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VCU Menorah Review

*For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought*

Winter/Spring 2014 no. 80

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## Author's Reflections on Politics in the Bible

By Matthew B. Schwartz and Kalman J. Kaplan. Lanham MD: Jason Aronson, 2013

### ***Politics in the Hebrew Bible: God, Man, and Government***

Much interest nowadays is aroused by the squabbles and gridlock that dominate Washington D.C. As I write these words, the U.S. government has been partly closed down for well more than a week. Politics is, of course, an ancient sport, and my co-author Kal Kaplan and I came to wonder how the ancients, especially Biblical Israel and Classical Greece, saw politics and government and what we might learn from them. This book offers the results of our inquiries. In it, we treat both the Bible and the Greek classics as offering of their abundant but very different sorts of knowledge and experience to an open minded reader.

The problems facing humanity seem to change little from one era to another. The Bible presents stories and laws to teach and command people toward good and useful behavior. We deal with 42 Biblical texts. The story of King Ahaz of Judah makes tangible the uselessness of appeasement. Gedaliah exemplifies the danger of overtrust. Joseph puts into effect a brilliant economic reform as minister in pharaonic Egypt. Jethro advises Moses on how to establish a wise and efficient judiciary. The dangers stirred by rabble rousers like Sheba ben Bichri and demagogues like Korach must be met. Jeremiah's account of the fall of the Kingdom of Judah is viewed in the light of historians' analyses of the fall of the Roman Empire. The strange law of sota offers a sort of divine protection to the family. The story of King Uzziah deals with the suitable distance between priest and king, or in modern terms church and state.

The differences between Biblical and Hellenic approaches to government are notable. The Bible's monarchy was, at its best, a constitutional one in the sense of being Torah-centric. Biblical stories offer instances of kings who tried to live in accordance with Biblical ideals

and of others who did not.

The Hebrew Bible is not a theoretical or philosophical work, and it operates largely in terms of history, psychology, faith and law. It has great respect for the human being as created in the divine image and as the ultimate purpose of creation, seeing both individuality and structure as necessary and supporting each other. In contrast, Aristotle's brilliant *Politics* is philosophical and theoretical, discussing different systems of government — democracy, tyranny, oligarchy and the like, and basically disregarding individuals. Plato's *Republic* presents a totalitarian utopia, which allows little freedom or respect to its citizens. The government is the only structure; nuclear families will have no place.

In *Genesis*, the world was created by God in six days in a mode both orderly and harmonious. Hesiod, however, saw the world as beginning in Chaos, and in a sense the Greeks never got beyond that. Throughout their history, they could never unite and instead fought each other constantly, culminating in the disastrous Peloponnesian War and not ceasing their mutual destruction until, in their ensuing weakness, they were conquered by Philip of Macedon. The brilliant democracy of Athens in the Golden Age of Pericles declined precipitously after his death, when its leadership fell to unscrupulous demagogues like Alcibiades.

The Bible saw a pattern in world history. History began with divine creation and will proceed, albeit with bumps and starts, toward a messianic era. For the Bible, there is an ultimate purpose to human endeavor, and there are hope and faith. For King David, defeat and disappointment and even sin roused the need not to self-destruct but to come closer to God. For Hellenic thinkers, fate and capricious deities continued the Chaos in which the world began. For a Greek hero, defeat could easily lead to self-destructive behaviors and, all too often, to suicide.

What does the Bible view as the most important qualities of a great leader? A sense of his nation's role in the divine plan for history, strength, courage, wisdom, perception, and genuine devotion to his

people and to God. But also humility combined with true dignity, two traits sorely lacking in an era of provocative blogs and talk shows and TV ads.

Kingship is natural to the Hebrew Bible. Deuteronomy presents the legal and moral guidelines for selecting a king and for his behavior as ruler. The prophet Samuel anointed Saul as Israel's first king, at God's command. Medieval rabbinic writers were unanimous in support of the idea of kingship, except Don Yitzhak Abravanel, who preferred democracy, based on his study of both Torah and world history. His personal experience with kings had been discouraging as he had served loyally and brilliantly under kings of Portugal and later King Ferdinand of Spain, and both cruelly betrayed him.

Perhaps the wisdom and experience of the ancients can help bring some renewal to modern government.

*Kalman Kaplan, co-author, is a highly-experienced psychologist and scholar currently affiliated with University of Illinois, Chicago Circle. Matthew Schwartz, teaches ancient history and literature at Wayne State University, and has "enjoyed contributing to Menorah Review for over 20 years."*

## Books in Brief: New and Notable

### ***Père Marie-Benoît and Jewish Rescue: How a French Priest Together with Jewish Friends Saved Thousands during the Holocaust* by Susan Zuccotti**

Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Susan Zuccotti narrates the life and work of Père Marie-Benoît, a courageous French Capuchin priest who risked everything to hide Jews in France and Italy during the Holocaust. Who was this extraordinary priest and how did he become adept at hiding Jews, providing them with false papers and helping them to elude their persecutors? From monasteries first in Marseille and later in Rome, Père Marie-Benoît worked with Jewish co-conspirators to build remarkably effective Jewish-Christian rescue networks. Acting independently without Vatican support but with help from some priests, nuns and local citizens, he and his friends persisted in their clandestine work until the Allies liberated Rome. After the conflict, Père Marie-Benoît maintained his wartime Jewish friendships and devoted the rest of his life to Jewish-Christian reconciliation. Papal officials viewed both activities unfavorably until after the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), 1962-1965.

To tell this remarkable tale, in addition to her research in French and Italian archives, Zuccotti personally interviewed Père Marie-Benoît, his family, Jewish rescuers with whom he worked, and survivors who owed their lives to his network.

### ***The Status of Women in Jewish Law: Responsa* by David Golinkin**

Jerusalem: Shechter Institute of Jewish Studies

This 400-page book is a collection of 15 responsa that studies the status of women in the synagogue and public life, prefaced by two introductory essays on approaches to the topic since 1845. Rabbi Golinkin deals with the tension that exists between Jewish Law and modernity,

striving to bridge the gap between tradition and change. This important work points to the flexibility within Jewish Law that allows women to participate in most areas of Jewish ritual. Rabbi Golinkin deals with questions such as women being counted in the minyan (quorum of 10 for community prayer) and serving as Shelihot Tzibbur (prayer leaders), women being called for aliyot to the Torah, women reciting the mourners' Kaddish, women putting on tefillin (phylacteries), women acting as poskot (decisors of Jewish Law), the ordination of women rabbis, and more.

***Theatrical Liberalism: Jews and Popular Entertainment in America* by Andrea Most**

New York University Press

For centuries, Jews lived in diverse countries with vibrant theatrical cultures, yet they were one of the few peoples without a sanctioned theatrical tradition of their own. In the modern era, however, Jews came to be among the most important creators of popular theatre and film in America. Why? In *Theatrical Liberalism*, Andrea Most illustrates how American Jews used theatre to navigate encounters with modern culture, negotiating a position for themselves within and alongside Protestant liberalism by reimagining key aspects of traditional Judaism as theatrical. Discussing works from the Hebrew Bible to *The Jazz Singer* and *Death of a Salesman*, Most situates American popular culture in the religious traditions that informed the worldviews of its practitioners. Offering a comprehensive history of the role of Judaism in the creation of American entertainment, *Theatrical Liberalism* re-examines the distinction between the secular and the religious, providing a new way of understanding modern Jewish culture and liberalism, as well as their crucial contributions to a pluralist society. With extensive scholarship and compelling evidence, *Theatrical Liberalism* shows how the Jewish worldview that permeates American culture has reached far beyond the Jews who created it.

