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# VCU MENORAH REVIEW

NUMBER 55 • CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY • SPRING/SUMMER 2002

## *For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought*

### **Two Judaism's, Rabbinic and Christian, Invent Their Martyrdom Discourses**

*Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*

by Daniel Boyarin  
Stanford University Press

A Review Essay  
by Cliff Edwards

Daniel Boyarin, Taubman Professor of Talmudic Culture at Berkeley, investigates the relationship between rabbinic Jews and Christians in late antiquity, focusing on the history of martyrdom discourses as a “shared historical invention” of the two sometimes indistinguishable movements. Abandoning the “family-tree model” in which Christianity is viewed as daughter to mother Judaism, Boyarin prefers a “wave theory” (I’d prefer to call it a “ripple” theory) where religious innovations spread like ripples when a stone is thrown into a pond, admitting of both convergences and divergences, mutual sharings and complex tensions. In Boyarin’s view, until a “parting of the ways” in the fourth century, “one could travel metaphorically, from rabbinic Judaism to Christianity along a continuum where one hardly would know where one stopped and the other began.”

Within this proposed model of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity “inextricably intertwined” during the first three centuries, Boyarin pursues a comparative study of rabbinic and patristic literature on the developing theme of martyrdom. Similarities and differences in the “discourses” on martyrdom developed by the two movements are viewed as complex but, by the fourth and fifth centuries, these discourses are seen as revelatory of differences that became one mark of the separation of rabbinic Judaism from its “chief heresy,” Christianity. While

Judaism was not a forbidden religion in the Roman Empire, certain practices, as the teaching of Torah in public, were forbidden. A figure such as Rabbi Akiva could become part of the rabbinic martyrdom discourse as late texts looked back on the second century rabbi as a kind of “Jewish Polycarp.” But Christianity was an illicit faith and developed a more radical rejection of Rome and a more univocal approach to martyrdom. While Judaism through the very style of its Talmud maintained the “heteroglossia of dialogue,” a tolerance of dispute, Christianity moved from early diversities toward a more dogmatic and hierarchical structure that tended to spawn excluded “sectarian movements.” On the issue of martyrdom, one might cite Novatianism and Donatism as examples of such excluded sects. While Judaism allowed the options of deception (trickster postures), flight and “dying for God” as proper responses to Roman persecution, Christianity more and more emphasized the single way of acceptance of a violent death as the only proper “imitation” of Christ and the surest way to salvation.

Related to Boyarin’s analysis of martyrdom discourses are his hypotheses regarding the role of gender, sexuality and virginity in the development of rabbinic and Christian ideals and metaphors. For Boyarin, “In both late ancient Christianity and Judaism, ideal male identity was secured in part via cross-gender identification with female virgins.” Referencing the work of Virginia Burrus, Boyarin views rabbinic Jews and

early Christians symbolically enacting “femaleness” as resistance to the stereotype of Roman power seen as a “highly sexualized male.” So Jews and Christians honored feminine postures of asceticism, submissiveness, devotion to study and retirement to private spaces. For Jews, the danger of their own maleness was viewed as vulnerability to seduction by the prostitute of sectarianism, namely Christianity, while for Christians the Roman and Jewish ideal of the procreative family itself was problematic as Christians gave marriage a negative valuation in relationship to the ideal of ascetic renunciation. Martyrdom was a discourse, a way of telling the story of a death, that went well beyond simply reference to dying in violent circumstances. For Judaism, it borrowed from but went beyond the death-scenes of the Maccabees, for it could involve the image of the binding of Isaac, the Passover and erotic elements in the Song of Songs. Finally, it focused on the “Unification of the Name,” the recitation of the Shema. For Christians, in the context of Roman persecution, martyrdom came to borrow from these same Jewish texts but also came to focus on the confession “Christianus sum,” and could be described as an ecstatic and erotic experience one entered into willingly as a route to beatific vision and assured salvation in imitation of the pattern established by Christ on the cross.

Even the complexities hinted above are far from exhausting the many texts and sub-texts, hypotheses and suggested readings included in Boyarin’s volume. Some 544 end-notes, several quite extensive, continue the arguments debated in the body of the essay. Appendices and reference matter, in fact, account for 120 pages of the 247-page book. Reading this work by Boyarin is no simple matter but the rewards in terms of creative directions for thought regarding rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity make the effort well worthwhile.

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## Potholes in the Jewish Landscape

*New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise*  
by Beth Wenger  
New Haven: Yale University Press

A Review Essay  
by Jonathan Silverman

The Great Depression looms large in the American historical consciousness, given its devastating economic consequences and the resulting political, economic, social and cultural fallout. The Great Depression treated Jews relatively kinder in economic terms than their American brothers and sisters, but the 1930s also marked the high (low?) point of anti-Semitism with national figures like Father Coughlin and the relatively high numbers of Nazi sympathizers. In *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise*, Beth Wenger contextualizes the Jewish experience in the Great Depression. Scholars interested in either the Depression or Jewish history will find the work useful for its perspectives on both the experiences of Jews and the institutions that represented them.

