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For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

The Problem of Pain

Responses of Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature by David Kraemer Cambridge: Oxford University Press

> A Review Essay by Earle J. Coleman

Perhaps it is because humans are not sufficiently religious that they dwell on the problem of evil rather than the problem of the good. The latter arises when one asks: Why do glorious sunsets, delectable strawberries and Shakespeare exist? In any case, Professor Kraemer sets forth a comprehensive and learned study of the responses to suffering in classical rabbinic writings. Drawing from Clifford Geertz, Kraemer agrees that suffering poses a problem of meaning. Therefore, one should not ask about ways to escape pain but about how to make sense of it.

Kraemer presents a full range of rabbinic responses to pain—beginning with the most common explanation of suffering as a form of punishment for transgression of the Divine will, whether by the individual or the community. Clearly, traditionalists who recognize only punishment as a justification for suffering face various criticisms. For example, punishment does not seem to be a relevant justification for the suffering of infants or animals. Critics further assert that if punishment is God's response to evildoers, then God has a poor aim for the lightning bolt often hits the righteous individual instead of the sinner. When the Bavli rebels, it repudiates the view, which originated in the Torah, that one should interpret pain and death as punishment for sin. This rebellion is motivated by all the apparent exceptions to the supposed constant conjunction of sin and punishment. Therefore, the Bavli proposes, for example, that when good individuals die prematurely, it is because God wishes to protect the genuinely holy from various agonies. To those who suggest that death is a favor by which God relieves the struggles of good individuals, Kraemer responds, "...it may be good that the righteous have such rest. But death is a very serious means to achieve it."

Some Jews came to believe that God made them suffer precisely because He loved them. In short, they interpreted their suffering positively as a sign of their covenantal destiny. After all, God warned Abraham that his people would first be oppressed and only then would they flourish (Gen. 15:13-14). The argument was that God would not bother to punish a people if he did not greatly care for them; therefore, the punished most represent a select people. And Proverbs (3:12) warns, "For whom the Lord loves he rebukes." The notion that those in the most pain are closest to God is widely held, appearing also in the writings of the Christian mystic Teresa of Avila, who once complained to God about her sufferings and trials. God replied, "That is how I treat all my friends." To which she responded, "That's the reason that you have so few." This tradition of complaint is common in biblical books and notably in the prophecy of Habakkuk.

Some thinkers proposed that suffering was necessary to cultivate the individual, to achieve what one contemporary philosopher of religion calls "soul-building." Accordingly, if no one ever lied, how could honesty be a virtue? Rather than emphasize such self-development, others understood suffering as vicarious atonement for the sins of others. As Kraemer asks, "How else can the undeniable suffering of the righteous, side-by-side with the comfort of the wicked, be understood?" Of course, Philo could counter, "...it does not follow that if persons are considered good by us they are really such." Kraemer states that Christians inter-

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preted Jesus' suffering as atonement for the sins of the many. By contrast, in Hebrews (chapters 7 and 9), there is no intervention; instead, individuals must suffer and effect their own atonement. This sort of distinctin between Christians and Jews is a universal motif in world religions and sometimes appears in a single tradition; thus, early Buddhism taught that one attains nirvana through self-effort alone, and later Buddhism spoke of Bodhisattvas (spiritual beings) who could provide assistance.

One common biblical answer to the problem of evil involved positing a future life—but typically not an afterlife—in which inequities are reconciled. There are also those who believed that God would resurrect the righteous when this world perishes and that judgment will occur, ultimately and perfectly, in the world-to-come. Without the prospect of such a realm, many found it impossible to justify, for example, the suffering of innocents in the present world. Also defending a world-to-come, Immanuel Kant argued that humans have a moral obligation to do whatever they can to effect the union of virtue and happiness (i.e., to promote happiness among those who are good and deserving of it). Since the present life is short, Kant reasons that immortality is necessary for humans, working in concert with God, to achieve their sublime end.

Concerning the thesis that suffering is a test, Kraemer holds that any such test would tell an omniscient being nothing he did not know already. Of course, the test functions as an exercise for the participant but it is hardly obvious that all such so-called tests render individuals better persons. Despite the claim that God never gives one more than s/he can bear, suicide statistics seem to suggest that some tests are too severe. Therefore, appeals to punishment as a test remain decidedly controversial.

Kraemer observes that in the so-called halakhic midrashim, "Punishment is not measure-for-measure; it is less than justice would call for. God, in other words, is more merciful than just." Of course, this raises such questions as: Isn't God perfect in all his attributes, including justice? Can God be greater with respect to any one of his attributes? Examining the tension between God's justice and God's mercy, Kraemer

explains that God's mercy seems to fall on even genuinely wicked individuals—except for extreme cases—and this undermines one's appreciation of both traits. And later Kraemer raises Abraham's question, ...whatever the sins of Israel, their merits still put them above all other nations. What justice is there, therefore, in their present condition?" Commenting on the Bavli, Kraemer remarks: "To some extent, the system of balances, of appropriate reward and punishment, cannot be assured—there is something arbitrary in the whole system that does not permit confidence." Of course, it is dubious that human freedom could survive if God punished one's sins immediately and rewarded good deeds just as swiftly. Free will, then, would appear to require a haphazard or unpredictable distribution of suffering and happiness. Relating suffering to human freedom, some rabbis held that much misery is not punishment from God but the consequence of humans abusing their divinely bestowed gift of free will.

When God describes creation as "very good" (Gen. 1:31), he is referring to the entire universe, which he alone can see at once. Humans find fault with it because they can only see certain particulars and never the whole picture. Thus, stories in the Bavli make the point that injustice is often merely apparent owing to human ignorance. According to the mosaic thesis, were humans able to behold the totality, they would agree with God's pronouncement. But critics ask, if additional knowledge allows one to see a supposed evil as an actual good, may not additional knowledge allow one to see a supposed good as an actual evil? Ralph Waldo Emerson finds that polarities secure the whole, "For everything you have missed, you have gained something else; and for everything you gain, you lose something." In My Name is Asher Lev, a character exclaims that God's world is unfinished, the point being that it is premature for humans to criticize the universe. To the contrary, the celebrated atheist Bertrand Russell challenges any such model in which incontestably bad elements can somehow yield a good whole: "Each act of cruelty is eternally a part of the universe; nothing that happens later can make that act good rather than bad; or confer perfection on the whole of which it is a part.'

Suffering as a means to an end is a recurring theme in classical rabbinic literature; in the Tosefta, for example, suffering is a way to good because it effectively takes the place of sacrifice. Religious istorians submit that to eliminate sacrifices is to elevate a religion as when Hinduism moved from the horse sacrifice to an exclusively contemplative offering up of the animal. Viewing suffering as a means to catharsis, the Bavli teaches that suffering purifies one's sins and leads to freedom; thus, punishment does more than simply harm the individual. Again,

the author of 4 Maccabees presents suffering as an opportunity (i.e., a means to virtue, for pain can "make" a person, i.e., forge character). While this is surely true, unfortunately pain can also "break" a person (i.e., precipitate self-destruction).

