



2001

Menorah Review (No. 53, Fall, 2001)

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VCU MENORAH REVIEW

NUMBER 53 • CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY • FALL 2001

For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

Uriah Levy and Monticello

2001 Brown-Lyons Lecture

The following article is excerpted from the lecture presented by Dr. Melvin I. Urofsky for the 16th Brown-Lyons Lecture held last March. This annual lecture is sponsored by the Center for Judaic Studies and the Friends of the Library of Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Urofsky is the Director of the Doctoral Program, Center for Public Policy, at VCU and professor of history.

For a number of years books about Monticello sounded two themes, or to be more precise, one theme and a non-theme. The theme was first sounded by Paul Wiltstach in 1925 when he wrote "Monticello without its builder entered upon a full century of change, neglect and degradation." The theme was echoed by Thomas Fleming, an otherwise admirable historian, who charged that "Monticello... would moulder through a hundred years of abuse and decay." William Thacker declared that in 1923 "the mansion had lain in a state of disrepair since the death of its builder in 1826."

The non-theme is the ownership of Monticello from 1836 to 1923. One would not know that the Levy family owned and preserved the great house for nearly nine decades, a period far longer than Mr. Jefferson had owned it. We need to give the Levys—both Uriah and his nephew Jefferson—full credit for their role in preserving Monticello. Because of space constraints, in this article I would like to focus on Uriah and how he came to own Monticello.

There is no question that Uriah Phillips Levy is one of the great characters in American Jewish history. He was pugnacious, determined, eccentric, confirmed in the righteousness of his causes, an able businessman who was quite wealthy and an admirer of Thomas Jefferson.

His admiration rested on Mr. Jefferson's well-deserved reputation as a champion of religious liberty—not toleration but liberty. "I consider Thomas Jefferson to be one of the greatest men in history," Levy declared,

"the author of the Declaration and an absolute democrat. He serves as an inspiration to millions of Americans. He did much to mould our Republic in a form in which a man's religion does not make him ineligible for political or governmental life."

One wonders if Levy would have been so ardent if he had known of the third president's private comments about Judaism. Although Jefferson denied the divinity of Jesus, and defended the right of Jews to believe and practice their faith unmolested by others, he strongly abhorred Judaism. He considered Jewish ideals of God and his attributes "degrading and injurious," and their ethics "often irreconcilable with the sound dictates of reason and morality" as well as "repulsive and anti-social as respecting other nations." The man who championed natural rights and freedom of worship wrote to Joseph B. Priestly that Jewish beliefs and morality "degraded" Jews of "the necessity they presented of a reformation." To John Adams he wrote approvingly of the works of Johann Brucker, which denigrated Jewish philosophy and ethics, while to Ezra Stiles he declared that "I am not a Jew" and then misrepresented Jewish views on punishment.

But this aspect of Jefferson's personality remained unknown to all but a few of his contemporaries and would not become widely recognized until nearly a century after his death. In the early 1830s, Lieutenant Uriah Phillips Levy, like most of his fellow Jews and indeed most of the nation, saw Thomas Jefferson as the paladin of religious liberty, which in fact he was; they just did not see his dark side.

Levy's admiration for Jefferson first expressed itself in a unique gift the lieutenant

made to the government and the people of the United States. As he wrote to his attorney, George Carr, "there is no statue to [Jefferson] in the Capitol in Washington. As a small payment for his determined stand on the side of religious liberty, I am preparing to commission a statue." And the statue, in its way, led to Monticello.

There are three stories as to why and how Levy purchased the house. The first two are interesting, one for its implicit anti-Semitism and the other for its romantic nonsense. Both are totally unsubstantiated by any evidence whatsoever, except that after told once they wound up being repeated elsewhere.

According to the first account, after Martha Jefferson Randolph sold Monticello she went to live with her daughter in Boston. A group of patriotic Americans decided that at the very least Jefferson's daughter ought to be able to live at Monticello since Jefferson had given his life, in a way, for his country. They sent a representative to Boston to see if she would accept the gift and, on her assent, he sped back to Virginia to consummate the purchase from Barclay. But he stopped in New York for a few days to raise funds; at a dinner one evening met Lieutenant Levy and told him of his plan. The next morning the "crafty Jew" Levy sped south, purchased Monticello, and thus thwarted the noble and patriotic effort to return the family homestead to Jefferson's beloved daughter.

The second unsubstantiated account has Levy in the White House meeting with President Andrew Jackson. Levy supposedly said to Jackson that he had heard about the sad state of Monticello and had been thinking of buying it "in honor of Mr. Jefferson, whom I love."

General Jackson replied with vigor, "I order you, sir, to buy it."

"I always obey the orders of my superior, Mr. President," Levy replied and headed up the mountain.

The third account seems far more reliable, plus we have some corroborating evidence to support it. Levy had gone to France in 1832 to study advanced naval tactics and while there arranged to meet a man who was undoubtedly a hero to many of Levy's generation, the Marquis de Lafayette. He told

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Lafayette about his plan to have a statue made, and the nobleman, who had been a friend of Jefferson for nearly a half-century, lent Levy a portrait of Jefferson by Thomas Sully that he owned. The great French sculpture Pierre Jean David d'Angers then executed a full-length likeness of Jefferson based on the portrait and in March 1834 Levy presented the statue to Congress. It still stands in the great rotunda of the Capitol, the only statue there provided for by private funds.

