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MENORAH REVIEW

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For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

Current Feminist Critiques

Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach
by Ilana Pardes
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

The Women's Bible Commentary
edited by Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe
Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press

Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue
edited by Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut
Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society

Jewish Women in Historical Perspective
edited by Judith R. Baskin
Detroit: Wayne State University

The Jewish Woman in Contemporary Society: Transitions and Traditions
by Adrienne Baker
New York University Press

Rachels' Daughters: Newly Orthodox Jewish Women
by Debra Renee Kaufman
New Brunswick, NJ: Ruthers University Press

Women and Spirituality: Voices of Protest & Promise
by Ursula King
The Pennsylvania State University Press

The Voice of Sarah: Feminine Spirituality & Traditional Judaism
by Tamar Frankiel
San Francisco: HarperCollins

Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality
by Ellen M. Umansky
Boston: Beacon Press

A *Review* Essay
by Sarah Barbara Watstein

There is a lively and stimulating discourse occurring today among Jewish feminists. The books that are profiled below are eye-opening and multi-faceted. Some focus on the Jewish women today; others focus on the Jewish women in historical perspective; others transit Biblical times to the present; and still others target matters pertaining to feminine spirituality and traditional Judaism. The review begins with two Biblical commentaries that are both solid and scholarly as well as refreshing. The first, a book by Ilana Pardes that explores the dialogue between dominant patriarchal discourses of the Bible and counter-feminist voices, is entitled *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach.* Pardes' objective is to present a few exemplary cases to illustrate the diversity of antithetical texts and voices that call into question the predominantly patriarchal base of monotheism. She focuses on creation according to Eve, the politics of maternal naming beyond Genesis, the female subplot in Rachel's dream, Zipporah and the struggle for deliverance, female bonding and the doubling of the female subject in the Book of Ruth, and the Song of Songs. The book concludes with an evocation of Job's wife, a final example of what can be done with fragmented histories. The author notes that Job's wife's challenge supports "a certain line of inquiry in feminist criticism which I wholly endorse. Feminist criticism is at its best, I think, when, like Job's wife, it avoids taking truths for granted, when it lays bare the problematic presuppositions of given belief systems." She succeeds in exploring the heterogeneity of Biblical representations of femininity by opening up both herself and the reader to the past and by adding pleasures to present pursuits.

The Women's Bible Commentary, edited by Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, is "the first comprehensive attempt to gather some of the fruits of feminist Biblical scholarship on each book of the Bible in order to share it with the larger community of women who read the Bible." Sponsored by a Protestant publisher, the book follows the number and order of the Biblical books in the Protestant canon with the exception of the deuterocanonical additions to Esther and Daniel, which have been grouped with the canonical books. The first section of the book is designated with the dual title Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. Each article on a Biblical book begins with an introduction that orients the reader to the contents of the book and provides an overview of major issues raised. Contributor's comments pertain to those passages they have judged to be of particular relevance to women. Value is added to the book by the inclusion of several essays that go beyond the boundaries of the canon. These focus on feminist hermeneutics, everyday life of women in the period of the Hebrew Bible and everyday life in the period of the New Testament. The editors succeed in their goal—to offer "a model of some of the ways in which women reading

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as women can engage the Biblical text." The book raises many questions concerning Biblical authority and interpretation; the ambivalent power of the Bible, the complex factors that shape interpretation, including, for example, the history of interpretation, interpretation in a global context and gender, and language and interpretation.

Moving from commentary to history, several recent works focus on historical realities. *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue*, edited by Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut is a history of women's roles in the synagogue—both today and throughout history. The editors acknowledge that the role of women in the synagogue is a major subject for debate among all branches of Judaism today. Looking backwards, they focus on women and the Jerusalem Temple, women and the ancient synagogue, women and the synagogue in medieval Cairo, the European synagogues of the Middle Ages, and women's prayers. Relevant halakhic issues also are examined, including the obligation to observe religious commandments, the honor of the community, laws pertaining to purity and piety, and language and liturgy. Questions are raised concerning whether limitations imposed on women are an inherent aspect of Judaism or a reflection of social realities of particular times and places. Readers also are challenged as to how they view halakhah—as timeless or changing.

Contemporary realities conclude the book. Personal vignettes are preceded by three chapters: "The Synagogue as a Sacred Space for the Elderly Oriental Women of Jerusalem," "From Persia to New York: An Interview with Three Generations of Iranian Women" and "The Impact of the Jewish Women's Movement on the American Synagogue: 1972-1985." Growing up Lubavitch, being a Rebbetzin, the Havurah movement, being a Rabbi, becoming a cantor, being a Hazzanit, wearing tallit and tefillin are some of the vignettes that conclude the book. The editors look forward to the fuller integration of women into the life of the synagogue.

Judith R. Baskin's *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective* attempts to illuminate contemporary dilemmas concerning Jewish women's status, roles, obligations and disabilities by scholarly investigations of the lives and experiences of Jewish women of previous eras. While essays do not cover every era or locale of Jewish history, they nonetheless focus on a vast array of subjects, including portrayals of women in the Hebrew Bible, Jewish women in the Diaspora world of late antiquity, the image and status of women in classical Rabbinic Judaism, and Jewish women in the Middle Ages. Arranged chronologically, the next set of essays concern Sephardi women in the Medieval and Early Modern periods, Italian Jewish women and the religious world of Ashkenazic women. Other contributors consider emancipation through intermarriage in Old Berlin, Jewish women in Imperial Germany, the immigrant Jewish experience in the United States, women and the Holocaust, and Jewish women's religious lives in the 20th century United States.

Adrienne Baker's *The Jewish Woman in Contemporary Society: Transitions and Traditions* is a provocative exploration of what it means to be a Jewish woman today. The author understands the complexity of Jewish identity and the influences that shape the development of Jewish identity. She looks at the dynamic relationship between women and their contextual world and the forces within that culture, as well as the forces without, that impact on the ways in which feminism has brought about change for women within the Jewish culture. Chapters concern women's roles in Judaism; religious law; the religious scene; aspects of orthodoxy; family life (the Jewish women at home, marriage, child-rearing and sexuality); and areas of change. The latter include changing perspectives such as secular education, voluntary work, jobs and careers. The final chapter considers feminism in its widest sense and Jewish feminism with its specific issues. The author is sensitive to the ways in which both have touched Jewish women along the religious/non-religious continuum.

Debra Renee Kaufman's *Rachels' Daughters: Newly Orthodox Jewish Women* offers a more specialized perspective on one facet of Jewish women's religious life in the United States today. The author's interest is in those women who have consciously chosen to embrace Jewish orthodoxy. The stories of newly Orthodox women encourages the reader to rethink the meaning of family, gender roles, feminism, gender differences and even sociology. This is a book of many paradoxes, ambiguities and complexities. It is a fascinating exploration of the attitudes, values, experiences and concerns of newly Orthodox women who have voluntarily entered the patriarchal world of Jewish orthodoxy and, by doing so, have consciously rejected secular culture and the relativism of modern living.

