




1999

Menorah Review (No. 45, Winter, 1999)

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MENORAH

REVIEW



NUMBER 45 • CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY • WINTER 1999

For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

The Timeless Value of Heschel

Holiness in Words: Abraham Joshua Heschel's Poetics in Piety
by Edward K. Kaplan
Albany: State University of New York Press

A Review Essay
by Kristin M. Swenson

In an age of New Agers, off-to-the-mountain meaning-makers and back-to-the-cave soul-searchers, Abraham Joshua Heschel's voice is sanity for the soul and ecstasy for the mind. In an age of ethnic cleansing, race riots and political ideologues, Abraham Joshua Heschel's voice provokes, encourages, incites and soothes. In an age of Prozac and pot, green algae and ginseng, Abraham Joshua Heschel's voice cries out with despair but will not relinquish faith. In an age of free verse, rap music, prose poetry and desk-top publishing, Abraham Joshua Heschel's voice delights the ear, pleases the soul and disrobes the self.

In this small book, Edward K. Kaplan presents a great man—Abraham Joshua Heschel—teacher, mystic, diplomat, philosopher and rabbi. In this small book, Kaplan describes the life work of Heschel to keep the spirit of this remarkable man alive in the hearts and minds of people today. Part of the SUNY series in Judaica (“Hermeneutics, Mysticism, and Religion”), Kaplan's book is not limited to a description of Abraham Joshua Heschel's work. Rather, it goes on to show how we can continue to benefit from Heschel's thought and example. His comments throughout the book, his extensive annotated bibliography and his list of readings as a study guide (Appendix A) all help the reader implement Heschel's ideas. For, he writes, “Heschel's confidence braces our lives, our decisions...Under Heschel's guidance, our intuition of life's essential sanctity might energize the future” (p. 155). Kaplan writes of how Heschel's mastery of rhetoric, his “poetics of piety,” move his readers to faith and action.

Fourteenth Annual Pelma and Jacob Broson Lecture
Sponsored by the Center for Judaic Studies and
Friends of the Library of Virginia Commonwealth University

Thursday, March 25, 1999 at 8 p.m.

Speakers: Dr. Melvin J. Urofsky and Dr. Jack D. Spiro
Topic: "Physician-Assisted Suicide and Jewish Perspectives"

In putting together this collection of essays, Kaplan shares his personal reflections on Heschel's influence and seeks to effect some of that power on the reader. In the introduction he writes, “*Holiness in Words* is a reader's guide to transformation, not a plot summary” (p. 3). It is a book that sets the reader in step with Heschel, both the “exoteric Heschel” and the “esoteric Heschel.” Kaplan's first several chapters introduce us to the Heschel who sat with intellectuals and politicians, the Heschel who could translate mystical experience and religious beliefs into philosophical, secular categories. Assuming such a position was no compromise of Heschel's integrity, however, in chapter 9 Kaplan sketches the “esoteric Heschel,” the pious mystic inspired by such spiritual giants as the biblical prophets and legendary tzaddikim. Indeed, Kaplan writes that “if one ‘source’ of Heschel's thought can be located, it would be Hasidism, the legacy of its founder, the Baal Shem Tov” (p. 5).

In the first chapter, Kaplan introduces Heschel the man, in a combination of biography and chronology of his writings to

contextualize for the reader Heschel's career and goals as well as the literary style that reflects them. In reading Kaplan's book it becomes clear that with poetic beauty and rhetorical power, Heschel wove a double-stranded cord. Comprising it of piety and halakhah, Heschel anchored one end of it to earth and tossed the other into heaven.

In chapters 2-4 Kaplan sketches for the reader Heschel's landscape of language. Invested with this topographical map, we are better able to navigate Heschel's thought-world and so experience “life's fundamental holiness” (p. 13). Without bypassing the difficult antitheses and paradoxes integral to Heschel's religious sensitivity and secular sensibility, Kaplan describes a step-by-step approach to some of Heschel's more problematic writings. For example, he shows how, taken together, *Man Is Not Alone* and *God in Search of Man* “develop a strategy to absorb both emotion and value judgments into the path of religious perception” (p. 36).

Furthermore, Kaplan shows that the art of Heschel's writing is reflective of both the Bible's metaphorical style and of its aniconic emphasis. That is, Kaplan explains that while Heschel recognizes the impossibility of discussing matters theological without the use of metaphorical imagery, he warned us of the temptation of drawing a one-to-one correspondence between the transcendent and the words we use to describe it. In chapter 6, especially, Kaplan develops this sophisticated understanding of metaphor and symbol. Nevertheless, the title of Kaplan's book derives from Heschel's declaration that the Bible is nothing less than “holiness in words.” In his discussion, however, Kaplan does not draw a distinction between

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biblical and non-biblical language though Heschel described the Hebrew words as “hyphens between heaven and earth” (p. 55). Consequently, I wonder if Heschel’s understanding of metaphor and symbol ought to be slightly more nuanced.

In chapter 5 Kaplan illustrates the timeliness of Heschel’s thinking and applies techniques for reading Heschel to his idea of “depth theology” to show how his experience of despair and his faith-filled response of stupefied awe may lead us, too, from radical doubt’s desperation to radical amazement and reverence. With chapters 6 and 7, Kaplan sets us in the arena of social action. The importance of morality and the practice of justice to Heschel’s life and work are described in these chapters and illustrated by the photos in the middle of the book. Kaplan does a masterful job of describing Heschel’s philosophy of halakha in the context of concrete historical events. In these chapters as well as the final one, Kaplan negotiates Heschel’s sense of law and right action with clarity and tact. He writes that in “Heschel’s poetics of piety... the vexed problem of belief becomes secondary to performance, which claims nothing more than celebrating life and facing its demands and mysteries. By doing, we may understand what Heschel means by ‘living in a manner compatible with God’s presence’” (p. 153).

Clearly admiring of Heschel’s erudition and insight, Kaplan nevertheless does not present Heschel as a sterile scholar. Without apology, Kaplan describes a profoundly emotional, passionate man; a man who suffered alienation, despair and a man who claimed personal elation of divine inspiration. Furthermore, I think it would please Heschel to know that Kaplan does not claim for Heschel all answers to life’s tragedies and theological dilemmas. Instead, for example, in discussing Heschel’s reaction to the Holocaust, he notes that Heschel “refuse[d] to systematize the unspeakable” (p. 130) further claiming that “depth theology keeps unanswerable questions alive” (p. 131).

Kaplan’s book is itself in keeping with Heschel’s passion as a teacher, certain of the vitality of holiness and faith and of the intimately related importance of learning and remembering. Though Heschel’s poetics of piety ring true in religious traditions and ideologies much wider than any single one, Heschel worked, wrote, taught and prayed as a Jew, thereby invigorating the Judaism of his time. In this book on Heschel, Kaplan calls his readers to just that kind of learning and remembering. Concluding chapter 9, Kaplan writes: “The exoteric Heschel opens the window to the Holy Spirit. God’s presence lies waiting in our primal Jewish texts: the Bible and prayerbook... That remains our drama: Rising to the standards God has defined. Whatever the yearning is that throbs within us—whether

or not we call it the Holy Spirit—it is our responsibility to make it live” (p. 145).