The book was a long time due. As Wenger points out, the Jewish experience in the Depression has been neglected for the chronicles of the Jewish response to the coming Holocaust, the Jewish involvement in literary and political radicalism, and an often nostalgic view. Instead, Wenger focuses on the Jewish institutional response to the Depression as well as the individual response, logically centering her efforts on New York City where more than 40 percent of the nation's Jews lived during the Great Depression. She claims that the Jewish experience in the Great Depression was not so radically different from other Americans, rather that the period allows us to see an evolving Jewish culture.

Overall, Wenger provides a snapshot of Jewish life during the period, while detailing the relationship between Jews and the most difficult period in American economic history. She mostly succeeds but errs on the side of providing a thorough portrait of what it was like to be Jewish in this period, both on an individual and institutional level. In doing so, she, at times, replicates the work of other scholars (for example, Deborah Dash Moore and Leonard Dinnerstein) but any replication is a necessary part of undertaking a regional and time-specific study of this sort.

She begins the main text with the failure of the Bank of the United States in 1931, an institution run by and catered by Jews. In this

chapter, she hits all her targets: the relationship between institutions and individual Jews as well as the relationship of the institution to other institutions and to America itself. She does a good job describing the Jewish economic condition during this period: more secure than most because of a perponderance of Jews in white-collar professions but still insecure because of their Jewishness. However, it's hard to know from *New York Jews and the Great Depression* how much the rise of anti-Semitism in the decade was related to the relative Jewish security or because of the insecurity of other Americans.

Other chapters detail family lives, the experience of youth, the geographic distribution of Jews in New York and the economic status of these areas, Jewish political life, Jewish philanthropy and Jewish religious life. In all her chapters, Wenger does a thorough job of addressing previous scholarship and balancing personal anecdotes with statistics. She also leaves an excellent trail for future scholars to follow; her notes are extensive.

There are a few difficulties with the work. Because of the necessity of separating topics from one another by chapter, there tends to be some overlap. For example, the idea of Jewish radicalism is discussed in almost every chapter. In addition, some of *New York Jews and the Great Depression*

still feels like the dissertation it was; there is some repetitiveness as well as the annoying habit of not always introducing quotes from historical sources. No one is happier to scurry to the footnotes than I am but often these quotes seem geared toward proving to the reader the validity of the argument rather than enlightening the reader, a classic pitfall of the dissertation. Finally, I also would have liked to see something on Jewish artistic production in 1930s New York, given the importance both Jews and non-Jews placed in it. However, it's understandable that Wenger stopped where she did and it's unfair to chide an author for her omissions given the ambitious scope of this book.

Overall, the book will be of great use to future scholars who seek to get a better view of the Jewish landscape in New York during the Great Depression, a period in which both Jews and non-Jews suffered, but perhaps Jews felt more insecure. Non-scholars may find the book a little rougher going but will still find the work worth reading.

*Jonathan Silverman is a professor of English, Virginia Commonwealth University, and a contributing editor.*

## Remembrance of Things Past

*Holocaust Representation: Art Within the Limits of History and Ethics*  
by Berel Lang  
Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press

A Review Essay  
by Peter J. Haas

In the concluding chapter of this collection of essays, Lang cites Dostoyevsky as saying, "Incredible as it may seem, the day will come when men will quarrel more fiercely about art than about God." (p. 158) The nine essays gathered here are in many ways an instantiation of that prediction. Their common thread is a consideration not so much about the Holocaust itself but about how we have come to portray and thereby carry forward the memory of the Holocaust. More specifically, these essays have a shared focus on the point of confluence of three themes: that of aesthetics (what does art do and how does it do it), that of history (to what extent can, or should, artistic representations of the Holocaust be "true" to their subject) and that of ethics (what is the moral responsibility, if any, of art in general and Holocaust art in particular). The philosophical questions raised by the junction of these three themes can and do occur as regards any

### GOD WRESTLING

Mother played piano and sang sweetly  
Then she stopped  
Her mother's polo  
Took too much time

Dad couldn't play or sing  
He was absent making a living  
Taking three jobs

I was an 8-year-old wrestler,  
**Mountain Man Dean,**  
Mother never saw me as a boy.  
When our neighbor's house went up in flames  
She insisted I run into the fire to help

Coward she yelled  
And hit me  
And pulled me to the stove  
To burn my hands

Later I wondered  
was she trying to harden me  
like Thetis to her son Achilles  
Roasted every night

The Holocaust survivor  
Who lived in the burnt house  
Was found as if sleeping...

—Robert Michael

art but they have a particular urgency, Lang claims, when it comes to the Holocaust. This is so because the Holocaust has a moral claim on the artist and on the audience that is not true of any other event. Whether this is true or not is an open question, which is asserted rather than demonstrated. I cannot help but wonder whether or not the crucifixion and resurrection might not play a similar role in Christianity. But in all events, the Holocaust for Lang asserts a moral claim on art that constitutes a special case and so requires sustained scrutiny.