In many ways, Jewish orthodoxy is heightened spirituality and, as such, *Rachels' Daughters* serves as a bridge to the final books profiled in this review—Ursula King's *Women and Spirituality: Voices of Protest and Promise* Tamar Frankiel's *The Voice of Sarah: Feminine Spirituality & Traditional Judaism* and *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality: A Sourcebook*. King's work constitutes the second edition of a book first published in 1989. In the preface to the book, the author notes that since the book was first published, debates surrounding women and spirituality have continued to grow, expand even to global arenas. The author understands spirituality to be "an integral, holistic and dynamic force in human life and affairs" and brings a similarly broad understanding to feminism as both a contemporary social movement and "an important critical category in contemporary thought." She notes that "feminist thought acts as a decisive critical category for spirituality itself." She celebrates the "fruitful and decisive intersection of feminism and spirituality" throughout the book. *Women and Spirituality* is an analysis of both contemporary developments of Christian and Jewish feminist reinterpretations of sacred writings and traditions as well as religious beliefs, practices and institutions. The author first examines feminist challenges to traditional religion. She then investigates both the voices of new spiritualities, components of which may include worship of the goddess, matriarchy cults or debates about androgyny, and voices of new theologies more intimately grounded in women's experiences.

Frankiel's book explores the intimate connection between traditional Judaism and authentic feminine spirituality. The author listens to voices from our past—those of the famous women of our tradition—finding a profound and meaningful spirituality. Indeed, she believes that Sarah and the other mothers—Tamar, Ruth, Yehudit, Channah and others—can become rich resources of inner guidance. She examines the rituals and customs of Jewish life—mitzvot, kavannah, the celebration of the holidays—ever aware of the presence and role of feminine reality in these areas. She turns to the rhythms of natural cycles and spiritual dimensions of existence, exploring the challenge of developing a spiritual life for Jewish women. She argues that Jewish women can be in fruitful dialogue with modern views so that we can use "our strengths and correct our weaknesses to make a viable Jewish life for our daughters of the 21st century."

The Sourcebook, which concludes this review, is as much a history of Jewish women's spirituality as it is an anthology of spiritual writings that offer the reader "reflections on Jewish, religious self-identity as seen through the eyes of almost 100 Jewish women." The material included was written between 1560 and 1990; it represents a variety of literary genres and draws on women from around the globe. Editors Ellen M. Umansky and Dianne Ashton also sought material by Jewish women of "differentages, sexual orientations, and educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, responding to a variety of historical and personal situations." Too, the authors, whose works are included, represent modern Jewry's four major religious movements as well as "those who identify their spirituality as Jewish but are not part of a particular Jewish 'denomination' or define their community as other than, or outside of, the mainstream." Historical essays introduce each section and mate-

rial is arranged chronologically. This is a joyous celebration of Jewish women as spiritual human beings and would be meaningful to all who are interested in Jewish history and culture.

Sarah B. Watstein is assistant director for academic services and head of the Cabell Library at Virginia Commonwealth University. Also, she is a contributing editor for Menorah Review.

Ideological Passion

Ideals and Illusions: The Story of an Ivy League Woman in 1920s Israel
by Leon F. Hoffman
New York: S.P.I. Books

A *Review* Essay
by Rafael Medoff

What American Jewish immigrants to Palestine lacked in quantity, they made up for in quality. Few Jews migrated from the United States to the Holy Land during the British Mandate years, but their ranks included Golda Meir, Henrietta Szold and Judah Magnes as well as thousands of others whose names are forgotten but whose blood, sweat and tears were no less critical to the Zionist cause than that of their better-known compatriots. Those personalities with the highest profiles have attracted the lion's share of scholarly attention, but, for a more complete picture of the impact of American Jewish immigrants on the development of the Jewish State-to-be, one must learn more about the lesser known American Zionist pioneers of the 1920s, and Leon Hoffman's *Ideals and Illusions* is a good place to start.

Hoffman presents the letters that his sister, Hannah, wrote to family and friends in the United States during 1925-1927, when she lived at Kibbutz Tel Yosef. Contrary to her brother's assertion, Hannah Hoffman was not "the first American-born young woman to join a Kevutzah (kibbutz) in Palestine;" Golda Meir (then Meyerson), for example, joined Kibbutz Merhavia four years earlier. As Bernard Sandler has shown, several hundred other American Jewish pioneers also arrived during that period under the auspices of the Achooza movement and the American Zion Commonwealth Inc. and, withstanding hardships comparable to Hannah Hoffman's Tel Yosef experience, were responsible for the establishment of the moshavim of Balfouria (1922) and Avihayil (1931), in addition to the towns of Raanana (1921), Herzliya (1924) and Gan Yavne (1931). Still, even if Hannah was not the first, she was one of the earliest and, therefore, her letters are useful not merely for what they reveal about her personal experience but also because they illustrate conditions experienced by hundreds of American Jews who settled in Palestine at that time.

Those who left behind a life of comfort in the United States had the hardest time adjusting to life in the underdeveloped Middle East. Hannah, who grew up in a comfortable home in northern New Jersey and spent her college years on the pleasant campus of Smith College in Massachusetts, suddenly found herself living in conditions much harsher than anything she might have imagined. Her room had an earthen floor and a roof with so many holes that when it rained, she had to repeatedly move her bed to avoid getting wet. A "very short" working day involved "only eight hours" of manual labor. Frequently, she would be roused from sleep at 3:30 or 4 a.m. for an exhausting day of harvesting crops or draining malaria-infested swamps. The kibbutzniks were particularly skeptical of American women, whom they suspected were incapable of hard work. (Golda Meir was twice denied admission to Kibbutz Merhavia because of such prejudice.) The language barrier that separated Hannah from her Hebrew-speaking comrades was overcome only gradually; she may have known the traditional blessings and some Hebrew songs from the synagogue services but when it came to conversational Hebrew, Hannah spoke the language as if she "had a hot potato in her mouth," the kibbutzniks joked.

Hannah's letters also offer a new twist on the familiar saga of conflict between Jewish immigrants in America and their children, over fealty to religious traditions. Hannah's father, a traditionalist Conservative rabbi, no doubt hoped her stay in the Holy Land would revive some of the religiosity Hannah had abandoned in college; he must have been sorely disappointed by her descriptions of the attitudes toward Judaism among her kibbutz friends. In her early correspondence, Hannah seemed to go out of her way to soft-peddle the pioneers' staunch secularism, presumably to avoid provoking parental ire. Reading his daughter's enthusiastic description of a public reading at the kibbutz of Ezekiel's "dry bones" prophecy, Rabbi Hoffman might have detected some reverence for the Torah among the young kibbutzniks; more likely, however, it represented how the young pioneers appropriated familiar, but no longer revered, literature for use in fashioning their secular Zionist identity. Finally, after nearly a year at Tel Yosef, Hannah bluntly informed her parents that religious observance was out of the question on the kibbutz. "The conditions of the life here are of such a pioneer nature that one must leave one's past traditions behind," she wrote. "It is impossible to live a full and active life if one remembers always this and that, and how it was at home, etc. There is no time for it and one forgets all but the present and the future."

One activity for which the Tel Yosef workers did try to make time was the airing of their ideological passions. A typical evening's leisure period consisted of a two and one-half hour lecture by a kibbutznik on "the economic and labor conditions of the European and American countries." As her awareness of the depth of her comrades' ideological commitment grew, Hannah began to have misgivings. "Some of the people are Communists through and through," she wrote her brother. "They think Communism is the Jews' as well as the world's salvation and what they could do to help Russia spread this they would do." She worried that they might someday "be fighting against England, maybe against America," since those countries were regarded by the kibbutz militants as bourgeoisie capitalist enemies.

