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For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

Jewish Path, Buddhist Path: Do They Meet?

The following article is excerpted from the lecture presented by Dr. Richard G. Marks for the Selma and Jacob Brown Lecture held last March. The annual lecture is sponsored by the Center for Judaic Studies and the Friends of the Library of Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Marks is associate professor of religion at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia.

A journey I made in Burma in 1993 raised anew questions I have asked myself about Buddhism. The monks I met there, especially those of the highest rank, called "sayatow," like many of the older monks I have met in Thailand, were some of the...let me use the word "spiritual"...people I know: gentle, compassionate, sensitive, self-effacing, generous and also enchanting, powerful, charismatic. What I find in Theravada Buddhism, which attracts and troubles me as a Jew, is a deep spirituality without God, a powerful ethics and compassion without God. What are Jews to make of this?

Comparison of the Jewish and Buddhist traditions is complex and tricky, perhaps impossible. They speak different religious languages, arise out of very different cultures and their histories have never met in significant ways. I recounted in an earlier article how Thai language and culture resists all efforts to translate into it or even correlate the Hebrew word *kadosh*, holy, and concepts related to it ("Teaching Judaism in Thailand," *Approaches to Modern Judaism*, Vol. 2, 1984). There is the further question of what kind of Buddhism we are comparing. Theravada, Mahayana, Tibetan? (I am able to discuss only Theravada Buddhism, which is centered in Southeast Asia.) Also, do we compare the Buddhism of the monks or of the laity? Lay Buddhists, who are the vast majority of Theravada Buddhists, do not seek Nirvana or practice the Eightfold Path including meditation; their Buddhism is aimed at producing good karma for prosperity in this life and a better rebirth. It focuses on a great web or cycle of acts of generosity—giving to monks, parents, elders, spirits, children, neighbors and more. Lay Buddhists try to fulfill their family responsibilities in as peaceful, responsible and moral a manner as is possible in a life lived outside the monastery.

What kind of Judaism are we comparing? Frequently these days it is Kabbalah that is compared with monks' Buddhism. Rodger Kamenetz in his book, *The Jew in the Lotus* (1994), recounts his discovery of a significant commonality in the spirituality of contemporary followers of Kabbalah and that of the Tibetan Buddhist monks he met in India, and he calls for the revival and dissemination of the Kabbalistic streams of Judaism. American Judaism, he argues, needs a healthy dose of spirituality; it's losing some of its more thoughtful children to Buddhism.

A paragraph in the autobiographical book by Rabbi David Cooper, *Entering the Sacred Mountain* (1994), illustrates this way of connecting Judaism and Buddhism: "The 10-day retreat has just ended. Once again I feel revitalized on my spiritual path—the Vipassana technique [of Buddhist meditation] opens increasingly higher levels of awareness in my Jewish practice. Indeed, ...the intense meditation I did during this retreat inspired more clarity into a mystical world that transcends religious distinctions" (132). Cooper asserts that the Buddhist and Jewish paths meet through mysticism, an experience of transcending the self or ego.

I believe, however, that the question of relationship between the two traditions, the two paths, must go beyond Kabbalistic Judaism and monks' Buddhism. It should also address mainstream Judaism and include lay Buddhism. I should like to see a Jewish dialogue with Buddhists proceeding not only from the mystics in our midst but also from religious thinkers in the center of our communal life, who will respond to what they learn of Buddhism from their understanding of central doctrines and symbols from the rabbinic tradition and its modern offshoots. I find precedence for this enterprise in the way Christian theologians have been approaching dialogue with Buddhists for the last 15 years, most of them from the non-mystical core of Christian traditions.

Leonard Swidler, for example, in *A Jerusalem-Tokyo Bridge* (1990), addresses the apparently opposing views that Christians and Buddhists hold toward the reality and role of God. On the Christian side, we find a person-like God who wills things to happen, shows love, saves people from suffering and sin; on the Buddhist side, we find an assertion of the irrelevance of gods because human beings must work out for themselves their own wisdom and peace, and another assertion that final, ultimate reality is one of ceaseless flow, becoming and relationship. What does Swidler do with these contradictions?

He reinterprets symbols and concepts. The Buddhist concept of reality as ceaseless flow and change, called "Co-Dependent Origination," can have a positive meaning as Ultimate Source: all things and people of this world issue out of this creative flow of energies. On the Christian side, Swidler points to Western philosophy, God is not a substance, an independent personality, but a dynamic process in relationship with all that exists. Modern Western philosophers and physicists are increasingly attracted to relational theories of reality.

Swidler also seeks variations within each tradition that point toward the other tradition, and he asks whether elements dividing the two traditions are of an essential or accidental nature. The general strategy is to read just the relationship from conflict into a conversation between two sides, a conversation seen now as emphasizing different aspects of an issue, in the same realm of possibilities.

One can raise serious objections to this approach, from various considerations, but I

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think that we Jews can learn from thinkers like Swidler (and a few articles by Rabbi David Hartman in *Conflicting Visions* have echoed them) the courage and humility of going out to meet strangers at our door. If these strangers are like the sayatows of Burma, we can only be enriched.

But why should we, especially with all the other problems and issues at hand? I hope I have conveyed my own motivation for such a dialogue. It is an intellectual question: Can we envision a Judaism that can speak about common issues with Buddhists? It is, more importantly, a religious question: How do I, as a Jew, respond to the powerful logic of Buddhist philosophy and the attraction of Buddhist spirituality? Can I find teachings in my own tradition that address the claims of the Buddhist Path? What would I learn about Judaism by taking a new look at it through the eyes of Buddhist philosophy and discipline?

I want to conclude by illustrating one strategy for a Jewish meeting with Theravada Buddhism. In contrast to Swidler, what I suggest seeks contact while putting on hold the question of "commensurability"—whether Buddhist experiences and language can be translated meaningfully into Jewish ones. I appeal rather to the metaphor of "midrash," which I take to be (in this context) a means of discovering unnoticed affinities and parallels through re-visioning and re-emphasis. What, then, would a "Buddhist midrash" on Judaism "see"? How might we look anew at our own Judaism through a [Theravada] Buddhist mind? To what elements would we be drawn?

(1) Let's begin with the image of Path. Monks' Buddhism has its Eightfold Path disciplining the mind through morality, wisdom and meditation; and lay Buddhism has its cycles of celebration, its moral precepts and its constant rounds of giving, which can be seen as a training in generosity, of letting go. Can we find in rabbinic literature a concept of Halakhah as a path of discipline? This question leads to the traditional topic of the reasons for the commandments, *Taamei HaMitzvot*, which is given a variety of answers. However, according to Ephraim Urbach (*The Sages*), the most frequent answer to the question of the purpose of the laws appears to be, first, the refining of human beings (represented by a statement attributed to Rav in Gen. Rab. 44,1) and, second, granting Israel reward in the World to Come for performing *mitzvot*. Rav's ideal of refining means the gradual purification of our desires as we learn to refrain from sin by following the *mitzvot*.

So it seems possible within rabbinic tradition to interpret Halakhah as purification, like the Buddhist monks' Eightfold or the training in generosity followed by Buddhist laypeople. And the lay Buddhist motivation of producing good karma resembles the other rabbinic explanation of the *mitzvot*, as opportunities for acquiring merit. Motives, merit and karma are considered in both traditions to be lower levels of motivation than that of purification.