***From Ambivalence to Betrayal: The Left, the Jews, and Israel***



**by Robert S. Wistrich**

Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press

This is the first study to explore the transformation in attitudes on the Left toward the Jews, Zionism, and Israel since the origins of European socialism in the 1840s until the present. This path-breaking synthesis reveals a striking continuity in negative stereotypes of Jews, contempt for Judaism, and negation of Jewish national self-determination from the days of Karl Marx to the current left-wing intellectual assault on Israel. World-renowned expert on the history of Anti-Semitism Robert S. Wistrich provides not only a powerful analysis of how and why the Left emerged as a spearhead of anti-Israel sentiment but also new insights into the wider involvement of Jews in radical movements.

There are fascinating portraits of Marx, Moses Hess, Bernard Lazare, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky and other Jewish intellectuals, alongside analyses of the darker face of socialist and Communist anti-Semitism. The closing section eloquently exposes the degeneration of leftist anti-Zionist critiques into a novel form of "anti-racist" racism.

***Fathers & Daughters in the Hebrew Bible* by Johanna Stiebert**

New York: Oxford University Press

The father-daughter dyad features in the Hebrew Bible in all of narratives, laws, myths and metaphors. In previous explorations of this relationship, the tendency has been to focus on discrete stories — notable among them, Judges 11 (the story of Jephthah's human sacrifice of his daughter) and Genesis 19 (the dark tale of Lot's daughters' seduction of their father). By taking the full spectrum into account, however, the daughter emerges prominently as (not only) expendable and exploitable (as an emphasis on daughter sacrifice or incest has suggested) but as cherished and protected by her father. Depictions of daughters are multifarious and there is a balance of very positive and very negative images.

While not uncritical of earlier feminist investigations, this book makes

a contribution to feminist biblical criticism and utilizes methods drawn from the social sciences and psychoanalysis. Alongside careful textual analysis, Johanna Stiebert offers a critical evaluation of the heuristic usefulness of the ethnographic honor-shame model, of parallels with Roman family studies, and of the application and meaning of 'patriarchy'.

Following semantic analysis of the primary Hebrew terms for 'father' and 'daughter', as well as careful examination of inter-family dynamics and the daughter's role vis-a-vis the son's, alongside thorough investigation of both Judges 11 and Genesis 19, and also of the metaphor of God-the-father of daughters Eve, Wisdom and Zion, Stiebert provides the fullest exploration of daughters in the Hebrew Bible to date.

***The Mark of Cain: Guilt and Denial in the Post-War Lives of Nazi Perpetrators* by Katharina von Kellenbach**

New York: Oxford University Press

The author fleshes out a history of conversations that contributed to Germany's coming to terms with a guilty past. Katharina von Kellenbach draws on letters exchanged between clergy and Nazi perpetrators, written notes of prison chaplains, memoirs, sermons and prison publications to illuminate the moral and spiritual struggles of perpetrators after the war. These documents provide intimate insights into the self-reflection and self-perception of perpetrators. As Germany looks back on more than sixty years of passionate debate about political, personal and legal guilt, its ongoing engagement with the legacy of perpetration has transformed its culture and politics. In many post-genocidal societies, it falls to clergy and religious officials (in addition to the courts) to negotiate and create a path for individuals beyond the atrocities of the past. German clergy brought the Christian message of guilt and forgiveness into the internment camps where Nazi functionaries awaited prosecution at the hands of Allied military tribunals and various national criminal courts, or served out their sentences. The loving willingness to forgive and forget displayed towards

his errant child by the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son became the paradigm central to Germany's rehabilitation and reintegration of Nazi perpetrators. The problem with Luke's parable in this context, however, is that perpetrators did not ask for forgiveness. Most agents of state crimes felt innocent. Von Kellenbach proposes the story of the mark of Cain as a counter narrative. In contrast to the Prodigal Son, who is quickly forgiven and welcomed back into the house of the father, the fratricide Cain is charged to rebuild his life on the basis of open communication about the past. The story of the Prodigal Son equates forgiveness with forgetting; Cain's story links redemption with remembrance and suggests a strategy of critical engagement with perpetrators.

***1929: Mapping the Jewish World* by Hasia Diner and Gennady Estraikh**

New York: NYU Press

The year 1929 represents a major turning point in interwar Jewish society, proving to be a year when Jews, regardless of where they lived, saw themselves affected by developments that took place around the world, as the crises endured by other Jews became part of the transnational Jewish consciousness. In the United States, the stock market crash brought lasting economic, social and ideological changes to the Jewish community and limited its ability to support humanitarian and nationalist projects in other countries. In Palestine, the anti-Jewish riots in Hebron and other towns underscored the vulnerability of the Zionist enterprise and ignited heated discussions among various Jewish political groups about the wisdom of establishing a Jewish state on its historical site. At the same time, in the Soviet Union, the consolidation of power in the hands of Stalin created a much more dogmatic climate in the international Communist movement, including its Jewish branches.

Featuring a sparkling array of scholars of Jewish history, *1929* surveys the Jewish world in one year offering clear examples of the transna-

tional connections which linked Jews to each other — from politics, diplomacy, and philanthropy to literature, culture, and the fate of Yiddish — regardless of where they lived. Taken together, the essays in *1929* argue that, whether American, Soviet, German, Polish or Palestinian, Jews throughout the world lived in a global context.

***Jews and the Military: A History* by Derek J. Penslar**

Princeton University Press

This is the first comprehensive and comparative look at Jews' involvement in the military and their attitudes toward war from the 1600s until the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Derek Penslar shows that although Jews have often been described as people who shun the army, in fact they have frequently been willing, even eager, to do military service, and only a minuscule minority have been pacifists. Penslar demonstrates that Israel's military ethos did not emerge from a vacuum and that long before the state's establishment, Jews had a vested interest in military affairs.

Spanning Europe, North America and the Middle East, Penslar discusses the myths and realities of Jewish draft dodging, how Jews reacted to facing their coreligionists in battle, the careers of Jewish officers and their reception in the Jewish community, the effects of World War I on Jewish veterans, and Jewish participation in the Spanish Civil War and World War II. Penslar culminates with a study of Israel's War of Independence as a Jewish world war, which drew on the military expertise and financial support of a mobilized, global Jewish community. He considers how military service was a central issue in debates about Jewish emancipation and a primary indicator of the position of Jews in any given society.

Deconstructing old stereotypes, *Jews and the Military* radically transforms our understanding of Jews' historic relationship to war and military power.

***Bounded Mind and Soul: Russia and Israel, 1880-2010*, edited**

**by Brian Horowitz and Shai Ginsburg. Slavica Publishers**

Indiana University. Bloomington, Ind.

In *Bounded Mind and Soul*, twelve leading scholars grapple with questions about the complex relationship between Israel and Russia. What are their mutual interests? What are the areas of conflict? And how has the immigration of more than one million Jews from the former Soviet Union affected Israeli culture, society, and politics? These essays range from studies of literature and intellectual history to in-depth examinations of the treatment of Jewish dissidents in Soviet times and new immigrants in Israel. The collection provides unexpected answers to the questions: what is the extent of Russia in Israel and Israel in Russia?

