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For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

An Interpretive Methodology With Supersessionist Forebodings

Liberating the Gospels: Reading the Bible With Jewish Eyes
by John Shelby Spong
New York: Harper-Collins Publishers

A Review Essay
by Frank E. Eakin Jr.

Bishop Spong's title, *Liberating the Gospels: Reading the Bible With Jewish Eyes*, accurately suggests his presuppositions. He is convinced that the Gospels need to be liberated; that is, freed from fundamentalist interpretation if the Gospels are to have meaning for modern individuals (for example, see Chapter II). At the same time, he is equally convinced that the basic problem with modern interpretation is the failure of Christians to approach the Gospels from a Jewish perspective. Spong suggests that the Gospels, which he appropriately indicates are not history as generally understood (p. 37), are midrashic construction in that the Gospels are self-consciously written to portray Jesus as the fulfillment of the Torah. He suggests they are "...not...chronological biographies describing literal events of history, but rather...collections of expository teaching or preaching that had been created in the same way that the rabbis would create what came to be called the *midrash rabbah*" (p. 52). I would not contend with his judgment that the Gospels are not modern historical writings. Methodologically, however, I have difficulty with his use of the midrashic motif as he interprets and applies the literary genre, and with his caricature of Christians as unrelenting literalists (see specific comments below).

Spong's book nonetheless has numerous dimensions to it that make it quite readable. His primary thesis is interesting, at times provocative, but not ultimately compelling. There are interesting associations

drawn but, at the same time, significant gaps exist. For example, whereas few would argue today for the absolute historicity of the Gospel narrative, the assumption that Luke's long digression in the travel narrative is created totally by Luke and, apparently, has no inkling of historical germ (see pages 156-165) is unrealistic.

It is interesting because it calls attention to the fact that Christians must deal with the medieval "sins" of supersessionism and triumphalism, but it is disheartening to think that those concepts were already consciously in the minds of the Gospel author/editors at the time of the compilation of the Gospels in the last third of the first and the early part of the second century. It is difficult to accept that the radical separation of Jesus of Nazareth from his Jewish roots was accomplished so early in the life of the church.

Spong's negative caricatures of Bible believers, as in Chapters 1 and 2, troubles me. The vast majority of Christians, even if conservative, are not so Neanderthal as Spong portrays them and, sometimes, his criticism even of accomplished scholars is much too harsh (as on page 15), as is his critique of Raymond Brown, John Meier and Joseph Fitzmyer as lacking "intellectual courage." Scholars must recognize that the data may be evaluated and differing conclusions drawn with absolute intellectual courage and integrity. Whereas I join Spong in disagreeing with practically every basic principle of the Biblical fundamentalists and inerrantists, one must be cautious about drawing a line that precludes debate and discussion, for that position only encourages the promulgation of this awful phenomenon!

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As a matter of fact, I find some instances of literalization in Spong's text to be strange. For example, on page 74 in a discussion of the Pentecost event, he treats the 3,000 saved on that day as an unquestioned historical figure. There was no suggestion, for instance, that this might relate to the harvest associated with the Jewish festival of Shavuot. Again, on page 230, there is a reference to the fact that Matthew was a scribe. This is not germane since few would associate Matthew, one of the Twelve, with the authorship of the Gospel. Indeed, Spong rejects the eyewitness view but, nonetheless, this reference persists. Other examples could be enumerated.

Additionally, I noted some places where a better awareness of Judaism would have been helpful. For example, on page 164, Spong drew a division between "the two ways," and suggested that Luke had purposefully associated Christianity with the "way of blessing." It seems equally likely that this is simply an association of the followers of Jesus with the "Way of Israel," indicating that those who follow the Christ are on a common track with the Jews. On page 173 at one of the places where he deals with how the lection would have developed, he suggested that 52 lections would have provided one reading per Sabbath. The problem with this is that the Jewish calendar was established on a lunar basis with 12 months of 28 days each. This was synchronized with the solar calendar by inserting leap-months into the calendar seven times every 19 years but it is not so simple as dealing with 52-week years. On page 222, he interprets *ruach* as wind but it may also mean spirit or breath. *Nephesh* did not mean breath but being, i.e. the entirety of the living being; the *basar* (body, flesh) inbreathed by *ruach* constituted the *nephesh*. On page 278, Spong talks of the importance of the resurrection and how "...even today in this secular society, Sunday still dictates the way that we experience and count the passage of time." This, of course, is true in societies dominated by Christianity but clearly it is not true for Jews in Israel or, for that matter, for those American Jews who welcome the Sabbath bride each Friday evening. These are a few of the passages that raised a red flag for me.

Chapter 15, "He Died According to the Scripture II" (pages 247-255), is indicative of Spong's approach, where he concludes that Jesus died alone and isolated from any of his followers and, therefore, no one could know what was done or the words that were spoken. He suggests that the story of the death was shaped by developing the death narrative according to the views of Psalm 22 as well as Isaiah 52 and 53. Something happened of momentous nature, he states, but we have no idea what that was.

This reviewer has three problems with Spong's development in Chapter 15, and these problems reflect reactions to other sections. One, the idea that absolutely all of Jesus' followers abandoned him is an assumption, supported by the Biblical text it is granted (however, recall that he questions the veracity of that text), but, otherwise, this assumption is unprovable. Do we know that no valid traditions persisted? Second, the idea that the followers abandoned him is somewhat non-germane because, regardless, we are not talking about eyewitness recorders. Did the story grow? Of course! Did it perhaps attach itself to certain scriptural passages resultant to these passages being prompted in some fashion by events or statements associated with the crucifixion? Equally possible or impossible but, of course, one's response is presuppositionally based rather than being absolutely provable, as is also the case with Spong's position. Finally, Spong's position reminds one of the debate over radical Form Criticism. Does the Form Criticism analysis give information only about the period of oral transmission, or does it in some way give us a germ of historical reality regarding the Jesus of history? Obviously, the debate continues, but equally obvious is the fact that presuppositions, and not just historical data, determine conclusions.

There is a general problem that this reviewer has with Spong's methodology. As I understand it, Jewish midrash was basically the homiletical development of a single scriptural passage regarding its implications for a current issue or situation. One did not put bits and pieces of various scriptural passages together to form a purposefully concocted mosaic. Chapter 16, "Judah Iscariot," is a good example of where I have difficulty with Spong's application of the midrashic motif, as he has drawn together his mosaic portrait of Judas (see page 270 for the various thoughts put together).

Let this be clearly understood. Do I think Spong to be on the side of the angels in the struggle against anti-Semitism? Of course! That is obvious; for example, on page 236, where he states: "Biblical literalism arises, in my opinion, out of a blindness that has been created both by an ignorance of and a prejudice against the Jewish origins of our Christian faith" (also see page 276, the concluding paragraph to his Judas chapter).

