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# MENORAH

## REVIEW



NUMBER 47 • CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY • FALL 1999

### *For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought*

#### **Physician-Assisted Suicide**

1999 Brown Lecture

*The following two articles are excerpted from the lecture by Dr. Melvin I. Urofsky and the response by Dr. Jack D. Spiro on the issue of "physician-assisted suicide" for the Selma and Jacob Brown Lecture held last March. The annual lecture is sponsored by the Center for Judaic Studies and the Friends of the Library of Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Urofsky is professor of history and director of the Center for Public Policy at VCU and Dr. Spiro is affiliate professor of religious studies and director of the Center for Judaic Studies at VCU.*

In matters of death and dying, and especially with assisted suicide, the voices in the debate are many and diverse. They range from those who believe in the full autonomy of the individual to those who argue that since only God can give life, then only God may end it. Within the medical profession, a group most familiar with death and dying, there are enormous deviations of opinion. The professional societies, like the American Medical Association, condemn assisted suicide but polls of practicing physicians indicate a majority of doctors favor it.

Those of us who teach constitutional and legal history constantly remind our students that law is a reflection of society, that one cannot understand the development of the law or of constitutional doctrine except if one sees it in the larger context of social, economic, political and cultural development. There is no subject in which this lesson can be learned more clearly than in the debate concerning assisted suicide and the connected question of the so-called "right to die."

Let me quickly review the legal terrain. In 1976, we have our first important right-to-die case, that of Karen Ann Quinlan. The date is important because, as you can see, this debate concerning the right-to-die and assisted suicide is recent. Law normally develops slowly, over decades or centuries;

this issue is like a speeding freight train. During the next 15 years, most state courts approved the notion that a person who is on life support has the right to stop treatment, even if that decision should lead to death. In addition, courts acknowledged that a surrogate, usually a family member, could act for one who was incompetent, such as a person in a coma. The Supreme Court, in the early 90s, constitutionalized this right in the Cruzan case. In addition, state legislatures as well as Congress recognized the validity of living wills. All of these developments are part of the growing patients' rights movement, the desire of people to gain more control over their health care decisions.

To many people, it is one thing for a terminally ill person who is suffering great pain and loss of dignity to request that life support be withdrawn; the resulting death is, in many ways, "natural," even a "blessing." But they do not understand how someone who is not terminally ill, who may have months—perhaps even years—of life left to live, can deliberately elect death.

The large number of volumes on library shelves dealing with suicide from ethical, sociological, psychological, religious and metaphysical viewpoints show conclusively that it is far from a moot issue today. For some people, taking one's life, no matter what the circumstances, is wrong and, even if not in violation of secular law, is an affront to God's law. For other's, one's life is one's own and each person must determine whether it is worth living.

To tie the notion of suicide to contemporary law, the issue must be cast not in religious terms but in the framework of personal autonomy. But the questions are far more complex than the simplistic and often heard "Whose life is it anyway?"

The strongest argument in favor of allowing individual discretion is that of autonomy, which has become a major issue in modern law. The Supreme Court, even while downplaying privacy, has emphasized the right of personal autonomy, which it finds embedded in the liberty interests protected by the 14th amendment. Under this line of reasoning, individuals have, within very broad parameters, the right to govern their own lives and to decide, if competent, when to end their lives by refusing continued medical care.

The potent arguments against suicide are those grounded in morality. While the major western religions do not object to the voluntary termination of medical treatment, especially heroic measures, for the terminally ill, they all draw the line at suicide.

The debate surrounding physician-assisted suicide often begins—and ends—with the activities of Jack Kevorkian, the so-called "Dr. Death" who has reportedly assisted more than 130 people to end their lives. But the issues involved transcend the activities of the retired pathologist. He has pushed the envelope, offending many people, but he has also become a hero to those who believe that society ignores the needs and wishes of those for whom life no longer has any value. Most importantly, Kevorkian has forced a public debate concerning the options people should have at the end of life.

Doctors are sworn to protect life but, far more than most people in society, they see death. They see people so diseased and wracked with pain that death is preferable to life, and they are unique in having the power and the resources to bring that release. Although some newspapers condemned Kevorkian for "disgracing" the medical profession, doctors may, both legally and ethically, help patients to die.

The doctor who agrees to forego treatment or to help patients avoid further treatment is not assisting in suicide. Courts have consistently ruled that foregoing treatment is not suicide because the act of refusing treatment is not the cause of death; people die from their illnesses, not from withdrawal of treatment. Suicide is self-inflicted death; the illness that leads to death is not self-inflicted.

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To some people, this appears as sophistry, the drawing of fine lines to disguise or rationalize murder. But the law is made of fine distinctions, not just in the criminal area but in civil law as well. One has to take into account the facts of the situation, the motives of the actors, the rights of both society and the individual. Nor is the law immune from morality or compassion and that is as it ought to be.

Because doctors can help their patients die as well as live, it is not surprising that people turn to them for assistance. Some doctors are affronted by such requests; they have sworn to heal people, not kill them, and they refuse to be accessories to suicide because of their own deeply felt moral convictions. On the other hand, many doctors will one way or another quietly assist their patients to commit suicide.

Doctors, medical ethicists and politicians are widely split over the issue of physician-assisted suicide. The general public, at least according to polls, seems to favor the idea although there are significant groups opposed. It is a public policy issue of great moment and we, as a nation, are going through an important debate concerning the merits of allowing doctors to assist their patients not just to die peacefully but to actively end their lives.

If one reads the pages of the official medical organization journals or listens to testimony before legislative committees one would think that doctors overwhelmingly oppose physician-assisted suicide. Historically, the role of doctors has been to save life and ease pain.

In presentations to legislatures and in briefs to courts, medical associations have offered palliative care as an alternative to assisted suicide. Assuming that it is pain that leads many incurably ill people to seek death, the medical profession offers pain management, the use of drugs to alleviate suffering. While this certainly seems to make sense, the fact is that when pain gets to a certain level the amount of morphine (the drug of choice in terminally ill pain relief) necessary to stop the pain reaches a lethal level.

The medical profession is comfortable with this so-called "double effect" of palliative care and sees it as an acceptable practice, one condoned by doctors, courts, hospitals and, quite often, families. A patient who is terminally ill and in pain is put on a morphine drip, with the amount of medication proportional to the level of pain. As the pain increases, so will the dosage. At some point, however, the quantity of morphine will be so great that it will depress the ability of the body to breathe and will lead to a quiet and painless death. Although the proximate cause of death will, in fact, be morphine overdose, the certificate will invariably ascribe death to the underlying illness.

