



HAPPY CHANUKAH



Jewish Books in Review

is a service of the JWB Jewish Book Council,
15 East 26th St., New York, N.Y. 10010

Suggested Books For Chanukah Giving

Heritage: Civilization and the Jews. By Abba Eban. Summit Books/Simon and Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. 1984. 354 pp. with many illustrations and index. \$32.95.



Reviewed by David M. Szonyi

A companion to the nine-part PSB series of the same title, *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews* attempts to provide an overview of more than 4,000 years of Jewish history in less than 340 pages. It largely succeeds, in part because of its organizing principle: Like Chaim Potok in *Wanderings*, Abba Eban focuses on cultural symbiosis, the interaction of Jewish with a politically, theologically or intellectually "dominant" culture, rather than on an internal, communal/institutional history, ala Salo Baron. This approach allows him to paint the Jewish story against the backdrop of world history, where it belongs, and thus make it easier for the general reader to grasp.

Eban also has a gift for succinctly and clearly stating complex ideas. He notes, for example, that the prophetic vision of a coming messianic age contrasted sharply with the stoic belief in a past "golden age," and that while Marcus Aurelius and other stoics were resigned to the idea of historical cyclicity, the prophets lay the foundation for the idea of progress by demanding human commitment to a better society in the here-and-now.

Heritage: Civilization and the Jews also relates the frequent convergence of Jewish and general history. Thus, the Magna Carta (1215), that landmark document of Western civil liberties, included a clause limiting the claims of Jewish moneylenders against the estates of landowners who had died in their debt.

Unlike many Israeli historians, Eban is careful not to provide short shrift to, or to stereotype, Diaspora history. To the contrary, he feels that "The Jews were exiled into survival...the diaspora became the essential precondition for the preservation of their creativity and identity.

Eban's telling of the Jews' epic story is considerably enhanced by the book's extensive and beautiful illustrations. Particularly striking are the reproductions of master works of Renaissance art based on biblical themes, paintings by Raphael of *Jacob's Dream* and by Caravaggio of *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, as well as a Donatello sculpture of *Jeremiah the Prophet* are among the many included here, an illumination of Pompey entering the Holy of Holies (from Josephus) by Fouquet, and a series of maps which are models of clarity and usefulness.

of the recrudescence of Jewish consciousness during the 1960s and '70s, or of the exit of a quarter-million Jews and the plight of the "prisoners of conscience" since 1970.

Similarly, a chapter on American Jewry alludes, as usual, to Haym Salomon and such entrepreneurs as Levi Strauss and Julius Rosenwald (a cofounder of Sears, Roebuck), but tells the reader next to nothing about the founding of the reform and conservative moments or the growth of the federation movement. Mordecai Kaplan, Abraham Joshua Heschel and J.B. Soloveitchik are among the names that go unmentioned. This is taking the "symbiotic" approach to Jewish history too far.

Even the concluding chapter on "Israel and World Jewry" limits mention of Menachem Begin's stunning 1977 electoral triumph, which ended thirty years of Labor rule, to a photo caption. In summing up the impressive achievements of the Jewish state during its first four decades, Eban also glosses over the tension between the two "two Israels" (Ashkenazic/Sephardic and religious/secular).

Finally, *Heritage* contains a number of errors which, in a work of this importance, should have been caught. To cite three: Walter Rathenau, the German-Jewish foreign minister, was assassinated in 1922, not 1920; Tel Aviv unmistakably is Israel's largest, not "second most populous city," as a photo caption has it; the Falashas, the recently-decimated black Jews of Ethiopia, number more like 20,000 than the 32,000 claimed by Eban.

Despite these flaws, the fluid writing and visual sumptuousness of *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews*, as well as its TV tie-in, guarantee it a large readership, though its format and price may also prompt many readers to relegate it to the coffee table. That would be a shame, for Abba Eban has written a good introduction to, if not a really comprehensive telling of, the Jewish saga. I hope it will serve as a spur to Jews everywhere to tackle more detailed academic or analytic works on their people's sometimes colorful, often tragic, ever richly-varied past.

David M. Szonyi, Associate Director, The Radius Institute in New York, is contributing editor of the *Baltimore Jewish Times* and *The Long Island Jewish World*.

Jonah and the Great Fish. Retold and illustrated by Warwick Hutton. Atheneum, 597 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017. 1984. 32pp. Ages 4 to 8. \$12.95 cloth.

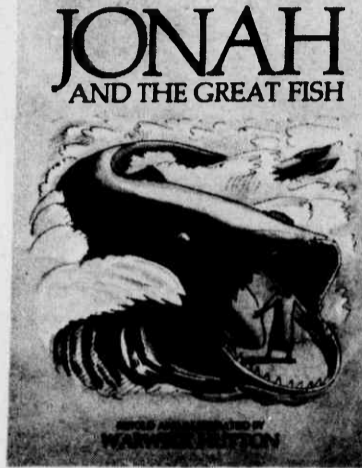
Reviewed by Sue Barancik

A good story, one that maintains the reader's attention from the first syllable to the very last word, usually is marked by a brief introduction, an absorbing, constantly moving middle, and a succinct and satisfying ending. *Jonah and the Great Fish*, an adaptation of the story of the Biblical prophet, retold by British author-illustrator Hutton, succeeds completely in meeting these criteria.

