

**Emanuel, Simha. *Hidden Treasures from Europe*. Volume 1: מגנזי אירופה א, Magnus Press, Jerusalem, 2015. 501 pp. \$31.25 (9789654620130). Hebrew.**

*Hidden Treasures from Europe* is a research work supported by The Israel Science Foundation, grant no.250/09. The work analyzes many thousands of Hebrew pages that were torn from various old Hebrew manuscripts and used for book bindings and as folders for archive files. These treasures are appropriately called the European “Geniza.”

In 1863, six pages from the Babylonian Talmud were discovered in the book binding of a volume from Vienna. A year later, Rashi’s commentary on the Books of Daniel and Ezra was found in another Viennese bookbinding. In 1912, the Vienna National Library tried to catalog and organize these and other findings emerging from within their collections. Many other such discoveries, in diverse publications across multiple libraries, encouraged the establishment, in 2007, of the organization of “Books within Books: Hebrew Fragments in European Libraries” (<http://www.hebrewmanuscript.com>). The three main goals of the researchers include: locating and identifying the voluminous Hebrew documents that are hidden in book bindings in Europe from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries; cataloging this material; reconstituting the manuscripts to their original state.

*Hidden Treasures from Europe* is a well-structured study of these rediscovered manuscripts; it concludes with an erudite bibliography and well-prepared indexes. The book will be useful in academic libraries, *yeshivot*, and synagogue collections.

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**Epstein, Lawrence J. *Converts to Judaism: Stories from Biblical Times to Today*. Lanham, MD; London; Boulder, CO; New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 202 pp. \$37.00. (9781442234673).**

A warmly narrated story not only about Judaism’s history of *giyur* (proselytism or conversion), but also the evolutionary development of the Hebrew people as Jews. Epstein, a professor emeritus from Suffolk County Community College, has a publishing record reflecting Jewish thought and culture. While not sourced directly in the text, the book’s collection of references found at the end will assist the reader in learning the history of converts to Judaism from Ruth in biblical times to the present and the likes of Elizabeth Taylor and Sammy Davis, Jr. In each of the eight chapters, Epstein through the use of anecdotes and rabbinic thought and commentary, supplemented by discussions, covers the debates within the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox communities regarding the advisability and opposition to conversion. This is a good contribution for a synagogue library that has an interested audience from young adults to adults, interested or somehow involved with the intricacies of the history of Judaism and the role of conversion in it. Similarly, the wealth of information provided would serve any *Chavurah* (Fellowship) a treasure trove of topics.

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