There is no question that when pain can

be controlled, people are less interested in dying. But there are other issues, which pain management advocates ignore. Often, to alleviate intense pain the level of morphine, hydromorphone or methadone is so high as to dull the patient's senses. There are several steps in palliative care. Initially, strong medication can relieve the suffering without impairing the patient's mental alertness. But as the body either builds up resistance to the drug or the illness progresses the level of medication has to be increased. My aunt died in a hospice and at the end she was unconscious most of the day, free from pain but also totally unaware of her existence. And, of course, if one raises the morphine

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***The medical profession is comfortable with the so-called "double-effect" of palliative care and sees it as an acceptable practice, one condoned by doctors, courts, hospitals and, quite often, families.***

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drip high enough, death results.

Not everyone agrees with the view that if pain can be managed, then people will not want to commit suicide. In a study done in Holland, where physician-assisted suicide is permissible, studies seem to indicate that pain is not the main reason people seek to end their lives. They talk about loss of control or the deterioration in the quality of their lives. It is this aspect of illness and old age that many opponents of physician-assisted suicide either ignore or dismiss out-of-hand.

Finally, let me turn to the Supreme Court cases handed down just two years ago. Chief Justice Rehnquist's opinion is terribly simplistic. What is really interesting about the opinions is that five members of the Court, even while agreeing with the decision not to constitutionalize assisted suicide, nonetheless indicated that this was not a closed issue for them. Given different scenarios in which the states foreclosed end-of-life options, these justices indicated that they would be willing to take another look at the problem.

The most interesting of these opinions is that of David Souter, the only one of the justices to acknowledge the pain and suffering that underlay these cases. Souter spoke about individual autonomy and how under the 14th amendment new rights may be added to the pantheon if the issues rise to a high level of social value.

Will physician-assisted suicide ever rise to that level? I do not know but these things I do know:

- doctors are currently covertly and overtly

helping some of their patients die, covertly by prescribing medications that the patient can take in overdose and overtly through so-called palliative care, the morphine drip.

- the pain that a terminally ill patient suffers is not necessarily less because that person is not on life support, and I see no distinction between a person wanting to end that suffering by turning off the machine or ending the therapy (which is legal) and taking an overdose of a powerful drug (which is not legal).
- to ascribe a wish to die solely to pain is to ignore the quality of life involved and, in my mind, that is important. Merely being alive if one cannot live is not a life, it is a variety of hell.

- there is a danger that as health care costs rise, there will be pressure on the elderly, the infirm and the sick to end their lives so as not to be a burden on their families. Some studies indicate that as much as 80 percent of a person's total lifetime medical expenses are connected to illness in the last year of life. This is a real issue and this is the slippery slope that we do need to worry about. Here the Dutch example is not useful because in Holland everyone has fully covered health insurance. In the United States, as you know, health coverage is irregular and costs are high.

- I also worry about creating a two-tier system similar to what we now have in which the middle-class and the well-to-do can get good health care and the poor cannot. My roommate from college is a physician who believes in individual autonomy; I know he would help me to die if I asked him. What about people who do not have such access, who did not go to college, who don't have close ties to a doctor friend? Do we condemn them to a long, drawn-out death of pain and suffering?

In the end the issue is really that of individual choice and the individual suffering might well be an aunt or uncle, a parent, a child, a beloved spouse or companion, a friend or even oneself. All of us will die and the question of how we die is of great importance to us. Whose life is it? Whose decision should it be?

—By Melvin I. Urofsky

### ***A Response***

My purpose is to place Dr. Urofsky's discussion into a Jewish context. According to Halachah (Jewish law), are there ever circumstances in which there is an obligation to terminate life? Arthur Clough, who was not even Jewish, probably didn't realize he was summarizing the Jewish position in 1862 with his rhyming couplet:

*Thou shalt not kill but needst not strive  
Officiously to keep alive.*

Judaism distinguishes between passive and active euthanasia. If nothing remains but the persistent vegetative state of a "quasi-life" and there is certainty that the state is

irreversible, Halachah permits the cessation of all artificial means of keeping a person alive. It is also permissible to keep a patient comfortable and relieve pain even if, in so doing, it may slightly hasten death. If the two obligations of a physician conflict—namely, to prolong life and to relieve pain—there is no need to take the position that extending life must always take precedence.

But we must turn, of course, to the other form of euthanasia: the active kind, sometimes referred to as physician-assisted suicide. In this context, the very first issue I must mention is the deed of suicide itself. The Halachah is crystal-clear on this: Suicide is a graver misdeed than homicide. In the finality of taking one's own life—whether with assistance from another or not—there is no opportunity left to atone for the act of killing. Thus it is more sinful than homicide where the murderer still has the opportunity to atone.

The Talmudic statement that it is “against your will that you were born and against your will that you will die” clearly indicates the need to ultimately relinquish control over our own life and death to God. But this is unambiguously a matter left exclusively to God, not to other human beings including doctors or families or even the suffering person.

As for relieving a human being's suffering, the Halachah supports the alleviation of pain. Dr. Kathleen Foley, a pain specialist at Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, writes that “we undermedicate terribly in American medicine.” Pain is treatable. Of the more than 1,200 medical schools in the United States, at last count only six include courses on pain management and caring for the terminally ill. According to Jewish tradition, pain itself is a disease whose relief is an important medical objective.

An individual on the verge of death is called, in Hebrew, a “gosays.” The Halachah specifies what may and may not be done on behalf of a gosays. Here are two unequivocal passages from the Talmud and Shulchan Aruch:

1. *“A gosays is considered to be alive in every respect...To what may he be compared? To a flickering flame, which is extinguished as soon as one touches it. Whoever closes the eyes of the dying while the soul is about to depart is shedding blood.”*
2. *“It is forbidden to cause the gosays to die quickly, such as one who is moribund over a long period of time and cannot die. It is forbidden to remove the pillow from under him on the assumption that certain kinds of birdfeathers prevent his death. So, too, one may not move him from his place. Similarly, one cannot place the keys of the synagogue beneath his head [on the assumption that their presence hastens death],*

*or move him so that he may die. But if there is something that delays his death, such as a nearby woodchopper making noise, or there is salt on his tongue, and these prevent his speedy death, one can remove them, because this does not involve any action at all but rather the removal of the preventative agent.”*

The key to these Talmudic texts is this:

In treating the gosays, the dying person, Jewish tradition permits the removal of any obstacles that prolong dying and prohibits any action that hastens death. Judaism distinguishes between hastening a person's death, which is prohibited, and letting nature take its course, which is permitted. Once a medical treatment ceases to be effective and beneficial, it ceases to be medicine.

