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REVIEW

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A 100th Anniversary Memorial Issue Dedicated to the Victims of the Kishinev Pogrom 1903 and to All Who Followed 1903-2003

Kishinev, 1903-2003

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April 12, 2002. KISHINEV JEWISH CEMETERY VANDALIZED. Up to 50 tombstones in the Kishinev Jewish cemetery were vandalized during Passover, many of the tombstones damaged beyond repair.

When I read this headline, I felt the dread of the approaching century anniversary of the Kishinev pogrom. My first introduction to this event was in my search for Holocaust poetry. I'd been incredulous that Bialik's poem *City of Slaughter* was written in 1903, not 1943. Then my horror was doubled when I realized Bialik was so angry at what he saw that passages of his poem blame the Jews, Jewish men, for not killing themselves or praying so hard that a silent God would be forced to intervene. He calls them mice, and roaches, and dogs.

*Crushed in their shame, they saw it all
They did not stir nor move;
They did not pluck their eyes out; they
Beat not their brains against the wall!*

His anger reminded me of the anger that many feel on first reading about Jewish passivity in the face of Nazi depredations. I myself, an experienced scholar, had this foolish reaction. Why didn't they fight back, how could they let themselves be stripped of their rights, their property, their clothes, their dignity, their lives? It wasn't a double death the Jews experienced, it was a death five times over. When I teach about Jewish reactions, and the near-miracle of active Jewish resistance, I show the students how much easier it is to resist when you are 20 years old, single and childless. Nothing seems impossible. Drive to New York from Boston on a lark, why the hell not? Tires soft? Cranky engine? Who cares? You can hitch a ride or, if it comes to that, walk. But

once the wife and kids come along for the ride, that's when you examine the tires, listen to that engine purr, load up the emergency blankets, check the cellphone, collect the extra clothing, towels, wipes, diapers, flares, flashlights, food, oh, and more. Resisting with your family is quite different from being single.

Do you stay or run? Do you try to protect or take off? Do you comfort others or flee? Families. I'm reminded of the heart-scorching testimony of Hermann Graebe, a German civilian engineer witnessing the mass murder of the Jews of Dubno: "Without screaming or weeping, these people undressed, stood in family groups, kissed each other, said their farewells. ... The man and wife were looking on with tears in their eyes. The father was holding the hand of a boy of about 10, speaking to him softly. The boy was fighting back his tears. The father pointed to the sky, stroking the boy's head, and seemed to explain something to him."

In 1903, the Russian Jews were in a fix. State, church and people were alienated from the Jews, the Christ-killing Jews, who were needed primarily as scapegoats for Russian problems: the recently freed serfs, the growth of nationalism, rapid economic and social change. Who better to blame things on than the so-called stiff-necked, Christian-child-murdering Jews? Save Russia, beat the Jews, went the popular slogan. Restrict them to a massive ghetto, the Pale of Settlement. No matter that the Jews were innocent

of the hysterical charges against them, they were nevertheless the snake in the lap of Holy Mother Russia.¹ That is, scapegoat number one. In times of economic and/or political crisis, as in other places and earlier times, Jews became the prime target of abuse. Their predicament was aggravated by the fact that many of those politically opposed to the traditionally anti-Semitic, incompetent and manipulative czarist government were Jews.

Russians and Moldavians comprised almost half of the population of Kishinev, and the Jews made up most of the other half.² Most of the city's prosperous economy had fallen by default or assertiveness into Jewish hands, even though a sizable minority of Jews required charity to survive. But, as with medieval money-lending, any economic success aggravated traditional antagonism. And enemies the Jews did have: Krushev the newspaper publisher, the contractor Pronin, provincial governor von Raaben and Orthodox bishop Iakov, who said nothing to dissuade his parishioners of the medieval defamations they still believed, ritual murder and blood libel. In the second rank were those government officials who turned their backs on law and order when it came to the Jews, men like vice-governor Ustrugov and chief of police Khanzhenkov. Lower-level government bureaucrats, police officials and soldiers not only mistreated Jews but encouraged those who did. The head of the artisans guild Stepanov, Pronin's collaborator, was also hostile. Bekman, commander of the garrison, was impartial but many if not most of his officers and soldiers hated the Jews. Finally, prosecutor Goremykin and

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¹Jews have threatened Christians from within, as they have done to all their hosts, "like a mouse in our pocket, like a snake in our lap, like a fire in our insides." Jews were "the enemies of the Cross." The words of Pope Innocent III in regard to Jews in 1205 and 1208. Simonsohn I, *Documents* 82, 88.

²See the excellent treatment by Edward Judge, *Easter in Kishinev: Anatomy of a Pogrom* (New York, 1992).

mayor Schmidt tried to do their jobs impartially, but overall those who acted against the Jews were rewarded.

