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Shapira, Anita. Yosef Haim Brenner: A Life. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015. \$75.00. (9780804793131).

Brenner is one of the major figures of modern Hebrew literature, some would say a towering figure. Israel Prize in Jewish History winner, Anita Shapira has written a fine biography of Brenner covering both the public and private spheres. We are shown a Jewish patriot who doubted the practicality of Zionism, a lover of Hebrew who did not think it would ever again be a spoken tongue, a man subject to great depression yet a hard worker, an atheist and anti-clerical who was steeped in the Bible, a socialist who generally refused to identify with any party, a man both subject to self-pity and capable of great generosity to others. While Dr. Shapira discusses many of Brenner's writings, the literary criticism plays a distinctly secondary role. An interesting, recurring theme in the author's interpretation of Brenner's character is a certain contrast between Brenner's conscious, sincerely held views and the way he lived his life. For example, he was skeptical of Zionism yet, once he moved to the Land of Israel, demonstrated a commitment to the land. Recommended.

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