This reviewer does believe, however, that it is methodologically wrong and overly simplistic to place the beginning of the evolution of Christian anti-Semitism on the early Christian weaving of the Judas character who comes to symbolize the Jews as a body and thus serves as the foundation for Christian anti-Semitism.

Spong has assuredly written a provocative book that should encourage Christians to view again the Gospels and ask anew questions of dating, authorship and motives for penning. It is my judgment, however, that he has pushed, excessively, the midrashic motif to explain the creation of the Gospels. Granted, he believes something magnificent happened and that a story resides therein, but, according to his evaluation, none of what we have is even close to a reliable accounting. That leaves little with which to work, whether to support or to refute. And, this reviewer finds the type of mosaics he builds painfully unsatisfactory, for I would contend that such analogies are frequently forced and baseless, akin to apocalyptic imagery separated from its historical association.

I applaud Spong's willingness to focus on the hard questions, but the harder the questions the more crucial it is that the most careful and cautious scholarship be pursued (see Volumes I and II of John P. Meier's *A Marginal Jew* for an excellent example of the application of the Biblical critical methodology). Unfortunately, I would judge that Spong's book probably covers subject matter that neither a Jew nor a Christian acting alone could effectively write so as to bring in all the relevant critical data. A truly collaborative effort involving a Jew and a Christian would likely produce more effective results. Spong could bring a dimension regarding the literature of the Gospels and the development of early Christian liturgical forms, while a Jewish scholar could add a deeper dimension regarding the Midrash and its formulation as well as knowledge of the Jewish liturgical forms. Probably, it would take such a joint effort authentically to read the Gospels with Jewish eyes and to give a better understanding of the Gospels than those currently in vogue among New Testament scholars.

Thus, while Spong is to be commended for his concerns about the Jewish roots of Christianity, I do not find the Gospels to be freed from layers of tradition building and Hellenization by his interpretive methodology. Furthermore, I must continue to search for the perspective that best enables one to see the Gospels through the presuppositions and understandings of Judaism.

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Through a Glass Brightly: Seeing the Unseeable

*Through a Speculum That Shines:
Vision and Imagination in
Medieval Jewish Mysticism*
by Elliot R. Wolfson
Princeton University Press

A Review Essay
by Earle J. Coleman

Aristotle was hardly alone in his opinion that vision is the most cognitive sense. Jewish mystics also elevate vision over the other senses, for the Israelites told Moses: "...one who hears cannot be compared to one who sees." From this, it would follow that the best sensory way to know God is to see him. Indeed, etymologically, the word "Israel" refers to "one who sees God." This, however, is obviously problematic since the God of theism is invisible. Given the essential aniconism of Judaism, the very idea of a divine vision seems contradictory. Only bodies are visible; so if God is visible, he possesses a body. But, what kind of body? It is no wonder that Catholics speak of the "mystical body of Christ." Jewish Pietists argued that God could have no body, for bodies are composite and God is a unity without parts. Eleazar pointed out that if the Creator had an appearance, then an infinite reality would have a boundary. Traditionally, no one can look on the face of God and live (Exodus 33:20). If God has no visible form, there is an iconoclastic implication: one cannot worship him through created images. In Hinduism as well, Brahman is "not this, not this" since the absolute has no knowable attributes, visual or otherwise. The Spanish kabbalist, Joseph Gikatilla, describes Yahweh as nothing: "What is He? The answer is Nothing; that is, no one can understand anything concerning Him." Again, in Taoism, the Tao as the form of the formless transcends thought as well as perception; it is the root of forms but it is not itself a form. Even in Icon-rich Christianity, one finds: "Noone has ever seen God" (John 4:12).

To reconcile God as utterly transcendent with God as present in visions, Hindus appeal to a distinction: *nirguna* Brahman refers to the innermost, intrinsic nature of God, one that is altogether beyond human apprehension; *saguna* Brahman refers to the extrovertive nature of God, Brahman with perceivable qualities. Likewise, Spinoza proposes a distinction between God as unmanifest (*natura naturans*) and God as manifest (*natura naturata*). Contemporary Jewish scholars, such as Gershon Scholem, also distinguish between the invisible God and his corporeal appearance. For one of the

most stunning appearances of the divine in the literature of world religions, one may turn to the *Bhagavad Gita*. Arjuna is terrified by his vision of Krishna who is a descent form of the God Vishnu: "Seeing your magnificent form, Oh Krishna, with multiple mouths, eyes, arms, thighs, feet, bellies and terrible tusks, all worlds shake as do I." Thus, Krishna is a bridge between humans and the unmanifest divine, just as Christ is the "word made flesh" for Christians.

According to Eleazar, images exist because a direct encounter with the divine would overwhelm the prophet. Philosophers sometimes compare the two aspects of Brahman to the two sides of a coin, one designating God as esoteric and the other signifying God as exoteric. But Jews, who regard God as absolutely incorporeal and hence invisible, find the expression "image of God" to be logically contradictory. Of course, there is a tension because mystically-inclined Jews appeal to images of the divine as intermediaries by which finite beings may imagine or relate to the infinite imageless God. There are innumerable offshoots of the paradox of manifestation; for example, one may wonder how all perceivable beauty derives from the imperceptible absolute. Moreover, in Hekhalot Rabbati, one reads that no mortal can see God or even the robe or cloak of God. Indeed, some Jews have held that not even angels could bear to see God. Concerning Isaiah's report that he beheld the Lord, some interpreters argue that Isaiah saw only the throne and not the face of God. In Freudian terms, some accuse the mystic, who sees images, of triggering delusions through wishful thinking. Judah ben Barzillai al-Barceloni compared believers in images of God to Christians who made images, bowed down to them and thereby committed idolatry.