***The Phantom Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and Jewish Catastrophe*  
by Olga Gershenson**

New Brunswick, N.J.

Even people familiar with cinema believe there is no such thing as a Soviet Holocaust film. *The Phantom Holocaust* tells a different story. The Soviets were actually among the first to portray these events on screens. In 1938, several films exposed Nazi anti-Semitism, and a 1945 movie depicted the mass execution of Jews in Babi Yar. Other significant pictures followed in the 1960s. But the more directly filmmakers engaged with the Holocaust, the more likely their work was to be banned by state censors. Some films were never made while others came out in such limited release that the Holocaust remained a phantom on Soviet screens.

Focusing on work by both celebrated and unknown Soviet directors and screenwriters, Olga Gershenson has written the first book about all Soviet narrative films dealing with the Holocaust from 1938 to 1991. In addition to studying the completed films, Gershenson analyzes the projects that were banned at various stages of production.

The book draws on archival research and in-depth interviews to tell the

sometimes tragic and sometimes triumphant stories of filmmakers who found authentic ways to represent the Holocaust in the face of official silencing. By uncovering little known works, Gershenson makes a significant contribution to the international Holocaust filmography.

***Like Dreamers: The Story of the Israeli Paratroopers Who Reunited Jerusalem and Divided a Nation* by Yossi Klein**

New York: Harper

In *Like Dreamers*, acclaimed journalist Yossi Klein Halevi interweaves the stories of a group of 1967 paratroopers who reunited Jerusalem, tracing the history of Israel and the divergent ideologies shaping it from the Six-Day War to the present. Following the lives of seven young members from the 55th Paratroopers Reserve Brigade, the unit responsible for restoring Jewish sovereignty to Jerusalem, Halevi reveals how this band of brothers played pivotal roles in shaping Israel's destiny long after their historic victory. While they worked together to reunite their country in 1967, these men harbored drastically different visions for Israel's future.

One emerges at the forefront of the religious settlement movement, while another is instrumental in the 2005 unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. One becomes a driving force in the growth of Israel's capitalist economy, while another ardently defends the socialist kibbutzim. One is a leading peace activist, while another helps create an anti-Zionist terror underground in Damascus. Featuring eight pages of black-and-white photos and maps, *Like Dreamers* is a nuanced, in-depth look at these diverse men and the conflicting beliefs that have helped to define modern Israel and the Middle East.

***The New Reform Judaism: Challenges and Reflections* by Dana Evan Kaplan et al.**

Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press

This is the book that American Jews and particularly American Reform Jews have been waiting for: a clear and informed call for further re-

form in the Reform movement.

In light of profound demographic, social and technological developments, it has become increasingly clear that the Reform movement will need to make major changes to meet the needs of a quickly evolving American Jewish population. Younger Americans in particular differ from previous generations in how they relate to organized religion, often preferring to network through virtual groups or gather in informal settings of their own choosing.

Dana Evan Kaplan, an American Reform Jew and pulpit rabbi, argues that rather than focusing on the importance of loyalty to community, Reform Judaism must determine how to engage the individual in a search for existential meaning. It should move us toward a critical, scholarly understanding of the Hebrew Bible, that we may emerge with the perspectives required by a postmodern world. Such a Reform Judaism can at once help us understand how the ancient world molded our most cherished religious traditions and guide us in addressing the increasingly complex social problems of our day.

***Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk* by  
Elissa Bemporad**

Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Minsk, the present capital of Belarus, was a heavily Jewish city in the decades between the world wars. Recasting our understanding of Soviet Jewish history, *Becoming Soviet Jews* demonstrates that the often violent social changes enforced by the communist project did not destroy continuities with prerevolutionary forms of Jewish life in Minsk. Using Minsk as a case study of the Sovietization of Jews in the former Pale of Settlement, Elissa Bemporad reveals the ways in which many Jews acculturated to Soviet society in the 1920s and 1930s while remaining committed to older patterns of Jewish identity, such as Yiddish culture and education, attachment to the traditions of the Jewish workers' Bund, circumcision and kosher slaughter. This pioneering study also illuminates the reshaping of gender relations on the Jewish street

and explores Jewish everyday life and identity during the years of the Great Terror.

***How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* by Leora Batnitzky**

Princeton University Press

Is Judaism a religion, a culture, a nationality — or a mixture of all of these? In *How Judaism Became a Religion*, Leora Batnitzky boldly argues that this question more than any other has driven modern Jewish thought since the eighteenth century. This wide-ranging and lucid introduction tells the story of how Judaism came to be defined as a religion in the modern period — and why Jewish thinkers have fought as well as championed this idea.

Ever since the Enlightenment, Jewish thinkers have debated whether and how Judaism — largely a religion of practice and public adherence to law — can fit into a modern, Protestant conception of religion as an individual and private matter of belief or faith. Batnitzky makes the novel argument that it is this clash between the modern category of religion and Judaism that is responsible for much of the creative tension in modern Jewish thought. Tracing how the idea of Jewish religion has been defended and resisted from the eighteenth century to today, the book discusses many of the major Jewish thinkers of the past three centuries, including Moses Mendelssohn, Abraham Geiger, Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, Zvi Yehuda Kook, Theodor Herzl and Mordecai Kaplan. At the same time, it tells the story of modern orthodoxy, the German-Jewish renaissance, Jewish religion after the Holocaust, the emergence of the Jewish individual, the birth of Jewish nationalism and Jewish religion in America.

More than an introduction, *How Judaism Became a Religion* presents a compelling new perspective on the history of modern Jewish thought.

***The Book of Job: A Biography* by Mark Lattimore**

Princeton University Press



The Book of Job raises stark questions about the nature and meaning of innocent suffering and the relationship of the human to the divine, yet it is also one of the Bible's most obscure and paradoxical books, one that defies interpretation even today. Mark Larrimore provides a panoramic history of this remarkable book, traversing centuries and traditions to examine how Job's trials and his challenge to God have been used and understood in diverse contexts, from commentary and liturgy to philosophy and art.

Larrimore traces Job's obscure origins and his reception and use in the Midrash, burial liturgies, and folklore, and by figures such as Gregory the Great, Maimonides, John Calvin, Immanuel Kant, William Blake, Margarete Susman, and Elie Wiesel. He chronicles the many ways the Book of Job's interpreters have linked it to other biblical texts; to legends, allegory, and negative and positive theologies; as well as to their own individual and collective experiences. Larrimore revives old questions and provides illuminating new contexts for contemporary ones. Was Job a Jew or a gentile? Was his story history or fable? What is meant by the "patience of Job," and does Job exhibit it? Why does God speak yet not engage Job's questions?

Offering rare insights into this iconic and enduring book, Larrimore reveals how Job has come to be viewed as the Bible's answer to the problem of evil and the perennial question of why a God who supposedly loves justice permits bad things to happen to good people.

***The War Within These Walls* by Aline Sax**

Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

It's World War II, and Misha's family, like the rest of the Jews living in Warsaw, has been moved by the Nazis into a single crowded ghetto. Conditions are appalling: every day more people die from disease, starvation and deportations. Misha does his best to help his family survive, even crawling through the sewers to smuggle food. When conditions worsen, Misha joins a handful of other Jews who decide to make a final, desperate stand against the Nazis.

Heavily illustrated by Caryl Strzelecki with sober black-and-white drawings, this powerful novel dramatically captures the brutal reality of a tragic historical event.