(But is Halakhah a path in a Buddhist sense? After all, hasn't it been understood primarily as a path ordained by God, responding to God's words, rather than a human search for wisdom? But, at this point, I am speaking of a Buddhist vision of Judaism; much discussion must follow.)

(2) A Buddhist midrash on classical Judaism might also emphasize the behavior of *Hasidim* and *Talmidei Hakhamim*. The *Hasidim* (in rabbinic thought) follow a path of piety that moves beyond the strict requirements of the law. A famous passage in *Avot* defines *Hasid* as one who says, "What is mine is yours and what is yours is yours," in contrast to average people who say, "What is yours is yours and what is mine is mine" (5:13). This, and various anecdotes about *Hasidim* in the Talmud, reverberate with the Buddhist goals of compassion and non-attachment. As to the *Talmidei Hakhamim* of rabbinic times, we notice that, like Buddhist monks, they formed a society, in the academies, set apart from the general society, and they held themselves to higher standards of asceticism, community service, study and morality (in the sense of acting beyond the letter of the law). Two descriptions of the *Talmid Hakham* would particularly echo in Buddhist ears. In *Derekh Eretz Zutta*, we read that "he is humble and lowly of spirit, alert and world-wise, beloved by the people and not domineering... He says, all the things of this world I do not really care for. He willingly covers himself with dust by sitting at the feet of the wise. ...Let all your ways be for the sake of Heaven." In the sixth chapter of *Avot* we find a list of some of the same virtues, and these are woven together under the metaphor of a ladder that the *Talmid Hakham* climbs in his study of Torah: "Torah is acquired by 48 rungs," and these include disciplining one's lips; awe and reverence; humility, joy and purity; serving the wise; lessening one's preoccupations with business, the ways of the world, pleasure, sleep, conversation and laughter; patience, a good heart; accepting anguish cheerfully; rejoicing in one's lot; avoiding self-righteousness; loving people, and loving justice, good deeds and rebuke. Louis Jacobs devotes a book, *Jewish Saintliness Through the Ages* (1990), to the topic of *hasidut* in the history of Jewish thought, with headings like "the saintly path," "the saintly ideal of equanimity" and "saintly raptures," as well as examples of saintly rules from various Jewish writings—all of which resonate with both monks' Buddhism and the teaching of selfless generosity in lay Buddhism. Professor Harold Kasimow has asserted that, of all the streams of Jewish tradition, the Musar movement, with its stress on "ethical perfection," has the greatest affinity with Buddhism (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 23.2 [1986]: 291).

(3) One more aspect of Halakhah as Path deserves attention. The highest motive for observing the *mitzvot* in rabbinic discussions is the motive of doing so "for its own sake," *li-shmah*, without ulterior motive, out of a pure response to God; and many praises are found in rabbinic writings for what the rabbis call "the joy of the precept," which means the joy and gratification that comes from doing a *mitzvah* for its own sake. These two ideas suggest to me a sense of absorption in the *mitzvot* themselves. We follow this path not for its reward and not as a heavy burden but for the sake of the path itself and of God who ordained it, losing ourselves in the process of walking the path. In this way, m Halakhah becomes a means of helping us transcend our selfish motives, of raising our consciousness beyond the normal grasping self. And that is the goal of all Buddhist disciplines? Walpola Rahula, in *What the Buddha Taught* (72), uses the term "mindfulness" (a primary goal of the Eightfold Path) in association with such absorption of self in the present moment. Similarly, lay Buddhists are taught that the highest form of generosity (called *thanamai* in Thai) is giving without expecting benefits from doing so, even good karma.

(4) A Buddhist *midrash* might also explore parallels between the Jewish concept of Covenant and the Buddhist concept called "Co-Dependent Origination." The Covenant implies that our independent selves are incomplete and attain to the core of existence only in relationship to entities outside ourselves. Reality, then, becomes relational, not absolute; and God, too, is known and affects the world only through relationship, mutuality, interdependence. Martin Buber's philosophy could be of some help here.

Sparks of Light

The Great Chasidic Masters
Edited by Avraham Yaakov Finkel
Jason Aronson Inc.

A *Review* Essay
by Earle J. Coleman

Like other expressions of the mystical spirit, Hasidism emphasizes the student-teacher relationship. The Hindu term "Upanishads" literally means "to sit down close to," as when students gather at the feet of the master; similarly, Hasidim are to be found sitting at the rebbe's table. Beginning with the founder of Hasidut, Baal Shem Tov, Avraham Yaakov Finkel's rich compendium puts the reader at the feet of more than four dozen eminent Hasidic teachers. Their instruction consistently emphasizes deveikut (i.e., attachment to God, sincerity and passionate prayer over scholarship). On prayer,

the Baal Shem Tov advised: "If you see a person, who is in turbulent prayer—gesturing wildly and moving his body, do not scoff at him, for he just does not want to drown in the sea of distractions which threaten prayerful concentration." When asked what he did before praying, Sanzer Rav replied, "I pray that I may be able to pray properly." Rather that introduce radical concepts, Hasidut revitalized traditional ideas. Yearning for the good old days, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rymanov lamented the appearance of highways because, before they existed, travelers spent their nights at an inn, reciting psalms and discussing "Torah thoughts" but now people speed on the highways day and night, with no time for reflection. When asked, "Why has Mashiach not yet come?" Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kossov cried for reform, "Because we are today just as we were yesterday."

Agreeing with Socrates, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter proclaimed that the highest knowledge one can achieve is to know that he does not know anything. It was in this condition that "...the children of Israel wandered through the wilderness." Of course, any such denials of knowledge were hardly unqualified. Intellectual activity flourished as numerous theological and philosophical problems engaged the Hasidic mind. For example, Rabbi Alter himself observed that the command to love God is perplexing because love is an emotion that lies beyond one's control. If feelings cannot be dictated, then why is "Love the Lord your God" a Torah precept? The Rabbi concluded that the imperative was intelligible only if one assumes that humans have an innate love of God, one that is dormant at the core of the soul. Thus, the task is to arouse and realize what is incipient. According to Rabbi Avraham Borenstein, "...hidden deep in each person's heart and mind is the knowledge of God." Hasidism may be understood as the way to release this suppressed knowledge.

On the meaning of life, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Efraim of Saddilkov stated that everyone can attain the holiness of God himself, since the soul is divine; indeed, the ultimate purpose of creation is to become God-like. Also, addressing the purpose of creation, Rabbi Dov Ber moves from the premise "...that the purpose of all things becomes evident in the end," to the conclusion that God created the whole cosmos for the sake of Israel. To the question, "Why did God create non-Jews? some responded that it was to show the greater virtue of Jews. For another view of creation , Rabbi Bunam of Pshis'cha held that "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" should be translated as "When God began to create heaven and earth" since creation is an ongoing process without any break. Were the activity to cease for even an instant, the universe would revert to nothingness. That the world is "in progress" leaves some justification for the existence of evil since it is premature to judge an unfinished universe. Similarly, Hinduism identifies Vishnu as the sustainer of God, and Descrates argues that one must posit the existence of God to account for the perpetuation of the universe from one moment to the next. After all, Descartes finds nothing within himself to guarantee his continued existence. Through Torah study, scholars are continuously creating the non-physical world, a realm populated by insights, new questions and aspirations. While God created matter from nothingness, the tzaddik creates nothingness out of matter (i.e., by his good deeds, he transforms the physical world into a domain of spirituality).