And so we must conclude that killing oneself or appointing another to do the killing is unequivocally counter to the most fundamental concepts of ethical obligation and moral responsibility in Judaism. I agree with this position, not because it is the best solution but because I object to killing a person regardless of the circumstances.

I am profoundly concerned about the issue that is sometimes called a “duty to die.” Many elderly people may feel “obligated” to die because of pressures, subtle or otherwise, indirect or otherwise, from family members to avoid consuming family resources or to avoid the anguish of family members in the relentless caring of the terminally ill. We even read about this dangerous possibility in Derek Humphry and Mary Clement's book, *Freedom to Die*, as an effective way of containing costs. Here's the way they put it: “Like it or not, the connections between the right-to-die and the costs, value and allocation of health care resources are part of the political debate, albeit frequently unspoken...The right-to-die movement is gaining momentum in response to a legitimate societal problem—the emotional, physical and economic toll of the dying experience on not only government, employers, hospitals and insurance companies, but on families as well.”

Killing people saves a lot of money. And even if we were to give this argument a modicum of respectability, the *New England Journal of Medicine* informs us that the projected cost savings would be less than 0.07 percent of total health expenditures for the entire nation per year. For the sake of convenience, thrift and the avoidance of the anguish that accompanies care for the dying by loved ones, beware the slippery slope. Dr. Kevorkian is the personification of the slope as he slipped down from letting the person pull the cord to actually giving the fatal injection. Now multiply him to the massive scale of an entire society or the world.

There is an alternative—the relatively new sanctuary for terminally ill Americans.

It is the hospice where we can feel protected from pressures by family, professionals and society itself to end our lives. The hospice is prepared to deal with our final pilgrimage; it knows how to deal with the palliation of pain and the relief of suffering. It knows how to keep company, loving and compassionately, with those who are reaching the boundaries. The hospice, in its commitment to bringing the terminally ill back to their own homes and the bosom of their own loved ones, has renewed the centuries-old concept of *ars moriendi*—the art of dying, not the science of either saving or killing. In past centuries, the art was no less painful or fearful. But it happened in the comforting presence of loved ones and caring doctors “watching,” as Dr. Maimonides said, “over the life and death of [God's] creatures.” Not the impersonal intervention of biomedical science, not the dull lights and alien beeps of intensive care units nor strangers in sanitized uniforms—but fellow human beings keeping company, watching, holding our hands and petting our brows—not in the arcane chambers of medical technology but in the vigilant hearts and hands of family and friends. Another Jewish law about the “gosays” I did not mention before is this: “From the moment one is in the grip of death, it is forbidden to leave them alone.”

The most agonizing pain is the pain you cannot share with others, but in the fellowship of the broken there can be a measure of solace.

—By Jack D. Spiro

## What Price Prejudice?

Reflections on his recently published book, *What Price Prejudice? Christian Anti-Semitism in America* by Frank E. Eakin Jr. A Stimulus Book, New York: Paulist Press

A Review Essay by Frank E. Eakin Jr.

*What Price Prejudice?* grew out of an earlier study focused on American Judaism in its broadest scope—the social, economic, political and religious implications of the Jews' settlement in the Colonies/United States. As that study progressed, two things became apparent. First, numerous effective books were appearing, covering either the breadth of the Jewish experience in the United States (as Abraham J. Karp, *A History of the Jews in America*, 1997) or focused on some specific aspect of that experience (as Jack Wertheimer, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America*, 1993). Second, as

the research and writing progressed, it was clear that the part of the story that most interested me and that I, as a Christian, could most effectively address is the issue of anti-Semitism (in the book, p. 12, I assert my preference for "anti-Judaism" for precise reference but concede to the popular use of "anti-Semitism"). This research offered the opportunity to exercise my varied interests—Biblical, historical and contemporary social analysis. The book, which assuredly does not attempt to answer all the questions that abound relative to the absurdity of anti-Semitism and that are raised with renewed intensity resultant to the horrors of the Holocaust, will hopefully contribute to the dialogue focused on both anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. It helps to move forward that dialogue, it will have accomplished much that the author intended.

***What Price Prejudice? is intended for both Jewish and Christian readers, conveying to Jews a sense of the convoluted reasoning that has led to Christian anti-Semitism but, more importantly, encouraging Christians to evaluate...theological understandings that have fueled anti-Semitism's manifestations.***

*What Price Prejudice?* is intended for both Jewish and Christian readers, conveying to Jews a sense of the convoluted reasoning that has led to Christian anti-Semitism but, more importantly, encouraging Christians to evaluate anew long-held Biblical and theological understandings that have encouraged anti-Semitism's manifestations. Since the book is not intended to give comprehensive coverage, a rather lengthy bibliography, divided into various sections, is included. The focus of the bibliography is on books rather than articles. Unless one is associated with an academic institution, articles often are difficult to secure. The reader is encouraged to pursue further the issues confronted in *What Price Prejudice?* via the bibliographic suggestions.

The book's layout suggests that the reader must assess numerous areas of inquiry before one can begin to understand anti-Semitism. Attention is directed to some of the suggested roots of anti-Semitism (Chapter I), with special focus on New Testament passages that have been used/abused to bolster anti-Semitism (Chapters I and II). At the same time, it is clearly noted that anti-Semitism pre-existed the emergence of Christianity, as seen in the Biblical materials recording the Egyptian period in the life of the early Hebrews or the post-exilic focus of

the Book of Esther. Nonetheless, Christians cannot take solace in the fact that anti-Semitism existed before Christianity's emergence since Christianity's early development encouraged a new genre: theological anti-Semitism. This type of anti-Semitism, which justified its hideous actions by appeal to the Biblical text, kept anti-Semitism alive during historical periods when it might otherwise have died out.

To emphasize the Church's culpability but not sole responsibility, brief attention is given to the medieval era (Chapter III). Through the development of creedal affirmations, ecclesiastical edicts and church/cathedral iconography, the Church developed and propagated its own brand of anti-Semitism.

Special attention is directed to the experiences of the Jews in the United States, from the colonial era to the early Federal period (Chapter IV) as well as the experience of the 19th and 20th centuries (Chapter V). It is clear that, whereas the early Colonies and ultimately the United States presented an environment relatively free of anti-Semitism, nonetheless anti-Semitism has always been present in this context, its intensity increasing both with the passing of time and the growth of the Jewish population.