During Levy's visit to La Grange, the aging marquis had enquired as to the well-being of Martha Randolph and of Monticello. Levy did not know but he promised to find out as soon as he returned to America. After taking care of business matters—Levy was a very successful real estate speculator and owner in New York—he did go south and discovered Monticello to have been shabbily treated by Barclay, who was then eager to sell. In early April 1834, barely two weeks after presenting the statue to Congress, Levy and Barclay struck a bargain—the house and some acreage for \$2,700. Because Barclay had been selling off land it was not clear just how much property remained with the house and it took a lawsuit to clear the title. In May 1836 the suit was settled and Levy received the house and 218 acres of land in a deed of conveyance. "My heart leaped," Levy declared when he became the owner of Monticello.

For those of us who are used to seeing Monticello as it is today, lovingly restored to what our best knowledge tells us was Mr. Jefferson's plan, it is hard to envision the great house seedy or run-down. In fact, it was already looking that way in the last years of Jefferson's life. He was so far in debt that he did not have the money needed to make the needed repairs or do the preventive maintenance the house required. A visitor in 1824—two years before Jefferson's death—reported that the mansion was "old and going to decay," and that the gardens and lawns were "slovenly."

Dr. Barclay, who bought the house and land at auction after Jefferson's death, did nothing to repair the damage. He had bought the property to indulge his hare-brained scheme of raising silkworms and thought nothing of cutting down the beautiful poplar trees that Jefferson had so lovingly planted. He threw the bust of Voltaire by Houdin into a field, declaring that the French *philosophie* was an antichrist. He planted vegetables next to the house and kept his silkworms in the conservatory. Despite his widow's recollection years later that they had taken good care of the house, contemporary reports belie that contention. What Uriah Levy bought was a house beautiful in design, with a strong foundation, but one that badly needed repairs.

On his work Levy gladly embarked and,

from all reports, did so successfully. He assembled a small army of workers—including more than a dozen slaves that he purchased—and put them to work cleaning out the interior of the house, making needed repairs on the outside, and restoring the landscaped gardens and lawns. There are conflicting accounts as to whether he actually managed to buy some of Jefferson's original furnishings that had been sold at auction after his death. But he did go to great lengths to restore the house to its former glory. He put in working order the seven-day clock that had been made to Jefferson's specifications in 1793 and also restored the body of a two-wheeled carriage that tradition, if not fact, claims to be the one Jefferson rode to Philadelphia in 1775 for the Continental Congress.

As a serving naval officer, as well as a businessman with extensive holdings in New York, Levy lived at Monticello sporadically. But he did bring his mother to reside over the house and, when Rachel Phillips Levy died, her son buried her on the mountain top not far from the house. Levy also hired Joel Wheeler as an overseer and, although Wheeler would later do great damage to Monticello, from all reports he initially and for a number of years shared his employer's passion for restoring the house and did much to keep it as well as the grounds in good shape.

Then in 1853 the 61-year-old bachelor took a bride, his beautiful 18-year-old niece. [This is a long story and it scandalized some of the local people who did not like Levy to begin with, although it is not clear whether they disliked him for being Jewish, a Yankee or, at least in one sense, both! In addition, apparently the marriage laws in Virginia prohibited a union of such close blood.]

Virginia Lopez later recalled all the fun they had at Monticello, and how Uriah would dress in workman's clothes while he puttered around the grounds, pretending that the owner was not there when visitors came to call. But it must have been hard for the vivacious young woman to live there all alone and she took every opportunity to accompany her husband on his trips, including one voyage on a navy ship he commanded.

One thing is certain. A third of a century after Thomas Jefferson's death, the house he built was in far better condition than it had been in 1826. And then the war came; the conflict as well as a family feud prevented Uriah's final plans for Monticello from being completed, namely, that the government of the United States would receive Monticello as a testamentary gift and then preserve it as a monument to the memory of the third president. But for that story, as well as Jefferson Levy's tenure as Monticello's owner, the reader will have to consult the book.

Dr. Urofsky's most recent book is The Levy Family and Monticello, 1834-1923: Saving Thomas Jefferson's House. Charlottesville, VA: Thomas Jefferson Memorial.

Prejudice and the Military

Reflections on his recently published book, *The "Jewish Threat": Anti-Semitism, Politics of the U.S. Army* by Joseph W. Bendersky
New York: Basic Books

A Review Essay
by Joseph W. Bendersky

That anti-Semitism existed in the U.S. army is certainly no revelation. It was, however, startling to discover and fully document that an anti-Semitic worldview permeated the officer corps of the U.S. army and that it included biological racism as well as eugenic ideas usually associated only with extremists or fanatics. Of equal, or perhaps greater importance, was disclosing that sections of the army, as well as prominent and high-ranking officers, were so politically engaged against what they perceived to be a "Jewish threat" to the United States. Indeed, this institutionalized anti-Semitism and political engagement had a crucial impact on U.S. policy toward immigration, the fate of Europe's Jews during and after the Holocaust, and the establishment of Israel. Until well after World War II, many officers believed in the physical, intellectual and moral inferiority of Jews and feared that Jews threatened their "superior" Anglo-Saxon culture, gene pool, government and national interests.