Despite the problems posed by visions of the divine, it is no easier to dismiss them than it is to accept them. Even Genesis mentions the creation of Adam in the image of God; and not all are willing to reject Isaiah's testimony that he saw God on the throne. In addition, Enoch's awesome, unmistakably visual, face-to-face meeting with the Lord ("His face was strong and very glorious and terrible.") may remind one of Arjuna's encounter with the transfigured Krishna. Of course, scripture relates that Moses beheld the likeness of the Lord (Numbers 12:8). In Exodus, Moses asks, "Let me behold your glory," and the divine answers, "You cannot see my face." Eventually, God does reward Moses with a glimpse, "as My glory passes by." If one insists that seeing God is possible, he usually elevates the imagination to supreme status, regarding it as the divine element in the human soul that allows one to taste the incorporeal. The imagination is rescued from arbitrariness and mere fancy because it is the supreme medium through which the divine acts and expresses

himself. Although images of God exist in one's imagination, the mystic does not consider this faculty to be below reason. Images do not simply spring from the subjective unconscious but from something quite public because the mystic's religious tradition conditions and shapes the forms that is beheld. To the faithful, these visions are not purely subjective because the mystic's imaginings are a personal response to a transpersonal reality. Wolfson adds: "One must assume that the visions and revelatory experiences recorded in the apocalypses are not simply literary forms but reflect actual experiences deriving from divine inspiration." In short, the image in a mystic's vision is neither corporeal nor reducible to a pri-

For Eleazar, the object of revelatory experience is an angel, a form that God has created. The angel is not just a mental construct but a reality that transmits the divine will to human consciousness.

vate, psychological reality. According to the kabbalists, the image possesses an elusive status, one between being and non-being. God—like a person whose step creates a splash in water, a shifting impression in sand and a footprint in the earth—produces distinct effects in every beholder, remaining all the while unchanged. Moreover, the various experiences are anything but completely subjective since the divine is the cause and the ever-present common denominator. Seeking to affirm accounts of God's manifest form and to avoid any tinge of idolatry, mystics located the image (i.e., the anthropomorphic expression of God) within the imagination. In effect, the formless can take on form, not in the material realm but only in the ideal state of an imaginative consciousness.

When Yohanan Alemanno says that the imagination, directed by the Active Intellect, "forms veridical images taken from the subtle, spiritual forms," the key term is veridical. Similarly, the platonic artist tries to capture a taste of the universals (i.e., the invisible, immaterial, eternal forms, that are the foundations of the particulars). Images in mystical states and art works alike are symbols of ineffable realities that transcend the physical. In the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides states: "The forms that are incorporeal are not seen by the eye, rather they are known through the eye of the heart, just as we know the Lord of everything without vision of the eye." Otherwise, why would Eleazar emphasize that even a blind person could see the angel of death? Naturally, the heart's eye refers to the faculty of imagination. In discussing aesthetics, the Hindu scholar, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, suggests an answer to the problem of how an

invisible deity can be 'visible':

... all the arts, without exception, are representations or likenesses of a model; which does not mean that they are such as to tell us what the model looks like, which would be impossible seeing that the forms of traditional art are typically imitative of invisible things, which have no looks, but that they are such adequate analogies as to be able to remind us, i.e., put us in mind again, of their archetypes.

Nissim ben Jacob Kairouan (ca. 960-1062) is representative of Jews who adopt a poetic approach according to which one should interpret scripture metaphorically. In short, one must understand any graphic description of the glory of God figuratively or allegorically.

For Eleazar, the object of revelatory experience is an angel, a form that God has created. The angel is not just a mental construct but a reality that transmits the divine will to human consciousness. Similarly, some mystics regarded an angel as the descent form of sefirotic light within the imaginative consciousness. In effect, the object, absolute reality accommodates itself to subjective imagination. In Exodus 3:2-4, an angel of the Lord appeared in a fiery bush and immediately after God called out from the bush. Thus, some identified the divine and an angel; and when Eleazar states that "the glory alludes to the angel that changes to many forms," the angel takes on divine powers if not divinity itself.

For Judah Halevi, one solution to the paradox of seeing the invisible is to see the beauty of the King by having a mystical vision of the letters that constitute the divine name. Accordingly, some scholars held that to look upon the open Torah scroll is to gaze upon the form of God, words and letters being compared to a person's garments. According to Abraham Abulafia, saying the divine names to form spiritual images. But, it was Eleazar who identified the preeminent role of light in addressing the paradox: "The glory is an appearance of the resplendent light, which is called Shekinah, and the will of the Creator shows and images that very light to the prophets..." Again, the philosophical and mystical writer, Shabbetai ben Abraham Donnolo, spoke of God's demut (i.e., image) as a light of unsurpassed greatness. Others interpreted the light that mystics beheld not as God himself but as a form created by the divine. And Pietists insisted that such light existed apart from the mind and that it is not created but an emanation, thereby undermining any sharp ontological distinction between God and His effulgence as light. A doctrine of emanations clarifies a well-known statement from later medieval Jewish literature: "He who knows himself knows his Lord." If the divine emanations are within one's self, then to know this self is to know something of the divine.

Wolfson has written a learned, authoritative and scrupulously documented study of visionary experiences among medieval Jewish prophets and mystics. It is when the author turns to mysticism in general that his remarks become more controversial. Agreeing with contemporary writers on mysticism, such as Steven Katz, Wolfson insists that theory precedes and conditions experience. While this view may seem innocent and commonsensical, it rules out an unmediated mystical experience, one that is cross-cultural or universal. As some have said, "It is no accident that when Catholics meditate, they see Christ or the Virgin Mary, but when Hindus do so, they behold the Lord Krishna." But even if one's culture normally determines the images that enliven his mystical experiences, this is not to say there are no universal mystical experiences. Given that mystical experiences begin on the other side of ineffability, there may be shared, but inexpressible, common core in introverted, non-imagistic experiences of the great mystics. Wolfson quite properly chooses to focus on extroverted mysticism, not introverted mysticism. Still, it is in the latter that cross-cultural similarities prevail, as when a Catholic saint contemplates a Godhead that is neither male or female and a Chinese mystic testifies that the Tao is beyond gender, male and female being derivative. Universal motifs for the introverted mystic include the discovery that absolute reality is unitary; thus, Jews and Christians speak of the divine simplicity of God, Taoist's talk about the uncarved block and the Moslem affirm the unity of the divine. Again, what Scholem identifies as the formlessness of mystical experiences corresponds to what Taoists call their undifferentiated character. It would be difficult to explain such agreement among mystics were they not, despite their uncommon backgrounds, possessed of certain common experiential elements. Of course, Wolfson is correct in pointing out that all mystical experiences take place in a cultural context. But, if humans cannot transcend their particular settings, perhaps God elects to penetrate them all.

