishnah*.

This is a must read for any scholars and students of the *Mishnah*. It contains twenty-two articles by respected academics within the field.

**David Tesler,**  
Efrat, Israel



Fox, Sandra. *The Jews of Summer: Summer Camp and Jewish Culture in Postwar America*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2023. 304 pp. \$28.00 (9781503633889) PBK.

Postwar America saw the rise of Jewish suburbia and the synagogue as a community center. The role of the summer camps is examined in this interesting book. Beginning with the roots in the early Protestant and Progressive movements, such as the Fresh Air reformers and the Boy Scouts, which advocated for the countryside to build strong, healthy city kids, the author asks, what made Jewish camps unique?



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Originally comprised of immigrants barred from Gentile counterparts, they developed into microsystems fueled by rabbis, educators, lay leaders, and journalists, sheltered and structured with sports, recreation, and socialization, and, above all, supported by parents ambivalent about affluence and anxious over assimilation and intermarriage.

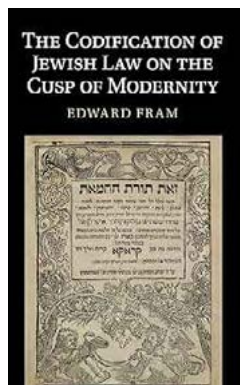
To the author, these camps reflected a “child-centered Judaism,” an extension of synagogue youth groups, sisterhoods, and nursery schools that tried to bolster religious and ethnic loyalty. Ashkenazim and their liberal movements (Reform, Conservative, Yiddishist, Zionist, Hebraist, Socialist), are the focus, although mention is made of the Modern Orthodox camps of Yeshiva University or Bnei Akiva, which integrated *Torah* law and practice into their activities. (Ultra-Orthodox and Sephardic camps are also mentioned, however briefly.) Each stream pushed its own ideology, and its own form of “positive” or “authentic” Judaism; some camps, stressing the emergent State of Israel, even simulated kibbutzim, although egalitarianism among the adolescent counselors heightened commitment to Western democracy. The Sabbath was acknowledged, if not fully observed; *Tisha B’Av*, the summer holiday, was commemorated through Holocaust or Temple imagery. The author also discusses coed dynamics, resulting in some romantic liaisons or awakenings.

But how successful were these camps in stemming the tide of secularization? The record here is ambivalent; attempts to impart heritage through Hebrew or Yiddish language immersion largely failed or faded, as did East European tradition. Despite attempts to reinforce Jewish identity, for example, importing Israeli counselors, Americanization became the norm. The author discusses the transformations following the radical trends of the 1960s onward (#MeToo, LGBT, and BDS) and the political shift toward Diaspora, instead of Zionist, activism. Well-researched, with some wry photos (e.g., counselor dressed up as David Ben Gurion), this book offers a nostalgic glimpse into a part of American-Jewish history. This title is suitable for synagogue and academic libraries with Judaic collections.

**Hallie Cantor,**  
*Yeshiva University, New York, NY*

Fram, Edward, *The Codification of Jewish Law on the Cusp of Modernity*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 2022. 325pp. \$99.99 (9781316511572) HC.

Professor Fram’s project in this book is clear with the very first sentence of his introduction: “in the mid-sixteenth century, three rabbis, one living in the Land of Israel, another in Poland, and a third in Lithuania, were independently trying to do what few had ever succeeded in doing: establish a single code of Jewish law.” For Fram, Yosef Caro (1488-1575), the Rabbi living in the Land of Israel, showed “prodigious learning and organizational strengths” in a previous work (the *Bet Yosef*) where he gathered the pertinent legal material, discussed it and our author under



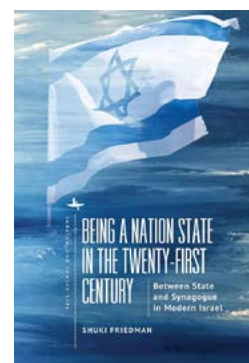
review came to this conclusion: the *Bet Yosef* “established Caro’s reputation and accelerated acceptance of his *Shulh an Arukh*.” In the next two chapters, Fram turns to Solomon ben Jehiel Luria (1510-1573 or 1574, the “Maharshal” from Poznan, Poland) and his “magnus opus,” the *Yam shel Shelomoh*. Luria never fully engaged with the *Shulh an Arukh* “even though he saw at least one part late in his life.” Unlike for Caro, for Luria, the reputation of a Rabbi was not “a basis for deciding the law ... the legal merits of arguments determined their valence, not someone’s name.”

Fully part of Fram’s presentation is the history of the printing and diffusion of the works of all three rabbis, who published where and why, when was a work written, and when it was published, and where and when it could have been seen by the other two. The third Rabbi, Moses ben Israel Isserles (approximately 1525-1572, the “Rema”) followed the same methodology as Caro of evaluating the valence of a past rabbinical authority; he showed great respect for Ashkenazi customs and the teachings of medieval Franco-Ashkenazi rabbis. Fram also notes that he had a “proclivity to stringency” in his decisions. For this reviewer, the hero of the book is Luria, qualified by Fram as “a legal maverick who engaged with the past and charted his own way forward.” *The Codification of Jewish law on the Cusp of Modernity* is well written, thoroughly researched, and has a serious prospect to become a classic on the topic in the English language.

**Roger S. Kohn,**  
*Silver Spring, MD*

Friedman, Shuki. *Being a Nation State in the Twenty-First Century: Between State and Synagogue in Modern Israel*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2023. Judaism and Jewish Life Series. 117 pp. \$129.00 (9798887190891) HC.

To the vast literature on the relationship of religion and state in Israel, Shuki Friedman adds a slim volume examining the changes in the “Status Quo” agreements on the relationship between religion and state, first formulated between Ben Gurion and the religious parties in 1948. The “Status Quo” stipulated that the framework of observance of the Sabbath, personal status in the areas of marriage, divorce, and conversion, and public standards of kashrut would be regulated by the rabbinate.



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