



## Association of Jewish Libraries

*Leadership for Jewish literacy, libraries, and librarians*

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### ***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:***

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The Research and Special Libraries Division (R&S) of the Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL) is very pleased to announce the winners of its 2005 Judaica Reference and Bibliography Awards.

These awards, sponsored respectively by Dr. Greta Silver of New York City and Eric Chaim Kline of Los Angeles will be presented at the banquet at the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention of the Association, which will take place on Tuesday evening, June 20<sup>th</sup> at the Hyatt Regency Cambridge in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

This year, we have several breakthroughs: for the first time ever, we have selected titles in each category—two bibliographies and one reference work—to receive honorable mentions from among the many excellent works we reviewed; also, we have our first Hebrew-language Reference Award winner, which also marks our first award in this category to be published in Israel in any language; and the first German-language winner in any category—the Bibliography Award—which is also our initial winner in this category to be published in Germany—you would have to go back almost a quarter of a century—when the first R&S Award was given—to find the only other imprint—*Josephus and Modern Scholarship, 1937-1980* by Louis H. Feldman (Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1984)—published in Germany to win one of our awards.

On behalf of the members of AJL, we congratulate the winners on their valuable contributions to the fields of Judaica reference and bibliography and thank the donors, Eric Kline and Greta Silver, for their generous support. We look forward to the winners and/or their representatives joining us in person at the awards ceremony.

This year's winners are:

**Reference Award:**

*Leksikon ha-sipur ha-hasidi* / Gedalyah Nigal. (Jerusalem: ha-Makhon le-heker ha-sifrut ha-hasidit, 765 [2005]).

This comprehensive Hebrew-language compilation embraces a range of topics in Hasidic literature including people (authors of, and characters in, tales), ritual concepts and comportment, places, and works (monographs, stories, commentaries, etc.). The entries briefly summarize the tales and reference the sources in anthologies, collections, and other works. Besides the main alphabetical listing that constitutes the body of the work, there is a catalog of Biblical terms and names with an index of books by order of publication date and index of references to names found in the lexicon.

Although the lexicon is primarily destined for graduate libraries with strong Judaic collections or a focus on mysticism and/or folklore, Nigal's book may also prove to be of value to some users in yeshivas, large undergraduate libraries, and for accelerated high school students concentrating on specialized literary forms. In addition, *Leksikon ha-sipur ha-hasidi* may find a home on the shelves of synagogue libraries with significant *hasidut* collections. Beyond the principal targeted audience of scholars, Nigal makes Hasidic literature accessible to a larger audience of researchers with this major new work in a field that continues to grow in importance and attract wider scholarly attention.

**Gedalyah Nigal** is professor emeritus of Hebrew literature, Faculty of Jewish Studies, the Joseph and Norman Berman Department of Literature of the Jewish People at Bar-Ilan University. His research interests include Hasidic sermons and tales, Jewish philosophy, folk tales, supernatural motifs and themes, possession and exorcism, and transmigration. Among his more recent publications are *Rabi Levi Yitshak mi-Berditshov: sipurim* (Jerusalem: Mekhon "Kedushat Levi," 757 [1997]); and *Nashim ba-siporet ha-hasidit* (Jerusalem: ha-Makhon le-heker ha-sifrut ha-hasidit, 765 [2004 or 2005]).

**Bibliography Award**

*Sepulcra judaica: Bibliographie zu jüdischen Friedhöfen und zu Sterben, Begräbnis und Trauer bei den Juden von der Zeit des Hellenismus bis zur Gegenwart=Jewish Cemeteries, Death, Burial and Mourning from the Period of Hellenism to the Present: A Bibliography* / Falk Wiesemann (Essen: Klartext, 2005). First edition .

This substantial bibliography is certain to benefit historians and genealogical researchers in particular, but serve scholars in other fields, too, such as religious studies, folklore, art history, anthropology, archaeology, and more. The geographic scope is global and—as the title indicates—ranges from antiquity to the modern age. Subject coverage in the first

section includes death, burial, and mourning customs including burial societies; and the representation of headstone symbols such as the laver signifying Levites and broken saplings to indicate a life cut short in its prime. Also found here are martyrdom as embodied in the concept of *Kiddush ha-Shem* and the related topic of suicide.

Following the initial segment on burial and mourning practices are the considerably longer sections on cemeteries. These are arranged chronologically beginning with ancient Judea, then the medieval period, and the modern age. The breakdown is primarily geographical and alphabetical by all other localities with the exception that Jerusalem heads the list off Judean sites. The later eras are organized by continent and the countries within them. The name, geographic, subject, and author indexes at the back of the book as well as the detailed table of contents at the beginning are well organized, useful access points to this extensive and impressive bibliographic resource.

**Falk Wiesemann** is a professor of modern history at Heinrich Heine University in Dusseldorf. He specializes in local regional Jewish history and civilization in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Germany. His other publications include „*Kommt heraus und schaut*“ *Jüdische und christliche Illustrationen zur Bibel in alter Zeit* (Essen: Klartext, 2002); *Genizah: Hidden Legacies of the German Village Jews=Genisa: verborgenes Erbe der deutschen Landjuden* (Vienna: Bertelsmann, 1992); and *Bibliographie zur Geschichte der Juden in Bayern* (Munich; New York: K.G. Saur, 1989).

