

Books in brief

From life on a commune to the princess who makes more than reservations

Local History

The Love Israel Family: Urban Commune, Rural Commune, by Charles P. LeWarne (UW Press, paper, \$24.95). LeWarne traces the growth, development and collapse of the Seattle-based Love Israel family religious commune (or cult) in this fascinating history. Founded by Love Israel (born Paul Erdmann), the group started out in an old mansion on Seattle's Queen Anne Hill. The "family" eventually expanded its interest in farming to a piece of property outside the town of Arlington, but as their financial viability and leadership waned in the early part of this century, they were forced to sell that beautiful piece of land, now the home of the Union for Reform Judaism's Camp Kalsman. The author ties this commune's history in with the overall history of communes in the United States. The book ends with an afterword by Serious Israel, one of the group's early leaders.

Poetry

In My Bustan, by Michal Mahgerefteh (Poetica, paper, \$13). The poet writes about Jewish themes, about life and death, about Israel and about spirituality in straightforward and accessible language. Her language is most beautiful when she takes a biblical turn, reinterpreting the psalms in the final section of the book.

Music History

A Fine Romance, by David Lehman (Nextbook/Schocken, cloth, \$23). Lehman — editor of the Oxford Book of Poetry — takes us through a non-chronological history of American Jewish songwriters, the lives and times of those most famous names: Gershwin, Berlin, Hart, Hammerstein...Dylan, and

the influence they had on him and on our popular culture.

Geniuses of the American Musical Theater, by Herbert Keyser (Applause, cloth, \$29.99). A lovely coffee-table book with pictures and short biographies of 28 of America's most talented songwriters. Of course, they're not all Jewish, but yes, a lot of them are.

Family History

My Father's Paradise, by Ariel Sabar (Algonquin, paper, \$13.95). Journalist Sabar explains at the beginning of this family history that he spent most of his life trying to avoid learning anything about his father, Yona, who grew up speaking Aramaic in the Jewish section of the remote Kurdish village of Zakho. The birth of his first child caused him to do an about-face and he set about listening to his father — a professor of Near Eastern languages at UCLA — contacting relatives and visiting Israel. This resulting novel-like memoir traces Yona's story as it follows the arc of modern Middle East history.

Jacob's Cane, by Elisa New (Basic, cloth, \$27.95). New, a professor of English at Harvard, clung to her family history as her relatives recounted it. She dutifully quizzed her elderly great-aunts about her great-grandfather Jacob and her great-uncles, recorded their sto-

ries and considered her work done. But some of the stories didn't seem quite right and some of the facts didn't quite fit, and once her great-grandfather's cane resurfaced, even more questions arose. So New set off to discover the real history of her family from its roots in Lithuania (not Austria, as she'd been told), to London and Baltimore, and their rising and falling fortunes. New's lyrical style is engaging and almost poetic.

Cooking

Jewish American Food Culture, by Jonathan Deutsch and Rachel Saks, (University of Nebraska, paper, \$17.95). A small book that crams a large amount of information on the eating proclivities of American Jews into its pages. The dominant theme is Ashkenazic, but the authors also include Sephardic traditions, too. Recipes for basic holiday foods are included, along with an explanation of *kashrut*. This would serve as a good basic introduction, and possibly as a handbook for caterers.

Jewish Cooking Boot Camp, by Andrea Marks Carneiro and Roz Marks, (Three Forks, paper, \$19.95). Sub-titled "The Modern Girl's Guide to Cooking Like a Jewish Grandmother," this fun and sometimes funny compact cookbook and holiday guide promises (and seems to deliver) "a real-life approach to Jewish cooking." Along with traditional recipes like "Sweet and Tangy Brisket," and the less traditional "Ice Cream Pie," you can enjoy the authors' suggestions for updating your festivities, like their guide to hip hop music for Hanukkah.

Jewish Slow Cooker Recipes, by Laura Frankel (Wiley, cloth, \$24.95). The executive chef of Wolfgang Puck's kosher restaurant in Chicago reveals professional cooks' in-home secret: they love crock pots! This book, which is nice looking enough to make a great gift, is full of delicious-sounding recipes all designed to simmer in your slow cooker. Some are quintessentially simple and basic, others more complex. Some may call for exotic ingredients like harissa or smoked paprika. Study up before you dive into the actual cooking.

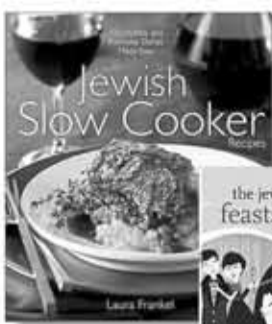
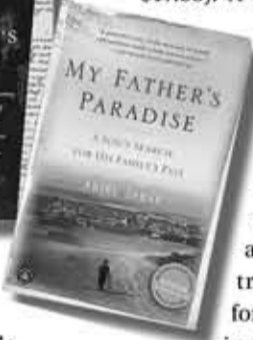
The Jewish Princess Feasts and Festivals, by Georgie Tarn and Tracey Fine (Sterling, cloth, \$19.95). Hmm...I thought the sexist and outdated joke was that Jewish princesses only made reservations. But it seems that in England, whence the authors hail, princesses scurry around the supermarket in high heels and perfectly coiffed hair, preparing holiday meals for massive numbers of friends and relatives, all while keeping a sense of humor! Organized by holidays and significant events, the recipes are all simple and fun, and the intervening essays are humorous. Of Esther, the authors say, "I bet she over-catered," and they discuss Passover Panic in a frank way.

Ethics

How to be a Mensch (& Not a Schmuck), by Michael Wex (Harper, cloth, \$24.99). It seems unlikely that anyone who's an actual schmuck would read this book. Those in the choir to whom the author is preaching, though, who would like to understand the religious and cultural sources of their "mensch-ness," will find copious references here from biblical, Talmudic, Mishnaic and folk sources. Along with all that comes the opportunity to feel smug about not being a schmuck. (Ooops! Not very mensch-like.)

Spirituality

Kabbalah for Inner Peace, by Gerald Epstein, M.D. (ACMI, cloth, \$20). Epstein is already an established expert in using guided imagery to heal both mental and physical ailments. The author of **Healing Visualizations**, here he draws on Kabbalah as a source of inspiration and guidance, providing practical exercises for relaxation and restoration, along with stories of successful treatments.



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