



BROWSE



Food and Judaism (review)

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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Adriana M. Brodsky (bio)

Food and Judaism. Edited by Leonard J. Greenspoon, Ronald A. Simkins, and Gerald Shapiro. *Studies in Jewish Civilization*, vol. 15. Omaha: Creighton University Press, 2005. xvi + 345 pp.

One of the contributors to this volume, echoing a folk wisdom heard in his synagogue, comments that "all Jewish holidays can be reduced to one . . . explanation: 'They tried to get us, God rescued us, let's eat!'" (297). Our own memories of family and Jewish celebrations will find this saying, although comical and simplistic, to be true, especially when it comes to the "let's eat" part. Thus, it does not seem necessary to argue for the validity of studying the centrality of food in Jewish tradition. But by presenting these eighteen essays, which focus on such diverse questions as What did God really want us to eat?, and Were women powerful in the kitchen even though limited by the laws of kashrut?, the editors make us realize how much a multidisciplinary approach can aid us in exploring the relationship between food and Jewish law and practices in all of their complexity. Although a thematic organization would have allowed the reader to uncover more connections among the articles, these essays together provide much food for thought—pun intended.

Most of the essays were originally presented at the Creighton University's Fifteenth Annual Klutznick-Harris Symposium, "Food and Judaism," in October 2002. Two of these, the article by Joan Nathan, "A Social History of Jewish Food in America," and Jenna Weissman Joselit's "Food Fight: The Americanization of Kashrut in Twentieth-Century America," were keynote presentations. In these essays, the authors respectively take us through an overview of Jewish-American food practices (and their change over time) and a thoughtful discussion of the battle over the legitimacy of kashrut in modern America during the first few decades of the twentieth century.

The volume then presents sixteen essays organized, the editors explain, chronologically. The reader travels not just across time but also across oceans and disciplines in order to analyze various aspects of food and Jewish law and practice: kashrut, Jewish cookbooks, food and ways of cooking as ethnic markers, the role of food in the kabbalah and in **[End Page 367]** Hasidism, and Jewish food practices in the context of Christianity and Islam. The richness of the volume resides in that these topics are then studied from different perspectives and disciplines.

Whereas Ruth Ann Abusch-Magder in "Kashrut: The Possibility and Limits of Women's Domestic Power" argues that women were indeed able to exercise some control in their kitchens even when faced with rabbinical (male) pronouncements regarding what was acceptable and what was not, David Kraemer's "Separating the Dishes: The History of Jewish Eating Practice" focuses on when the laws that called for a separation of milk and meat products came to be interpreted as the need for separate pots, pans, and other utensils. In "The Vegetarian Ideal in the Bible," Gary A. Rendsburg argues that the Bible clearly indicates that the vegetarian diet is ideal, while S. Daniel Breslauer in "The Vegetarian Alternative: Biblical Adumbrations, Modern Reverberations" maintains that the Bible and modern Jewish writing state the acceptance of both meat and meal offerings in order to "save life," an interpretation that, in his opinion, breaks the simple binary opposition of a structuralist analysis.

Other essays focus on what constitutes Jewish food as different communities construct their Jewishness in new environments and, sometimes, in the face of discrimination. Eve Jochnowitz's "Smoked Salmon Sushi and Sturgeon Stomachs: The Russian Jewish Foodscapes of New York" describes this recent immigrant community and its attempts to inscribe Russian and Jewish traditions into the established Jewish and American gastronomic landscapes, creating, in the process, a hybrid culture. In "Public and Private in the Kitchen: Eating Jewish in the Soviet State," Alice Stone Nakhimovsky discusses the ways in which the Jews in Russia dealt with their "invisible" status by keeping their Jewish foodways inside, and how now those traditions are finally becoming more public statements of identity. In "Exploring Southern Jewish Foodways," Marcie Cohen Ferris looks at a community that has created a regional identity within the...

as its population grows, no doubt draw more scholarly attention in the future.

Marianne Samua
Florida Atlantic University

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The American Jewish Tercentenary, a unitary state, as rightly believes I.

Arguing with god, Talmudic discourse, and the Jewish countermodel: Implications for the study of argumentation, political socialization is traditionally chosen by Christian democratic nationalism.

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