Finally, Kaplan returns our focus to Heschel’s remarkable poetics noting that “we study him...—not only for learning and edification...[but also] for the fearful purpose of transforming our very consciousness of reality” (p. 147). Kaplan observes that one cannot read Heschel without risking this vulnerability to holiness. His words compel readers to both self-examination and the loss of self itself. Indeed, Kaplan notes that “for Heschel, the shattering of ego can become a positive intuition of God as the ultimate Subject” (p. 149).

Convinced that Heschel’s life work and example are not only relevant but also of great value in our time, Kaplan concludes with a clear, pragmatic discussion of where to go from here. He lays out a number of specific tasks that “can further [Heschel’s] legacy at many levels” (p. 149). He discusses the spiritual transformation, the invigorating of traditional texts and rituals, and the moral posture of social action that Heschel’s work and example elicit. Kaplan has convinced this reader that to keep alive the legacy of Abraham Joshua Heschel is to recognize the ultimate vitality of holiness.

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Religion and Politics

The Politics of Torah
by Alan L. Mittleman
Albany: State University of New
York Press

A Review Essay
by Steven Windmueller

This is an exceptional piece of work in that it coherently describes the birth and evolution of Agudat Israel, the first comprehensive political movement among Orthodox Jews, while placing the developments surrounding this institutional structure in the context of Jewish political thought and practice. This book represents something significantly more than a historical accounting of a 19th- and early 20th-century survey of an organizational network but rather provides, in an extremely thoughtful and well-reasoned analysis, new insights into the emergence of a tradition of Jewish politics.

Alan Mittleman’s fascination with religion and politics affords us, his readers, a special opportunity to benefit from his intellectual inquiry. At the outset we are introduced to a marvelous survey of the various approaches and schools of thought identified with this evolving discipline (i.e., the

Jewishpolitical tradition). Mittleman points out that the framing of this concept becomes more evident when we examine Jewish events and ideas from a quasi-theological, prescriptive perspective.

A number of writers over time have begun to question the notion of Jewish powerlessness prior to the post-Second World War. Ismar Schorsch asks, “if Jews had not possessed political skills and sagacity,” then how do we explain their capacity to march through history? In each political circumstance, the Jew adjusted his own self-definition to accommodate to the requirements of citizenship in his new host society.

Drawing on the writings of Maimonides and Abravanel on the one hand and of Spinoza and later Mendelssohn on the other, a literature begins to form that implies the presence of a Jewish political philosophy. In some measure it is Dan Elazar’s contemporary writing that gives full definition and direction to this idea of a Jewish political existence. The notion of covenant serves as the essential ingredient for Elazar in constructing his view of the Jewish polity. At the same time, Mittleman is careful to contrast the views cited above with those of David Biale, whose primary thesis appears to emphasize the realities of power and prudence at the expense of tradition and covenant. In the end the author opts for Elazar’s model and proceeds to effectively apply this approach in his study of the Agudat.

Mittleman’s next task is to place the birth of a modern religious advocacy group in its appropriate historical and political context. The establishment of Agudat Israel, according to Mittleman’s thesis, can be seen as bridging the centrality of Torah with the principles of modernity, as a means of counteracting the forces associated with assimilation and the Jewish liberal tradition. This text successfully combines the necessary background analysis of Western European experiments with nationalism along with the specific Jewish institutional responses in building modern communities. By cataloging these various 19th-century Jewish organizational developments, Mittleman can then place in context the rationale for the emergence of an Orthodox entity.

The last section of this relatively brief book is dedicated specifically to an understanding of both the extensive internal politics associated with the formation in 1909 of Agudat Israel and with the ongoing ideological battles and institutional issues around personal rivalries. Regarding this latter matter, this reviewer was particularly struck by the raging wars over Agudat’s institutional directions carried on between Jacob Rosenheim and Rabbi Isaac Breuer for more than 20 years. These conflicts serve as a window of insight representing the overall thinking within European orthodoxy during the period of the First World War and fol-

lowing. Among the questions under consideration were the debates over how Orthodox institutions ought to relate to Zionism, in what manner Agudat Israel ought to be ideologically inclusive and under what circumstances would this movement relate to the larger European Jewish world.

This piece of writing offers those of us interested in the religious-political relationship both a superb analysis of the relevant literature that has been developed in this field and an opportunity to observe the specific application of Dan Elazar's model as seen in the Agudat Israel case. In the end, Mittleman presents us with a fascinating question: "Why did the Agudat vision of a sacred politics...die?" In seeking to offer some judgment in this matter, the author opens a new challenge to us and hopefully for himself in suggesting that in liberal societies the place of religiously directed movements and ideas still is open to further study. Having begun this process so extraordinarily well, one can only encourage Alan Mittleman to continue the journey.

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Picks and Pans from the Feminist's Corner

A Review Essay
by Sarah Barbara Watstein

A Price Below Rubies: Jewish Women as Rebels and Radicals. By Naomi Sheperd. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. In her study of Jewish women's participation in revolutionary politics from 1870 through the 1930s, Sheperd boldly goes where few scholars have gone before. The focus in this volume is on women who were prominent radicals and rebels working for the cause of political and social change. Profiles of Anna Kuliscioff and other early radicals lead off the volume and are followed by in-depth portrayals of several fascinating women of ideas, including Rosa Luxemburg, Esther Frumkin and the women of the Bund; Manya Shochat and the Zionist women pioneers; Bertha Pappenheim and the problem of Jewish feminism; and Rose Pesotta and American Jewish immigrant unionists. Sheperd writes, "...I have selected mainly those behind whom there was a large group of politically active women...Bundists, Zionists and Jewish women workers in the United States during the first decades of the century." Sheperd leads us on a journey that spans the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with stops along the way at the Pale of Settlement in Russia; Palestine, the United States; France, Ger-

many, Austria-Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria. It is a journey that will increase your sensitivity to the complicated and complex relationship between political radicalism and Orthodox Jewish values. The women profiled by Sheperd are rebels twice over. Each is inspiring in her own right.

Odyssey of Exile: Jewish Women Flee the Nazis for Brazil. Edited by Katherine Morris. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. This collection offers a rare glimpse into the personal histories of some women refugees who lived through the Nazi era. Here are women who fled to a "third-world" country in the 1930s and the 1940s. Here are educated women from the German and Polish middle class who had enjoyed certain privileges and freedoms before the Nazis came to power. Here are women who escaped to save their lives and confronted the challenges of a different culture and language. Here are women who faced problems that were exacerbated by social and political factors, in particular by the all-pervasive sexism and unique political climate in Brazil. The women in this anthology provide multiple perspectives, creating, as the editor describes, "a mosaic composed of four distinct categories: persecution and exile, the concentration camps, transfer to Brazil and restitution. If you are fascinated by autobiographies, with war memoirs, and with women of courage, the personal histories you will encounter are memorable.