The starting point for such scrutiny is the presupposition that in art form and content always, by the nature of things, must influence each other and so cannot be separated. This means, of course, that the very nature of the Holocaust, the content of Holocaust art, inescapably puts its own unique stamp on the artistic possibilities of its portrayal. This is so in the simple sense that the art must be "true" (more on this in a moment) to the events; that is, the artistic work must reflect or refer in some way to what happened. But it is also true in the more complicated sense that the Holocaust pushes forward an ethical claim that also must find its way in and through any artistic representation. In the Holocaust, history and ethics converged for Lang (p. 6) and this convergence is part, in fact an essential part, of what must drive Holocaust art. As the author himself puts matters, "...there is a strong sense in which the chronicle of the Holocaust—the rudimentary details of the answers to the questions of who, what and when—remains at the center and as a test of whatever else is constructed on them. Both as a matter of fact and as a matter of justice." (p. 13) So history imposes limits on what may or may not be said about the Holocaust. Otherwise, he astutely notes, Holocaust revisionism and denial could count just as much as an artistic portrayal of the Holocaust, being imaginative responses to the underlying events. In making this assertion, of course, Lang brings to the surface a deeper philosophical question, namely whether it makes sense to talk about limitations to art at all. Do we expect art in some way to be true to the facts? In other words, does all art necessarily have to point to some reality beyond itself to make its point, or is this a particular requirement of art dealing with the Holocaust?

The overall sense of the book is to give an affirmative answer to this last question. The enormous ethical weight of the Holocaust has had the effect, Lang argues, of distorting the very portrayal of it. The first chapter, for example, considers three "genres" of writing about the Holocaust—memoirs or autobiographies (the books of Primo Levi, for instance); academic histories (the model here being Raul Hilberg's *Destruction of European Jewry*); and his-

torical fiction (Aharon Appelfeld's *Badenheim 1939* is the flagship example). All of these are, of course, to some extent imagined; that is, each genre presents the Holocaust (or some piece of the Holocaust) as filtered through the author's mind. Because of this, each genre has its own particular contribution to make to our appropriation of the Holocaust. Thus, Primo Levi gives a highly focused first-person account of his own experiences while Hilberg gives a broadly sweeping and detached academic account of the whole process as based on historical records, while *Badenheim 1939* is a fictional account meant to convey the moral horror of the Holocaust. One irony Lang points out is that Appelfeld's book, as a piece of fictional art, is able to convey something of the emotional and moral impact of the Holocaust that neither Levi nor Hilberg do, even though, of course, Appelfeld never directly mentions the Holocaust per se!

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It is this irony that provides the pivot around which the second chapter revolves. The question here is what extent literature and art on the Holocaust has to be historically accurate. For Lang, the need for historical accuracy (or at least historical reference) is paramount when we talk about the Holocaust. This is so because the ethical power of the Holocaust is such that its historical content is an intrinsic part of the message, and must be included in the form. It is precisely because of this imperative for historical reference that normal literary genres get blurred when the subject is the Holocaust. It is not clear, for example, whether Philip Hallie's *Least Innocent Blood Be Shed* should be cataloged as philosophy or history; and then there is the controversy regarding whether Thomas Kenneally's *Schindler's List* is fact or fiction. The point is that the moral and historical weight of the Holocaust is such that it distorts the normal genres of art and writing. Even artistic categories can no longer remain the same in the post-Holocaust world.

Having taken us this far, Lang now turns to an examination of what exactly the limits on art imposed by the Holocaust might be. On the one hand, the very historicity of the Holocaust demands that we talk about it, so silence is not an option. On the other hand, pure and detached historical writing is not a viable alternative either. The moral lesson of the Holocaust has to be part of the telling; the content, to repeat, must shape the

form. But of course as soon as one makes the Holocaust into a moral lesson, one has left the realm of historiography. Hence the blurring of genres. But this raises a series of interesting questions (including a surprising one that I will not reveal here) about how we read Holocaust literature. Does it really make a difference and, if so, what difference if say Benjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments of Memory* is or is not in fact based on real memory? What is really at stake in declaring Thomas Kenneally's *Schindler's List* to be fiction or to be non-fiction? Does the assignment to one genre or the other change the message?