Some scholars regard the Babylonian Talmud or Bavli as the definitive formulation of classical rabbinic Judaism. Among the classical rabbinic documents, it is only in the Bavli that the Talmudic sage prays, "Please Goddon't make me suffer." Kraemer speculates that the Bayli mentions truly minimal kinds of sufferings (putting one hand into one's pocket to take out three coins and coming out with only two) because it wants "to pay lip service to that demand [that suffering follows sin] while reducing its actual requirements as much as possible." The radical spirit of the text is apparent when one reads that suffering or death may occur without previous sin (Shab. 55a-b) or that such arbitrariness prompts each of several suffering rabbis to declare, "I want neither suffering nor reward! (Ber. 5a-b)"

The noncongnitivist is someone who concludes that there is no explanation for suffering; instead, s/he may find prayer more fruitful than intellection. Surely God's answer to Job is more experimental than intellectual. Moreover, as Martin Buber points out, even if one cannot comprehend the meaning of life, s/he can still embrace it. The Avot tradition, for example, allows that humans cannot understand the suffering of the righteous. But such a mystery thesis is acceptable, not as a beginning point but only after one has carefully weighed the varieties of theodicy. Josephus concedes that the explanation for the tribulations of Israel is that there is no explanation, for it is simply a divine decree. Some held that to inquire about the meaning of one's suffering was worse than futile and could lead a person astray from his faith. In short, they believed that to question suffering is to question God and to commit a moral error as well as an epistemological mistake. So some critics ask, "Who was Job to challenge God?" But others, like Rava, hold that a person is not culpable if he speaks from a state of distress. Wrestling with the problem of suffering sometimes provoked a despair that anticipates the "God is dead" theological movement of the 1960s. For example, Azariah, son of Oded the prophet, is interpreted to say, "In the future, days will come upon Israel in which there will be 'no God of truth,' [meaning] the attribute of justice will not be operating [in the world]." For Buber, however, the "eclipse of God" and the "obscuring of eternity" occurs not in God but between humans and God.

The long-standing and cross-cultural view, that evil represents God's absence from the world, appears in the Bavli as a response to the destruction of Jerusalem. According to Kraemer, the best explanation

for suffering is that God removed himself and permitted it. The text offers no explanation for why he did so. If evil is the privation of God, then it is not a production for which one can hold the divine responsible. Of course, the doctrine of omnipresence raises questions about how God can be absent from any spatial-temporal event or situation. Perhaps the most dramatic response to the problem of evil is to deny that it exists. Rather than affirm evil as the non-existence of God, one can reject the existence of evil altogether. Spinoza, for instance, insists that there is no evil in the world—only the subjective projections of humans. Certainly one could ask, "Even if evil is just a human imposition, isn't the fact that humans project evil upon the world itself evil?"

The prospects for a comprehensive understanding of suffering are not good since it is interwoven with life itself; and unless one grasps the meaning of life, only a deficient understanding of the meaning of suffering exists. From the Mishnah, which interprets suffering as punishment for sin, to the Bayli, which raises doubts about traditional proposals, one can approach the problem of suffering in terms of philosophical replies. Inasmuch as human beings are creatures of the heart and will as well as the intellect, no wonder intellectual solutions alone have not proved to be satisfying. This is because the suffering of the world is something humans must feel, not just analyze, something they must act on, not just observe: witness Buber's advice that one embrace life in all its perplexities. Responding to suffering is more complicated than philosophers might recognize because human beings are themselves more than philosophers.

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

Science and Religion: The Case of Judaism

Old Wine, New Flasks:
Reflections on Science and
Jewish Tradition
by Roald Hoffman and Shira
Schmidt
New York: W.H. Freeman & Co.
Rational Rabbis: Science and
Talmudic Culture
by Menahem Fisch
Bloomington: Indiana University
Press

A Review Essay by Peter J. Haas

response to the destruction of Jerusalem. The relationship between science and According to Kraemer, the best explanation religion has become a hot topic during the

last few years, spilling over into Jewish Studies as well. In many cases, unfortunately, studies of science and religion have turned out to be little more than pious attempts to reconcile some reading of the Bible with some current cosmological or astrophysical theory, what might be called the "Big Bang and Creation" genre. The two books before us are much welcomed exceptions. They each look at the relationship between science and Judaism in a much more sophisticated way, asking about the intellectual structures that Judaism and modern science share. Hoffman and Schmidt argue that it is the drive to determine how the world is put together and how it operates that forms the common bond between modern science and classical Judaism. This is so because the making of good halakhah depends on understanding the matter one is discussing. Fisch argues that it is the very workings of the scientific mind, its constant self-reflection and self-critique, that is also found in the Talmudic mind. Classical Judaism and modern science share not only an interest but an intellectual method. In the end, then, from somewhat different perspectives, both books come to the conclusion that modern science and Judaism, far from being antagonistic, are deeply compatible on the intellectual level.

Turning first to Old Wine, New Flasks, this book is actually the fortuitous outcome of a chance meeting between Nobel Laureate in Chemistry Roald Hoffman and Shira Leibowitz Schmidt, a former engineer who was working for the Rector of Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheba. The meeting occurred as Roald Hoffman arrived at Ben Gurion University in 1989 to receive an Honorary Doctor of Science degree. What Hoffman and Schmidt discovered in each other were kindred souls. Each was deeply aware of the poetry of science and technology, and each was profoundly convinced that this same poetry could be found in Judaism as well. Over time, they decided to collaborate in an effort to bring to a wider audience a sense of this shared wonder in modern science and Judaism. The result is this book.

One should be clear at the outset as to what this book is and what it is not. The title might give the impression that this is one more example of what I have called the "Big Bang and Creation" genre, albeit on a more modest scale, but this is not the case at all. What the book is about is some parallels in thought and logic around certain themes in both Judaism and in science—the nature of nature, for example, or the chemistry of writing Torah scrolls. One comes away with a new appreciation both of how "scientific" Judaism is; that is, of how deep a concern Judaism has with the details and mechanics of the physical world and of the poetry, almost spirituality, one can find through a "scientific" study of nature.

It is hard to describe the flavor of the book because of the oddly, and seductively poetic, way in which it is written. Let me try by giving an example. Chapter Five, entitled "The Flag That Came Out of the Blue," is written as a three act play, with a public lecture available during each intermezzo. I should say at this point that each chapter of the book is written in its own style: an exchange of letters, a court case or, as here, a play. This sort of playfulness infuses the book at all levels and makes reading it a kind of experience in its own way.

