

adoption, insisting that he be adopted by Jews. It's a slim volume: the weight is in the writing—agile though it is. EN



**WAITING FOR AMERICA:
A STORY OF EMIGRATION**

Maxim D. Shrayer

Syracuse University Press, 2007. 225 pp. \$22.95
ISBN: 978-0-8156-0893-6

Just after his twentieth birthday in 1987, Maxim Shrayer and his family were suddenly granted permission to leave Moscow after nine years as *refusniks*. They were not permitted to take much with them—some cash, clothes, mementos, and an unusually heavy trunk, bearing a surprise addition to their party. Over the next three months, they would meet an eclectic cast of Jewish charac-



...Shrayer reminisces about that difficult transitional period with charm, insight, and unexpected humor.



ters on their own exoduses from the Soviet Union. The family was housed by JIAS (Jewish Immigration Aid Society) in the low-rent districts of Vienna and Rome, and in the unlikely Italian beach resort of Ladispoli. Not even a string of furtive love affairs could take the edge off Shrayer's anxiety as the family waited for its papers to America and tried to imagine how they would survive. His joy at new freedoms in the West, the shock of material plenty, his visits to long-imagined historical sights and watching American movies are tempered by a keen awareness of the toll

statelessness and poverty were taking on his family. His parents, who struggled with English, would face a loss of status and their identity as well-known intellectuals. Now, after twenty successful years as an American, Shrayer reminisces about that difficult transitional period with charm, insight, and unexpected humor. A lovely read. LPR

CONTEMPORARY JEWISH LIFE

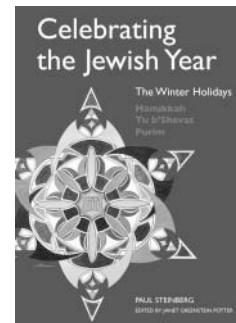


CAN I HAVE A CELL PHONE FOR HANUKKAH?

Sharon Duke Estroff

Broadway Books, 2007. 302 pp. \$12.95
ISBN: 978-0-7679-2544-0

This book is a step by step comprehensive guide for the modern mom on how to raise young Jewish children as Jewish *mentsches*. It has suggestions on topics ranging from play dates and extracurricular activities to birthday parties and bar/bat mitzvahs. It includes information about observing and celebrating Shabbat and Jewish holidays and generating interest by the children. There are reading, website, and *tzedaka* opportunity lists. Estroff deals with the internet and says that parents must stay current. She recommends not trying to keep up with the Jonesteins and not making yourself and your kids crazy by overbooking their schedules. She advises maintaining reasonable limits in everything from allowance to party plans to computer usage. Much of the advice is common sense, but for the first-time parent of elementary to middle school kids, this is a warmly written, easy to read sourcebook with an extensive index and bibliography. MBA



**CELEBRATING THE JEWISH YEAR:
WINTER HOLIDAYS—HANUKKAH,
TU B'SHEVAT, PURIM**

Paul Steinberg; Janet Greenstein Potter, ed.

Jewish Publication Society, 2007. 257 pp. \$22.00
ISBN: 978-08276-0849-8

One way I try to celebrate Judaism's annual holidays is by trying to learn something new about them every year. That's why I'm grateful for books like this one, which looks at holidays from a wide variety of perspectives. This volume is part of a series that delves into groups of holidays according to their season. This approach enables the author to explore connections between holidays. For example, Hanukkah, Tu B'shevat, and Purim are not biblical, but historical in nature. All are linked to the Torah only peripherally. Yet, each is infused with its own spiritual nature, and the significance of each has increased over time.

The book opens with a brief but fascinating exploration of time, and the Jewish concept of time. It then presents a section on each holiday, including a fairly in-depth look at the holiday's origins, ideology, and customs, particularly those associated with home observance. For example, you can find out everything you need to know about running a Tu B'shevat seder.

The holiday sections also provide relevant passages from Jewish texts, such as the Babylonian Talmud, the *Zohar*, and the *Sefer Ha-Hinukh*, a medieval compilation of the Torah's 613 commandments. Readings from great thinkers—Maimonides, Rashi, Marge Piercy, Martin Buber, Arthur Green, and others—are included. Finally, each section provides interpretations of relevant sacred texts: the literal meaning, the historical