Light is a universal symbol of the divine, whether in Plato's form of the good or the Taoist's ming. Therefore, the Zohar states that, when God disclosed himself on Mt. Sinai, all Israelites saw as one sees a light in a crystal. Even the crystal is a cross-cultural manifestation. A biographer of the Catholic nun, Teresa of Avila, testifies that she had a vision of the soul as a castle, in the form of a beautiful crystal sphere—a three-dimensional "mandala," which contained seven dwelling places, with the King of Glory dwelling in supreme splendor in the central one. From this locus "...He beautified and illumined all those dwelling places..." Although Wolfson dwells on sexual imagery in mystical states, he may not have considered that it is another cross-

cultural feature of mysticism. From nuns as "brides of Christ," to medieval Jews, many mystics associate mystical union with sexual union. When Wolfson declares that one's mystical states are "always" determined by his institutional affiliation, he raises the question: What is one to make of mystics who come to heterodox beliefs through their experiences? Ironically enough, Wolfson nearly embraces cross-cultural experiences, for he identifies a progression in which one empties the mind of all forms and attains a state of imagelessness/consciousness, thereby reaching the loftiest station if not the Infinite (*Ein-Sof*) itself. Similarly, Buddhists seek the vacant mind or emptiness (*sunyatta*) that "leaves room" for enlightenment and bliss (*ananda*). Mystical experiences unite the universal and the particular just as the same wine fills containers of different sizes and shapes—however, much one may overemphasize the vessels at the expense of their contents.

Wolfson concludes that a believing Jew must accept what cannot be explained: "the spiritual, incorporeal intention of God becomes tangible in both a visible and audible form known scripturally as the God of Israel." The skeptic asks: "How can an invisible God render himself visible?" The believer asks: "If God is omnipotent, what prevents him from doing so?"

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The 12th Annual Selma and Jacob Brown Lecture

Thursday, March 27, 8 p.m.
James Branch Cabell Library
Virginia Commonwealth University

Guest Speaker: Dr. Richard Sherwin

Topic:
"The Image of the Jew in American Literature"

Dr. Sherwin is professor of English at Bar Ilan University in Israel.

The lecture is sponsored by the VCU Center for Judaic Studies and the VCU Friends of the Library

Controversy and the Dead Sea Scrolls

Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Reader From the Biblical Archaeology Review
Edited by Hershel Shanks
New York: Random House

The Hidden Scrolls: Christianity, Judaism and the War for the Dead Sea Scrolls
by Neil Asher Silberman
New York: Grosset/Putnam

A Review Essay
by Theodore A. Bergren

During the past five years substantial controversy has raged concerning the alleged monopoly for the Dead Sea Scrolls exercised by the small group of scholars who, since the time of the Scroll's discovery in 1947-56, had been authorized to edit and publish them. Since the time of the discoveries, many of the Qumran texts have, in fact, been published but almost as large a number have remained secreted away in the files of the so-called "International Team" of authorized scholars waiting to be published and, therefore, inaccessible to all except a few favored colleagues and graduate students.

Around 1989, a small group of scholars, who wished to consult the unpublished Scrolls for academic purposes but were consistently denied access to them, started to mount increasingly vocal protests. Emerging as leaders of this movement were Robert Eisenman, professor at California State University at Long Beach, and Hershel Shanks, editor of the *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Eisenman's and Shanks' insistence that an unconscionable length of time had passed since the Scrolls' discovery, with no immediate hope of publication in sight for many of them, elicited a groundswell of protest. Eventually, a full set of photographs of the unpublished Scrolls was leaked to Eisenman from a still unknown source, and, shortly thereafter, the Huntington Library in California, which housed a complete archive of Scrolls photographs, opened access to them for all qualified scholars. Thus the "monopoly" over the Scrolls was essentially broken.

This dramatic process did not go unnoticed in the press or in the public eye. For some reason, the Scrolls have always exercised a special fascination in the popular imagination, and this latest sequence of events only served to enhance this appeal. Thus it is no surprise that a flurry of new books on the Scrolls has been published in the past several years. Two of the best of

these are *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, a "reader" of articles from the *Biblical Archaeology Review* compiled by Hershel Shanks, and Neil Asher Silberman's *The Hidden Scrolls*.

As noted above, Shanks was one of the prime movers in the initial controversies over the Scrolls, and the *Biblical Archaeology Review* quickly became a forum for articles introducing the public to the fine points of the Scrolls studies. Shanks' book is a collection of 22 such articles.

In surveying the Table of Contents for the volume, one is immediately struck by the authorship of the essays. Despite the fact that Shanks succeeded from time to time in alienating a number of prominent Scrolls scholars, the authorship of the book reads like a Who's Who of academics connected with the Scrolls. Contributors include Yigael Yadin, Frank Cross, Magen Broshi, Lawrence Schiffman, James VanderKam and Hartmut Stegemann. Conspicuous by his absence is Eisenman himself, who has gained a reputation as a maverick in Scrolls studies.

After an initial overview by Shanks of the Scrolls and their history, the volume is divided into nine sections. The first, entitled "The Find," features articles by Harry Frank on the discovery and history of the first Scrolls as well as Frank Cross on the consensus view of the Scrolls' historical and theological background.

The Scrolls' origin is a controverted issue and Section 2 gives a variety of perspectives on this issue. Lawrence Schiffman first argues that the founders of the Qumran sect were proto-Sadduceans. Next, James VanderKam attempts to refute Schiffman's theory, supporting the traditional view that the Scrolls community were "Essenes." The section concludes with articles by Raphael Levy, who describes the 1897 discovery of two manuscripts of the Qumran Damascus Document in Cairo, and Shanks, who discusses the theory that the Essenes originated in Babylonia during the Exile. Section 3 is devoted to the Temple Scroll. Yigael Yadin surveys the content as well as the theology of the Scroll and describes his own role in its acquisition; Magen Broshi writes on the huge dimensions of the ideal temple prescribed in the Scroll; Hershel Shanks provides another perspective on the acquisition of the Scroll; and Hartmut Stegemann argues that the Scroll is actually a lost sixth book of the Torah.

In the fourth section, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible," Frank Cross writes on "The Text Behind the Text of the Hebrew Bible" and "Light on the Bible From the Dead Sea Caves," while Ronald Hendel proposes an exegesis of Genesis 6:1-4 that builds on variant textual readings found in the Scrolls. Section 5, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christianity," contains an article by James VanderKam that explores points of contact between the Scrolls and early Chris-

BOOK LISTING

Editor's Note: The following is a list of books received from publishers but, as of this printing, have not been reviewed for Menorah Review.