A pivotal concern of the book is the way that various Christian bodies have responded to the reality of the Holocaust by adopting statements focused on Jewish-Christian relations. In this section (Chapter VI) the strong statement developed by the Presbyterian Church, USA (see pp. 134-150, Appendix A: "A Theological Understanding of the Relationship Between Christians and Jews"), has been used as the basis for comparison with some of the other statements developed. Again, the reader is directed to various volumes in which fuller inclusion of the different ecclesiastical statements might be found. Some of these statements are quite bold (see especially pp. 162-163, Appendix C: "The Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community"), while others manifest the problems generally associated with bringing any organizational statement down to the lowest common denominator to secure acceptance. Nonetheless, they are steps in the proper direction, enabling the Church to deal with the reality of the Holocaust and the culpability of the Church for what occurred during this horrendous period of the 20th century. They remind us of that theme running through all of history, namely that what we refuse to deal with takes on new form and manifests itself again in our midst, often with even more horrific consequences.

A final chapter (VII) investigates some measures that might be pursued to improve Jewish-Christian relations. In addition, the response to *What Price Prejudice?* becomes the clearer—to the degree that the Church

initiates and propagates anti-Semitism, the price of enacting that prejudice is the soul of the ecclesiastical body! This Faustian scenario is harsh payment for activity that runs counter to everything a Christian professes.

As one evaluates anti-Semitism in America, the easy response is to blame the organized Church for all that has occurred. While acknowledging that there is sufficient blame for the Church to incur its fair share, as is often the case, the easy answer is rarely sufficiently precise.

In the Nuremberg trials following World War II, the response "I am not guilty, I was only doing what I was told..." was often heard. Christians should recognize that at one level this sounds like a Christian lament. The individual Christian cannot hide behind the skirts of the Church. Regardless of how anti-Semitic certain Johannine passages may appear, how conducive certain creedal passages or ecclesiastical edicts may be to anti-Semitism, or how encouraging of anti-Semitism many iconographic elements may be, one must ask what the Gospel of Love demands and I suggest that it never preaches hatred. Thus, when the Christian "does what he is told," if that activity encourages or participates in anti-Semitism—GUILTY! This is a lesson Christians must learn from the Holocaust, and we begin to assimilate this truth as we take responsibility for our own actions.

Closely aligned with the preceding comments, the Church per se cannot be held accountable for the Holocaust, the ultimate symbol of anti-Semitism. As noted earlier, there is sufficient blame to go around and, indeed, one may go further in suggesting that the Holocaust could not have occurred without the fertile ground prepared by the Church for roughly 1,900 years through the misuse of the Biblical text, through creeds and edicts that encouraged anti-Semitism, and through church/cathedral iconography that taught anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, the litany just recited constitutes the actions of the corporate body and, just as at Nuremberg, individual Christians cannot hide behind the facade of doing what we are told. We are individually responsible; we must read the Biblical text and determine its intent within historical context; we must evaluate creeds and edicts within the historical context in which they were promulgated; and we must scrutinize church/cathedral iconography to see that material for what it is. **I am responsible!** And if I fail to act on that responsibility, if I encourage and/or participate in anti-Semitic actions, the price of the prejudice is the loss of the Church as a functioning New Testament entity.

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## The American Synagogue: Now and Then

***Sic Transit Gloria: Isaac Leeser***  
*Isaac Leeser and the Making of*  
*American Judaism*  
by Lawrence Sussman  
Detroit: Wayne State  
University Press

***The Synagogue of Context***  
*The American Synagogue: A*  
*Historical Dictionary and*  
*Sourcebook*  
by Kerry M. Olitsky  
Westport, CT: Greenwood Press

Two Review Essays  
by Matthew Schwartz

### *Sic Transit Gloria: Isaac Leeser*

Mention the name of Reverend Isaac Leeser to an educated Jew nowadays and you probably will draw a vapid stare. Yet, Leeser was the most prominent Jew in America in his day and historian Maxwell Whiteman has referred to the time of his leadership, 1829-1868, as the Age of Leeser. Many contemporaries of Leeser also respected his contributions. "The history of American Judaism and that of Isaac Leeser are one and the same," wrote Henry Morais. Dr. Cyrus Adler and Judge Mayer Sulzberger, who went on to prominent roles in the development of Dropsie College and the Jewish Theological Seminary, were students and admirers of Leeser. Even Isaac Mayer Wise, with whom the Orthodox Leeser often crossed swords, recognized Leeser as a major Jewish leader of good character, the "lumen mundi of American Jewry at that time," (p. 103).

Yet Leeser, and American Jewry, faced serious challenges. Many Jews were drifting from religious practice; some converted or married out; some men were not circumcised; and others simply did not care about their faith. These people were often the subjects of Leeser's sermons and writings. Leeser battled antipathy and hostility even within the walls of his own synagogue, where wealthy but unlearned bigwigs tried to push him around. There were enough animosities that the periodic renewal of his contract always aroused an acrimonious personal fight, with the votes on renewal often very close.

Another view of Leeser, more personal and more touching, comes from the letters of the famed Rebecca Gratz, a noble, humane and pious Jewess of Philadelphia some years older than Leeser. The two worked together to found the first Jewish Sunday school in

America. This was after the failure of Leeser's attempt to build a Jewish day school. Miss Gratz saw the inner life of the man, not only the hard-working cleric. "Our young pastor is certainly more attractive to those who are indifferent to the outer man...Mr. Leeser is ugly and awkward—but so sensible and pleasant as well as pious." A few months later she remarked that "he is certainly a very pious and worthy man and takes very hard the latitude allowed in matters of religion in this enlightened age" (pp. 58-59).

A small man, dim of sight and with a face marred by smallpox, Rev. Isaac Leeser devoted his life to working for Judaism. Leeser came from Germany in 1824 at age 17 to live with an uncle in Richmond, Virginia. He had a good basic education in Judaism, including some Talmud, and also spent time in a secular school. He was, however, neither ordained rabbi nor a college graduate.

In Richmond, Leeser interested himself actively in the problems of the small American Jewish community, resulting in an invitation to the pulpit of Mickve Israel synagogue, Philadelphia, in 1829. During the next four decades, Leeser initiated just about every device that American Jewish leaders would ever use to arouse their congregants' interest in religion. These included regular sermons in English, the first Jewish Sunday school (1838), a Jewish day school, a high school (1849) and a Jewish college (Maimonides, 1867). He wrote many books, translated both Sephardic and Ashkenazic prayer books and the Bible, founded the Jewish Publication Society (1845) and a weekly paper (*The Occident*). He battled Christian missionaries, led the American response to the Damascus blood libel of 1840, and often responded in print or from the pulpit to attacks on Jews and Judaism.

