

## **Portraits in Literature: The Jews of Poland. An Anthology**

Presentation by Hava Ben-Zvi

Hava Bromberg Ben-Zvi editor. London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011. 380 pp. \$74.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-85303-873-3.

Finalist, National Jewish Book Awards, 2011.

My new book: Portraits in Literature: The Jews of Poland. An Anthology is the saga of Jewish life in Poland as reflected in the mirror of literature.

Why the Jews of Poland?

Of the six million Jewish lives we lost during the Holocaust years, three million were the Jews of Poland. Before their annihilation Poland was the world center of Jewish life and culture. This rich and vital civilization, preserved in literature, is their legacy to us. The Jews of Poland were frequently our physical ancestors, and always our spiritual and intellectual forefathers. Their values, transformed, influenced our ideas of what it means to be a Jew, and formed the basis of western civilization.

Portraits in Literature is a lavish compendium of short stories, eyewitness reports, memoirs, poetry, folk tales, essays and humor, all touching upon the Jewish experience in Poland.

Following a historical introduction, the stories, poems and other forms of literature cover many aspects of daily life, life cycle events, and many themes: loyalty, friendship, violence, envy, the Holocaust, children, Hasidism, conflicts and war. The tales were selected for their authenticity of contents, characters and relationships, and for their emotional impact.

Each selection is followed by notes providing biographical information about the author, putting it in context of its time and conditions.

Excerpts of reviews best describe this anthology:

“Ben-Zvi has selected some of the most affecting and enlightening passages from her remarkable diverse source material, and she makes them even more meaningful by providing her own annotations and illuminations...a beautiful and stirring book.”

Jonathan Kirsch, *The Jewish Journal*, vol.26, #29, September 16-22, 2011, p.40.

“This sense of homage to a literature and culture of Polish Jews permeates the entire anthology”. Justine Pas, Lindenwood University, H-Judaic, May, 2012.

“...unforgettable literary memories and emotional power... “ *Jewish Book World*, Spring 2012.

“This Finalist for the National Jewish Book Awards is highly recommended”. Sheryl Stahl, Senior Associate Librarian, Frances-Henry Library, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles.

Association of Jewish Libraries, Reviews, February-March 2012. For information contact Hava.benzvi@att.net