***Jews in Gotham: New York in A Changing City, 1920-2010* by Jeffrey S. Gurock**

New York University Press

*Jews in Gotham* follows the Jewish saga in ever-changing New York City from the end of the First World War into the first decade of the new millennium. This lively portrait details the complex dynamics that caused Jews to persist, abandon or be left behind in their neighborhoods during critical moments of the past century. It shows convincingly that New York retained its preeminence as the capital of American Jews because of deep roots in local worlds.

***Hanukkah in America: A History* by Dianne Ashton**

New York University Press

In New Orleans, Hanukkah means decorating your door with a menorah made of hominy grits. Latkes in Texas are seasoned with cilantro and cayenne pepper. Children in Cincinnati sing Hanukkah songs and eat oranges and ice cream. While each tradition springs from its own unique set of cultural references, what ties them together is that they all celebrate a holiday that is different in America than it is any place else. For the past two hundred years, American Jews have been transforming the ancient holiday of Hanukkah from a simple occasion into something grand. Each year, as they retell its story and enact its customs, they bring their ever-changing perspectives and desires to its celebration. Providing an attractive alternative to the Christian dominated December, rabbis and lay people alike have addressed contemporary hopes by fashioning an authentically Jewish festival that blossomed in their American world.

***The Rise of Abraham Cahan* by Seth Lipsky**

New York: Nextbook/Schocken

The first general-interest biography of the legendary editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, the newspaper of Yiddish-speaking immigrants that inspired, educated and entertained millions of readers; helped redefine journalism during its golden age and transformed American culture.

Already a noted journalist writing for both English-language and Yiddish newspapers, Abraham Cahan founded the Yiddish daily in New York City in 1897. Over the next fifty years, he turned it into a national newspaper that changed American politics and earned him the adulation of millions of Jewish immigrants and the friendship of the greatest newspapermen of his day, from Lincoln Steffens to H. L. Mencken. Cahan did more than cover the news. He led revolutionary reforms — spreading social democracy, organizing labor unions, battling communism and assimilating immigrant Jews into American society, most notably via his groundbreaking advice column, *A Bintel Brief*. Cahan was also a celebrated novelist whose works are read and studied to this day as brilliant examples of fiction that turned the immigrant narrative into an art form.

Lipsky gives us the fascinating story of a man of profound contradictions: an avowed socialist who wrote fiction with transcendent sympathy for a wealthy manufacturer, an internationalist who turned against the anti-Zionism of the left, an assimilationist whose final battle was against religious apostasy. Lipsky's Cahan is a prism through which to understand the paradoxes and transformations of the American Jewish experience. A towering newspaperman in the manner of Horace Greeley and Joseph Pulitzer, Abraham Cahan revolutionized our idea of what newspapers could accomplish.

## Masada

A poem by Isaac Lamdan

Who are you that come, stepping heavy in silence?

--The remnant.

Alone I remained on the day of great slaughter.

Alone, of father and mother, sisters and brothers.

Saved in an empty cask hid in a courtyard corner.

Huddled, a child in the womb of an anxious mother.

I survived.

Days upon days in fate's embrace I cried and begged  
for mercy:

Thy deed it is, O God, that I remain.

Then answer: Why?

If to bear the shame of man and the world.

To blazon it forever--

Release me! The world unashamed will flaunt this shame

As honor and spotless virtue!

And if to find atonement I survive

Then Answer: Where?

So importuning a silent voice replied:

"In Masada!"

And I obeyed that voice and so I came.

Silent my steps will raise me to the wall,

Silent as all the steps filled with the dread

Of what will come.

Tall, tall is the wall of Masada.

Deep, deep is the pit at its feet.

And if the silent voice deceived me,

From the high wall to the deep pit

I will fling me.

And let there be no sign remaining,

And let no remnant survive.

## Nazism and Politics

A Review essay by Rochelle Millen

### ***Complicity in the Holocaust: Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* by Robert P. Erickson. Cambridge University Press**

Toward the end of this meticulously researched and excellent volume, Robert P. Erickson relates an experience that occurred in 1987 during the 250th anniversary of Gottingen University. Part of the commemoration entailed the writing a major study of Gottingen under Nazi rule. Erickson was asked to contribute a chapter about the theological faculty, to which he agreed. When approached to pen a chapter on the famous history seminar as well, he found out that several young faculty had earlier been invited to do so, but had been advised by their mentors not to accept, as “stirring up the Nazi past” would inhibit career advancement. More than fifty years after the rise of Nazism in the tumultuous 1930s, bringing to the surface unpleasant, buried truths could be fraught with negative consequences.

This anecdote illustrates the variegated hues on the spectrum of complicity during the years of Nazi Socialism, a rainbow of involvement that Erickson’s book carefully delineates. Undergirding his analyses of church meetings, faculty politics and student upheavals is a question posed by the historian, Konrad Jarausch, and quoted by Erickson: “How could competent, individually decent university graduates fall collectively for the Austrian corporal?”

Erickson’s book describes the many pastors and professors who “fell for the Austrian corporal.” While drawing on the work of Victoria Barnett, Christopher Browning, Doris Bergen Susannah Heschel, Kevin Spicer as well as his own groundbreaking 1985 study, *Theologians Under Hitler*, Erickson offers an important added dimension to their body of research by summarizing, integrating and evaluating aspects of the complicity spectrum. His thorough and well-written study clearly demonstrates the many ways “individually decent university gradu-

ates" and pastors already in positions of power "collectively" fell under the sway of Hitler, his ideology and his pseudo-religious nationalism.

The case of Gottfried Ewald is an excellent example of the complexity of complicity, the many shades of grey which can make it difficult, in some cases, to make unambiguous moral judgments. Professor of psychiatry at Gottingen and director of the state hospital, Ewald joined a right wing student organization, the *Bund Oberland* in 1924 and subsequently became an early supporter of the idea and practice of forced sterilization. Yet at a 1937 meeting of academics in Berlin, when asked to serve on a board which would assess psychiatric patients for possible euthanasia, Ewald simply walked out of the meeting. He refused to comply even when many other professors agreed. Upon returning to Gottingen, he composed a letter explaining his position and received a reply from a right wing friend from his student years. "I am quite convinced," the friend writes, "that the views of the entire German Volk in these matters are in a state of flux, and I can easily imagine that things which at one moment are considered unacceptable, in the next moment can be declared the only right choice. We have experienced that numerous times in the course of history" (p. 162).

These words remind us, as Ericksen notes, of the shifting concept of "right." Pastor and professors gradually came to refashion their moral values and views to fit within what were considered the norms of Nazi ideology. "Nazi Germany," he writes, is nothing if not a laboratory for the study of groupthink and norms adjustment (162). Ewald did not change his views on euthanasia and never served on an assessment board. Yet in 1940-1941, he sent 238 of his patients to their deaths, listing them as "severely afflicted." Did Ewald accept individual decisions (i.e., his own) that would send persons to their death, but feel wary of a collective board of assessment? He protested euthanasia, but supported Nazi ideology, participated in forced sterilizations, and knowingly sent patients to their deaths. "Where then," asks Ericksen, "should we place Ewald on our moral spectrum?" (163). The line Ewald refused to cross remains blurred. Did he perhaps comply with some aspects of Nazi racial science in order to safely refrain from others he

perceived as more heinous?