Such irrefutable evidence of this kind of army political engagement emanating from pervasive and vehement anti-Semitism holds important implications for our understanding of anti-Semitism in American society and the U.S. response to the Holocaust. As David Gerber argued in *Anti-Semitism in American History* (Urbana, IL, 1986), American anti-Semitism has often been of an insidious type and thus difficult to document and study. This is especially true where governmental institutions are concerned because American anti-Semitism was, in contrast to European versions, never official government policy. The difficulty in identifying anti-Semitism and documenting its causal relationships is at the heart of the debate concerning the American response to the Holocaust.

In his highly acclaimed *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*, David S. Wyman attributed significant weight to anti-Semitism as

an explanation for America's failure to meet the challenge of the persecution and genocide of Europe's Jews. Despite the tremendous amount of new documentation Wyman introduced that dramatically altered this entire field of study as well as general public perceptions, documenting precisely overt anti-Semitism in the U.S. governmental institutions still proved elusive. Thus, those critics of Wyman who attribute the limited U.S. response to logistical reasons or conditions of wartime necessity still deny that apathy and anti-Semitism affected such decisions as the refusal to engage in rescue or to bomb the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The "Jewish Threat" now fills that gap in documentation and understanding. As Wyman has recently noted, this "pathbreaking study" is a "model of thorough research and judicious analysis," which "provides crucial new information that will certainly affect the way we look at U.S. military history, the history of American anti-Semitism and America's response to the Holocaust." Yet, as a scholar whose field is German history, I never intended to write this book nor ever set out to answer these important historical questions on America and the fate of Europe's Jews.

While researching a book on Weimar, I accidentally found a U.S. Military Intelligence file that contained shocking indications of anti-Semitism. One long document entitled "The Power and Aims of International Jewry" actually suggested that the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" had some validity and that a Jewish conspiracy for world domination might really exist. However, it took me years to realize what I had uncovered before I started to systematically research this subject. Although other historians had come across bits and pieces of such evidence, it appeared so limited and so astounding that it was difficult to assume that these extremist attitudes pervaded the American officer corps. The literature on anti-Semitism and on the military had not given any indication of what I would find; and for years, I also worked with these same blinders. Initially, I thought I had uncovered only a very small clique of anti-Semitic officers. Then, I realized these attitudes were pervasive throughout the officer corps but, even at that point, I believed this was only an expression of the nativism of the 1920s and I set out to write a very short book that stopped in 1929. However, the continual discovery of new documents forced me to repeatedly expand the scope of this study through World War II and the Holocaust.

There are several reasons why I was able to go beyond the documents others might have found and discover so much that was new, shocking and illuminating. Military historians had no interest in the subject while historians of anti-Semitism had gener-

ally neglected the army. I was, naturally, quite fortunate to find some of the more astounding material at the start, which motivated me to look further. Timing was another factor, as some of the documentation was not declassified until the 1970s or even the 1990s. More important was the extensive research I conducted for 10 years to track down hundreds of names and subjects, and to follow leads on thousands of document numbers. Ultimately, I had to work my way through thousands of boxes of material to locate documents scattered in the National Archives and about 35 other archives across the country.

The institutionalized anti-Semitism and political engagement [in the U.S. Army] had a crucial impact on U.S. policy toward immigration, the fate of Europe's Jews during and after the Holocaust, and the establishment of Israel.

Although it had earlier antecedents, the story that began to unfold started after World War I when many officers perceived Jews at home and abroad as a threat to the United States. It was widely held that Communism was a Jewish conspiracy, that the Jews launched the Russian Revolution and controlled the Soviet Union. Some high-ranking officers believed that the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" constituted proof of a Jewish conspiracy for world domination that included subversion of the United States. Military Intelligence sent copies of the "Protocols" to all its officers as "guides" in studying the Jewish "problem." The army reaction to this Jewish threat took on various dimensions. Extensive investigations by anti-Semitic American military attaches across Europe supposedly proved the link between Jews and Communism. Officers in Europe and Washington supported counter-revolutionary forces in Poland and Russia even if these led to widespread pogroms. As one intelligence report noted, "a pogrom of the Jews would be a simple solution to Bolshevik rule." The officer corps actively opposed Jewish immigration to the United States, arguing that Jews were racially inferior and political subversive forces would endanger the future of America. Officers actually wrote official reports stating that the "Jewish scum" must be kept out to preserve the purity of America's "Nordic race." Military Intelligence and army opposition were significant factors in closing America to Jews through the racial quota system established in 1924, which essentially shut off Jewish immigration to the United States.

The evidence indicated that those officers involved were fairly representative of the

officer corps and that among these were prominent military men in decision-making capacities. Anti-Semitism was manifested in the ideas and activities of most military attaches in Europe, including the military attaché in Nazi Germany. Also involved were the Chiefs of Military Intelligence between 1918 and 1944; the Chief of Naval Intelligence during World War II; commandants of the Army War College in Washington, D.C.; top generals in Plans and Operations; and such well-known generals as Patton, Wedemeyer, Stratemeyer and MacArthur's chief of intelligence, General Willoughby.