During 1926-1927, Tel Yosef's parent body, the Gedud Ha-Avodah, was wracked by a bitter ideological quarrel between moderates and radicals. The kibbutz was torn apart by the dispute and many workers left (including some who returned to the Soviet Union and tried, unsuccessfully, to establish a communal farm in the Crimea). For Hannah, the fighting was a disillusioning experience, shaking—and almost shattering—her idealized view of the Zionist endeavor. In Hannah's disdain for the ideological battles on the kibbutz, one may find a manifestation of the broader conflict of practicality versus ideology that divided American Zionists from their European counterparts. "Oh, they make so much of their politics...but I don't feel that it actually is related to the life here or to life in general," she wrote. Like Louis Brandeis and his colleagues in the American Zionist leadership, Hannah Hoffman preferred to deal with practical matters and had no patience for this speechmaking and ideological nitpicking so characteristic of her European-born comrades at Tel Yosef.

Ideals and Illusions could benefited from scholarly editing and some explanatory footnotes. Leon Hoffman is not a historian, and one consequence is that the book is a little rough around the edges; the correspondence makes reference to a wide variety of people, places and events, sometimes without any clue for the reader as to who or what they were. The author's introductory remarks and appendices are helpful but cannot entirely replace a scholar's guiding hand.

Nonetheless, *Ideals and Illusions* offers a rare and rewarding glimpse at an aspect of American Zionism history that has been heretofore neglected, and it lays the groundwork for future scholarly analyses of the phenomenon of American Jewish *aliyah* during the Mandate years.

Rafael Medoff is a visiting scholar at the Melton Center for Jewish Studies, Ohio State University; assistant professor of religion at Denison University; and a contributing editor for Menorah Review.

The Voices of Silent Dialogues

The Letters of Martin Buber: A Life of Dialogue
edited by Nahum N. Glatzer and Paul Mendes-Flohr
New York: Shocken Books

A *Review* Essay
by Earle J. Coleman

From the three-volume, German edition of selections from over 40,000 letters at the Martin Buber Archives in the Jewish National and University Library of Jerusalem, the late Nahum N. Glatzer and Paul Mendes-Flohr chose some 750 letters for their anthology. Despite Buber's voluminous correspondence, a personal touch was evident in that, until his final years, he wrote virtually all his letters by hand. Of course, the personal, dialogical character of letters squares with Buber's I-Thou philosophy of reciprocity. Indeed, the confiding, revealing, sharing, exploratory and sometimes confessional nature of the letters lends them a unique intimacy. Unlike his lectures or essays, which were edited, Buber's letters were largely unrevised, spontaneous expressions often with the vivacity of spirited conversation. Like all letter writers, Buber addresses two parties, the other and the self. For an existentialist like him, letter writing goes beyond self-communication and self-discovery to self-creation because such writing helps determine the very nature of one's self. Thus those who wish to understand the thought of Martin Buber will find the compilation by Nahum N. Glatzer and Paul Mendes-Flohr to be indispensable.

Buber's long-standing participation in the arts invites a book-length study of his aesthetic side. His involvements included studies in art history at the universities of Leipzig, Berlin and Zurich, with a doctoral examination in art history at the University of Vienna. Also, he pursued university studies in literature, wrote the novel *For the Sake of Heaven* and perceived himself as an artist; in 1900, he wrote his wife Paula, "I have found an artistic road that is my own" and a year later he told her, "What is at stake is simply my art..." Naturally, he valued his friendships with such Nobel Prize-winning artists as Hermann Hesse and S.Y. Agnon. Paula herself wrote short stories and novels under the pen name Georg Munk. While he could scarcely be impartial, the preeminent Buber scholar, Maurice Friedman, described *For the Sake of Heaven* as one of the greatest novels that he had read.

Occasionally, writers do acknowledge Buber's aesthetic nature. Thus, in the standard anthology devoted to Buber, Louis Z. Hammer contributes an article on Buber's aesthetics. Further, David Werner, Executive Vice-President of the Hebrew University, commended Buber for being a rare combination of "a religious seeker and an artistic, effective man." Finally, Malcolm L. Diamond draws from his own experience in an art gallery to throw light on Buber's I-Thou relationship. Buber characterizes real encounters in aesthetic language when he reports that, from the perspective of the I-It world, I-Thou moments seem to be "lyric-dramatic episodes." In Berlin, he was a member of the Thursday Club, which welcomed artists and writers. He also collaborated on the literary periodical, *Der neue Merkur*; published poems in *Der Jude*; and corresponded on poetry with the Austrian poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Also, Buber corresponded with such visual artists as Max Liebermann, the German expressionist painter, and with the novelist, Franz Kafka, whose challenging writing very favorably impressed Buber. He acknowledged the potency of art when he praised the artistic form of a Jewish youth program, with a Zionist message, for having greater impact than speeches could ever possess. Of Richard Dehmel's poetry, Buber remarked, "your poems were among the few formative influences of my youth." Ludwig Strauss, a poet and literary historian, who also was Buber's son-in-law, was a frequent correspondent. Buber was once so affected by Strauss' poetry that he was "unable to say anything 'about' them." On another occasion, he went a step further by publishing them. Novelist and dramatist, Arnold Zweig, thanked Buber for comments on the novel and story as forms and said, "Nowadays nobody except you knows anything about the nature of the divine."

Like many artists discussing art, when Buber talks about religion, he sees it as "a way of looking, intuiting in contrast to intellectualizing." When he wrote and lectured on drama, Buber sometimes seemed to be under the spell of Spinoza: "In great drama, good and evil are both equally destroyed." Buber also thought that the Bible translation, undertaken by Franz Rosenzweig and himself, would be seen as a work of art, "but only to a person who does not look for one in our work..." In fact, it was praised by the celebrated poet Alfred Mombert. Like an art critic who refuses to give a definitive judgment of a masterpiece but instead singles out aspects of the work and directs attention to them, Buber identifies his role as a pointer: "I believe I am not giving an 'answer'...but rather a pointer...a pointing of the way."

Writing *I and Thou*, his most influential contribution to religion and philosophy, occupied him for more than six years and was first conceived as the prolegomenon to a five-volume study. In 1922, he wrote of this master work, "I am pressing out the vintage." Surely Buber's I-Thou relationship, where the other is regarded as a free person rather than the determined thing of an I-It relation, was influenced or reinforced by the thought of Paula who wrote in a letter of 1899: "Our attitudes toward each other ought above all to be 'person to person'—not 'Frenchman to German,' not 'Jew to Christian,' and perhaps less of 'man to woman.'" While Buber's *I and Thou* has been widely and warmly accepted by philosophers, religionists and psychologists, there have been critics. Some argue that Buber focused on the individual "I" rather than the communal "we." One reply is that the I-Thou stance is non-egoistic even if it is a person-to-person rather than a social orientation. In any case, it's fair to say that society is not in the spotlight in the text. Still, Buber stated, for example, "...that a dialogue element can enter the business world from time to time." Given that Buber's crabbed writing style greatly challenges the reader's powers of analysis and interpretation, one of the most baffling criticisms is from the Protestant theologian Florens Christian Rang who attacked the work for being "too clear." In later years, Buber spoke of his "I of relation" as "the eye of love." Like Augustine who said, "Love God and then do whatever you will" or Confucius who advocated the love of fellow feeling, which renders one unable to overstep the bounds of what is right, the later Buber regarded love as the cardinal virtue. As publisher and editor of *Der Jude*, a journal devoted to the treatment of Jewish problems and the advocacy of Jewish issues, Buber devoted a typical issue to the topic of Germanism and Judaism. With *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman* and *The Legend of the Baal Shem*, Buber sought to revitalize Judaism among Western European Jewry. Clearly, his most monumental undertaking was the co-translation of the Bible, which he and Franz Rosenzweig began in 1925.