Child-like faith prevails over philosophical speculation. Following Socrates, Christ and the Buddha, the Hasidic rebbes developed an oral tradition, with only a minority expressing themselves in writing. Their argument for favoring fear of God over any rational path to the divine is that an intellectual approach would disadvantage most humans because they are not possessed of superior intellects. On similar grounds, Leo Tolstoy argues that genuine art communicates emotions, not ideas, because all humans have an emotional life, whatever their intellectual limitations might be. Cultivating speculative reason sometimes proved to be problematic; during the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, under pressure from the Church, those who were philosophically inclined converted to Christianity, but simple, pious Jews chose martyrdom instead of conversion. According to Rebbe Reb Bunam, "the existence of God can be fathomed only by the heart." There is no empirical proof for the existence of God because faith should be an act of one's free will and any such demonstration would compromise one's freedom of doubt.

Occasionally, however, Hasidic thinkers have offered rational demonstrations for the existence of God. The argument from design, for example, has been employed. This is the proof that Immanuel Kant called the oldest, the clearest and the most deserving of respect. Even Voltaire, who is highly critical of religion in *Candide*, once asked: "Nobody can doubt that a painted landscape or drawn animals are works of skilled artists. Could copies possibly spring from an intelligence and the originals not?" As in the case of William Paley who compared the intricacies of the world to those of a watch and argued that the former required an intelligent mind as much as the latter, Rabbi Tzadok of Lublin emphasized that the construction of the world was like an exquisite timepiece fashioned by a skillful artist. Sometimes called the teleological argument, this proof has great aesthetic appeal but is subject to the criticism that it proves, at best, an architect who fashions from preexistent materials, not a God who creates from nothing. David Hume's catalog of additional criticisms and the theory of evolution have further undermined the argument, lending force to the Hasidic tendency to emphasize the experimential over the intellectual, piety over reason, faith and feeling over philosophy.

The Baal Shem Tov emphasized fervent and joyful service toward the divine, "Serve God with gladness" (Psalm 100:2). Serving God with zeal, rather than asceticism, was recommended on the grounds that, unless one eats, drinks and enjoys life, he will be unable to cling to God. To celebrate the spiritual power of aesthetic activities, joyful prayer, dance and song were espoused over austerities such as fasting. Rabbi Bunam turned to the paradigm of the child on the grounds that a child is always moving, ever happy, and constantly ready to cry for what it wants. Applied to the service of God, adults should be zealous about performing the mitzvot, constantly joyful and forever ready to tearfully implore God's assistance. A God-infatuated rabbi once proclaimed, "Dear God, I don't want your paradise, I don't want your World-to-Come, I just want You." Augustine would agree and add that God is the only object of desire such that when one truly wants Him, he or she immediately possesses Him. The all-consuming nature of the spiritual enterprise is evident in that, even when sleeping one is gaining strength to serve God. If to approach God is to be happy, it is not surprising that Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov declared: "A Jew must always be happy."

Naturally, as monotheists, the Hasidic masters had to come to terms with the problem of evil. Since God is everywhere, there is a concealed spark of goodness even in evil; and, performing one's mitzvot releases it. Everything contains a hidden divine core; for instance, within lust, there is passion for Torah study. Even jealousy toward a better scholar inspires one to enhance his or her own scholarship. One can love a wicked person by realizing that within each is a spark of God, pitying the spark that is trapped within the evil person and loving this divine spark. On dietary laws Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter states that although holiness is present in the species that Jews are forbidden to eat, it cannot be released from its physical casing when eaten by a God-fearing Jew. The Baal Shem Tov explained how there could be a holy spark in a sin: "It is the holy spark of repentance. When a person repents of a sin, he raises the holy spark that was trapped in that sin..." Rabi Yaakov Yosef addressed the problem of evil by interpreting "It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18) to mean: "the yetzer ra or evil impulse is necessary for human development." Again, Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik Taub of Kalev believed that suffering purifies one's soul, thereby cultivating it. But, this leads some to ask, "Why do animals suffer?" In the teachings of Rabi Yaakov Yosef, bad things happen to good people and

good things to bad people because of their deeds in a previous existence. Of course, the doctrine of reincarnation encourages one to put a premium on future existence. That it is held to be of paramount importance is evident, for example, in the thought of Rabbi Yechezkel of Shiniava for whom this world is merely a bridge to the World-to-Come. According to Be'er Mayim Chayim, Abel became a shepherd to restore souls who had been reincarnated as sheep. But reincarnation generally is not embraced by Jews and there are two further objections to the doctrine. First, it would undermine compassion for the deformed, handicapped and diseased since their behavior in previous lives is responsible for their present condition. Second, using reincarnation to justify the existence of evil leads to an infinite regression: "Why was he born blind?" "Because he was a thief in a previous life." "But why was he a thief in the previous life?" "Because he was a chronic liar in the life before that." Obviously, the questions can continue without end; therefore, reincarnation can give no ultimate explanation for an individual's present state.

Of course, joy is compatible with poverty. When he was asked how such an impoverished man could nonetheless thank God for his blessings, the Zlotchover Maggid replied, "Evidently poverty is what I need and I am well provided with that." In a like spirit Francis of Assisi welcomed "Lady Poverty" as a spiritual blessing. As wealth enlarges and distorts the individual's sense of importance, poverty contributes to a humble assessment of one's self. Indeed, humility becomes a cardinal Hasidic virtue because, if people have lofty opinions of themselves, they are not apt to view others as their equals. But if they attain complete self-nullification, they will be able to rank others as true equals. Moreover, if one is extremely humble, he or she can learn from everyone. Before God, the humble person considers himself as nothingness, for he has engaged in self-annulment (i.e., renouncing any and all of his capacities in the face of the majesty of the Holy One). If, in the vernacular, someone is "full of himself," he leaves no room for Godliness to dwell within him. Thus, Rabbi Yisrael Yitzchak of Alexander insists, "...only the humble can truly understand the Torah." But how could a supposedly humble man like Hillel the Elder say, "If I am here, everyone is here?" His utterance has been taken to mean that if God nourished the spiritual attainment of such a low being as Hillel, then everyone else is capable of the same accomplishment. Naturally, misguided humility can cause problems. In the Zohar, Noah's professed humility—he failed to pray for his people because he did not think his worth was sufficient to guard them from approaching disaster—is judged to be a flaw because humility should not prevent one from doing a good act. In fact, humility has been carried too far if one concludes that a human's deeds could not be of significance to an almighty God.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of faith in Hasidic thought for, according to Rabbi Mordichai of Neshchiz, with faith one can revive the dead. But Rabbi Menachem Mendel adds that without hard work faith is helpless. Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshel of Apta states that although Noah trusted fully in God, he was reluctant to believe unconditionally that the flood would occur. Believing that "faith can move mountains," Noah feared that if he had complete faith in the coming of the flood, then he would be responsible for making it happen. Of course, one could chide Noah for failing to distinguish between believing that an event will occur and causing it. While his faith disposed him toward the former, he should have realized that only God can effect the latter.