His plans met with but limited success. His translations of the prayer books and the Bible remained in use for many years, but the Jewish college and the day school both closed after a short time. Leeser led the battle of traditionalism against Reform and its rabbis such as Isaac Mayer Wise, David Einhorn and Max Lilienthal. However, the national trend was to the left and Leeser could not stop it. His fond hope of building a national Jewish organization ended likewise in disappointment.

Two central questions in studying Leeser are: (1) What sort of Jew actually was Isaac Leeser? (2) Did Leeser's hard work lead to any significant success?

(1) Leeser was accused within his own congregation of certain indiscretions in ritual matters. His critics sneered that he lived in a room rented from a Gentile widow and hinted that maybe he ate at her non-Kosher table. Another story suggested that Leeser was in love with the widow's daughter who had nursed him through his smallpox.

Some of Leeser's ideas also smacked of Reform—preaching in a synagogue, the teaching of secular subjects in day schools as well as innovations in synagogue finances. The Orthodox Abraham Rice wrote a letter to Leeser that gently criticized Leeser's efforts to work together with the Reform rabbis (p. 170). Rabbi Rice saw Leeser as a sincerely religious Jew who did not understand certain things about "true Judaism (sic)" because he lacked the experience of living in a more intensely traditional surrounding. Rice was undoubtedly accurate in his estimate of Leeser, although a recent article in an Agudah publication (by Lynn Berkowitz, *Jewish Observer*, 1995) also quite correctly emphasizes Leeser's devotion to halachic practice.

(2) Why is Leeser so forgotten today? Leeser died in 1868, 13 years before the great East European immigration began. The new immigrants brought with them socialism, the labor movements, Yiddish culture and other new forces that impacted strongly on American Jewish life. The Orthodox Judaism that they knew was different in its styles and sounds than Leeser's. They followed, or often enough disregarded, a different set of leaders. Leeser's institutions were superseded and the liberal branches of Judaism were for generations in the ascendant. If many of his ideas and plans were later pursued, it was by new immigrants whose roots were Bialystok, Minsk, Odessa and Sighet, not antebellum Philadelphia. Yet, a person's importance in history should not be judged solely on the tangible later effects of his thoughts and deeds. The insightful Rebecca Gratz wrote about the new Sunday school to her sister-in-law, "If it is successful I shall feel that I have been useful in my generation." Certainly, Leeser, like the Biblical Noah, was a righteous and worthy man in his generation.

Leeser may indeed have felt inadequate to his new position in Philadelphia. He had known the very learned Rabbi Abraham Sutro in Germany and was well aware that his own rabbinic scholarship was not great. But America has few serious Jewish scholars, and there were no ordained rabbis in the country until Abraham Rice in 1840. An excellent rabbinic scholar and an honest man, Rice nevertheless accomplished little and eventually relinquished his pulpit to run a small business. However, if Leeser was not a great Talmudist, he was still a thinker and a hard worker both in his studying and in communal affairs. Perhaps what American Jews needed most, reckoned Leeser, was to be held together.

The great challenge then as Leeser saw it was to build the institutions that would serve as the infrastructure of a well-knit national Jewish community. A century and a half later, this goal has not yet been completely achieved, certainly not in compari-

son to the exilarchate of Amoraic Babylonia or the patriarchate of ancient Judea. Jews in early North America were a mixture of Sephardic and Ashkenazic backgrounds. They had come as individuals with no natural unity or leadership. Growing religious and social differences plus the pull of acclimatization as well as economic and social opportunity made real unity increasingly difficult.

By contrast, conditions were very different in the Jewish community of Recife under Dutch rule, 1630-1654. Most Jews came from Holland and the community organized itself quickly with a full range of Jewish institutions—schools, synagogues and the like. Jews prospered as merchants, craftsmen and plantation owners. Two established and experienced rabbis came from Amsterdam, Isaac Aboab da Fonseca and Moses Rafael de Aguilera. Jews settled in Recife not as fugitives but as participants in a major enterprise. It was natural to bring their Judaism with them. They absorbed successfully a number of Marranos who had been living there earlier under Catholic Portuguese rule. The settlers' lives did not suffer the destructuring so typical for North American Jewish immigrants in Leeser's time and even in the 20th century.

Dr. Sussman's book provides a useful introduction to Isaac Leeser's life and times. It omits, however, a number of incidents or sources that would have offered a more closeup view of Leeser and the intensity of his personal involvement in every aspect of American Jewish life of his day; for example, Leeser's vacillating response to Rabbi Max Lillienthal's introduction of the confirmation ceremony in his New York congregation or Leeser's energetic protest when Governor Hamilton Fish of New York addressed his 1849 Thanksgiving Day proclamation to Christians alone. Fish's proclamation the next year omitted any mention of Christians.

### *The Synagogue in Context*

Kerry Olitzky's *The American Synagogue* presents itself as a source book for synagogue histories in North America in that it offers brief histories of a selection of American synagogues. The list, indeed, includes only a small percentage of the thousands of American congregations, but Professor Olitzky hopes the representative sample will be great enough to reflect the diversity of American Jewry's four main movements.

In fact, the selection of a small percentage of synagogues out of many must in itself reflect the weltanschauung of the selector. This book seems caught in the dynamic often referred to as the Protestantization of the American synagogue in which American congregations drifted from traditional European modes and took on certain fea-

tures of a Protestant church. For example, is the synagogue actually "the core institution of the Jewish community," as Professor Olitzky claims? Certainly, Jewish centers, welfare federations and schools have typically exercised greater influence on American Jewish life.

Nor does the American synagogue generally fulfill the same function regardless of the religious affiliation of its members." The synagogue in which most members come only on the High Holy days will serve a very different function for its congregants than one in which many members attend daily services and classes.

The story of the American synagogue cannot be understood except in its more general context. This book, although published in 1996, fails to deal with two of the most dynamic forces of recent years—the movement left and the movement right.