But back to my example. Chapter Five, as I said, includes a play and two intermezzi. The first act of the play has to do with the commandmentgiven through Moses at Sinai to wear fringed garments and proceeds through the subsequent rebellion of Korah. As the curtain comes down on the first act, the audience files out into the vestibule where there is a lecture available, given by Professor Azul ("blue") that deals with what can only be called the history of the color blue and its interrelationship with human society. Included is a scientific discussion of the molecular makeup of blue dye and the process for producing it. The lights blink and the audience returns to the play. The second act picks up the story of the Tallit by depicting a search for the original mollusk from which the Biblical dye was made. The central character is Rabbi Gershon Hanokh Leiner, the Radznyer Rebbe and his travels to the coast of Italy near Naples in the 19th century to find the "Hilazon," the animal identified by the Talmud as the source of the blood from which the original dye was manufactured. Involved in this act is also the German invention of the artificial dye, "Prussian blue." The curtain falls and the audience files out to the lecture of the second intermezzo. This is a long discussion of the spiritual meaning of the Tallit, bringing us back to Korah and adding the voices of Maimonides and Soloveitchik. We return to the play. The third and final act is centered around the foundation of the World Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 in which what is to become the Israeli flag is devolved out of the design of the Tallit (thus the "flag that came out of the blue"). The closing scene of the play is a discussion of the relation between religion and politics in Israel among a group of Israeli youth sitting in the lobby of the Basel Hotel, on an evening when Prime Minister Yitzkhak Rabin was scheduled to talk in Tel Aviv. One observant member of the group, a young Yeshiva student named Yigal, falls to show up.

It is through just such multivalent juxtapositions of apparently diverse and random elements of science and Judaism that the book goes about doing its business. We learn something about how artificial the distinction between synthetic and natural is both in the natural sciences and in Judaism by looking at scientific breeding and what elements can be used to build a Sukkah, for example. A few chapters later, a court case involving the ambiguous placement of a traffic sign leads us on a trek through Nahmanides' theory of sign and symbol as regards the rainbow and in to the beginnings of modern semiotics. The last chapter has to do with the art and science of writing Torah scrolls, including the ins and outs of the discussion as to whether or not a printed scroll can be used by Jewish Chaplains in the U.S. Armed Forces.

While this book is a wonder to read and full of nuggets of interesting information, it is hard at the end to know exactly what one has learned. This is, after all, neither a textbook on chemistry nor an introduction to Judaism. So for someone who is interested in knowing more about Judaism or more about science, this is not the book. Nor will it really help those who want to know about the cosmology or technology of traditional Judaism. In fact, the multivalency of the book assumes that the reader already has some cosiderable knowledge of Judaism and at least a passing acquaintance with modern science.

The book does make a statement, however, and it is an important one in these days when the subject of the interrelationship between religion and science has become a major topic in the popular press. Discussions of science and religion all to often get reduced to the most simplistic and absurd terms: the "Church vs. Galileo," for example or, in our own day, the opposition of religious "creationism" to scientific "evolutionism." To be sure, many people have been thinking and writing about the interconnections between science and religion in much more informed and sophisticated terms. But in the end, it seems to me, both science and religion are still conceived as being two huge, all-encompassing monolithic intellectual traditions that somehow stand against each other. The real interaction between science and religion as ways of thinking about and relating to the world has remained largely unacknowledged and unaddressed.

It is precisely here, then, that this book makes its contribution. What we see unfold before our eyes in this book is that many of the foundational questions of the Halakhah, and so the Jewish understanding of the nature of the cosmos, are issues that also continue to intrigue scientists, and that the insights gained by hard scientific investigations of nature shape how the Halakhah will go about solving its problems. In short, we see in this book not only that "science" and "religion" can and do work together but we see the commonalities between them. Both come across as modes by which human beings try to understand, relate to and control the world around them. It is the claim, never made explicit but always present, that one can not really be a properly religious person without some knowledge and appreciation of how the material world works and that by the same token one can not be a truly good scientist without, at some level, a sense of awe and wonderment about the cosmos in which we live.

"Science," the authors note, "indeed deals with the ordinary...but it will not remain in the ghetto of the material. ...And religion—well, it simply refuses to bury itself in the study of wondrously rich tomes of the Talmud, the warm tones of the Sabbath." It is the glory of this unusual book that it lets both science and religion free to find each other.

If Hoffman and Schmidt give us an almost poetic appreciation of the interplay of natural science and religion, Fisch shows us the philosophical side. In fact, despite its subtitle, this is not really a book about science and Talmudic culture at all. Instead, it is a book about the "scientific" mentality of the framers of the Babylonian Talmud. Fisch's basic premise, teased meticulously, even tediously, from a select number of Talmudic sugyot (B. Hagiga 3b; M. Eduyot 1,5, 7; B. Pesahim 66a) is that the framers of the Talmud did not accept unquestionably the authority of tradition but instead showed a very "scientific" scepticism about received learning. To use Fisch's language, they were antitraditionalists. This, in the end, seems like a fairly modest reward for reading through nearly 200 pages of closely argued and tightly written text. On the other hand, simply working through the author's filigree of logic offers a certain satisfaction. The reader has not only been reading about Talmud but actually has been engaged in a form of doing modern Talmudic exegesis.

The point Fisch derives from all this analysis is in fact more subtle than stated above. While it is true that the final framers of the Talmud did not accept the authority of tradition, demanding instead that everything had to be proven, it is also the case that they framed their discourse in a form, commentary on the Mishnah, that suggests on its very surface that the maintenance and elaboration of tradition is precisely what they are all about. This is, then an apparent tension between form and content. This tension, or dichotomy, is not accidental but was intended by the reactors. Why? The reason, Fisch opines, has to do with the very purpose of the Talmud. This purpose is not to teach students Halakhah but to teach students how to think about the Halakhah. But one can not begin to do a detailed analysis of the Halakhah until one knows the Halakhah, meaning one has first to master the tradition. So the text has to address two different sorts of students: beginning ones who have to learn the tradition and to respect it and advanced students who know the tradition and have to learn how to deconstruct it (my term, not Fisch's). So the text presents itself as traditionalist for the beginning students but, for those conversant with its subtlety of argument, its true antitraditionalism will surface.

Before turning to a consideration of how Fisch gets to this point, it will help to ask what all this has to do with science and/ or scientific culture. The answer, Fisch argues, is that modern science (and here he draws heavily on Popper) is based also on the critic of tradition. That is, modern scientists, like their talmudic antecedents, have to learn a highly nuanced body of traditional learning but have to be forever open to critiquing its basic assumptions and questioning its results. Science may not be able to verify the truth but it can surely point out where it is wrong. In this its attitude is paralleled exactly in the Talmud. Therefore, there is a common intellectual culture. Fisch even notes in the beginning of the book that the whole project was designed to make just this point. The book before us began as an extended exercise in addressing Jacob Neusner's question in The Making of the Mind of Judaism as to why "Judaism of the dual Torah" did not contribute to Western science and philosophy. Fisch's answer, of course, is that Neusner's answer—the rabbis did not think scientifically—is wrong.