In attitude, policy and personnel, the initial investigations of the alleged Jewish "menace" in the 1920s laid the foundation for the Army's later response to the Holocaust. Some officers opposed the admission of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany on the grounds that they were racially inferior and would damage the American gene pool. Former Assistant Chief of Staff, General Moseley, proclaimed that Jewish refugees must be "sterilized" before entering the United States. Others believed that Jews would bring Communist subversion into the country. It was also held that American Jews were undermining U.S. national interest by damaging U.S. relations with Nazi Germany. Many officers urged avoiding a war with Germany despite persecution of the Jews and Nazi conquests in Eastern Europe. The U.S. military attaché to Nazi Germany, Colonel Truman Smith, worked closely with Charles Lindbergh and the American First Committee to keep America out of World War II. Smith engaged in this isolationist political activity while serving as General Marshall's chief expert on Germany. Smith shared Lindbergh's pro-German and anti-Jewish sentiments, and even advised Lindbergh on his speeches.

Even after America entered the war, the army strongly resisted every suggestion and initiative to rescue Jews from persecution and genocide. In a major policy paper, the Chief of Naval Intelligence argued that Jewish "refugee traffic" was merely a money-making scheme that constituted a danger to wartime security by sneaking Jewish spies and subversives into America, on whom they make a substantial profit. In this regard, particularly crucial documents emerged from the army file I discovered on Palestine during and after the war. Publicly, the army told Jewish groups it was doing all that was militarily feasible to assist Jews and wished it could do more to alleviate their plight. Secretly, though, the Chief of Military Intelligence in 1943 stated bluntly, "Arabs and Jews are of importance only in so far as security is concerned..." Indeed, he spent an entire year in a secret political campaign undermining not only efforts of the U.S. government to possibly do anything but in counteracting private efforts by Jewish or-

ganizations. He actually drew up a program to have the U.S. government prevent Jewish rallies (such as those at Madison Square Garden) urging action to stop the genocide and open Palestine to refugees.

The longstanding and deeply embedded tradition of anti-Semitic attitudes and political engagement helps explain the failure of the army to bomb the gas chambers at Auschwitz. At the time, the army claimed that such bombing missions were not feasible from a technical or logistical point. Army defenders still hold to this today. Nonetheless, historians have shown not only that it was possible to successfully bomb the gas chambers but that the military never seriously considered whether it could be done. And my study offers considerable evidence that the reluctance by the army to assist Jews was strongly influenced by indifference and anti-Semitism.

When the army rationalization for non-action (e.g., wartime security, diversion of resources, inability to reach Jews) disappeared with total victory over Nazi Germany, the army position on Jews still did not change. Initially, of course, soldiers liberating the camps were shocked and quite sympathetic to Holocaust survivors. But soon this sympathy turned to revulsion toward survivors and there emerged a growing sympathy for the sufferings of Germans. The army's indifference and anti-Semitic attitudes toward Holocaust survivors created a major scandal. Moreover, the army continued to use longstanding charges of racial, geopolitical and subversive Jewish threats to resist allowing Holocaust survivors to emigrate to America or Palestine. "Top

Secret" reports I uncovered also showed that the army tried for years to prevent the creation of Israel. Key generals argued that the Jewishshaddeceivedand manipulated the President, Congress and the American public into supporting Zionism against the national interest of the United States. These top officers believed the United States was about to lose the strategic Middle East and its oil while the Soviet Union simultaneously won over the Arabs and Jewish-Communists established in Israel.

The persistence of anti-Semitism in the officer corps after the 1940s is a much more complex question and more difficult to identify and assess. Significant changes could already be detected by World War II. America became more tolerant and progressive; and with the wartime expansion of the army into the millions, the officer corps likewise became more diverse in makeup and attitudes. But anti-Semitism seemed to pervade the older officers and those in the upper ranks. After World War II, the army still investigated Jews and, as late as 1946, commissioned a secret study on the link between Jews and Communism. How much changed and how fast thereafter this occurred cannot be determined because the internal army records are only available until about 1950. What is certain, nonetheless, is that an important clique of retired officers continued to work privately to combat what they perceived to be a Jewish threat to America into the 1970s and 1980s. They still claimed that secret Jewish forces were manipulating the American government and people.

There were, of course, throughout the first half of the 20th century officers who were free of anti-Semitism; others probably just held general social prejudices. These types were much more evident during and after World War II and the Holocaust. Jewish soldiers, for example, report that anti-Semitism seemed to decrease the longer soldiers lived together and the further they got from the United States. There was apparently no anti-Semitism in combat. But I did not find any challenges by career officers to the anti-Semitism in Military Intelligence reports or the racist teachings and attitudes expressed at the Army War College. The most clear-cut, courageous and honorable stand against anti-Semitism came from two generals (Lanham and Palmer) who did so despite great risks to their careers. In 1946 and again during the peak of the McCarthy attacks on the army itself, they heroically defended a Jewish officer that Military Intelligence charged with subversion merely because he was a Jew.