The catalyst for the pogrom was the death of a boy in a neighboring town some weeks earlier in February 1903. Rumors were that he was crucified by the Jews, a centuries-old myth that Jews ritually required the blood of a Christian boy to add to the matzah eaten during Passover. Krushevan's newspaper published the report and, even though it was retracted in March, it planted the seed of violence fallen on the fertile soil of traditional Christian anti-Semitism. Another rumor spread that the czar had issued a secret edict permitting three days of "beating the Jews" and pillaging them as part of the Christian Easter celebration. Wishful thinking with dire results.

Easter Sunday, April 6, 1903, coincided with the last day of Passover. At first, inhibitions loosened by alcohol, groups of rioters vandalized Jewish property, many Christian businessmen and homeowners marking their property with crosses to protect them. Because the police refused to intervene to stop the rioting against the Jews and because Bishop Iakov blessed the Christian crowd as he usually did on this holy day, many in the crowd were even more convinced that the czar had given them three days to beat the Jews. This led to Monday, when the crowds moved from attacking Jewish property to assaulting Jewish bodies. When Jewish men gathered to defend themselves with canes and perhaps some firearms, the police quickly dispersed them, arresting several. Quite a different response than the police had in regard to the Christian rioters, which was to do nothing. Once the rumor spread that Jews had defiled holy objects and murdered a priest, the situation grew violent. This was reminiscent of the medieval desecration of the consecrated Host, a defamation that led to the deaths of more Jews than any other in Middle Ages. Fear and anger ruled the crowd, and youth, workers and townsfolk took their revenge on Jews for their imagined crimes.

Most of the nearly 50 dead and the nearly 500 wounded were clubbed on the head with crowbars and canes. Untold numbers of others were wounded by rape. Torah scrolls were desecrated. Bialik wrote:

*Arise and go now to the city of slaughter;
Into its courtyard
and touch with your own hand,
And see with the eyes of your own head
On trees, on stones, on fences, on walls,
The splattered blood and dried brains
of the dead Jews.
Walk into the ruins,
Pass by the shattered houses and broken
walls,
Whose burned and barren brick, whose
charred stones reveal*

*the open mouths of such wounds that
No mending will ever mend,
Nor healing ever heal.
There your feet will stumble
On wreckage doubly wrecked,
Torah scroll heaped on Talmudic
manuscript,
Fragments again fragmented.*

By noon Tuesday, when the army finally moved in and made some 800 arrests, it was over.

There is indirect evidence that Russian minister of the interior, Count Plehve, orchestrated the Kishinev pogrom as part of a plan to divert the Russian people's attention toward a scapegoat for Russia's economic, political problems and, at the same time, damage the Russian Jews who were some of the leading lights in revolutionary movements. True enough, but, as Edward Judge argues, the overriding concern of the Russian government was to preserve law and order and this superseded support for any riots. Nevertheless, as Judge points out, by issuing anti-Jewish legislation, by discrimination and quotas in residence, education, government and professional positions, by officially repressing the Jews and by supporting anti-Jewish national officials and local agitators, the clear impression was given that pogroms against Jews were condoned and supported by the government.³ The message was that "Jews were not only different, they were dangerous."⁴

Public outcry throughout the world was aroused by the incident and protest meetings were organized in London, Paris and New York. In Russia itself, Leo Tolstoy expressed his sympathy for the victims, condemning the czarist authorities as responsible for the pogrom. In the United States, President Theodore Roosevelt ordered a conservative State Department to forward a protest petition from prominent American Jews to the Russian government. He also issued a statement expressing "the deep sympathy felt not only by the administration but by all the American people for the unfortunate Jews who have been the victims in the recent appalling massacres and outrages."⁵ The Russians would not formally receive the petition, but the message was there, both for the Russians and the Jewish voters of the United States.⁶ The 1903 and 1905 pogroms in Kishinev led to the creation of the American Jewish Committee in February 1906.⁶

³Judge, *Easter in Kishinev*, pp. 124-37.

⁴Judge, *Easter in Kishinev*, p. 135.

⁵Nathan Miller, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Life* (New York, 1992), pp. 443-44.

⁶See also the report of Korolenko, "Kishineff: The Medieval Outbreak Against the Jews" in *The Great Events by Famous Historians*, vol. 20 (n.p., 1914), pp. 35-49.

Under this strong pressure of international public opinion, some of the perpetrators of the Kishinev pogrom were brought to justice but they were awarded relatively lenient sentences.⁷ One of the consequences of all the publicity accompanying the many atrocities in Kishinev was that a number of Jewish banking houses throughout Europe and the United States stopped, or threatened to stop, credits to the cash-poor czarist government.