#### **HONORABLE MENTIONS:**

#### **Reference:**

*A Dictionary of German-Jewish Surnames* / Lars Menk  
(Bergenfield, New Jersey: Avotaynu, 2005).

Containing approximately 13,000 Jewish family names from current and former German-speaking territories of Central and Eastern Europe, this is another outstanding, meticulously researched Jewish genealogical resource from the leading publisher in the field, Avotaynu. In its 796 pages, the reader will find historic backgrounds and dates of origin of surnames, geographic provenances, etymologies, copious demographic and statistical data, and detailed descriptions in chapters on pre-17<sup>th</sup> century names. Other features include a brief history of Jewish surnames in Germany, Jewish population figures for Germany and Prussia from circa. 1800 and 1816, 1825, and 1925, the extensive list of towns with Jewish populations in the 19th century, and a good bibliography. This book is recommended for all libraries with serious genealogical collections and certainly for Jewish and academic libraries, as well as large synagogue, center, and school libraries.

**Lars Menk** is a genealogist and translator in Berlin. He earned a degree in communication science from the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts and has been studying genealogy and Jewish history since 1981. He began work on *A Dictionary of German-Jewish Surnames* in 1996.

**Bibliography:**

*Clavis Commentariorum of Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in Manuscript*  
/ Elisabeth Hollender (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005).

This is arguably the most highly specialized work among our cited selections published in 2005. Containing 979 pages, it is also one of the most exhaustive. This is without doubt, the most extensive and authoritative index to commentaries on manuscript *piyutim*, i.e., Hebrew liturgical poems. As such, this is truly a groundbreaking reference tool that opens doors to this vast collection of heretofore largely uncataloged critical works in manuscript. In constructing this bibliography, the author consulted 415 manuscripts. She lists these alphabetically by the city and its holding library before the main section containing the compendium of the commentaries, which number 18,025.

The key entry point and organizational structure for *Clavis Commentariorum* are the first lines of the *piyutim* in alphabetical order by the first word of the poems. Within each listed *piyut* commentary, there is further subdivision alphabetically by the particular rite of various communities such as Ashkenaz, Carpentras, Corfu, Romania, Rome, Tsarfat, and Yemen, as well as Karaite. The collection in which each manuscript commentary is held and its geographical location, along with page and manuscript citation, are given. Authors are provided when known. Bibliographical references are followed by indexes of poets and commentators leading to the specific commentary by number cited in the main body of the work. While its audience may be smaller than other titles cited this year, and this monumental reference tool belongs in all serious, scholarly collections that treat liturgy, the bibliography should also be an invaluable resource for literary, linguistic, and religious studies scholars at the graduate level and beyond.

**Elisabeth Hollender** is Heisenberg-Fellow of the German Research Foundation (DFG) at the Institute for Jewish Studies at the Heinrich-Heine-University Dusseldorf. Her main area of research is medieval Hebrew poetry and commentaries; she is also co-author of *Rabbinische Auslegungen zu Ester* (Brill, 2000). Currently she is finishing a monograph on medieval Ashkenazic *piyyut* commentary.

*The Jewish Story Finder: A Guide to 363 Tales, Listing Subjects and Sources* / Sharon Elswit. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2005).

In the “Foreword” to *The Jewish Story Finder*, Peninnah Schram sums up the necessity for this work. “*The Jewish Story Finder*,” the noted American story teller maintains, “...provides access to an enormous range of tales allowing for more extensive use of

stories everywhere...” Of the 363 stories indexed here, a wide variety of themes are covered such as “Tales for Festivals and Holidays” and “The Supernatural.” Each story lists descriptors, i.e., themes covered in the story cited, such as “change in attitude,” “wishes,” and “courage.” Each tale is summarized with at least one source—often several—and, in many cases, with variant versions. Each source is linked to the detailed bibliographic references near the end of the book, followed by an index of story titles.

This is truly a crossover resource. While it will find its main home in school, synagogue, and Jewish community center libraries and should be a resource for public library reader advisory services as well, this book should be included in seminary, undergraduate, and even graduate libraries. It is useful for library and information science collections in the latter where it should serve a myriad of purposes including as a reference work to support the curriculum of such programs as library and information studies.

**Sharon Elswit**, a children's librarian for over 30 years, is head librarian at Rodeph Sholom School in New York City. Her work has been published in *School Library Journal*, *Writer's Digest*, *AJL Newsletter*, and *Jewish Book World*. She learned to tell stories at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y Storytelling Center and now also performs as a guest in other schools and synagogues

Members of the R&S Judaica Reference and Bibliography Awards Committee:  
Elliot H. Gertel, (The University of Michigan), Cheryl Jaffee (Library and Archives Canada), Peggy K. Pearlstein (Library of Congress), James P. Rosenbloom (Brandeis University), Deborah Stern (Reconstructionist Rabbinical College).

Elliot H. Gertel

Chair, R & S Judaica Reference and Bibliography Awards Committee