

# Sh'ma

*a journal of Jewish responsibility*

9/177, SEPTEMBER 21, 1979

## **An appeal to two troubled communities**

*Harold Schulweis*

In a few weeks the Jewish community will be entering the High Holy Day season of turning and reconciliation. High on that agenda will be the relationship between Blacks and Jews which has plummeted to its nadir point. The precipitating occasion is the beclouded resignation of Ambassador Andrew Young. But it is apparent that the intensity of the reaction and counter-reaction to that event as expressed by Black and Jewish leaders stems from earlier and deeper sources.

A decade of disenchantment has burst forth in a cumulative rage. Jewish leaders have sensed with deep unhappiness the rise of Black anti-semitism; Black leaders have interpreted certain Jewish positions on affirmative action and busing as a reversal of the traditional Jewish liberal stance. Jews perceive the Black aid and comfort to the PLO as an atrocious act, as bizarre as would be Jewish alliance with the Ku Klux Klan. Blacks view the amicus curiae support of some Jewish organizations in the Bakke case and the prominence of men and women with Jewish identities opposing school busing as racist. Angers are impatient with distinctions. It seems to matter little that neither community is a monolith or that not all who bear Jewish names or Black identities speak for their entire communities. There is a consensus that the two communities no longer share their historic congruence of interest.

As one raised in the Jewish tradition and committed to the prophetic and rabbinic value-system, I find such a rift painful and tragic. By Biblical precept and historic experience, Jews share with Blacks a kinship of suffering. They have each of

them "gone down to Egypt land." They know the bitterness of slavery, the genocidal terror of their enemies, the shame of discrimination. They know the heart of the slave and the stranger. In my own community, when we read Nat Turner's sermons to his fellow slaves grounded in the story of Exodus, when Mahalia Jackson sang the promise of "we shall overcome," when Martin Luther King raised his voice of righteous indignation, the sounds resonated in the marrow of being. We trembled with recognition. Is it all over between us now? Are we destined to enter our isolated camps as enemies? Are we content to accept such a separation?

### **Let us say "No" to Divide and Conquer**

That verdict would visit a moral blight upon the land and upon the promise of its future. No society can remain so deeply divided, economically, educationally, politically that its dream is broken into contradictory parts. Between Whites and Blacks there are real conflicts and different judgments which cannot tolerate benign neglect. Between Jews and Blacks the conflicts produce a special pain precisely because there were such high expectations from each other. But where there is pain, there is hope.

Jews and Blacks must not allow themselves to be used. They must be wary of those who would polarize us. They must not allow divided judgments to be converted into racial or religious prejudices. The rhetoric of accusation and counter-accusation only serves to frustrate the constructive forces within both communities, and to justify the cynics who counsel indifference. Jews and Blacks know that within their respective constituencies are many men and women with strong memories. There are people in both communities with the power to heal the bruises and bind up the wounds. The leaders and laity of both groups should know that only the bigot profits from our falling apart. According to Wayne King, the *New York Times* correspondent based in the South, the Klan, which we thought to be long dead, has increased its national membership by 25 per cent in the last five years. In Jackson, Mississippi, Klan night-riders shot up a synagogue and several Black churches. Klansmen burned crosses on the lawns of both Jewish and Black homes. They must not hand their common enemy victories through their severed relationship.

### **We can work together and disagree**

Admittedly, they are separate communities with separate agenda and interests which do not and

will not always coincide. But they become self-destructive when they blind themselves to the transcending commonality which binds them. Of course, a certain distance is necessary for the dignity of each communal self-identity. Over-dependence upon others often destroys a people's sense of self. But autonomy does not mean isolation. Blacks and Jews need each other. They are interdependent communities and they cut themselves off from each other at their own peril. Uncaring, angry, they prosper their enemies and lose their own souls.