The second half of the book deals more with visual art. The mode is still philosophical (there are no actual photographs of art to be seen). The generative questions are nonetheless the same: how accurate to the Holocaust does a visual representation have to be to be "true"? Might it be the case, for example, that the content of a piece of art might exceed its form so that while inaccurate on the surface it in fact points to something like Kant's "Sublime," in this case the moral domain, that goes beyond the limits of form? The textbook case here are the "photographs" of Shimon Attie depicting ghostly pre-Holocaust Jewish images and figures imposed on contemporary Berlin streets and buildings. These Lang invites us to consider not only aesthetically, but ontologically. (p. 115)

These reflections lead in the last few chapters to a consideration of the whole post-modern dilemma; that is, to what extent a piece of art conveys what the artist is saying about the subject as opposed to what the consumer (reader, viewer) brings to it and so reads from it. This are of consideration has special import, again, because of the historical and moral weight of the Holocaust. So at the end, Lang comes back full circle to his starting point, namely, the thesis that there is something transhistorical about the Holocaust. For a piece of art or literature to fail to communicate this moral weight is either to have failed to accommodate its form to its content or to have declared, in essence, that the Holocaust is so different its meaning cannot be communicated to us over the historical gap it has opened. Form and content must always be in communication; neither is autonomous, especially here. Fittingly, the book in the end has become an example of its own thesis. Putting the book down, I find myself asking whether I would advise our librarian to shelve the book in the section dealing with the theory of art, with moral philosophy or with the Holocaust. It is clear that at least for Lang these distinctions can no longer be maintained when considering the Holocaust. Aesthetics and morality are now inseparably fused. Art, as Dostoyevsky predicted, has come to displace God.

It should be said at the end that this book is really part of a much larger theme in Holocaust scholarship. The book covers ground, albeit in its own particular way, that has been plowed over quite a bit already. The question as to whether the Holocaust is so unique that it distorts everything coming after or whether it is part of the normal historical process has been discussed in various forms from the intentionalist to functionalist controversy to the *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s. Even the issue of Holocaust art and memorialization has become a topic in its own right. The book before us plainly stakes out its own claim in this territory. But along the way it considers the philosophical contours these debates have laid bare, an important contribution on its own. As we face the loss of the generation of survivors and perpetrators we are really left with the Holocaust only as a memory and, in this emerging situation, the philosophical reflections on what that means are important and timely.

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## The Endless Diversity of Interpretation

*Reading the Book: Making the Bible a Timeless Text* (2nd edition)  
by Burton Visotzky  
New York: Shoken Books  
*The Biography of Ancient Israel: National Narratives in the Bible*  
by Ilana Pardes  
Berkeley: University of California Press

A Review Essay  
by Kristin Swenson-Mendez

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is an urban university in the best sense. It comprises a mix, both reflecting and affecting the problems and possibilities of Richmond. Our classrooms are a spicy stew of fresh coeds, starchy-sweet parents and older folks who add experience like a splash of red wine. Diverse colors and creeds, in bunches and pinches, add complicated depth. So when my Bibleclass bubbles up in the heat of different interpretations from different traditions I count it a success. After all, the Bibles models a conversation of many members with a variety of concerns, experiences and predictions. Therefore, it invites participation and begs relevance. Both Ilana Pardes and Burton Visotzky get into the mix but they do so in

different ways.

Pardes looks to the Pentateuch for biographical information, reading it as Israel's life story, "the construction of a male character who is marked as God's firstborn son." (p. 6) In the process, she discusses the relationship of individual and community, especially evident, she proposes, in the relationship of Moses to Israel. Pardes reads in the Pentateuch Israel's birth in Egypt, its suckling in the wilderness, initiation at Sinai, adolescence at the edge of Canaan and adulthood in the plains of Moab. And she concludes by taking her readers to Moses' side to hear how his last words reflect both hope and warning, marking the "unmistakable fissure that lies between revolutionary dreams—dreams of a just society in a bountiful landscape—and their realization." (p. 158) Pardes' book stays close to the biblical text as she develops Israel's biography. She finds in the biblical stories of change, hope, disappointment and expectation the basis for her story of Israel's growth as a distinct character.

Visotzky's approach and scope are different from Pardes'. He describes his book as "a Rabbi's romp through the art of his ancient forebears, an introduction to midrash." (p. vii) Visotzky exercises his own playful interpretation of biblical texts; but his primary focus is rabbinic midrash dating back to the first through the fifth centuries CE. Some of these interpretations are so different from their biblical basis as to be hardly recognizable, illustrating the freedom with which the Rabbis used biblical texts to explain, chastise, even entertain. Although Visotzky spends most of his time on interpretations from the book of Genesis, he does not limit himself to Genesis, drawing not only from the greater Pentateuch but also from Judges, Amos and even the Song of Songs. Within its fairly short 240 pages, Visotzky manages to tie these vastly different readings together, like the Rabbis whose interpretations leap through time and text, into a book that is great fun to read.

The paradoxes, lacunae and ambiguities of biblical texts allow for the kinds of interpretations that both Pardes and Visotzky illustrate. Pardes admits that for her the most fascinating aspect of Israel's biography "is the ambivalence that lies at its very base...The nation is both the chosen son and the rebel son, and accordingly its relationship with the Father is at once intimate and strained." (p. 7) Indeed, as she travels with Israel out of Egypt and into the wilderness, tracking the nation like a modern anthropologist, the events she chooses to present and analyze reflect these ambivalences.