Although Fisch's argumentation is detailed and complex, it is not without its problems. It particular, it seems to grow out of a certain parochialism and simplistic understanding of the rabbinic tradition. For example, in the very first page of the preface, Fisch laments the absence of philosophicl analysis of the rabbinic texts in contrast to the academic study of Western science, which he claims is "the one sustained intellectual endeavor of Western culture that rivals that of the rabbis in scope and duration." But this is much too simplistic a claim. What about the Western philosophical tradition, for example, or, for that matter, the Western Christian theological tradition? Do not these have impressive scope and duration to rival that of the rabbis? In fact, are not all long intellectual traditions caught in the tension between tradition and innovation? It is, of course, true that the rabbinic literature exhibits this trait, but it is hardly alone, unique and paradigmatic in this. So the parallels Fisch finds are not as shocking as he at times makes them sound.

This brings me to my second critique, namely, Fisch's assumption that there is "a" rabbinic literature that has "a" particular attitude vis-a-vis tradition (or anything else). I would have felt on safer methodological grounds if Fisch had argued that certain periscope (the Yavneh story, for example) were venues for reconciling the relationship between traditionalists and antitraditionalists. I would even have felt better had he restricted his remarks to the ultimate reactional layer of the Babylonian Talmud, that is, to the ideology of the so-called Stammaim. And, to be fair, at times Fisch seems about to make this more restricted claim. But in the end his claim is much more comprehensive. This can be seen, for instance, by the fact that he brings into the discussion not only the Babylonian Talmud but the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the Yerushalmi and occasional snippets from the midrashic literature. Now one can certainly disagree with Neusner's claim that each of these documents has its own interests and so has to be understood on its own terms. It is possible to posit that they all share a common intellectual agenda. But I do not think this is obvious or a given. Fisch owes us some sort of explanation as to why he regards all these texts, separated as they are by time and space, to be part of a single discussion on one philosophical issue that is characteristically "rabbinic."

Nonetheless, Fisch's careful and detailed analysis shows us that at least in places the Babylonian Talmud (and other documents) do exhibit the antitraditionalist scepticism he claims it does. But whether this is widely and definitively true of all rabbinic Judaism, and whether this is some sort of unique connection between Judaism and modern science, are questions that go well beyond the data he musters for constructing answers.

In the end, both books leave us at a similar place. Both tell us that Judaism as an intellectual system has nothing to fear from modern science. Both the poetry and the cynicism of the modern scientists have been anticipated and incorporated into the very core of rabbinic thinking. What neither book tells us is where to go from here. How do we maintain the integrity and credibility of Halakhah in a universe operating by the laws of Quantum Mechanics? What does Chaos Theory mean in conjunction with divine providence or the Kabbalistic breaking of the vessels? Neither book ventures into these muddy, and much more dangerous, waters. That will have to be the task of other books.

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

Skylock the Liberal

Shylock and the Jewish Question by Martin D. Yaffe Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

A Review essay by Nicholas A. Sharp

If for nothing else, Martin D. Yaffe's Skylock and the Jewish Question is to be admired for its audacity. It would be hard to imagine a more radical reinterpretation of The Merchant of Venice than this.

Established opinion, which Yaffe summarizes by quoting no less an authority than

Harold Bloom, holds that Shakespeare's play represents an "altogether murderous anti-Semitism," especially in its insistence that the "proud and fierce Jew" Skylock must undergo a forced conversion to Christianity (3). Yaffe, however, not only rejects this widely accepted interpretation, he actually argues that the play is deeply sympathetic to Judaism and should properly be read as "a helpful guide for the self-understanding of the modern Jew" (1).

Shakespeare, he argues, needs to offer no apology for his anti-Semitic treatment of Shylock because *The Merchant of Venice*, in fact, has a far more adequate and positive understanding of what it means to be Jewish in the modern world than does Harold Bloom. Although it may be a "commonly accepted or tolerated opinion that Shakespeare is somewhat morally obtuse toward Jews...an attentive reading of *The Merchant of Venice* suggests that Shakespeare is not so pressingly in need of our instruction on what it means to be a Jew in modern times as we are of his" (163).

Though radical, Yaffe's position is essentially simple. Shylock is not a good Jew but rather a very bad one, and the play punishes him not for being Jewish but for betraying his own Jewish faith and heritage. In the famous "quality of mercy" speech during the trial scene of the fourth act, says Yaffe, Portia appeals to Shylock with arguments based on justice and mercy, social values held as equally important by both Christians and Jews. Shylock's refusal to be moved by those appeals (and by the similar appeals made earlier by the Duke) amounts to a rejection of his own Jewish identity. In fact, says Yaffe, Shylock's self-justifying speeches reveal that his true values are those of a modern, secular liberal (individualistic, materialistic, anti-communal and anti-traditional), not a faithful Jew. If he had behaved more like a pious Jew and less like a commercial citizen of the modern, secular city, he would never have found himself in court at all.

Here we arrive at the real heart of Martin Yaffe's interest in Shylock. Yaffe is not, after all, an English professor or a literary critic; instead, he is a political philosopher and a teacher of Jewish studies. His interest in *The Merchant of Venice* is not a literary historian's but a philosopher's. Though his book is certainly an important contribution to the critical literature on Shakespeare, it is published as a title in the Johns Hopkins Jewish Studies series, not simply as another monograph on Elizabethan drama. The important thing about *The Merchant of Venice*, he says, is that Shakespeare offers excellent instruction on "what it means to be a Jew in modern times" (163).

Therefore, Yaffe approaches the play much the way that Leo Strauss (a philosopher that Yaffe has studied and written about frequently) approached classical works. He treats it as an insistently contemporary document, not just an historical text, and he evaluates its arguments as serious living ideas, not archeological evidences of past thoughts from a dead culture. For Yaffe, the interesting thing about Shylock is not that he is a powerful dramatic character from an earlier, unenlightened age but that he is a potent, living image of the modern Jew in the modern city. In Yaffe's reading, Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice is not simply a play but a serious and challenging political and philosophical text. He reads it as a cautionary tale reminding both Jews and Christians to be faithful to their shared traditional values of justice and temperance, despite the blandishments of modern commercial and cosmopolitan liberalism.

Much of Yaffe's book devotes itself to establishing Shylock's credentials as a voice for modern, anti-traditional secularism and rationalism. Chapter Four negatively critiques Francis Bacon's Jewish character Joabin, a spokesman for the modern, scientific state described in Bacon's late and unfinished utopian romance, The New Atlantis. Yaffe finds that Joabin speaks for a social vision that includes religious toleration primarily because religious values are irrelevant to modern technological society. According to Yaffe, in Joabin's "ideal" state, government promotes "security, health, luxury, religious toleration and foreign commerce" but not justice, the core value of the traditional Judeo-Christian social vision (119). Yaffe argues that Shylock and Joabin share the same social vision, seeing government as essentially a means of promoting wealth, not justice, and believing that law is primarily an instrument of the state's commercial policy and not an expression of divine virtue.