In shedding light on a previously neglected dimension of the history of the U.S. Army, my research shows not only the pervasive anti-Semitism but also the political engagement of certain officers against an

alleged Jewish threat. It expands our understanding of the U.S. response to the Holocaust by demonstrating that anti-Semitism did play a crucial role in the army's opposition to refugees, rescue and the bombing of concentration camps. Equally important, it reveals that even well-educated elites are susceptible to the most extreme forms of racial anti-Semitism and conspiratorial fears normally only associated with the fringes of the political spectrum. And the book establishes how difficult it is to alter or eradicate such prejudices once they are deeply embedded in the culture and personnel of government institutions. Even after the Holocaust, prominent retired generals went to their deaths in the 1970s and 1980s still believing in a Jewish threat to America.

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The Feminist's Corner

A Review Essay
by Sarah Barbara Watstein

Our Sisters' Promised Land: Women, Politics and Israeli-Palestinian Coexistence. By Ayala Emmett. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press. If you are interested in women's political activism in the ever-changing Israeli political climate and in the broader world of women in politics, don't let this powerful and timely book pass you by. If you are interested in the experience and political agendas of those groups and/or minorities on political margins—as contrasted to the experience and political agendas of those at the political center—you will be doubly rewarded. Here are manuscripts from fiction writers, essayists and poets. Very much a book about identity, this is also a book about equality and gender. It is as much a book about nation-ness and about borders as it is about global-local connections. Written in 1994, this book focuses on women's peace activism in Israel and offers critical political insights into the transition from conflict to coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians. The reader will find, as the author did, that women's acts of protest in 1990 foreshadowed the official agreement between Israel and the PLO in 1993, and that their objection to the Labor government's (partial) peace position in 1993 predicted ongoing simmerings among Palestinians. Emmett drew on her fieldwork in Israel in 1990, two years before the Labor Party won the elections, and in 1993, several months after Rabin became Israel's prime minister. The book is filled with excerpts from interviews that give voice to the women who played vitally important yet often overlooked roles

HOLOCAUST PHOTOGRAPHS

That skinny dark eyed ten year old is me at school in Kovno ghetto in forty-three running the Boston woods to try escaping goyim ganging up on me in safety

Now its forty-nine I've come to nothing changes much its Israel the Russians atheists and Muslims organize the world to guarantee our right to die

Give me one good reason Lord just one besides you wanted it and so its done why dreams of beautiful and good and true the world creates somehow can't take the Jew

A little here a little there must go that what is left is deads no problem though.

—Richard Sherwin

in the political transformations of the contemporary Middle East.

Kiddish for a Child Not Born. By *Imre Kertesz*. *Evanston: Northwestern University Press.* This novel is a tale of identity and memory—the story of a middle-aged man taking stock of his life in the shadow of the Holocaust. The story unfolds at a writer's retreat as the narrator, a survivor of the Holocaust, explains to a friend that he cannot bring a child into a world where the Holocaust occurred and could occur again. In an intricate narrative we learn of the narrator's myriad disappointments: his unsuccessful literary career, his failed marriage, his ex-wife's new family and children—children that could have been his own.

Budapest Diary: In Search of the Motherbook. By *Susan Rubin Suleiman*. *Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.* Susan Rubin was a little girl when her parents fled through darkened fields to escape the Communist regime in Hungary in 1949. This autobiographical narrative is a poignant piece of self-revelation, sprinkled with some trenchant observations on the way the dead hand of history has weighed down the former Warsaw Pact countries. This is living prose at its best.

From a World Apart: A Little Girl in the Concentration Camps. By *Francine Christophe*. *Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.* Francine Christophe's account begins in 1939 when her father was called to fight with the French army. A year later, the Germans took him prisoner. Hearing of the Jewish arrests in France from his prison camp, he begged his wife and daughter to flee Paris for the unoccupied southern zone. They were arrested during the attempted escape and subsequently interned in the French camps of Poitiers, Drancy and Beaune-la-Rolande. In 1944, they were deported to Bergen-Belsen in Germany. In this work, Christophe relates the trials that she and her mother underwent. You live the child's experiences as if you had gone hand-in-hand with her through the death camps.

A Spiritual Life: A Jewish Feminist Journey. By *Merle Feld*. *State University of New York Press.* Interweaving poems with personal reflections, Merle Feld invites the reader on a spiritual journey through well-known paths not often associated with the sacred. In search of a meaningful Jewish self-identity, she draws on her own experiences as wife, mother and Jewish-community feminist. This book will interest feminist theologians and historians as well as anyone seeking paths toward the holy.

The Defiant Muse: Hebrew Feminist Po-

ems from Antiquity to the Present, A Bilingual Anthology. Edited by *Shirley Kaufman, Galit Hasan-Rokem and Tamar S. Hess*. *New York: The Feminist Press.* This volume includes 100 poems by more than 50 writers, many never before available in English. Recovering work from Israel and from the Diaspora, from ancient times to the present, the collection illuminates the tremendous breath and diversity of the women's poetic tradition in Hebrew. The voices presented here—alternately wise, strong, aggrieved and joyous—redeem the cultural expression and experience of women. The poems appear in Hebrew with English translations on opposite pages, and the volume includes a comprehensive introduction as well as full biographical and bibliographical notes on the poets.