For example, lineage is mixed and the family structure is unusual. Pardes explains that both Moses and the nation are the products of two cultures—Egyptian and Israelite. And, in the absence of a mother, both

Moses and God grapple with the demands of a suckling Israel, forced to wean in the desert. Pardes interprets the fashioned calf, which so angered both Moses and God, as a "displaced image of Isis...that speaks of the absence of a suckling cow." (p. 59) Although the initiation of Israel into the sacred realm at Sinai marks at least a partial break with the maternal, Pardes explains that the Promised Land is "the best of all feminine gardens: maternal nurturing coupled with erotic delights." (p. 107)

But it is also a threatening land, and its native inhabitants force the Israelites to revisit questions of identity, this time in relation to religio-sexual issues. Pardes tells that crossing into this land is to betroth her. Thus, it is a second initiation, not accomplished without a struggle, like Jacob's at the Jabbok River. Indeed, "Jacob...is the most conspicuous example of how the community imagines its embodiment within an individual." (p. 156) And understanding Israel "requires a plunge into the intricacies of the individual psyche and the tumultuous world of interpersonal relationships." (p. 156).

While Pardes admits that Freud informs her hermeneutic, Visotzky illustrates the variety of techniques the ancient Rabbis employed in biblical interpretation. "For the Rabbis there were many ways to hear God talk, as it were, and many means of finding revelation in the words they studied." (p. 228) On page 126, Visotzky cites the *Seder Eliahu Rabbah* to illustrate the principle of measure for measure. The text explains that God brought the plague of frogs, which say *Kav leKav*, *Kav leKav*, on the Egyptians because the Egyptians regularly required the Israelites to bring "creeping and crawling animals, that we may be entertained with them as we so desire." So God overran the Egyptians with frogs. There were so many that "when an Egyptian would go to the outhouse, a frog would jump out and bite him on the behind," croaking *Kav leKav*, meaning "measure for measure."

Visotzky shows how the Rabbis were at their best when the biblical text was most difficult. They thrived on ambiguity and gaps in biblical narrative, and they drew on each other's interpretations in an ongoing conversation. On page 71, Visotzky cites Rabbi Yose ben Zimra's explanation of a peculiar phrase in Genesis 12:5, which tells that following God's orders to set out, "Abraham took Sarah...and the souls they had made in Haran." Noting how difficult it is to "make a soul," the Rabbi explains that the souls were converts, and "to make a convert out of an idolater is as though he had created him anew." So, why does it say "they made" and not "he made"? Rav Huna explained, "Abraham could convert the men while Sarah would convert the women." But let Visotzky relate for you, with descriptions

of the Rabbis' individual personalities, the highly contrived logic and imagination they employed in biblical interpretation. How Jacob worried that his sons might be bums, how Ruth and Boaz negotiated a rather awkward night, how Moses did not die without a fuss and much more.

Visotzky introduces his readers to the strange and wonderful world of rabbinic midrash. Paradoxically, by rejecting the quest for "one correct interpretation, [the Rabbis] uncovered the infinite truths intended by the Infinite Author of the text." (p. 228) And so Visotzky extends to his readers an invitation to experience how "communal study of the Bible, even now, can continue to provide us with a means for clarifying our ideas about the world around us and for linking them historically to a long-standing tradition." (p. 226) Similarly, in her *Biography of Israel*, Pardes explains that although ancient Israel's story comes from a particular time and place, "yet it has had the power to shape other collective and individual identities in different lands and different times... National biographies, like individual biographies, must be reinterpreted time and again in light of changing perspectives and changing circumstances." (pp. 159-160)

That the Bible can not only sustain new interpretations but actually requires fresh, imaginative reading lies at the foundation of both Pardes' and Visotzky's books. That these two authors illustrate the dynamic relevance of biblical texts in such different ways only underscores their invitation to join the conversation. Visotzky recalls the sage Ben Bag Bag's ever-timely bidding: "Turn it, turn it, round and round/In it all things can be found."

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## The Response to Uniqueness

*Martin Buber on Psychology and Psychotherapy: Essays, Letters and Dialogue*  
edited by Judith Buber Agassi  
New York: Syracuse University Press

A Review Essay  
by Earle J. Coleman

Believing that "the sicknesses of the soul are sicknesses of relationship," Martin Buber applied his philosophy of dialogue to psychology and psychotherapy. For him, "A soul is never sick alone, but there is always a between-ness also, a situation be-

tween it and another existing being." More specifically, psychic maladies occur because one lacks a whole soul but there can be no wholeness until a person is engaged with a Thou. In *I and Thou*, Buber links psychology with ethics, declaring that the whole soul cannot do evil and only the whole soul can do good.

Often Buber's philosophy of psychology is a trenchantly critical response to the basic teachings of Freud and Jung. Indeed, Judith Buber Agassi states that the worldviews of Freud and Buber were so far apart there was not even enough common ground for a meaningful dispute. She asserts, for example, that Buber's ideal that the therapist can learn as much as the patient would have been quite unintelligible to Freud. Again, she distinguishes Buber from Freud who fashioned himself as the omniscient analyst treating intriguingly foolish neurotics. Instead, Buber recognized humans as creatures who are possessed of dignity and who can be redeemed, and he regarded each of them as unique. Given Freud's atheism and Buber's theism, it is not surprising that they part company in many other ways. For example, Buber locates the unconscious below the level at which the human being is divided into physical and psychical phenomena. Asked about what is psychic, Buber asserted that the psychic is not an it: "...the psychic that is going on in this moment cannot be itself sufficiently an object to make a definition possible." Buber also explained why the I-Thou relation is ontological rather than merely psychological: "...the duality of the relationships is something that makes man what he is and that only expresses itself in his dual experience."

