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MENORAH



BULLETIN OF THE JUDAIC STUDIES PROGRAM OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY • NUMBER 1 • FALL 1984

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am very pleased to extend cordial greetings and warm congratulations to the members of the Judaic Culture Committee and the editorial committee of *Menorah*, the new quarterly publication of VCU's Judaic Studies Program. I want to express the hope that this publication will be successful as a vehicle for the exploration and enrichment of Jewish thought. *Menorah* is a splendid idea and a proud addition to the University's publications. It has the enthusiastic support of the VCU community. My very best wishes to the editor and the editorial committee.

Edmund F. Ackell, D.M.D., M.D.
President
Virginia Commonwealth University

FROM THE DEAN

This first issue of *Menorah* is an important milestone in the growth of the Judaic Studies Program at Virginia Commonwealth University. I am confident that the existence of this publication will do much to strengthen the ties between those interested in Judaica and other aspects of Jewish thought at the University and the greater Richmond community. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Judaic Culture Committee for making possible both the initiation of the Judaic Studies Program and now the implementation of the publication of *Menorah*. You will see from the articles in this first issue that the Judaic Studies Program is already off to a good start after only 1½ years under the leadership of Dr. Jack Spiro.

Exchange of ideas is the very core and substance of the University, and it is also important that this exchange be shared with the community at large. These are difficult times. International events give us concern. I am sure that there will be times when there are points of view presented in *Menorah* with which some of the readers may strongly disagree. I would in fact be disappointed if this were not the case. For it is only by exploring ideas and challenging them that there can be a true exchange among scholars, educators, and students from different backgrounds and different perspectives.

Thus I extend my very best wishes and enthusiastic congratulations to the Editorial Board, members of the Judaic Culture Committee and the readers.

Elske v.P. Smith, Dean
College of Humanities and Sciences

THE BRANDEIS-FRANKFURTER CORRESPONDENCE: A PREVIEW BY MELVIN I. UROFSKY

When David Levy and I first began our work on editing the letters of Louis D. Brandeis in 1967, there was relatively little available about him aside from some technical law review articles and the semi-authorized biography written by Alpheus T. Mason in 1946. While Mason had the benefit of interviewing Brandeis, he did not have access to other major manuscript collections, such as those of Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Felix Frankfurter or Chaim Weizmann, all of which contain important documents relating to Brandeis' life and work. Even at the time we began our editing, there was no good secondary studies on many aspects of his career; no scholarly book on American Zionism, for example, appeared until 1971.

In the past few years, however, there has been an outpouring of books and articles. These include two new biographies published this year alone, as well as a more specialized study of his early career in Boston. This latter book, by Zvi Ganin, utilized the recently opened archives of the Brandeis law firm, and for the first time we learned the extent of his Jewish contacts and activities before he became the leader of American Zionism.

But the biggest public interest centered on the relationship between Brandeis and his collaborator and alter ego, Felix Frankfurter, whom Brandeis once tellingly described as "half son, half disciple." Although scholars had known of these activities



Neil November, distinguished leader of the Richmond Jewish community and generous sponsor of this issue of *Menorah*.

for a while, the general populace was aroused and titillated by Oxford University Press's clever, and often misleading, media campaign touting Bruce Murphy's *The Brandeis/Frankfurter Connection*. Murphy focussed attention on the extrajudicial and allegedly unethical conduct of the two men especially during the New Deal. A few months ago, Leonard Baker, the award-winning biographer of Leo Baeck, presented his "dual biography" of the two men, much of which attempts to refute Murphy's insinuations.

These new books draw upon two sources which were closed at the time Levy and I did our work, the enormous Frankfurter Papers, now housed primarily in the Library of Congress, and family letters held by the late Susan Brandeis Gilbert, now in the Goldfarb Library of Brandeis University. The public interest in these two men led us to reactivate our project to include two additional volumes, one dealing with the Frankfurter materials and the other with family papers. Thanks to research grants from Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Oklahoma, and now major support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, work on these volumes is well under way, and the first volume should be off the press in 1985. They will, we believe, allow readers to see for themselves not only the extent of Brandeis' off the bench involvement in the New Deal and other activities, but also judge whether or not such conduct violated common notions of judicial propriety.

One must recall, however, that there has always been a gap between public perception of the judiciary, which in the United States approaches the status of a secular priesthood, and the private involvement of judges in political affairs. From the Washington Administration on, there has been close, but discrete, interaction between the executive, legislative and judicial branches. After all, most men appointed to the High Court enjoyed extensive public careers first, and it would be strange to expect them to suddenly abandon their friends and interests; conversely, one may ask whether a president or senator should be deprived of the wisdom

of these men because they have now donned the black robe. The ethical question arises when, and if, matters they privately discuss or offer advice upon should come before the Court for adjudication.

The complete volume of letters written by Louis Brandeis to Felix Frankfurter in the 1930's will give a detailed portrait, and will be annotated to identify people and events mentioned in the correspondence. The moral judgment will, as it should, rest with the people for whom the Supreme Court represents the highest embodiment of the ideal of government of laws and not men.