A passage in the Talmud which is applicable to both our communities records the commentary of the rabbis on a verse in Deuteronomy 33:28, "And Israel dwelleth in safety, all alone, at the fountain of Jacob." Then the prophet Amos came and revoked that terrible judgement and declared, "Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech Thee. How shall Jacob stand alone? for he is small, and then the Lord repented concerning this: 'This shall not be,' saith the Lord" (Amos 7:5-6). No community dares stand alone. Now, in the midst of anguish and pain, is the time for religious and secular leaders and laity, Blacks and Jews, to initiate candid and caring dialogue towards reconciling the interests of these two troubled communities.

The focus of our attention has centered upon Blacks and Jews, but the issues confronted are by far not exclusively theirs. No group can remain without, as if it were an uninvolved, innocent spectator. If we take the incident of Andrew Young to be a Jewish-Black affair, we will deceive ourselves. At its root it remains an American dilemma calling for a moral American solution.

### **If i were preaching at the holy days**

*Jonathan R. Adelman*

#### **Let us Deal Realistically with the U. S. S. R.**

As we gather here today for *Rosh Hashonah*, our thoughts turn to the plight of nearly three million Jews of the Soviet Union. From the liquidation of Yiddish cultural institutions in the late 1940's to the shooting of the poets and the Doctor's Plot in 1952 to the denial of even elementary religious and nationalist rights today, the record is depressingly familiar. But, if we are to continue to help our fellow Jews, we must continue to deal realistically with the Soviet Union. Ritualistic denunciations of the Soviet Union, and especially

those which equate it with Nazi Germany, are inflammatory, false and dangerous to the future of Soviet Jews.

Despite hostile intent, the Soviet Union has repeatedly helped Soviet and world Jewry at critical moments. During the 1920's and 1930's Soviet Jews, unlike Polish Jews, were free to enter Soviet universities and government in large numbers. During World War II it was Red Army divisions which liberated Vienna and Prague, smashed the Nazi Panzers and conquered Berlin. Millions of Russian Jews, and other Western European Jews, owe their very lives to the heroism of the Red Army. In 1948 it was the Soviet Union through Czechoslovakia – and not the United States – which supplied Israel with the weapons she so desperately needed. And despite an abysmal Soviet record of massive aid to the Arabs, many experts believe that the Soviet ouster from Egypt in 1972

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### **Sh'ma**

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was partly caused by a Soviet refusal to supply Egypt with highly sophisticated and devastating modern weaponry.

Even today, as relatively conservative superpower, the interests of the Soviet Union are not totally hostile to our interests. That is why we must continue to deal with the Soviet Union in a realistic manner – for as the home of nearly 3 million Jews and the world's other superpower, we dare not deal with it in any other manner.

*Ed Feder*

#### The Uzi, Galil, Gabriel and Shafir

Newspapers have carried items about the \$400 million Israeli armaments sales abroad. (This is a mere 2% compared to the vast global total, with the main suppliers being the U. S., Russia, England, and France.) Mentioned among the countries supplied by Israel were South Africa, Chile, Argentina, Iran and Nicaragua. The Israeli weapons being shipped are machine guns, rifles, missiles, etc., with catchy romantic names: *Uzi, Galil, Gabriel, Shafir*.

The advantage of these sales, it is claimed, is that they help the Israeli balance of payments deficit. They also insure the existence of a well-oiled armaments industry, ready to swing into defense production if war breaks out.

But it is not posies that come from the barrels of the *Uzi, Galil*, etc. They spew forth death and blood in places far from Israel, against human beings who are not Israel's enemies. To a pacifist who is willing to accept the fact that others may believe in armaments for the defense of Israel, this commercial dealing in arms is a moral outrage. To a Jew, who has hoped that someday, Israel would follow the call of the prophets and take moral leadership in the world, this information is a shock. And to those of us who remember the call to holiness (*Kedoshim*) in the Bible Israel's actions are not the way to that goal. Really, not the way at all.

*Bert S. Gerard*

#### Sh'ma – let us listen and be silent

- I am going to listen to my conscience.
- I am going to listen to my wife when she tells me that "Salt Free Diet" means no pickled herring even if it is *Shabbos* or *Yontiff*.