Although America's German Jews disliked the Russian Jews, they were nevertheless deeply disturbed by the barbarism of the czar's persecution even before Kishinev. Jacob Schiff, a power in international finance, led a crusade to force Czar Nicholas to abandon his anti-Semitic campaign.⁸ He brought pressure to bear on the American government to use its influence to ameliorate the suffering of Jews in other European locations, and influenced his friends and family as well as non-Jewish financial houses to a banking boycott of Russia, resulting in the denial of loans to Russia in most French, English and U.S. money markets.⁹ In 1904, after war broke out between Russia and Japan, Schiff lobbied for high-risk war loans to the Japanese. The result was a \$100 million, which allowed the Japanese to score a series of humiliating victories on the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War; this, in turn, caused Russia to lose face internationally.¹⁰ Schiff was commemorated in Japanese newspapers and history books as a new national hero.¹¹

Another interesting result of the pogrom was the involvement of Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, who called for the creation of Jewish *nachtsyls* (havens)

⁷On October 1905, riots broke out once more, in which 19 Jews were killed, 56 were injured, and houses as well as shops were looted and destroyed. Again, some Jews organized themselves into self-defense units. The two pogroms had a profound effect on the Jews of Kishinev. Thousands left the city, many emigrating to the United States and the Americas. "Kishinev," *Encyclopedia Judaica*.

⁸Eric Hirshler, "Jews from Germany in the United States," in Eric Hirshler, ed., *Jews from Germany in the United States* (New York, 1955), pp. 62-64, 72-76, 96-98; Cyrus Adler, *Jacob H. Schiff: His Life and Letters* (Garden City, NY, 1929), I: pp. 42-154 and II: pp. 117-38, 296-97; Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews 1870-1914* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), pp. 95-98.

⁹Adler, *Schiff*, II, pp. 120-138.

¹⁰Marvin Tokayer and Mary Swartz, *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews During World War II* (New York, 1979), p. 46; Adler, *Schiff*, I, pp. 215-26; Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York, 1967), p. 335.

¹¹Tokayer and Swartz, *Fugu*, p. 46; Adler, *Schiff*, I, pp. 216, 228.

throughout the world.¹² For years he had vainly tried to gain support for the emigration of Russian Jews from Russian statesmen or members of the Imperial family. But in the wake of Kishinev, he succeeded.¹³ Thousands of Jews left Kishinev and many more from other parts of Russia because, as Herzl himself had learned in France during the Dreyfus Affair, they reluctantly realized they were no longer safe since the progressives were not going to succeed in their lifetimes. As Judge writes, "it was very dangerous to be a Jew in the Russian Empire."¹⁴

In August 1903, Herzl met with Minister of the Interior Count Plehve. Herzl succeeded in convincing Plehve to accept the Jews as equal subjects provided they integrate socially and linguistically into Russian society and give up their communal and religious isolation. Plehve's position paralleled the general European Christian attitude toward the Jews. As Chaim Weizmann observed, to the Germans the Jews were like a splinter in the eye and, even if the splinter were gold, it was still an incapacitating irritant.¹⁵

Longer-term causes were surely involved in the Kishinev pogrom as well. It has been shown repeatedly in Jewish history that when the government and church in Christian Europe, the two most powerful institutions, discriminate against the Jews, or turn their backs on helping them, it legitimizes popular actions against Jews. Anything done to any group seems justified when it is dehumanized. Aldous Huxley pointed out that if you call a person a bug, soon you will treat him/her like one. Official anti-Jewish actions encourage and aggravate pogroms, riots, individual acts of prejudice and violence. It was not by chance that the pogrom began on Easter and lasted for three days. The slogan, "save Russia, beat the Jews," was well received by many Russians and Moldavians, taught from birth in Orthodox homes and churches, and accepted as well by the government that the Jews were Christ-killing, child-murdering, economic blood-sucking villains who deserved whatever they got from the rioters.

The same social-political-psychological dynamics also can help explain, dare I

say it, the Holocaust. Not neglecting coercion, nationalism and human weakness, and much greater organization and scale, that is, considering the historical differences, it must still be said that there are important historical parallels between the events surrounding the Kishinev pogrom and the Holocaust. It was no mistake that Bialik's poem seemed to be written in 1943 instead of 1903. Although hundreds of thousands of Europe's Christians fought prejudice and helped the oppressed Jews, hundreds of millions of Europe's Christians collaborated with the Nazis or turned their backs, allowing the Nazis and their allies to perpetrate the largest, most sophisticated, most murderous pogrom in history between 1933 and 1945. Populations generally conditioned to dehumanize Jews, hostile governments and churches, anti-location, official and informal discrimination, assault on Jewish property, desecration of the Jewish religion, and finally the torture and murder of Jews occurred, *mutatis mutandis*, in Kishinev in 1903 and in Germany as well as in other parts of Europe 40 years later.