Buber's responses to other world religions and their practitioners reveal a steadfast Jew who steadfastly worked to establish mutuality between himself and non-Jews. A pioneer in advancing the interfaith dialogues that flourish in contemporary society, he supported reconciliation and cooperation with Arabs through membership in groups such as The League for Arab-Jewish Rapprochement, Brit Shalom and the Ichud. That Buber's interest in world religions extended to eastern thought is evident from his discussions of Buddhism in *I and Thou* and from his attendance at a Lao Tzu conference in Switzerland in 1924. But among the other world religions, it was toward Christianity that Buber directed his most sustained energies. *Die Kreatur*, an ecumenical quarterly, was edited jointly by Buber; Joseph Wittig, a Catholic; and Vikto von Weizsacker, a Protestant. In a letter to Pastor and Professor Leonhard Ragaz, Buber expressed an earnest wish for dialogue between Judaism and Christianity, saying "I hope to emphasize our agreements rather more than our differences..." At times, he was obviously moved

by the New Testament. For example, Buber spoke enthusiastically to Gershom (Gerard) Scholem, the preeminent 20th-century authority on the Kabballah in particular and the varieties of Jewish mysticism in general, about the potential of John 3:1-8: "In my book I use it as a point of departure, and I am excited about the possibility of an entirely new interpretation." On one occasion, Buber went so far as to state that the relationship of Jews and Christians to one another can only be approached "by regarding Judaism and Christianity as realities that intend God and as such are intended by Him." On another occasion, at Frankfurt in 1953, Buber was severely reproached by the world Jewish press for speaking at St. Paul's Church. It is a poignant footnote to discover that his topic was religious dialogue. At times, Buber took a monolithic view of Christianity, as when he wrote that "according to the Christian teachings, which has turned the meaning and ground of Jesus upside down, nothing lies within our choice; rather, everything depends upon whether or not we have been elected." Such a doctrine has not been universal among Christians; of those Christians who embraced it, many eventually renounced it. Buber stated his reason for denying that Christ can be the Messiah: "...whether his name is Jesus or Buddha, Zarathustra or Lao-tse...Such an epithet [Messiah] is appropriate only for one who has redeemed the world." But Buber found the world to be quite unredeemed, "...don't you feel that as I do, in every drop of blood?" Interestingly, his own father, Carl, once criticized Buber's *My Way to Hasidism*, accusing his son of "virtually announcing yourself as the Messiah." Buber did state that "everything that is creative about Christianity is Jewish." Still, in 1945, writing about the fate of Christians and Jews, Buber's ecumenical spirit was evident: "We agree in that we both go back to the sources. Someday we—i.e., the two 'creeds'—shall meet there; basically we are already together."

The character of Buber's hundreds of correspondents testifies to his own character and is evident throughout the letters that have been selected by Glatzer and Mendes-Flohr. Buber admired the Protestant theologian, philosopher and physician Albert Schweitzer and praised his medical work because it was directed toward healing the body for the sake of the soul. Schweitzer, in turn, wrote Buber that, "Your books are very dear to me." Interestingly enough, he chides Buber for reading Soren Kierkegaard whom he characterizes as a "psychopath." High praise for Buber's *Kingship of God* came from another eminent Protestant theologian, Emil Brunner, whose ethical writings Buber valued. Brunner congratulated Buber on the excellence of his Bible translation, but he also criticized Buber for affirming I-Thou relations between humans and lesser animals, adding that this smacked of pantheism. Of course, Buber could have replied that if I-Thou relations with non-humans constitutes pantheism, then the Native American Black Elk, Francis of Assisi and a host of other religious notables are pantheists. A third Protestant theologian, Hermann Maas, called Buber "holy," meaning: "a man who makes it easier to believe in God in days of affliction, doubt and anxiety."

Buber's longest letter in this anthology, 10 pages, was addressed to Mohandas K. Gandhi. Among his impassioned views, Buber argued that non-violence would not work with "unfeeling human beings," force sometimes being a necessary evil. Unfortunately, no letter in the present volume contains Buber's response to the non-violence at the heart of the civil rights' movement in America. Hermann Hesse, recipient of the 1946 Nobel Prize for literature, wrote to express appreciation for the enjoyment he had found in Buber's writings. In 1957, Eleanor Roosevelt thanked Buber for supporting the Day of Protest on South Africa. On Buber's 80th birthday, Theodor Heuss, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, sent greetings and spoke movingly of Buber's national significance: "...you have become virtually an 'enricher of the German spirit.' This is one of the horrible paradoxes of these bad times..." On the same occasion, Buber received greetings from Prime Minister David Ben Gurion. Emphasizing Buber's unique contribution to scholarship, the Japanese philosopher Hiroshi Kojima wrote that Buber's writings were neither Oriental nor Occidental but "altogether singular." Even Bertrand Russell, perhaps the most eloquent atheist of the 20th century, wrote Buber requesting his signature on an appeal to Kruschev on behalf of Soviet Jews. After Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary General of the United Nations, 1953-1961, died in a plane crash before finishing his translation of *I and Thou* into Swedish, a nephew informed Buber that among Hammarskjold's few personal effects on his last flight were German and English texts of *I and Thou*.

The prizes, awards and honors bestowed on Buber were as numerous as they were varied. In 1953, he received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade; in 1956, he gave the fourth William Alanson White Lectures at the Washington School of Psychiatry, Washington, D.C; and in 1958, Buber became the subject of a volume in the prestigious Library of Living Philosophers' Series that included such illustrious thinkers as Albert Einstein and John Dewey. It is also telling that in 1960 he declined to have a memorial plaque attached to his house in Heppenheim an der Bergstrasse, where he and his family lived from 1915 to 1938, on the grounds that the plaque would only mention his residence and not the "plunder and expropriation that put an end to this living connection." In 1962, he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine from the University of Munster. A year later, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands conferred the Erasmus Prize upon Buber, the philosopher Karl Jaspers and the painter Marc Chagall being among the previous recipients of this award. Just days before Buber died, the city council of Jerusalem conferred on him the honorary citizenship of the city. In fact, the President of Israel led the mourners at Buber's funeral. In a tribute to the success of Buber's participation in interfaith dialogues, Arab students of Hebrew University placed a wreath on his grave. Buber, who was sometimes criticized for his assertion that one could establish an I-Thou relation with a tree, was finally honored posthumously with the inauguration of the Martin Buber Forest near Kibbutz Hazorea in 1979.