- I am going to listen to my rabbi's sermons for their teachings, not their grammar.

- I am going to listen to my doctor when he tells me that a work addict is really a pompous, conceited ass looking for continuous praise.

- I am going to listen to my secretary when she tells me not to expect the president to have his annual report ready for the last issue of the temple bulletin.

- I am going to listen to the Still Small Voice that tells me moral imperatives did not go out with *Habbakuk*.

- I am going to listen to my broker when he tells me that money has no meaning anymore, put your pension into 1954 Thunderbirds.

- I am going to listen to my four sons when they tell me it's time to slow up and write a book. A good book.

- I am going to listen to my music again. Not just to say I own everything from Bach to Beiderbecke and back again; but to listen to what Bach and Beiderbecke were trying to say to me.

What are you going to listen to? And more important, after listening, what will you do?

*Shirley Gould*

#### How to be a Jewish Parent

The only way you can influence your children is to *be* actively Jewish. Being born Jewish or accepting Judaism isn't enough. We have lost the inspiration from grandparents who came from Europe imbued with Jewish values, learning, ideals and belief, and we must now create them for ourselves and our children in every generation. You're never finished being Jewish, and you're never finished learning.

Judaism isn't just three days in the fall and a gift season in early winter – if it is to continue, and to bring joy and fulfillment to those who espouse it, it must be part of daily life, an ever evolving process. We can help our children most by who we are, what we do, and least by what we say. A Jewish home has Jewish art objects on the walls, Jewish music on the hi-fi, Jewish books on the shelves, and Jewish observances all year around. *Shabbat* come 52 times a year, and each one is a reminder of the beauty and significance of our faith. Festivals come three times a year, and each

one has unique qualities to be enjoyed at home as well as in the synagogue.

To be an effective Jewish parent, each of us must be actively Jewish, learning, doing, and demonstrating to our children that we find joy in Judaism as they also will.

*Kate Helsy*

A Sermon for Prayer

Happy New Year!

Come to Letca, a logging hamlet in Transylvania, place of my childhood summers. Grandfather prays in the kitchen door, facing east. I don't understand Hebrew, still partake, swinging with his melody . . . Friday evening. Candles lit, grandmother's lips move, but I hear no sound. Is she praying in Hebrew? I whisper my question. "In no language, I don't pray in words." Garden-fragrance blows through the window, whirls with steam of soup, smell of food. Prayer without words swells the room. I grow giddy. Grandmother's prayer started in the morning while preparing for the Sabbath. Grandfather's too. First with words, then without, as he left for work, his big frame shrinking down the road to the forest . . . No prayer in Budapest. My parents were "enlightened." After our vacations in Letca stopped, religion faded from my life. Yet . . .

When decades later I was desolate in a hostile world Judaism reached out for me. Faith and tradition welcomed the forsaken from diverse lands. In normal times Jews gather in synagogues for community worship, on our own we realize that praying alone contains the communal and the private. An isolated utterance of the *Sh'ma* invokes voices of invisible observants, of those faraway and of those long buried. They join in morning prayers to fuse separate plans with the larger design, help to extend prayer into daily life and work. For the evening prayer asks: did we do our share? And the final summing up will be: did we pray our life and live our prayer? . . .

Grandmother became one of the Six Million, I grew gray and now, at the same age, we are separate persons no more. I light the candles and she moves my lips.

Join our prayer for a good 5740.

*George Jochowitz*

No More Forced Feeding

I will not preach to you on some major moral

issue, nor will I exhort you to be generous or idealistic. Rather, I will ask you to refrain from a very common bit of cruelty, a nasty and unnecessary act that people do every day without stopping to think.