The text is economical in its use of words, simple and conversational in tone. It is easy to imagine that the author is sitting next to you whispering in your ear the exploits of Jonah, a troubled man fleeing from the commands of God. With the possible exception of the phrase concerning the "drawing of lots," the book is easy to comprehend by most children in the early elementary grades.

Glorious watercolor paintings enhance the text beautifully. The mysterious depths of blues and blacks, the gentler shades of lilac, pink and turquoise suffuse and intertwine the words in a waterworld of art. The illustrations fit the text as a smooth kid leather glove fits the wearer's hand.

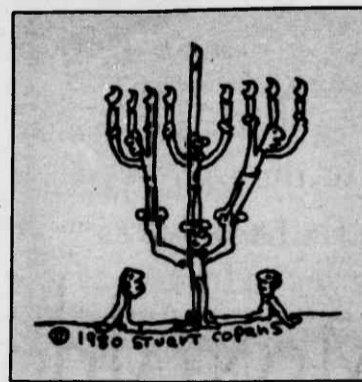
Hutton is certainly not the first to put his hand to adapting Jonah's adventures for the picture book reader. He may, however, be the most successful. Beverly Brodsky's *Jonah* (Lippincott, 1977) is beautifully and lavishly adorned with impressionistic paintings from her able brush, but the text does not mesh as well with her illustrations. She concentrates her telling more on the wicked people of Nineveh than on the treacherous journey of Jonah. Clyde Bulla's *Jonah and the Great Fish* — why do they ever allow books to have the same exact ti-



tle? — (Crowell, 1970) is satisfactory, but is just too wordy and minutely detailed for the young reader.

The concepts of the Jonah story, the sinning and the asking for forgiveness, the false pride, the need for humility and sincere prayer, provide great meat for discussions between parent and child, teacher and class, librarian and patrons, storyteller and audience. Yom Kippur, our Day of Atonement, is an extremely apt time to introduce this fine book to our eager listeners.

Sue Barancik, librarian of Temple Adath B'nai Israel, Evansville, Indiana, served as Book Award Chairman for the Association of Jewish Libraries, 1982-4. She also travels around the Midwest as a storyteller, telling tales to audiences ranging from nursery school to nursing home age.



List **\$32.95**
With This COUPON **\$25.95**
EXPIRES 12-31-84

Little Professor Book Center
Park Road Shopping Center
525-9239

Mary Frances Miller Antiques, Inc.

Come Visit Us For Your Holiday Selections!

416 Providence Road
Charlotte, N.C. 28207
Gallery (704) 375-9240
Residence (704) 376-6926

Planters Exchange
Pawley's Island, S.C.
(803) 237-2466

" 'Twas The

'Twas the night before Chanukah,
Boichicks and Maidels,
Not a sound could be heard,
not even the draidels.
The Menorah was set
by the chimney alight,
The Bubbie was choppin' a bite.
Salami, pastrami, a glassele tay,
And Zoyereh pickels with bagels
—oy vay!
Gesundt and geshmack
the kinderlach felt,
While dreaming of taglach
and Chanukah gelt.
The alarm clock was sitting,
a klappen and ticken,
And Bubbie was carving
a shtikele chicken.
A tummel arose like
a thousand Beruches,
Santa had fallen
and broken his _____
I put on my slippers —
ains, zvei, drei.
While Bubbie was enjoying
her herring and rye,
I grabbed for my bathrobe
and buttoned by gotkes,
And Bubbie was just
devouring the latkes.
To the window I ran
and to my surprise,
A little blue yamalke
greeted my eyes.
When he got to the door
and saw the Menorah,
"Yiddishe Kinder,"
he said "Kenahorah".

— The Me

When Is A Menorah Not A Menorah

Actually a menorah is always a *menorah* because a lamp (*menorah*) is always a lamp. But on Chanukah we use a very special kind of lamp, called a *chanukiyah*. The *chanukiyah*, or Chanukah menorah, is different than the menorah that was used in the Temple. That *menorah* had seven branches. On Chanukah we use nine branches: Eight plus the *shammash* (attendant).

In the early days of the holiday, *chanukiyot* (more than one *chanukiyah*) were placed near the doorway on the outside of the house. So that everyone would see them and be reminded of the miracle of Chanukah. Some followed the custom of hanging them right on the doorposts, across from the *mezuzah*, while others would place them in the window. In times of danger, when Jews were being persecuted, the rabbis permitted *chanukiyot* to be lit in private places.

