

# Book Reviews



*The Strange Nation of Rafael Mendes.* Moacyr Scliar. Translated by Eloah F. Goacomelli. Harmony Books, 225 Park Ave. So., New York, NY 10003. 1988. 309 pages. \$19.95.



Moacyr Scliar, a practicing physician in Brazil, is also the best-selling author of 10 novels and 7 short story collections in his homeland. Four of his books, published in the U.S. as original paperbacks, have received widespread critical acclaim. The Washington Post likens Scliar's writing technique to "that of I.B. Singer...to integrate the magical and the fantastical into the real world...It infuses his work with humor, fantasy, authenticity and ethical substance."

*The Strange Nation of Rafael Mendes* combines fantasy and reality, politics and history. From the prophet Jonah in the belly of the whale forward to Rafael Mendes in present-day Brazil, this novel brings the distant past and the present equally to life and explores the benefits and dangers of knowing one's history. The novel reflects the powerful influences of the author's nationality and his religion. It blends Jewish and Brazilian history and myths to create the genealogy of Rafael. The

character's fictional ancestors include Jonah, Maimonides, a mapmaker to Columbus, and the Brazilian 18th century hero Tirandentes, who is said to have been a Marrano.

Scliar traces Mendes's lineage from the prophets to Egypt, then to the Portuguese Inquisition, Holland and Brazil from colonial times to the present. The history of Jews in Brazil is a history of conflicts, Scliar says. There is not only conflict between the cultures, but also between myth and history, between irrational strength and frail logic, and, sometimes, between simple interests. This novel reflects Scliar's belief that the emotional effects of the Inquisition are still present in Brazil.

"The Inquisition was a conditioning factor for the political and emotional life of Brazil," he says. "People hid their emotions and lied during the Inquisition. The systematic persecution of the Marranos in Brazil generated a climate of fear and uncertainty, and lying and dissimulating became a question of survival. The influence of the intolerance in the Brazilian ethos today is difficult to evaluate, but it certainly exists," he says. "In my book, I tried to connect the past events of Brazilian history with today's conditions... for example, the lies of politicians, corruption and economic scandals."

Scliar is a public health physician in the city of Porto Alegre, where he was born. This city, in the south of Brazil, was the first organized Askenazi community in the country. Scliar's parents both arrived there as children in about 1915, coming with their parents from Bessarabia. There are about 10,000 Jews living today in Porto Alegre, concentrated in the Bom Fim section. Many of the original Jewish settlers came from Eastern Europe.

"One laughs with him, but make no mistake about it: Mr. Scliar is a tough writer, one of the bitterest to come out of Latin America in a long time."

— New York Times

## — Library Lines —

By Lenora Stein

During the past few months, under the auspices of the Speizman Jewish Library, the children of the Charlotte Jewish Day School, Temple Beth El V'Shalom Religious School and Temple Israel Religious School have participated in the Great National Jewish Read-In for the benefit of the Jewish Braille Institute. This is a program which encourages both reading and tzedakah. The young people obtained sponsors who pledged money for every book which was read during a designated time period. All funds raised go directly to the Jewish Braille Institute, an agency which provides services and materials for the visually impaired. In addition to the school-wide sponsorship of this program, all classes took part in a blind awareness program, conducted by the Metrolina Association for the Blind. This included a hands-on demonstration, a movie and discussion on age-appropriate levels to sensitize our students to the issue of visual handicaps.

I am pleased to report the results of the Read-In. The three schools together raised a grand total of \$553.20. The individual top-achieving students by school are:

**Charlotte Jewish Day School**

Most money raised—Sara Seiferheld

Most books read —Sara Seiferheld

**Temple Beth El V'Shalom**

Most money raised—Heather Shane

Most books read Stacy Blumenthal

**Temple Israel**

Most money raised—Elissa Golembe

Most books read —Korey Jaben

KOL HA-KAVOD for a job well done! Certificates and prizes will be awarded to all children who participated. The Jewish Braille Institute is very appreciative of the efforts of our students. We can be very proud of their dedication to reading and tzedakah.

### Jewish Calendar Candlelighting

Apr. 7 - 7:31 p.m. (7th eve of Pesach)  
Apr. 8 - 7:32 p.m. (8th eve of Pesach)  
Apr. 15 - 7:37 p.m.  
Apr. 22 - 7:43 p.m.  
Apr. 29 - 7:49 p.m.  
May 6 - 7:55 p.m.