I am talking about forcing children to eat. Most parents do it, and Jewish parents are especially likely to be guilty. When a child makes a reasonable statement like, "I don't want anymore," we reply in an unreasonable fashion. We say, "If you don't finish, you won't get dessert," thus teaching the child that sweets are to be desired over other foods. We say, "The food will go to waste," as if eating something unwanted weren't wasting it. We say, "You'll be hungry later," as if this were a major problem that couldn't be solved with a carrot or a few peanuts. We say, "You won't get your vitamins and minerals," forgetting that we Americans consume more protein than any other people in history.

Overweight is a common problem in our culture. One of the reasons for its existence is that we were taught to eat everything on our plates. Overeating, in a society plagued by heart disease and stroke, is a public health menace. In spite of this, loving parents force their children to overeat.

Health is an important reason not to make children eat, but morality is an even stronger argument against this practice. It is immoral to be gratuitously unkind, and making an issue of eating is very unkind indeed. On Yom Kippur, we pray for forgiveness for the sin of *imutz ha-lev* — hardening of the heart. Let us resolve never again to harden our hearts when our children say, "I don't want any more."

*Chaim B. Naphtali*

The Root of Judaism — There is a God

As a Reform Jew I insist on the right to define for myself what is acceptable as religious authority. Consequently, I must acknowledge the right of others to do the same. Nevertheless, I am unable to understand Judaism without identifying common elements shared by all Jews which distinguish Jews from all other people.

This state of understanding led to my exploration of claims that Judaism is essential genetic, social, historic, or a combination of these. I discovered that to view Judaism in such terms is like observing a flower, its petals, leaf and stem, without sensing its unseen root system, absent which

# K'ra

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## The Sh'ma Book Review

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**EYEWITNESS AUSCHWITZ: THREE YEARS IN THE GAS CHAMBERS.** *Filip Muller.* Stein and Day \$10.95.

**F**ilip Muller stayed alive in Auschwitz for three years through the belief that he must bear testimony to what actually happened there. *Eyewitness Auschwitz* is his powerful testimony. Muller is the only Holocaust survivor to have worked in the gas chambers and crematoria of Auschwitz-Birkenau during the entire course of their operation. Without embellishment, he recounts his experiences from the spring of 1942 when he was deported to Auschwitz until the cessation of the killings and the liberation by the Allies. The application of German efficiency to murder is revealed in all its horrific details.

The book describes rather than speculates. Yet if it does not treat specific subjects thematically—e.g., theology or resistance—it raises these issues in ways that force the reader to confront them. Muller reproduces the remarks of several devout “believers” amidst his fellow prisoners—and leaves the reader to wonder if such religious belief is defensible in Auschwitz. Similarly, he mentions various options for resistance—and the reader feels a traumatic uncertainty in weighing the alternatives to compliance.

Muller’s work is not easy to get through. The reader is not spared as the author recounts his tasks in the crematoria; The horrifying details make it almost impossible not to put the book down periodically. There is no literary drama—in fact, the stark descriptions are the book’s asset. For those who did not themselves live through the Holocaust, this volume serves to help comprehend the reality that goes beyond one’s most terrifying nightmares—a reality which a non-survivor can never fully grasp. It is to be hoped that many will read this book and give Muller’s sufferings some lasting meaning. *(Ralph Dalin)*

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**VISION OF THE VOID.** *Michael Berenbaum.* Wesleyan U. \$15.

**T**his is the first full-scale theological examination of the writings of Elie Wiesel and it is a comprehensive and thoughtful one. Berenbaum divides his treatment into two sections, the first a close reading of Wiesel’s works, the second, Wiesel’s thematic emphases, a comparison of his views with those of the theologians Rubenstein, Fackenheim and Berkovits and the humanists Arendt and Bettelheim.

