

# Book Reviews



**Ben-Gurion: The Burning Ground, 1886-1948.** Shabtai Teveth. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2 Park Street, Boston, MA 02108. 1987. 876 pages. \$35.00.

Reviewed by Joseph Aaron

If you want to know something about the modern state of Israel, you have to know something about David Ben-Gurion, you have to read Shabtai Teveth's new book.

Fourteen years in the making, and fourteen years after Ben-Gurion's death, the book provides a fresh, in-depth look at the forces that shaped the man who did more than anyone else to shape the reborn State of Israel. And it does it in 876 pages, no less. Pages that deal only with events in Ben-Gurion's life up to 1948, no less.

That the book is being published in 1987 is no accident, coming as it does midway between the just-concluded celebration of the 100th anniversary of Ben-Gurion's birth and the soon-to-be celebration of the 40th anniversary of Israel's independence.

That the destinies of Ben-Gurion and Israel became so linked is no accident, either. Teveth, a senior research fellow at the Dayan Center for Middle East Studies at Tel Aviv University, shows how almost from the very beginning, the man who would become Israel's first prime minister, felt he had a mission, that he was destined to lead Jews back to the promised land.

Born in 1886 in tsarist-controlled Poland, young David Gruen's life was steeped in Zionist thought. His grandfather began teaching him Hebrew at the age of three; his father, a local Zionist leader, filled him with a love for Eretz Yisrael.

Using unimpressively exhaustive research, Teveth goes beyond and behind those facts to provide detail after detail, anecdote after anecdote, much of it new, to paint a vivid portrait of the environment and the influences that surrounded Ben-Gurion and the ways in which he reacted to it.

In the process, we discover fascinating tidbits such as that while Ben-Gurion always claimed to have given up the Zionist dream of life as a farmer reluctantly and under pressure, in fact, he never had any desire to be a farmer, considering it too confining. We also learn that while, until his dying day, Ben-Gurion stubbornly claimed that both his father and grandfathers were lawyers, Teveth conclusively shows that they were not.

Teveth's smooth writing style and eye for detail carry us along as the twenty-year-old Gruen leaves Poland for Palestine in 1906. And shows us how, in 1910, as he began the long journey that would be his life's work, he changed his



Ben-Gurion

name to Ben-Gurion "to celebrate my second birth."

From there, Ben-Gurion's life reads like the history of the Jewish people in the 20th Century, with which it is so intertwined. One of the most fascinating parts of the book is Teveth's revelation that Ben-Gurion had a premonition of just what the 20th Century had in store for the Jewish people.

Discovering a forgotten expense account of Ben-Gurion's, Teveth found that, in August 1933, while changing trains in the Munich railroad station, Ben-Gurion purchased a copy of Adolph Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

"Hitler's rule imperils the entire Jewish people," Ben-Gurion noted all too prophetically in January 1934. He figured the Zionists had "four to five years" to rescue Jews. Indeed, it would be exactly five years later that the death machinery would swing into action.

Ben-Gurion's insight into the fate awaiting Eastern Europe's Jews, Teveth shows us in a gripping narrative, made him a driven man, single-minded and of iron will, determined to bring a Jewish state into being. He was, at once, that rare combination of master politician, adept at getting things done, and biblical visionary, who saw the opportunity had presented itself to

make possible what had, for so long, been impossible.

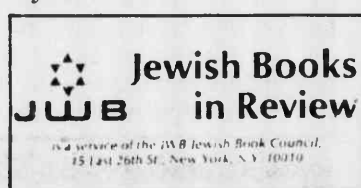
We follow him as he moved rapidly up the Zionist ladder, serving as head of the Histadrut, chairman of the Jewish Agency, crafting solutions, recognizing trends, fashioning compromises, pursuing the path he, and sometimes only he, believed would achieve the ultimate goal.

Thanks to Teveth's mastery of Ben-Gurion's letters and diaries, and his hundreds of personal interviews with Ben-Gurion, we have a ringside seat at the incredible political, ideological and personal struggles Ben-Gurion engaged in as he outmaneuvered and confounded both his critics and allies, in the end, accomplishing exactly what he set out to accomplish.

