

discussion with the ratification of women's suffrage in 1920. And instead of introducing her post-1945 chapter with reflections on the Holocaust, Nadell opens with the conservative gender dynamics of the 1950s. Such choices usefully blur the boundaries between the overlapping fields of American women's history and the history of American Jewish women.

Unsurprisingly, *America's Jewish Women* proves strongest when addressing those moments and issues that have generated abundant scholarship. As such, its treatment of twenty-first-century history tends to be somewhat cursory, reflecting a field that has yet to grapple with the challenges and successes of American Jewish women over the past twenty years. While recognizing the inherent difficulty of bushwhacking through terrain where historians have yet to tread, it was still disappointing, for instance, to find no more than one sentence each on Jewish women of color and Jewish transwomen. I also found myself irrationally wishing that the volume might address significant moments in the history of American Jewish women that happened after the manuscript had gone to press, such as the #metoo/#gamani movement and the reckonings that occurred not only within the American Jewish community but also within the field of Jewish studies. All of this, of course, testifies that in spite of over forty years of the field of American Jewish women's history, there is still much yet to be written.

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Allan Amanik. *Dust to Dust: A History of Jewish Death and Burial in New York*. New York: New York University Press, 2019. 272 pp.
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For countless people, the 2020 coronavirus pandemic has led to a sudden, scrupulous accounting of everything from the ways we have grown accustomed to living to the ways we have grown accustomed to dying. In New York City, for example, a count of roughly 20,000 individual deaths from the contagious disease within a two-month span resulted in various news stories telling of the unexpected, and shocking for many, appearances of temporary morgues and burials as well as even mass graves.¹ But for some, like historian Allan Amanik, exploring death and burial over time is an obvious entrée into learning more about the politics, economics, and social make-up of a particular community or place. In *Dust to Dust: A History of Jewish Death and Burial in New York*,

1. 20,000 is an approximate number, including confirmed and presumed deaths due to Covid-19 in NYC: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data.page>.

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Amanik dives into this narrow history to tell a broader story, not only of Jews in America, but also of the role of death practices and attitudes in American society writ large.

Amanik divides his study into five central chapters, broken into stretches of time that sometimes partially overlap. Each chapter's unfolding reflects the book's overarching theme, which is how the traditional Jewish commitment to separate burial intersects with Jewish American inclinations to change with the times, and how this tension has endured as a shaping force in the Jewish community, and beyond, over three hundred years. Our story opens in the mid-1600s, in New Amsterdam, when Jewish settlers petitioned for burial ground and were finally, though not easily, granted a tiny patch of land to that end. Amanik rightfully highlights this momentous event: "A dedicated Jewish graveyard not only represented the first communal and public space that Jews created in North America," he explains, "but counted among several legal, social, and religious privileges that paved the way for long-term settlement in the colony" (19). As more Jewish traders settled, and more burial land needed to be purchased, a pattern was secured whereby the wealthiest Jewish individuals and families came to own burial grounds on behalf of the community. In tandem, at least originally, Jewish congregations were unable to purchase real estate. What emerged was a system in which a powerful few maintained a controlling hand over a Jewish collective. In practice, this meant that certain religious practices and customs, in addition to the collection of dues payments, could be enforced through granting, or withholding, end-of-life and burial care.

Amanik tracks how several important areas of contention in particular—namely, fees associated with rights to burial, and questions surrounding burial and intermarriage—evinced the ways that the rise of the family, among other factors, eventually upset a system presumed to be safeguarding communal interests over individual choice. A third related and also eventually disputed practice enforced in early, mainly pre-Revolutionary times, was chronological burial. Individuals would be buried in rows according to when they died. Such a system, reasoned to enforce "communal bonds" as well as to reflect a commitment to equality, was increasingly challenged as individuals sought to elevate kinship ties in death, as they had begun to rise in significance in life. As Amanik carefully shows, market forces as well as "broader American sentiment making its way into early New York Jewish circles" became driving mechanisms behind changing Jewish funerary and burial practices (39), eventually moving toward the family lot system so often employed today.

By the end of the nineteenth century, with increased Jewish migration and a relatedly growing Jewish working class, in addition to increased concerns over poverty, Jewish burial and aid societies began to flourish, further decentralizing the stronghold that Jewish congregations had on Jewish death and burial practices. Notable developments resulting from such grassroots endeavors included increased individual control over end-of-life practices as well as more flexible, individualized preemptive and postmortem aid options. The rise of independent burial societies, or Jewish fraternal orders, also coincided with increased efforts to make Jewish end-of-life as well as mourning rites and practices more widely known and accessible,

as the publication of the handbook *Compendium of the Order of the Burial Service and Rules for the Mournings* (1827) illustrates. The Rural Cemetery Movement, too—a widespread mid-nineteenth-century phenomenon, whereby individuals and communities were increasingly driven to bury their dead outside of, or on the outskirts of, cities—led to increased rights and options for Jewish individuals and families, even as Jewish cemeteries aesthetically came to resemble non-Jewish burial spaces.

The final two chapters of *Dust to Dust* move into twentieth-century Jewish cemetery politics. In one of the most interestingly laid out chapters, “Wives and Workingmen,” Amanik painstakingly traces a shift in the dissemination of death endowments by fraternal orders and other aid societies. Whereas widows’ pensions had once made up a central tenet of mid-nineteenth-century death-related benefits, by the early to mid-twentieth century, changing demographics as well as budgetary strains ironically cast widows into the role of a “reliable source of revenue” (119). Amanik tracks these shifts alongside the increased commodification of the funeral industry, first broadly and, eventually, if belatedly, within Jewish communities. In his final central chapter, he tracks how synagogues, for so long at the margins with regards to Jewish burial and end-of-life practices, were able to reinsert themselves as intermediaries between individuals and a Jewish funeral industry gaining a reputation as exploitative at best, unscrupulous at worst.

Dust to Dust is a meticulously researched and solidly written study making the case for how powerfully end-of-life matters have continually molded the daily lives of American Jews. Throughout, New York City emerges as the cornerstone for related precedents and debates, setting the tone across Jewish communities in North America and beyond. Amanik concludes by submitting that recent changes in Jewish burial practices suggest “a return—if not a widespread revival—of deeper communal and traditional priorities on the horizon” (199). Given the hegemonic power structures at the root of earlier systems, one would hope for revolution rather than revival or return. In any case, if the latest in Jewish funeral practices are any indication, namely, socially distanced funerals and virtual shivas, the future of Jewish end-of-life care will need to orient its way through a maze of twenty-first-century environmental, political, technological, and epidemiological surprises.

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Lior B. Sternfeld. *Between Iran and Zion: Jewish Histories of Twentieth-Century Iran*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018. 208 pp.
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Lior Sternfeld refreshingly departs from mainstream accounts of modern Iranian Jewish history by pointing out the multiple ways through which the