The section on Detroit, for example, presents two Reform, one Conservative, one Secular Humanist and one Orthodox congregations. The two Reform temples have for many years played important roles in Detroit Jewish life. Yet, they are only two of many, and there is no hint of the move to the radical left of newer temples that actively encourage proselytism and innovation. Nor is Detroit's Reconstructionist temple mentioned. The one Orthodox synagogue described was the most liberal in its day but is in fact now closed. The trend of Orthodoxy is strongly toward the right. A local kollel was so crowded during prayers that it spawned a new separate congregation in 1996. The kollel has meanwhile greatly enlarged its own building and is still crowded. A local yeshiva also recently enlarged its main study/prayer space and is still packed with worshippers from the neighborhood for Saturday morning services despite an 8:15 a.m. starting time. The power of these institutions, both right and left, is not noted in this book. The half page on Sherwin Wine's Secular Humanist temple seems to be merely a textbookish summary that fails to focus on the impact and controversy concerning both

Wine's self-proclaimed atheism and his radical social practices.

Similarly, the section on Toronto includes only three established congregations and one newer Reconstructionist. However, it again fails to reflect the burgeoning of a bustling Jewish population. Bathurst Street is home to a series of Jewish stores, restaurants and, of course, synagogues of many types, while a strong Jewish educational federation helps support a large number of day schools ranging from ultra-liberal to ultra-Orthodox.

To ignore all this is to remove the synagogue totally from its true historical context.

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

## Picks and Pans From the Feminist's Corner

A Review Essay  
by Sarah Barbara Watstein

*Like Bread on the Seder Plate: Jewish Lesbians and the Transformation of Tradition.* By Rebecca Alpert. New York: Columbia University Press. No one practicing Judaism would place leavened bread on the seder plate. But in the early 1980s that is precisely what some Jewish lesbians began doing at Passover—placing a crust of bread on their seder plates to represent their alienation from a tradition that had always rendered them "other." In this powerful and oftentimes riveting book, Rebecca Alpert, one of the first women to be ordained as a rabbi and who is now openly lesbian, explores what it means to be a part of both these communities, suggesting ways in which lesbians can reconcile these seemingly discordant elements of their identity. The first chapter asks "Lesbian and Jewish: What's the Problem?" Subsequent chapters address subjects as diverse as Jewish-lesbian interpretations of Torah, Jewish-lesbian visibility, Jewish-lesbian sexuality, Jewish lesbians and gender nonconformity as well as contemporary Jewish-lesbian fiction. The author states that the ultimate goal of this book "is to further the dialogue between lesbian Jews and other segments of the Jewish community who, working together, will bring a new kind of learning about Jewish lesbians into the fabric of Jewish communal life." There is no question in this reader's mind that Alpert succeeds in bringing a new understanding of Jewish sacred text, one that makes room for a lesbian perspective.

*Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish*

### AMELEK

Unable to sleep  
I turn on the light and read  
tenth century words  
translated ten centuries  
and three seas straight to my heart.

...  
We need not dress up  
as monsters, the world does that,  
each generation  
carnivalling Auschwitzes,  
Two minuscule horns will do.

—Richard Sherwin



**Man.** By Daniel Boyarin. Berkeley: University of California Press. Are Jewish males effeminate? If so, why? If not, why does this myth persist? Bottom line, this book finally reveals itself to be a work about identification, and cross-gendered identification at that. In this book, the author explores the origins of the rabbinic model of masculinity in the Talmud. Part I is a critical presentation of the construction of the feminized Jewish male ideal. The second half of the book describes the reconstruction of Jewish gendering under the pressure of the rise of heterosexuality, especially in Vienna at the fin de siècle. Chapters in this part of the book focus largely on two crucial figures in the invention of the modern Jewish man as an undoing of the tradition of the effeminate Jewish male—Sigmund Freud and Theodor Herzl. The final chapter provides a positive model for Jewish modernity in the guise of Bertha Pappenheim, once Anna O, the first psychoanalytic patient, grown to be the militant leader of Jewish feminism in Germany. This work succeeds in opening a way for readers into Jewish thinking, Jewish history and Judaism itself.

**Our Sisters' Promised Land: Women, Politics and Israeli-Palestinian Coexistence.** By Ayala Emmett. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. In this powerful book, Emmett examines the political roles of women in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Emmett's insights come from numerous trips to the region that included in-depth interviews with many of the participants in the peace process. This book provides excerpts from the interviews that give voice to the women who played vitally important yet often overlooked roles in the political transformations of the contemporary Middle East. If you are interested in political life and public events in Israel, spending time with Emmett will be worth your while. Additionally, if your interests are the lives, roles, achievements and status of women active in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process throughout the 90s, spending time with Emmett also will be worthy time spent. This book succeeds on two levels—it is as much about Israel's political life as it is about women's peace activists and their struggle for coexistence with Palestinians and for equality within the state.

**Under the Wedding Canopy: Love and Marriage in Judaism.** By David C. and Esther R. Gross. New York: Hippocrene Books. This new book delineates the wide range of customs, ceremonies, traditions and practices that have become part of the Jewish heritage for nearly 4,000 years. Among the topics covered in 24 chapters are the Jewish concept of marriage, how to achieve marital happiness, the two-part wedding ceremony, arranged marriages, married

sexual life, dancing before the bride, divorce and childlessness, forbidden unions, choosing the right partner, and problems facing Jewish families. A glossary follows the text and is very helpful. The book jacket claims that this is an "ideal gift book for brides and grooms, and a 'must' for every library." If you are planning marriage, this book will come in handy. Readers beware, however, the authors' intent is not to provide a comprehensive reference on love and marriage in Judaism.

**Gender Equality and American Jews.** By Moshe and Harriet Hartman. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. The Hartmans study gender equality in education, labor force participation and occupational achievement among American Jews, based on the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey. Part I is concerned with gendered patterns of secular achievement among American Jews. Chapters describe the extent of gender inequality in education, labor force participation and occupational attainment among American Jews. The authors focus first on education and training, which act as key "gatekeepers" to roles in the economy. Their focus on gender differences in educational attainment is seen as a key for access to similar occupational roles and the rewards that derive from them. The authors then assess the gender similarity in labor force behavior and occupational attainment, and consider the differential allocation of rewards resulting from the secular attainment of Jewish men and women.

In the second part of this book, they consider the extent to which the characteristics and behaviors they identify in the first part of the book are shared by all types of Jews. Part 2 focuses specifically on gender equality within Jewish couples. The methodology of the 1990 Jewish National Population Survey is discussed in Appendix I. Jewish Factors are discussed in Appendix II, and in the third and fourth appendices methods of analysis are addressed and a profile of Israeli society is offered.

