



1992

Menorah Review (No. 26, Fall, 1992)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/menorah>

 Part of the [History of Religion Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

© The Author(s)

Recommended Citation

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/menorah/25>

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the VCU University Archives at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Menorah Review by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.



MENORAH REVIEW



NUMBER 26 • CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY • FALL 1992

For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

Evangelicals and Jews: The Odd Couple's Partnership

by Joshua O. Haberman

The following article is excerpted from the lecture presented by Dr. Joshua O. Haberman for the Selma and Jacob Brown Annual Lecture held last March. The annual lecture is sponsored by the Center for Judaic Studies of Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Haberman is rabbi emeritus of Washington Hebrew Congregation and adjunct professor at the Wesley Theological Seminary.

Some 50 years ago a radical change took place in Jewish-Christian relations. Facing formidable common enemies, Catholics and mainline Protestants entered into serious dialogue with Jews. What about the Evangelicals?

Professor Marvin R. Wilson of Gordon College, a leading Evangelical historian and theologian, characterized the relationship between Jews and Evangelicals as "aloofness." "But today," he added — and that was less than 15 years ago — "we stand on the threshold of a new era."

What accounts for this long-standing aloofness? And what is now breaking the ice between Jews and Evangelicals?

As for the first question, what kept Jews and Evangelicals apart more than other denominations, my answer is geography. Jews are predominantly an urban people. More than 90 percent of American Jews live in big cities. At least until recently, Evangelical Christians, for the most part, were settled in rural areas. Only within the last few decades did they move in large numbers to the big cities, gain significant representation on the college campus and in the various professions. Prior to this recent demographic change, there was very little contact between Jews and Evangelicals and even less knowledge of one another — and lack of knowledge is the perfect breeding ground for huge misconceptions about each other.

Not knowing better, many Jews accepted the cartoon-like images of Evangelicals that were popularized by the Baltimore cynic, H.L. Mencken and others, in the aftermath of the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tenn. in 1925. Mencken, to the amusement of millions of readers, contemptuously referred to Evangelicals as people of the Bible Belt, rednecks, crackers, Bible-thumping fanatics and narrow-minded bigots. He called their ideas "degraded nonsense which country preachers are ramming and hammering into yokel skulls."

Evangelicals on their part, not knowing real, living Jews and unaware of their contemporary spirituality, fall back entirely on the Old Testament for their impressions of Judaism, impressions confounded by New Testament polemics against the Pharisees, priests and scribes, the people who rejected Christ and who, in turn, were rejected by Christendom as Christ killers on whom vengeance was taken generation after generation.

What accounts now for change in our mutual perception and relationship? What is finally breaking the ice between Jews and Evangelicals?

Two developments: First, more frequent person-to-person contact between Jews and Evangelicals as fellow students on the college campus and as colleagues in the professional work place. Second, the ever-growing impact of so-called "intertestamentary" studies that have led Christians to greater awareness of the Jewish roots of Christianity and convinced Jews of many affinities between rabbinic Judaism

IN THIS ISSUE

- *Evangelicals and Jews: The Odd Couple's Partnership*
- *Il Duce and Der Fuhrer*
- *From Peor's Heights to Crown Heights: The Continuity of Anti-Semitism*
- *Americanism and Judaism*
- *Book Briefings*

Editor: Jack D. Spiro

Editorial Consultant:

Herbert Hirsch

Production Manager: Kay W. Brill

Contributing Editors:

Earle J. Coleman

Frank E. Eakin Jr.

Cliff Edwards

David Ellenson

Peter J. Haas

Herbert Hirsch

James E. Lindsey

Robert Michael

Louis E. Newman

Matthew B. Schwartz

Robert M. Talbert

Melvin I. Urofsky

Leon J. Weinberger

Steven F. Windmueller

and the New Testament. Without belittling serious theological differences, I would point to three common characteristics shared by Jews and Evangelicals:

Direct Access to God

In an important study entitled *Religion in American Public Life* by A. James Reichley, Evangelicals are defined as "that branch of Christianity . . . that emphasizes direct experience by the individual of the Holy Spirit (born again) — and that regards the Bible as an infallible source of religious and moral authority." (p. 312)

Evangelicals believe in instant, personal access to God and the Holy Spirit. Prayers roll off their tongues in situations where others would not dare to intrude on God and they tell us that God talks back to them as well as tells them what to do. Such claims may arouse our suspicion of religious posturing or of self-hypnosis. And yet, having come to know a number of Evangelicals intimately, I cannot doubt their sincerity.

What is the real significance of their belief that God is available to them on call? It makes each Evangelical independent of

the institutional church. It is part of the doctrine of the priesthood of every believer. Evangelicals are bitterly opposed to any form of religious regimentation or church hierarchy. They see no need for the mediation of an institutional church. This is a point of kinship with Jews who, likewise, believe that no clerical introduction or mediation is needed when you turn to God in prayer. The psalmist addressed himself to God with the words "Thou, Who hearest prayer."

The Centrality of the Bible

The second and most obvious bond between Evangelicals and Jews is the Bible. No Christian group is more Bible-centered. Like Jews, they have raised up scripture as the supreme spiritual and moral authority. They glory in the Bible. Their speech and worship resonate with the Bible. They know it and, to my embarrassment, they often know it better than Jews. Someone said, "The Jews wrote the Bible and the Evangelicals study it."

All religious polls report that Evangelicals are the fastest growing religious community in America. What is the secret of their success?

I would credit their moral earnestness and realism based on biblical principles. They have targeted a number of issues that people really care about deeply. They differ sharply with liberal secularists and mainline churches in the approach to such social problems as the rise of teenage pregnancy (by some 400 percent in a single decade); the fact that 25 percent of white and 55 percent of black children now grow up in single-parent homes; and the immeasurable devastation of drug addiction; not to mention a crime rate that makes American streets the most unsafe in the world next to Beirut, Lebanon. As against those who would continue to treat the problems we have mentioned exclusively with more monetary appropriations and social tinkering, Evangelicals make a powerful case for attacking these problems on a moral and religious level. Jews, faithful to their Judaism, will be of one mind with Evangelical Christians in believing that these social problems cannot be solved without a moral response.

The Restoration of Jewish Peoplehood

The third article of faith uniting Evangelicals and Jews as partners will surprise my fellow Jews. It is the eschatology of Evangelicals, a scenario of the end of history that puzzles and even repels those who do not recognize its true significance. The approaching end of the world, the final tribulation, the last judgment and the end of all history are favorite preaching themes of Evangelicals. It so happens that in our time these themes of fear and trembling conform to an almost universal sense of an approaching catastrophe. We are in the

midst of a radical mood-switch from the optimism, progressivism and super confidence of the modern age. We are the post-modern generation, filled with pessimism and visions of future doom.

Curiously, the Evangelical vision of the end of history assigns to Jews a leading role in God's plan for the final days. The now dominant branch of Evangelicalism, which is known as dispensationalism, divides all of history into seven dispensations or periods of time in each of which mankind is put to the test by different events. According to dispensationalists, we are now in the sixth, the pre-final period of history. This is the world's last chance, they say, to come around and be saved through the gospel, which is the door God opened for gentiles to partake of his Covenant with Israel. All others are doomed to destruction except the Jews whose survival, albeit in a small remnant, is assured by God's unbreakable Covenant.

I cannot share the Evangelical eschatology in all of its parts, but I am impressed by the doctrine of the dispensationalists that the people of Israel are destined to survive. It contradicts the historic position of most Christian denominations that share a kind of "death-wish" for the Jewish people. From the close of the New Testament to the present age, the Christian mind has been perplexed by the continued existence of the Jewish people as a puzzle, a mystery, even a scandal. Having failed to acknowledge Jesus as God and Savior, the Jews were designated in the gospel according to John (8.44) "the children of the devil," deserving of severest punishment. But then, there is the mystery of Jewish survival. Could this perhaps be a special form of punishment? A long, lingering decline, destined to end with their final disappearance? This notion has been popularized in the myth of the eternally wandering Jew.

In this context, we appreciate the Evangelicals of the dispensationalists school who stand out believing in the future of a Jewish nation. Whereas others look on Judaism as something obsolete and often speak of themselves as the new Israel replacing the old Israel, Evangelical dispensationalists believe that God wants both a "carnal" Israel, that is, a Jewish people in the flesh — and a spiritual Israel, by which they mean Christian believers.

We are now, they say, near the end of the sixth, the pre-final dispensation, which will witness a time of dreadful tribulation for all mankind. Also, it will bring about the restoration of carnal Israel to their land. This idea is the main reason for the amazing pro-Zionism of Evangelicals. To them, the State of Israel is proof that their prophetic time table is correct.

Conclusion

Harvey Cox tells of an amusing

conversation with a Jewish friend. "A Christian neighbor of mine," he said, "put a bumper sticker on his car that said: I FOUND IT."

Thereupon, a Unitarian minister mounted a bumper sticker that said: "I'M STILL LOOKING."

The Jewish fellow's response was a bumper sticker that read: "WE NEVER LOST IT."

I do not resent the zealous missionary activities of Evangelicals in the gentile world. I bless them for every convert who, through them, discovers the faith we have never lost. Moreover, I believe that when Evangelicals thoroughly examine the faith they affirm so passionately, they are bound to conclude as did Karl Barth in his theological classic *Church Dogmatics* (I.2 Edinburgh: T.T. Clark, 1956, page 511):

"The Bible . . . is a Jewish book. It cannot be read and understood and expounded unless we are prepared to become Jews with the Jews."

Karl Barth did not mean conversion to Judaism, but the sharing of a Hebrew understanding and of Hebrew attitudes toward God, the world and the human condition.

By the same token, I believe that when Jews take the trouble of examining the faith of Evangelicals, we shall conclude that in some of its most essential elements, what Evangelicals believe is identical with the faith we have always called our own. As Ripley's famous cartoon would put it: BELIEVE IT OR NOT — JEWS AND EVANGELICALS ARE PARTNERS.

PSALM

*So why not pretend to be mere creatures
seeking only survival*

*letting the numbers
fend for themselves*

*turning off all inwardness
with its infinite craving —*

*Cushioned in the mundane
our minds mere footprints
seawash of the brain*

*chained to our destiny
by the simplest command
just to be*

*fate a mere transcient
following the sun*

*faith commuting nowhere
yet always on time:*

Praise God for answering why.

— Carol Adler

Il Duce and Der Fuhrer

*All or Nothing: The Axis
and the Holocaust,
1941-1943*

by Jonathan Steinberg
New York: Routledge,
Chapman, and Hall, Inc.

A Review Essay by
Steven Bowman

It was an open secret, even during the war, that areas under the control of the Italian army were safe havens for Jews persecuted by ethnic nationalism or Nazi ideology. Immediately after the war, scholars regularly pointed out the humanity of the Italian Fascists at the same time that the Nuremberg trials were convicting the German army and its Nazi masters for wholesale massacres of Jews and other non-combatants. The question arises, why rehash a story known for more than a generation and one which never has been challenged by any side to the circumstances?

Perhaps the question should be rephrased. While it is true that the Italian army protected Jews in Greece, Yugoslavia and southern France, some of the Fascist government did as well. On the other hand, the Italian army committed war atrocities, including gas attacks on Ethiopian soldiers and civilians as well as punitive massacres on Greek villagers. Hence the question, why not the Jews? If then a fact of history represents only part of the story, the historian has perforce to uncover the sub-surface realities that influence, if not shape, both the past and the present.

Steinberg has written a volume that is more than a history. Or rather more than a chronicle of the events and an explanation or interpretation of them. He asks a question, simple on the surface, that leads him into an analysis of the history and culture of two distinct civilizations, each caught up in a violent revolution. The question is why two armies subject to dictatorial leaders, who were allied, treated the Jews under their control in totally different ways. Here the author points up a fascinating phenomenon almost unique in history. In Greece and Yugoslavia, both armies functioned under relatively similar conditions during the same period. Therefore, we have a unique historical crucible within which to test the nature of two disparate cultures acting within the same contemporary reality.

The author builds his story carefully. Part One of the volume describes the events recreated from the documentary detritus of

two totalitarian bureaucracies. This, too, is part of contemporary research on the Holocaust period. For more than 30 years, scholars were content to study and analyze the Nuremberg and other post-war trial documents for their information. It was as if the lawyers, or rather the prosecutors, had proven the case and it was sufficient for scholars to organize, categorize and pontificate on the basis of this huge corpus. It is no wonder that anti-Holocaust historians were able to challenge the "Holocaust conspiracy" by appealing to a broader leadership, their cases drawn from a haphazard defense critique of the same material. Historians, however, find that a text has its true meaning in context rather than isolated from its *Sitz im Leben* and buried in a theoretical argument. Thus, Steinberg waded through Nazi and Fascist documents to understand or at least follow what they did and why they thought they were doing it.

The events related in the book fall into four phases during the period April 1941 to September 1943. The first, from April 1941 to June 1942, brought two armies of occupation, the German and the Italian, into the Balkans. The author calls this the phase of unsystematic murder. This was the heyday of the Croatian Ustasha butchering of the Serbs and Jews, both of whom fled to the Italian zone. Phase Two, from June to November 1942, he calls systematic murder. Here the Italian government as well as the army was aware of the Final Solution and, for many reasons, chose to protect Jews seeking asylum in the Italian zone. Phase Three, from November 1942 to July 1943, found the Italians sick of a war they saw as lost and, hence, they extended an active defense of the Jews in occupied Greece and France. The last act was from July 25 to September 8, 1943 wherein the Badoglio government in Italy protected Jews with a clear eye to its imminent surrender to the Allies who already had a foothold in the Italian patria.

So far we learn nothing new except a few more facts as well as a chronology of Italian attitudes. Helpful this is and useful for scholars and students of the Holocaust to follow the story within the context of the actual war. It may be important to note that the author is a modern historian and does not concern himself professionally with Jewish history. A new prospective on an old problem is always welcome.

Part Two of the book raises this study to the level of a major contribution, both for those working independently in Jewish or in general history. Here the author's comparative method raises a new focus based on his deep analysis of the two cultures involved. Just why and how do Germans and Italians differ? What are the basic characteristics of the Nazi and Fascist revolutions? How do the leaders of each compare autonomously and in relation to

each other? Finally, how do the Jews of Germany and Italy fit into the complex matrix of each culture such that the surface arguments of each revolution manifest themselves differently in each society? Here the author gives us a valuable lesson in historical interpretation that supplements his competent exercise in the methodology of the historical discipline in Part One.

In these four thematically taut chapters he changes style from chronological analysis to a more biblical contrast of opposites. The story, as in any historical narrative, goes beyond good Italians and bad Germans. The author is careful not to let moral didacticism cloud the vicissitudes of human nature. Why did one individual save documents that, if found by the Axis Gestapo, would cost him his life, yet when presented to the enemy would possibly mitigate his punishment? He summarizes Italian public life as "disorder, disobedience, and *menfreghismo*, . . . slowness, corruption and casual carelessness." As Steinberg states, "In effect, the vices of Italian public life made the virtues of humanity easier to practice." German bureaucracy, on the other hand, was a model of Prussian honesty and efficiency, in the abstract something to be admired.

**"Hitler felt affection for Mussolini;
Mussolini found Hitler repellent
and yet exhilarating, hypnotically
powerful, ultimately frightening."**

— Jonathan Steinberg

Yet, during the war, it is best summed up by the dilemma of an army officer in Serbia who correlated the number of hostages shot with the number who ought to have been shot in reprisal for attacks on German soldiers. The author concludes that there is much to understand from the impersonal language and the pedantic bureaucratise of the report that lists humans as *Bestanden* (supplies) just as the concentration camp referred to Jews as *Stucke* (pieces). "Evil," he reminds us, "is the perversion of good." Just as the Nazis perverted the autonomy of Jewish self-government in East Europe to organize the destruction of the Jews, so they perverted the efficiency of the Prussian civil service to dehumanize German culture.

And what of the charisma of Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini? Most important for the author is the "brutal friendship" between the two — of the admiration of the Nazi Fuhrer for Il Duce, his Fascist idol. It was "Hitler's affection for Mussolini that gave the Italians some limited freedom" to counter German military and civilian policies. It was Italian humanity that allowed some individuals to act decently within such a situation. "Hitler felt affection for Mussolini; Mussolini found Hitler repellent

and yet exhilarating, hypnotically powerful, ultimately frightening." In his analysis of the two dictators, there seems to be a deep metaphor of the male-female relationship. Mussolini, the historian notes, may have been Hitler's only friend.

The author's comparison of the two armies is not new but succinctly put. The Italian army was archaic, moribund, with an aged leadership and a lackadaisical manner. The Wehrmacht was taut, aggressive and rewarding of potential leadership in the field. Il Duce directed a royal army that was sympathetic to its Jews: "traditional, liberal, masonic, philo-semitic." Hitler, on the other hand, had his special SS military units imbued with anti-semitism and constantly issued reminders to his Wehrmacht staff that fraternization with "das Judentum" was a heinous crime against the new order. In illustration, the author tracked down an administrative guideline that sums up the anti-semitic ideal of the Third Reich; it should be cited in any course on the Holocaust.

His last chapter surveys the role of Jews in the modern histories of Italy and Germany as well as the responses of the respective majorities to their contributions. Again, nothing new that has not been studied extensively in monographs for the past generation. Yet the author infuses his summary with a moral invective worthy of the Bible, which he quotes in his conclusion. "The evils of fascism and national socialism became possible when . . . the fanatical followers of Hitler and Mussolini made men into gods." In turn, they "suffered for it;" the Germans with a physical destruction and the Italians with moral pangs. The Germans worshiped the Messiah of Unreason (*pace* Nietzsche). Both forgot the admonition of Moses: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me . . . thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them not serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Deuteronomy 5, 7-9). Perhaps herein we have a key to an understanding of the first post-war generation in Europe.

Steven Bowman is professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Cincinnati. He is

TALMUD

Teach me to number my days
slowly
teach me slowly

slowly teach me
then teach me how
to forget the number
now.

— Carol Adler

From Peor's Heights to Crown Heights: The Continuity of Anti-Semitism

*Anti-Semitism:
A Disease of the Mind*
by Theodore Rubin
New York:
Continuum Press

A Review Essay by
Matthew B. Schwartz

Why do people dislike Jews?

Multitudes of inkwells have been emptied in unceasing efforts to solve the mystery of anti-semitism. Clergymen, historians, philosophers, psychologists, novelists, film makers and many more have had their say. Yet, anti-semitism seems always ready to flare up someplace. In *Anti-Semitism: A Disease of the Mind*, Theodore Rubin, speaking from the view of a practicing psychoanalyst, offers what constitutes a theoretical psychoanalytic manual of anti-semitism.

One must begin, says Rubin, with understanding a fundamental point — that anti-semitism is a disease of the mind, a psychiatric problem, highly contagious and destructive and difficult to treat. All anti-semites are emotionally disturbed. Rubin introduces the term "symbol sickness" to describe bigotry-oriented illness and goes on to list as well as explain 14 main psychological characteristics of the bigot — symbol gap, obsession, hierarchical striving, envy and others. Although anti-semitism began in the pre-Christian era, Christianity gave it a new dimension. The Christian anti-semitic has very mixed feelings about Jesus and the crucifixion. In one sense, he resents Jesus; he hates the obligations and guilt the savior's life and death impose on mankind while at the same time resenting the Jews' family connection to him. The hatred of Jesus is transferred to this family, the Jews, who rejected his divinity.

Also, Jesus preached love and compassion, which inhibits the conscience, limiting the freedom to exercise such emotions as pure rage, revenge and murder (p. 57). The periodic flare-ups of violent anti-semitism reflect a displaced rebellion against inner unconscious tyranny. The meaning of the martyrdom of Jesus must be reinforced by new martyrdoms in a type of ritualistic displacement that provides the victimizer with a feeling of security rather than guilt or regret (p. 92).

The anti-semitic is impelled by a deeply

secret desire to be a Jew and to have the freedom from conscience and inner coercion that he believes Jews have. Deep down, he despises his own identity and wants to be the expatriate and outsider he perceives the Jew to be even while he vaunts his own patriotism and nationalism (p. 79).

The anti-semitic also is subject to an immense unconscious terror, "a homosexual panic leading to severe paranoid states." He "is in terror of his own unconscious homosexual feelings and homosexual attractions." When these feelings begin to emerge, he must do anything possible to repress them, including expressing them in brutal paranoid attacks against people who are not homosexual. He may seek to portray himself as macho to cover his need for warmth and dependency (p. 96).

Where the Jew has a strong sense of his place in the historical continuum and a feeling of time and place, the anti-semitic has no strong sense of roots to time or people. He substitutes a fixation on geographical place that he praises as patriotism. His sense of time is narrow, limited to the new, leaving him frustrated, cut off, envious and enraged (p. 87).

Why do anti-semites typically complain that Jews are pushy, vulgar, cowardly and lacking in manners? This may stem from envy of exactly these characteristics. They envy the Jews' seeming freedom from censored expression and their articulateness. "Is lack of manners actually the antithesis of a self-hating overlay of affectation? Is cowardice really evidence of self-preservation and, yes, compassion?" In symbol sickness, death is often idealized in contrast to the Jewish desire and reverence for life.

This book sticks almost exclusively to theory and, although its ideas are stimulating, they are a step removed from hard reality. Only the very interesting chapter on Hitler's opinion of Jews bridges the gap between speculation and reality by using several selections from Hitler's own writings to explain his primeval delusional paranoia and its horrifying consequences.

One may doubt that education can help, as Rubin hopes, to reduce anti-semitism. A reader also may find pointless Rubin's distinction between good Christians and anti-semites who cannot, by definition, be good Christians. (some of my best friends are Christians?). It is clear, too, that although early Christianity did add new forms to anti-semitism, in a real sense Jew-hatred has remained remarkably consistent since centuries before the New Testament.

Where did anti-semitism begin? Can we trace it to the story of Isaac (*Genesis* 26:20f., see Rashi) or even to *Genesis* 12:3? When Rabbi Jannai had to meet with Roman officials, he would study the story of Jacob and Esau. Mark Twain saw the origins of anti-semitism in the Egyptians' jealousy and resentment of Joseph, despite the help he

brought them. Perhaps the first complete anti-semitic diatribe is the one reflected in the insightful midrashic interpretation of Balaam's prophecy in *Numbers*. Hired by King Balak of Moab to curse the Israelites, who were encamped at the Heights of Baal Peor near Moabite territory, Balaam is instead ordered by God to bless them. The midrash comments that from Balaam's blessing, one can see what curses he originally had in mind. Balaam's planned anti-semitic diatribe is apparent in the praise that he, in fact, did pronounce. From the Heights of Peor through the ages to Crown Heights, the Jew-hater's supply of maledictions is remarkably consistent and displays not only the emotional sickness that Rubin describes but also the perversion or blunting of any higher spiritual impulse. Many of these themes appeared in news accounts of the Crown Heights disturbances of August 1991. The Jew-hating rabble overturned cars as well as threw rocks and bottles telling reporters this showed how strong they were. They bewailed the feeling that they were abandoned and betrayed by men, children by their fathers and women by husbands or lovers. They spoke of being unwanted, neglected by the government and looked down upon by their Hassidic neighbors; the Jews only want to be left alone and will not mingle with them. The rioters complained that they looked around their community and saw thousands of lives broken.

Balaam's diatribe qua blessing, more than 3,000 years ago, dealt with all these points and showed that he was planning to voice these same complaints. In the eyes of God, it is the Israelites who had the true strength of lions, yet they were not wantonly violent (*Numbers* 23:24 and 24:9). They look with pride to wise and loving ancestors, and they derive security from their family lives (23:9, 24:5). The Israelites can be friendly to outsiders, but they are not jealous of others and do not wish to be like them. They have a strong sense of identity as well as a unique and compelling purpose (23:0). God loves them and derives joy from them, and their individual lives are filled with meaning (23:8, 10, 21, 22).

The anti-semitism in Crown Heights expressed itself largely in socioeconomic terms, but Balaam's blessing dealt as well with the usual theological canards of the Jew-hater's repertoire. Accusations of the Jews' greed, debauchery and guilt and their damnation and rejection by God were all refuted in the words God placed in the mouth of Balaam. God had, in fact, seen no evil among the Israelites (23:21). He cared for them and promised them a most glorious history (24:14). He did not reject or displace them (23:19). Balaam was moved to wish that his own end could be like theirs (23:10).

Can the anti-semitic ever learn a lesson? Perhaps some can, but Balaam did not. Motivated heavily by the greed and rage of

which he wanted to accuse the Jews, he cleverly advised Balak to harm them by weakening their loyalty to God, to their families and to their unique purpose. He himself ultimately met a well-deserved and violent death at their hands.

Matthew B. Schwartz is professor of history at Wayne State University.

Americanism and Judaism

*Rabbis and Lawyers:
The Journey from Torah
to Constitution*
by Jerold S. Auerbach
Bloomington:
Indiana University Press

A Review Essay by
Rafael Medoff

Are the professional and political inclinations of American Jewry the modern, secularized expressions of traditional Jewish values? In this compelling reinterpretation of the American Jewish acculturation process, Jerold S. Auerbach maintains that the career choices and political activities of many American Jews are actually less an indication of lingering affection for Jewish tradition than they are evidence of the search by some Jews for means to distance themselves from that tradition.

The theory that the Jewish values of centuries gone by have resurfaced, secularized, in the form of a contemporary Jewish predilection for certain types of professional and political behavior is commonly applied as an explanation for American Jewish involvement in leftwing politics. Gerald Sorrin has devoted an entire book, *The Prophetic Minority: American Jewish Immigrant Radicals, 1889-1920*,¹ to the thesis that Jewish socialists on the old Lower East Side used biblical allusions in their speeches as a way of expressing affection for Jewish tradition. Jeffrey Gurock was probably closer to the truth when he suggested that "these holy references were mostly the best way of communicating to their still-religious potential constituency."²

Auerbach concurs that "socialism — except for its Labor Zionist variety — offered an alternative to a Jewish identity, an exit from Judaism rather than any modern restatement of ancient Jewish values," and sees the Jewish attachment to American law in a similar light. He challenges the view, articulated most fervently by Donna Arzt,³

that the disproportionate number of American Jews who have taken up public interest demonstrates "a kind of loyalty to the Jewish 'tradition' of public service." Arzt believes that public interest law provides American Jewish attorneys with the framework in which to express that "latent component of Jewishness," which cannot be lost through assimilation, a timeless Jewish political style that will live on. Auerbach maintains that the opposite is true. "For Jews who so preferred, and many did, the identification with American law and justice could even provide an escape from Judaism," he argues. "Among Jews, it has been suggested (by Joel Carmichael — RM), 'one way of hiding is to choose a universal mask'; as defenders of the American rule of law, and as champions of social justice, Jews located themselves securely within the prevailing liberal precepts of modern America."

Those who have grown accustomed to thinking in terms of the confluence of Americanism and Judaism may be startled by Auerbach's contention that the two diverge in more ways than they converge. Yet Auerbach does appear to be on solid ground when he contrasts the American Constitution, which "rests upon a conception of individual freedom," with traditional Judaism, which "imposes a collective obligation of obedience." While "the constitutional emphasis upon personal liberty usually overrides competing communal claims," the Jewish legal tradition, by contrast, "strongly asserts the principle of collective responsibility, even for intimately private activities." Those American Jews who have insisted on the compatibility of these two conflicting legal traditions have actually been trying to "eradicate the nagging duality within their own identity," Auerbach maintains. The "compatibility" thesis is rooted in the American Jewish yearning "for full integration into American society, fed by apprehension lest covenantal distinctiveness undermine the effort."

That integration happened, according to Auerbach, in part because of a gradual transfer of Jewish legal authority from rabbis to acculturated Jewish attorneys, which took place in the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century. Certainly there is considerable evidence to bolster Auerbach's fascinating theory. The social and economic pressures under which immigrants labored, combined with the freedom to assimilate what Americans offered, helped accelerate the erosion of rabbinical authority. Many of the men who subsequently assumed positions of power in the American Jewish community were lawyers. The two most outstanding were, of course, Louis Marshall and Louis Brandeis. Marshall was a dominant force among the successful German Jewish immigrants associated with the American Jewish Committee, of which he was president from

1912 until his death in 1929. At the same time, Marshall's influence was not limited to the "Our Crowd" elite. His crucial support for the Jewish Theological Seminary (which at that time was closer to Orthodoxy than to what is today known as Conservative Judaism) and his tireless lobbying against immigration restrictions, helped ensure that his descriptions of the Constitution as the "holy of holies, an instrument of sacred import" would be taken seriously by audiences far removed from the pews of Temple Emanu-El.

Brandeis' role as a Jewish leader is better known than Marshall's, and his part in furthering the rabbi-to-lawyer transition is perhaps more obvious. Who could have been more suited to such a role than a Jewish Supreme Court Justice known as "old Isaiah"? In an expertly crafted chapter on "Zionism as Americanism," Auerbach shows how Brandeis, devoted to the idea of running the American Zionist movement like a business corporation (or a law firm!) filled its key positions with fellow lawyers who would help mold a new, Americanized Zionism distinct from the European variety. The speech-makers and nationalist ideologues of Old World Zionism were supplanted by attorneys and hard-headed businessmen for whom Palestine was either an attractive investment or a sort of experiment station for the *noblesse oblige* values of America's Progressive Era.

Thus, by 1915, with Marshall at the helm of the American Jewish Committee and Brandeis in charge of the American Zionist movement, "lawyers controlled the major organizational expressions of

American Judaism," Auerbach writes. Rabbinical influence in the American Jewish community had been severely eroded, and "lawyers stepped in to provide a secular legal frame of reference for Jewish acculturation," as Auerbach puts it. "Their fervent attachments to the American legal system defined a new identification for American Jews."

In a concluding chapter that spans the Roosevelt era, Auerbach explores the parallel leadership roles of Stephen Wise, the rabbi, and Joseph Proskauer, the lawyer. Some of this is familiar territory; Wise's wartime record has received extensive treatment elsewhere,⁴ while Auerbach himself has already authored the definitive essay on Proskauer as a "court Jew,"⁵ which appears here in a somewhat abridged version. One could argue that the most important pair of American Jewish leaders during the Hitler years was not Wise and Proskauer at all but rather Wise and Abba Hillel Silver—both rabbis. Could it be that the immigrants of the early 1900s, having passed through the initial stages of acculturation (partly via the rabbi-to-lawyers process), had by the 1930s become sufficiently secure in both their American and Jewish identities to turn back to rabbis (Wise and Silver) as their moral, if not legal, authorities? This intriguing possibility will surely receive its due consideration by other historians as they begin to explore the implications of Auerbach's fascinating thesis.

Rafael Medoff teaches Jewish history at Ohio State University and Denison University.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1985.
- ² See Gurock's review of the Sorrin book in *Jewish Social Studies* 49 (Spring 1987).
- ³ "The People's Lawyers: The Predominance of Jews in Public Interest Law," *Judaism* 35 (Winter 1986).
- ⁴ For example, in Melvin Urofsky's biography, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise* (Albany, N.Y.: 1982), in Henry Feingold's essay, "Stephen Wise and the Holocaust," *Midstream* 29 (January 1983) and in my own *The Deafening Silence: American Jewish Leaders and the Holocaust* (New York: 1987).
- ⁵ See Auerbach's review of *Proskauer: His Life and Times*, in *American Jewish History* 68 (September 1979).

how can i give away what i've never had unless someone wants a midlife mama in running shoes and sweats

untrained in anything but knitting socks and cooking soup with no consciousness to raise, only children, and no banners to wave, only hands

this rummage sale nanny with no tangible goods for anyone to desire but the unmerited wealth of a soul on fire

— Carol Adler

SAVING FACE

"Be humble and likeable to all people, and specially to members of your household."

Talmud

Should I be humble and likeable to my own household of one?

*For what am I if meek and mild but a parody of traits
I've purposely labored to shed
in order to be honest with myself—
What is self-directed humility
but self-indulgent pride?*

*And if indeed a divided household can't stand
in order to live with myself
and save face I'd have to
excommunicate that teacher's pet:*

Complacency is vain and vanity disrespect—

*So for one I say
an eye for an eye.
Charity begins at home.*

— Carol Adler

BALANCING

"It is a moral imperative that orphans pay the debt of their fathers."

Talmud

*If I could itemize and price
each debt considering depreciation*

*or maybe as in the case
of antiques and art
their estimated accretion*

*add to this list all the
intangibles of human feeling
then subtract all past services rendered
for which payment is still due*

*and divide this sum by the infinite
number of persons waiting to be paid*

*I would have to spend the rest of my
days not paying but balancing*

*So I've chosen to remain
indebted.*

— Carol Adler

BOOK BRIEFINGS

Editor's Note: Inclusion of a book in "Briefings" does not preclude its being reviewed in a future issue of Menorah Review.

Holy Living: Saints and Saintliness in Judaism. By Louis Jacobs. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, Inc. The word "hasid" is technically used to refer to what may be described as the saint or saintly personality in Jewish history and tradition. This book is the only in-depth study of the phenomenon. It offers a scholarly and sensitive portrait of the hasid as a theoretical style, and it describes many individuals throughout history who have personified the essence of the hasid. The author also analyzes how Jewish saintliness resembles and how it differs from saintliness in other religions.

Night Tales Remembered: Fables From the Shammass. By Michael Jay Katz. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, Inc. In this book, the author continues his Night Tales Trilogy, in which an old synagogue caretaker spins the tales that have been handed down through the centuries. The scene is a medieval synagogue somewhere in Germany. Volume I is *Night Tales From the Shammass* and Volume III is *Night Tales From Long Ago* (1991). Although the style is fresh and new, these stories lose nothing of their ancient flavor and wisdom.

The Journey Back From Hell. By Anton Gill. William Morrow & Company. This book depicts the Holocaust and its aftermath in the haunting words of its survivors. Based on interviews with 120 people from 14 countries who lived through the horror, it is one of the few books that offer direct testimony not only from people who were children at the time but also from those with adult memories of the camps. It is a stunning work of oral history that records the experiences of German, Hungarian, Austrian, Czechoslovakian and Polish Jews, as well as resistance fighters and political prisoners.

Defending the Faith: Nineteenth-Century American Jewish Writings on Christianity and Jesus. By George L. Berlin. Albany: State University of New York Press. While this book's concern is the centuries-old argument between Christians and Jews, it focuses on the American setting of that argument and shows how American conditions shaped it. Traditionalists emphasized the differences, assuming an outsider stance with regard to American culture. In contrast, Reformists identified the highest ideals of both Christianity and America with Judaism. The author demonstrates that the Jewish writings are not a matter of interest so much for their theological content but, more importantly, for their exposition of the struggle within the Jewish community to define its relationship to American culture and society.

The Jews in the Greek Age. By Elias J. Bickerman. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. This is a vivid account of the Jewish people from the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.E. to the revolt of the Maccabees. It is a rich story of Jewish social, economic and intellectual life and of relations between the Jewish community and the Hellenistic rulers and colonizers of Palestine - a historical narrative told with consummate skill.

The Existence and Unity of God. By Fred Rosner. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, Inc. No Jewish thinker has exercised as significant an influence in his own and in subsequent generations as Moses Maimonides - Rambam. Rosner introduces as well as translates three treatises long attributed to the Rambam and argues convincingly that two of them are spurious. He has performed an invaluable service in making these treatises available for the first time in English. Those interested in Maimonides and in the history of Jewish thought will find this volume as fascinating as it is essential.

The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe. Edited by Lucy S. Dawidowicz. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, Inc. Renowned historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz has assembled a collection of autobiographies, memoirs, reminiscences and letters by some 60 Eastern European Jews whose lives and works form a rich sampling of Jewish responses to modernity. The thoughtfulness with which Dawidowicz has arranged and anthologized these works, which were written between the end of the 18th century and the eve of the Holocaust, makes this book more than the sum of its parts: *The Golden Tradition*, embracing history, autobiography and philosophy, is an affirmation of the diversity of the Jewish spirit as it struggled to reconcile its own religious and cultural traditions with the demands of a changing world.

They Made Their Souls Anew. By Andre Neher. Albany: State University of New York Press. This volume is an original, philosophical discussion in which the author relates the lives of prominent 19th and 20th century Jews to traditional Jewish thought on issues of assimilation, the Holocaust and liberal intellectualism.

Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israeli and American Experiences. By Charles S. Liebman and Steven M. Cohen. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. What does being Jewish mean to Israeli and American Jews? How has each group reinterpreted the common Jewish tradition? In this fascinating book, a political scientist living in Israel and a sociologist living in America explore how Israeli and American Jews differ in the way they conceive of their Judaism. The many divergences discussed by the authors do not, in their opinion, herald the emergence of two separate Judaisms but suggest far more differentiation than some observers currently recognize.

Israeli Pacifist: The Life of Joseph Abileah. By Anthony C. Bing. Syracuse University Press. For more than 50 years, Joseph Abileah has worked for reconciliation between Arabs and Jews. An ordinary man made extraordinary by his unwavering commitment to nonviolent social change, he shows what is possible when antagonists in conflict are not regarded as inhuman but as potentially good men and women. This engaging life of an Israeli pacifist is also a study of an alternative history of Israel, one that reflects the tensions between spiritual and political Zionism.

The Meaning of Yiddish. By Benjamin Harshav. Berkeley: University of California Press. Yiddish embodied an unusual culture and gave birth to a rich literature. With a rare combination of erudition and insight, the author investigates the major aspects of Yiddish language and culture. His analysis shows the origins of Yiddish and what it offers even as it ceases to be a "living" language. Both historical and linguistic contexts are substantively explored.

Stones in the Soul: One Day in the Life of an American Rabbi. By Ben Kamin. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. In this unique book of spirituality that will appeal to readers seeking inspiration in a confusing world, the author tells his story using the unusual narrative device of describing one particular day in his pastoral work. At each juncture of the day, various incidents serve as emotional points of departure, a microcosmic lens through which to view such fundamental human issues as mourning a loved one's death, the rebellion of children against their parents and how we confront cruelty as well as evil in our homes, neighborhoods and cities. The events of the day are the setting for the author's probing insights into the human condition.

Voices of Israel. By Joseph Cohen. Albany: State University of New York Press. The author takes an in-depth, critical look at three novelists and two poets who stand at the forefront of contemporary Israeli literature and whose works have been widely read, studied and admired in the Western world. Complementing the critiques are interviews with the five Israeli writers. The issues discussed combine with the essays to provide comprehensive insight into the contemporary Israeli mind. The writers examined are Yehuda Amichai, A. B. Yehoshua, T. Carmi, Aharon Appelfeld and Amos Oz.

The Midrash: An Introduction. By Jacob Neusner. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, Inc. This volume sets forth the way in which Judaism reads the Hebrew Bible. In this masterful presentation, the reader is introduced to the classics of Jewish Bible interpretation, with special attention to the way in which the rabbis of talmudic times read the Torah, the Book of Ruth and Song of Songs. The seven Midrash compilations are introduced with a lucid account of their main points, accompanied by selections that give a direct encounter, in English, with the Bible as Judaism understands it.

Between Redemption and Perdition: Modern Anti-Semitism and Jewish Identity. By Robert S. Wistrich. New York: Rutledge. The author focuses on the challenge to Jewish identity posed by the conflicting forces of enlightenment, emancipation, modern political anti-semitism and secular ideologies like Zionism, nationalism and socialism. Exploring the current antagonistic trends in France, Britain, Germany, the U.S.S.R. and the Middle East, Wistrich demonstrates convincingly how the Jewish world remains suspended in the gray zone between messianic hopes of redemption and the ongoing trauma of possible extinction. To confront this challenge without surrendering to violence and fanaticism is, he believes, one of the great tasks facing Jews and non-Jews alike in the closing years of the twentieth century.

The Netherlands and Nazi Germany. By Louis de Jong. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Concentrating on three central topics - the Holocaust, the resistance and the leadership of Queen Wilhelmina - de Jong recaptures the wartime experience of Holland and explains some of the more anomalous happenings. The swift, devastating conquest of the Netherlands by the Nazis made possible three appalling weapons of control over the Dutch: fear, the dividing of people and deception. De Jong recaptures a terrible time and the grim fate of a nation accustomed to centuries of peace, suddenly plunged into the Nazis' obscene war.

Jewish Spiritual Practices. By Yitzhak Buxbaum. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, Inc. This book incorporates, in an encyclopedic presentation, the practical advice offered by Jewish spiritual masters over the centuries. While drawing mostly from hasidic sources, the author has sifted through dozens of books looking for the down-to-earth practical suggestions made by these masters. Topics include eating, meditation, speech, sleep, sex and others. Hasidic stories have long captured the hearts of the Jewish world and beyond. This volume brilliantly succeeds in bringing the practical and devotional side of Judaism to all who seek spiritual growth.

Exploring Jewish Ethics. By Eugene B. Borowitz. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. In a series of brilliant essays, Borowitz explores whether the personal freedom cherished by today's Jew can have an effective role in a life shaped by the claims of Jewish law and tradition. He puts forth an ethical approach to problems as diverse as marital sexuality, capitalism's temptations, psychotherapy, social justice, homosexuality and more. Among those he debates in these pages are Robert Nozick, Jurgen Moltmann, Hans Kung, Paul Van Buren, Masao Abe, Aharon Lichtenstein and James Gustafson. He formulates an ethics of the autonomous Jewish selfliving in Covenant, intimately bound to the Jewish people and their God.



NUMBER 26 • CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY • FALL 1992

Menorah Review is published by the Center for Judaic Studies of Virginia Commonwealth University. Comments and manuscripts are welcome. Address all correspondence to Center for Judaic Studies, Box 2025, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA 23284-2025.

JUDAIC CULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Robert M. Talbert, chairman
 Harry Lyons, founding member
 Stephen M. Auerbach
 Irving Blank
 Earle J. Coleman
 Darryl C. Dance
 William H. Duvall
 Cliff Edwards
 Bea Fine
 Barbara J. Ford
 Lisa Fratkin
 Robert Hyman
 Amy Krumbein
 Jeffrey Levin
 Barbara Lowenstein
 Elaine Rothenberg
 Barbara Shocket
 Mark Sisisky
 Morris Yarowsky

Ex officio:

David R. Hiley
 Charles P. Ruch

Nonprofit organization
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Richmond, Virginia
 Permit No. 869