- The American Synagogue: A Historical Dictionary and Sourcebook.* By Kerry M. Olitzky. Greenwood Press.
- Reading the Rabbis: The Talmud As Literature.* By David Kraemer. Oxford University Press.
- From Generation To Generation: How To Trace Your Jewish Genealogy and Family History.* By Arthur Kurzweil (Revised Ed.). Harper Perennial.
- Odyssey of Exile: Jewish Women Flee the Nazis For Brazil.* Edited by Katherine Morris. Wayne State University Press.
- Jewish History in Modern Times.* By Joseph Goldstein. Sussex Academic Press.
- Milton and Midrash.* By Golda Werman. Catholic University of America Press.
- Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism.* By Lance J. Sussman. Wayne State University Press.
- Yemenite Midrash: Philosophical Commentaries on the Torah.* Edited by Yitzhak Tzvi Langermann. HarperCollins.
- People of the Book: Thirty Scholars Reflect on Their Jewish Identity.* Edited by Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky and Shelley Fisher Fishkin. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Israel Holocaust Drama.* Edited by Michael Taub. Syracuse University Press.
- The Logic of Evil: The Social Origins of the Nazi Party, 1925-1933.* By William Brustein. Yale University Press.
- Russia's First Modern Jews: The Jews of Shklov.* By David E. Fishman. New York University Press.
- Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies.* By David Stern. Northwestern University Press.
- The Jewish Mind.* By Raphael Patai. Wayne State University Press.
- Can We Avoid the Next Holocaust?* By Yisrayl Hawkins. Books-A-Hoy Publishers.
- Ecology and Democracy.* Edited by Freya Mathews. Frank Cass Press.
- In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany.* Edited by R. Po-chia Hsia and Hartmut Lehmann. Cambridge University Press.
- Responsa: Literary History of a Rabbinic Genre.* By Peter J. Haas. Scholars Press.
- The Arabs in Israel.* By Ori Stendel. Sussex Academic Press.
- New Perspectives on the Holocaust: A Guide For Teachers and Scholars.* Edited by Rochelle L. Millen. New York University Press.
- Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches.* By David M. Carr. Westminster-John Knox Press.
- Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Drama.* By Dominick LaCapra. Cornell Press.
- Leo Strauss and Judaism.* Edited by David Novak. Rowman & Littlefield Press.

tianity; a study by Hershel Shanks of a Scroll fragment that parallels the Gospel of Luke; and any essay by Otto Betz that argues that John the Baptist had connections with the Qumran community.

Section 6 comprises an essay by Lawrence Schiffman that argues the Scrolls confirm rabbinic descriptions of Pharisaic halakhah. In Section 7, Kyle McCarter addresses the mystery of the famous "Copper Scroll," which describes hidden treasure in various parts of Judea. In Section 8, Hartmut Stegemann describes new methods for reconnecting Scrolls fragments. Finally, Section 9, on controversial aspects of the Scrolls, consists of a summary of a now infamous interview with former Scrolls editor John Strugnell; a declamation by Shanks against anti-Semitism in Scrolls studies; and a refutation by Shanks of the theory that the Roman Catholic Church wished to suppress certain Scrolls.

It is difficult to overstate the strengths and overall usefulness of this volume. The essays are individually of extremely high quality, are well chosen and, together, constitute a remarkably comprehensive picture of the Scrolls and the issues involved in their study. Shanks has done excellent work of selecting authors and themes, balancing viewpoints and situating the book at a level that will be of value not only to the educated general reader but also to those with a good background in Biblical studies.

The second book reviewed here, Neil Asher Silberman's *The Hidden Scrolls*, is a work of a rather different character. Although Silberman does, to some extent, seek to provide the reader with a comprehensive picture of the Scrolls and their background, his main interests lie elsewhere. First, he gives a painstakingly detailed account of the modern saga of the Scrolls' history, from the early 20th century through 1993. Second, he wishes to challenge, in a dramatic way, the consensus of modern scholarly views on both the origin and the interpretation of the Scrolls. This second endeavor renders his book more interesting and challenging than a simple historical survey would be but also potentially lays it open to more trenchant criticism than a "safer" approach might evoke.

Silberman is a professional writer with an excellent background in Judaism and archaeology. He describes himself as someone who, even as a university student, had had a strong interest in the Scrolls but who had always accepted, without question, the consensus scholarly views on their origin. When the controversies around the Scrolls began to escalate in the late 1980s, however, and when he began to interview the key players in the controversy, he found himself increasingly attracted to Robert Eisenman's perspective and theories. Although Silberman does not embrace all of Eisenman's arguments concerning the iden-

ties of the individuals mentioned in the Scrolls, he does take very seriously two of Eisenman's central methodological points.

The first is that the Scrolls more plausibly reflect the events and political situation of Israel under the Romans in the first century C.E. than under the Hasmoneans in the second century B.C.E. (the latter being the consensus view). The second is that the Scrolls should be read not from a mainly philological perspective, or as representing the views of an isolationist Jewish sect, but rather as evincing a radical message of anguished protest against Roman oppression in Israel. Thus Eisenman, and Silberman with him, views the Qumran community not as a fringe collection of lunatics but as embodying the very core of first-century C.E. Jewish rage against the Roman imperium. Both authors further suggest that Christianity should be viewed in this same context and that both communities, the Qumranites and the early Christians, were part of the same sociopolitical movement of protest.

As suggested above, these points are the most provocative aspects of Silberman's thesis but are also those that are most susceptible to criticism. This is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion of the origins of the Qumran community. Suffice it to say that there are real and persuasive reasons why the vast majority of responsible Scrolls scholars locate the origin of the community and many of its documents in the Hasmonean period. Eisenman, and other non-mainstream scholars whose views Silberman embraces, certainly have valid points but scholarship by any account proceeds gradually and by a process of consensus, and valid historical interpretations rarely languish for long before being picked up by other responsible scholars. Only time and reasoned deliberation will determine whether challenges to the mainstream position should be sustained or fall away.

Silberman must, nevertheless, be praised for the determination and persuasiveness with which he argues his case and for the overall accuracy and sophistication of his treatment. The book is remarkably well documented and could almost have been written by a professional Scrolls scholar with a point to prove. It contains remarkably few errors, and its bibliography is of high quality. Another outstanding feature of the book is the extraordinary lengths Silberman has gone through to obtain oral documentation: the book is supplemented by extensive interviews with all the major figures in modern Scrolls history.

This leads to an assessment of Silberman's other main objective—to provide a detailed overview of the Scrolls' modern history. He accomplishes this task in exemplary fashion. In fact, it is difficult to imagine a treatment of this history that is more detailed, painstakingly researched and grippingly narrated than this one. Silberman

has consulted all the main literary sources, interviewed all the key figures and woven his findings into a narrative that is as spell-binding as it is informative. It is one of his key abilities to be able to interweave dry historical detail with modern intrigue in a way that produces an unforgettable story. This book is skillfully written and will educate as well as stimulate in the process of narrating the history of one of the most important manuscript finds of our time.

Theodore A. Bergren is a professor of religion at the University of Richmond.

Jewish Civics

The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History
(2nd Edition)

Edited by Paul Mendes-Flohr
and Jehuda Reinharz
New York: Oxford University
Press

A Review Essay
by Steven F. Windmueller

The preparation and presentation of historical documents as a tool for teaching modern Jewish history represents, for both scholars and students, a valuable methodology for understanding the institutions, individuals and ideologies that shape and dominate Jewish life. With the exception of possibly five other documentary readers (see Chazen and Raphael, Glatter, Dawidowicz, Hertzberg, and Ackerman), we are introduced to a volume of materials, many of which have never before appeared in English translation.