Other conflicts in the various universities led to nasty politics, loud demonstrations and clear violations of academic standards and policies. Interestingly, Ericksen points as well to the significant role played by historians in making possible the Nazi state. Historians wrote working papers justifying and advocating policies long advanced by right-wing nationalists, such as acquiring Eastern territories and moving and/or eliminating their populations. They incorporated concepts of conquest and annihilation as part of the world view passed on in university classrooms. So deep was the influence of historians that it was not until the 1998 German *Historikertag* that the powerful role of German historians in support of Nazi ideals came to be publically discussed. This was clearly due to the lasting impact of the teaching of several renowned historians on several generations trained in German universities. Some who were not supporters of Hitler in the early 1930s nonetheless saw the expansion of a renewed Germany as a “holy” task and many — though not all — of their students in 1998 defended their mentors. We may speak of “the power of the press,” but the voice in the classroom has its own influential resonances.

The example of Gunther Dehn, both a pastor and professor of theology, illustrates the tidal force of the increasingly nationalist forces in Germany in the late 1920s and early 1930s. It also demonstrates the potent — and insidious — control exerted by a large crowd. The Dehn tale — among many others from this period of brutality — reminds me of a verse in the Hebrew Bible: “Do not be a follower of the majority for evil, and do not respond to a grievance by yielding to the majority to pervert [the law]” (Exodus, 23:2).

As a theologian in the late 1920s, Dehn had argued that the fervor of war was not the only possible Christian response in World War I. In a speech in 1928, while acknowledging the morality of just war, he argued that pacifism is an equally legitimate Christian response; that perhaps churches should refrain from glorifying war through commemorative plaques listing the names of soldiers who died. These ideas,



coming a mere ten years after Germany's defeat and the war guilt clause in the Treaty of Versailles, began a cascade of rumor and anger, resulting in Dehn's eventual loss of a university appointment.

Dehn's comments had violated the rising nationalist mood. The negative press engendered was eventually taken up by the Brandenburg Church Council. After reading Dehn's text, the council was only partially mollified. It concluded that Dehn "had damaged the general interests of the church" by using words carelessly and speaking with irritation (77). The church had the opportunity to defend this scholar by acknowledging the legitimacy of his claims as one possible reaction to the glorification of war. It could have noted that Dehn's views were based on valid interpretations of biblical texts. But the church slid away from controversy, choosing to protect rumor and further foment a nationalism increasingly run amok.

When then offered a faculty position at Heidelberg, six of seven Heidelberg theologians failed to support him, fearing, it seems, student and faculty unrest. And their fears were all too correct. For finally, when hired by Halle, right-wing students — all this in 1931 — distributed an inflammatory flier attacking Dehn. The faculty senate, in an effort to contain the increasing distrust and restlessness, banned the Nazi Student Organization for a year. The *Rektor* and faculty senate continued to support Dehn. But students, having constructed a verbal caricature of Dehn, repeated and repeated it until they believed it was true. Refusing to consider an alternate perspective, they saw their task, their opposition to university authority, as "break [ing] the yoke of slavery and bring [ing] the German *Volk* to a better tomorrow" (79). Empowered by the political impetus of an ever stronger nationalism, they threatened not only to bar Dehn's appointment, but also to compel the *Rektor* to resign. In the end, despite Dehn's determination and the assistance of the administration, the right-wing students succeeded in forcing a confrontation. The outcome? The faculty senate declared that the students, despite their excessive behavior, "were motivated by pure and honorable feelings for the fatherland and for our university."

This capitulation, thirteen months before Hitler's ascendancy became official, conveys the increasing transformation of Nazi ideology — its nationalism, claim to obedience and complete devotion, its intimidating tactics, the worship of the *Volks* and eventually of Hitler — into a religion. Not conquering Moors on horses nor Crusaders and Inquisitors, but twentieth-century Germans espoused an absolutism, exclusivism, and narcissism that would eventually self-destruct, murdering millions in its wake.

All of which brings us to the German churches and how they were complicit. During the post-war years of denazification, the claim was repeatedly made that church membership meant opposition to Nazism. As Ericksen points out, this view became especially prominent in Germany after 1948 when the British gave up their role in the denazification process. Not only did church members, for the most part, not oppose Nazi ideology, but church leaders also promoted it. It was as if church leaders gave its members *permission* to disregard its moral teachings and replace them with a nationalism that created boycotts, the Enabling Act, coerced sterilization, the racial hierarchy of the Nuremberg Laws, the increasing violence leading to *Kristallnacht*, the murder of children with cerebral palsy and other disorders. In 1931, bishops in Bavaria warned against Nazi ideology *should it become* "incompatible with Catholic teachings, thus conveying a criticism of Nazi ideology later compromised."

Ericksen clearly demonstrates how both Catholic and Lutheran church leaders gradually warmed to Nazi ideas. A statement read in all Protestant churches in April 1933, proclaimed: "A state which begins once again to govern according to God's command may expect not just the applause but the joyous cooperation of the church." One need only recall Nazi actions between January and April 1933 to fully understand the meaning of governing "according to God's command." Such Catholic and Protestant proclamations conveyed to their laity an endorsement and approval of Nazi behavior. Were an individual to be wavering as to what to think and/or do, church statements could — and did — powerfully persuade. Even the enactments of the Confessing Church

were not declarations of resistance against the denigration of and violence toward the Other — especially Jews and later Roma and others — but rather resistance only in an ecclesiastical sense. The Confessing Church was not an heroic organization. Its many statements did not oppose the rising anti-Semitism, neither its legal restraints nor its violence. Even Dietrich Bonhoeffer would write about “the Jewish problem” in Germany, although he did sympathize with Jewish suffering. Nonetheless, when in 1952 friends of Bonhoeffer arranged to have a memorial plaque placed at the Flossenburg Concentration Camp, where Bonhoeffer had been executed, the Bishop of Munich refused to participate, calling Bonhoeffer not “a martyr to the church but a traitor to his nation.” Bonhoeffer had travelled outside Germany, contrary to nationalistic expectations. He had studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York, learning from the experiences of black Christians. But returning to Germany, he had only a small base of support and acted outside the parameters of his own Protestant church.

After 1945, the church rallied behind Bonhoeffer and Martin Niemöller as if they were representative of church policy rather than radical figures who had been persecuted by the Nazi state. Most church leaders welcomed, praised and accepted Hitler and Nazi ideology.

Ironically, pastors — and professors — in the post-war period claimed not to have been *real* Nazis, but only to have worked within the system to *protect* religious and academic values. Those were the very values, however, that succumbed to Nazism. The slow sinking of religious morality and academic standards led to the complicity of these institutions in ways large and small. By not protesting the early, smaller violations, churches and universities came to accept — indeed to foster — actions that were substantial, stronger and even more devastatingly significant. The churches and universities came to rationalize brutality and blatant injustice, much of it emanating from their own centers.

This volume is a lucid exposition of the ways the official religious and academic communities in German life became an integral part of the Nazi system as it made its tragic trajectory across Europe. By further

complicating the concept of complicity with pointed examples and astute reflections, Ericksen contributes to the ongoing examination of the central historical explosion of the twentieth century. The detail, perspective, and clarity of this book add an important dimension to the story we still seek to understand.