Because Hasidim hallow the ordinary, they hold a poetic conception of miracles that does not restrict them to violations of the laws of nature. Instead, miracles are found to be all pervasive, nature itself being a miracle. As Walt Whitman expressed it: "To me every hour of the dark and light is a miracle, Every cubic inch of space is a miracle, Every square yard of surface of the earth is spread with the same..." If the one-day supply of oil burned for seven days, why celebrate for eight? Because the eighth miracle is that God sustains the world; were his support withdrawn for an instant, the world would return to darkness.

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Jewish-Americans and American Sports: Memory, Identity and Assimilation

Ellis Island to Ebbets Field: Sport and the American Jewish Experience
by Peter Levine
New York: Oxford University Press

A *Review* Essay
by Herbert Hirsch

When I was ten years old my goal in life was to play shortstop for the New York Yankees. More remote, but sometimes creeping into my fantasy world, was the alternative of playing guard for, even though living in and near New York, the Boston Celtics. When I surveyed the lineup I saw the names of Mize, Skowron, Coleman, Rizzuto, Brown, Woodling, Mantle, Berra, Bauer, Ford, Rashi and Lopat. Or, Sharman and Cousy for the Celtics. Although I knew it would not be easy to reach either of those goals, I did not read the all too clear signals. Talent aside, it seemed Jewish boys did not play baseball. Our reputation, as Levine puts it in this fascinating book, was as "people of the book, rather than people of the jump shot, right cross or home run" (p. 4).

Still, my father encouraged me: "Look at Hank Greenberg," he would say, and we would go to Yankee Stadium, the Polo Grounds and even to Ebbets Field, home of the then hated Dodgers. I remember it vividly; I saw them all including Musial, the Duke, Pee Wee, Scooter and so on. My particularly favorite place to go was the Polo Grounds because somehow you seemed closer to the game and the Giants were not as hated as the Dodgers. Even as I watched, and especially as I grew older and listened to Mel Allen and Red Barber broadcast the games on the radio while dreaming the dreams of American boys, I instinctively knew I "would not make it."

Instead, like so many before me, I could not hit a curve, and I am now writing reviews of books that evoke marvelous memories of long ago summers. That, after all, is what this book is about—memory, identity and the "melting pot."

Sports in the United States, it seems, have been an integral part of the quest for the American dream and assimilation. To dispel the stereotypic and often racist as well as ethnocentric images of the most recent immigrant group, that group tries to become more American than the last. Sports, as Levine notes, were a "metaphor of American democratic ideals and a pathway to assimilation" (p. 3). Participation in American sports became one measure of success and "Americanization" at the same time that is dispelled some of the myths about Jews' lack of physical strength and courage. It became, in some communities, a point of pride. Jewish athletes were considered models of the "new American Jew."

Before the great immigration (that is before 1881), 250,000 Jewish-Americans, mostly of German descent, lived in the United States and were scattered around the country. Between that time and 1920, millions of Jews came to the United States with about one-half living in New York City. They began, as they experienced the American "melting pot," to participate in American sports. In settlement houses, school yards, colleges, in leagues that were not tightly organized, they started playing what is still a "city game"—basketball. It is a little recalled fact that between 1900 and 1950 Jewish involvement in basketball was greater than in any other sport. Basketball formed a part of the community life in many cities and, as Levine notes, by 1930 a sports writer

for the *New York Daily News* identified basketball as the "Jewish" game and tried to explain the connection between Jews and basketball in the following fashion:

> Curiously...above all others the game appeal[s] to the temperament of the Jews...Jews flock to basketball by the thousands [because it placed] a premium on an alert, scheming mind...flashy trickiness, artful dodging and general smart aleckness,"

traits, he went on to explain, that are naturally appealing to "the Hebrew with his oriental background." This unflattering portrait aside, Jews played and dominated basketball. Basketball leagues and teams generated great community enthusiasms and rivalry. Celebrated coaches and players emerged; the names are legendary: Nat Holman; Jammy Moskowitz; Sammy Kaplan; Red Sarachek; Red Auerbach; Moe Goldman, the first Jewish All-American at CCNY; Red Holzman and Dolph Schayes. While basketball provided this avenue to assimilation, the first generation immigrants did not always agree with their children's interest in sports. As Levine recounts, and as I can remember, when my grandmother got angry she would often sputter and speak in Hungarian and would say what to her was the ultimate reprimand when she referred to me as "you, you, you basketball player, you"—implying, quite correctly at the time, that sports was the main activity in which I was interested. However, with the passage of time, the generations became reconciled and as Levine concludes:

> "...stories of second-generation children and their immigrant parents are richly repetitious about the place of sports in their upbringing. Memories of childhoods in Jewish settings; of parents both disapproving and occasionally supportive but generally too busy to demand obedience to their views; of the ability of sports as a bridge between generations; and, most important, of a sense of empowerment, independence and drive to determine their own destiny that involvement in basketball imparted..." (p. 46).

What was true for basketball also held for other sports but Jewish participants never dominated as they did in basketball. Baseball was a more difficult game to crack open. Statistics indicate that between 1871 and 1980, 115 Jewish individuals played major league baseball. This represented 1 percent of the players who made it to the big leagues. However, baseball did provide the avenue for one of the greatest Jewish sports heroes of all time, Hank Greenberg, the great Detroit slugger.

Greenberg's story is inspiring. Born in New York's Lower East Side and raised in the Bronx, he became one of the truly great players. His lifetime batting average was .313 and he led the Detroit Tigers in the World Series four times. In 1935, he was the league's most valuable player; in 1938, he hit 58 home runs in one season and, in 1956, he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. Greenberg also became a hero during World War II as well as an adviser and confidant of Jackie Robinson when he entered baseball. Greenberg's experiences with anti-Semitism prepared him for the encouragement and support he needed to give Robinson in his very difficult struggle against racism.

Greenberg was not the only great Jewish baseball player—Sandy Koufax also comes to mind. He was a primary and important source of identification.

Jewish-Americans also were prominent in two other sports: in particular, boxing and track and field. Jewish boxers, such as Barney Ross, Benny Leonard, Max Baer, Abe Atell and Jackie Fields, were important as was the track experience of Marty Glickman. These stories are told in this interesting book, but they cannot be recounted in the space provided for this review. They are worth reading. For Jewish participation in American sports "had an important impact on the shaping of an American Jewish consciousness that combines American pride with a fierce, even physical, commitment to the survival of all Jewish people" (p. 234). But what happened to that participation?

As Jews left the city for the suburb, as they were more and more assimilated, they built their own visions of the American dream and sports were not a central part of that dream. Sure, Mark Spitz won six Olympic swimming medals in 1972 but he was never identified as a Jewish hero. Of course, Steve Stone has a 52-7 record for the Baltimore Orioles in 1980 and won the Cy Young award as the league's best pitcher but who knew he was a Jew? Jews have become Americans and their heroes have changed. As Levine notes, as great a pitcher as Sandy Koufax might have been, "he clearly was no match for Moishe Dayan and his legions of commandos when it came time to search for heroes and deeds symbolic of the contemporary Jewish experiences" (p. 247).