Editors Paul Mendes-Flohr of Hebrew University and Jehuda Reinharz of Brandeis, noting that "we are distinctly conscious of our place in history," have traced the Jewish experience from the 17th century to 1948. This second edition features materials previously unpublished regarding the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe, women in Jewish history, the Holocaust and the emergence of Zionism. The materials in this text, which include 309 individual documents, are arranged chronologically in each of 11 chapters. One cannot help but appreciate the editors' valuable set of introductions to each unit, which conveniently place the respective attached materials into a historical context. These annotated materials allow the reader additional access to a wide array of issues, historical personalities and primary events. The text is complete with the addition of some 20 tables detailing demographic patterns, covering population studies, migration patterns, and employment and occupational data.

My specific interest focused on four sections: "Political and Economic Change" (Section 1), "The Process of Political Emancipation in Western Europe" (Section 3), "Political and Racial Anti-Semitism" (Section 7) and "The American Experience" (Section 9).

The art of teaching Jewish civics is enhanced by the availability of such original source materials. Students can now evaluate events, personalities and core ideological issues through the lens of the key actors of modern history. The introduction of role-playing techniques, simulation models and psychological portraits is made much easier through the use of original documents. This is a wonderful contribution to Jewish political studies and contemporary historical inquiry.

Steven F. Windmueller is director for the School of Jewish Communal Service, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, and a contributing editor.

LEAH

Near sighted okay but I wasn't blind.
I knew my husband wanted my sister like
deserts rain, I wanted him worse, and took.

I knew he was kind the moment I saw him, and
loved his gentle voice so strong and deep
it rumbled through my womb welcoming him.

Never was pretty, never would be.
My sister I loved and loved me and would
flee our father if I was there to mother her.

He understood us finally. I was the earth
their love could grow on anywhere.
And I rejoiced in such reluctant lovers.

I gave him daughter and sons he never loved as
much as he loved hers and spoiled them rotten
Joseph needed dungeons to grow in.

Yes, it was worth it, all of it. I had the man
I loved in my bed, in my life, in my heart and
my sons carried on his dreams.

So he didn't lust for me as I for him my smell and
feel and weight on him wasn't the sheer delight,
but pleasure, that I made sure.

Childless, Rachel stole our fathers dolly gods
and sat through his search on them knowing
he knew and dared not prove it with curses.

Nothing was ever straight in our family but lies.
Preparation for our husbands' world and
God misdirections cunning truths.

Abys between word and deed, promise and
payment, prophecy and fact, passion, cunning,
and visions combined to breed our people.

—Richard Sherwin

BOOK BRIEFINGS

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

The Nazi Holocaust. By Ronnie S. Landau. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Inc., Publisher. How can a student grasp the enormity of the Holocaust? Why try to understand it when it was essentially an experience of the Jewish people? What relevance does it have for the ordinary student who is not Jewish? In this book, Landau meets these questions head on and offers an important breakthrough in understanding and learning about the Holocaust. By showing how the event is universal rather than uniquely Jewish and by making connections between the Holocaust and larger human history, Landau reaches the common reader and succeeds in making the subject less baffling, less unfathomable.

A Gathering of Angels. By Morris B. Margolies. New York: Ballantine Books. Margolies presents an entertaining and informative guide for those who ponder life's solutions as he pores through nearly 3,000 years of literature and lore in an enlightening exploration of the angels who shape and reflect Jewish beliefs, hopes and fears. Through his insightful interpretations, familiar stories become endowed with a new understanding and application for modern living.

The Essence of the Holy Days: Insights From the Jewish Sages. By Avraham Yaakov Finkel. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson Inc. In this volume, Finkel offers a rich selection of striking insights on the various festivals from the greatest Jewish teachers. In addition, he begins each section with a description of the historical background and significance of the holiday as well as concise treatment of pertinent laws and customs. The spirit of the holidays and festivals springs to life in this inspiring volume.

Ending Auschwitz: The Future of Jewish and Christian Life. By Marc H. Ellis. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press. The author wrestles in this volume with some of the critical issues of contemporary Jewish and Christian life, in particular the issues of Jewish and Christian religiosity after Auschwitz and 1492—two events that are historical and contemporary in their relevance. Both events carry the burden of mass dislocation and death, historically and into the present. Both mark Jewish and Christian religiosity in deep and compelling ways.

Seeking Ezekiel: Text and Psychology. By David J. Halperin. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press. Halperin argues that the book of Ezekiel provides substantial information about its author's psychology and reveals his personality in considerable depth. Psychoanalytic investigation yields a coherent portrait of its author: a gifted yet profoundly disturbed man, tormented by inner conflicts about his sexual longings and fears. Any psychological study of a man dead for 2,500 years will run into formidable methodological difficulties. Halperin establishes the legitimacy of his approach by arguing that it permits the solution of a wide range of long-recognized textual problems.

The Roots of Anti-Semitism in South Africa. By Milton Shain. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia. Historians of South African Jewry have depicted anti-Semitism in the 1930s and early 1940s as essentially an alien phenomenon, a product of Nazi propaganda at a time of great social and economic trauma. Shain argues that anti-Semitism was an important element in South African society long before 1930. Using previously unmined sources, he demonstrates that the roots of the anti-Jewish outbursts of the 1930s and early 1940s are to be found in a widely shared negative stereotype of the Jew that had evolved from the late 19th century.

Anti-Semitism in America. By Leonard Dinnerstein. New York: Oxford University Press. In this provocative and in-depth study, Dinnerstein categorically states there is less bigotry in this country than ever before. He also argues that Jews have never been more at home in America. What we are seeing today, he writes, is media hype. A long tradition of prejudice, suspicion and hatred against Jews, the direct product of Christian teachings, has, in fact, finally begun to wane. The author provides a landmark work—the first comprehensive history of prejudice against Jews in the United States, ranging from its foundations in European Christian culture to the present day. Penetrating, authoritative and frequently alarming, this is the definitive account of a plague that apparently has a life of its own.

A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period. Volume 1: From the Beginnings to the End of the Monarchy. By Rainer Albertz. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press. This comprehensive history of Israel and Judah, from the earliest

discernible beginnings to Hellenistic times, chronicles these kingdoms not only in light of the religions of the ancient Near East but also in light of what we can recover of Israelite social history. Albertz describes the history of Israel's religion as an interplay between historical demands, religious experiences and theological reactions as different groups struggle over the appropriate religious response to God and the social practice that needs to go with it. Albertz's work brings together archaeological, historical, social, literary and religious information, thereby illuminating Israel's religious practices and also giving the reader a stimulating survey of the whole of Biblical research today.

