

tion and the Jewish Theological Seminary from the 1970s onward, notably after the Seminary moved to support the ordination of women, a position strongly opposed by Rabbi Shuchat.

Finally, the use of primary and secondary sources in this volume deserves comment. On the positive side, the author has drawn extensively on the congregation's own archival records, and he has an excellent command of its oral history, especially during the nearly half century in which he exercised rabbinic leadership at Shaar Hashomayim. On the negative side, the volume is marred by a lack of footnotes and bibliography; this will make it difficult for scholars to access the text as research tool.

Overall, *The Gate of Heaven* represents a valuable contribution to the rather thin history of Jewish congregations in Canada. A religious history of Shaar Hashomayim – one of the most influential congregations in Montreal during the twentieth century – is especially welcome.

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Ancil, Pierre, ed. *Through the Eyes of **The Eagle**: The Early Montreal Yiddish Press 1907-1916*. Trans. David Rome. Montreal: Vehicule Press, 2001. 208 pp.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, there was a considerable influx of Yiddish-speaking, Jewish immigrants to Canada, most of whom were unaccustomed to the freedom of North American life. During this period, Montreal's Jewish population increased substantially and the city developed as the centre of Canadian Jewry. The new communal voice of Montreal was sounded in newspapers that reflected the maturing community. In the early twentieth century, Montreal's *Keneder odler* and *Der veg*, provide contemporary readers with a sense of how people lived within their small, semi-isolated worlds. The papers offer insight into the concerns and daily lives of Canadian Jews. Their importance is affirmed by the dedicated efforts of Pierre Ancil and the late David Rome,

former Director of the Jewish Public Library and Historian of the Canadian Jewish Congress, in this new book, *Through the Eyes of The Eagle*. This excellent work – a testimony to a time and a people – preserves and translates documents from early Yiddish newspapers published in Canada.

Through the Eyes of The Eagle left me with a sense that I had touched the hearts and minds of people living long ago. I was moved by the powerful editorials and short stories, such as “A Jewish Wife” – a story of a gentile doctor’s fascination with a married Jewish woman that touches on the forbidden and alludes to real-life experience.

From 1907 until 1916, the writings of Reuben Brainin, first editor of *The Eagle*, argue consistently that the Jewish community must move forward. His editorials were vital expressions of his belief in the need for continued strength and fortitude. He urged the Jewish community to make its presence felt in the greater society while remaining distinctive. Brainin believed that “a people like an individual can become what he wishes to be and what he seeks to become” (20). His newspaper sought to empower and instil this message in his readers, to inspire strength in a people that “has not yet emerged” (21).

Four chapters include a series of articles on cultural adjustment to life in Canada. Even though the majority of Canadian Jews lived in Montreal, the growing communities of Toronto and Winnipeg are not forgotten. In subsequent chapters, the focus moves from the individual and the community to social and economical issues of the day. From labour issues and social protests, to highly charged debates over the use of Hebrew instead of Yiddish, this collection of essays records confrontation with changing times. A specific example of this is “Daughter of the Jewish People” which articulates the hopes of a growing population, the need for powerful community leadership, and the emerging consciousness of a distinctive Jewish identity and its attendant hardships.

The section “Strikes and Social Protest” includes reflections on diverse topics such as the labour confrontations of

garment workers and a protest by school children. The essays show that “the Jew is already beginning to feel like a human being, a human being who has as much right to be born as all people” (80). This was an empowering idea that urged a move away from the Old World toward a modern community. These writings were an attempt to encourage people to leave the past behind and to adopt behaviours and customs that would enhance their lives in Canada. An advocate of Hebrew as a modern Jewish language, Brainin argued that Yiddish “has no future at all, because it is forgotten and ignored by the rising generation” (91). This debate over language further illustrates the growing diversity of Jewish opinion in Montreal.

The volume concludes with a series of articles on Yiddish theatre and French Canada; reminiscences; light pieces; and fiction. In these sections, the reader gains a sense of how cultural activity infused strength into the community. “Every people has the theater it deserves,” (123) wrote Brainin in 1912. His comments reflected the struggle for the establishment of Jewish cultural expression in Montreal. At the time, the Yiddish theatre stood “at a very low level. . . . a sign of the poverty of our people” (123). In Brainin’s view, for a community to realize its potential, it had to extend itself both in business and the arts.

Through the Eyes of The Eagle evokes the struggles of the Jewish community to assert its presence in a non-Jewish world. This collection of editorials, essays, and reflections serves as a historical monument to a world that might have been forgotten. Whether it is the “Obligations of Canadian Jewry” or the challenges of “Fundraising in Montreal,” these writings transport the reader to a time when dreams for the future powered a community forward. This book is a testimony to the heritage and legacy of the Montreal Jewish community.

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