Buber faults Jean-Paul Sartre, another important figure in existentialist psychology, for recognizing the subject-object relation as the main and exclusive one between two beings. For Buber the I-Thou relation is original and the subject-object relation is derivative. He believes that humans are born with a kind of innate "Thou," a congenial yearning to meet and establish relations with the other; therefore, encountering a Thou is the very means to one's own self-fulfillment. Because the other is latent within the I, as an incipient Thou, to meet the other is a two-fold self-realization, a discovery of the active I and an awakening of the dormant aspect of my self that always beckons—however faintly—for encounter. Therefore, "...the innate You is realized in the You we encounter..."

One might expect some measure of accord between Buber and Carl Jung, for religious discourse is prominent in both of their writings. But Jung assiduously avoids any proposition about the transcendent, for he contends that such a statement is "always only a ridiculous presumption of the human mind, which is unconscious of its bound-

aries." Jung conceives of God as an idea, not as the real object of an idea. A similar reduction occurs when someone reports: "God spoke to me in a dream" and the listener replies, "Oh, you mean that you dreamt that God spoke to you." Jung denies metaphysical validity to the Trinity and the devil alike, interpreting them both as psychic projections. Sounding very much like Immanuel Kant, Jung explains that since he cannot overstep the bounds of his experience, he cannot know "a real metaphysical archangel." Everything said of God is a human statement, for it is a psychological expression. To the contrary, Buber affirms the objective existence of God and regards an I-Thou relationship with a human being as a necessary condition for an I-Thou relation with the divine.

Clearly, Buber does not hold that one's relation with God is exclusive, for the person who is oriented toward God carries his I-Thou relations with others to the divine before whom they all become transfigured. Buber emphasizes that "neither psychology nor any science is competent to investigate the truth of the belief in God." In his reply to Buber, Jung insists that he is neither denying God nor putting man in his place. In his defense, Jung points out that he cannot go beyond the boundaries of his empirical discipline. Jung declares, "I make no transcendental statements." He also asks why Buber cannot realize that Jung himself deals with psychical matters and not with metaphysical assertions. He is occupied with phenomenal religion beyond which he knows nothing. Of course, Buber can deny that the phenomenal and the metaphysical are separable and can also accuse Jung of reducing God to an It or object.

Agassi's anthology furnishes valuable primary sources for the study of relations between and among Buber, Freud and Jung; moreover, as the following illustrations will show, the collection offers additional, intriguing selections for any student of Buber. To illustrate, when asked if I-Thou relationships occur in dreams, Buber replied in the negative, saying that dreams do not include I-Thou relationships but only hint at them. Dreamers, after all, are always singular; for each specific dream there is but one dreamer; and this precludes the real mutuality in which two beings encounter each other. Distinguishing between the dreamer and the psychotic, Buber says that one cannot engage a dreamer, for if you make contact, the dreaming ceases. Discussing Aldous Huxley and the relation between drugs and religion, Buber tellingly observes that drugs may release one from his ego but that they are also essentially uncommunal.

Philosophers from Plato to Rousseau have speculated about the genesis of language. Addressing its origin, Buber says "the mystery of the coming-to-be of lan-



guage and that of the coming-to-be of man are one.” While philosophers disagree in their accounts of such beginnings and other find that important origins are invariably veiled in mystery, Buber is surely correct in maintaining that the two must co-originate because without language one cannot communicate ideas and develop into a rational creature; and even if humans are not just rational creatures, they are at least rational animals.

At a time when Jewish-Catholic relations are under close scrutiny, Buber’s estimate of a book by one of the greatest, contemporary Catholic theologians, Hans Urs von Balthasar, could not be more timely: “I know Balthasar’s book and appreciate it, but think it too dogmatical. You cannot be dogmatical and dialogical...at once.” As Buber would urge, Jews and Catholics must cultivate a dialogue in which they strike a balance between expressing their respective views and carefully considering those of others so as to allow for the possibility of their mutual transformation. There is no dialogue when each party knows in advance everything that it will say and everything that it will hear. Buber’s dialogical approach to therapy is evident when he identifies two types of therapists: those who largely know what interpretations they will get and those who do not know. The latter are open and unaware of what method they will use beforehand. He adds, “You cannot interpret poetry by the same methods as a novel. In the world of patients the differences are greater than this.” Continuing his aesthetic analogy, Buber tells the psychotherapist: “If you judge Eliot by Keats, you fail. The real master responds to uniqueness.”