Christianity Without Anti-Semitism: James Parkes and the Jewish-Christian Encounter. By Robert A. Everett. New York: Pergamon Press. Culled from extensive research and his own friendship with James Parkes, Everett presents a detailed study of Parkes' life and an examination of his views on Christian theology as well as his interpretation of Christianity in relation to Judaism and the Jewish people. In so doing, the author shows that Parkes endeavored to provide a way for Christianity to be free of anti-Semitism and to challenge those who maintain that the Holocaust is the only reason for Christians to rethink their "theology of victimization" about Judaism. In light of contemporary problems and ideas, this study shows how Parkes' thoughts on these issues are increasingly relevant.

Jerusalem: A History of the Holiest City As Seen Through the Struggles of Jews, Christians and Muslims. By Thomas A. Idinopolos. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Inc. This majestic history of Jerusalem is the first to bring together, in a single volume, the experiences of three great religions in the Holy City from their

ancient beginnings to the present. It is a history in the grand manner, an absorbing saga of prophets, priests and pilgrims, kings and conquerors; the story of a city besieged, defended, conquered, damaged or destroyed, and rebuilt 40 times in 30 centuries—always in the name of God. Idinopolos' narrative is rich, intricate and spectacular as a religious tapestry.

A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. By Mark Tessler. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Tessler's book takes a long view of the Middle East and its struggles. He reaches back to ancient times to provide a new view of Jews and Zionists and of Arabs and Palestinians that is independent of the subsequent conflict between them. In the process, he draws attention to many commonalities and demonstrates there is nothing intrinsic to Zionism or Palestinian nationalism that makes a solution to the conflict inconceivable. He envisions a solution that will simultaneously end Palestinian statelessness and ensure Israeli security, and concludes: "Israelis and Palestinians can break with the past if they have the political will to do so, and any who doubts this need only look to the Israeli-PLO accord for evidence that it is on the parties themselves, and not on history, that the future depends."

Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages. By Mark R. Cohen. Princeton University Press. Cohen offers the first in-depth explanation of why medieval Islamic-Jewish relations, though not utopic, were less confrontational and violent than those between Christians and Jews in the West. His analysis includes differences in theology that helped influence the way Muslims and Christians treated Jews. Written for a broad audience, this book draws on many salient primary sources, which let the voices of medieval Islam, Christendom and the Jews speak for themselves.



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BOOK BRIEFINGS

A Supplement to *Menorah Review*

Winter 1997

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

The Black Anti-Semitism Controversy: Protestant Views and Perspectives. By Hubert G. Locke. Cranbury, NJ: Susquehanna University Press. This volume provides a background and assessment of the Black-Jewish issue as it has been discussed in academic and public circles for the past half-century, with an extended review of the literature on Black-Jewish relations since World War II. It offers a fresh examination of an old problem, rooted in a unique relationship between two groups in American society whose common history in the struggle for justice in America has been both the source of considerable achievements and considerable friction. This examination is offered in the conviction that Black and Jewish Americans continue to have far more to gain from pursuing a common agenda than in going their separate ways.

Gershom Scholem: The Man and His Work. Edited by Paul Mendes-Flohr. Albany: State University of New York Press. This is a collection of essays by several of Israel's eminent scholars reflecting on Scholem's impact on the academic and Jewish worlds, as well as his life as a scholar, a Jewish thinker and an activist. The editor provides an intellectual and spiritual biography of Scholem, highlighting the enduring significance of Scholem's work, which has remained the touchstone for all further scholarship on Jewish mysticism and kabbalah.

The Kiss of God: Spiritual and Mystical Death in Judaism. By Michael Fishbane. Seattle: University of Washington Press. Fishbane traces the spiritual face of Judaism in one of its many appearances. He explores the quest for spiritual perfection in early rabbinic sources and in Jewish philosophy and mysticism. The "kiss of God," a symbol for union with God and the ritual practices—meditation and performance—connected with it, are represented. The book identifies a persistent passion for religious perfection, expressed as the love of God until death itself. For some, Halachah itself was the means of spiritual growth; for others, more private practices were built on its foundation. But, all agreed that the purification of desire and the perfection of the soul offered the hope for personal salvation.

God's Phallus: And Other Problems For Men and Monotheism. By Howard Eilberg-Schwartz. Boston: Beacon Press. The author explores the "sex" of God by asking what the unintended consequences of using gendered/religious symbols are for men. He argues that men (and women) are diminished and challenged by a divine symbol that is male. Although God is imagined as He in the texts of the Bible, his body is never pictured and the features of his male anatomy are carefully avoided. This prohibition against making images of God is central to Judaism. The author explains why this is so by exploring how the male body of God worked as a symbol.

Present At Sinai: The Giving of the Law. By S.Y. Agnon. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society. Nobel Laureate Agnon brings together what has always been at the heart of Jewish religious consciousness: the Sinai event—as memory and as continuously renewed experience. The sweep of his erudition and his

skill as an anthologist make this one of his finest books. He uses Sinai as a prism through which to view Jewish theological tradition. His exploration encompasses Biblical and Talmudic texts and commentaries, the whole sweep of the Midrash, Kabbalah and Hasidism, as well as homiletic and pietistic writings of various periods down to our present time.

A Scapgoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Anti-Semitism in America. By Frederic Cople Jaher. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. In a country founded on the principle of religious freedom, with no medieval past, no legal nobility and no national church, how did anti-Semitism become a presence in America? And, how have America's beginnings and history affected the course of this bigotry? Jaher considers these questions in the first history of American anti-Semitism from its origins in the ancient world to its first widespread outbreak during the Civil War. Comprehensive in approach, the book combines psychological, sociological, economic, cultural, anthropological and historical interpretation to reveal the nature of anti-Semitism in the United States. The author offers rare insight into the New World's oldest ethnic and religious hatred.

Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History. By Stefan C. Reif. New York: Cambridge University Press. Reif takes the reader on an intriguing journey through periods about 3,000 years apart and into locations as distant from each other in every sense as Sura and Cincinnati. In this first attempt for almost 75 years to provide a scientific overview of Jewish liturgical history, the latest scholarship and the most original sources are carefully identified and utilized. The result is a book that will prove attractive both to scholarly as well as lay opinion, and will exchange the narrow and tendentious scholasticism of 19th-century Jewish liturgical research for a broader approach to the history of such religious phenomena that is appropriate for modern readers.