Buber's letters, like brush strokes, contribute to the portrait of a man that the world can never know too well any more than one can ever know enough about oneself. It is fitting that Buber liked the following observation of Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlaw: "As our hands over our eyes block an external vision, the outer world is an impediment to the introspective turn which can reveal all the luminosity of an inner world." Buber's correspondence casts light on both worlds. One cannot ask for more.

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

The Convenantal Relationship: Ethical Implications

Jewish Social Ethics
by David Novak
New York: Oxford University Press

A *Review* Essay
by Louis E. Newman

David Novak's *Jewish Social Ethics* represents the culmination of his extensive reflections during the past two decades on issues in Jewish law, philosophy and ethics. To read Novak's work is to be immersed in a conversation with Plato and the Shulchan Aruch, with Heidegger, Maimonides, Tillich and classical Jewish midrash, to name a few of the sources on which he draws. As in his previous collections of essays (*Law and Theology*, 1 and 2, Ktav, 1974-76), he works at the intersection of law and theology, of theory and practice. Indeed, his work exemplifies the cross-fertilization that can occur when Jewish law is illuminated by Jewish and Christian theological and philosophical reflection. Finally, Novak brings this rich tradition of religious practice and theological discussion into the arena of public de-

bate. In all these respects, Novak's work is ground-breaking and deserves our most careful and sustained attention.

Novak places himself on the spectrum midway between two extremes that have dominated contemporary Jewish thought. Like traditionalists, he regards the Torah as the primary source of Truth for the Jewish community and believes that all authentic Jewish thought must take as its point of departure a God who reveals and an authoritative tradition that interprets. He writes that the first responsibility of a Jewish social thinker is to the tradition itself, one must believe "that the normative Jewish tradition is a source of truth, indeed the prime source of truth in the world. What this means is that the thinker must accept the tradition as the tradition essentially accepts itself; that is, he or she must accept it as Torah" (7). From this standpoint, most modern Jewish thought has been characterized by an unacceptable capitulation to the behavioral norms and moral values of the secular world. In Novak's view, this represents an ultimately futile and destructive attempt to accommodate Jewish ethics to fit an essentially alien world.

On the other hand, Novak identifies with liberal rather than orthodox thinkers in his willingness to acknowledge sources of truth outside Scripture and tradition. In his works, Judaism is a source of ultimate, but not exclusive, truth. Moreover, as a philosopher, Novak views ethics as encompassing beliefs and principles, not (as most orthodox writers suppose) merely legal rules and precedents. He writes, "the task of Jewish social ethics is not to deduce conclusions from the rules at hand but, rather, to perform the more imaginative intellectual task of attempting to gain insight into the principles that inform and guide the whole normative Jewish enterprise in dealing with political and social issues" (5). Finally, his belief that Judaism can offer normative guidance to the pluralistic society in which we live, together with his conviction that tradition must acknowledge and speak to a radically new historical situation, separate him from orthodox ethicists whose work is both more parochial and less contemporary. Having placed Novak's work within the spectrum of contemporary Jewish thought, we are in a position to understand those categories that are central to the intellectual tasks he sets himself; namely truth, covenant and history.

Central to Novak's entire enterprise are the claims that truth is (1) found primarily in the Torah and (2) rational. Both claims are open to challenge. Certainly, one must ask whether the Torah is altogether true or could it contain falsehoods? Since the advent of Biblical criticism in the 19th century, we have become comfortable with the idea that Scripture's accounts of scientific and historical matters are not invariably true. It is especially troubling if certain ontological claims in the Bible, with its far-reaching moral implications, turn out to be false. Take, for example, the account of the creation of humankind in Genesis 2-3, which records that woman was created out of man for the purpose of serving as his helpmate. Over the centuries, Jewish and Christian ethicists have drawn out the implications of that story for male-female relationships in ways that have validated the subordination of women to the authority of man. If we concede that the text's ontology is false, we also concede that the theology and ethics flowing directly from it are likewise flawed. In short, it is relatively easy to acknowledge the moral truths in Biblical teachings and Novak is especially gifted in drawing such lessons from the texts he presents. It is harder to confront the possibility that such teachings could be simply false. For an ethicist like Novak, committed to the view that the Torah is "God's word," it would seem that such a possibility could not be admitted at all. Or is there some way in which Novak believes that he can secure some core of divine revelation, some body of eternal ontological and moral truths within Scripture, which are untouched by either Biblical or scientific criticism? If so, it is not clear how he hopes to accomplish this.

If the idea of Scripture as a source of truth is problematic, so too is the notion that truth is essentially rational. Novak embraces what he sees as the core of the natural law tradition; namely "that there is an intelligible order in the universe, and that by proper inquiry a human intelligence could discover his or her consistent place in that universal order" (67). In reality, Novak acknowledges two sorts of truth: those that are universal and those that are applicable only within discrete religious communities. Both types of truth are accessible to reason, in different ways, because, as he puts it, "a divine creative wisdom governs the whole universe" (80). But, while this view is found in Scripture, so too is the view that metaphysical and moral truths are inaccessible to reason. It is, after all, rabbinic tradition and not Scripture itself that is concerned to discover the "reasons behind the commandments." And when the Deuteronomist or the prophets admonish the Israelites to observe the law, it is not on the grounds that these statutes are reasonable or necessary for the smooth functioning of society but on the grounds that a proper relationship with God depends on it.

Scripture often seems to assume not only that divine truths are communicated through non-rational means but also that these truths themselves may not be rational. Consider, for example, God's election of Israel. The covenant is an expression, not of some rational choice on God's part but of God's love. As the prophet Hosea eloquently testifies, God's commitment to Israel, despite its sinfulness, is anything but rational. By the same token, Israel's acceptance of the covenantal relationship, their acceptance of the "yoke of the commandments," is not, as Novak and other rationalists would have it, that "the Jews experienced God as good and thus judged it right to respond to his commandments" (29). While Novak argues that Israel's response to God's law is "rational and not capricious," in fact the Biblical text (as distinct from rabbinic midrash) suggests it was neither rational nor capricious. When Israel recognizes and appreciates God's love for them, they will respond in kind. In Buberian terms, this is about I-Thou relationship, not about making the best rational choice among available alternatives. To suggest otherwise imputes a philosophical concern for reason, consistency and intellectual thought to a religious phenomenon grounded, not in philosophy but in the religious imagination and experience of a people. Arguably, that experience and the norms that are derived from it are not consistently or even primarily rational.

Turning now from Novak's discussion of truth to his treatment of covenant, he believes, as do other contemporary Jewish thinkers, from Eugene Borowitz to David Hartmann, the covenant is the foundation of Jewish theological ethics. As Novak sees it, our obligations to others, both within our own community and outside it, derive from our obligations to God, which, in turn, arise within the context of that ancient covenantal bond that the Bible records was established for all time on Mount Sinai.