Out of the Shadow: A Russian Jewish Girlhood on the Lower East Side. By Rose Cohen. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Does American social history intrigue you? Do you enjoy autobiographies? Are you interested in reading about the small and seemingly unimportant details of daily life? Seventy-nine years after its original publication in 1918, this book continues to have enduring value for readers. Rose Cohen's autobiography is a moving account of Jewish immigrant life in turn-of-the-century America. New York City and the Lower East Side figure prominently in this narrative. This is memoir literature at its best. I thank Rose Cohen for introducing me to *Out of the Shadow* and Thomas Dublin for an introduction that helps place this important work in a broader perspective.

Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies. Edited by Lynn Davidman and Shelly Tenenbaum. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Here is a provocative collection of critical evaluations of the impact of feminist scholarship on several of the disciplines encompassed by Jewish studies. The contributor's line-up includes eminent scholars in a broad range of disciplines—in alphabetical order) Joyce Antler, Lynn Davidman, Tikva Frymer-Kensky, Judith Hauptman, Paula E. Hyman, Sonya Michel,

Judith Plaskow, Susan Starr, Naomi Sokoloff, Shelly Tenenbaum and Hava Tirosch-Rothschild. Subject areas covered include the Bible and women's studies; Jewish theology in feminist perspective; feminism and the discipline of Jewish philosophy; feminist studies and modern Jewish history; a feminist sociology of American Jews; Jewish women in a cross-cultural perspective; the problem of gender in American-Jewish literature; the impact of feminist research on modern Hebrew literature; and Jews, gender and the American cinema. Each author writes about her own subject within Jewish studies and each draws on feminist scholarship, Jewish or otherwise, in several other disciplines. The end result is that each chapter is a work in its own right and yet taken together the chapters provide a strong argument for boundary jumping—for going beyond the traditional disciplinary boundaries that have structured the production of knowledge about women's lives and understanding their textual representations. Here is a strong argument for embracing, in whole or in part, research that uses gender as a central analytic category for the study of Jewish life. Recommended for feminist scholars trying to gain some insight into the state of Jewish studies and for scholars of Jewish culture who need an introduction to feminist paradigms of research.

Jewish Days: A Book of Jewish Life and Culture Around the Year. By Francine Klagsbrun. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux. At last—a beautifully illustrated and interpretive book built around the calendar! At its simplest, this is a book about time and events in Jewish life. It can be entered in any season and reentered time and again. Reading it cover-to-cover is only one option; browsing is sure to bring enjoyment on any occasion. Persons with little knowledge of Judaism will find this book a compelling pathway to Jewish ideas and beliefs. Those with more extensive backgrounds will discover new insights and challenges. This calendar/encyclopedia is readable through and through. If you wish to immerse yourself in the spiritual power of Judaism, do yourself a favor—buy this book. This book is a unique gift, which will keep giving festival after festival, sacred day after sacred day, all year long.

Heavenly Sex: Sexuality in the Jewish Tradition. By Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer and Johnathan Mark. New York: New York University Press. Yes, Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer is THE Dr. Ruth! And yes, I did approach this book with a healthy degree of skepticism. True, Judaism is intensely sexual and the Bible is quite direct about sex and about the relationships of Biblical characters. Nonetheless, I have not exactly been a fan of Dr. Ruth's and I tend toward the shy side when it comes to buying or consulting

sex manuals. Who better than Dr. Ruth to explore sexuality within Jewish religion and culture? Who better indeed! In this slim volume, Dr. Ruth applies her own unique brand of therapy to a broad array of issues pertaining to sexuality in the Jewish tradition. Some of the issues covered are sexual obsession, homosexuality, safe sex, sacred sex, sexual weaknesses, sexual lapses, to name a few. One chapter is a "romantic guided tour through 25 hours of sensual pleasure, based on the Jewish tradition" (the Sabbath begins at dusk but ends after dark). Another chapter explores dreaming about sex—daydreams and night dreams. Another explores the Mikvah and its relationship to sex. Don't let the lighthearted tone fool you! Dr. Ruth's upbringing as an Orthodox Jew has given her a solid foundation in a moral tradition that infuses the book. True confessions are in order: the more I read, the more I wanted to read, in spite of my initial skepticism. This is an important and affirming book. For those of you who might be wondering—Dr. Ruth has not lost her touch in breaking through barriers when it comes to talking about sex.

The Wiles of Women/The Wiles of Men: Joseph and Potiphar's Wife in Ancient Eastern, Jewish and Islamic Folklore. By Shalom Goldman. Albany: State University of New York Press. Are you interested in stories replete with tales of jealousy, sibling rivalry, sexual temptation and magic praxis? If you answered "yes" to one or more of these options, you won't want to miss this comparative study of Jewish and Muslim scripture and legend. This volume is at its simplest, a scholarly survey of medieval and modern Biblical commentary that demonstrates that the Joseph story of Genesis 37-50 was viewed throughout Jewish history as the central narrative in Genesis and as the most artfully constructed tale in the Pentateuch. Chapters focus on the centrality and significance of the Joseph narratives, Potiphar's wife in scripture and folklore, the Egyptian background of the Joseph story, and the women of the Joseph story. A final chapter is titled "Joseph's Bones: Linking Canaan and Egypt." This book will be of interest, if you are interested in Mesopotamian cultures and history; in Near Eastern, Jewish and Islamic folklore; in Biblical narratives and storytelling in general; and the history of religions. Goldman's work succeeds as both history and criticism. Immersing myself in this study was both a stimulating and rewarding experience.

A Cynthia Ozick Reader. Edited by Elaine M. Kauer. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. Cynthia Ozick's oeuvre is impressive, indeed there are few genres she has not explored. If Cynthia Ozick is one of your favorite writers, you will find this "reader" of selected poetry, fiction and es-

says to be a delight from cover to cover. Critics have focused on Ozick's Jewishness since her first published novel appeared in 1966 and, indeed, her vision is rooted in the Hebraic tradition and draws sustenance from the Jewish idea. It is the editor's contention that Ozick is a major writer in her own right, above and beyond her identity as an American Jewish writer. Kauer contends that Ozick's work is accessible to a broader readership and this volume succeeds in showcasing her manifold talents.

The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer: Romance and Reform in Victorian England. By Michael Galchinsky. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. This book succeeds in its aim to reconstruct the lost subculture of the Victorian Jews. Galchinsky focuses on a critical but forgotten moment in the development of Jewish women's writing, the moment "in which modern Jewish women transgressed their traditional 'exemption' from literary endeavor and began to publish books." He concentrates on the period between 1830 and 1880, and a period in which Jewish women in England became the first Jewish women anywhere to publish novels, histories, periodicals, theological tracts and conduct manuals. His study analyzes Anglo-Jewish women's momentous entrance into print in relation to Victorian literary history, women's cultural history and Jewish cultural history. The material is organized into four broad areas. An introduction posits the author's approach to modern Jewish literary history. The first section focuses on Walter Scott and the Conversionists. The following section explores the "new women" and the emergence of the modern Jewish man. This is followed by a chapter entitled "Marion and Celia Moss: Transformations of 'Jewess,'" and finally, in the last section, emphasis turns to Grace Aguilar, the "moral governess of the Hebrew family." An epilogue examines Anna Maria Goldsmid and the limits of history. This is a sophisticated and scholarly resource that will be of particular interest to those interested in language and literature, British history, Jewish cultural studies, and women's studies.