But just as we come to see Ben-Gurion, the leader, in a new light, so Teveth gives us new insight into Ben-Gurion, the man. Teveth provides fascinating detail of Ben-Gurion's uneasy relationship with Chaim Weizmann, his voracious appetite for knowledge, his three mistresses, and his neglect of his wife Paula and their three children.

In all, a complex and riveting portrait of a complex man on a complex mission. Thus, while to know anything about the modern state of Israel is to know something about David Ben-Gurion, to read this book is to know much more about how both came to be.

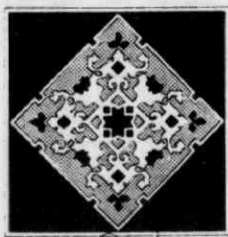
Joseph Aaron is editor of *Chicago JUF NEWS* and a frequent contributor to Jewish publications around the country.



EXPLORE

YOUR

OPTIONS



**PERSIAN**  
CARPET  
TRADING COMPANY

Our tradition of service along with our standards of excellence in craftsmanship are woven into our entire collection of fine antique and contemporary Oriental rugs and carpets.

1437 Morehead  
Morehead Station  
Charlotte, NC

Stop by today.

374-0000

## This 'n That

Jared N. Schwartz, MD, PhD, director of the department of pathology and laboratory medicine at Presbyterian Hospital and chairman of the N.C. Medical Society, has been awarded the Herbert Lansky Memorial Award. This award is presented to a board-certified pathologist who has demonstrated respected leadership consistent with the goals of the College of American Pathologists (CAP) Foundation and who has made significant contributions to the field of pathology. Dr. Schwartz is currently chairman of the CAP Program and Program Evaluation Committee and a national spokesperson for the College. The Lansky Award was presented by the American Society of Clinical Pathologists (ASCP) and CAP at their Fall Meeting in New Orleans.



Schwartz

The 1987 Meritorious Service Award from the National Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting (NOAPP) for outstanding community-wide activities focused on adolescent pregnancy prevention was presented to The Mecklenburg Council on Adolescent Pregnancy of Charlotte. Barbara Ziegler is the director of MCAP.

Daniel Anthony, vice president of Plej's Mill Outlet, was one of two recipients of the William Ettin Human Relations Award given annually by the home furnishings division of the American Jewish Committee. The award, presented in New York, is given in honor of the late Ettin, who was vice president and general manager of Manhattan-based Purified Downs Products and cofounder of the home furnishing division of the American Jewish Committee.



Anthony

Anthony, 36, and his wife, Brenda, are active members of Carmel Baptist Church. The American Jewish Committee was founded in 1906 to combat bigotry and advance human rights. Headquartered in N.Y., the organization has chapters and units in 100 U.S. cities.

Gabrielle Reznec, daughter of Phyllis Reznec and Philip Reznec, a student at West Charlotte, received an honorable mention for acting at the regional competition of the N.C. Theatre Conference's Secondary School Play Contest held last month at UNCC.

Jodi Mond, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Irving Mond, a junior at Jacksonville U., was inducted into the National Society of Collegiate Journalists.

Herman Blumenthal was recently appointed to the Board of Visitors of UNC-CH.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Hospital Authority established a commissioned award in honor of Dr. David Citron, who retired after 35 years as a Charlotte physician, most recently as director of medical education at Charlotte Memorial Hospital.

Marc Edlein, son of Mr. and Mrs. Saul Edlein, graduated from East Carolina U. with a B.A. in Commercial Art.

Edward Nadelman, United Family Services executive director, was honored at a recent luncheon for having served UFS for 27 years. He retired as the agency's consultant last month.

## The Celtic Trader



Hand Knit Aran Sweaters  
Celtic Music  
Designer Woolens from Ireland  
English China Tea Pots  
Specialty Foods from the British Isles  
Kilt Skirts

2400 Park Rd - The Courtyard  
Charlotte, NC 28203  
704-332-2358

Mon.-Fri. 10 AM-7 PM

Sat. 10-6 PM