Paper Bridges: Selected Poems of Kadya Molodowsky. Translated and edited by *Kathryn Hellerstein*. *Detroit: Wayne State University Press.* Kadya Molodowsky (1894-1975) was among the most accomplished and prolific of modern Yiddish poets. Between 1927 and 1974, she published six major books of poetry as well as fiction, plays, essays and children's tales. Molodowsky participated in nearly every aspect of Yiddish literary culture that existed in her lifetime—first in Poland where she lived until 1935, when she emigrated, and then in America. Before her emigration, she taught young children in the Yiddish schools of Warsaw. In New York, she supported herself by writing for the Yiddish press and founded a literary journal, which she edited for nearly 30 years. Briefly during the 1950s, she wrote and edited Yiddish publications in the new state of Israel. She returned there in 1971 to receive the Itzik Manger Prize, the most prestigious award in Yiddish letters. With regard to the image of the paper bridge, an image Molodowsky uses in her poems, Jewish legend has it that when the Messiah comes, the Jews will cross into Paradise on a miraculously strengthened bridge of paper while the Gentiles will walk on a bridge made from iron, a substance lowly regarded in Jewish folklore.

No Room of Their Own: Gender and Nation in Israeli Women's Fiction. By *Yael S. Feldman*. *New York: Columbia University Press.* Feldman's work is a comparative analysis of recent Israeli fiction by women and some of its Western models—from Virginia Wolfe and Simone de Beauvoir to Marilyn French and Marie Cardinal. Feldman shows the richness and subtleties of Israeli women's fiction as she explores the themes of gender and nation, as well as the (non)representation of the "New Hebrew Woman" in five authors—the "foremothers" of the contemporary boom in Israeli women's fiction: Amalia Kahana

Carmon, Shulamith Hareven, Netiva Ben Yehuda, Ruth Almog and Shulamit Lapid.

Women's Holocaust Writing: Memory and Imagination. By *S. Lillian Kremer*. *Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.* This text explores English-language fiction by emigre women living in America whose creative writing is influenced by Holocaust memory and experience, and fiction by American-born women encountering the Holocaust through research and imagination. The author's interest is in the distinctive ordeal and response of women as given voice and visibility before the end of World War II. Cultural and literary analysis is provided for Ilona Karmel, Hana Demetz, Susan Fromberg Schaeffer, Cynthia Ozick, Marge Piercy and Norma Rosen. If you are interested in the Holocaust novel as genre, or if you have read fiction by any of the authors noted, this examination will be worth your while. In her conclusion, the author notes, "The fiction examined in this book self-consciously ponders history, reflects on the tragedy and its implications, rescues memory from oblivion, and petitions future generations to accept the legacy of the Shoah and remember in perpetuity. The novelists inscribe the Holocaust images on our consciousness and thereby sustain memory."

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Derrida Remembers Levinas

Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas
by Jacques Derrida (translated
by Pascale-Anne Braut and
Michael Naas)
Stanford University Press

A Review Essay
by Cliff Edwards

The two names linked on the title page of this little volume are enough to attract many readers and warn many others away. On the one hand, Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida are two of the seminal thinkers of our time; on the other hand, Levinas can be difficult enough to understand but, when interpreted by Jacques Derrida, the task may be viewed by many as impossible.

Levinas, the great Lithuanian-born Jewish thinker who introduced the work of his teachers Husserl and Heidegger to France, spent his life searching for a "hospitality" that opens to "caring justice." He examined anti-Semitism and the possibilities of Jew-

ish-Christian dialogue, explored the meaning of Sinai and Jerusalem, and engaged in meditations on death and the treasures of the Talmud. Derrida, born in 1930 of a "petit-bourgeois Jewish family" in the suburbs of Algiers, teaching in the Sorbonne of Paris, brought to birth the movement called "deconstruction." *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* includes the appreciation delivered at the cemetery at Pantin on December 7, 1995, on the death of Levinas and a lecture given a year later, December 7, 1996, at the Sorbonne for an "Homage to Emmanuel Levinas" entitled "Face and Sinai."

How is one to summarize Derrida's exposition of the life-work of Levinas? Focusing, in large part, on Levinas's major work, *Totality and Infinity* (1961), Derrida traces the development of an ethic from an original "welcoming the Other," and the presence of a "third" person requiring us to open our unique relationship with the "Other" to a "comparison of incomparables." According to Derrida, Levinas discovered the pre-ethical origin of ethics in the encounter with a "feminine alterity" that interrupts the self, a welcoming of others that belongs to a "messianic order," a taking responsibility for the Other that names us both "host" and "hostage."

Levinas's thought was not content with philosophical generalities but sought to en-

gage the current political violence, the possibilities of the "State of David" culminating in "the Messianic State." He viewed Sadat's trip to Jerusalem as a path toward peace, and Zionism as the possibility of "political invention," a "humanity of the Torah." Meditating on the "hospitality" at the origins of an ethic, Levinas could affirm:

To shelter the other in one's own land or home,

To tolerate the presence of the landless and homeless

on the 'ancestral soil,' so jealously, so meanly loved—

Is that the criterion of humanness?

Unquestionably so.