Ruth's Journey: A Survivor's Memoir. By Ruth Glassberg Gold. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida. The author is one of about 2,000 orphans who were rescued from Romanian concentration camps on March 6, 1944. This book is her story. All of it. The days before the war and the days after the war; and the war itself. Gold's memoirs begin in her early childhood, in a village called Milie in Romania. They conclude with her return to "face the here and now" to Bershad, the largest and most infamous of more than 100 concentration camps in Transnistria, in 1988. Andrei Codrescu writes "Ruth Gold proves that the heart

broken into a thousand pieces can be broken yet more. She survived the hells of the 20th century to write this harrowing, powerful book...Read this book; it is filled with the stubborn light of the (barely describable) truth." I couldn't say it any better.

Sarah Barbara Watstein is director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Computing Service and a contributing editor.

What We Are, What We Have, What We Are Able to Do

The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany
by Michael Brenner
New Haven, CT:
Yale University Press

A Review Essay
by Peter J. Haas

It is almost impossible to look back objectively at the history of the German Jewish community without thinking of its horrible end. This is especially true of the Weimar period when the end (we now know) was so imminent. Yet the modern history of the Jews in German-speaking lands is not simply the story of a steady decline into oblivion. To the contrary, the Jews of modern Germany had created an extraordinarily fruitful and creative synthesis of Judaic and German cultures. To be sure there were rough spots, detours and potholes but, by and large, German Jews had created, by the beginning of the 20th century, a powerful and unique cultural amalgam. This culture continued its remarkable efflorescence into and beyond World War I. In fact, in many ways German-Jewish culture reached a kind of maturity in the Weimar period. The creation of a vibrant modern Middle European Jewish culture was a significant achievement that should not be overlooked by the events that followed. Weimar was not the beginning of the end, it was rather the end of a very promising beginning. For those prepared to celebrate the artistic, literary and philosophical potentialities of modern Judaism as evidenced in Weimar Germany, Michael Brenner's book is a must.

The received image of Weimar Jews, as Brenner points out in his introduction, is that of "Jews beyond Judaism," that is, of descendants of a once proud Jewish community who had all but assimilated away, giving up their religion, heritage—and yes, even their identity—in a futile attempt to become Germans like everyone else. They contributed only to German culture, blind to their true status. It was only in 1933 that they

were suddenly “reminded” that they were Jews. At this point, however, it was too late and the disappearance of German Jewry, already far advanced by assimilation and intermarriage, proceeded horrifically to its already determined end. This, as I said, is the received image.

Brenner’s study is an important corrective. Far from denying their Judaism, German Jews, Brenner insists, were facing squarely the problem of what it meant to be Jewish in the modern West. They understood fully, and correctly, that the old identity would simply no longer work. Their challenge was to forge, without any prior experience or model, a new modern, unprecedented Jewish identity; and to do this in a new country that had burst on the scene only in 1870 and since then had been undergoing explosive social, economic, political and cultural changes. In some real sense, German Jews were working out the implications of two new identities—what it meant to be German and what it meant to be Jewish. The result was a unique cultural creation, that of “German Judaism.” It was this new amalgam, just coming to a sort of maturity, that was felled by the Nazis. The true character and significance of what the German Jews created can never be fully understood because it was stopped unnaturally, in mid-stream as it were, by the triumph of Nazism. Yet even its brief life was long enough for us to adduce something of its essence and dynamic.

Brenner’s study proceeds in three parts, corresponding to the three stages he perceives in the development of this new German-Jewish culture. The first stage has to do with the emergence of modern Jewish culture in the period of the late 18th and early 19th century. This period was shaped, of course, by the struggle over Emancipation. The radical legal changes that the process of Emancipation entailed for Jews provoked a major transformation of Jewish self-identity; that is, of what it meant to participate in Judaism. From being a rather clearly demarcated, distinct and semi-autonomous social entity, Judaism now became for many Jews a sort of liberal religious confession. Jewish institutional structures emerged with a corresponding new sense of mission—to promote an appreciation on the part of both Jews and non-Jews for Jewish “culture.” As Brenner states, “German Jews selected certain aspects of the rich Jewish heritage and integrated them into modern European cultures, as expressed in the realms of scholarship, art and literary fiction. The result was the formation of a new tradition...” (p. 12). The intellectual background for the formation of this new Judaic cultural tradition was provided by the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums*. What remained of classical Judaic religious life was commemorated in the Moorish-style Temples and the abbreviated German “prayerbooks” of the Reform movement.

The second stage is marked for Brenner by the emergence of the Zionist movement among German Jews of the 1890s. Zionism marks a sort of reorientation, a return to a sense of Jewish difference and distinctiveness. To be sure, the bulk of German Jews looked at Zionism with suspicion, if not outright hostility. After all, they had spent the better part of their lives demonstrating that Jews were not essentially different from other Germans. But, Brenner argues, a core of intellectuals emerged who began to think of Judaism and Jewish culture (even within Germany) in new terms. For them, Zionism was taken not so much in its political sense (the establishment of a Jewish homeland) as in its cultural sense (the revitalization of Judaism and the Jewish self). Artists associated with this German Zionism, for example, felt themselves called to explore how modern artistic modes of expression could be used to articulate specifically Jewish national themes. This shift, Brenner argues, marked a sea-change in the focus of Jewish intellectual life. Rather than focusing on the past, as did the *Wissenschaft*, Jewish intellectuals were now looking to the future, struggling to find an authentic way to shape a new, secular Jewish culture in Germany.

The third phase was ushered in by World War I and its immediate aftermath. On the one hand, German Jews felt they had now achieved acceptance in German society; they were after all fighting as equals in the trenches alongside their non-Jewish comrades. On the other hand, many had in this war their first real, and often stark, encounters with rabid, and rising, anti-Semitism. In addition, many had the occasion for the first time in their lives to confront the traditional Jews of Poland and East Europe. For some it was like seeing real Judaism for the first time and they found a certain attractiveness in the self-certainty and spiritual “purity” of their eastern brethren. Others, to the contrary, were shocked and even repelled by the superstitious and primitiveness of these alien “Ostjuden.” In either case, this encounter with the still traditional Judaism of East Europe, combined with the disheartening fact of increasing anti-Semitism of post-war Germany, provoked a transformation of German Jewish culture in the years after the war. It was at this juncture that the various streams of indigenous modern German Judaism, of East European spirituality, of Zionism and of reaction to anti-Semitism came together to form the remarkably vibrant Jewish intellectual and artistic culture of the Weimar period. So powerful were the forces behind this effervescence that it carried on well into the Nazi period.

The bulk of Brenner’s book is a careful and sensitive review of the initiatives and accomplishments of the Weimar culture enterprise. The review is divided into three broad areas: institutional, educational and cultural (literature, the fine arts, language).