KISHINEV 1903

(inspired by Hayyim Nachman Bialik's
"The City of Slaughter")

touch with the flesh of your own hand
the dead
and witness with the eyes of your own
head
on trees on fences on pails
the spattered blood hear the distant
wails
walk past the shattered shelters and
broken bones
the burned and barren brick
the charred and scarred stones
listen to the dying echoes of yiddish
tunes
and see the gaping mouths of jewish
wounds
torah scroll heaped upon talmudic
manuscript
fragments refragmented torn and
ripped
abandon this old world of slaughter
of massacred sons and murdered
daughters
run away to America abandon your
old homeland
to the easier brigands.

—Robert Michael

Brief Reflections on Kishinev From Our Editors

Paul Bartrop

The history of anti-Jewish persecution is currently dominated by the Holocaust, an immense eruption defying easy explanation. The scars are still far from healed. In its shadow, earlier outrages against Jews are often downplayed, even overlooked.

The destruction suffered by the Jews after the Bar Kochba Revolt (132-135 CE) was of genocidal proportions. The Chmielnicki Revolt (1648-1660) killed more than 100,000 Jews and destroyed more than 700 communities. These, tragically, are little discussed today.

Why, then, should we remember the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903, when just more than 50 Jews were killed? Apart from the fact that the victims were all individuals who were created in the image of God and that they are entitled to our memory owing to their undeserved and brutal deaths; and apart from the fact that my sense of humanity and my Jewish identity have linked me with them across the century; when all is said and done, their deaths helped to initiate a century in which the Jewish world became devastated beyond anything its greatest thinkers could have envisaged beforehand—and then elevated through an equally powerful passion for life. Why remember the Kishinev Pogrom? Because every Jew who is alive today is a product of the terrible forces it unleashed.

Peter J. Haas

In his famous poem, *City of Slaughter*, Bialik mocks those who, after the pogrom, can think only of the law: "The *kohanim* salled forth, to the Rabbi's house they flitted: Tell me O Rabbi, tell, is my own wife permitted? and all is as it was before..." (translated by Abraham Klein). But the very character of Bialik's response shows that things were precisely not as they were before. His subtle attack on concern for the law in place of active defense reflected, and maybe even promoted, a sea-change in the minds of East European Jews. The quietest attitude of medieval Jewry is being left behind. For the past 100 years, we as a people have been working out the meaning of that break with our past. Kishinev marks a turning point in the Jewish relation to history with which we are still very much struggling.

Rafael Medoff

The Kishinev pogrom generated an enormous outpouring of sympathy among Americans, but few were more passionate than publisher-turned-Congressman William Randolph Hearst. As Philip Schoenberg has documented, the Hearst newspapers col-

¹²The Herzl material is based on the fine article by Shlomo Avineri, "Theodor Herzl's Diaries as a Bikkungstroman," *Jewish Social Studies* 5.3 (1999), pp. 1-46.

¹³Avineri, "Herzl," pp. 27-29.

¹⁴Judge, *Kishinev*, p. 141.

¹⁵"When someone has something in his eye, he doesn't care whether it is a piece of gold or a piece of mud, he wants it out." Fritz Stern, "The Burden of Success: Reflections on German Jewry," in *Dreams and Delusions* (New York, 1987), p. 11n.

lected nearly \$50,000 (quite a sum for 1903) for the Kishinev Relief Committee, commissioned the most comprehensive on-site investigation of the massacre and even hinted that the United States should consider declaring war on Russia.

Later, Hearst's criticism of the New Deal and his reputation for sensationalism left many American Jews uneasy. Yet, as the Holocaust unfolded, he again proved himself Jewry's champion. When Jewish activists led by Peter Bergson launched a campaign in 1943 to bring about U.S. action to rescue Jews from Hitler, Hearst was among their strongest supporters.

Hearst's response to the Holocaust is discussed in the recent book, *A Race Against Death*, co-authored by David S. Wyman and myself. The book includes excerpts from an interview with a Bergson group activist who recalled that "Hearst was the only newspaper owner who supported us without any qualifications or reservations." Hearst authored front-page editorials endorsing Bergson's rescue initiatives and was a sponsor of the group's Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People of Europe, which publicized practical steps to aid Europe's Jews and increased the pressure on the administration to act. In 1903 and in 1943, Jews discovered that sometimes their staunchest allies were to be found in unlikely places.

Rochelle Millen

The persistence into modern times of the ancient camard known as the Blood Libel is one of the horrific and bizarre realities of history. It is an unsavory thread that winds its way through the human journey, pandering to fear and superstition, paving an endless path of violence and death. Beginning with Apion in pre-Christian Alexandria, alleged against the early Christians as noted in the writings of Tertullian, the Blood Libel lay quiescent for nearly 900 years, spreading its tentacles once again in Norwich, England, in 1144.

The Eastern Orthodox churches, established in 1054 when the Catholic Church split, may not have been directly influenced by the 1144 Norwich Libel. But that event began the reinstatement of the Libel as a tool of superstition, bigotry and hate that has remained embedded in Christian (and now Muslim) cultures to this day.

