

Zipperstein, Steven J. *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History*. New York: Liverlight, 2018. 261 pp. \$27.95. (9781631492693).

On April 6, 1903, the Moldavian town of Kishinev broke out in a savage attack on the Jewish populace, resulting in 49 deaths, numerous rapes and injuries, and destroyed property. This pogrom, immortalized in Bialik's poem and Israeli textbooks, became an icon for later, and far worse, tragedies of the twentieth century. The author analyzes this horrific event based on new evidence and provides extensive detail and background—Jewish and Gentile life in Bessarabia, frequent hostile interactions, and that region's poverty and backwardness. The impact of the pogrom was enormous, becoming, as the author writes, "the only significant event embraced by all political sectors of the severely fractured Russian-Jewish scene." News reached worldwide audiences, shocking and humiliating the Tsarist regime. Reactions ranged from Zionists who condemned the victims for passivity (although many did fight back), to African-Americans who were galvanized into organizing a civil rights movement and eventual formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Justification for the attack led to the publication, several months later, of the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* by local anti-Semites, who viewed that area of the Russian pale as the center of a "vast international Jewish conspiracy." Included are photographs, eyewitness accounts (some quite lurid), and sensationalism from contemporary political and literary figures. These included not only Jews, but Irish nationalists and muckrakers whose heightened sympathy for the oppressed paralleled this tragedy to partisan struggles. In spite of the sobering subject matter, this book has a highly wry and breezy style that makes it not only riveting but appealing to general readers in public, as well as Judaica libraries.

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Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

Alexander, V.S. *The Taster: A Novel*. New York: Kensington, 2018. 320 pp. \$19.95. (9781496712271).

V.S. Alexander, author of *The Magdalen Girls*, gives readers a glimpse into a little-known aspect of World War II in this novel based on historical resources. In 1943, Magda Ritter's parents, concerned for her safety during the war, send her to live with relatives in Bavaria. They are Nazi supporters who expect her to do her patriotic duty. The civil service assigns her to Hitler's mountain retreat, the Berghof, high in the mountains. The beautiful surroundings provide a sharp contrast to the sinister events that unfold there. Magda learns that she will be a taster, sampling Hitler's food to make sure that no one has poisoned him. The work is dangerous, but she is in a better situation than the rest of the civilian population. She must remain quiet about her growing misgivings concerning the war. Falling in love with a young SS officer involved in the resistance will draw her into a plot that will threaten her safety while providing a chance at freedom and vengeance. The author captures the bleak atmosphere and desperation of war along with the courage of the resisters. This is an excellent choice for public libraries and synagogue libraries that collect fiction. The presentation of moral dilemmas offers wonderful discussion opportunities for book clubs.

Barbara Bibel, Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA

Gabin, Jean S. *The Paris Photo: A Novel*. Chapel Hill: Wisdom House, 2018. 494 pp. \$18.99. (9780692097519).

In 1943, Ben Gordon is a young man from Brooklyn serving as a postal clerk in the United States Army. His assignment is to organize the postal service for the troops in Paris. He has never been abroad and finds Paris fascinating despite the ravages of war. Before he left New York, a young French woman who comes to the post office asks him to check on her cousins in Paris if he gets there. Ben finds them and, as a result, learns first-hand about the plight of French Jews during the war. Americans, even

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