In each case, the interest is not evaluative or polemical but descriptive. But beyond description, Brenner wants to help us feel the human drama of the German Jews’ struggle to create a sense of self-identity in the midst of forces pushing and pulling in various directions simultaneously. This is an ambitious project and Brenner succeeds sufficiently to make this part of the book compelling reading. The results nonetheless are uneven. At times, this larger purpose emerges with clarity, at others the descriptions become so focused on the subject at hand that we lose sight of the larger issues at stake. Maybe this is a function of the fact that we are simply too close yet to the problems and struggles of the Jews of Weimar Germany. In many ways we are caught ourselves in the ambiguities of the same struggle. I at least found it hard to read many of the chapters without thinking about (a) how similar our own struggles and conclusions are as modern American Jews and (b) how it all ended.

At the very end of the book Brenner invites us to speculate on “how this story might have continued in a pluralistic and democratic society.” There is, of course, no answer but the question is a good one anyway. The process was far from played out when it came to its unnatural end and had it been allowed to continue, it may well have continued its productive and provocative existence. As Brenner points out at the end, while the renaissance in Jewish culture that occurred in Weimar Germany was a particular response to specific circumstances in one place at one time, the challenge it was addressing was far wider and is far from over. After putting down the book, one can’t help but feel that in many subtle ways we in North America of the 1990s are ourselves still writing the continuation of that story. It is a tribute to this book that we can now begin to make that connection.

Peter Haas is a professor of religion at Vanderbilt University and a contributing editor.

The monsters sing in the showers,
cleanliness superior to Cyklon B and
God, the heaps of grinning gold
and glorious hair the bellies pillowing
their crimson rods.

When they are old
the beasts will not forget
the joy, the power, the youth,
the lust, the shock of plowing slaves
unwilling fields, and fears of futures
buried, fertilized, in rot.

—Richard Sherwin

Mendelssohn, Reason and Religion

Moses Mendelssohn and the Enlightenment
by Allan Arkush
Albany: State University of New York Press

A Review Essay
by Earle J. Coleman

Arkush's clean and revealing analysis focuses on Mendelssohn's synthesis of the philosophy of Leibniz and Wolff with Judaism and, more generally, on his union of rationalism and Judaism. Mendelssohn's defense of belief in the afterlife is representative of his numerous attempts to verify religious doctrines through reason. His several considerations include a psychological appeal: "Nature has not instilled us with the desire for eternal felicity in vain." Of course, a critic might condemn this as mere wishful thinking. Mendelssohn also argues that humans need an afterlife to avoid stagnation (i.e., to grow more perfect and virtuous). After all, in their earthly lives they are unable to reach the established goals for them by God. Naturally, a critic could charge that talk about goals established by God begs the question. The atomist Epicurus taught that humans need not fear death since their atoms disperse after they die. Thus, individuals do not persist to suffer any pains whatsoever. But Mendelssohn asks if there is anything more frightening to a soul than his annihilation. He also reasons that unless there is a future life one cannot reconcile certain cases of suffering with divine providence.

Accepting human happiness as an ideal, Mendelssohn developed an eudemonic argument to the effect that immortality is essential to further human progress toward happiness. From the idea of constant advancement, he concluded that there is no hell (i.e., permanent state of punishment) in the afterlife. Eventually, the suffering of even the worst souls ends and they move toward perfection and happiness. Some Christians have also denied the existence of Hell. They ask, for example, why an infinitely compassionate being would condemn a finite creature to hell for all eternity. No matter what the transgression, parents sometimes forgive a child; is God less merciful? Immanuel Kant believed that if humans are to achieve the *summum bonum* (highest moral good) or the union of virtue and happiness, it must occur in a future life. Kant, however, was careful to point out that this line of thinking did not constitute a philosophical (i.e., theoretical) proof; instead, it exhibits the practical reason that animates the moral life. Having considered psychological and theolog-

ical grounds for believing in immortality, Mendelssohn did not ignore political considerations. To illustrate, he recognized that belief in an afterlife can move one to sacrifice his own life for society. Arkush, however, rightly points out that the very same belief can be a premise in an argument for the state's right to demand self-sacrifice.

Concerning the salvation of the Gentiles, Mendelssohn declares, "...all the inhabitants of the earth are destined to felicity; and the means of obtaining it are as widespread as mankind itself, as charitably dispensed as the means of warding off hunger and other natural needs." As a man of reason, Mendelssohn finds it unreasonable to think that Gentiles should be blamed for their ignorance of Noahide laws. Regarding primitive people, Mendelssohn observes that even the simplest human "...hears and sees the all-vivifying power of the Deity everywhere—in every sunrise, in every rain that falls, in every flower that blossoms and in every lamb that grazes in the meadow and rejoices in its own existence." Apparently, his claim is that aesthetic experience renders religious truth accessible to everyone. In any case, Mendelssohn's approach is preferable to one prominent Christian response to the problem of how to justify the salvation of non-Christians. The doctrine of the anonymous Christian declares that, for example, a Hindu woman who is loving unacquainted with Christ but leads a loving Christ-like life can attain salvation because she is an anonymous Christian (i.e., a Christian who is unaware of her status as such). Obviously, one problem with this proposal is that a Hindu can point to a Christian, who is unfamiliar with Krishna, and assert that he is an anonymous Hindu.

Mendelssohn argued that the axioms of ethics are as demonstrably certain as those of mathematics. Kant's categorical imperative said (1) one should always act on a maxim that he was willing to universalize and (2) one should never treat an individual, including oneself, as a mere means to an end. Mendelssohn's "universal practical maxim" states: "Make you own and your fellow man's inner and outward condition, in due proportion, as perfect as you can." Regarding this last formulation, a critic can ask about the status of women. Should this be viewed as carping, one can ask about animal rights. Scholars usually interpret Kant's imperative to embrace all rational beings—including any rational animals that there may be. For Mendelssohn, "...no system of morality can exist without the expectation of an infinite future..." Here immortality becomes a motive for moral action. If we reject immortality "...the loss of our life entails the loss of all existence, life ceases to be a means [to the end of an afterlife]; then its preservation becomes the object, the only aim of our wishes." The traditional Confucian has a different emphasis; when asked about the

afterlife, he replies, "Worry about living a good life in the here and now; the afterlife will take care of itself." Furthermore, Kant argues that the consequences can never be an incentive to practice the moral life; instead, one acts according to principle because duty dictates that it is the right thing to do (i.e., it is intrinsically correct). Still, Kant does link immortality with ethics, but his belief in an afterlife amounts to a necessary postulate rather than the conclusion of a proof.

When ethical issues begin to involve more than a small number of individuals, social-political philosophy arises. Thus, Mendelssohn raised telling questions for those who opposed separation of church and state. For example, he asked: What should church members do if the state launches an unjust war? To him, "...the smallest privilege which you publicly grant to those who share your religion and convictions is to be called an *indirect bribe* and the smallest liberty you withhold from dissidents an *indirect punishment*." While Mendelssohn was a champion of human rights to liberty of conscience, his fear of the social effects of atheism led him to favor limits on atheists' free expression of their views. In any case, as much as Kant and Mendelssohn differ philosophically, Kant praises him for expressing the idea of liberty of conscience.