In Chapter Five, Yaffe attacks Spinoza's rationalist social vision and argues that Shylock shares many of the radically antitraditional political values promoted in the Theologico-Political Treatise. He argues that in Spinoza's vision of Amsterdam as an ideal city, "riches and poverty are at stake above all" (161). Those with "ruthlessly mercenary motivations" have no effective curb on their power and they can use the law cunningly to promote wealth, even if they must "trample where necessary on those of 'good faith' who 'live honestly.'" This, he says, is essentially Shylock's position in the trial scene, and it is the Duke and Portia who insist that law must be respected but only because it is based on moral values such as justice and moderation. It is Portia and, to a lesser extent, the Duke, not Shylock, who speak for traditional Jewish values, albeit values shared with Christians. Shylock speaks for rationalist commercialism, not Judaism, and when the law condemns him to the choice of death or apostasy, he is merely being shown the choice he has already effectively made.

Though he is primarily interested in "the Jewish question," Yaffe sees The Merchant of Venice as a critique on all of modern urban society, Christian as well as Jewish. Antonio, for instance, the character for whom the play seems to be named, certainly does not emerge pristine from Yaffe's reading. To the contrary, Yaffe sees in him a sort of over-zealous Christianity, poking its nose intermperately into everyone else's business and insisting on his own values despite other characters' fundamental indifference. As Yaffe reads the play, Antonio's anti-Semitism is notably different from the kind of anti-Semitism that Shakespeare's contemporary Marlowe, for example, represented in *The Jew of Malta*. In that play, says Yaffe, anti-Semitism was merely one aspect of a virulently anti-religious social vision. In the tradition of one type of humanist political thinking that goes back to Machiavelli, Marlowe equally despises all religious constraints on the individual will-Christian, Muslim or Jewish. Human beings are ultimately selfish and bestial, and if Marlowe's Barabbas is unusually obvious in revealing those qualities, then the problem is not that he is Jewish but that he is human.

Antonio, in contrast, is specifically Christian, and his failure lies above all in his intemperate zeal for a kind of charity that unbalances the virtue of justice. His risky kindness to Bassanio and his unrelenting persecution of Shylock, says Yaffe, proceed from the same flaw in his character, a lack of moderation.

The other citizens of Venice, too, are portrayed badly. In their refusal to aid Antonio by loaning him the money to repay his debt, Yaffe sees one of many evidences that Venice is a city rapidly declining into the cosmopolitan commercialism of Spinoza's Amsterdam. Though still formally bound by a constitution based on the biblical values of justice and moderation, the core of the Judeo-Christian social ethic, the citizens of Venice are rapidly losing sight of their Judeo-Christian tradition and moving, instead, toward a rationalistic legalism based on wealth and toleration rather than justice. Only Portia and the Duke are able to see that without some sort of biblical and moral foundation, law becomes just another instrument of a liberalsocial policy designed to foster wealth as a sole criterion of value.

Yaffe's study of this play is powerfully persuasive, both as a literary critique and as a statement of political philosophy. True, his method has its weaknesses. His critique of Lorenzo's "Pythagorean" philosophy of music and harmony, for instance, assigns a technically philosophical rigor to dialogue that, in fact, is little more than a concatenation of medieval and renaissance commonplaces about Ptolemaic cosmology. In my opinion, he never really deals adequately with either Jessica's betrayal of her

father or Portia's inconsistent switching between profound wisdom and coquettish lying in the play's final scenes. But those are blemishes rather than flaws.

Many Shakespeareans will find themselves unpersuaded by this book. Yaffe's anti-modernist position on both Jewish and Christian social philosophy implies that traditional religious values should be central in any decent society and this proposition will be rejected out-of-hand by many readers, no matter what their religion or ethnicity. Moreover, his notion that Shylock's problem lay in his failure not to be Jewish enough rather than in Venice's insistence that he not be Jewish at all will seem to many a reader to be false *prima facie*.

Still, those who feel with Yaffe that modern, liberal society is radically flawed by its indifference to traditional Judeo-Christian values may well find there is much in his book that makes sense. Improbable as it seems that *The Merchant of Venice* should have much to teach about what it means to be a Jew in modern society, Professor Yaffe proves that it does at least offer a good deal to consider.

Nicholas A. Sharp is a professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The Poet of Delight Beyond Suffering

The Book of Job: Translation, Introduction and Notes by Raymond P. Scheidlin New York: W.W. Norton and Co.

A Review Essay by Cliff Edwards

Raymond Scheidlin's little volume is a gem. It provides a powerful, rustworthy, poetic translation of the Book of Job that is bound to move many to read it through in a single sitting, moved by its flow of word and image. The "Introduction" is thoughtful, and the "Notes" are properly saved until the end, revealing just enough of the translation problems, strategies and history to draw one back to a re-reading of the text of Job.

Dr. Scheidlin is professor of medieval Hebrew literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America; his understanding of the context of ancient mythologies, his grasp of the history of Hebrew language and interpretation, and his good sense in translation all converge in this volume. It was a request by W.W. Norton for Scheidlin to translate a chapter of Job for their World Poetry anthology of 1998 that created excitement enough to lead to his translating the whole of this most difficult Hebrew classic. Among readers of his drafts were scholars of the stature of Steven Geller and Robert Alter.

In his "Introduction," Dr. Scheidlin describes the Book of Job as an ancient exemplary tale providing the narrative framework for a "gifted poet in the Persian province of Judea" who transformed the tale into "a literary and religious masterpiece." Scheidlin sees the poet commenting ironically on the moralistic narrative, satirizing the tale's claim "that we inhabit a world governed by justice and meaning." For Scheidlin, Job not only expresses our agony but seeks to "tame it by means of imagery, rhythm and wordplay." And what does God's reply to Job provide for the reader? In Scheidlin's words:

"All man has by way of consolation is whatever pleasure he can derive from life's sheer plentitude: wonder at God's creatures, amazement at His language, gratitude to be in a world so fascinating and abundant..."

As Scheidlin reminds us, "...the main reason we read a poem is not to gather information but to allow the poet's distinctive imagination to operate upon our own." Of the many translations of Job available in English, perhaps Scheidlin is enough of a poet himself to set free in new and creative ways the poetry of the Hebrew text so that the modern reader might be moved by the powerofthe original poet's distinctive imagination.

Cliff Edwards is professor of religion at Virginia Commonwealth University and a contributing editor.

The Feminist's Corner

A Review Essay by Sarah Barbara Watstein

Talking Back: Images of Jewish Women in American Popular Culture. Edited by Joyce Antler. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press. If you are interested in Jewish women's contributions to history, literature, art, religion, scholarship, radio, television, film and performance, I encourage you to spend some time with this anthology of academic essays. Essayists expose manifold images of Jewish women as victims and resisters, onlookers and activists, homemakers and paid workers, exotic "dark ladies" or clumsy "losers." Readers are introduced to the changing images of immigrant women and to representations of the "Lost Generation" (voices of Jewish girls in adolescent diaries of the 1920s and 1950s, Jewish women entertainers, the Jewish-American world of Gertrude Berg).