Editor's Note: The complete volume by David Levy and Melvin Urofsky is tentatively called *Half Son, Half Disciple: The Letters of Louis Brandeis to Felix Frankfurter*, to be published by SUNY Press in 1985.

JEWISH LIFE AND THE ETHNIC DILEMMA: A REVIEW ESSAY BY HERBERT HIRSCH JEWISH LIFE IN PHILADELPHIA. Edited by Murray Friedman (Philadelphia: ISHI publications, 1983.)

Ethnic groups aspiring to fit into the American milieu are confronted by a dilemma. On the one hand immigrants are told to eschew their traditional language and customs as they participate in the ritual of assimilation. At the same time, they are supposed to become, as an integral part of that assimilative process, functioning members of their new society. The dilemma is that, without a sense of self, of identity, the likelihood of participation is very low.

If there is any one generalization that emerged from the study of the ethnic re-awakening of the late 1960's, it is that the first, halting steps toward active involvement rest on a strong sense of ethnic identity. This positive sense of one's self provides a feeling of belonging, of community, and a sense that the society is perme-

able. It provides the individual a basis which may allow him or her to confront the possible prejudice which may emerge to block paths to social, economic or political success.

This book, however, does not focus specifically on the ethnic dilemma. What it offers instead is an uncritical and upbeat account of Jewish life in Philadelphia. The idea of the ethnic dilemma remains an underlying theme which is not explicitly developed in the portraits of prominent individuals or in the chronicle of the development of Jewish institutions in the Quaker city.

Founded by William Penn in 1682, the city of Philadelphia began as an island of religious tolerance. It should, therefore, be no surprise that it attracted relatively large numbers of Jews. Philadelphia is the third largest Jewish community in the United States, and the fifth largest in the world. As noted in the informative introduction: "Only New York, Los Angeles, Paris and Tel-Aviv-Jaffa exceed it in size." (p. 1) The atmosphere of relative toleration is demonstrated by an interesting comparison with Boston which sent its first known Jew back to England, while Philadelphia welcomed Jews from the beginning. (p. 5) In this environment Jewish life began to flourish and Jewish institutions and individuals developed and achieved economic advancement and some modest political influence.

The rich texture of life that emerges in these pages is engrossing. Some of the portraits of influential individuals are, in fact, captivating. For example, "The Legacy of Isaac Leeser," by Maxwell Whiteman (Chapter 2) details his enormous energy and influence.

Born in Westphalia in 1806, Leeser moved to Richmond in 1824. From there he moved to Philadelphia in 1829 to assume a position as Hebrew reader for Philadelphia's Congregation Mikveh Israel. Leeser's energy was legendary. He translated the Bible into English, wrote prayer books, was a journalist "without peer in his lifetime." (p. 47) Yet, as this book demonstrates, he was not unique.

No less interesting is "The Movies

First Mogul," which details the career of Siegmund Lubin. (Chapter 6) Bitter rival of Thomas Edison, Lubin was a pioneer in the development of the motion picture industry. A "movie mogul" before there was a motion picture industry, his description is as colorful as his career:

a middle-aged, balding, well-dressed, cigar-smoking, diamond-flashing, shrewd and eccentric Jewish businessman, part cutthroat and part sentimental father figure. (p. 99)

From his start as "S. Lubin, Manufacturing Optician," Lubin branched out into the making and financing of early motion pictures. Eventually moving to distribution, he was the chief and only rival to Thomas Edison. Lubin created a film empire which was to collapse when World War I cut off the foreign market for his films, and when he was beset by antitrust suits which cost him millions of dollars. Finally, by the end of 1916, Lubin was left with "the family home in Atlantic City and the old optical shop in Philadelphia."

Equally interesting is the collective portrait of "The Philadelphia Group," (Chapter 4) which examines Jewish leadership in Philadelphia and compares it to what emerged in New York. Lacking the "real wealth of the New Yorkers who were immersed in the world of business and finance . . . Philadelphia's Jewish leadership could be found in the art, literary, scientific and social milieu . . ." (p. 164) The individuals who eventually formed "The Philadelphia Group," benefited from the legacy of Isaac Leeser. They were a distinguished group including: Louis Edward Levy, Sabato Morais, Judge Mayer Sulzberger, Cyrus Adler, Joseph Krauskopf, and Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen. "All were prolific writers . . . and shared the common mission of elevating the condition of American Jewry." (p. 177)

Additional leadership for the Philadelphia Jewish community emerged from the reform rabbis as outlined in "National Leaders of Their Time: Philadelphia's Reform Rabbis," (Chapter 10) and from the world of business and commerce as depicted in "The Rise of Albert M. Greenfield" (Chapter 12).