Covenant as a theological and moral category, however, is open to numerous interpretations and the tradition itself encompasses a range of covenantal theologies. As Novak understands this covenantal relationship, radical inequality exists between the divine and human partners. In writing about the human interpretation of divine commandments, he comments, "the active process of imaginative human interpretation, implementation and even supplementation of the Torah is ultimately subordinate to the passive process of obedient acceptance of the Torah as the word of God" (7-8). when he discusses the creation of the convenantal relationship altogether, he says that "nothing required God to make a covenant with Israel. His was always the option not to make the covenant, or to make one with some other people...The choice of humans, however, seems to be much more limited in that it is only the freedom to respond or not. The prime obligation already exists; humans in no way create it or even co-create it" (35).

This hierarchical interpretation of the covenant's nature is but one option within the tradition. Others emphasize those passages in Scripture that point to a covenantal relationship of greater equality and mutuality. Israel's response to God, *na'aseh v'nishmah*—"we will observe and we will listen"—can be seen as an act of co-creating the covenantal bond rather than as passively accepting a bond that God creates unilateral-

ly, as Novak would have it. By the same token, the long history of pious Jews' challenging the morality of God's actions implies that either partner to the covenant can bring charges against the other.

The moral implications of these alternative conceptions of covenant are far-reaching. For Novak, Jewish ethics is a matter of discovering and explicating God's demands on us. While human interpreters play an essential role in discovering Jewish moral obligations, they do not significantly create them. By contrast, a more fluid understanding of covenant would be less hierarchical and more open-ended. It would mean that God and Israel jointly discover their obligations to one another through interaction. By giving Israel a more active and less subordinate role in defining Jewish moral obligations, this model of covenant may be more apposite to a post-modern philosophical context in which humans are neither "the measure of all things" nor "the servants of a righteous king." Novak surely cannot afford to minimize or overlook such an understanding of covenant and its possibilities.

Novak's hierarchical understanding of covenant accords well with his understanding of the role history plays in the construction of a modern Jewish ethic. On the one hand, Novak acknowledges that Jews are living in an unprecedented time in their history. The Emancipation necessitates a higher level of interaction between Jews and non-Jewish society, the Holocaust made us all into "survivors," and the establishment of Jewish political sovereignty in the State of Israel challenged us both to develop an ethic of political empowerment and to extend Jewish ethical norms to non-Jews living under Jewish authority. Novak insists that Jewish ethicists meet these challenges imposed by historical circumstance. And yet, he insists they must do so within a theological framework that is essentially "timeless," one he claims must not be altered in response to historical conditions. He expresses this clearly in relation to revelation when he states that "we regard history as the medium for the transmission of Torah to us, not as Torah itself" (7). Or, as he says in another context, "although we do not derive norms from history directly...surely historical experience can vividly illustrate what we already know from the Torah to be true" (200-201). For Novak, ontological and moral truths are discovered through history but are not affected by history.

Two important questions about this view of history must be raised. First, does Novak believe God could not instruct us (literally, give us Torah) through historical events, or only that God has chosen not to do so? And, if God has not chosen to do so in the past, why does this preclude the possibility that God would choose to instruct us in new ways in the present and future? In short, this essentially static, rationalist conception of metaphysical and moral truths, unaltered by historical change, appears to rests on the assumption that God either cannot or will not use history as a mode of revelation and that theological judgment needs a fuller defense than Novak provides in this volume.

Second, it seems this view of history is in tension with Novak's own longstanding commitment to understanding the historical context in which traditional exegetes lived and worked. He believes that, to apply the truth of Jewish tradition in a modern context, we must discover the historical circumstances surrounding, for example, the Torah's rules on economic justice or the rabbinic discussions of criminal punishment. Indeed, one of his most important contributions has been the subtlety with which he explores these matters. But having allowed that historical circumstances shaped the perceptions, judgments and interpretations of earlier exegetes, he wants to severely limit the ways in which contemporary exegetes can draw on their own historical experience as they interpret the law. He can note that the rabbis of the Palestinian Talmud interpreted the law concerning the rebellious son partly in reaction against certain principles of Roman law at the time (168), but would regard as illegitimate the attempt to reinterpret, say, the traditional sanctions for capital punishment in response to contemporary social norms.

In all, Novak's views are well-grounded within the tradition but so too are others, which deserve fuller consideration than they find in this volume. Even if some of his views are problematic, liberal readers will find themselves challenged to reassess their own presuppositions and to formulate their own views more rigorously. In that sense, Novak's book is a welcome stimulus for those across the Jewish religious and philosophical spectrum to move toward more penetrating and self-critical reflections on issues, both perennial and contemporary.

Louis E. Newman is professor of religion at Carleton College and a contributing editor for Menorah Review.

The Perennial Shylock

Shylock Reconsidered: Jews, Moneylending and Medieval Society
by Joseph Shatzmiller
University of California Press

A *Review* Essay
by Leon J. Weinberger

In this learned and carefully researched volume, Professor Shatzmiller seeks to correct a prevailing image—fostered in large part by Shakespeare's Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*—of the medieval Jewish moneylender as an unsavory character. From his study of the court registers of Marseilles for the 14th century and other primary sources from the High and Late Middle Ages (12th to 15th centuries) listed in J. Sornay and R.H. Bautier, *Les sources de l'histoire economique et sociale du moyen age*, Paris, 1968-74, the author suggests that "side by side with expressions of resentment and frustration contemporary documents present expressions of recognition and appreciation for a benign and generous Jewish moneylender." Abetting this ambivalence was a larger dilemma resulting from an expanding 13th-century European economy in dire need of the services offered by the Jewish banker. While usury was prohibited by Biblical law, exceptions were made permitting Jews to lend money to Christians. This ruling was prompted by the verse in Deuteronomy 23:20-21, "On loans to a foreigner you may charge interest, but on loans to your brother you may not charge interest." The Christian, not being a "brother," was therefore a suitable candidate for receiving loans on interest from Jews. While such arguments were pleasing to Christian heads of state—like the Emperor Frederick II of Sicily—who could now satisfy their need for credit, it did not persuade the Jewish philosopher Joseph Albo who declared (in his *Iqqarim*, ed. Husic, 3 [1946], 237) that the "brother" in the Deuteronomic law refers to anyone who is not an idolator. Therefore, interest is to be taken from one who belongs to the "seven nations of old"—from a Canaanite or an Amorite, for example.

Prominent Church figures, like William of Auxerre, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, also were not convinced and found usury sinful by it very nature, independent of the question of who was committing it (p. 45). However, they too reflected the ambivalence of an age struggling with the demands of economic necessity to make concessions to the reality of the marketplace. In his *Summa Theologiae* (II-II, 78, art. 1 and 3), he writes, "This is why civil legislation has at times to consider usury, not because usury is thought to be just but so as not to hinder the advantages that so many derive from it."

Given unfavorable economic alternatives, the Jews were easily drawn to moneylending. The extent of this practice may be gauged from a comment by the 15th century rabbi, Joseph Colon, who came from France and later settled in Italy. In a responsum (*Teshubot Ma-haRiK*, #118, #132), Colon writes that Jews in both France and Italy hardly engage in any other business. Abraham b. Morris Farissol (1451-1526) confirmed Colon's observation with regard to Italy. Added to the other condemnations of usury in the High and Later Middle Ages was the perception that this practice was not considered to be "useful"—as for instance, working with one's hands. Peter the Ven-

able echoed this sentiment in his letter to King Louis VII of France in which he informed him that "it is not by honest agriculture, by military service, or by any kind of honest and useful office that they (the Jews) fill their barns with produce and their cellars with wine" (pp. 62-63). Expulsions of the Jews from several European countries often were justified by the ruling authorities as a way of gaining relief for Christian debtors. Yet, hand-in-hand with the expulsion was an indecisiveness coming from a grudging admission that the "usurers" made a valuable contribution to the economic well-being of the society (pp. 67-70).