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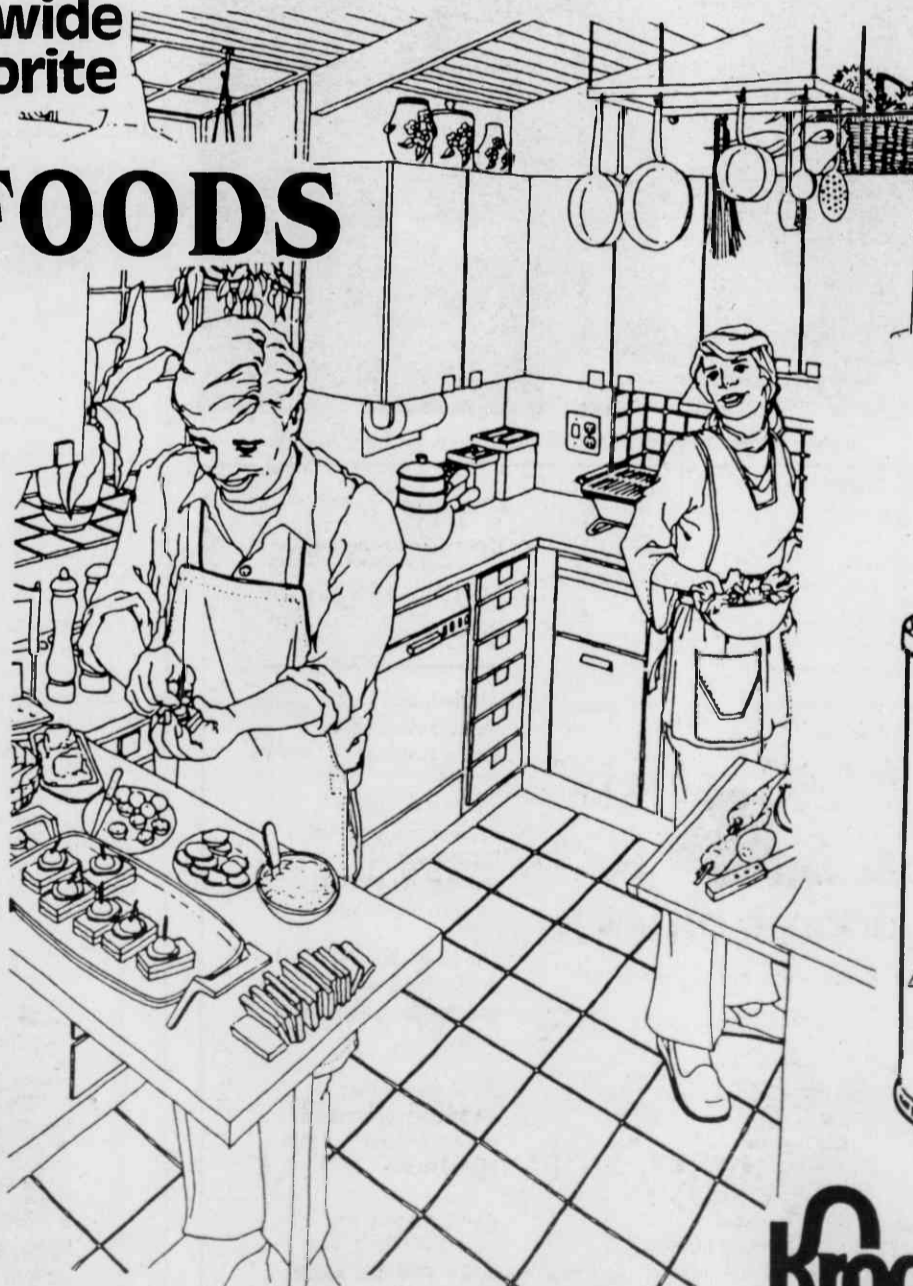
# KOSHER FOODS

## Empire Frozen Kosher Foods

- Pie Crust
- Potato Latkes
- Natural Cut Potatoes
- Challah Dough
- Chall-ettes
- Rye Bread
- Chicken
- Breaded Mushrooms
- Pot Pies
- Pizza
- Bagels
- English Muffin Mix
- Frozen Blintzes (large variety)
- Bagel Pizza
- Garlic Bread
- Liver Spread

## Others

- Noodles by Goodman, Greenfield and Mrs. Weiss
- Soups by Carmel, Croyden House, Goodman and Teima
- Mother's Schav
- Mother's All Whitefish
- Rokeach Old Vienna Fish
- Rokeach Tomato & Mushroom Sauce
- Wolff Groats/Kasha
- Joyva Halvah Candy
- Kedem Grape Juice
- Rokeach Pareve Coffee Creamer
- Swee-Touch-Nee Tea Bags
- Panni Shredded Potato Pancake Mix
- Panni Bavarian Potato Pancake Mix
- Pasteurized Goats Milk



## Manischewitz Brand

- Matzos
- Soup Mixes
- Borscht
- Soups
- Matzo Ball Mix
- Matzo Ball Broth
- Gefilte Fish
- Whitefish & Pike
- Potato Kugel Mix
- Matzo Meal
- Matzo Ball Soup
- Bakit



# Kroger Sav-on