And, so the world has changed. The long-gone ethnic communities of America's cities were, as Levine notes, "way-stations, places where American agencies, be they the American capitalist workplace or the admonitions of settlement-house workers, encouraged them to pick up the skills and values necessary to move upward and onward as Americans" (p. 271). Sports was an area where second-generation Jews learned about American values, an area that encouraged assimilation and allowed them to feel some sense of control over their lives. It was a transition and it provokes important memories. As Levine states: "The pace and push of contemporary American life encourages actions and thoughts tied only to the moment, with too little regard for the consequences of such behavior for future generations. There is something to be said for appreciating, even savoring, the past as a means of reminding ourselves that we are all part of a larger history" (p. 274).

So, what of sports today? Does it offer false promises or does it provide the only avenue to the American dream in a society replete with racism, violence and an uncaring, distant government and culture? If society does not open other avenues of achievement, the dream cannot be fulfilled by all who visualize it. Levine recognizes that, while sports offered limited opportunities for both African-Americans and Jews, "for Jews, however, accomplishment in sports paralleled and ultimately was replaced by increased economic and social mobility—hardly the case for the majority of black Americans since World War II despite the very real gains made by the civil rights movement. Racism, the dynamics of capitalism and historical context explain why" (p. 283). He goes on to elaborate:

> "Certainly second-generation American Jews, both as children and as adults, faced anti-Semitism, street violence and discrimination in their struggle to succeed. Without minimizing what they confronted first-hand or the pain and horror they felt over the loss of family and friends in the Holocaust, nevertheless their collective personal experiences did not approach the violence, death and discrimination faced by American blacks during the same period of time. Moreover, racism in a variety of forms clearly inhibited opportunity for blacks more so than anti-Semitism did for American Jews, denying them access to education and vocational training that might have facilitated their full integration into American society" (p. 283).

Yet, while all too true, sports are a small part of the story and the experience of participation in sports is part of the formative socialization experiences of large numbers of American youth. For that reason alone, it is important what form that experience takes. Does it occur in highly organized settings run by adults who treat children like Marine drill instructors and who

> "encourage a win-at-all costs mentality replete with racism, sexism and a disregard for others that may be used to legitimate the continual repression of opportunity and hope for those less fortunately situated because of class and race? Or do they serve as positive role models in helping to reshape American priorities and values? Too often in recent years, the evidence suggests domination by the former" (p. 285).

Or, finally, is it all for naught? In the long run do sports not reflect the culture, the dominant attitudes of a society? And, if they do and if American society has become

over-organized, overly bureaucratic, racist and uncaring, can sports be any different?

This book describes a different time and place, a different America. It was a place where a young Jewish boy in New York could go to the park by himself to play basketball, play stickball on the street, skate around the block or, in the rural America of that time, ride his bike to the park for a pick-up game of football—not always touch and without pads. It wasn't always organized and it wasn't always run by adults, and while there was an occasional fist fight, no one got shot. Even if all the sports dreams did not come true, others did. The dreaming of them, the idea that in America even a Jew could aspire to play shortstop for the quint-essential Anglo team, the Yankees, inspired other dreams and aspirations. If you could do that, you could do anything—become a lawyer, an engineer, a doctor, even a college professor. The dream, the sense of possibility, of a "good" future, of a future at all, is what propels young people forward to achievement. When that dies, when it disappears and is replaced by hopelessness and frustration and alienation, that is when ambition will travel other paths to its fulfillment. If there are no legitimate roads to travel, then you grab success in the entrepreneurial spirit of your society by selling and taking whatever you can, for, after all, that is what is encouraged in a win at any costs, highly individualistic, uncaring society. Ultimately, whether one talks about sports or politics, one cannot escape these questions concerning what kind of society in which we wish to live.

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How to Develop the Moral Personality

Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement: Seeking the Torah of Truth
by Immanuel Etkes
Philadelphia: JPS

A *Review* Essay
by Peter J. Haas

As a brief look at Etkes' bibliography will indicate, the Mussar movement of Rabbi Israel Salanter has remained of enduring interest. In light of the sectarian nature of its doctrine and the technical difficulty of its texts, this continuing influence comes as something of a surprise. What makes this movement compelling today, some 150 years after its founding, is the question it grapples with. It is, of course, true that Mussar was influenced heavily by developments internal to traditional Judaism. As Etkes makes clear in this study, however, the movement was shaped as much, or even more, by the social and historical situation of Eastern Jewry. Salanter and his teachers (and disciples) struggled with the question of how to maintain and even strengthen traditional Judaism in light of the challenges presented by Haskalah, Hasidism and Russian secularism on the one hand and a traditionalist as well as a conservative rabbinate on the other.

However, to leave matters here would be to understate Mussar's interest. The point was not simply to put a modern spin on traditional Judaism; that is, to articulate traditional Judaism in modern language. Rather, Etkes shows us, as we shall see shortly, that behind the Mussar movement was a conviction that traditional Judaism, meaning the way of life for traditional Jews, itself needed to be revitalized and re-articulated. Salanter and his movement proposed to do nothing less than redirect traditional Judaism away from its focus on, and even obsession with, theory as well as "theology" and toward concern for individual human psychological development and character-building.

The Mussar movement, then, attempted to restate traditional Judaism in modern terms and in light of its modern situation. It is precisely this interest that makes the Mussar movement so compelling to us. It is responding, albeit in a foreign and dated idiom, to questions and issues that very much animate our own contemporary discourse. Its issues are still in many ways our issues.

For me, there are three ways of approaching the Mussar movement. One is to concentrate on the internal content and dynamic of the movement: What was it saying and how did it change or develop over time? This is the kind of study Hillel Goldberg accomplished, for example. A second approach is to look at the larger social and intellectual context of the time and place the movement into its broader historical and literary context. The book before us does this and, in doing so, opens a new stage in Mussar study. The third approach is to see the movement as part of the whole modernization process; that is, as a movement that shares concerns, initiatives and even vocabulary (despite disclaimers to the contrary) with Hasidism, Reform, Haskalah, Zionism and others. This approach, which has yet to be written, would see Mussar as part of a multifaceted rediscursivization of Judaism from a medieval to a modern religion. Although this level of generalization is beyond the task Etkes sets for himself, his study, which asks new and interesting questions of Mussar, hopefully will encourage more research into that area.

In many ways, this study of Salanter and the beginnings of the Mussar movement cover familiar ground. The basic understanding of Mussar for Salanter and the way this concept was shaped in its various phrases from Vilna, to Kovna to Germany, are not substantively different as presented here from what others have said. In this regard the study before us has little new to offer. Where Etkes does break new ground is in asking how these changes can be correlated with the larger social and religious context of Eastern European Jewry. From his pen we get a sense of the internal dynamics of Russian Jewry under the 19th-century czars as Jews bound to the tradition struggled first with Hasidism and then with the Haskalah. As Etkes carefully isolates, dissects and interprets the data, we begin to see Mussar as a movement teased out at a time of conflict and change to counter these other movements, only itself to fall under suspicion. In this process, Mussar takes on the character not of a static theory but more of a movement that is a product of its changing time and place. It is unfortunate, I think, that Etkes feels he must constantly remind us that his intent is not to diminish the originality of Salanter's thought. Salanter's own contribution comes out strongly in the work, but he also is more firmly than before placed in a concrete historical setting.