Greenfield is of interest because he attained a position of influence not only in business, but in society and politics. Albert M. Greenfield was a "Russian immigrant who rose from office boy to ruler of an immense business empire encompassing real estate, retail stores, banks, hotels, and transportation companies." (p. 213) His career stretched from 1904 to 1967, and he was considered one of the "most powerful figures — Jew or Gentile — in the history of Philadelphia." (p. 213)

Greenfield illustrates the ethnic dilemma. He was eager to be accepted as an "American," and yet was unwilling to cut himself off from his roots. Active in many secular Jewish organizations and not an observant Jew himself, he "had no use for people who tried to erase their Jewish heritage." (p. 230) Greenfield built upon a strong perception of identity and reached out to non-Jews. A friend of Dennis Cardinal Dougherty, Archbishop of Philadelphia from 1918 to 1951, Greenfield manifested success and influence.

The City of Philadelphia, therefore, acted as a relatively tolerant community within which American Jews could develop in many areas of social, economic and political life. The Jewish institutions of Philadelphia also developed within this atmosphere and are discussed at length in this book. Descriptions of institutions, however, often pale beside those of colorful and forceful individuals. Yet, it is really neither the institutions which form the most interesting chapter in this book. Amid all this description, the most interesting chapter is the final one which compares "The Jewish Communities of Philadelphia and Boston: A Tale of Two Cities."

Not known for its tolerance of other religious groups, "Puritan Boston" was slower in developing a Jewish community. Of all the colonies, Pennsylvania was the "most ethnically and religiously heterogeneous," while Massachusetts Bay, in general, and Boston, in particular, "was surely the most homogeneous and best educated community in British North America." (p. 293)

The two cities exemplify the ethnic dilemma. Boston as the ideal of assimilation

and submergence of identity. Philadelphia as cultural pluralism. Examining the religious, charitable and educational institutions in the two cities highlights the profound differences between the ideals of assimilation and cultural pluralism. Using the examples of the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard, these can be clearly observed in the responses of the two great institutions to the "rising tide of antisemitism in America in the first part of the twentieth century . . ." (p. 308)

Restrictive in admissions and assimilationist in outlook, Harvard even attempted to establish formal quotas for Jews. Penn, on the other hand, continued a tradition of "laissez-faire cultural pluralism." (p. 309) As such, these two important educational institutions may be seen as manifestations of the cultural contexts of their respective cities, and, in some sense, as representative of the ethnic dilemma.

While this book is rich in descriptive detail, it does suffer from one dissatisfying defect. There is a distinct lack of any notion of what I have called the ethnic dilemma. The reader, therefore, is at loose ends in attempting to interpret the historical impacts of the vignettes presented.

Lacking a theory of the ethnic dilemma, the reader is left with this rich and unfolding tapestry of description, but with no conceptual mechanism to aid interpretation. This, however, is not uncommon to edited collections. In the long run, detailed portrayals of ethnic life are valuable for the feel they give the reader about a time which can only be relived through books such as this.



Part of the Passover display last spring in the V. C. U. Cabell Library, arranged by Carol Parke and suggested by Dr. Harry Lyons

1984-1985 VCU JUDAIC STUDIES PROGRAM

Interpreting Scripture: The Hebrew Text. First semester. Beginners with no knowledge of Hebrew learn the Hebrew text of the Bible, to use Bible-study tools, requiring some knowledge of Hebrew, and to apply these to biblical interpretation. Emphasis is placed on the creation story and the Joseph narratives in the book of Genesis.

Modern Jewish Thought. Second semester. This course examines the writings of leading Jewish thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries. Students will seek to identify and analyze enduring issues arising from the encounter of Judaism with the modern world. Some of the topics to be investigated include the nature of God, the impact of the Holocaust, the nature of redemption, and the significance of the state of Israel.

The Holocaust: Second semester. A multidisciplinary examination of the events leading up to and culminating in the Nazi extermination of 6 million Jews, the historical settings of European Jewry and of German Fascism, the role of traditional anti-Semitism, the psychology of aggressor and victim, the Holocaust in art and literature, and the moral implications for today.

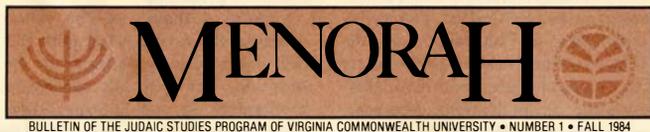
Perspective: Jewish Responses to Difficult Questions. A 16-part newspaper course in the *Reflector*, cosponsored by the Jewish Community Federation of Richmond and VCU's Office of Non-traditional Studies. A study guide is available for \$10 from the Nontraditional Studies Office to accompany the articles. The course continues through the fall and spring semesters.

Lunch and Learn. Informal brown-bag sessions held periodically to cover various Jewish themes and issues. Dates, topics, and campus meetings will be announced.

BOOK GRANT PRESENTED



Irving Scherr, representative of the Jewish Chautauqua Society, presents a book grant from the Society to Jack D. Spiro, director of the VCU Judaic Studies program, and to William J. Judd, Director of University Library Services, for the Judaica Collection of the Cabell Library.



Menorah is published quarterly by the Judaic Studies Program and the Judaic Culture Committee of the Virginia Commonwealth University. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, especially review essays of books with substantive, original content. Address all correspondence to Judaic Studies Program, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Va. 23284.

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