The need to revisit the question of Jewish moneylending in the Middle Ages was already suggested by R. W. Emery who called for a revised perception of the Jewish banker "and perhaps even a revision of the traditional view of moneylending in general. It does not appear in the sources very much like the 'degraded and degrading' profession we read about in contemporary history" (p.2). Shatzmiller builds on Emery's suggestion and presents his argument through a case history from Marseilles' court records of February through June 1317, involving a dispute between the Jew Bondavid of Graguignan, a moneylender, and a citizen, Laurentius Girardi. The latter charged that Bondavid falsely requested him to repay a debt he had already paid.

The records preserve the testimony of 24 citizens of Marseilles, all non-Jews, giving witness to Bondavid's honesty and good reputation. Shatzmiller records several of the most notable examples of Bondavid's character as reported by his Gentile friends. One account involved a sum of money that Canon Raymundus Egidii had deposited with Bondavid "without witness or any written document." When the canon died, Bondavid went to the executor of the deceased man's will and asked him, "Did my Sir Raymundus Egidii...before his death hand over to you any obligatory note, that is, a receipt, or public and private act in which I Bondavid am obligated to him?" When the executor replied that he did not discover any document in which he was obligated to pay to Sir Raymundus, Bondavid told him that he (Bondavid) had 2,000 silver *tournois* "which the said Sir Raymundus handed over to me so that I might guard them for him." And Bondavid immediately gave the canon's money to the executor (pp. 112-113).

Regrettably, almost no documentation exists supporting Girardi, and the final decision of the court delivered in July 1317 has not been preserved. However, the provocative studies of Emery and Shatzmiller make a strong case for reconsidering the nature of moneylending and the role of the Jew in this practice. Shatzmiller's valuable monograph features chapters on "Opposition to Jewish Moneylending: Between Theology and Politics" and "Indebtedness in Medieval Society: Need, Habit and Equanimity" and is a must reading for an understanding of the social as well as the economic issues in the High and Middle Ages in Europe.

Leon J. Weinberger is a research professor of religious studies at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa and a contributing editor for Menorah Review.

"According to the Camel is the Load."
Talmud

Is there any way of knowing capacity
except through trial and error
measuring by the median slump
or decibels of balk
but who can account for the extra monkeys
and who can weigh minuses
so let me be my own dumb beast
and when my belly grazes the ground
when my legs cave in
then let me simply become the burden
let me bear the unbearable
so that I shall never be tempted to say
"I've borne more than my share."

—*Carol Adler*

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BOOK BRIEFINGS

A Supplement to Menorah Review

Winter 1995

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

Final Solutions: Biology, Prejudice and Genocide. *By Richard M. Lerner. University Park, PA: Penn State Press.* Recognizing the inadequacy of both biological and cultural determinism to explain the complexities of human development, Lerner offers a scientific alternative to biological determinism—"developmental contextualism." This alternative recognizes that biology plays a ubiquitous role in human behavior but denies that either biology or environment alone determines that behavior. Developmental contextualism emphasizes that biology develops in relation to the complex and changing contexts of human life. Furthermore, one's biological heritage provides a "liberator of human potential" rather than an inescapable path. Lerner shows how biology allows human existence to be improved and, in fact, to be "recreated" across the entire span of human life. Finally, he demonstrates the policy implications of developmental contextualism, stressing that humans can be active agents in improving the quality of their lives.

Studies in Maimonides. *Edited by Isadore Twersky. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.* This volume contains papers prepared for a conference sponsored by Harvard's Center for Jewish Studies on "The State of Maimonidean Studies." The papers deal with the following themes: Maimonides on Halachah, on Kabbalah, on truth and falsehood, responses to the philosopher's *Guide to the Perplexed* during the next seven centuries.

The Jewish Reception of Heinrich Heine. *Edited by Mark H. Gelber. Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.* This volume is the result of a three-day conference in Beersheva of Jewish responses to Heine. The conference provided an opportunity to utilize the methodological guidelines and insights of reception esthetics by investigating the particular Jewish reception of Heine. All the essays fall within the purview of reception. It is fascinating to note the rich diversity of both non-Jewish and Jewish readerships related to individual readers and ideological movements represented. Heine, himself, became a symbol of diverse cultural options for European Jewry. He, together with his works, was often embraced or rejected on the basis of strong emotional responses to aspects of his personality or controversial movements in his career.

In the Beginning: Discourses on Chasidic Thought. *By Adin Steinsaltz. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson Inc.* This book is a commentary on Genesis. It is also a commentary on a commentary, as it is based on a classic Chasidic text that explores many ideas found in the Torah. While the author connects his observations and insights to details found in the Book of Genesis, it becomes clear that his concerns reach to the deepest mysteries of human existence. This is an intriguing journey through Genesis by one of the leading rabbis of our generation. Along this journey, the depths of his insight help to reveal the hidden paths of wisdom contained in the Torah.

Jokes and Their Relations. *By Elliott Oring. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press.* The author offers a fresh perspective on jokes and related forms of humor. He delineates an approach that can explain the peculiarities of a wide variety of humorous expression. Analyzing elephant jokes, disaster jokes, esoteric forms of Jewish humor and even the humor of Sigmund Freud, Oring extracts startling new insights from familiar texts and discovers meaning in seemingly impenetrable ones. Written in an accessible and engaging style, this book will appeal to scholars and laypersons alike—to anyone who has ever wondered how jokes work and what they mean.

The Satinizing of the Jews: Origin and Development of Mystical Anti-Semitism. *By Joel Carmichael. New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation.* Literature about anti-Semitism is vast. However, much of what has been written takes the existence of this phenomenon for granted, giving us a history of anti-Semitism without explaining what it really is. Carmichael's treatise is different. It is not a history of atrocities—it goes to the roots, thus clearing the confusion about the distinction between mystical anti-Semitism and other forms of racism. Mystical anti-Semitism is a singular idea that culminated in the Holocaust and is still alive today. The author contends it has nothing to do with a personal hatred of Jews. He argues that the view of anti-Semitism, as being directed against real-life Jews, has helped objectify the irrational hatred that is at its core.

After Auschwitz: History, Theology and Contemporary Judaism *(2nd edition). By Richard L. Rubenstein. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.* With the first edition of this book, Rubenstein virtually invented Holocaust theology. This edition remains as much a book about the human condition as a book about God. While retaining essential material from the 1966 edition, Rubenstein offers his latest thinking on the issues of belief and tradition after the Holocaust. He also deals extensively with events making headlines and shaping contemporary Jewish thinking and theology, such as the Palestinian question and Judaism in post-Communist Eastern Europe. Facing the threat of Holy War and future Holocaust, questioning the possibility of genuine peace, exploring mysticism and other religions, this edition is as challenging—and may prove as controversial—as the original.