**[Conversations with] Dvora: An Experimental Biography of the First Modern Hebrew Woman Writer.** By Amia Lieblich. Berkeley: University of California Press. Simultaneously historical and personal, this book is a fascinating biography of Dvora Baron (1887-1956), the first modern Hebrew woman writer and an important modernist who also lived the last 30 years of her life as a recluse, never leaving her apartment. Baron is portrayed as both a rebel and conservator of tradition, a social and literary activist, and a homebound recluse. Lieblich has chosen to write this biography as a series of 24 "encounters" or conversations taking place between Dvora and the narrator and author. These conversations occur in Dvora's

darkened room in the last years of her life. This edition concludes with a translation of one of Dvora Baron's most powerful stories, "Fradl." Baron's personal reality and her life story are truly fascinating. This post-modern biography well deserves a place on your "must read" list.

**The Nakedness of the Fathers: Biblical Visions and Revisions.** By Alicia Suskin Ostriker. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. In this book Ostriker re-reads the Bible from the controversial perspective of a 20th-century Jewish woman. Filtered through her consciousness, Creation, the lives of early patriarchs and their wives, the drama of the Exodus, the sufferings of Job, and other stories are newly experienced as contemporary realities. Like much 20th-century feminist writing, this book crosses the boundaries of genre. Biblical interpretation combines with fantasy, autobiography and poetry. Politics joins with eroticism. Irreverence coexists with a yearning for the sacred. Scholarship contends with heresy. Ostriker continues and extends the tradition of arguing with God that commences in the Bible itself and proceeds now, as it has for centuries, to animate Jewish writing. The difference here is that the voice that debates with God is a woman's. You are in for a treat—this book is an imaginative, a spirited and a spiritual dialogue with characters and narratives of the Old Testament.

**Judaism Since Gender.** By Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt. New York: Routledge. This volume offers a radically new concept of Jewish studies, staking out new intellectual terrain and redefining the discipline as an intrinsically feminist practice. Contributions concern Judaism, Jewishness and Jewish studies just as much as gender, feminism and women's studies. The list of contributors includes nearly 30 luminaries of both Jewish and women's studies. The book's essays come in two sections. Part One, "Knowledges," is imagined as a conversation, one "without the spontaneity of spoken exchange but with the artfulness and craft that writing proffers." In Part Two, "Studies," scholars present longer essays that offer more extensive analyses of practices and possibilities for conceptualizing readings of Jewish texts and analyses of issues that Jews face. Take the time to enjoy these intellectual adventures. The editors are absolutely correct when they assert that the essays "offer openings into new thinking about women, men, Jewish culture, history and religion, feminism and gender."

**Women in Chaim: A Sourcebook on the Agunah.** By Jack Nusan Porter. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson. Today, the agunah issue remains one of the more sensitive areas of Jewish law. The plight of the *agunah*



(literally "a chained woman," a woman who cannot remarry because her husband has disappeared due to accident, war or abduction, or is senile, because there is no proof of his death or because he has refused to grant her a divorce) has been at the forefront of the Jewish media for many years but, the editor argues, the dire, often tragic, circumstances surrounding this issue have existed for centuries. This book is a collection of some of the most crucial writings on the subject of the *agunah*. Many viewpoints are represented, including American and Israeli perspectives, a modern Orthodox perspective, and a Conservative Jewish position. Also represented are the pros and cons of *agunah*-law reform and a wide range of solutions to the *agunah* dilemma, including new legislation, prenuptial agreements, changes in the Ketubah, and community outreach to rabbis and social agencies. The book concludes with a list of sources for help and a short glossary. Bottom line, this is a book about Jewish women's rights.

***My Years in Theresienstadt: How One Woman Survived the Holocaust.*** By Gerty Spies. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books. In *My Years in Theresienstadt*, a recollection of the attempted extinction of the Jewish people, individual memory and history are fused to establish the all-important link between the disastrous past and the new, hopeful future. Theresienstadt, located in Czechoslovakia, was a peculiar concentration camp. It was publicized as a retirement city, a place for privileged and prominent Jews to sit out the war. In reality, it was a collection point for arriving and departing transport. Between 1941 and 1945, about 33,000 people died in Theresienstadt of disease and malnutrition, while about 88,000 were transported to the death camps in the East. This book is composed of personal observations and experiences that will capture your attention.

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

### KING DAVID

The darkness wind would wake his harp  
hung up above his bed,  
waking him to study the rest of the night.  
Great kings need great studying.

We hung up our harps on willow trees  
our joy songs mute,  
our studying messiahs calendars  
and all the maintenance until.

—Richard Sherwin

## A Good Life Now and Then

*A Treasury of American-Jewish Folklore*  
by Steve and Lion Koppman  
Northvale, N.J.:  
Jason Aronson Inc.

*A Review Essay*  
by Steven Windmueller

*"What do you call someone who comes from the state of Michigan?"  
"A Mishugener!" ("A crazy person")*

This little play on words represents one of the hundreds of stories, sayings, superstitions and, of course, jokes that comprise this nearly 400 page collection of American-Jewish folklore. Jewish humor has always been a unique trademark of a people who, despite historic adversity, developed and sustained a body of literature rich in self-deprecating anecdotes and communal folk tales. The literature is rich with such materials, some of which can be found in rabbinic and community sources. *The Wise Men of Chelm* offers another marvelous example of this storyline taken from Eastern European sources.

Folklore consists of a body of literature that incorporates a wide variety of writings, which have been passed from generation to generation. These tales tend to travel between people and regions of the country, ultimately acquiring their own standing as "classics." "In its purest form, folklore is associated with the 'grapevine.' Virtually every story, every folk belief, every song has variations since it has been passed along orally from individual to individual and, in the retelling, inevitably changed and embellished."

American-Jewish folklore evolved as early Jewish Americans grew distant from the traditions they left behind. A new culture materialized that spoke to the special situations and crisis these new immigrants faced in a new land. From the earliest settlers parables were invented about "Jews among the Indians." Even more tales were spun by Jews arriving in the Post-Civil War era, where such themes evolved as the "Joys of Peddling," "Learning English," "The Yiddish King Lear" and "Envy at Grossinger's." We find here tales of Jews and Billy the Kid, Daniel Boone, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. There are stories as well about Jewish underworld figures, Broadway and Hollywood personalities, and rabbis and philanthropists.