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## night trains

A poem by r.e. sherwin

richmond Statesboro  
little rock d.c. nightclubs  
southern all my wars  
waited eighty years  
to say what i thought and felt  
and all of it gone  
not even the groan of night  
trains echo thru my dreaming  
not even sixty  
years ago saxophones blasts  
desiring desires  
thru fogs of drunk and smoke and  
futures unbelievable  
music for tin ears  
dancing rattling to and thru  
moons never quite full  
suddenly suddenly old  
suddenly suddenly dark  
black battalions  
all my wars unfinished the  
night trains rolling still

## Salvation Through Transgression

A Review essay by Peter J. Haas

***The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755-1816* by Pawel Maciejko. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press**

One of Theodor Herzl's famous early fantasies of how to solve "The Jewish Question" in nineteenth century Europe was to orchestrate the mass conversion of Jews to Roman Catholicism. Although he set the stage beautifully as regards how this mass conversion was to take place, it was obviously a fantasy scenario that could never play out in real history. There was no precedent at all in Jewish history for any such voluntary mass conversion to Christianity, with one exception. As Maciejko points out at the very beginning of his book, such a voluntary mass conversion did take place reportedly in the city of Lwow in 1759 and was led by Jacob Frank. This event in some sense culminated the life cycle of a very odd group that emerged out of one of the streams of Sabbateanism and along its trajectory intersected in complicated ways with Karaites, Protestant missionaries, blood libels, a sort of proto-Zionism, messianism, medieval disputations, the worship of Mary and the breakup of Poland. Maybe just as astonishing as the voluntary mass conversion of a group of Jews to Roman Catholicism was the reaction of the Jewish community, which responded with relief if not celebration: they were glad to see the group go. In fact, by the time of the death in the Offenbach Castle in 1816 of the Frankist messiah, Eve Frank (Jacob Frank's daughter), many outsiders were completely unaware that the court of this colorful and apparently Polish Catholic nobleman had any connection with the Jews or Judaism. There is obviously quite some back story to this event and the strange offspring it spawned, and Maciejko sets out to research and describe it.

Sabbateanism and its aftermaths are not easy phenomena to research. The events of the messianic movement surrounding Shabbtai Zevi are well-known, at least in broad outline. Gershom Sholem has written

a 1000-page exhaustive and presumably definitive account of the movement and its founder. What is less well-studied is what happened to the followers of Shabbtai Zevi after his conversion to Islam in 1666. We know that several responses emerged, ranging from a penitent and chastised return to normative rabbinism to the formation of various Sabbatean sects, that practiced forms of Sabbatean inspired antinomianism to various degrees, sometimes openly sometimes in deep privacy. We also know that some of these groups persisted for decades, the "Dönme" sect in Turkey even lasting into the twentieth century. What also appears to be the case, as Maciejko points out, is that Sabbatean-inspired activities were often tolerated, or at least not forcefully addressed in the Polish territories of central Europe, nor elsewhere, well into the eighteenth century. Why this was so is open to speculation: maybe it was because such Sabbatean groups were marginal and so not seen as a real threat, maybe because the Sabbateans enjoyed too much popular sympathy and rabbinic power was too limited to launch a frontal attack, maybe because of a fear of washing too much crazy Jewish dirty laundry in public. Whatever the reasons, the tensions between Sabbateans and normative rabbinites continued to boil beneath the surface, appearing in veiled form in all sorts of polemics back and forth, but rarely broke out into public view. There are at least two major exceptions to this "discretion". One was the famous Emden-Eibesbüsch controversy that rocked Central European German Jewry from the 1750's on. The other was what Maciejko calls the "Lanckoronie Affair", which involved the Frankists and occurred in a little town near the Moldavian border in January 1756.

The original event was, on the surface, maybe nothing all that unusual. A group of Sabbateans, led by Jacob Frank, held what might have been, so Maciejko speculates, a sort of distorted "Simhat Torah" celebration, which would have included dancing with, and maybe hugging and kissing the Torah scrolls. Usually this celebration occurs in late September/early October, just after the Jewish New Year and marks the beginning of the annual cycle of the reading of the Torah. That a Sabbatean sect would celebrate an established rabbinic ritual on the

wrong day, in fact in the wrong season, is perfectly within character for Shabbatai Zevi's disciples. As noted above, such bizarre activities were usually ignored by the authorities. What made the events at Lanckoronie distinctly controversial, apparently, is that instead of dancing, hugging and kissing the Torah scrolls, the adherents allegedly danced, hugged and kissed an allegedly naked or semi-naked woman (allegedly also the wife of a local rabbi). To be sure the ceremony seemed to have been carried out with some discretion, heavy curtains or rugs apparently having been placed over the windows, for example. Nonetheless word got out and the local Jewish authorities decided this time to intervene and to do so by turning to ecclesiastical authorities. A consistory trial was called, to be presided over by Bishop Dembowski. The main perpetrators were arrested and a trial was set up in the dioceses of Kamieniec diocese. At this juncture, the Lanckoronie celebration became the Lanckoronie Affair, and the starting point for Maciejko's study.

The first six chapters of the book review the history of the Frankist movement in Poland. The turn to ecclesiastical authorities had its own complications. One of the elements of Sabbateanism was that it appropriated non-Jewish symbols, including Christian crosses. There are in fact some grounds for thinking that certain forms of Sabbateanism were influenced by Jews whose ancestors had converted to Catholicism in Spain and whose families later returned to Judaism, but brought with them some elements of Christianity. Thus when the Lanckoronie case came before the ecclesial court, the Sabbateans could argue with some credibility that they were actually closer to Christianity than were to their rabbinic Jewish prosecutors, and hence potential allies of the Church. To forestall such an argument, Rabbi Jacob Emden, already on the warpath against Sabbateans, crafted a letter to the Council of the Four Lands, the "governing" body for the Jews in the area roughly of Poland, supplying arguments to establish just the opposite. According to Emden, the very New Testament itself testified that Paul and the apostles regarded Judaism as a valid religion and did not preach the end of the law but its fulfillment. Jews too could recognize the validity



of the religion expressed in the New Testament. What both Christians and Jews shared now, according to Emden, was the threat of a newly invented orgiastic heresy such as Sabbateanism, which distorted both Judaism and Christianity. Emden, Maciejko argues, made a powerful case, and in the process, for the first time, drew a definition around what could be called "orthodox" Judaism. In this definition, Sabbateans were clearly outside the bounds; they were a heresy that even Christians could discern.

In light of this argument, the "Lankoronie" Sabbateans built a defense strategy based on Christian anti-Judaism. In fact Maciejko refers to the confrontation as the "Kamieniec Disputation". The Sabbateans now argued that in fact Talmudic Judaism was indeed law without spirit, just as the Church had always been teaching. Moreover, the Sabbateans now averred that they accepted many basic Catholic doctrines, including that of the trinity and that such acceptance had deep roots in Jewish thought, especially the Kabbalah and more particularly the Zohar. In framing matters this way, the Sabbateans managed to position themselves on essentially the same side as the Christians, denouncing the common enemy who refused to accept the truth, namely Talmudic Jews. This strategy, Maciejko argues, gave the Sabbateans another advantage. They could be identified, at least implicitly, with the other anti-Talmudic Jewish group in the region, a group that already had recognized legal standing, the Karaites. It also put the rabbinic side in an awkward position because they now were forced in effect to denounce the Kabbalah.