The Blood Libel entered the 20th century when the corpse of a Christian child was found on April 6-7, 1903, during Easter in Kishinev, Bessarabia. The local paper circulated the "fact" of a ritual murder and the Kishinev pogrom was ignited. As in most such allegations, the "certainty" of a Blood Libel was preceded by anti-Jewish propaganda, designed to rouse the populace to a frenzy of violence. The "chance" finding of a body was the match that kindled an already smoldering conflagration.

A series of incidents in the summer of 1889 demonstrates clearly that the Blood Libel had become an integral part of Christian culture, not only among the less learned masses but also at the highest echelons of church power. In July, 1889, Father Henri Desportes published a book titled *The Mystery of the Blood Among the Jews*. Copies were sent to Pope Leo XIII and the papal secretary of state, Cardinal Rampolla, for approval, which was granted. The book read very much like the series on ritual murder in a prestigious Jesuit journal receiving praise at this time in the Vatican's daily newspaper. The Catholic Church was well aware of the powers it could use to curtail the influences of modernity and liberalism. The Blood Libel was in its arsenal of weapons against the forces it perceived as opposing Catholic traditions.

In November, 1899, the Vatican's own newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, published an article on "Judaic Ritual Murder." When members of the English Catholic Church protested this provocation and others like it, especially in France, an inquiry into the veracity of these claims was established by the Vatican. In July, 1900, the cardinals concluded, with the Pope's approval, that Jews could not be declared innocent in regard to the allegations of the Blood Libel.

Is there a connection between the cardinal's implication of Jewish guilt in 1900 and the Kishinev Blood Libel less than three years later? Undoubtedly. Russians came in from adjacent towns and villages to join the melee, which left hundreds dead and seriously injured, as well as more than a thousand Jewish homes and businesses looted and destroyed. In hindsight, the 1903 pogrom, and its lesser version in October, 1905, foreshadow Kristallnacht three and a half decades later and across the continent of Europe. In Russia, agitators were often students from the theological seminary; religious fanaticism ostensibly led to the attacks, as much an expression of the deterioration of the czar's political control as of a seeking after religious uniformity and "pure" truth. In Germany, while the Blood Libel appeared in *Der Stürmer*, the Nazi propaganda paper, it was not among the ostensible causes of the murder machine.

When I hear the name Kishinev, I think of the Blood Libel; of irrational Christian lies knowingly spread in the name of "religion"; of persistence beyond the pale of humanity; of Bialik's elegaic poem. I also think of the Biblical verses that equate blood with *nefesh*, the very soul of life (e.g. Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 17: 11, 14). Commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Kishinev pogrom, of the introduction of the Blood Libel into the 20th century, leads us—in yet another century—to hope that the true meaning of blood, the sanctity of all life, will finally come to be understood.

Matthew B. Schwartz

Eternal vigilance is the price of Judaism, no less than that of American liberty. For Jews to understand where they are and what they must do now, they must remember where they have been and what they have done until now. They must know, too, their opponents through history who so often have lived with an orientation toward death and not life.

We all remember the man in Ramallah only a few months ago who triumphantly raised his hands dripping with Jewish blood to arouse a mob. Can we forget the ancient midrash that describes the pharaoh bathing in the blood of Jewish children every morning and evening to salve his disease and who was willing to destroy even Egyptian babies to kill Israelite babies? Most of all, Jews must remember how important their children are.

The Kishinev pogrom is a notable signpost along the road of Jewish history. We dare not forget.

CRYSTAL NIGHT

From blacked-out streets
(wide avenues swept by curfew, alleyways,
veins of dark within dark)

from houses whose walls had for a long
time known the tense stretch of skin
over bone as their brick or stone listened—

The scream!
The awaited scream rises, the shattering
of glass and the cracking of bone

a polar tumult as when black ice booms,
knives of ice and glass splitting and
splintering the silence into innumerable
screaming needles of yes,
now it is upon us, the jackboots are
running in spurts of sudden blood-light
through the broken temples

the veils are rent in twain
terror has a white sound
every scream of fear in a white needle
freezing the eyes, the floodlights of their
trucks throw jets of white, their shouts
cleave the wholeness of darkness into
sectors of transparent white-clouded
pantomime where all that was awaited
is happening, it is Crystal Night

it is Crystal Night. these spikes
which are not pitched in the range of
common hearing whistle through time

smashing the windows of sleep and dream
smashing the windows of history
a whiteness scattering in hailstones
each a mirror for man's eyes.

—Denise Levertov

THE CITY OF SLAUGHTER

by Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873-1934)

Bialik was 30 years old when the Kishinev pogrom took place, 39 years before the beginning of the Nazi's "Final Solution." He went to Kishinev for Odessa's Jewish Historical Commission to interview survivors of the pogrom and to report on the massacres. He wrote this poem, excerpted below, after his visit.