Questions and Reform Jewish Answers: New American Reform Responsa. *By Walter Jacob. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis.* What is the responsibility of an AIDS carrier? Shall CPR be given to the frail elderly? Can genetic engineering be patented? May a Torah be loaned conditionally? Can there be a "berit" for Messianic Jews? What is the relationship of Jews to Hindus? May a criminal be a member of the congregation? May a "tallit" be worn at an interfaith service? Are any plantings appropriate in a cemetery? May a wedding be videotaped? Must a Jewish lawyer defend terrorists? These are just a few of the questions answered in this book that contains 246 responsa. They reflect the concerns of American Reform Jews during the last decade. The annotated index includes earlier volumes of responsa material.

Storm From Paradise: The Politics of Jewish Memory. *By Jonathan Boyarin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.* Taking Walter Benjamin's famous image of the Angel of History blown into the future by a "storm from paradise" as his point of

departure, the author launches a wide-ranging examination of the role of memory in the study of knowledge, culture and power. He addresses the complicated relationship between space and time in the constitution of memory and identity, as well as the dynamics of "othering" in 20th century culture within the context of a long tradition of Jewish writings on the subject.

Most important, in an articulation of post-colonial practices, Boyarin confronts directly the politics of memory and forgetting in Jewish culture strategies of state power vis-a-vis the Palestinians, while insisting that those concerned with questions of justice and autonomy have much to learn from the legacy of Jewish experience. This volume ultimately links the construction of anthropology itself with Jewish and Christian textual traditions, arguing that the Jewish narrative has re-emerged—even though transformed—in continuing discussions of multiplicity and in attempts to forge ethnic identities within problematic national boundaries.

The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945. *By Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.* Between 1933 and 1945, the Germany's Nazi regime tried to restructure a "class" society along racial lines. This book deals with the ideas and institutions that underpinned this mission and shows how Nazi policy affected both victims and beneficiaries.

This book begins with a comprehensive discussion of the origins of Nazi racial ideology and then demonstrates the thoroughness and purposiveness with which this was translated into official policy. It does this with the systematic persecution of Jews, the largest group of Nazism's victims, as well as with the fate of lesser known groups such as Sinti and Roma, the mentally handicapped; the "asocial" and homosexuals. Finally, the book examines the racially motivated social policies of the regime that affected every German "national comrade." It argues that the "polycratic" and chaotic character of the regime, described so frequently by recent historians, did not hindered the ruthless way in which the regime pursued and destroyed its victims. The Third Reich was fundamentally different from other totalitarian regimes precisely because of the all-encompassing nature of its racial policies. The latter were neither exclusively reactionary nor "modern" but were rather an unprecedented form of progress into barbarism. The authors make an important contribution to fundamental questions.

Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought. *Edited by Lenn E. Goodman. Albany: State University of New York Press.* This book deals primarily with the problem of the one and the many. The problems of creation, of evil, of revelation and of ethics are all treated as special cases. The authors focus on the unifying theme of mediation, the means by which the Absolute relates to the here and now. The principle figures studied include Philo, Plotinus, Avicenna, Ibn Gabirol, Maimonides, Averroes, Aquinas, Gersonides, Nachmanides, Isaac Abravanel and Spinoza, as well as several Kabbalistic thinkers. Taken together, these essays offer an impressive historical survey of the ideas, achievements and philosophic struggles of a group of men who worked to form a unique and durable tradition that bridged the gap between rival confessions and sects—mystics, rationalists and empiricists; Jews, Christians and Muslims. This is a philosophic source whose vitality is not yet exhausted.

Freud's Jewish Identity: A Case Study in the Impact of Ethnicity. *By Jerry Victor Diller. Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.* This volume traces the psychological development of Freud's ethnic identity and its role in shaping the history and content of psychoanalysis. The author presents an exhaustive review and integration of existing biographical information about Freud's experiences as a Jew into a coherent psychodynamic case study, fully agreeing with Paul Roazen's assessment that "it is impossible to over-emphasize Freud's Jewishness, since it was the single most important part of his background." By carefully sifting through the vast store of biographical and autobiographical information on Freud with the eye of an expert in ethnic psychology, Diller has been able to create a more comprehensive understanding of Freud's identity as a Jew and the role of Jews and Judaism in the creation of psychoanalysis than has been previously available.

A Guide for the Perplexed. *By Jonathan Levi. New York: Random House.* Levi dazzles and provokes with this playful, post-modern novel that deals with the themes of personal survival, the healing power of music, Jewish identity forged in exile, the discovery of the New World and the metaphoric underpinnings of religion. His characters delve into whether Columbus was Jewish and uncover family secrets linking their entwined destinies to the madness of history.

Judaism: Between Yesterday and Tomorrow. *By Hans Kung. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.* This volume may be the most important book written by a Christian about Judaism in this century. Kung begins by tracing the history of Judaism from Biblical times to the rise of the now post-modern world. He discusses the horror of the Holocaust and the kind of world in which it was possible. He describes the birth and development of the State of Israel. We look again, through Jewish eyes, at the life and work of Jesus and the alienation between Judaism and Christianity that came after his death. The identity crisis of modern Judaism, various groupings and leading thinkers are all considered. The conflicts over the observance of the Law are examined in depth, and Kung shows how many of the dilemmas today run parallel to those in the time of Jesus and Paul. This extraordinary volume will inform and enlarge the dialogue among the religions of the world, especially between Judaism and Christianity.

A Jewish Boyhood in Poland: Remembering Kolbuszowa. *By Norman Salsitz, as told to Richard Skolnik. Syracuse University Press.* Kolbuszowa is gone now. Before World War II, it was a thriving Polish town of 4,000, half Polish Catholics, half Jews. It was the town where Salsitz was born, in 1920, and it was the town he helped to destroy, forced by the Nazis in 1941 to assist in the brick-by-brick destruction of the Jewish ghetto in which his family lived. Salsitz was later sent to a German work camp but escaped into the woods to tell his story of Kolbuszowa to Skolnik. The author speaks to us both as an exceptional witness to everyday events in the town and as a shrewd observer of the broader landscape. He conveys how painful it often was to be Jewish in Poland, even before the war. Despite the persecution, he evokes the dignity and strength of the Jewish way of life among the peasant and professional classes alike.

The Harvard Hillel Sabbath Songbook. *Edited by Ben-Zion Gold. Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher.* This volume is an ambitious and extensive selection, newly arranged and introduced, presenting songs from all congregations of Judaism. Each song is presented with full musical accompaniment, arranged for keyboard instruments, guitar, melody instruments and simple percussion. It is lavishly illustrated with woodcuts and engravings from historical sources. The book also contains the complete Sabbath ritual for the home, beginning with the blessing for the lighting of the candles through Havdalah.

Vilna. *By Israel Cohen. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.* First published in 1943, this re-issue is significant to the re-emerging city and the heightened interest in re-establishing Jewish communal organizations within it. Efforts to rebuild cultural and educational facilities have been undertaken by groups of the United States and Israel. Vilnius University now has a department of Jewish studies. Representatives of the present-day Jewish community, arranging to publish books of Jewish content for their people, made Cohen's book one of their first selections. The book is recognized as an overview of a city considered the "Jerusalem of Lithuania." It is one of the most reliable remaining records of a Jewish community whose archives and institutions have been essentially destroyed.