Things now went from bad to worse. The consistory court ruled in favor of the Sabbateans and even decreed the burning of the Talmud. In order not to give the still-not-Christian Sabbateans too much of a victory, however, it also denounced the Kabbalah. When the archbishop suddenly died and was replaced by none other than the Bishop Dembowski who had issued the outcome of the "disputation", the situation of the rabbinic authorities seemed hopeless. But then Dembowski himself suddenly died, and the poles were reversed. The pressure on the "Talmudic" Jews abated, and the persecution of Sabbateans, who

were now neither Christians nor Jews, began in earnest. In the end Frank and many of his followers converted to Islam and soon Podolian Sabbateanism seemed to have been driven from the land.

But the Sabbateans returned, and just in time to be part of a revival of the "blood libel", that charged Jews with needing to kill Christians for their blood. The details of the libel and the "disputation" that took place in Lwow need not detain us here. Suffice it to say that the resurfacing Frankists did not hesitate, according to Maciejko, from adding their own "expertise" concerning the moral depravity of Talmudic Jews. In the end, it was determined that there was no basis for the blood libel charge and so the worst fears of Polish Jewish authorities faded. Moreover, by this point the Frankists had in a body converted to Christianity and so no longer posed the threat they once did. No wonder the Jewish community wished them a good riddance.

Actually, as Maciejko points out, even the conversion was not so simple. Apparently every one of the religious players saw it differently. The rabbinic opponents had by the time of the conversion convinced themselves that the Frankists weren't even practicing Judaism, so the "conversion" to Roman Catholicism was basically a non-event; Protestant missions in Poland, who saw hope of converting the Christianizing Frankists, were astonished that they chose the Catholic Church instead; the Frankists, in order to blunt rabbinic charges of immorality had already distanced themselves from Sabbateanism and had begun to see themselves as a distinct religion, just as the rabbis had been claiming; and the Roman Catholics in the end were not quite sure that they had converted actual Jews. In all this argumentation to and fro, the movement took shape as an "ism" with a very mixed DNA.

The end of the Frankist movement was as bizarre as everything else about it. After the full conversion was completed, Frank and his followers settled in Warsaw and began bargaining for land and for the right to serve in the military. Eventually some "Christian Sabbatian"

colonies were established, although according to Maciejko, only the Warsaw group had any robustness. The rest gradually fell away. At the same time denunciations of Frank began to surface. He was eventually arrested and ended up imprisoned in Czestochowa, where he fell under the spell of the icon of the Virgin Mary and gradually came to fantasize that the Virgin Mary, the Shekhina, the messiah and his daughter Eve were all interconnected. As Macielkjo puts it (on page 179), "...Frank developed a doctrine in which he was the physical father and partner (metaphorical or not) of his daughter Eve, the true messiah of the Frankists."

The concluding three chapters of the book piece together what might be called the afterglow of the Polish Frankist movement. Chapter Seven concerns itself with Frank's eventual move to Moravia and the apparent ties he seems to have had, or had developed, with the Viennese court. This story gives Maciejko an opportunity to examine the differences between Frankists in Poland and their apparently more educated counterparts in the Hapsburg Empire, more specifically the area around Prague. Chapter Eight focuses attention on the person described as "Frank's most important rival for the leadership of Eastern European Sabbatians", namely Wolf Eibeschutz, the youngest son of the Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschutz who was so famously attacked as a Sabbateian by Rabbi Jacob Emden. Wolf seems to have an unusual life as a sort of playboy — big mansions, racy artwork and all. After being forced to leave Altona, he appeared in Vienna and eventually became a Hoffaktor in Dresden, managing to procure along the way the title of Baron, although the exact meaning of this ennoblement evokes some careful definition from Maciejko. This chapter also contemplates the intersections of Moravian Frankism with a variety of other occult or mystery movements active at the time such as Christian Kabbalah, Freemasonry and "Der Ritter des Lichts" (even Giacomo Casanova makes a cameo appearance here). The ninth and last chapter takes up the story as Frank makes his last major move, this time to Frankfurt am Main (or more accurately, the suburb of Offenbach).

It is here that Frank begins the transition from historical person to

legend. Even Maciejko despairs of sorting fact from fiction. Allegedly, Frank entered Frankfurt in regal procession, complete with an entourage and pages in livery. He set himself up in Eve's residence, a castle he called the "Gotteshaus" and was known locally as some sort of Polish baron. He attended Catholic mass at a church in a nearby village. Unlike Warsaw or Prague, it seems that his Jewish roots were unknown in Offenbach; he was simply "the Polish prince" with a strange and mixed following that was vaguely Catholic in practice. But despite his royal airs and ostentatious living, the movement was in financial ruin. Frank himself died in 1807, his son Roch in 1813, and his daughter and messiah, Eve, in 1816 while under house arrest as her creditors were closing in. But the legend was already in the making. Two sources lay the foundation of the legend, the so-called "Red Letters" (some written in red ink to Eastern and Central European Jews by Frankist leaders in Offenbach) and "The Prophecies of Isaiah". On the basis of these, and the royal legends circulating in Frankfurt, a myth grew up about the mystical and magic Frankist "state within a state", or secret society, or whatever it was. For the remaining Frankists, the death of the founding prophet led to a Weberian routinization or institutionalization, with the movement exorcising some of the most radical theological innovations of Jacob Frank and so a return to a more "normative" Sabbateanism. The Warsaw group for example, is described as having given up their orgiastic practices in favor of a more bourgeois morality. Maciejko even asserts that attacks on the movement in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially by rabbinic opponents, served both to define, moderate and keep intact the surviving groups. They certainly helped formulate the way in which Frankism began to enter the writing of modern Jewish history.

In the end, Maciejko helps us see clearly that Frankism failed in its own self-proclaimed mission. The world remained unredeemed and Rabbinic Judaism continued. But it nonetheless had immense impact on Jews, on Christians and on Jewish-Christian perceptions of each other as Europe stumbled into the modern world. How exactly to understand and evaluate this strange group and its various receptions

and legends is still an open question. But what the book before us does make clear is that for the rabbinic Jewish community, the Frankists represented a strange and ultimately embarrassing collection of peoples, theologies and moralities located in the heart of the Jewish world. It truly was an analog of that unwelcomed part of the Jewish people's journey out of Egypt, the "mixed multitude". Nobody, it seems, came out of this encounter the same as when they went in.

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## Shoah: The “First” Day

A Review essay by Paul R. Bartrop

***The Night of Broken Glass: Eyewitness Accounts of Kristallnacht*, edited by Uta Gerhardt and Thomas Karlauf. Cambridge: Polity Press**

November 9-10, 2013 marked the 75th anniversary of the event in 1938 known as Kristallnacht. It was the most extensive act of Nazi persecution against the Jews prior to the outbreak of World War II.

After all those years, what more needs to be said about that awful night, and the days and weeks that followed? The night was dubbed by Nazis as the “Night of Broken Glass,” or “Night of Crystals” (*Kristallnacht*). The term we use today is a Nazi term of derision against the Jews, introduced by Hermann Goering amid much laughter. It was a term intended to humiliate the Jews. What was it about this event that prompted such desperation on the part of the Jews still remaining in Germany (which now included Austria and the German-speaking areas of Czechoslovakia, the Sudetenland)?

