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Review of *THE CASE AGAINST ACADEMIC BOYCOTTS OF ISRAEL*

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Recent years have seen increased activity on college campuses by the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Part of that initiative has been the attempt, adopted by some academic groups to boycott Israeli institutions of higher education, and sometimes scholars associated with them.

Last year at its Chicago meeting, the prestigious Modern Language Association (MLA) also took up a boycott resolution (*JEWISH STAR*, June 13, 2014).

“There is only one country, Israel, that is the object of an international effort to boycott its universities,” writes

Cary Nelson in his Introduction to a welcome collection of essays on *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, edited by Cary Nelson and Gabriel Noah Brahm (Wayne State University Press, MLA Members for Scholars’ Rights, 549 pp., \$34.99 pb).

Nelson and Brahm both spoke against the MLA boycott vote at its Chicago meeting (*JEWISH STAR*, Jan. 24, 2014).

In more than two dozen essays by fellow academics (Nelson is at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Brahm is at Northern Michigan University), the editors intend the collection to be “a resource to bring reason, history, and sound information to campuses confronting this BDS agenda.”

So it is not a “how-to” compendium but rather an educational compilation to examine (and thereby understand) various aspects of boycotts in general, and BDS in particular.

Themes addressed include academic freedom, anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, the history of the boycott movement, along with a section devoted to the American Studies Association’s 2013 adoption of a boycott resolution.

Adding to the collection’s educational value is an instructive section offering “A Concise History of Israel,” an essay of some 50 pages by Cary Nelson, Rachel S. Harris, and Kenneth W. Stein.

There is, too, the wordings of some of the boycott resolutions, and a list of online resources.

This is anything but a quick read. Its academic approach can be abstruse and oddly dispassionate, especially given the emotion material.

However, for those who believe in the value and power of education and of the ability of knowledge to combat ignorance, it is an invaluable collection.