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## The Reference Shelf

by Sarah Barbara Watstein

***The Jewish Book of Etiquette.*** By Ronald H. Isaacs. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson. The focus of this volume is Jewish ethics. It is intended to introduce readers to the types of acceptable behavior that will help people in their relationships with their own family, neighbors and people in general. It promises to be useful in reminding the reader how to act or respond according to the suggestions of the rabbinic sages in a variety of life situations. Advice drawn from this volume is derived from the Bible as well as rabbinic sources, including the Talmud, various codes of Jewish law and several midrashic works. Subjects covered include how to visit the

sick, comforting mourners, the etiquette and ethics of righteous giving, how to be a good guest, the ethics of teacher-student relationships, the ethics of parent-child relationships, the ethics of friendship, the etiquette of language, etiquette in the business place, the ethics of ill-gotten gains (i.e., theft, stealing and deception), telling the truth, the etiquette of repentance, honoring people, prayer etiquette, and ethical wills. Chapters are chock full of information, most of which is arranged in easy-to-read question/answer (Q/A) format. A detailed introduction to the world of Jewish ethics leads off the volume and is followed by a listing of meritorious characteristics of people.

***The Next Generation: Jewish Children and Adolescents.*** By Ariela Keysar, Barry A. Kosman and Jeffrey Scheckner. Albany: State University of New York Press. This monograph on American Jewish children and their socialization into a minority subculture in an open society has been written for a varied audience: academics, educators, youth leaders, social workers and anyone interested in the study of children of a minority religious group. Topics covered include demography, household structure, social welfare, affiliation, denomination, parental fertility, Jewish education, geographic differences, community participation, religious socialization, interfaith status of the household and household projections. Some sections are descriptive, some are analytical, some are more theoretical while others are complicated statistical models. *The Next Generation* offers valuable analyses of the critical issues concerning the entire U.S. Jewish community. Drawing on the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, the book questions the future of the Jewish community’s next generation.

***Suddenly Jewish: Jews Raised as Gentiles Discover Their Jewish Roots.*** By Barbara Kessel. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, published by the University Press of New England. Drawing on candid interviews with more than 160 people, Kessel tells the stories of Jews who were raised as Gentiles but learned of their Jewish heritage later in life. For the “hidden” children of the Holocaust (both those whose parents survived and those whose parents perished), for the children of traumatized Holocaust survivors, and for the “crypto-Jews” of the American southwest (descendants of Jews who fled the Spanish Inquisition), the discovery of a Jewish heritage challenged their sense of self and of their place in the world in profound ways. Though responses to this challenge ranged from outright rejection to wholehearted embrace, a surprising number of Kessel’s subjects reported that the news merely confirmed a long-held suspicion and compared the discovery of their Jewish roots

to a “homecoming.” More mysteriously, others who had harbored no such suspicions had still felt an inexplicable attraction to Judaism. Directly engaging issues of identity, self-hood and community, Kessel’s subjects offer poignant, powerful and often very funny testimony about the experience of discovering you are not who you thought you were.

***Dictionary of the Holocaust: Biography, Geography and Terminology.*** By Eric Joseph Epstein and Philip Rosen. Westport, CT: Greenwood. Today, decades after the Holocaust, and in many ways thanks to the educational impact of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and similar institutions, teaching and learning about the Holocaust occurs in many brick-and-mortar settings nationwide as well as globally. These settings include elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges and universities. Today, too, the World Wide Web provides a virtual setting in which to learn about the Holocaust. Somewhat ironically and in spite of these efforts, many students and general readers lack general information relating to the Holocaust and the historical background that explains the plight of the Jews and others during the Nazi era and World War II. Thanks to Epstein and Rosen, help is at hand. With nearly 2,000 entries, many, many cross-references, books and articles cited, a bibliography and index, the authors have succeeded in providing a current, accurate and easy-to-use reference. Students and general readers of the Holocaust and the war against Nazi Germany will find this title an invaluable research tool.

Here readers will find background, in dictionary format, on the basic facts crucial to understanding the Holocaust and Nazi war crimes. Included are what the authors feel are the “most important and commonly used terms” relative to the Holocaust and Nazi war crimes. In terms of scope, they have clearly cast a wide net; it is unfortunate that they chose not to elaborate on selection criteria in their *Introduction*. Up-to-date information (data revealed as late as 1997) informs the entries in this work, each of which is tied to the Holocaust or Nazi war crimes. The entries can be classified as biographies, places and terms. At the conclusion of most entries are suggested readings, books in English, so the reader may pursue the topic. These have been carefully selected as to availability, relevance and recency; many are copyrighted after 1990. The authors hope to update the book periodically; future editions would be strengthened by the inclusion of suggested readings after each entry.