Etkes' study moves through three broad phases. In the first part of the study, Etkes wants to establish the extent to which Salanter's teaching is linked to previous authorities. In some sense, it feels like there is an apology here, an apology aimed at convincing us that despite the apparent newness of Salanter's thought, it has deep and honorable roots in early modern orthodoxy. Etkes begins by tracing Salanter's intellectual genealogy back to Rabbi Elijah of Vilna (the Vilna Gaon). The Vilna Gaon taught not only the importance of Torah study but also the importance of personal purity and even asceticism. "Yir'ah," the fear of heaven, had to be combined with Torah study to restrain the Evil Impulse. This teaching was carried forward by one of the Vilna Gaon's greatest disciples, Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin. Hayyim of Volozhin agreed with Elijah that the Hasidic movement, with its deemphasis on Torah study, was misguided. But unlike his teacher, he thought that Hasidism did indeed have something important to say. In his own teaching, such as in the Yeshiva at Volozhin, he continued to stress the importance of Torah study, contra the Hasidim, but in contrast to his teacher he included in his program a more practical orientation. In his way he hoped to train students who were less caught up in theory and more aware of the practical effects of their learning and eventual teaching. His goal was to develop a set of character traits in his students that went beyond the purely intellectual realm.

One of the star products of the Volozhin Yeshiva was the next link in the chain, Rabbi Zundel Salant. Zundel absorbed his teacher's

values but placed even greater stress on the importance of acknowledging the depravity of the human soul and the consequent importance of cultivating yir'ah. Rabbi Zundel, with his increased concern for the psychological education of his students, was one of the most influential teachers of Israel Lipkin Salanter. Thus Salanter was the heir of an impressive intellectual tradition, the pedigree of which one can trace back to the most honored spokesmen of tradition Judaism.

Beyond any doubt, one of the great strengths of Etkes' book is his analysis of this intellectual tradition from the late 18th to the early 19th century. Here we see the interplay of such central concepts as Talmud Torah, yir'ah, devekut and halachah as Mitnaggedic thought took shape. But Etkes provides us with even more. He shows how the development of Mitnaggedic thought in this regard can be related to the rise and establishment of Hasidism. We see in Elijah a staunch emphasis on Torah study in clear contrast to the teachings of the newly emerging Hasidic masters. In the next generation, that of Hayyim of Volozhin, we see a warmer attitude toward Hasidism, which was now widely established, an attitude that held that Hasidism did indeed have important things to say to Jews, although it had distorted them. Later on, in Zundel's teachings, we see the growing despair of Orthodox thinkers as non-Orthodox movements rapidly gained adherents: reform in the West, Hasidism among the rural masses and especially Haskalah among the emerging political elite. By the time we come to Israel Salanter, in fact, Hasidism had been replaced as the main enemy by Haskalah. The concern now is not so much to counter Hasidic emotionalism; it is to counter the secularism of Haskalah by stressing the importance of Torah, Avodah and religious devotion. For this reason, Etkes argues, Salanter directed the early Mussar movement at the sector of the population that was seen to be the most susceptible to Haskalah teachings, the common householders (ba'alei batim). In this part of the study, then, Etkes sketches, in a compelling and insightful way, the intellectual framework within which Mussar took shape.

The second stage of the study traces the development of the Mussar approach in Salanter's mind. As far as Mussar itself is concerned, Etkes has little to say here that is new. He accepts, and repeats in large part, the general development of Salanter's thought and of the Mussar movement as we know it from elsewhere. What is different is Etkes' interest in again tying changes in the movement not just to the internal logic of the idea but to the social circumstances within which Salanter finds himself. That is, Etkes tries to see how changes in Salanter's thought and in the Mussar movement are related to the type of students Salanter finds and the kinds of opposition his teaching provokes. Etkes helps us see how Salanter's experience in the Nevyozer Kloiz, for example, was important in shaping the future development of the movement. Or, to take another example, Etkes examines how in Berlin, Salanter changed certain aspects of his lectures so as to address himself more directly to the needs and backgrounds of students with fairly extensive secular educations but little familiarity with Talmud and traditional Judaism. In this constant reference back to the realities of Salanter's life, this study is different from any of its predecessors.

The third phase of this book is to look at the effect Salanter and the Mussar movement had on the Jews of Russia in the years when Salanter himself was physically moving West. Once again, the strength of the book lies in its description of the changes occurring in Judaism. In this case, Etkes focuses our attention on developments in Russia. The oppression of Nicholas I gave way in the late 1850s to the more progressive policies of Alexander II. Under Alexander, a small class of assimilated Jewish artisans and intellectuals developed, and the Maskilim were given new optimism that their brand of modern Judaism might define the Judaism of the future. As tensions increased between the government and the Maskilim, on the one hand, and traditionalist Jews on the other, the Mussar movement found its own niche, as it had earlier in Vilna, Kovna and Germany. It offered a way of countering Enlightenment thought within the framework of traditional Rabbinic Judaism. By directing our attention to social realities and policies, Etkes makes clear the social and intellectual location of Mussar on the Russian scene in the 1870s and 80s.

At the conclusion of the book, Etkes allows himself to ruminate a bit about the life and accomplishments of Israel Salanter. During his life, Salanter felt he had largely failed in his efforts to fortify traditional Judaism against the attacks of Hasidism, Haskalah and secularization. Despite his own personal acclaim and recognition, the number of Mussar yeshivot remained modest. Even some of Salanter's own children and grandchildren seemed to have drifted away from traditional Judaism. The problem, Etkes opines, is that the Mussar regimen put too many demands on people. Yet, as we know, the Mussar movement did not fade away after Salanter's death. His psychological approach did seem to address the interests of younger scholars, giving them a way of expressing their religious radicalism. It was this younger generation that carried Mussar into the 20th century.

Etkes ends the study with what, in many ways, has been a recurring subtheme in the text. Citing Rabbi Eliezer Gordon, one of Salanter's pupils, Etkes notes that Salanter was not only important for the Mussar movement, modest though it was, but also for traditional "Orthodox" thinkers in the latter part of the 19th century. This is so because in his attempt to wrestle with the problem of how to conceptualize and teach traditional Judaism in a period of such widespread change, Salanter forced others to articulate what it meant in the modern period to be a God-fearing Jew. That struggle to articulate the importance of religion has much to teach us even today in our post-modern situation.

Peter J. Haas is professor of religious studies at Vanderbilt University and a contributing editor.

Political and Nationalist Judaism

On Modern Jewish Politics
by Ezra Mendelsohn
New York: Oxford University Press

A *Review* Essay
by Steven F. Windmueller

During the past few years, a new discipline has emerged, in many ways led and inspired by Dan Elazar. Focused on developing theoretical materials on the idea of Jewish politics, this enterprise has begun to attract a wider array of creative thinking.

Ezra Mendelsohn, a member of the Hebrew University faculty, now has contributed to this discourse. Dividing Jewish political thought and behavior into a series of different groupings, Mendelsohn seeks to analyze the competition among these schools. Using the American and Polish-Jewish experiences as the basis for his research during the period 1918-1933, he has attempted to define the primary political forces that did impact Jewish life in this period, namely, nationalism and the politics of the left.