The event itself was far from spontaneous. The Nazi pogrom took place against Jewish stores, synagogues and community centers in what the Nazis referred to as “retaliation” for the fatal wounding of the Third Secretary of the German Embassy in Paris, Ernst vom Rath, by a sixteen-year-old Jewish youth, Hershel Grynszpan. Grynszpan’s parents and sister, originally from Poland, had earlier been forcibly relocated across the border between German and Poland, and were living in destitute and squalid conditions in the no-man’s land between the two countries. Frustrated and angry to the point of distraction, on November 7, 1938 Grynszpan sought to raise the consciousness of the world to the injustice meted out to his family and the two thousand other Jews who were in the same situation: hence his action, driven by desperation, in shooting vom Rath in Paris. It was an act born out of hopelessness, and it had terrible consequences for the Jews of Germa-

ny.

The Nazis saw it as a wonderful opportunity to launch a pogrom against the Jews, the better to intimidate them into leaving, once and for all. Quickly labeling Grynszpan's act as the work of a criminal Jewish conspiracy, they arranged for the "punishment" of German Jewry through a wholesale pogrom against all Jews in the Reich. The attacks were carefully orchestrated. In 24 hours of street violence, 91 Jews were killed. More than 30,000 — one in ten of all Jews still remaining in Germany after five years of Nazi rule — were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Before most of them were released two to three months later, as many as one thousand had been murdered, 244 in Buchenwald alone. A further 8,000 Jews were evicted from Berlin: they included children from orphanages, patients from hospitals, and elderly folk from retirement homes. Eight hundred and fifteen shops and 29 major department stores owned by Jews were destroyed, and more than 260 synagogues and cemeteries were vandalized. In addition, it has been estimated that more than 7,500 Jewish-owned businesses were attacked. The actual cost of the damages inflicted was more than 25,000,000 Reichmarks, for which the Jews themselves were held liable by the Nazis, as well as a fine of more than one billion Reichmarks as "reparations."

The possibility that there could ever be an accommodation reached with Nazism — a hope long held by many — now vanished for Germany's Jews, and the painful truth which they had for so long tried to avoid broke through: they were being forced to quit the country and would have to leave Germany for other lands. Prior to the *Kristallnacht* many could not face up to that awful reality.

Some have termed the November pogrom "the day the Holocaust began," the day after which nothing could ever be the same again for the Jews of Germany. It was certainly a turning point, a point of no return, following which the Jews could hold no illusions as to how the Nazis viewed the Jewish presence in the Nazi state — namely, that they would not be considered as members of the community, to be

isolated, reduced to second class subjects (not considered as citizens), and encouraged at every opportunity to leave — by force, if need be.

*The Night of Broken Glass*, edited by Uta Gerhardt and Thomas Karlauf, bring together a collection of 21 eyewitness accounts by German Jews who lived through that horrible time. The collection is based on a 1939 project undertaken by three Harvard academics, the historian Sidney B. Fay, the psychologist Gordon Allport, and the sociologist Edward Hartshorne. In what became a competition, they offered a \$1,000 prize for “the best unpublished personal life histories of persons who have experienced the effects of National Socialism in Germany.” A total of 263 personal accounts were submitted, from which the editors have taken the current selection.

These testimonies recount a wide variety of first-hand experiences and witness statements relating to the events of the night of November 9-10, 1938, but they also embrace other incidents and encounters with the Nazis. The most poignant of these relate to what happened to the Jewish men arrested and taken to the concentration camps, particularly Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Dachau. After undergoing Nazi terror tactics intended to intimidate them into leaving the country, the men were in most cases released, after several weeks or months, on the sole condition they emigrate and leave most of their property in Germany.

Of course, after November 1938 this was far from easy. As we know, the way was to be barred for the Jews of Germany and Austria on so many occasions, and in so many ways, that Chaim Weizmann, later the first President of Israel, was known to make the famous statement that the world was at that time divided into two places: those where Jews could not live, and those where Jews could not enter.

The value of the accounts in this volume rests in the quality of their detail and their closeness to the events they are relating. It is a book worth reading, and a valuable first-hand collection that definitely adds to our understanding of this, arguably “the first day” of the *Shoah*.



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## The “Jewish” World of Herbert Hoover

A Review essay by Steven Windmueller

### **Herbert Hoover and the Jews: The Origins of the “Jewish Vote” and Bipartisan Support for Israel**

Is this book intended as an attack on the Democratic Party, and in particular, President Franklin Roosevelt for his failure to intercede on behalf of European Jewry, or is it a thoughtful historical study of the rise of Herbert Hoover and his impact on shaping and empowering the pro-Israel agenda?

Sonja Schoepf Wentling and Rafael Medoff offer us some fascinating insights into the political history of Herbert Hoover. In this well-researched and meticulously documented study, we are introduced to the humanitarian orientation of President Hoover and to the political environment covering a 25-year period, 1919-1944, in which this former president would play a high profile role.

In many ways the following excerpt from the Wentling/Medoff book best describes the writers’ primary thesis: “Despite Hoover’s record on Jewish concerns, most mainstream Jewish leaders refrained from building ties to the former president or other prominent Republicans.”

For Hoover, who was born in West Branch, Iowa, his Quaker upbringing would frame his social and political values. Over the course of his public career he would hold to the view that America was unique among the nations, and with this historical status, came a special responsibility. American exceptionalism was also a perspective that he would share with his Jewish friends.

From the outset Hoover, due to his role as head of the United States Food Administration and his involvement with humanitarian aid services during the period of the First World War, developed an array of personal and political connections with key Jewish leaders including Felix Warburg of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee,

Lewis Marshall of the American Jewish Committee and Rabbi Stephen Wise of the American Jewish Congress. Hoover's extraordinary skills in organizing relief efforts would be acknowledged by the Jewish community as essential in saving the lives of Jews and others.

During his Presidency, and at other times during his political career, Hoover was outspoken in his support of Jewish claims to Palestine. As early as 1922, he called for developing in Palestine "an asylum for the less fortunate masses of the Jewish people and as a restoration of religious shrines." During his tenure as President (1928-1932), Hoover would speak out in support of the Zionist cause, despite facing strong opposition from his own State Department. Of the course of his Presidency, Hoover would issue statements of support to both Jewish and Pro-Zionist Christian groups.

In a chapter entitled "Hoover and the Origins of the Jewish Vote," Wentling and Medoff initially revisit Roosevelt's reluctance to act on behalf of European Jewry covering the period of 1942-1944. In turn, they provide a fascinating account of Republican efforts in 1944 to embrace the case for a Jewish.

State in Palestine and in turn, seek to pull the Jewish vote away from the Democratic Party. "...for the first time in history, the Republicans and Democrats adopted planks pledging support for Jewish statehood and actively competed for Jewish electoral support on that basis."

Toward the end of this book, the authors move away from Hoover and focus almost exclusively on the "Jewish vote" seeking to identify any possible shifting patterns over the years that would suggest a change in the historic support garnered by Democrats among the Jewish electorate. This overt attention to politics seems to undermine the more central focus of their earlier work, to uncover for us the contributions and impact of Herbert Hoover.

It should be noted that at the same time the authors offer a far less sympathetic view of Franklin Roosevelt; commenting, for example, on Roosevelt's involvement with the Evian Conference of 1938, they

would write: "Roosevelt exhibited a kind of amateur geographer's fascination with the idea of moving people around and creating new countries or societies."

By introducing us to the world of Herbert Hoover, Wentling and Medoff share with us some insights into the broader political mindset of this period in American history with its deeply rooted anti-Semitism and isolationism.

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