Here too, readers will find essays on Jewish women in postwar America. In this section, we read of Herman Wouk's messenger to the Gentiles—Natalie Jastrow, an American in her twenties who is the heroine of Wouk's *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*. Essays here also explore

subversive representations of Jewish women in postwar popular novels, and the contrasting images of Faith and Puttermesser, characters created by two of the strongest, most distinctive Jewish female writers to emerge in the postwar period-Grace Paley and Cynthia Ozick. There is a section on contemporary Jewish feminists as image-makers, which includes an essay on the images of Jews and women in the films of Barbra Streisand. Finally, there is a section on new images of women in stories and song. This final section includes two essays: one on the changing representation of biblical heroines and a second on feminism and Judaism in women's haggadot. An epilogue considers Jewish women on television.

Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebelllum America. By Dianne Ashton. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. Flap copy claims that this "is the first in-depth biography of Rebecca Gratz (1781-1869), the foremost American Jewish women of the 19th century." Set in the context of Philadelphia's urban world, Rebecca Gratz explores the gendered dimensions of American Judaism as it developed before the onset of mass immigration. Chapters cover the Gratz family in early Philadelphia, the transformation of Gratz' personality, the founding of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society (1817-1830), the founding of the Hebrew Sunday School (1830-1840), the lessons of the Hebrew Sunday School, social power (1840-1860), family ties and sectional conflict (1840-1850), women in new Jewish institutions (1850-1860), Gratz' last years and legacy. A final chapter explores the legend of Rebecca Gratz.

The post-Revolutionary era through the close of the Civil War was a dynamic and crucial time in the nation's history. Through her organizations, her own willingness to become a model of female Jewish piety and respectability, and her endless advice freely given to Jewish women around the country, Gratz helped to mold American Judaism as it took shape in the earliest days of the Republic. If you are interested in this period, this biography is for you. If you are personally challenged to confront and resolve the issues of your identity as a Jew, you will find this to be a captivating and inspiring story.

Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for Her Mother's History. By Helen Epstein. Boston: Little, Brown. This is a memoir in the form of a quest for personal and historical understanding. After the death of her mother Frances in 1989, Helen Epstein began to research and reconstruct the life of her mother and that of her grandmother and great-grandmother. Frances Epstein had been a dress designer and a Prague Jew whose Central European roots went back several centuries. She was the only member of her immediate family to survive the Holo-

caust, part of a tiny remnant of the oncethriving community of Prague Jews. With Helen's mother gone, there was virtually no one still alive who knew the family story. Helen's great-grandmother, Therese, was an innkeeper's daughter who fell in love with a Czech Christian, but was instead married off to a Jewish peddler. In 1890, she leaped from a fourth-floor window in Vienna to commit suicide. Her daughter, Pepi, orphaned at the age of eight, grew up in the Bohemian city of Kolin where she became a dressmaker. After the turn of the century, she began a career in high fashion in Prague. Pepi's daughter, Frances, became her business partner at the age of 15, only a few years before the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939. Pepi was murdered during the Second World War. Frances survived. The story of Therese, Pepi and Frances-three generations of women—is in many ways emblematic of their time and offers a rare, detailed glimpse into a vanished world where so many American women have origins. Don't miss this one!

Strangers to the Tribe: Portraits of Interfaith Marriage. By Gabrielle Glaser. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. In this book, journalist Gabrielle Glaser introduces us to 11 Jewish-Gentile couples, their families and the many ways they have found to navigate their differences. Based on candid interviews across America with couples of all ages, these true stories will inform and inspire anyone embarking on an interfaith relationship. Herself a partner in such a marriage, Glaser rejects pat answers and easy formulas; she probes deeply and sympathetically. Her intent is to write about their lives, their reflections on their decisions, the long-term influence of angry or even dead relatives on adult children, their spouses and their grandchildren. This is an exhaustively researched book—Glaser talked to dozens of couples and their extended families, rabbis and ministers, priests and therapists, from Honolulu to Chicago to New York. This book will not please everyone; it is controversial. Finally, given that more than half of America's Jews marry outside the faith, it is a "must read" for those Jews and non-Jews who strive and sometimes struggle to make marriages across cultural and religious lines successful. Strangers of the Tribe also will help Jews who are searching for identity—regardless of their marital status.

Rereading the Rabbis: A Women's Voice. By Judith Hauptman. Boulder: Westview Press. Talmudist and feminist Judith Hauptman here examines 10 key issues and institutions of rabbinic law: Sotah (wayward wife), relations between the sexes, marriage, rape and seduction, divorce, procreation, Niddah (rules of the menstruant), inheritance, testimony, and ritual. The

author's goal is to present the Talmudic basis for welcoming women into the fullfledged membership ranks of the Jewish people, and I suspect that most readers will concur that she succeeds in reaching this goal. To read the texts as objectively as possible, Hauptman has developed a method for reading texts. For each topic under consideration, she goes to the loci classic. the places in the Torah and the Talmud where the topic is discussed initially and/or fully and extracts the main ideas. Then, she compares the biblical and rabbinic statements to see if the rabbis made any significant changes. Next, assuming that literary and legal contexts influence meaning, she reads each paragraph of the relevant Mishnah (the key rabbinic text, the touchstone of all subsequent rabbinic commentary), in light of the surrounding cluster of mishnahs. Third, she reads the mishnaic passages in the context of related rabbinic texts, from both the same time period and later.

Hauptman posits that by seeing the full range of views on a subject, we can understand more accurately and precisely the meaning of each articulated. Also, by noting the field of choices open to each rabbinic speaker, we can assess the relative stringency or leniency of the view he chose to adopt. Praise for Rereading the Rabbis from Letty Cottin Pogrebin states: "Beneath the patriarchal biases of the Talmud, Hauptman finds evidence of a remarkable, compassionate, rabbinic impulse to improve the lot of women, an impulse that, in its historical context, was nothing short of revolutionary." Rereading the Rabbis is not an "easy read," yet Hauptman is to be credited for her clearly reasoned Talmudic scholarship. When you are ready for a mind-opening reading of classic rabbinic texts, immersing yourself in this book will be a wonderful treat.

Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia. By Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore. New York: Routledge. Sponsored by the American Jewish Historical Society (the nation's oldest ethno-religious historical organization), this two-volume historical encyclopedia pays tribute to American Jewish women. The encyclopedia consists of 910 entries, 800 of which are biographies of individual Jewish women and 110 of which deal with other topics. These two types of entries are integrated in this set and are presented in one alphabetical sequence. There is a complete list of all entries in the front of the first volume. Bibliographies at the end of the entries provide the sources used by the author for information and also provide suggested materials for additional reading. Scholars in American, Jewish and women's history will be excited by the scholarship and learning contained in these pages. Entries are complemented by a splendid variety of photos. The set can be used to answer specific reference questions or read simply as an introduction to the fascinating history of Jewish women in the United States over the last 350 years. This reviewer predicts that Jewish Women in America will become a standard source in academic and public libraries, as well as a treasured addition to the personal libraries of Jews—women and men alike—nationwide.

