

Spiritual Community - The Power to Restore Hope, Commitment and Joy
by Rabbi David A Teutsch. Jewish Lights Publishing 2005

The Divine Feminine in Biblical Wisdom Literature ed. Rabbi Rami Shapiro
Jewish Lights Publishing 2005

Meaning and Mitzvah by Rabbi Goldie Milgram
Jewish Lights Publishing 2005.

These three new books from Jewish Lights Publishing cover discrete areas of Jewish Life - the communal, personal study, and personal (and communal) devotion.

In *Spiritual Community - The Power to Restore Hope, Commitment and Joy*, Rabbi David Teutsch analyses the different areas of communal life and the work that needs to be done to ensure that they all come together in as constructive a way as possible. While there is nothing especially novel in what Teutsch writes the material is well expressed, wholly persuasive and presented in such a way as to feel manageable rather than utopian. Anyone who wants to improve their synagogue community should read this book, and for rabbis and lay leaders alike it should be required reading.

The Divine Feminine in Biblical Wisdom Literature is the latest in a series produced by the Jewish Lights Publishing imprint Skylight Illuminations. *The Divine Feminine* contains a range of texts conceptualising Wisdom as female.

Rami Shapiro, also responsible for two other books in the series on *The Hebrew Prophets* and *Hasidic Tales*, produces texts from the Hebrew Bible and the Apocrypha, which he has translated and annotated, arranged under four headings: *Who is She?* *Where is She found?* *What does She teach?*, *the Way of the Wise*.

Shapiro's notes, as always, are clear, engaging and instructive, and *The Divine Feminine* is a valuable teaching tool as well as an excellent corrective for any who view the sacred texts of Judaism as being irredeemably patriarchal.

Meaning and Mitzvah is an instruction manual for deepening the spiritual dimension in Jewish life through thought and practice. Goldie Milgram considers 6 areas - Finding Meaning in Jewish Prayer, Reclaiming God with Integrity, Taking Torah Personally, Hebrew is a Spiritual Practice, Living a Mitzvah-Centred Life and The Positive Power of Peoplehood.

Each section contains anecdote and instruction, the former often moving and inspirational, the latter largely the same.

There is a strong mystical seam in Milgram's writing which will attract some readers as it may distance others, and an assertion of the value of meditative practice that struggles to take its place in Jewish communal life.

Meaning and Mitzvah also has links to a dedicated website containing the details of many more spiritual practices that complement those already in the book. Goldie Milgram's approach will not appeal to everyone but for those with whom it resonates *Meaning and Mitzvah* should prove a very useful book indeed.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh