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# MENORAH

## REVIEW



NUMBER 27 • CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY • WINTER 1993

## For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

### Transcending Tolerance

#### *Tolerance and Transformation: Jewish Approaches to Religious Pluralism*

by Sandra B. Lubarsky  
Cincinnati: Hebrew Union  
College Press

A Review Essay  
by Earle J. Coleman

Sandra B. Lubarsky has written a superb prolegomenon to all future discussions of Judaism and pluralism; i.e., the view that no religion has a monopoly on spiritual truths. Her forcefully argued, elegantly succinct account is quite timely since growing number of scholars exist who regard pluralism as today's most urgent topic for theology and philosophy of religion. Alongside perennial questions about the existence of God and evil, pluralism raises a host of challenging issues: Given the often mutually exclusive claims of the world religions, are there non-relative truths? Is dialogue between and among religions possible? If so, what are the proper goals of such dialogue? What is the significance of chosenness in a pluralistic world? And, as Lubarsky asks, "How can a Jew best approach non-Jewish traditions?"

Because questions of one's own faith in relation to other faiths have proliferated with recent advancements in communication and transportation, it is not surprising that writings thus far have often been sophisticated, dogmatic and insensitive, as when Christian apologists assert that the ethical Hindu worshiping Krishna is actually an anonymous Christian worshipping Christ without realizing it. Again, some contemporary Jews, for whom only the Noachide model is recognized as salvific, deny that adherents of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism can attain salvation within the context of their own traditions. Lubarsky rejects the idea that Jews should tolerate other religions, because toleration presupposes that one party is superior. Nor is the author satisfied with the view that

Jews should learn to appreciate different religions since she denies that appreciation is enough to sustain fruitful dialogue. Rather, hers is an eloquent plea for an openness that does not resist transformation. She endorses the "transformation dialogue," espoused by the Protestant theologian, John Cobb, which renders one open to change through the absorption of insights from other religions. In support of Lubarsky, one might ask: How profound is one's encounters in art, love and religion if they did not involve self-transformation?

As she observes, dialogue between religions need not entail a loss of one's own tradition. After all, if the food of other cultures nourishes one's body and if their art moves one emotionally, may not their religions have the capacity to inspire one spiritually? To approach another religion may be to move closer to one's own. Of course, studying a different religion can lead to confusion, disdain for one's own path, and conversion or atheism. But did not Martin Buber speak of the religious life in terms of walking a narrow ridge, one devoid of security? Walking a tightrope furnishes an apt metaphor. The tightrope walker who succeeds reaches security, but the way itself cannot be secure. Like the balancing pole that sustains the tightrope artist, one may carry her own religion along so that it can balance, temper and, ultimately, be strengthened by the encounter with another tradition. As the tightrope walker achieves greater confidence after her journey, the student of another religion, who perseveres in her travel, may find her own faith deepened. She may be like the man whom T.S. Eliot writes about, one who leaves a place only to return and see it for the first time. For Lubarsky,

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"an affirmation of the theological relevance of other religions—is also the more profound way of remaining faithful as Jews of God's presence in our lives." In fact, she denies that Judaism can be defined independently of what it is in relation to other religions.

Given that religions have basic doctrinal disagreements, the skeptic sometimes wonders: "When religions contradict each other, they cannot all be right; are they all wrong?" But Lubarsky emphasizes that pluralism is not a relativism that denies the existence of objective truths. She criticizes relativism for assuming a parity among religions and, therefore, eliminating the point of dialogue; and, she perceives a further problem with relativism in that it must accept religious cannibalism, human sacrifices and religious wars of aggression as being on the same footing with feeding the poor, giving charity to others and working for peace. In defense of pluralism, Lubarsky states: "Unless value is transcendent of particular traditions, we are all prisoners of relativism." According to her, one's own tradition may lack significant truths that are present in other religions. Therefore, enlightenment is the goal of dialogue because it is assumed that through such interaction one can discover

truths either absent from or inconspicuous within her own tradition.

Lubarsky offers various reasons in favor of pluralism as opposed to any absolutism or exclusivism in which one claims her own religion is the only true vehicle. One of her fundamental reasons for rejecting absolutism is that she believes one cannot transcend her own subjectivity; another is that absolutism has had a history of violence. Of course, it is not difficult to marshal additional reasons in support of pluralism. For example, Descartes' proof that there is an external world may be employed. He believed that if reality consists of only our minds and ideas then God is deceiving us, for there surely appears to be an outside, independent, physical world. But, since to be a deceiver is to be imperfect and since God is perfect, he cannot be deceiving us about the existence of the material world. Similarly, one could ask: If there is but one true religion, why would God deceive us with so many convincing counterfeits? Each of the world religions attracts with its great art — whether poetry, music, painting, sculpture, dance, architecture, calligraphy or literature — as well as with its miracle stories, accounts of revelation, moral codes, sacred spaces, saints or gurus, great thinkers, ascetics and humanitarians. Indeed, students of comparative religion are prone to discover that the more one studies different religions, the harder it becomes for him to elevate one over all others. If one does not ascribe truth to each, how can he explain the fact that all the major traditions share, say, the golden rule? As Lubarsky realizes, any claim that Judaism is the supreme religion must come to terms with, for example, the fact that Hinduism has its spiritual masterpiece, the *Bhagavad Gita*, Christianity its *New Testament*, Islam its *Koran* and China its *Tao Te Ching*. Each is a religious and an aesthetic classic that espouses moral principles of the highest order. One wonders how these works originated if there is but one spiritual fountain. And Hinduism, for example, embraces not merely morality but ethical monotheism. Since it contains ethics, monotheism, aesthetic import and a bewildering number of schools from which to choose, one wonders on what grounds it can be relegated beneath Judaism.

Because religion is a human phenomenon and the noblest expressions of humanity flourish in different cultures, truth cannot be exclusively assigned to any single religion. In addition, since religions are human institutions, we must judge them by the quality of the humans associated with them. Thus, John Hick, who has taught at Claremont Graduate School, from which Lubarsky received her Ph.D., has proposed that if religions are judged by the number of saints they produce, no religion will prevail over all others. Speculating about God's concern for all his children, Prashant Miranda, a contemporary East Indian philosopher, states:

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"The revelation of a God of love must embrace all nations, ages and religions, but if he restricts His revelation to the chosen people of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament and allows a large part of humanity to sit in darkness and death, he cannot be the God of love." In a sympathetic vein, Lubarsky declares, "To claim that Judaism or Christianity or any other religion is the one, complete, final truth by which all individuals shall gain salvation is to commit to idolatry."

Lubarsky's exposition proceeds through a critical analysis of four recent Jewish thinkers: Leo Baeck, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber and Mordecai Kaplan. While Baeck recoiled from the exclusivism of Jesus' words, "No man cometh unto the father but by me," he himself denied the truth value of all non-Jewish traditions. A cultural rather than an epistemological pluralist, Baeck called for dialogue, not theological conversation but to affirm the rights of all religions to proclaim their message. Considering Baeck's philosophical insularity, it is not surprising that Lubarsky faults him for his shallow grasp of Buddhism. His characterization of Buddhisms "the religion of egoism" would be false of any major religion and is especially ironic with respect to Buddhism in which the concept of an enduring self is sometimes denied. Perhaps Baeck's contribution to pluralism was to underscore the importance of political freedom as a prerequisite for ideological freedom.

For Franz Rosenzweig, religious dialogue is theological and philosophical, not merely political as it was with Baeck. Unfortunately, Rosenzweig rejects Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism on the false grounds that they regard the individual and the world as mere illusions. Instead, Buddhists speak about discovering one's Buddha Nature and powerfully affirm the reality of the world in their dictum that "Nirvana is samsara," which means that the realm in which all suffering is extinguished is identical to the present spatial-temporal world. Additionally, most Hindus

are theists who recognize the integrity of the individual atman (soul) and interpret the world as the creative play (maya) of Brahman, not as any mere illusion. Moreover, Taoists emphasize the importance of self-cultivation so that the ego-form self can be transformed into one's true self. Rather than perceive the world as illusory, Taoism uncovers and celebrates nature, in all its concrete modes, through landscape, architecture, painting, calligraphy, the tea ceremony, martial arts, medicine, and even cooking.

Assessing Christian thought, Rosenzweig criticizes the need for any third person between oneself and God, holding that the lack of any intermediary between the individual and God is what distinguishes Judaism from Christianity. Interestingly, a representative Christian response found in Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* indicates that one must behold even the mediator Christ through a sacramental intermediary: "My eyes could not bear to behold You in Your own divine brightness, nor could all the world bear to see You in the light and glory of Your majesty. Therefore, you greatly help my weakness by hiding Yourself under this Holy Sacrament [the sacrament is Holy Communion]."

Rosenzweig surely raises the right question by asking how one can be converted if he has been chosen from birth. He believes all non-Jewish religions will eventually merge in the permanent, eternal life of Judaism. Of course, Christians have long awaited a similar convergence of all religions into one holy, apostolic, universal church. Totally opposed to the pluralism Lubarsky supports, such views appear to be ahistorical, since members of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam are flourishing rather than declining. Hence, the Jew or Christian who forecasts the consolidation of all other religions into his own is moved more by optimism than by any apparent evidence.

It was Buber who insisted that dialogue between religions must go beyond toleration

to mutual transformation. But Lubarsky faults him for not following through by engaging in sustained transformative dialogue himself. Here one of his own book titles is apt since he should certainly receive credit for *Pointing the Way*. Buber does find the I-Thou relation in Christianity as well as Judaism, but he argues that the relationship between Jews and God is more intense because there is no intermediary present. Buber was very concerned about what he called "ditheism," i.e., worshiping Jesus instead of God and thereby undermining the immediacy between humanity and the eternal Thou. Naturally, the Christian rejoinder would be to deny any dichotomy between Jesus and God through some version of the incarnation doctrine. That Buber was not wholly prepared for dialogue with Christianity, or any other tradition, is apparent in his remarks such as: "Whatever in Christianity is creative is not Christianity but Judaism . . ." and " . . . I am certain that no other community of human beings has entered with such strength and fervor into this experience [of relationship with God] as have the Jews."

Mordecai Kaplan rejects the status of chosenness, which poses a significant problem for pluralism, and also recognizes the autonomous value of non-Jewish religious traditions. But Kaplan's concept of religion as the heightened expression of the goals of a civilization is atheistic. Furthermore, given his cultural relativism, interreligious discussion is reduced to the exchange of societal preferences, for there are not objective truths to be gleaned by either participant. On the side of pluralism, Kaplan wisely disparages the idea of there being one universal religion in the future. Would humankind really wish for a single world religion any more than for a single world art? Again consonant with pluralism, Kaplan conceives of Judaism — like art — as always prepared for the arrival of novelty since absolute religion and static art both inhibit the creativity of the human spirit.

In the end, Baeck cut himself off from other theologies, Christian as well as Asian; Rosenzweig turned to other theologies but profoundly misunderstood Asian systems; Buber, at least, made tentative overtures toward dialogue; but Kaplan's ethnocentrism renders dialogue impossible. Thus, it clearly remains for Jewish scholars of Lubarsky's generation to continue and deepen interfaith discussions. Exploring the prospects for mutually transformative dialogue between Judaism and, for example, Buddhism, Lubarsky suggests that since Judaism stresses the ethical and Buddhism the aesthetic, each can learn from the other's emphasis. More importantly, both can profit from exploring the relationship between ethics and aesthetics; in fact, a contemporary process philosopher, Charles Hartshorne, has argued that aesthetic value is more inclusive than ethical since infants and lower animals are

precluded from the domain of the moral.

To those who believe they have rational grounds for the superiority of their own religion, it may be sobering to remember that religions are usually acquired on the basis of birth circumstances rather than intellectual analysis. Students of world religions may also attain some of the humility that nobles all saints by listening to the great historian, Arnold Toynbee, who once suggested that no one will ever live long enough, learn enough and know enough to assert: "My religion is best." In a sense, Toynbee is correct. Obviously, one life hardly affords a person the opportunity to appropriate her own tradition much less master others. Nonetheless, some will continue to feel enough to say, "My religion is best."

*Earle J. Coleman is professor of philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University and a contributing editor.*

## In the Lifeboat Together: American Protestants and Jews

*Dual Destinies: The Jewish  
Encounter with Protestant  
America*

by Egal Feldman  
Urbana & Chicago: University  
of Chicago Press

A Review Essay  
by Robert Michael

Professor Feldman has written a classic, analyzing the interplay between the Protestant majority — both evangelical and liberal — and the Jewish minority in the United States. He explains "the pluralistic character of American religion" and the variety of majoritarian opinions, both anti-Jewish and philo-Jewish as well as Jewish reactions to it all. His judgments are sound, his research exhaustive. The book impressed and informed me.

Several literary figures also are analyzed, such as Emerson and Henry Adams. But Feldman has decided only to touch on the enormous body of Protestant literary anti-semitism. Is it not here that we find expressed the most telling of American attitudes toward Jews? American literary are the curators not only of our literary heritage but also of our most essential values, expressed in the most beguiling manner possible.

Like 20th century anti-semes, Nathaniel Hawthorne combined religious

and racist hatred of Jews. In *The Marble Faun*, he referred to the Jews as "the ugliest, most evil-minded" people, "resembling . . . maggots when they over-populate a decaying cheese." Similarly, Adolf Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* that "if you cut even cautiously into . . . an abscess, you found, like a maggot in a rotting body, often dazzled by the sudden light — a kike!"

We get the clearest idea of Hawthorne's theological anti-semitism, however, from an essay in his English Notebooks. In 1856, Hawthorne was invited to a formal dinner given by the first Jewish Lord Mayor of London, David Solomons. Hawthorne described the Lord Mayor's brother in this way:

"There sat the very Jew of Jews; the distilled essence of all the Jews that have been born since Jacob's time; he was Judas Iscariot; he was the Wandering Jew; he was the worst and, at the same time, the truest type of his race, and contained within himself, I have no doubt, every old prophet and every old clothesman that ever the tribes produced; and he must have been circumcised as much as 10 times over. I never beheld anything so ugly and disagreeable, and preposterous, and laughable, as the outline of his profile; it was so hideously Jewish, and so cruel, and so keen; and he had such an immense beard that you could see no trace of a mouth, until he opened it to speak, or to eat his dinner — and then, indeed, you were aware of a cave, in this density of beard. And yet his manners and aspect, in spite of all, were those of a man of the world, and a gentleman. Well, it is as hard to give an idea of this ugly Jew as of the beautiful Jewess. . . . I rejoiced exceedingly in this Shylock, this Iscariot; for the sight of him justified me in the repugnance I have always felt towards his race."

Feldman also includes summaries of Melville and Twain, but more time could have been spent on these two leading writers of the 19th century. Herman Melville had little direct contact with Jews, yet still treated them in apredominantly negative way. Early on, before 1856, in *Redburn*, his only novel with Jewish characters, he described a Jewish pawnbroker as "a curly-headed little man with a dark oily face and a hooked nose, like the pictures of Judas Iscariot." Later in the book, he praised German-Americans as "the most orderly and valuable of her foreign population." He then observed that America is special because its ethnic diversity makes Americans noble. Ironically, he completes his image by means of an anti-semitic allusion.

"There is something in . . . the mode in which America has been settled, that in a noble breast, should forever extinguish the prejudices of national dislikes."

"Settled by people of all nations, all nations may claim her for their own. You cannot spill a drop of American blood

without spilling the blood of the whole world. Be he Englishman, Frenchman, Dane or Scot. . . . We are not a narrow tribe of men, with a bigotted Hebrew nationality — whose blood has been debased in the attempt to enoble it."

In *The Confidence Man*, after describing a series of criminals, a horse-thief, an assassin, a treaty-breaker and a judicial murderer, Melville listed "a Jew with hospitable speeches cozening some fainting stranger into ambuscade, there to burk him, and account it a deed grateful to Manitou [Mammon], his God." And in his journal he referred to the Jews in Palestine in this way: "In the emptiness of the lifeless antiquity of Jerusalem the emigrant Jews are like flies who have taken up their abode in a skull."

In his long poem, *Clarel*, following traditional Christian theology, he noted that Christ would come a second time on the conversion of the Jews and their return to Palestine. In this same poem, one of Melville's Christian characters, Ungar, noted that actual ritual murder was a myth but that Jews still torture Christians by means of the capitalist system.

"... Old Ballads sing  
Fair Christian children crucified  
By impious Jews: you've heard the thing:  
Yes, fable; but there's truth hard by:  
How many Hughs of Lincoln, say,  
Does Mammon in his mills, today,  
Crook, if he do not crucify?"

Aside from the Jewish women, whom he (again following Christian tradition) seemed to regard positively, there were four Jewish male characters in *Clarel*: one, Nathan, was a convert from Christianity; another, Margoth, was a self-hating apostate Jew; a third, the Lyonese, was described as a "toiy of Mammon," an assimilated Jew anxious to discard his Jewish identity; and finally, there was Abdon, an Indian Orthodox Jew whose life was essentially over, simply waiting to die in Palestine. Surely no one could rationally argue that these four characters were typical Jews — one convert, two self-hating Jews and, the only Jewish Jew, an old man with no future. There was not among them a born Jew who experienced his Judaism as a living faith with a future.

In 1879, in an unpublished note, a 44-year-old Mark Twain observed that "the Jews are the only race who work wholly with their brains and never with their hands. . . . They are peculiarly and conspicuously the world's intellectual aristocracy." In other words, he still stereotyped Jews, ignoring the realities of impoverished Jews and exploited Jewish labor in American cities. In his famous essay, "Concerning the Jews," published just before the turn of the century, Twain proves that the habits of a lifetime die hard. Despite some praise of stereotyped Jewish traits, he repeated, without endorsing or denying them, the charges that the Jews

had an "unpatriotic disinclination to stand by the flag as a soldier" and that they want others to look after only their safety. His solution was forgoings of Jews, and Jews only, to enlist in the army so as to prove false the charge that "you feed on a country but don't like to fight for it." This remark evidently roused some ire after it was published by Twain in the States. And so he wrote a Postscript in which he ate his words and noted that despite having to endure American anti-semitism, Jews fought widely and bravely in American wars. Therefore, "that slur upon the Jew cannot hold up its head in presence of the figures of the War Department."

***The principle under which [T.S. Eliot] claimed to make his political judgments was not humanistic, but a condemnation of both democracy and fascism as inferior to the perfect Christian commonwealth he sought.***

Nevertheless, ignoring the historical realities, he recounted how, whether in the American South, Czarist Russia or medieval England, Spain and Austria, the Jews through sharp and "sordid" business practices have exploited the poor and ignorant.

"There was no way to successfully compete with [the Jew] in any vocation, the law had to step in and save the Christian from the poorhouse. . . . Even the seats of learning . . . had to be closed against this tremendous antagonist. [The Jew] has made it the end and aim of his life to get [money]."

Twain opposed Theodore Herzl's plan for a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. He argued that "if that concentration of the cunningest brains in the world was going to be made in a free country . . . I think it would be politic to stop it. It will not be well to let that race find out its strength." Hard to believe, but Adolf Hitler made a similar analysis, *mutatis mutandis*, the same argument was made by Hitler when he wrote, "All [the Zionists] want is a central organization for their international world swindle, endowed with its own sovereign rights and removed from the intervention of other states: a haven for convicted scoundrels and a university for budding crooks."

For Twain, there was evidently no place in this world for the Jews.

"By his make and ways [the Jew] is substantially a foreigner wherever he may be, and even the angels dislike a foreigner. I am using this word foreigner in the German sense — *stranger*. . . . You [Jews] will always be by ways and habits and predilections substantially strangers — foreigners — wherever you are, and that will probably keep the race prejudice against

you alive."

Twain's article is full of errors of fact and negative stereotypes of Jews. His essay, in effect, fostered the very anti-semitism he claimed he was writing to disprove.

Continuing this anti-Jewish tradition into the 20th century are the great poets, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. Mimicking the greatest anti-semites in history, including Adolf Hitler, Pound regarded the Jews as aliens, enemies, children of darkness, haters of life, and parasitic destroyers of individuals and nations. Although he later repudiated his Protestant background and often wrote against the Churches, his major accusations against the Jews — the traditional charges that the Jews destroy Christian values and mean to take over the world — may have initially derived from his Christian upbringing and Sunday school education.

Of the more than 120 wartime broadcasts Pound made on Rome Radio, he condemned Jews in almost every one. He blamed the Jews for exploiting Gentiles, starting the war and corrupting the world. "The Jews have ruin'd every country they have got hold of. The Jews have worked out a system, very neat system, for the ruin of the rest of mankind, one nation after another." (21 March 1943) England, France, Russia and the United States were all "under yidd control. Lousy with kikes." (27 April 1943) On May 4, 1942, he opined that the Talmud "is the code of vengeance, of secret means unto vengeance. Aimed specifically at the destruction of all non-kike order. It is a dirty book, and reading of it might well be reserved to mature and responsible students of psychosis and of pathology. Out of it came the Bolsheviks. Out of it came the determination to ruin Europe, to break down Christianity. . . . Destroy everything that is conducive to civilization."

Like many anti-semites, from the Middle Ages through the Nazis, his language is full of violent and disgusting images of Jews. They are "rats," "bedbugs," "vermin," "worms" and "parasites," who constitute an overwhelming "power of putrefaction," "rot[ting] EVERY nation he has wormed into." As to Hitler, Pound observed on May 18, 1942, "Hitler, having seen the Jew puke in the German democracy, was out for responsibility, government officials etc. to be RESPONSIBLE for their acts." George Orwell recalled a wartime broadcast "in which he approved the massacre of East European Jews and 'warned' the American Jews that their turn was coming presently."

Second only to Pound among 20th century poets in anti-semitic intensity is T.S. Eliot. The principle under which he claimed to make his political judgments was not humanistic, but a condemnation of both democracy and fascism as inferior to the perfect Christian commonwealth he sought. In fact, continually critical of democracy, he seldom could bring himself to attack fascism,



seeing an identity between the "moral order" of fascist states with the theocratic order of an idealized Christian society. Idealizing Christian society, he regarded the Jews as corrupters of Christian civilization, without roots in, or loyalty to, the nation in which they lived, animalistic, and ruthless in their search for power over Gentiles.

In "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar," Eliot wrote of the Jews as worse than prehistoric monsters and rats. Their compulsive greed undermined Christian society:

"Bleistein's way:  
A saggy bending of the knees  
And Elbows, with the palms turned out,  
Chicago Semite Viennese.  
A lustreless protrusive eye  
Stares from the protozoic slime  
... The rats are underneath the piles.  
The Jew is underneath the lot.  
Money in furs."

Like Henry Adams, Eliot saw the Jews as the fundamental "Forces of Evil," the "diabolic," "the Evil Spirit today" that should not be allowed to corrupt Christian culture. In *After Strange Gods*, whose epigraph translated into "The Modern World Made Vile," he argued that because of tradition, the homogeneity of a Christian population is best, as against racial-cultural differences and competition. "What is still more important is unity of religious background; and reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable. ... And a spirit of excessive tolerance is to be deprecated."

Although Eliot objected that he was not consciously an anti-semiter, the fact remains that he uses the notion of "Jew" in his work to represent the most despicable and corruptive principles. As Leslie Fiedler has commented, "On an unconscious level, the Jews are to him an object of horror, a symbol of illegitimate dispossession, of bestiality."

Several American authors — F. Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe and William Faulkner — developed from an earlier anti-semitism to a later appreciation of Jews. This transition is brilliantly captured in a poem of Oliver Wendell Holmes called "The Pantomime." In his poem, Holmes recounted how he attended a play and was hemmed in by Jews, whose very appearance he found distasteful. He thought of their perfidy, of their usury, of their murder of Christian children and of Jesus Christ.

"I stabbed in turn with silent oaths  
The hooked-nose kite of carnion clothes,  
The sneaky usurer, him that crawls  
And cheats ...  
Spawn of the race that slew its Lord.  
Up came their murderous deeds of old,  
The grisly story Chaucer told.  
And many an ugly tale beside  
Of children caught and crucified; ...  
I thought of Judas and his bribe,  
And stooped my soul against their tribe. ..."

But then he looked more closely into the faces of the Jews surrounding him and thought, Jesus of Nazareth must have looked like this. His heart melted as his insight grew:

"The shadow floated from my soul,  
And to my lips a whisper stole, —

...  
From thee the son of Mary came,  
With thee the Father deigned to dwell, —  
Peace be upon thee, Israel."

Feldman's last word, as well as his first, on Protestant America is that it provides a diverse collection of opinions on the Jewish spirit that has served Jews relatively well. Yet to find dislike, distaste, anger and hatred against Jews in such 20th century authors as Dreiser, Mencken, Pound and Eliot, despite the existence of so many decent Christians, makes one far from sanguine about the happy future of Jews in America.

*Robert Michael is professor of history at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, and a contributing editor.*

## Great Jewish Thinkers

Bialik by David Aberbach  
Rashi by Chaim Pearl  
Heine by Ritchie Robertson  
New York: Grove Press

A Review Essay  
by Richard A. Cohen

These three books are part of a new series on "Jewish Thinkers," published by Grove Press under the general editorship of Arthur Hertzberg. They are short and suited for general readers and introductory undergraduate classes.

No statement of the organizing principle of the series is given, but the evident differences separating the three persons chosen — one the 12th century French master commentator on the Bible and the Talmud; one an early 19th century German poet and essayist, baptized Christian; and, one a late 19th century and early 20th century Romantic and popular Zionist poet — indicates that "Jewish Thinkers" is taken in a very broad sense. All three were born Jews, all three are widely respected and thoughtful men and all three wrote explicitly, either entirely or to some significant extent, on Jewish topics.

Chaim Pearl's *Rashi* is both comprehensive and concise, a delightful non-sense text in the style of Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (1040-1105) himself. Chapter One presents a brief historical survey of the relevant background of medieval French Jewry and scholarship. Chapter Two provides a

thumbnail sketch of Rashi's life and thought, presented, as I think is necessary, through a fair-minded blend of fact and legend. Chapter Three explains the character of Rashi's Bible commentary, both his emphasis on *peshat* (plain meaning) and his liberal sprinklings of *derush* (figurative moral lessons) at fitting moments. Pearl provides many extended and apt examples. Chapter Four explains the character of Rashi's Talmud commentary, a dry, restrained but now indispensable *peshat*. Again Pearl provides many extended and apt examples. Chapter Five concludes the book with a survey of Rashi's profound influence on the Jewish world, and his indirect influence on Christian Bible interpretation.

I have nothing but praise for this small book. It is well organized, well written and accurate; all in all an excellent introduction to Rashi. May it prosper.

Ritchie Robertson's *Heine* is also a fine book, though at times it seems not to have been written for a "Jewish Thinkers" series. This impression, however, is in one sense not a fault since it results from Robertson's fair treatment of Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) himself. Heine, for the most part, did not conceive his works as contributions to the ageless dialogue of Jewish thinkers. He breathed the 19th century German Jewish naivete or optimism that allowed him to see himself as representing the best of both Jewish and German culture at the same time; benefiting, so he thought, both. Still, a book on Heine, written for a series on "Jewish Thinkers," should be more closely focused, I think, on Heine's Jewishness.

The book is divided into four chapters. In the first three chapters, Robertson argues, against the many critics who see in Heine a mere stylist concerned with turning pretty phrases and amusing cultured readers; that is to say, against those critics who see only a clever but superficial Heine. Rather, so Robertson shows, Heine's graceful and popular style is fully appropriate and deliberately crafted to fulfill Heine's particular purpose; namely, to link the profound but otherwise obscure insights of German pantheist philosophy with an active, popular and progressive politics. In this manner, Robertson proposes, Heine remains the artist that he was and, at the same time, moves beyond the apoliticalism of Goethe's aestheticism.

Only in the 25 pages of the last chapter, "Between Religions," does Robertson address the problematic of Heine's Jewishness. On June 28, 1825, at the age of 28, Heine had himself baptized a Christian. Yet unlike the baptized Jews of 19th century Germany who chose to completely repress their Jewish origins, Heine's relation to Judaism remained nuanced and complex to his death. Regarding his Jewishness, both before and after his conversion, he neither denied nor affirmed its centrality, but, importantly and perhaps characteristically, he did not hide it either.

Rather than mold himself into accordance with the behavior and thought patterns of Judaism, Heine instead molds Judaism to suit his own temperament and interests — to the extent, one must add, that he takes Judaism into consideration at all, which is not always or even very often. One thing is certain, Heine takes it for granted that the Jews of Germany are German and, hence, that the exceptional Jews of Germany are at once exceptional Germans and, hence, that all Germans could and should take pride in them, in the name of Germany, just as Heine himself evidently did.

I found two small oddities on page 100. First, Robertson identifies the word "schlemiel" as a "Jewish-German word," when, of course, it would have been simpler and more accurate to say it is a Yiddish word. Second, referring to Heine's celebrated poem as "Judah Halevi" in the *Hebrew Melodies*, Robertson writes: "Judah Halevi (whom Heine miscalls 'Jehuda Halevy')." It is, of course, not Heine's but rather Robertson's miscall, and the editors at Grove Press should have caught it and saved him the embarrassment. But these are two very small faults indeed.

The main fault, and not a small one, is that while Robertson's *Heine* is certainly an adequate short general introduction to Heine, it suffers as part of a "Jewish Thinkers" series because it makes no real effort to uncover the significance of Heine's Jewishness or the Jewishness of his writings or outlook. In the concluding bibliography (p. 110), Robertson does refer his readers to several books that do focus on Heine as a Jew.

David Aberbach's book, *Bialik*, is excellent. He begins it with an honest admission of what must be its (but not Aberbach's) prime failure: "The reader who knows no Hebrew may find Chaim Nachman Bialik's (1873-1934) achievement and influence hard to fathom. English versions of his works are mostly antiquated and, in any case, the richness and subtlety of his style, which depends greatly on allusions to classical Hebrew literature, lose much in translation." (p.xi). It is a tribute to the success of Aberbach's efforts that, after reading this brief introductory text, the reader does come to know a great deal about Bialik's life and his thought and will want, I think, to read his poems.

Instead of reviewing here the details of Bialik's interesting life and work, as Aberbach lays them out, I will instead let Gabriel Sivan of the *Jerusalem Post Magazine* characterize the book, in a blurb that appears on the backcover: "Impressively researched, richly documented and the first major study of the 'Hebrew poet laureate' in English." I think that is a recommendation strong enough, and I second it.

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## Beyond Words

### *The Pictorial History of the Holocaust*

Edited by Yitzhak Arad  
New York: Macmillan  
Publishing Company

A Review Essay  
by Abraham J. Edelheit and Hershel Edelheit

Among the most powerful of recent works on the Holocaust is Yitzhak Arad's *The Pictorial History of the Holocaust*, a fruitful result of the collaboration between Yad Vashem, Israel's National Memorial and Research Institute on the Holocaust, and the Maxwell/Macmillan Publishing Company. Dr. Arad, the editor, is an esteemed scholar, World War II partisan, retired Brigadier General in the Israeli Defense Forces and Chairman of Yad Vashem. During the past three years, he and a team of researchers assembled in one heavy tome a graphic history of such immense — and horrific — proportions that the reader cannot fail to grasp the indescribable history of the Holocaust. Collected herein are 426 photographs, all but 28 taken from the Yad Vashem archives. The collected photographs offer irrefutable evidence regarding the most heinous crime of our century.

The selection of 398 photographs from the approximately 50,000 in the Yad Vashem archives was not an easy task. In his introduction, Arad notes that difficulties abound at every step to craft the pictorial history. Undoubtedly, selecting pictures to form a continuous link documenting the unfolding tragedy was a herculean task for Arad and his staff. Although a plurality of the pictures originate with Germans, or their local workers, the Nazis did try to keep the Final Solution a secret. As a result, only a few of the photos actually originate with the murderers; most were taken by German, or other, Axis soldiers (and, occasionally, civilians) who spent time in the rear, for example in the Warsaw or Lodz ghettos. Similarly, the fact that many of the extant photographs originate with the Nazis has, potentially, skewed the historical record, in much the same way that the overwhelming proportion of written documents originating with the Nazis has skewed the accounts of some Holocaust historians. Finally, another potential pitfall exists: That a pictorial history of this sort will concentrate on the horrifying deaths of six million Jews without noting either the rich and vibrant life of Jewish communities before the Holocaust or the postwar recovery of Jewry in the State of Israel, in the United

States and, to a much lesser degree, in western Europe. It is to Dr. Arad's credit that he has risen above such potential problems and produced a book that is rich, yet stark; one that graphically covers — in photographs, maps and charts — the history of European Jewry from 1933 to 1948.

The book is divided into four sections, according to Arad's division of the phases of the Holocaust: (1) 1933-1939, which includes background into anti-semitism; (2) 1939-1941, the period of German military conquest in Europe; (3) 1941-1945, the period of mass murder and Jewish resistance; and (4) 1945-1948, the liberation of the camps and the efforts of the survivors to attain rehabilitation in *Eretz Israel*. Arad has further subdivided these four sections into eleven chapters. Each chapter includes a brief introduction that places the selected photographs into context. Some of the chapters contain further explanatory material. Ten maps are appended, including two on the Warsaw ghetto, one on Lodz and five showing the layout of different death camps. Unfortunately, the maps are the weakest part of the book and it is difficult to explain some of the anomalies. For example, a map on the *vernichtungslagern* is included but none on the Nazi concentration camp system. A map of the latter would be most useful, especially since the concentration camp system plays a prominent role in the text. One also may ask why the map on the *vernichtungslagern* is placed in the chapter on deportations and not in the chapter on death camps. The text suggests two other maps: one showing the general location of Jewish partisan units active in eastern Europe during World War II and one showing the *Briha* and *Aliya Bet* routes from Poland and southeastern Europe to Palestine between 1945 and 1948. While glaring, these omissions are not crucial and could be included in a later edition.

On the positive side, Arad includes segments that broaden the depth of our understanding of the Holocaust's history. Brutal Nazi medical experiments that caused much pain and suffering in return for very little useful scientific data is an example of such a segment. Arad also chronicles contemporary efforts to effect the rescue of European Jewry.

Unlike the remaining chapters that develop in a strictly chronological format, the one on deportation is divided geographically. This section is perhaps the most important in the book. Quite usefully, Arad includes a discussion of Axis allied states, like Finland, that refused to allow the deportation of their Jews. This chapter also includes detailed statistics regarding deportations, similarly divided by country. Jewish-Gentile relations *in extremis* has not been ignored, although this still controversial question does not really lend itself to photographic representation.

Though the text is important, the photographs are the key to the book. Vividly they

force the reader (if that term may be appropriately used here) to look at the pictures, examine the faces of little children full of fear. We realize the great loss to the Jewish people and to humanity as a whole. We try to estimate the great potential benefit to humanity that some of the 1.5 million innocent children murdered could have brought had they been allowed to live and develop.

The sequence of the photographs is tastefully arranged, makes the chronological development clear. Thus, when we come to page 26, examine picture number 14 and read the caption on the large placard that Dr. Spiegel, a Jewish lawyer, was forced to wear while being marched by the SA through the streets of Munich, "I shall never again complain to the police," and inadvertently glance at picture number 15, which depicts several German judges swearing the oath of loyalty to Hitler, we immediately and without difficulty gain a view of how the road to extermination was paved. Other photos show objects painted with headline banners: "The Jews are our misfortune," the anti-semitic slogan coined by the German historian and politician, Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896), which became a violent tool when exacerbated by the vile racist propaganda of Dr. Josef Goebbels and Julius Streicher. In the hands of the SA and, later, Heinrich Himmler's SS, this slogan became an outright justification to prosecute the anti-Jewish program in a way that would ultimately lead to the pits of Ponary, Babi Yar, Maly Trostnits and, from there, to the gas chambers and ovens of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belzec, Chelmo, Sobibor and Majdanek. The oft-quoted statement by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) that "where books are burned, human beings are destined to be burned too" is most appropriate in this context.

The early reactions of German Jews also are not neglected. Through 14 unfolding pictures, we gain visual understanding of the measures German Jews took to counteract, as far as possible, the daily Nazi onslaught against them. The slow but steady course of Nazi aggression is included: the occupation of the Saar (1935), the Rhineland (1936), the annexation of Austria (1938) and, finally, the sellout of Czechoslovakia (1938) by Britain and France for "peace in our time."

If the photographs in the first two sections overtake the reader, picture number 75 on page 71 — a seemingly simple sign painted outside a railway car of a moving train packed with German soldiers on their way to Poland — tells much: "We travel to Poland to trash the Jews!" From there on, we witness a continuous outpouring of terror and brutalization as never seen before in the annals of history. From making sport with Jews to cutting off (tearing out) beards and sidecurls of pious Jews, to pitiful scenes of Jews in overcrowded, cold and starving ghettos, a process of increasing brutality unfolds.

The graphic scenes of murder, which

unfold in Chapter Five, "Mass Murder 1941-1945," are sure to leave readers shocked. Although most Holocaust historians must deal with the horror, the photographs somehow make wanton acts of cold-blooded murder, carried out by otherwise sane people, and the cool, calculated efficiency with which these acts were systematically performed all the more unsettling. How the perpetrators could behave in such a sadistic manner and carry on "normal" family lives is baffling. So is the fact that the murderers did so daily, shamelessly consigning to death hundreds of thousands of fellow human beings — young and old, men and women, children and babes — whose only sin was to be born with three (or four) Jewish grandparents.

As against Nazi brutality, the reader also will see the calm decency of the victims gathered in small family groups, embracing, kissing and saying goodbye to each other. Jewish courage, faith and dignity in the face of death also are recorded: for example, in the photos documenting Jewish children attending schools or the various Jewish cultural activities. Scenes of the Jewish effort to produce for the Nazi war machine — a widely believed notion that by doing so some Jews will be spared — mingle with pictures of hungry little faces, eagerly awaiting a plate of soup, and children dying on the sidewalk, victims of starvation. The somber faces of the little "ghetto providers," caught by the Nazis smuggling food into the ghetto, swells our hearts with pride by their defiance of the Nazis, while also filling our hearts with terror at the thought of what is going to happen to the tiny heroes of Israel.

Hundreds of extermination sites — many well known, but perhaps ten times as many unknown — some with just a few victims, others with hundreds or thousands, lie scattered on the blood-soaked soil of eastern Europe. These are the handiwork of the *Einsatzgruppen* and their affiliated Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian collaborators. The Rumanians also had their share in the killings, as becomes evident from the pictures of the Jassy pogrom, where Rumanian troops systematically murdered approximately 10,000 Jews between June 29 and July 4, 1941. The enormity of the Nazi crimes becomes clearer still as the reader delves further into the book. Community after community was violently emptied of Jews and the victims were relentlessly driven, to prepared pits or ravines in wooded areas, forced to undress naked and then machine-gunned to death. In some cases, the intended victims themselves were forced to dig their own graves before being murdered.

The next chapter, "Deportations to Death Camps," advances us into the ultimate phase of the Final Solution. In their new extermination scheme, the pits and ravines in the Soviet Union where the victims were disposed of became too bothersome as well as unorderly for the German technocrats

and were replaced. In place of the slower methods of murder, the Nazis created *Vernichtungslagern* (death factories), fully automated institutions for the sole purpose of disposing of as many victims as quickly and efficiently as possible. Thousands of Jews were still butchered the older way, but millions of others were moved from all parts of Nazi-occupied Europe in almost continuous streams via hundreds of transports — in closed cattle cars or passenger cars (depending on the country of origin) — to be gassed and cremated at the end of the line. The Nazis, being masters of deception, used the confusing term *aussiedlung* (deportation), thereby momentarily allaying the fears of hundreds of thousands of victims — calming them into thinking that perhaps they would be resettled and could start a new life. Again, we witness scenes of despair, as community after community is emptied in an orderly fashion and the victims are loaded into trucks or cattle cars, some clutching babies, most carrying bundles or suitcases — their last worldly possessions — all anxious but unaware of the fate that awaits them.

Perhaps, the resigned faces in pictures 289/290, showing groups of victims waiting to be sent to the gas chambers, will force readers to identify with the unparalleled horror of the death camps. The illustrations of concentration camps where the Nazis did not undertake direct mass extermination still makes us shudder, especially when we view picture number 312 and realize the mockery of Nazi justice: the camp orchestra playing while a prisoner caught trying to escape is led to his execution.

Jewish victimization is not Arad's only theme. Chapters Eight and Nine review armed Jewish resistance, concentrating on the Warsaw ghetto uprising and on the struggle of Jewish partisans in the forests of eastern Europe. The drama of liberation — as camp after camp was "discovered" by advancing Allied troops who were totally unprepared for what they found — sums up the net result of 12 years of Nazi rule: pile upon pile of rotting corpses and the few skeletal hulks of the liberated living-dead. Finally, the last chapter shows the first steps taken toward rehabilitation of the survivors. Despite obstacles placed by the British en route to Israel. The last picture shows the conditional emergence of the Jewish people from powerlessness. Albeit, the story of the State of Israel — a story that is still unfolding — is the story for a different pictorial history. Perhaps that will be Macmillan's next major Judaica-related project.

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# BOOK BRIEFINGS

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

**From Leningrad to Jerusalem: The Gulag Way.** By Hillel Butman. Berkeley, Calif.: Benmir Books. Written by a former prisoner of conscience, this book is the compelling story of the 1970 sky-jacking attempt by a group of Russian Jews whose actions focused attention on the plight of Soviet Jewry. World outrage against the Soviet Union's treatment of these seekers of freedom eventually forced the Russians to lift the ban on emigration.

**The Myth of the Jewish Race.** By Raphael Patai and Jennifer Patai. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. The authors investigate the idea of a Jewish race. New material in this revised edition examines the psychological aspects of the Jewish race issue, the Jewish psyche and the consequences of the U.N. resolution equating Zionism with racism. Revised and updated scientific information supports the conclusion that the idea of a "Jewish race" is, indeed, a myth.

**A Touch of Heaven: Eternal Stories for Jewish Living.** By Annette and Eugene Labovitz. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson Inc. This is an enchanting collection of evocative stories and reflections attributed to hasidic masters. The selections provide essential insights into the Jewish tradition for those who want to know what it means to be Jewish. Told with warmth and love, these stories offer a sense of direction, spirituality and values that enhance the quality of Jewish life.

**Bearing the Unbearable: Yiddish and Polish Poetry in the Ghettos and Concentration Camps.** By Frieda W. Aaron. Albany: State University of New York Press. This volume is a pioneering study of Yiddish and Polish-Jewish concentration camp and ghetto poetry. It reveals the impact of the immediacy of experience as a formative influence on perception, response and literary imagination, arguing that literature contemporaneous with unfolding events offers perceptions different from those presented after the fact. The author shows that the mission of the poets was to provide testimony to their epoch, to speak for themselves and for those who perished. For the Jews in the condemned world, this poetry was a vehicle of cultural sustenance, a means of affirming traditional values and an expression of moral defiance that often kept the spirit of the readers from dying.

**A Restatement of Rabbinic Civil Law, Volume 1.** By Emanuel Quint. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson Inc. This volume offers a fresh and insightful explanation of *Hoshen Ha-Mishpat*, the standard code of the Halachah's civil law. In this first book of a multi-volume set, the most inclusive and difficult portion of the Shulchan Aruch is opened to the wider audience it deserves. This section covers such topics as appointment of judges, jurisdictional issues, trial procedures, due process, arbitration, venue, filing of motions, selection and interrogation of witnesses, testifying, rules of evidence, continuances, and appeals.

**Corrigendum:** Lucy Dawidowicz' book, *The Golden Tradition*, published in hardcover by Jason Aronson, is also available in a Schocken Books paperback edition.



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