Mendelssohn's defense of belief in the afterlife is representative of his numerous attempts to verify religious doctrines through reason.

Mendelssohn's rationalism was no more evident than when he tried to demonstrate that the teachings of the Old Testament were exactly the same as those of reason. Fundamentalists might agree on such a sameness but they do not try to establish their beliefs through philosophical argumentation; and philosophers, such as Spinoza, disagree and criticize the text. Arkush asserts that any difference between the teachings of the rabbis and what reason teaches has quite evaporated in Mendelssohn's thought. Not surprisingly, Konrad Feireis accused Mendelssohn of being a deist rather than a believing Jew since Jews believe in more than what one can rationally demonstrate. More generally, the mystical strain in every religion is testimony to the fact that the rational does not exhaust all of spirituality. Finally, one might have expected that Kant's critique of philosophy would have served as a safeguard against undue optimism toward the prospects for metaphysical inquiries. Having criticized and rejected the traditional arguments for the existence of God, Kant stated that he had destroyed metaphysics to make room for faith. He argued convincingly that it is foolhardy to apply reason

beyond its province, to extend it from physics to metaphysics. Mendelssohn replied that, in the face of philosophical uncertainty, we should rely on common sense. Although he did not define common sense, by it he sometimes meant an appeal to direct experience: "Look, brother, the new day! How beautiful must be he who made this!" For Mendelssohn, this kind of outburst had all the force of an irrefutable demonstration. Kant argued that no experience could go beyond itself to establish its own transcendental ground; in short, experiences present appearances or phenomena, not noumena or things in themselves. Mendelssohn acknowledged the critical powers of the "all-crushing Kant" who attacked the capacity of reason to address God, the self and immortality. Still, contemporary scholars believe that Mendelssohn clung to the belief that all knowledge of God is founded on rational proofs. As the years passed, Mendelssohn showed a diminished confidence in the power of speculative reason. In addition, because miracles might be sheer trickery, he rejected them as evidence for the truth of religion. Against traditional Judaism, Mendelssohn rejected the notion of an exclusive and essential revelation of the truths of religion for he wondered what would become of those countries that had never heard of such a revelation. By the end of his life, Mendelssohn saw that the traditional arguments for the existence of God were less than cogent. Nevertheless, unlike Kant, Mendelssohn remained confident in the resiliency of reason to address the objections of the skeptics.

Critics of Mendelssohn have had their day. To his belief that God resided in the heavens, a more sophisticated Spinoza replied, "Moses went up the mountain, which he certainly need not have done if he could have conceived of God as omnipresent." When Spinoza and his disciples expressed skepticism concerning the Israelite prophets' assertion that they had been in direct communion with God, Mendelssohn simply observed that revelation is miraculous but this proved to be no answer since Spinoza and his followers denied the possibility of miracles. Indeed, as noted earlier, Mendelssohn himself had reservations about appealing to miracles to support religious convictions. As is true of nearly any rationalist other than Spinoza, one can fault Mendelssohn for inconsistencies (i.e., his failure to rationally justify Divine impartiality with the election of Israel). Ultimately, Mendelssohn's rationalism became sophistic. As Arkush says of Mendelssohn, "The case he made for Judaism was in crucial respects more rhetorical than real." His system is an object lesson, demonstrating that no matter how much reason and religion overlap, they can never fully coalesce. In addition, he forcefully advanced the ideal of separation of church and state, which Jews

and non-Jews cherish in contemporary, pluralistic societies.

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Mordecai Kaplan and American Jewish Orthodoxy

A Modern Heretic and a Traditional Community: Mordecai M. Kaplan, Orthodoxy and American Judaism
by Jeffrey S. Gurock and Jacob J. Schacter
New York:
Columbia University Press

A Review Essay
by Kimmy Caplan

This book unfolds an important and yet untold significant chapter in the life of Mordecai M. Kaplan (1881-1983), arguably the most interesting religious figure in the history of 20th-century American Judaism. The scholarly works that have been already written about Kaplan thus far focus on the second part of his exceptionally long life, in which he founded the Reconstructionist movement and was recognized as a provocative and controversial religious philosopher and leader.

The book presented by Gurock—a prolific scholar who has devoted his whole career to researching the history of American Jewish Orthodoxy—and Schacter, the rabbi of the Jewish Center in which Kaplan served as its first spiritual leader, explores the first part of Kaplan's life: his East European origins, immigration to American and childhood in the Lower East Side of New York, his Orthodox home and environment, his formative years in schools and yeshivas, his higher and rabbinic education, and his ongoing struggle with Orthodoxy. Therefore, once and for all we can understand the life span of Kaplan and comprehend many unclear aspects of the latter part of his life as well. We also learn a great deal about the Lower East Side and the Upper West Side's Orthodox elite, "Kehilath Jeshurun" (KJ), Kaplan's relationship with the RaMaZ, the "Jewish Center" (JC), numerous new insights regarding the institutional-political history of American Jewish Orthodoxy, and much more.

This well researched and well written biography of Kaplan's earlier years is based on an exceptionally impressive amount of various primary sources, such as congregational minute books, journals, newspaper

articles, personal interviews, Kaplan's diaries, personal papers, sermons, notebooks and many other materials. The authors are well aware of the methodological problems when attempting to assess the validity and reliability of these sources, as can be seen in the text and more so, at times, in the footnotes. Therefore, it is an important document for any scholar writing a biography of a controversial character such as Kaplan. It should be noted, however, that a methodological problem that is not directly raised is that this chapter in Kaplan's life is based on his relationship with various characters, all part of New York's Orthodox elite. It remains unclear how much of the events described were made known to the average Orthodox Jew in New York and to what extent they were discussed by the laity.

The chapters of the book are based on the chronology of the events as they took place, notwithstanding certain digressions that are, at times, irritating. In the first chapter, we learn about Kaplan's youth, schooling and private teachers within the Orthodox circles of the Lower East Side of New York, especially those associated with Rabbi Jacob Joseph and some of the characteristics of this specific circle.

The second chapter describes, in detail, the complex relationship of this Orthodox circle with the Jewish Theological Seminary founded in 1886. The most important conclusion is that this institute was regarded by many Orthodox Jews, although not by all, as an Orthodox-oriented institution whose goal was to train students to become "Ameicanized" Orthodox rabbis who understood the needs of the New World Orthodox community. (These findings support C. Liebman's "Orthodoxy in Nineteenth Century America," *Tradition*, 6[2], 1964, pp. 132-141.) This discussion teaches us a great deal about Kaplan's contemporaries and teachers at the Seminary, as they were perceived and valued in his and others' eyes, the curriculum at the Seminary, Kaplan's academic studies and degrees, and some of the personalities who formed the elite of New York's Orthodox Jews during this time.

In 1903, Kaplan graduated from the Seminary and was elected to serve as the rabbi of congregation KJ in Yorkville, New York. He remained in this position for six years; however, as we learn later in the book, his relationship with this congregation and some of its leaders continued for many years. It is in the beginning of this chapter that the reader grasps the central questions of the book: When did Kaplan's doubts and problems with Orthodoxy develop and why did he not openly express his true beliefs earlier? Why did Kaplan continue to live a double life long after he had drifted from Orthodoxy? The thrust of the argument is that even though Kaplan began to drift from Orthodoxy no later than during the first decade of the 20th century, while serving as

rabbi at KJ he deliberately remained unclear, and did not expose his opinion early and publicly until 1920.