Of steel, and iron, cold and hard and dumb,
 Now forge yourself a heart, O Man! and come
 and walk the town of slaughter. You shall see
 With walking eyes, and touch with conscious hands,
 On fences, posts, and doors,
 On paving in the street, on wooden floors,
 The black, dried blood, commingled here and there
 With brains and splintered bone.
 And you shall wander in and out of ruins
 Of broken walls, doors wrenched from off their hinges,
 Stones overturned, dilapidated hearths,
 And singed beams laid bare, and half-burnt bricks,
 Where axe and flame and iron yesternight
 Danced a wild dance and led the bloody revel.
 Then, creep to attics, clamber over roofs,
 Peep in where all the black and yawning holes
 Appear like ragged wounds that neither wait
 Nor hope for healing more in all this world.
 Outside, the sultry air is thick with feathers,
 And you shall think to wade as in a river,
 A flow of human sweat, the sweat of anguish,
 You stumble over heaps of goods and chattels—
 They're just whole lives of men, whole lives of men,
 Like broken potsherds, past all mending ever—
 You walk, run, fall in the wreckage,
 In cushions, tensil, linings, silk and satin,
 All dragged and rent and torn to bits and trampled—
 They're holidays and Sabbaths, joy of feast days—
 And scarfs and prayer books,
 Parchments, scraps of Torah,
 The white and holy wrappings of your soul.
 Look, look! they fold themselves about your feet,
 They kiss the very footmarks in the dust...
 You flee! Whither? back to light and air?
 Run, run! the sky will laugh you, man, to scorn!
 The sun will blind you with its glowing spears,
 Acacias hung with tassels white and green
 Will poison you with smells of blood and flowers,
 And blossoms and feathers fall on you in showers.
 A thousand, thousand shivered bits of glass
 Shall twinkle in your dazzled eyes—behold!
 For now is given you a wondrous thing.
 A twofold gift, a slaughter and a spring!
 The garden blossomed and the sun shone bright,
 The Shochet slaughtered!
 The knife was sharp and glistened, from the wound
 Flowed blood and gold.
 You seek the shelter of a court! in vain!
 A heap of refuse. They beheaded twin:
 A Jew—his dog, with hatchets, yesterday,
 Toward the centre of the court. This morning

A hungry pig came by and dragged them hither,
 And routed, grunting, in their mingled blood.
 Let be! tomorrow there will fall a shower
 And wash the blood into the drain, and stifle
 Its cry to heaven for vengeance; some, maybe,
 Has sunk already deep, deep down, and feeds
 The thorny tangle of a crooked hedge.
 And calmly, like today and yesterday,
 The sun will rise tomorrow, in the East,
 Its splendor not diminished in the least,
 And just as nothing were, pursue its way...
 Go, half distraught, and scramble to a garret,
 And there remain alone in musty gloom,
 Alone? the fear of death is breathing round you!
 It fans the dark with black and chilly feathers
 And lifts each single hair upon your head.
 Look, here and here, and in between the rafters,
 Are eyes and eyes that gaze at you in silence,
 The eyes of martyred souls,
 Of hunted, harried, persecuted souls,
 Who've huddled all together in the corner,
 And press each other closer still and quake;
 For here it was the sharpened axes found them,
 And they have come to take another look,
 And in the apple of each staring eye
 To glass once more the picture of their end,
 Of all the terror of their savage death,
 Of all the suffering of their dreary lives
 And, trembling like a crowd of startled doves,
 They flutter in a cluster to the ceiling,
 And thence they gaze at you with dumb, wild eyes,
 That follow you and ask the old, old question,
 The one that never yet has reached to heaven,
 And never will:
 For what, for what? And once again, for what?
 Yes, strain thy neck... behold, there is no heaven!
 There's nothing but a roof of blackened tiles.
 Thence hangs a spider—go and ask the spider!
 She saw it all, and she's a living witness,
 The old grey spider spinning in the garret.
 She knows a lot of stories—bid her tell them!
 A story of a belly stuffed with feathers,
 Of nostrils and of nails, of heads and hammers,
 Of men who, after death, were hung head downward,
 Like geese, along the rafter...
 And, stifling down the sob within thy throat,
 You rush headlong down the stairs and out—
 To see again the world of every day,
 The usual sun, outpouring unashamed
 A wealth of beams at every guilty threshold,
 And lavish of its store on worse than swine...

From the children of the Warsaw Ghetto and Terezin...

Fear

Today the ghetto knows a different fear,
Close in its grip, Death wields an icy scythe.
An evil sickness spreads a terror in its wake,
The victims of the shadow weep and writhe.

Today a father's heartbeat tells his fright
And mothers bend their heads into their hands.
Now children choke and die with typhus here,
A bitter tax is taken from their bands.

My heart still beats inside my breast
While friends depart for other worlds.
Perhaps it's better—who can say?—
Than watching this, to die today?