Berenbaum is most persuasive in his treatment of the human and Jewish elements in Wiesel. His concern with life and antipathy to causing pain, his determination to be an honest witness and his solidarity with all Jews, are amply elucidated. I find the more directly theological material less satisfactory. The positive side of Wiesel’s engagement with the God he struggles with seems understated. His differences with Rubenstein involve more than a different upbringing. And I read Fackenheim as less traditional and Berkovits as more innovative than does Berenbaum. Moreover, what seems Wiesel’s central theolog-

ical problem, coming to terms with the inexplicable, gets lost here, perhaps because the richness of Wiesel’s work eludes cognitive translation. *(Eugene B. Borowitz)*

**THE JEWS OF ARGENTINA.** *Robert Weisbrot.* JPS. \$12.50.

**L**ike that of most American Jews, my knowledge of contemporary Jewry focuses on three main communities: Israel, the United States, and the Soviet Union. My fund of information concerning other modern Jewish communities around the world has consisted of bits and pieces, stories in magazines and newspapers, fragments of conversations with friends in Israel, all lodged in my peripheral vision. Robert Weisbrot’s book has considerably sharpened that vision, at least insofar as the Jews of Argentina are concerned. The author traces the history of the Argentine Jewish community (the fifth largest Jewish community in the world), its cultural, religious, and educational institutions, and its relationship to Argentine society in general. The chapters on the history of Argentine antisemitism, Zionist activity, and the early Jewish agri-

cultural cooperatives are especially informative. Anecdotes such as that concerning the first Jewish wedding ceremony in Argentina (1860), and a section on a seamier side of Jewish life — the involvement of some Jews in the 'white slave' trade — provide fascinating reading. (Mindy Avra Portnoy)

**THE AMERICAN MOVEMENT TO AID SOVIET JEWS.** William W. Orbach. U. of Massachusetts. \$15.00

In this detailed account, Orbach analyzes and puts in historical perspective the successes and failures of the American movement to aid Soviet Jews through the 1960's and 70's. He traces the organizers' first fumbling efforts, the pivotal role of the Jewish student activists in the late 1960's, the proliferation of organizations, and the internal conflicts which have been critical to the movement's development. He examines as well how the changing stances of Israeli, American and Soviet authorities have influenced the evolution and effectiveness of Jewish organizers' political tactics. Writing with a keen sense of the workings of international politics, Orbach has made an important contribution to the serious student as well as the general reader interested in Soviet Jewry. (Ruth H. Sohn)

**THINK JEWISH.** Zalman I. Posner. Keshet.

The author of this collection of essays — an oversimplified and rose-colored look at Judaism and Chassidus — states in the Foreword that he endeavored "to demonstrate that Judaism's teachings must be examined with the care and rigor one examines, say, political or economic or social or scientific offerings." If only he had done so. (Joseph C. Kaplan)

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## K'ra

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*The Sh'ma Book Review*

will be published five times until issue 10/195.

K'ra (read!) reviews books in terms of their value to general readers interested in significant books about the Jewish people and tradition. Its reviewers are present or former Sh'ma "staff" members.

**THE TRIAL OF GOD.** Elie Wiesel. Random House. \$8.95.

Why? Throughout Jewish history, after every disaster, after every pogrom, after the Holocaust, Jews cried out, why?

So in a small East European town on Purim eve in 1649, several months after a pogrom and hours before another, a small group performs a somber *Purimschpiel*. God is placed on trial, accused of "hostility, cruelty, and indifference" to His chosen people. All the necessary actors are here — the bitter survivor, the ruined innocent, the optimistic faithful, the Catholic priest offering salvation as he blames the victims for their plight. But the only person who can defend God is a mysterious stranger who transforms evil into good. For you see, the slaughtered leave this world with gratitude.

A play for our time which asks all our questions and answers them — bleakly. (Ethel C. Fenig)

**TWO LOST TRIBES.** Sheldon Greene. Kinur. \$4.95.

*A positive imagining of what a survivor might find experience like in an ordinary American town.*

**THE DOCTOR FROM CORDOVA.** Herbert Le Porrier. Doubleday. \$8.95.

This biographical novel of the life of Maimonides, molds a living, breathing and feeling man out of the almost more than human legend Maimonides has become. The overemphasis on Maimonides as a physician is somewhat disappointing. The practically complete neglect of him as a *halakhist* is to be regretted, as is the failure to touch upon the Maimonidean Controversy. Nonetheless, the author's attempt to fill in some of the gaps of Maimonides' life is worthwhile and results in a surprisingly enjoyable read. (Joseph C. Kaplan)