The fourth chapter traces Kaplan's activities and writings for most of the second decade of the 20th century, showing how he criticized Orthodoxy and most of its fundamental beliefs on the one hand and how he was perceived on the other. The authors offer several explanations for this phenomenon, which we will return to later. The most interesting part of this chapter is that for all these years Kaplan was unclear about his most serious reservations regarding Jewish Orthodoxy he was still very active in Orthodox circles. The question remains: What did Kaplan have to lose by clearly expressing his doubts and criticism?

Part of the answer appears in the fifth chapter where we learn about Kaplan's financial and other considerations when accepting the position of rabbi at JC. From the conclusion of the book we learn that Kaplan believed he would "convert" all American Jews to his form of Judaism and, thus for years to come, he never burned his bridges with Orthodoxy. In this chapter, we learn more about Kaplan's relationship with some of the Upper West Side Orthodox elite, especially those most involved in founding the JC—Joseph Cohen and William Fischman. The second part of this chapter discusses his enthusiasm about Marxism and his first clearly anti-Orthodox opinions, which caused much tension between him and JC leaders.

The next chapter opens with the uproar that some of Kaplan's articles (published in 1920), in which he challenges Orthodoxy, raised in Orthodox circles. It is hard to understand why a similar reaction did not come years earlier after a series of other publications by Kaplan. The answer is that in 1920 Kaplan came out against Orthodox religious practices and beliefs and called for a new trend in Judaism. The explanation offered by the authors is that Orthodoxy is most concerned with a Jew's religious observance, not so much his beliefs and thoughts. In other words, as long as a person holds to an Orthodox way of life his thoughts would not cause him to be excluded from the community. However, once the way of life and observance was challenged, the opinions serve as additional proof against the "heretic." This scandal opens a battle in the JC between Kaplan and those who wished to terminate him. Interestingly, Kaplan had strong support among JC members and the battles end with a split in the JC, with the election of Rabbi Leo Jung as the JC's new rabbi and with pressure on the Jewish Theological Seminary to fire Kaplan. Notwithstanding, Kaplan was asked to return to the JC in the late 1920s and several proposals were made to merge the JC with Kaplan's Society for the Advancement of Judaism. Ultimately, these negotiations failed.

The seventh and last chapter takes the

reader into the 1940s at which time Kaplan retired from the Seminary. He continued to be very influential in American Jewish educational circles including Orthodox Jews, congregations and institutions who did not adhere to the excommunication (*herem*) of Kaplan during an Orthodox convention in 1945—where the burning of the prayerbook he edited occurred. The dialogue between American Jewish Orthodoxy and Kaplan continued on different levels, such as Zionist conferences and public forums where some Orthodox rabbis like Lookstein and Rackman appeared together with Kaplan and even acknowledged some of his contributions to American Judaism—not without disagreeing with his understanding of the Jewish faith and practice.

Notwithstanding all the positive aspects of this work, I would like to share some of my misgivings. The most fundamental problem is with what is missing in the book, primarily several comparative contexts of discussion that leave the reader confused with any attempt to place this story in several possible historical perspectives.

When writing about a person who undergoes a major transformation in his life—similar in scope to persons who decide to "return to the faith" (*hozrim biteshuvah*)—though different in many ways, one cannot ignore his/her psychological profile. (See, for example, J. Aviad, *Return to Judaism: Religious Renewal in Israel*, Chicago, 1993; B. Beit-Hallahmi, *Despair and Deliverance: Private Salvation in Contemporary Israel*, New York, 1992. Relevant and insightful material also can be found in psychological works on conversion.) These personal aspects help shed light on the process an individual undergoes, none of which are discussed in this book. Nevertheless, the authors allude to certain possible issues such as Kaplan's guilt feelings (p. 36) and his double life (p. 52). It seems as though Kaplan's guilt partially explains his double life for more than a decade. Did Kaplan find it difficult to disconnect himself from his former way of life—a phenomenon we know about from those who return to the faith?

From the various instances in which Kaplan had the choice to either clearly declare his opposition to Orthodoxy, and officially part from it, or be ambiguous and remain within the boundaries of Orthodoxy, he chose the latter. These careful and conscious choices do not appear to be due to personal distress but rather to a combination of politically and ideologically calculated decisions. Kaplan is projected in this book as a master of careful wording, completely conscious of how and what should be said from different platforms or pulpits to various audiences, or in discussions with individuals. The suggestion raised in the conclusion that this calculated approach is a result of Kaplan's belief that he will eventually persuade American Jews to adopt his

ideas seems to be somewhat simplistic.

This book leaves us without any information about how much Kaplan's parents knew, if at all, or about his personal turmoil. Furthermore, we do not know anything about Kaplan's relationship with his wife, his children, his sister or his brother-in-law, Rabbi Phineas Israeli. What were the relationships in his family and did any differences of opinion exist at any time? And most interestingly, what did Kaplan observe in his home throughout this period—did he remain a fully practicing Orthodox Jew and, if not, to what extent? For example, did Kaplan observe the Sabbath and dietary laws, and did his wife observe family purity laws? Does this aspect of his life change in accordance with his "heretical" opinions or not? Information on Kaplan's personal life would probably give us a unique point of view, and one is left to wonder why it is completely overlooked.

This book lacks comparisons or references to well researched topics in Jewish history that would contribute to our understanding of both this case and others like it. This omission is most noticeable in two of the most central aspects of this work: heresy and Orthodoxy. Any discussion of heresy within the Jewish context immediately raises the association to Baruch Spinoza of Amsterdam, a name that surprisingly does not appear once in this book. Spinoza harbored heretical thoughts for several years and arrived at the conclusion that *mizvot* should be understood primarily as historical pillars of Judaism without many practical implications. He stopped observing *mizvot* for six months before being excommunicated by the rabbinic authorities of Amsterdam. Even though there is a debate as to why Spinoza was excommunicated, it seems clear that the rabbinic criticism of Spinoza related to his acts rather than his thoughts. Similarly, Uriel Da Costa was excommunicated due to his rejection of the Oral Torah and the basic tenets of rabbinic Judaism. (See Y. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Marrano of Reason*, Princeton, NJ, 1989, esp. pp. 3-15; **Idem**, *Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Adventures of Immanence*, Princeton, NJ, 1989.) Comparing the case of Kaplan with that of Spinoza, even though the social, historical and religious context is completely different, could prove fruitful and thought-provoking.

The importance of a person's thoughts or acts is most significant when examining his/her relationship with Orthodoxy as well. Some of the criticism against Kaplan and the calls to remove him from Orthodox circles relate to his thoughts while others focus on his opinions on traditional Jewish rituals. Interestingly, his personal observance is not raised once in the sources quoted in this book as a reason for his rejection, unlike in other cases concerning the history of Orthodoxy. Furthermore, Kaplan was excommu-

NOTEWORTHY BOOKS

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.