No, no, my God, we want to live!
Not watch our numbers melt away,
We want to have a better world,
We want to work—we must not die!
—Eva Pickova, 12 years old

The Butterfly

The last, the very last,
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing
Against a white stone...

Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly 'way up high.
It went away I'm sure because it wished to
Kiss the world goodbye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here,
Penned up inside this ghetto
But I have found my people here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut candles in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live in here,
In the ghetto.
—Paul Friedman, 4*6*1942

My Father

My father took part in their war for four years,
and he didn't hate his enemies or love them.
But I know that already there, day after day,
he was forming me out of his few—so very few—

tranquilities, which he scraped up between bombs and smoke,
then put them in his tattered pack, together with
the scraps of his mother's hardening cake.

And in his eyes he gathered the name—
less dead, a great many dead he
gathered for my sake, that I might
recognize them in his look and love them.

and not die, as they did, in such horror...
He filled his eyes with them, and
he was mistaken: I must go out to all my wars.
—Yehudah Amichai

IF I FORGET...CAN I? DARE I?

*Reflections on the Eichmann Trial 40 years later and
dedicated to the victims of the Kishinev Pogrom, 1903*

I

The Jerusalem court reminded me of ours:
Principled, functional, inviolable, ritualized:
"Hear ye!"

"This Honorable Court" (*tsedek tsedek tirdof*)—
All rise for the robed judges presiding—
(Why robes? to cover hate, grief, guilt, despair?)
Silence—the gavel on its block the only sound.

II

Prologue done, we're ready to seek the truth—
the whole truth, so help us and who we are.
The defendant? The doors open, bailiffs lead him
To his harm-proof, transparent shelter,
Shielding him from dazed onlookers who witnessed
The failure of Absolute Genetic Racial Purification
(Except, in round numbers, for six million)
"IT WAS NOT MY WISH TO KILL PEOPLE."
1962—Jerusalem—home of David and Ben-Gurion—
If I forget you, O Jerusalem!

III

The *fons et origo* of Isaiah's words:
"Let justice well up as waters"—
The mighty stream of pain, torrents of torture
Welled up in that ordinary-looking *bet din*
Justice? What does it define? What can it repair?
"AM I GUILTY OF BEING OBEDIENT?"

IV

My God, wasn't he only doing his duty as an officer—
An obedient soldier loyal to Nation and Leader;
The Leader's vision cheered by zealous patriots?
Wasn't he the ordinary man I sat next to
In the train from Frankfurt to Munich,
A middle manager just following the C.E.O.'s orders?
Typical-appearing businessman (humans for merchandise)?
The nondescript man in line for a train ticket to Berlin?
Nails filed, hair combed, suit/tie/white shirt pressed:
So proper-looking! So banal, prosaic, forgettable!
Who could tell? Invisible at any gathering.
"I ACCUSE YOU OF ABUSING MY OBEDIENCE!"

V

Fourteen weeks of due process probingly completed,
And then the awesome decree of Justice pronounced:
No self-dug trench, no zyklon shower (and, later, soap),
Only a single noose fashioned with rope from a local store
And a broken neck...quiet and painless asphyxiation,
Not even a rattle, only the usual dropping of excrement.
"I DO NOT RECOGNIZE THE VERDICT OF GUILTY."
And then mere carrion unfit for marker, grave or grubs.
And when the ashes were scattered to oblivion.
(Biblically sanctioned: "to dust shall you return.")
Who would care anyway? Who would remember?
"If I forget you, O Jerusalem!"

VI

I lived in *Yerushalayim shal matah*—the earthy town
Where Jews-become-soldiers vow, "Never again."
Where none forgets another "town beyond the wall."
Tangled wire, Uzis and martial valor guarded us then
From Jew-hating massacres, expulsions, zyklon showers...
If I forget...how can I? how dare I?
Or else? roofed tongues and clumsy hands? forget them.
—Jack D. Spiro

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.

- Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789-1923.*** By Efraim and Inari Karsh. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- The Fence and the Neighbor: Emmanuel Levinas, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, and Israel Among the Nations.*** By Adam Zachary Newton. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Our Lives as Torah: Finding God in Our Own Stories.*** By Carol Ochs. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Seeing God: Ten Life-Changing Lessons of the Kabbalah.*** By Rabbi David Aaron. New York: Most Tarcher/Putnam Books.
- Life Reborn: Jewish Displaced Persons, 1945-1951.*** Edited by Menachem Z. Rosensaft. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
- The New Country: Stories from the Yiddish About Life in America.*** Edited by Henry Goodman. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Rewriting the Jew: Assimilation Narratives in the Russian Empire.*** By Gabriella Safran. California: Stanford University Press.
- Ben's Story: Holocaust Letters With Selections from the Dutch Underground Press.*** Edited by Kees W. Bolle. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933-2001.*** By Harold Marcuse. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Symbols of the Kabbalah: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives.*** By Sanford L. Drob. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc.
- Kabbalistic Metaphors: Jewish Mystical Themes in Ancient and Modern Thought.*** By Sanford L. Drob. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc.
- Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE-400 CE.*** By Martin S. Jaffee. Oxford: University Press.
- Growing Up Jewish in America: An Oral History.*** By Myrna Katz and Harvey Frommer. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- The Banality of Good and Evil: Moral Lessons from the Shoah and Jewish Tradition.*** By David R. Blumenthal. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Not One of Them in Place: Modern Poetry and Jewish American Identity.*** By Norman Finkelstein. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- The Jewish Book of Etiquette.*** By Ronald H. Isaacs. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc.
- The Way into Jewish Mystical Tradition.*** By Lawrence Kushner. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing.
- Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism.*** By Karla Goldman.
- An Uncommon Friendship.*** By Bernat Rosner and Frederic C. Tubach. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Are We One? Jewish Identity in the United States and Israel.*** By Jerold S. Auerbach. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History Up to World War II.*** By Steven Alan Carr. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- The Sovereigns: A Jewish Family in the German Countryside.*** By Eric Lucas. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948.*** Edited by Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- The Deutsche Bank and the Nazi Economic War Against the Jews.*** By Harold James. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- A Menorah for Athena: Charles Reznikoff and the Jewish Dilemmas of Objectivist Poetry.*** By Stephen Fredman. Illinois: The University of Chicago Press.
- Elie Wiesel and the Politics of Moral Leadership.*** By Mark Chmiel. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Pain, Pining and Pine Trees: Contemporary Hebrew Poetry.*** By Yair Mazor. Tel Aviv University: Papyrus Publishing House.
- Through the Lens of Israel: Explorations in State and Society.*** By Joel S. Migdal. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Brother Jesus: The Nazarene Through Jewish Eyes.*** By Schalom Ben-Chorin. Athens: The University of Georgia Press.
- Jewish Instrumental Folk Music: The Collections and Writings of Moshe Beregovski.*** Edited by Mark Slobin, Robert Rothstein and Michael Alpert. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Lesbian Rabbis: The First Generation.*** Edited by Rebecca T. Alpert, Sue Levi Elwell and Shirley Idelson. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives.*** Edited by Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press.
- Scholem, Arendt, Klemperer: Intimate Chronicles in Turbulent Times.*** By Steven E. Aschheim. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Rescuing Haya: Confessions of an Eighth Generation Israeli Immigrant.*** By Shelly Spilka. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Drive Back to the Text: The Premodern Sources of Levinas's Postmodernism.*** By Oona Ajenstat. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- The House of Returned Echoes.*** By Amost Lustig. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Hurdles in the Halls of Science: The Israeli Case.*** By Nina Toren. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem.*** Edited by Steven E. Aschheim. Berkeley: University of California Press.

NOTEWORTHY BOOKS, *continued from page 7*

The Fragility of Goodness: Why Bulgaria's Jews Survived the Holocaust. By Tsvetan Todorov. Princeton University Press.

Moses Hess and Modern Jewish Identity. By Ken Koltun-Fromm. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Mara. By Tova Reich. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People and Its History. By Rabbi Joseph Telushkin. New York: William Morrow.

Gendering Politics: Women in Israel. By Hanna Herzog. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Judaism Within Modernity: Essays on Jewish History and Religion. By Michael A. Meyer. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.

Rethinking the Holocaust. By Ehuda Bauer. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Debating Islam in the Jewish State: The Development of Policy Toward Islamic Institutions in Israel. By Alisa Rubin Peled. Albany: State University of New York Press.

At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for God With Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land. By Yossi Klein Halevi. New York: William Morrow.

Sources of Holocaust Research: An Analysis. By Raul Hilberg. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher.

Contemporary Debates in American Reform Judaism: Conflicting Visions. Edited by Dana Evan Kaplan. New York: Routledge.

A People Apart: A Political History of the Jews in Europe, 1789-1939. By David Vital. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ideology and Jewish Identity in Israeli and American Literature. Edited by Emily Miller Budick. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Love and Terror in the God Encounter: The Theological Legacy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Volume 1). By David Hartman. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing.

The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook: A Guide to Understanding, Exploring and Living a Spiritual Life. Edited by Stuart M. Matlins. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing.

The Book of Tahkemoni: Jewish Tales From Medieval Spain. Edited by David Simha Segal. Portland, OR: The Litman Library of Jewish Civilization.

Fragile Branches: Travels Through the Jewish Diaspora. By James R. Ross. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc.

Jazz Age Jews. By Michael Alexander. Princeton University Press.

Yiddish: A Nation of Words. By Miriam Weinstein. South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press.

The Magic Worlds of Bernard Malamud. Edited by Evelyn Avery. Albany: State University of New York Press.



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