**GERSHOM SCHOLEM.** David Biale. Harvard. \$15.

This urbane intellectual biography, by its insight into Scholem's creative Jewish perspective, shows why George Steiner's profile of Scholem in the *New Yorker* was so disappointing. The hero is deftly characterized and his German Jewish milieu is nicely illuminated. I sense too much reliance on Scholem's version of all the controversies and a curious silence on the obvious Oedipal motivation in the man and his work.

(Eugene B. Borowitz)

### Sh'ma's List of Jewish Bestsellers

A GUIDE TO JEWISH PRACTICE. *Isaac Klein*. KTAV. \$12.50. LEAH'S JOURNEY. *Gloria Goldreich*. Berkeley Brook. \$2.50.

Other than these two books, no single titles markedly dominated book sales this summer. However the following books all appear to be selling well: SO HELP ME GOD. Herb Tarr; YONI. Max Hastings; OVER AND ABOVE. Laura Hobson; YIDDISH ALPHABET BOOK. Frederica Postman and Bonnie Stone; TO BE A JEW. Chayim Donin; EVERGREEN. Belva Plain; GOD WRESTLING. Arthur I. Waskow; JEWISH RESPONSES TO NAZI PERSECUTION. Isaiah Trunk; GERSHOM SCHOLEM KABBALAH AND COUNTER-HISTORY. David Biale; THE WAR AND REMEMBRANCE. Herman Wouk; WANDERINGS. Chaim Potok; A JEW TODAY. Elie Wiesel; THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MENAHEM BEGIN. Frank Gervasi; THE JEWS IN THE EYES OF THE GERMANS. Alfred D. Low; THE FUGU PLAN. Marvin Tkayer and Mary Swarz; THE ARTIST. Norman Garbo; THE KING OF THE CASTLE. Peter C. Newman.

Editors' Choices: J. David Bleich — SEFER HA-CHINUCH. *Trans. Charles Wengrov*. Feldheim. \$13.95; Paula Hyman — GERSHOM SCHOLEM KABBALA AND COUNTER-HISTORY. *David Biale*. Harvard U. \$15.00; WHEN MEMORY COMES. *Saul Friedlander*. Farrar Straus Giroux. \$9.95; FREUD, JEWS AND OTHER GERMANS. *Peter Gay*. Oxford. \$3.95.

Thanks to our sources: *Behrman House Inc.* in New York; *Hamakor Judaica* in Chicago; *Harellick and Roth, Booksellers* in Los Angeles; and *Abe's Jewish Bookstore* in Wheaton, Md.

**JEWISH CIVILIZATION: ESSAYS AND STUDIES.** *Ronald A. Brauner, ed.* Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. \$16.95.

**T**he lay reader will find little that is compelling in this collection of essays by prominent Reconstructionist thinkers. Most of the pieces are too scholarly to be accessible. The best pieces are Ben-Horin on Kaplan and Buber, Tobin on the Jews and the Catskills, and Maller on the children of mixed marriages. *(Jeffrey K. Salkin)*

**BLESSINGS, CURSES, HOPES, AND FEARS.** *James A. Matisoff*. Institute for Study of Human Issues. \$12.50.

*Yiddish phrases psychoanalyzed in 100 plus typescript pages, many quite delightful.*

**FROM REFORM JUDAISM TO ETHICAL CULTURE.** *Benny Kraut*. HUC Press. \$16.50.

*Felix Adler's religious development carefully researched and well, if lengthily, recounted.*

**HONEY IN THE LION.** *Doris Gold*. Biblio Press. \$3.

*The directly Jewish poems in this collection only clarify how "Jewish" the liberal, human ones are.*

**I DARED TO LIVE.** *Sandra Brand*. Shengold. \$8.95.

*Another unbelievable, moving Holocaust survivor story, this time of passing as a gentile in Warsaw.*

**ESSAYS ON HUMAN RIGHTS.** *David Sidorsky, ed.* JPS. \$12.00.

**T**his volume proceeds from both a Jewish and general perspective, with sensitivity and authority. The practical and philosophical aspects of the question are addressed, e.g., the problems of Soviet and Arab Jewries, and Israeli policy in the occupied territories. The writing is of uneven quality, with the best offerings by Katz on liberalism and universalism, Talmon on anti-semitism, and Brichto on the Biblical sources on human rights.