The American experience has been particularly open to the opportunities to create

a Jewish folklore tradition. Steve and Lion Koppman have attempted to collect and to categorize much of this tradition. Drawing on an impressive array of sources and writers, they have amassed in excess of 500 items as part of this collection. The editors have categorized these diverse stories and jokes into 19 subgroups, representing both different periods of the Jewish experience in America (13 sections) and the various types or subject areas of some of this humor (six sections). In sections called "Greeting the Mispacha" and "Out in the World," the focus is directed to the tensions of life as experienced by a minority group in a free society. Issues of denominational tension or increased assimilation are not exclusive concerns to the present day community agenda.

A number of these tales offer a serious side, while others clearly want us to laugh at ourselves. I selected one from this latter category:

### Our Little Secret

A rabbi became friendly with a minister who took a strong and sincere interest in Judaism. One day they were talking and the minister asked, in a very earnest tone, "You know, I have observed something about your synagogue that's made me very curious. This one thing has me stumped; I've never found anything in my reading on it. Tell me, Rabbi, what is the special ceremonial practice Jews have that requires them to stand *outside* the synagogue?"

As the author comments, this type of collection "signifies a coming of age of American Jewry." When a community feels established and rooted in a society, it is then able to measure and even relish in its accomplishments and in its behavior styles.

The humor and tales selected for this volume have helped shape the American-Jewish consciousness, how we think about ourselves and how others might perceive us. Historians frequently cite the use of folktales and the types of ethic lore as a way of measuring a group's sense of self, its level of comfort and of acceptance in a society. Such storylines provide useful insights into the lifestyles, politics and economic issues that touch and shape how ethnic and religious groups contend with the burdens and blessings of life itself. Take a look at these humorous items:

- Q:** What are the three most important Jewish holidays?  
**A:** Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashonah and September 25th.  
**Q:** Why September 25th?  
**A:** That's when the new Cadillacs come out.

# 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.*

- Praying With the Jewish Tradition.* Compiled by Elias Kopciowski. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America.* By Gerald Sorin. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- The Crucified Jew: Twenty Centuries of Christian Anti-Semitism.* By Dan Cohn-Sherbok. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Making a Scene: The Contemporary Drama of Jewish-American Women.* Edited by Sarah Blacher Cohen. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man.* By Daniel Boyarin. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Speaking/Writing of God: Jewish Philosophical Reflections on the Life With Others.* By Michael Oppenheim. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Forging a Common Future: Catholic, Judaic and Protestant Relations for a New Millennium.* By Bruce Chilton, Andrew Greeley, William Scott Green and Jacob Neusner. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press.
- Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity in New York, 1880-1939.* By Daniel Soyer. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Living Judaism: The Complete Guide to Jewish Belief, Tradition and Practice.* By Wayne Dosick. New York: HarperCollins.
- Herschel: The Boy Who Started World War II.* By Andy Marino. Winchester, MA: Faber and Faber Inc. Publishers.
- A Modern Heretic and a Traditional Community: Mordecai M. Kaplan, Orthodoxy and American Judaism.* By Jeffrey S. Gurock and Jacob J. Schacter. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Trial and Error: Israel's Route From War to De-Escalation.* By Yagil Levy. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Israel Before Israel: Silent Cinema in the Holy Land.* By Hillel Tryster. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Twenty Israeli Composers: Voices of a Culture.* By Robert Fleisher. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Smart Jews: The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence.* By Sander L. Gilman. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Victims and Survivors: The Nazi Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, 1940-1945.* By Bob Moore. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe.* Edited by Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys.* By Jeffrey Herf. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Black, Jewish and Interracial.* By Katya Gibel Azoulay. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question.* By Richard J. Bernstein. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Does David Still Play Before You? Israeli Poetry and the Bible.* By David C. Jacobson. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Succeeding at Jewish Education: How One Synagogue Made It Work.* By Joseph Reimer. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society.
- Judgment in Jerusalem: Chief Justice Simon Agranat and the Zionist Century.* By Pnina Lahav. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Run East: Flight from the Holocaust.* By Jack Pomerantz and Lyric Wallwork Winik. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- The Bible As It Was.* By James L. Kugel. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Politics and Policy-Making in Israel's Education System.* By Haim Gaziel. Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press.
- Telling and Remembering: A Century of American Jewish Poetry.* Edited by Steven J. Rubin. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Holocaust Journey: Traveling in Search of the Past.* By Martin Gilbert. New York: Columbia University Press.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls: Understanding Their Spiritual Message.* By Steven A. Fisdell. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc.
- From the Ashes of Sobibor: A Story of Survival.* By Thomas Toivi Blatt. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Israel, Jordan and the Peace Process.* By Yehuda Lukacs. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096-1996.* Edited by Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews From the Nazis.* By William D. Rubinstein. New York: Routledge.
- The Faith of the Mithmagdim: Rabbinic Responses to Hasidic Rapture.* By Allan Nadler. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Russian Jews on Three Continents: Migration and Resettlement.* Edited by Noah Lewin-Epstein, Yaacov Ro'i and Paul Ritterband. Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers.
- The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism: Jewish and Christian Ethnicity in Ancient Palestine.* By Doron Mendels. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

**Test**

A woman goes to a kosher butcher to buy a chicken. After rejecting several just on their appearance, she settles on one for careful examination. She lifts a wing and sniffs under it; then she lifts the other and smells. Then she spreads the chicken's legs apart and smells again. She shakes her head with obvious dissatisfaction.

"This chicken's no good," she says to the butcher, "give me another."  
 "Gimme a break, lady," says the butcher, "Could you pass a test like that?"

Writing in Reform Judaism, the editors of that publication defend this collection as "delightful." The book deserves such praise as a useful resource volume focusing on the "outside" of American Jewish culture and social behavior.

*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.*

**NOTEWORTHY BOOKS**, *continued from page 9*

*T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form.* By Anthony Julius. New York: Cambridge University Press.

*Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust.* By Michael C. Steinfeld. New York: Syracuse University Press.

*From Rabin to Netanyahu: Israel's Troubled Agenda.* Edited by Efraim Karsh. Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers.

*Envoy to Moscow: Memoirs of an Israeli Ambassador, 1988-1992.* By Aryeh Levin. Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers.

*Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties.* By Stuart Svonkin. New York: Columbia University Press.

*Transferring to America: Jewish Interpretations of American Dreams.* By Rael Meyerowitz. Albany: State University of New York Press.

*Spinoza, Liberalism and the Question of Jewish Identity.* By Steven B. Smith. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

*We welcome Dr. Brian Horowitz and Dr. Jonathan T. Silverman to our staff of contributors. Dr. Horowitz is a professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literature at the University of Nebraska, and Dr. Silverman is a faculty member in the Department of English, Virginia Commonwealth University.*



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