The Holocaust in Historical Context (Volume I): The Holocaust and Mass Death Before the Modern Age. By Steven T. Katz. New York: Oxford University Press. With this volume, Katz initiates the provocative argument that the Holocaust is a singular event in human history. Unlike any previous work on the subject, this work maintains that the Shoah is the only example of true genocide—a systematic attempt to kill all the members of a group—in history. In this first of three volumes, Katz looks at the ways in which the Holocaust has precedents and parallels as well as in what way it stands alone as a singular, highly distinctive historical event.

Israeli Preoccupations: Dualities of a Confessional Citizen. By Haim Cherok. Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press. This collection of articles calculates a running tab of persistent Israeli preoccupations, chiefly coming to terms with Palestinians, and the conditions facing women in the Jewish state. Most of the author's preoccupations and poignant observations are born of the daily quirks, vexations and gebolements of many years spent awakening and lying down inside a very particular town in the Negev. In the

concluding section, Chertok self-admittedly risks "the saline fate of the Lot's spouse" by concluding with several backward glances at the American Jewish community.

Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature. By David Stern. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Stern shows how the parable or "marshal"—the most distinctive type of narrative in midrashic literature—was composed, how its symbolism works and how it serves to convey the ideological convictions of the rabbis. He describes its relation to similar tales in other literatures, including the parables of Jesus in the New Testament and kabbalistic parables. Through its innovative approach to midrash, this study reaches beyond its particular subject and will appeal to all readers interested in narrative and religion.

The State of Israel in Jewish Public Thought: The Quest for Collective Identity. By Yosef Gorny. New York University Press. Are the Jews a religious community dispersed among other nations? A community with equal citizens of various countries with their own cultural and historical identity? Or, are the Jewish people a nation with its own homeland? However one answers this question, the ramifications are enormous. Moreover, since world Jewry is now crisscrossed by divisions between religious and secular Jews, between groups of different cultural backgrounds, and between those living in a sovereign Jewish state and those who are citizens of other countries, it is the link between Israel and the Diaspora that confers a collective identity on this multiform entity. Gorny's central theme is Jewish public thought concerning the identity and essence of the Jewish people from the Holocaust as well as the establishment of the State of Israel to the present day. Reflecting the collective thinking of Jewish intellectuals, this is a volume of interest to anyone concerned with the issues of Jewish identity.

Rethinking Jewish Faith: The Child of a Survivor Responds. By Steven L. Jacobs. Albany: State University of New York Press. This book addresses the faith of a member of the "second generation"—the offspring of the original survivors of the Shoah. It is a re-examination of those categories of faith central to the Jewish religious experience in light of the Holocaust: God, covenant, prayer, Halachah and mitzvah, life-cycle, festival cycle, Israel and Zionism, and Christianity from the perspective of a child of a survivor. Jacobs bears witness to the anguish of a second generational Jew wrestling with the key elements of his faith.

Jewish Identity. Edited by David Theo Goldberg and Michael Krausz. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. These original philosophical essays discuss the nature of Jewishness and the significance of cultural identity. This volume is unique in its focus on the conceptual features of cultural identity, the conditions underlying commitment to contemporary Jewishness, and the cultural and moral obligations this commitment may entail. The contributors ask, "What does it mean at the close of the second millennium to be and to choose still to be a Jew?"

Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible. By Frederick J. Murphy. New York: Oxford University Press. This is a literary and theological study of the Biblical Antiquities of Pseudo-Philo—a long, well-written reinterpretation of the Hebrew Bible, composed by a Palestinian Jew of the first century C.E. The text provides critical information about late Second Temple Judaism, the historical Jesus, and the origins of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. Murphy provides a penetrating analysis of the book and sheds light on Jewish thought of the period regarding covenant, leadership in Israel, women in Israel, relations with Gentiles, divine providence, divine retribution, eschatology and many other subjects.

Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust. By

Pierre Vidal-Naquet. New York: Columbia University Press. This book exposes revisionism for the deeply perverse enterprise it is, laying bare the mechanisms of lies and manipulations on which it is sustained. More than this, it asks searching questions about the underlying causes of revisionism and its influence and diffusion in France, the United States and the rest of the world. Vidal-Naquet struggles with the idea that refuting the revisionist theories might, in some minds, provide evidence indicating the validity of their claims.

War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence. By Susan Niditch. New York: Oxford University Press. Niditch considers a wide spectrum of war ideologies in the Bible, seeking in each case to discover why and how these views might have made sense to Biblical writers, who themselves can be seen to wrestle with the ethics of violence. To understand attitudes about war in the Bible, she argues, is to understand war in general. More widely, the work explores how human beings attempt to justify killing and violence. Niditch's unique study will be of particular interest to students of Judaism, the Bible and religion, as well as ethicists and historians concerned with relating classical sources to contemporary issues.

Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy. By Robert Bonfil. Berkeley: University of California Press. The author re-creates the richness of Jewish life in Renaissance Italy. He also forces us to rethink conventional interpretations of the period, which feature terms like "assimilation" and "acculturation." There are neither as much separation nor as much openness between Jewish society and the broad Christian society as those terms would suggest. What we see instead is that Italian Jews were no more and no less people of their times than were Italian Christians, and they perceived their Jewish identity through constant interplay—on whatever terms—with the "Other." This vividly detailed picture reveals in Italian Jews a sensitivity that took into account every aspect of the larger society.

Idolatry. by Moshe Halberstam and Avishai Margalit. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. The authors consider Christianity and Islam but focus primarily on Judaism. They explore competing claims about the concept of idolatry that emerges in the Hebrew Bible. They examine the meaning and nature of idolatry—and, in doing so, reveal much about the monotheistic tradition that defines itself against this sin. This brilliant account of a subject central to our culture also has much to say about metaphor, myth, and the application of philosophical analysis to religious concepts and sensibilities. The work is especially valuable in these days of implacable religious difference.

The Political Economy of Israel: From Ideology to Stagnation. By Yakir Plessner. Albany: State University of New York Press. This book is the first attempt at a comprehensive description, history and analysis of Israel's economy. Plessner argues that problems within the Israeli economy can be explained by the extent of its departure from the institutions and rules that govern predominantly market economies. Told within the framework of Zionism and the creation of Israel, this book answers the question of why the Israeli economy finds itself, today, in the same state in which it has languished since 1973.

Blind Jump: The Story of Shaikhe Dan. By Amos Ettinger. New York: Herzl Press. This is the story of the amazing exploits of Shaikhe Dan, who volunteered during World War II to parachute behind enemy line in Romania on behalf of British Intelligence. His jump had two objectives: (1) to locate the prison camp where 1,400 Allied Air Force crewmen were being held and (2) to try rescuing Jews from Eastern Europe and getting them to Palestine. With the publication of the his life's story, the curtain goes up on the astounding tale of a modern-day Pimpernel.