The deep feeling of appreciation of Derrida for Emmanuel Levinas and his work is evident on every page of this little book. Derrida's "adieu" to Levinas is not only a witness to the vulnerability and interruption essential to life but is also an a-dieu, "to God" or "in-the-presence-of-God" that might be translated as Levinas's word to us and Derrida's word to Levinas: "God bless."

Cliff Edwards is director of the Religious Studies Division of Virginia Commonwealth University and editorial consultant.

Jerusalem and Tel Aviv

Athens in Jerusalem: Classical Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew by Yaacov Shavit (translated by Chaya Naor and Niki Werner)
London and Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization

A Review Essay
by Jonathan Skolnik

The English reader who would ponder Tertullian's famous, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem," now has Yaacov Shavit's broad survey of the impact of classical antiquity on modern Jewish culture. *Athens in Jerusalem* is a revised and expanded version of Shavit's Hebrew original, which was first published in 1992. But the reader should pay careful attention to the book's title, for Shavit's aim is not to offer a new version of the venerable contrast of Hebrew thought with Greek thought (with the aim of uncovering essential differences in each of their world-views). Rather, Shavit provides a rich survey of the complex ways this dualistic model of Western culture (Jew vs. Greek) has informed the long process of Jewish "self-discovery" and "self-rebuilding" in the modern age (p. 7). Although Shavit draws on an impressive range of primary and sec-

ondary sources spanning the millennia, his main focus centers around the Haskalah and the modern Jewish identities that emerged from it. His purpose is to illustrate how the Jewish encounter with both classical culture and with the Western image of a Jewish/Greek dichotomy (typified by thinkers such as Matthew Arnold) led "to a new understanding of Jewish history [through which] Judaism was perceived as pluralistic, dynamic, even syncretistic entity" (p. 11).

Shavit's survey is not a systematic introduction to the question of "Hellenism" and modern Jewish culture, and the reader will quite often feel lost in the wide-ranging discussion. Yet, this book is not without value for the reader who is looking for such an introduction; Shavit's references, footnotes and parentheses are windows that provide a view of some fascinating moments throughout history. Shavit's book touches on the image of *tarbut yevanit* (Greek culture) in classical Jewish sources, the reception of philosophy and secular culture in Berlin Haskalah, the German-Jewish poet Heinrich Heine's response to German Graecophilia, medieval Jewish anthologies of aphorisms from Greek philosophers, the Jewish reaction and response to 19th-century conceptions of "race," and contemporary cultural-political debates in Israel between secular and religious forces. It is this contemporary dimension that hovers in the background of even the most historically removed topics addressed in *Athens in Jerusalem*: the tension between "Jerusalem" and "Tel Aviv" as the symbolic poles of modern Jewish life.

Jacob Neusner is an example of one critic who has faulted Shavit's wide temporal scope for not being able to produce sustainable historical arguments. But what I find intriguing about Shavit's impressive ability to traverse the ages for apposite examples are the historical questions that emerge from these juxtapositions. If, before the age of Enlightenment, the "Greek mirror" was the means by which two religious world-views were contrasted, how are boundaries to be drawn when the redefinition of Judaism as "culture" depends on a "secularization of the Jewish past" (the title of Shavit's 12th chapter)? Shavit's discussions on the role of the "Greek mirror" in shaping new notions of Jewish ethics (chapter six), aesthetics (chapter eight) and politics (chapter 15) assemble a wide body of evidence that suggests such a "secularization" could never signify a complete break. A "new Jewish culture" would be characterized by "the situation Josephus had ascribed to the Greeks—the simultaneous existence of diverse and even contradictory historical traditions" (p. 380).

Jonathan Skolnik is assistant professor of German at the University of Oregon.

TU B'SHVAT

The poem I should have written and read for the Tu B'Shvat Seder

Staggering drunk up
High Street on wines and prayers
illuminating
full moon midnight the mind cold
sober drunk on plum perfume

the soul still dancing
kabbalist through the holy
orchards and gardens
of Israel Eden the
birthday songs of almonds and

apples, the body
sweating happy in its high
and hearing lions
roaring through the stars on watch
the night the Temple reborn

the chosen remnant
blessing finally the Lord,
the priestly service
of creation blossoming
plums and almonds, Aaron's staff.

—Richard Sherwin

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.

- Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948.** By Anita Shapira. Stanford University Press.
- The Meaning of Yiddish.** By Benjamin Harshav. Stanford University Press.
- What is Judaism? An Interpretation for the Present Age.** By Emil L. Fackenheim. Syracuse University Press (Syracuse edition, 1999).
- An Episode of Jewish Romanticism: Franz Rosenzweig's The Star of Redemption.** By Ernest Rubinstein.
- Hebrew Study From Ezra to Ben-Yehuda.** Edited by William Horbury. T & T Clark, Ltd.; Edinburgh, Scotland.
- The German-Jewish Dialogue: An Anthology of Literary Texts, 1749-1993.** Edited by Ritchie Robertson. New York: Oxford University Press.
- The Israel Connection and American Jews.** By David Mittelberg. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- These Are the Words: A Vocabulary of Jewish Spiritual Life.** By Arthur Green. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing.
- Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999.** By Benny Morris. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc.
- An Underground Life: Memoirs of a Gay Jew in Nazi Berlin.** By Gad Beck. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Jews of the Amazon: Self-Exile in Paradise.** By Ariel Segal. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society.
- King David's Harp: Autobiographical Essays by Jewish Latin American Writers.** Edited by Stephen A. Sadow. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- The Collected Stories of Moacyr Scliar.** Translated by Eloah F. Giacomelli. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- National Variations in Jewish Identity: Implications for Jewish Education.** Edited by Steven M. Cohen and Gabriel Horenczyk. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- No Room of Their Own: Gender and Nation in Israeli's Women's Fiction.** By Yael S. Feldman. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and Its Place in Judaism.** By Hyam Maccoby. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Contemporary Jewish Writing in Austria: An Anthology.** Edited by Dagmar C.G. Lorenz. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times.** By Raphael Patai. Princeton University Press.
- Profane Scriptures: Reflections on the Dialogue With the Bible in Modern Hebrew Poetry.** By Ruth Kartun-Blum. Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press.
- The Jewish Search for a Usable Past.** By David G. Roskies. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Theatrical Performance During the Holocaust: Texts, Documentaries, Memoirs.** Edited by Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Press.
- Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture.** By David G. Roskies. Syracuse University Press.
- In Search of American Jewish Culture.** By Stephen J. Whitfield. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies Under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944.** By Radu Ioanid. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher.
- Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism.** By Daniel Boyarin. Stanford University Press.
- Spinoza: A Life.** By Steven Nadler. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Letter to My Children: From Romania to America Via Auschwitz.** By Rudolph Tessler. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- A Durable Peace: Israel and Its Place Among the Nations.** By Benjamin Netanyahu. New York: Warner Books Inc.
- The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews.** By Arthur A. Goren. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Master of the Return: A Novel.** By Tova Reich. Syracuse University Press.
- The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years.** By Lee I. Levine. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Independence Park: The Lives of Gay Men in Israel.** By Amir Sunakal Fink and Jacob Press. Stanford University Press.
- Random Harvest: The Novellas of Bialik.** Translated by David Patterson and Ezra Spicchandler. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- From Mesopotamia to Modernity.** Edited by Burton L. Visotzky and David E. Fishman. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- The Berlin Haskalah and German Religious Thought: Orphans of Knowledge.** By David Sorkin. London: Vallentine Mitchell.
- The End of Days: A Memoir of the Holocaust.** By Helen Sendyk. Syracuse University Press.
- Bociany.** By Chava Rosenfarb. Syracuse University Press.
- Of Lodz and Love.** By Chava Rosenfarb. Syracuse University Press.
- Himmler's Jewish Tailor: The Story of Holocaust Survivor Jacob Frank.** By Mark Lewis and Jacob Frank. Syracuse University Press.
- Tangled Loyalties: The Life and Times of Ilya Ehrenburg.** By Joshua Rubenstein. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- A Spiritual Life: A Jewish Feminist Journey.** By Merle Feld. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Antisemitism.** By Milton Shain. London: Bowerdean Publishing Co.

Understanding the Holocaust

The Holocaust: A German Historian Examines the Genocide
by Wolfgang Benz
New York: Columbia University Press

A Review Essay
by Paul Bartrop

On the jacket cover of this book the statement is made that Wolfgang Benz "makes an important contribution by bringing [a] German perspective" to understanding the Holocaust. A close reading of his short study (186 pages) shows this to be both right and wrong. The statement is right in that this is, indeed, an important contribution; it is wrong, however, or at least misleading, in asserting that the book brings a distinctly German perspective to the issue.

Benz has written a succinct text that is objective, relevant and devoid of any specific national orientation or flavor.

This is, of course, to the good. Benz may have been writing for a German audience but the way he has gone about his task should strike a chord with readers of any background. His juxtaposition of documentary analysis, personal testimony and a general history of both the Third Reich and the Holocaust weave an attractive fabric that is highly accessible to a broad readership.

While this is a general history of the Holocaust, it does not attempt to be encyclopedic in scope as have some earlier histories. This obviously presents Benz with some problems concerning content and detail, however, he successfully negotiates this by his clever use of tightly focused case studies that illustrate the essential historical issues necessary in any treatment of the Holocaust.

There are some things Benz does not address in this book such as the previous history of German anti-Semitism, the complicity or otherwise of the people in Nazi

Jewish persecution, or how Nazism was able to surface and succeed in taking control of Germany. His interests do not lie in these areas.

Instead, he has devoted his energies to producing a study that examines how it was that Nazi politics set itself the task of isolating, dehumanizing and then annihilating millions of Jews (specifically) and other ethnic minorities (more generally) in Europe during the period of the Third Reich.

This little book is a valuable addition to the historiography of the Holocaust and certainly makes a worthwhile contribution to the vast body of material we already have. Originally published in German, an excellent English translation by Australian scholar Jane Sydenham-Kwiet has rendered Benz's study both easy and enjoyable to read—even if the subject matter is disturbing. Overall, it is to be recommended.

Paul Bartrop is a research fellow in the School of Australian and International Studies, Deakin University (Australia), and a contributing editor.



Nonprofit organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Richmond, Virginia
Permit No. 869

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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