Biographical descriptions record the person’s birth or death dates and give a brief history, the person’s significance and their historical context. Geographical entries pin-

# 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.*

- Uncertain Travelers: Conversations with Jewish Women Immigrants to America.*** By Marjorie Agosin. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England.
- His Brother's Keeper: Israel and Diaspora Jewry in the Twenty-First Century.*** By Yossi Beilin. New York: Schocken Books.
- Quest for Inclusion: Jews and Liberalism in Modern America.*** By Marc Dollinger. Princeton University Press.
- Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity.*** By Mitchell B. Hart. Stanford University Press.
- Anton the Dove Fancier and Other Tales of the Holocaust.*** By Bernard Gotfryd. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Sacred Text, Secular Times: The Hebrew Bible in the Modern World.*** Edited by Leonard Jay Greenspoon and Bryan F. Le Beau. Omaha, NE: Creighton University Press.
- The Narrow Bridge: Beyond the Holocaust.*** By Isaac Neuman with Michael Palencia-Roth. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- God, Humanity and History: The Hebrew First Crusade Narratives.*** By Robert Chazan. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism.*** By Karla Goldman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hannah Arendt on the Holocaust: A Study of the Suppression of the Truth.*** By Jules Steinberg. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- From Herzl to Rabin: The Changing Image of Zionism.*** By Amnon Rubinstein. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers Inc.
- The Hunting Horse: The Truth Behind the Jonathan Pollard Spy Case.*** By Elliot Goldenberg. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- False Papers: Essays on Exile and Memory.*** By Andre Aciman. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Beyond Survival and Philanthropy: American Jewry and Israel.*** Edited by Allon Gal and Alfred Gottschalk. Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press.
- Israel and the Politics of Jewish Identity: The Secular-Religious Impasse.*** By Asher Cohen and Bernard Sussler. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.
- What Makes Women Sick? Maternity, Modesty and Militarism in Israeli Society.*** By Susan Sered. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press.
- Beyond Patriarchy: Jewish Fathers and Families.*** By Lawrence H. Fuchs. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press.
- With Roots in Heaven: One Woman's Passionate Journey into the Heart of Her Faith.*** By Rabbi Tirzah Firestone. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc.
- The Avengers: A Jewish War Story.*** By Rich Cohen. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality and Cultural Diffusion.*** Edited by Yaakov Elman and Israel Gershoni. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- The Conservative Movement in Judaism: Dilemmas and Opportunities.*** By Daniel J. Elazar and Rela Mintz Geffen. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Dreaming the Actual: Contemporary Fiction and Poetry by Israeli Women Writers.*** Edited by Miriyam Glazer. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Historical Dictionary of Zionism.*** By Rafael Medoff and Chaim I. Waxman. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press Inc.
- Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender.*** By Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert. Stanford University Press.
- The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village.*** By Susan Slyomovics. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000.*** By Yaakov Ariel. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism.*** By Jonathan Klawans. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Journal 1935-1944: The Fascist Years.*** By Mihail Sebastian. Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee Publisher.
- Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America.*** By Hasia R. Diner. Princeton University Press.
- History of Zionism: A Handbook and Dictionary.*** By Abraham J. Edelheit. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin.*** Edited by Yoram Peri. Stanford University Press.
- The Tree of Life: Diversity, Flexibility and Creativity in Jewish Law (2nd Edition).*** By Louis Jacobs. Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- From Emancipation to Catastrophe: The Rise and Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry.*** By T.D. Kramer. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- The Man Who Stopped the Trains to Auschwitz: George Mantello, El Salvador and Switzerland's Finest Hour.*** By David Kranzler. New York: University of Syracuse Press.
- Studies in Biblical Interpretation.*** By Nahum Sarna. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Imagining the Holocaust.*** By Daniel R. Schwarz. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.
- The Torah's Vision of Worship.*** By Samuel E. Balentine. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- What Remains: A Novel.*** By Nicholas Delbanco. New York: Warner Books.



point exact locations, using other cities or countries as landmarks, and give the number of Jewish inhabitants before Nazi occupation, and the percentage of Jews killed. Historical background is given for such events as Kristallnacht and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and the entries on concentration and death camps give details on the nationalities interned, each camp's specific location and its history. Entries are concise, as one would expect from a one-volume dictionary of this sort; readers seeking more in-depth information and/or discussion of a given person, place or event will need to consult other sources for additional information.

One Internet reference is listed at the

end of the *Bibliography*—the H-NET List for History of the Holocaust. Given the increasing use of the Internet for reference and research (i.e., discussion groups, e-journals, e-text, listservs, Web sites), this passing “nod” to relevant Web sites is a serious shortcoming. It is hoped that future editions will include Internet references alongside suggested readings and in the *Bibliography*.

For further reading...

Readers interested in more in-depth information about the ghettos and Nazi camp system would be well served by checking out the *Historical Atlas of the Holocaust*,

issued in 1995 by the Holocaust Museum and Macmillan. Covering the period from the Nazi rise to power in 1933 through the Jewish post-war emigration from Europe, the atlas presents both overview maps of the camp system and detailed plans for more than 20 Nazi concentration, transit, forced-labor and extermination camps; plans for major European cities; the ghettos established by the Nazis in eastern Europe; and the important events of the war.

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