- Revelation Restored: Divine Writ and Critical Responses.* By David Weiss Halivni. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- The Making of Israeli Militarism.* By Uri Ben-Eliezer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Beyond Lament: Poets of the World Bearing Witness to the Holocaust.* Edited by Marguerite M. Striar. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Paying for the Past: The Struggle Over Reparations for Surviving Victims of the Nazi Terror.* By Christian Pross. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- The Tribal Basis of American Life: Racial, Religious and Ethnic Groups in Conflict.* Edited by Murray Friedman and Nancy Isserman. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers (Greenwood Publishing Group).
- Women of the Holocaust.* Edited by Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Past Imperatives: Studies in the History and Theory of Ethics.* By Louis E. Newman. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Rethinking Modern Judaism: Ritual, Commandment, Community.* By Arnold M. Eisen. University of Chicago Press.
- Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women.* By Chava Weissler. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889-1985.* By Pamela S. Nadell. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam.* By Miriam Bodian. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Jewish Poet in Fatimid Egypt: Moses Dar'I's Hebrew Collection.* By Leon J. Weinberger. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.
- Soldier of Peace: The Life of Yitzhak Rabin.* By Dan Kursman. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.
- The Mediterranean Society: A Challenge for Islam, Judaism and Christianity.* By the European Commission. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Signposts on the Way of Torah.* By Jacob Neusner. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Martin Buber: The Hidden Dialogue.* By Dan Avnon. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Entering the High Holy Days: A Complete Guide to the History, Prayers and Themes.* By Reuven Hammer. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.
- Here I Am: Contemporary Jewish Stories From Around the World.* Edited by Marsha Lee Berkman and Elaine Marcus Starkman. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.
- Israel and the Bomb.* By Avner Cohen. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Athens in Jerusalem: Classical Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew.* By Yaacov Shavit. Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Hasidim Reappraised.* Edited by Ada Rapoport-Albert. Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Jewish Hymnography: A Literary History.* By Leon J. Weinberger. Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- The Brink of Peace: The Israeli-Syrian Negotiations.* By Itamar Rabinovich. Princeton University Press.
- Romanian Nationalists and the Holocaust: The Political Exploitation of Unfounded Rescue Accounts.* By Randolph L. Braham.
- The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology.* By Michael Fishbane. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Return from Exile: One Women's Journey Back to Judaism.* By Carol Matzkin Orsborn. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Writer of Heaven and Earth: Rabbi Meshullam Feibush Heller of Zbarozh and the Rise of Hasidism in Eastern Galicia.* By Miles Krassen. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- The Fate of the European Jews, 1939-1945: Continuity or Continuity?* Edited by Jonathan Frankel. New York: Orford University Press.
- From Catastrophe to Power: Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel.* By Idith Zertal. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Modern Judaism.* By Dan Cohn-Sherbok. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- The Road to Auschwitz: Fragment of a Life.* By Hedi Fried. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Jewish Days: A Book of Jewish Life and Culture Around the Year.* By Francine Klagsbrun. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Jews for Sale? Nazi-Jewish Negotiations, 1933-1945.* By Yehuda Bauer. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- The Politics of Torah: The Jewish Political Tradition and the Founding of Agudat Israel.* By Alan L. Mittleman. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations.* Edited by Ronald L. Nettle. Langhorne, PA: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- German-Jewish History in Modern Times, Volume I.* Edited by Michael A. Meyer. New York: Columbia University Press.
- China Dreams: Growing Up Jewish in Tientsin.* By Isabelle Maynard. Iowa City: The University of Iowa Press.
- Against All Hope: Resistance in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 1938-1945.* By Hermann Langbein. New York: Continuum Books.

nicated many years after leaving Orthodoxy, and those who did so could have found support for this action in many of Kaplan's acts and publications before the publication of his prayerbook.

Finally, the vast majority of Orthodox rabbis and leaders have been, and remain, very sensitive and suspicious of possible heretics and other "problematic" individuals. Unlike other cases where very aggressive tactics are employed against possible "heretics," in this case we find the exact opposite: an ongoing, at times conscious and intentional, disregard of Kaplan's opinions and the changes he wanted within Orthodoxy. Examining this aspect, as well as several others, within the wider context of Jewish Orthodoxy would enable us to gain a better understanding of the unique aspects of American Jewish Orthodoxy.

Another related aspect that rises from this work is the possible role of Kaplan as a border case between Conservative and Orthodox Judaism, which helped both movements define themselves in the first decades of the 20th century. Throughout the fourth chapter, the authors tried to prove that the Orthodox elite did not see Kaplan as their enemy. If they did perceive him that way, it would be hard to believe he was invited to speak at Yeshiva College (YC). This claim does not consider that Kaplan may have

been used as a pawn in the generational conflict within Orthodoxy at the time. For example, if Fischel supported any changes in Orthodoxy (p. 84), in addition to others who sponsored the Seminary, what would be more obvious than seeing Kaplan as an excellent model of a modern American Orthodox rabbi trained at the Seminary? If the answer is yes, inviting him to speak at YC would be a good choice. Also, they may have thought that Kaplan had no option but to be associated with the Seminary because a more "modernized" Orthodox opinion, which they may have wanted to develop, did not exist. We also remain curious as to the reaction, or lack thereof, of East European Orthodox rabbis who supported Revel, such as Moshe S. Sivitz, when they heard about Kaplan being invited to speak at YC.

Kaplan's struggle with American Jewish Orthodoxy enables us to further understand the dynamics of the defensive and rejective characteristics of Orthodoxy, which has been part of a trend since its beginning, and how they develop over time. This aspect also could have been developed by the authors of this book and would have taught us more about the diversity of American Jewish Orthodoxy. Furthermore, the intensity of the reaction toward Kaplan also must have helped to create certain boundaries between different groups within Orthodoxy

as is obvious from the sources quoted although not discussed in depth. These aspects of European Orthodoxy have received scholarly attention and, therefore, lay the ground for some interesting comparisons.

On a structural level, it might have been beneficial to devote a specific chapter to the years 1920-21 when some main events occurred that led to a new relationship between Kaplan and New York's Orthodox elite. When faced with a series of important events, which take place in a limited period and become a focal point of change, it would be helpful to describe what took place at the same time on different fronts.

Notwithstanding the criticism, the field has been enriched by a fascinating work that cannot be overlooked in any attempt to understand American Jewish Orthodoxy in the 20th century. The lack of comparative discussion is a pity for it could have greatly contributed to the reader's understanding with additional fruit for thought. This remains an important task in the attempt yet to be made to write the history of American Jewish Orthodoxy. (See C.S. Liebman, "Studying Orthodox Judaism in the United States: A Review Essay," *American Jewish History*, 80[3], 1990: pp. 415-425, esp. pp. 415-418.)

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Nonprofit organization
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Menorah Review is published by the Center for Judaic Studies of Virginia Commonwealth University and distributed worldwide. Comments and manuscripts are welcome. Address all correspondence to Center for Judaic Studies, P.O. Box 842025, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA 23284-2025.

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