

American dictator, supported the project.) A bilingual (Spanish and English) exhibition held at The Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City accompanied the launching of the book.

Marion A. Kaplan, author of *Beyond Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, organizes her history into seven well defined chapters in chronological order. The photographs of life on the farm emphasize the role of agriculture in the endeavor. Indeed it was farming that was the driving force of the settlement, giving Jews a new vocation that enabled them to exist and even thrive in this haven. If the story of the Jews of Sosúa is a model for implementing a resettlement program, Marion Kaplan's concise, organized history serves as an ideal way of telling such a story. Bibliography, endnotes, index, photos, timeline. **SaMB**



IRAQ'S LAST JEWS: STORIES OF DAILY LIFE, UPHEAVAL, AND ESCAPE FROM MODERN BABYLON

Tamar Morad, Dennis Shasha & Robert Shasha, eds.

Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 220 pp. \$79.95
ISBN: 978-0-23060-810-8

While the history of Holocaust survivors has been extensively recorded, researched, and documented, the history of the Jews of Iraq has not had nearly the same exposure. So it's interesting to learn about various facets of Iraqi society and the colorful individuals who lived there. *Iraq's Last Jews* introduces us to some of them—a selection of prominent bankers, famous musicians, and average people who describe their lives in Iraq—what prompted them to leave their country of origin and how they fared in other countries after their departure.

With stories told in their own words or in the words of their children, *Iraq's Last Jews* is an intense piece of literature that feels well suited to academic research on the subject but doesn't qualify as a good bedtime story unless you have a keen interest in history, and in this history specifically. But it does cast a new light on Iraq and the country's recent past, as seen through the eyes of people who were ultimately forced to flee and make new lives abroad. **LK**



JEWISH PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: HOW A GENERATION OF SWASHBUCKLING JEWS CARVED OUT AN EMPIRE IN THE NEW WORLD IN THEIR QUEST FOR TREASURE, RELIGIOUS FREEDOM—AND REVENGE

Edward Kritzer

Doubleday, 2008. 324 pp. \$26.00
ISBN: 978-0-385-57398-2

With its alluring cover, *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean* promises a rollicking tale about lovable rogues who cherished the faith while collecting booty. It delivers that and more.

Driven to find new homes, Iberian Jews financed and accompanied the explorers, settling all over South America and the islands. As Christian converts they formed secretly allied Jewish communities.

In the Mediterranean they established large ghettos in major ports. Since money-changing was forbidden to Catholics and Moslems, Jews minted coins, collected taxes, made loans, and financed ventures.

Those who are chiefly familiar with Ashkenazi history will be painfully surprised to read of the Jewish experience in South America, with the pressure of the Inquisition and constant rejection by older settlers.

Kritzer concludes with this editorial comment: "Welcome us and we will make you rich." Suffused by the aura of the conquistadors, this book suggests class projects or gifts; libraries should also note that it has scholarly weight. **JW**



JEW AND SHOES

Edna Nahshon

Berg, 2008. 288 pp. \$34.95
ISBN: 978-1-84788-09-9

Would the wanderings of the Jews in the desert have been any less onerous if only they had had comfortable walking shoes? In *Jews and Shoes*, an anthology of articles examining the relationship between the chosen people and the, at times mundane, and at times holy indispensable item of dress, we learn of the role of the shoe

throughout Jewish history. From early biblical references, to the iconic sandal of the modern Jewish kibbutzniks, we learn that the shoe is indeed a reflection into the "soul" of the Jew.

From biblical times, shoes have played an integral role in the relationship of the chosen people to their God. It is the command that Moses remove his shoes that preceded God's conveying his plan to deliver his people out of slavery. The role of the shoe in Jewish traditional rituals is also examined in the course of several articles. The *halitzah* ceremony invoked in the book of Deuteronomy requires that a childless widow remove the shoe of the brother of her deceased husband if he refuses to marry her. The strange shoe shaped tombstones that appear throughout Jewish cemeteries in the Ukraine are viewed by the author as symbolic of the desire for messianic redemption.

Shoes have also been a way for Jews to distinguish themselves from the Gentile population amongst whom they lived for generations. Whether self imposed or forced upon them by the people in whose midst they dwelt, the disparity in footwear was used to mark the Jew as the "other." In Muslim lands, for instance, footwear and at times barefootness were imposed upon Jews to humiliate them as non-Muslims.

Memorialized in prose and literature, the Jewish cobbler of the European shtetl is an omnipresent figure throughout the period of the Diaspora. The uncertainty associated with earning a decent living is a theme present in all such literature. Yet, the humble shoemaker never bemoans his fate, but keeps working to the light of the dimming candle.

After reading *Jews and Shoes*, one will no longer view that essential part of the wardrobe as a mere item of necessity. One will marvel at the pivotal role the shoe has played in the psyche and community of the chosen people. **PL**



LANDMARK OF THE SPIRIT: THE ELDRIDGE STREET SYNAGOGUE

Annie Pollard; Bill Moyers, fwd.

Yale University Press, 2008. 192 pp. \$35.00
ISBN: 978-0300124705

In New York's Chinatown, surrounded by tenements and small shops, stands the