Sarah Barbara Watstein is assistant director of Academic User Services, Virginia Commonwealth University, and a contributing editor.

American Jews: A Body Politic

Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry by Daniel J. Elazar Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society

> A Review Essay by Steven Windmueller

Jewish political theory has come to represent a whole new discipline regarding the study of Jewish communal behavior. Clearly Daniel Elazar must be seen as the architect of this school of thought. His rich political science, constitutional theory and federalism background, along with his thorough understanding and knowledge of Jewish history and religious sources, has permitted Elazar the opportunity to frame concepts associated with Jewish political ideas and practices.

Combining this theoretical framework with a keen knowledge of contemporary Jewish affairs, Elazar's Community and Polity has served as a principal sourcebook on American Jewish communal life, since its first edition in 1976. Filled with basic information on institutional structures, historical and social trends, demographic and geopolitical data, and decision-making models and practices, this extraordinary text of nearly 500 pages serves as a road map on American Jewry. Neatly divided into 13 distinct thematic fields of inquiry and accompanied by nearly 30 tables and charts, this book represents the most complete guide to organizational life available.

This revised edition examines the major transformations associated with the federation field, the downsizing of national membership structures, the changes in the delivery and focus of Jewish educational services, and the issues of Jewish pluralism, consensus and competition. In addition, this volume addresses the changing dimensions

to the field of community relations, the impact of demographic shifts, the evolving sets of new relationships between the American-Jewish community and Israel, and the emergence of new non-traditional organizational models that seek to reach the more marginal and disaffected elements of the community.

In many ways this book's content has been developed and refined by Elazar during a four-decade period. This text's focus, while directed toward the institutional and structural aspects of Jewish life, also assesses the commitment of Jews to their faith and their participation in the communal enterprise.

The author has suggested that there are two purposes for developing such a work: namely, "to provide a basic survey of the structure and functions of the American Jewish community and to suggest how that community should be understood as a body politic, a polity that is not a state but is no less real from a political perspective." With reference to this second principle, it is here where Elazar's unique talents and insights are manifest. His treatment of this material from a political framework offers us wonderful insights into communal decision-making, organizational politics and government-like systems of organizing.

The attention to detail, for example, can be seen in the focus on the data surrounding the evolution and growth of the federated system. Elazar's distinction between territorial (community based agencies) and nonterritorial organizations (national institutions) offers another example of his commitment to institutional analysis, defining the unique characteristics of different types or segments of Jewish structures. Of particular value is Elazar's third chapter, entitled "The Community and its Environment," where the author matches Jewish responses to the larger American social pressures of assimilation and indivdualism.

Elazar uses his introduction to present some of his core theoretical ideas associated with the concepts of the Jewish polity: the role of covenants and contracts, the principles of federalism, and the Jewish models of community or "edah." He suggests that there are five core ingredients that characterize the functions of the organized community: the control over decision-making in matters of defending (protecting) the community, the presence of an assembly that determines its own leaders, the portability of the community and its decision-makers, the centrality of the land of Israel in the content of Jewish destiny, and the constitutional authority performed by the Torah on behalf of the community.

It is here that Elazar reintroduces his three tiers of Jewish authority, literally the three crowns (keterim) of the Torah. "Each Keter is to be regarded as a mediating institution between God and the edah in possession of a distinct focus, thereby enabling each to exercise a constitutional check on the others." These various functional units perform specific and significant tasks on behalf of American Jewry, fulfilling executive, legislative and judicial functions. The description of the quasi-governmental character of the Jewish enterprise represents one of Elazar's principal contributions.

The book's value is further enhanced by its extensive, updated bibliography and the author's detailed notes. The emphasis, especially in the later chapters, on the critical issues facing Jewish communal life continues to make Community and Polity a most relevant reader. In the chapter "Handling the Tasks of the Jewish Community," Elazar devotes attention to the primary arenas of conflict, assesses the power configurations within the community, and examines the key styles and types of leadership present in Jewish life. The final segment of the book (Chapter 13) serves as a vehicle through which he examines the basic organizational, political and demographic trends apparent within American Jewish life. Optimistic as well as realistic, Elazar lays out a scenario of how the various forces of change have and will impact the American Jew on the eve of a new century. For this thoughtful and creative political scientist and Jewish researcher, the bottom line appears to be an 'essential wholeness" that is now being reflected in an authentic American "Jewish way of life."

Steven Windmueller is director of the Irwin Daniels School of Jewish Communal Service, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles, and a contributing editor.

From Woodstock Shall Go Forth the Law

People of the Book: Thirty
Scholars Reflect on Their
Jewish Identity
edited by Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky
and Shelley Fisher Fishkin
Madison: University of Wisconsin
Press

A Review Essay by Matthew Schwartz

If one would pick up a book of essays on medicine, he could fairly assume it to be written by physicians or medical researchers, not professors of classics. Similarly, a book of essays on history could be expected to proceed largely from the pens of historians and not chemists. Here, we have a book of 30 reflections on Jewish identity. One would expect to find the writings of specialists in Bible, rabbinics, Jewish history or

psychology, or of congregational rabbis.

Instead, we find essays written not by Judaic specialists but, in almost every case, by professors of modern literature. There people are almost all university professors, well-published and many holding endowed chairs. But their range of knowledge simply does not include Judaism. The editors claim that "this book celebrates the diversity of American-Jewish culture by highlighting its mult-faceted dimension." In fact, it does no such thing. Rather, it excludes almost the entire range of what Judaism is and focuses on the narrow singular views of a group of people who may know other fields but know little about Judaism.

What results is a Judaism that derives its spirit from the foul vapors of Woodstock and not from a loving theophany of Sinai. Apparently, this group does not have a name nor does this book set a clear mission statement. It offers no definition nor organized discussion of exactly what Jewish identity is. Yet, there are certain attitudes that persist throughout the book.

- (1) The writers know little about Judaism except in terms of modern Jewish fiction. Their occasional mention of the Bible seems colored by post-modernist doctrine and are not based on serious analysis of sources. Certainly, these writers show no awareness of the richness of thousands of years of Jewish literature. They have no inkling of the poetic inspiration of a Judah Halevi or Bialik, of the analytical prowess of a Rashi or of the feeling of intimacy with God and His world felt by the Hasidic masters. They seem more comfortable with Portnoy's Complaint, and they have no place in their thought world for righteousness and holiness. One writer regrets that "an active relationship to the religion of Judaism is tending to become a sine qua non of Jewishness."
- (2) Many of these essayists seem angry at Judaism. They speak all too often of negative memories from their childhoods, and indeed the sort of Judaism they saw in childhood was generally skimpy and meaningless. They had only minimal experience of Jewish schools, synagogues or home practices.
- (3) Their view of the Jewish woman is hopelessly jaundiced. They choose to portray Jewish women as mistreated and cudgelled, and they rewrite history to suit their needs. They should spend more time in serious study of the sources, beginning with Genesis.
- (4) There is much expression of resentment against parents. One essay refers to weddings as generational struggles. I can not presume to guess how realistic or well founded these feelings may actually be for any individual. Perhaps their parents cheated them by not giving them better religious training. However, these writers are now all highly educated adults. (Who, after all, paid

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.

- Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration. Edited by Jacob J. Schacter. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc.
- Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience. By Jonathan D. Sarna and David G. Dalin. The University of Notre Dame Press.
- Rational Rabbis: Science and Talmudic Culture. By Menachem Fisch. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Taking Hold of Torah: Jewish Commitment and Community in America. By Arnold M. Eisen. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Apocalyticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls. By John J. Collins. New York: Routledge.
- The Plo and Israel: From Armed Conflict to Political Solution, 1964-1994. Edited by Avraham Sela and Moshe Ma'oz. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Quakers and Nazis: Inner Light in Outer Darkness. By Hans A. Schmitt. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- We Were So Beloved: Autobiography of a German Jewish Community. By Manfred and Gloria De Vidas Kirchheimer. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- German-Jewish History in Modern Times: Volume 2, Emancipation and Acculturation, 1780-1871. Edited by Michael A. Meyer. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kibbutz Buchenwald: Survivors and Pioneers. By Judith Tydor Baumel. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Post-War Germany. By Michael Brenner. Princeton University Press.
- Thinking About the Holocaust: After Half a Century. Edited by Alvin H. Rosenfeld. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1391-1648. Edited by Benjamin R. Gampel. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism. By Emmanuel Levinas. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- American Space, Jewish Time: Essays in Modern Culture and Politics. By Stephen J. Whitfield. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe Inc.
- Theology in Rabbinic Stories. By Chaim Pearl. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc.
- The Beast Reawakens. By Martin A. Lee. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Readings in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. By John A. Corrigan, Carlos M.N. Eire, Frederick M. Denny and Martin S. Jaffee. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hebrews of the Portugese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam. By Miriam Bodian. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- People of the Book: Canon, Meaning and Authority. By Moshe Halbertal. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR. Edited by Zvi Gitelman. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- The Illustrated History of the Jewish People. Edited by Nicholas De Lange. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company.
- Reading Prophetic Narratives. By Uriel Simon. Blooomington: Indiana University Press.
- When Life Hurts: A Book of Hope. By Wayne Dosick. HarperSanFrancisco.
- Jewish Spiritual Guidance: Finding Our Way to God. By Carol Ochs and Kerry M. Olitzky. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Nazi Family Policy, 1933-1945. By Lisa Pine. New York: Berg.
- The Kibbutz Movement: A History (Vol. 2: Crisis and Achievement, 1939-1995). By Henry Near. Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Jews in Germany After the Holocaust: Memory, Identity and Jewish-German Relations. By Lynn Rapaport. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Anna in Chains. By Merrill Joan Gerber. Syracuse University Press.
- Striking Back: A Jewish Commando's War Against the Nazis. By Peter Masters. Novato, CA: Presidio Press.
- Israel and the Western Powers, 1952-1960. By Zach Levey. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- The First Zionist Congress in 1897: Causes, Significance, Topicality. Edited by Heiko Haumann. New York: S. Karger.
- Children of Zion. By Henryk Grynberg. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Dictionary of the Holocaust: Biography, Geography and Terminology. By Eric Joseph Epstein and Philip Rosen. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- The Staff and the Serpent: Pertinent and Impertinent Observations on the World of Medicine. By Allen B. Weisse. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Maimonides to Nietzsche: Skepticism, Belief and the Modern. By Aryeh Blotwinick. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Saint Veneration Among the Jews in Morocco. By Issachar Ben-Ami. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- A Hitler Youth in Poland: The Nazis' Program for Evacuating Children During World War II. By Jost Hermand. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds: Accounting for Halakhic Difference in Selected Sugyot from Tractate Avodah Zarah. By Chiristine Elizabeth Hayes. New York: Oxford University Press.

for their college educations?) It is high time to work out their problems and avoidstrengthening an unfortunate pattern that will impel their children to turn against them some day in the same manner.

(5) What resonates most strongly through this volume on Jewish identity is the fact that most of these writers have a very troubled sense of identity. They constantly use phrases like: "Jewishness never figured in my frame of reference," "my Jewish self is ill defined," "I am Jewish precisely because I am not a believer, because I associate...the courage not to believe with being Jewish," "Judaism is the source and symbol of a world I wish to reject," I am "the kind of Jew who only knows what kind of Jew she doesn't want to be," "I learned to eschew ethnocentrism in favor of cosmopolitarianism and global citizenship," "I'm not Jewish. I'm an art historian."

It is almost as though in the bizarre Jewish framework of these scholars, there is something wrong in knowing who you are. Indeed, they promote asking questions but seem uncomfortable with answers. One writer praises Hegelian dialect and argues that "contradiction undercuts complacency and nostalgia...without conflict we have no

cause for analysis and self-criticism." And "the moral life of the nation depends not on answering these questions but on keeping them alive." Questioning and analysis are, of course, fundamental to Judaism. Jews have always criticized and questioned their leaders, their beliefs and their practices. The Talmud is all question and answer, and little children recite their four Passover questions. However, in Judaism, debate should lead to harmony and to decisions by which people can work together, not to exacerbating conflict.

The angst and alienation in these essays is overdone. In Judaism, one may experience some degree of angst in weak moments but it is a sign of spiritual upset, not a glorious goal to be sought. The Jew seeks insight and intimacy with the Creator and with the world. Angst may be a virtue for novelists but, for a Jew, it is a problem to be overcome by wisdom, healthy behavior and faith. The identities of these professors have little place for faith and trust.

Perhaps the two most interesting essays were written by Black converts to Judaism, who had no Jewish parents against whom to rebel. There are several other good moments; for example, a discussion of

Dostoevsky's anti-Semitism and a piece of Edgar Degas' hatred of the Jewish Camille Pissaro. The few brighter spots serve to show how capable these scholars can be when they deal with their own fields of expertise.

What is missing in this book is a serious frame of Jewish reference, a respectable level of objectivity and, perhaps most notably, a love of the Jewish people or of the Jewish heritage in some form. What remains is all too often a personal and emotional polemic against what these writers think is Judaism. People so abjectly lacking in Jewish knowledge should never teach their wholly misinformed brand of Judaism in college classrooms where eager students will be misled.

A great rabbi of the past century is reported to have said, "Not every thought should be written down, and not every thought once written should be published." If readers want to learn about Judaism or Jewish identities, there are many fine books, but this one is not worthy of attention.

Matthew Schwartz is professor in the department of history at Wayne State University and a contributing editor.



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Editor: Jack D. Spiro Editorial Consultant: Cliff Edwards

Production Manager: Kay W. Brill Contributing Editors;

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Steven F. Windmueller

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