*(Jeffrey K. Salkin)*

**WHEN MEMORY COMES.** *Saul Friedlander*. Farrar Straus Giroux. \$9.95.

**T**his is a moving and charming autobiography of one who spent the Holocaust years living "on the edges of catastrophe." Born in the early 1930's to an assimilated family in Czechoslovakia, Saul (ne Paul) Friedlander fled with his parents to France where he was safely hidden in several homes, including a Catholic orphanage. He recounts his early years, as seen through the eyes of a confused child, with warmth and perception, interspersed with equally perceptive insights about life in Israel where he emigrated at age 15.

This is an important addition to our understanding of a little known group of Holocaust survivors. *(Ethel C. Fenig)*

**UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN JEWISH PHILANTHROPY.** *Marc Lee Raphael.* Ktav. \$15.

*22 articles on a variety of important themes are gathered, giving the usual mixed perspective.*

**A TIME TO REMEMBER.** *Marie Jastrow.* Norton. \$8.95.

“**H**ouse Calls a Dollar, Office Visits Fifty Cents.” Now *that* was a time to remember, 1907. Marie Jastrow and her parents were immigrants to America then and this is an account of the struggle they endured as newcomers to New York. Not a rousing narrative, but one that should evoke memories for others who settled in Yorkville at the turn of the century. The sepia toned photographs lend the work a more universal appeal. *(Alicia Seeger)*

“TAZ” – **RABBI DAVID HALEVI.** *Elijah J. Schochet.* Ktav. \$7.50.

**T**his is a concise monograph on the author of one of the foremost commentaries to the *Shulan Arukh*, the *Turei Zahab*, including his life and works. The highlight of the book is its examination of the differences between the *Turei Zahab* and its fellow commentary, the *Siftey Kohen* of Rabbi Shabbetai b. Meir HaKohen. Rabbi Schochet places their dispute within the context of the contemporary controversy over the *Shulhan Arukh* itself. Rabbi David is shown to reflect the historical and economic conditions of seventeenth century Poland.

Even those not studying the *Turei Zahab* should now realize that *halakhic* work needs to be understood in its economic and historical context. *(Ralph Dalin)*

LANIE BERGMAN's name was misspelled twice in the last issue. We apologize.

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the flower would wither. Moreover, the visible elements of Judaism are most vulnerable to perishability through intermarriage, ignorance, disinterest and secularization, while the root system provides natural defenses to these and other harms.

What, then, is the root I sense so deeply? I discovered that being Jewish requires an acknowledged belief in a living God . . . a God relating to Jews in a unique way, thus evoking the unique response labelled Judaism. Only rooted in such a relationship does Jewish lineage, society and history remain identifiable as Judaism and possess the means for survival and renewal.

Uplifted by this idea, I readily discussed it with Jewish friends. To my surprise, I found most Jews reluctant to define or discover any essential principle in Judaism, particularly God. If you declare yourself Jewish, you are Jewish. Furthermore, such a declaration was not essential, for you could be Jewish if others declared you so, or even absent that. In other words, Jews do not seem to be willing to foreclose the possibility of Jewishness. If you are potentially Jewish, *dayenu!*

It is my inability to accept this position which prompts this sermon. In my own search for Judaism I find no rules, no guidelines, no formulas. But there is the real relationship with a living God. It is in the midst of that relationship alone that the mystery of Jewish identity must begin and end.

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