Of particular value to scholars in this field are the series of seven questions Mendelsohn raises with us, against which we can examine the behavior of diaspora Jewry during this fractious inter-war period. I would reference several of the questions that I found particularly useful. For example, he raises the issue of what he defines as "usable Jewish pasts," as a means by which we ought to study how contemporary Jewish organizations might use previous historic models.

A second inquiry that also seems most relevant here focused on: "Which political forces in the non-Jewish world would these Jewish organizations identify and seek out as allies?" Another key question Mendelsohn posted involved, "What sort of political contact would these various organizations favor?" Both of these issues would allow the reader to assess the forms of political behavior and conduct that different social entities

adopted to advance their interests.

Mendelsohn places special emphasis on the question of Jewish participation in leftist political movements. If this book has a particularly skewed dimension to it, it is based on his hostility and discomfort with the politics of the Jewish left. In contrast, Mendelsohn endorses the triumph of the Jewish centrist as well as the rightist perspectives and the emergence of Zionism as the ultimate proof of the failure of the Jewish left. As a result, he gives little recognition to ideas or contributions of those forces within socialism, Zionism or even certain components of Yiddish thought, whose ideas were framed and influenced by the politics of internationalism and labor.

Among Mendelsohn's findings is the notion of "integrationism," namely the idea that, during the inter-war period, the American Jewish community established its identity and polity. He distinguishes the success of the American model of integration with what he defines as the value of Russian and Polish experiences, resting in parton the fact that the American Jewish community found support and assistance through its alliance with liberal institutions, while the Polish and Russian cases reflected alliances in the one case with right-wing regimes and the other with Communist institutions. Both, he concludes, were problematic relationships for the Jewish world.

Arguing that the greatest single achievement of modern Jewish politics was the establishment of the State Israel, Mendelsohn documents the special emphasis on the "crucial alliances between Zionists and integrationists in the West." The special importance placed on democracy in the American Jewish community contributed greatly to the ability of this community to effectively aid and assist in Zionist causes. Of special interest, he notes some of the brief experiments developed in Eastern Europe by Jewish communities drawing on the principles of democratic politics, which he believes had direct payoffs for Jews who were later to settle in Israel and where the values associated with political pluralism were reaffirmed.

Mendelsohn, in his conclusion, suggests the "collapse of the Jewish left" has now been completed. He devotes little attention to defending this conclusion, however. He goes on to note that the "basic division between Jews who see themselves chiefly as a religious or ethnic group and Jews who regard themselves as members of the Jewish political *nation* still very much exists." He points out, I think correctly, that the evolving dichotomy between the "national community" in "Palestine" and the religious, ethnic subculture in America defines these two centers of Jewish life.

Correspondingly, the book's author concludes that the successful conquest of 20th century Jewish nationalism serves as the affirmation and confirmation of Zionism as the core value of political integration. Mendelsohn's view of Zionist triumphalism is probably in order, but his limited prejudicial outlook on leftist Jewish elements skews the overall relevancy of his findings and this book's usefulness.

Steven F. Windmueller is director of the Hebrew Union College's Irwin Daniel School of Communal Service in Los Angeles and a contributing editor.

LITIGATION

First of all, as you might have suspected
we only took the story of *Moses and the Burning Bush* because of the initial wording of
the contract concerning the manifestation

of miracles in which the Jews threatened to sue
the Lord if He would have deemed it necessary

to part the sea and leave His people
stranded in a desert for more than 40 years

and with nothing to eat but manna

—*Carol Adler*

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BOOK BRIEFINGS

A Supplement to Menorah Review
Fall 1995

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

Surviving Salvation: The Ethiopian Jewish Family in Transition. *By Ruth Westheimer and Steven Kaplan. New York: New York University Press.* In the last 12 years, 40,000 Ethiopian Jews have emigrated to Israel. This book is a chronicle of their experiences once they reached their destination. They are becoming rapidly assimilated; they have seen their family relationships radically transformed. Gender roles are being continually redefined, often resulting in marital crisis; parents watch with a growing sense of alienation as their children become "Westernized;" women, traditionally confined to the domestic realm, are now moving into the labor force—these are but a few of the whirlwind of wholesale changes confronting the Ethiopian Jews. This book is a tale of their struggle and the emotional saga of their experiences in Israel.

Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns. *By Moshe Garsiel. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press.* In this fascinating study, hundreds of puns on names in the Bible are examined. The Biblical authors made play with names of people and places, working them into a significant aspect of Biblical poetics. Post-Biblical literature continues this process. New solutions are offered by the author to many problems relating to Biblical names, and there are numerous specific discussions of the ways in which the implications and associations of given names are exploited to form part of the meaning of different literary units. Much is in this volume to interest all scholars and students of the Bible.

The Luckiest Orphans: A History of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York. *By Hyman Bogen. Champaign: The University of Illinois Press.* Founded in 1860, the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York was the oldest, largest and best-known Jewish orphanage in the United States until its closing in 1941. This book, the first history of an orphanage ever published, tells the story of the HOA's development from a 19th-century institution into a model 20th-century child care facility. Bogen brings a unique perspective to child-saving efforts in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His compelling tale portrays daily life for those who lived and worked in such institutions. He illustrates how an enlightened orphanage can help children gain self-esteem and become secure adults rather than crush the spirit of its young residents. This book will interest anyone concerned with the growing crisis in child care options.

The Paradoxical Ascent to God: The Kabbalistic Theosophy of Habad Hasidism. *By Rachel Elior. Albany: State University of New York Press.* Because of its spiritual vitality, creative continuity, social variety and scope, the Hasidic movement is a prominent spiritual phenomenon and a worthy successor to the mystical tradition of Kabbalah. Established in the 18th century, the Habad movement set forth a doctrine that expounded mystical ideas supporting the quest for God. This book is a study of this Hasidic Habad doctrine—a doctrine that concentrated on perceiving divinity: its essence; its nature; the stages of its manifestation; its characteristics, perfection, differing wills and processes; and the significance of its revelation. This conception generated a profound transformation in religious worship and a great controversy in the Jewish world.

The Joys of Hebrew. *By Lewis Glinert. New York: Oxford University Press.* This book is a celebration of Hebrew in the Diaspora today. It is the first practical guide to the hundreds of Hebrew words and expressions actively used among English-speaking Jews, all illustrated with examples from 3,000 years of sources, ranging from Psalms to Israeli pop songs. The reader learns that Hebrew is a mirror of the Jewish story—misty origins; ancient splendor; and a sudden eclipse followed by centuries of alien domination, culminating in a dramatic paradox of ruin and rebirth. This is not a dictionary. Through language, Glinert's book is a rich tapestry of Jewish life and culture, sounding every note from the lighthearted to the sublime.

Personal Witness: Israel Through My Eyes. *By Abba Eban. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.* This book is an eloquent, passionate observation of more than five decades in the story of Israel. Eban, no longer under the restraints that go with being a member of the government, offers insightful, often startling, opinions of Zionism, the Third World, the relationship between Arabs and Israel, the state of Jerusalem, the role of American Jews, the Palestinian Intifada, and a host of other topic subjects. In addition, his work contains frank descriptions and assessments of the many world figures that Eban has met and with whom he has worked. The book contains excerpts from some of Eban's more important speeches, including his memorable oration to the Security Council during the Six Day War, cited as "one of the greatest speeches of modern times." Throughout the book, Eban's eye is clear, his perspective humane, his voice rich and dramatic, and his vision sweeping.

Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. *By Robert F. Melson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.* Armenians and Jews survived as ethnic and religious minorities until they suffered mass destruction when the two old regimes were engulfed by revolution and war. Was there a connection between revolution and genocide in these two instances, and between the two in general? Melson elaborates a distinctive conceptual framework that links genocide to revolution and war. He discusses the destruction of Kulaks in the Soviet Union and the "autogenocide" in Cambodia as comparable situations where total domestic genocide followed on the heels of the Russian and Cambodian revolutions. Moreover, he warns that sweeping changes such as those in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe can be precursors to massive violence, including genocide.

The Jewish People of America *(Five Volumes). Henry L. Feingold, General Editor. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.* This magnificent and rich series of five volumes provides Jewish readers with the opportunity to enrich their self-understanding. It also reminds the general reading public that the American Jewish experience is evidence that the promise of America can still be realized. Drawing on the talents of five historians—Eli Faber, Hasia R. Diner, Gerald Sorin, Henry Feingold and Edward Shapiro—this series offers a historical synthesis at once comprehensible to the

continued, next page

intelligent lay reader and useful to the professional historian. Each volume integrates common themes: the origins of Jewish immigrants, their experience of settling in America, their economic and social life, their religious and educational efforts, their political involvement, and the change the American Jewish community experienced over time.

With Friends Like You: What Israelis Really Think About American Jews. *By Matti Golan. New York: The Free Press.* Golan gives vent to grievances beneath the surface of cordial relations between Israelis and American Jews. Written in the form of a dialogue between an Israeli and and American Jew, the book is an imaginative extension of a talk the author had with Elie Wiesel, whom Golan views as a symbol of everything that is wrong in American Jewry's attitude toward Israel. Golan asserts that American Jews have no right to advise or to criticize Israel because they do not bear the cost of the results of their advice. Boldly opening the one "forbidden" topic in Israel-Diaspora relations, Golan declares that the only safe future for both Israelis and American Jews lies in the immigration of a significant number of the latter to Israel.

The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism. *By Peter Schafer. Albany: State University of New York Press.* This book represents the first wide-scale presentation and interpretation of pre-kabbalistic, Jewish mysticism. This is the "Hekhalot" or "Merkavah" mysticism. The emphasis is on the conceptions of God, the angels and man that the texts provide and that are the framework of the Judaic world view in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The literature of this mystical tradition was concerned with nothing less than a radical transformation of the world of normative Judaism that for centuries was determined by the Rabbis.

Jewish Musical Traditions. *By Amnon Shiloah. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.* This is the first English-language volume to consider oral music of Jewish communities in a socio-cultural context. The world's leading authority on the Arab and Jewish musical traditions tells a musical story voiced throughout the world by men and women in synagogues and homes, mirroring the life of an ancient people exiled from its land. The story began in Biblical times and encompasses 2,000 years, when a widely dispersed people have tried to preserve their cultural values. The author considers the musical heritage as only one element in the value system informing an individual's world outlook and perception of the destiny of the Jewish people. He discusses the manner in which this heritage meshes with the complex web of Jewish history by way of central themes.

Hasidic People: A Place in the New World. *By Jerome R. Mintz. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.* This is an engrossing social history of the New York community based on extensive interviews, observation, newspaper files and court records. The author provides a vivid account of social and religious dynamics. He allows events to unfold through the reports and commentaries of the Hasidim. Their voices fill the book with vibrant life and meaning. Mintz's work offers new insights into family life; succession in Hasidic dynasties; social change; and conflicts concerning proselytizing, the State of Israel and Messianic expectations. With engaging style, rich in personal insight, the book invites us into this old world within the new, a way of life at once foreign, yet intrinsic to the American experience.

Autonomy and Judaism: The Individual and the Community in Jewish Philosophical Thought. *Edited by Daniel H. Frank. Albany: State University of New York Press.* This volume brings together leading philosophers of Judaism on the issue of autonomy in the Jewish tradition. Addressing themselves to the relationship of the individual Jew, to the Jewish community and to the world at large, some selections are systematic in scope while other are more historically focused. The authors explore issues ranging from the earliest expressions of the individual human fulfillment in the Bible and medieval Jewish discussions of the human good to modern discussions of the necessity for the Jew to maintain both a Jewish sensibility as well as an active engagement in the modern pluralistic state.

The Jews of Germany: A Historical Portrait. *By Ruth Gay. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.* This unique book provides a panoramic overview of the 1,500-year history of the Jews in Germany. Through tests, pictures and contemporary accounts, it follows the German Jews from their first settlements on the Rhine in the 4th century to the destruction of the community in World War II. Using both voices and images of the past, the book reveals how the German Jews looked, how they lived, what they thought about and what others thought of them. The book tells a story—moving, terrifying and exhilarating—that must be remembered.

The Ritual of Creation: Jewish Tradition and Contemporary Literature. *By Norman Finkelstein. Albany: State University of New York Press.* Finkelstein examines a wide range of recent Jewish writings, including poetry, fiction and literary criticism, to determine the changes such writing has undergone in its exposure to modern and post-modern conditions of culture. Featuring discussions of such figures as Gershom Scholem, Harold Bloom, George Steiner, Cynthia Ozick and John Hollander, the book explores certain themes that recur in modern Jewish literature: the relation of the sacred to the secular in Jewish writings, the role of loss and exile, "wandering meaning," and textual transformation. This is a book for all readers interested in modern Jewish literature, but especially for readers concerned with literary theory, the relations of text and commentary, and the fate of literary traditions in the contemporary and post-modern culture milieu.

A Heart of Wisdom: Religion and Human Wholeness. *By Maurice Friedman. Albany: State University of New York Press.* Drawing on almost half a century of immersion in the world's great religions, coupled with an ever-deepening understanding of the philosophy and phenomenology of religion, the author takes a dialogical approach through which religious reality is not seen as external creed and form or as subjective inspiration but as the meeting in openness, presentness, immediacy and mutuality with ultimate reality. Religion has to do with the wholeness of human life. The absolute is found, not just in the universal but in the particular and the unique. When it promotes a dualism in which the spirit has no binding claim on life and life falls apart into unhallowed fragments, religion becomes the great enemy of humankind.

Writing Their Nations: The Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Jewish Women Writers. *By Diane Lichtenstein. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.* In this critical study, the author shows how Jews, women and other "outsiders" have simultaneously struggled to maintain their "other" identity and to be seen as authentically American. These women strove to sustain alliances with both their American and their Jewish identities, and they used their writings to affirm multiple loyalties. By molding two stereotypes—the American "True Women" and the Jewish "Mother in Israel"—these authors attempted to follow the prescriptions for middle-class American and Jewish womanly behavior in their lives and in their writing. Thus, they reassured their Jewish families and their American readers that they were "good citizens." Wrestling with issues of assimilation as well as gender, these women wrote from a unique vantage point.