Morris Silverman
Israel Klavan
Solomon J. Sharfman
Aaron M. Margalith

BOOK REVIEWS

Great Jewish Personalities in Ancient and Medieval Times
edited with introductory notes
by SIMON NOVECK
(New York: B'nai B'rith Great Book Series, I; Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1959)

Point of View
An Analysis of American Judaism
by ISRAEL H. LEVINTHAL
(New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1958)

Joseph Carlebach and his Generation
by NAPHTALI CARLEBACH
(New York: The Joseph Carlebach Memorial Foundation Society, 1959)

The Religious Foundation of Internationalism
A Study in International Relations through the Ages
by NORMAN BENTWICH
(London: George Allen & Unoin Ltd., 1959)

REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

MORRIS SILVERMAN is assistant professor of history and Registrar of Yeshiva College. He has contributed articles and reviews to many learned journals.

RABBI ISRAEL KLAVAN, Executive Vice-President of the Rabbinical Council of America, was ordained by Yeshiva University. Before coming to the R.C.A. he served congregations in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Mount Vernon, New York.

RABBI SOLOMON J. SHARFMAN is the rabbi of Young Israel of Flatbush in Brooklyn. He is a past president of the Rabbinical Council of America and is active in the leadership of a large number of religious and charitable organizations.

DR. AARON M. MARGALITH has been professor of political science at Yeshiva University since 1933. He is co-author of *With Firmness In The Right,* a book on American diplomacy affecting Jews, and the author of a work on the mandate system in addition to numerous essays and articles.

DEPARTMENT EDITOR: *Sidney B. Hoenig*

CONTRIBUTORS TO "BRIEFLY NOTED": Maurice Lamm, Meir Shmueli, Louis M. Tuchman, Michael Wyschogrod, G. Yachad.

Great Jewish Personalities in Ancient and Medieval Times
by SIMON NOVECK

There has long been a dispute among historians as to the influence of the hero on history. Thomas Carlyle and his followers believed that "strong leaders have a determining influence on the course of human affairs." On the contrary, Marx and others say that "historical changes are due mainly to the underlying social and economic forces at work in a particular era." Most modern historians (see, for example, Sidney Hook's *The Hero in History*) take an intermediate position: the times must be ripe, but the man must also be present. In any case, I think that all will agree that in Jewish history great personalities have played particularly important roles. Without making the error of most Jewish historians before the present century in not recognizing the impact of economic and social forces, it can be agreed that in the absence of a Jewish state Jewish life in the last two thousand years has had largely a spiritual and cultural character and hence prophets, sages, philosophers, and teachers have exerted unusual influence. For this reason this reviewer has looked forward eagerly to the publication of *Great Jewish Personalities.*

This book is the first of a series of five prepared by the Department of Adult Jewish Education of B'nai B'rith for use by adult study groups and as basic books for the Jewish home. The general editor is Dr. Simon Noveck, the National Director of the Department and formerly the rabbi of the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York. This volume is to be followed by others on Great Jewish Personalities in Modern Times, Modern Jewish Thinkers, Modern Jewish Thought, and Basic Beliefs in Judaism.

Twelve heroes of the period of Jewish history up to 1800 are dealt with in the present volume. Each chapter is by a different author, an authority on the particular man, and the editor contributes a general introduction, concluding words, a glossary, and notes which supply the missing links between the various periods of Jewish history.

The book opens with three towering biblical personalities: Moses, (written by Dr. Harry M. Orlinsky); David (by Dr. Mortimor J. Cohen); and Jeremiah (by Dr. Noveck himself). In the immediate post-biblical period the men selected are Philo (by Dr. Erwin R. Goodenough) and Akiba (by Dr. Louis Finkelstein). Medieval times are represented by the philosophers Saadiah (written by Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin), Judah Halevi (by Dr. Jacob S. Minkin), and Maimonides (by Dr. Salo W. Baron) and by Rashi (written by Dr. Samuel Blumenfeld) and Abravanel (by Minkin). The Eighteenth Century (which is not really part of the Middle Ages even among the Jews, in spite of what the editor says on page 155) has two representatives, the Baal Shem Tov (written by Dr. Louis I. Newman) and the Gaon of Vilna (by Dr. Meyer Waxman).

While one can quibble about some of the choices (I would have suggested, for exmple, Isaiah instead of Jeremiah, and Ibn Ezra instead of Abravanel), by and large

the selections are satisfactory as representatives of the best in each period of our past. There is a good appraisal of the contributions of each man (although some of the authors overemphasize the importance of their subject), a discussion of the relevance of his thought for the Jews of today, and a brief bibliography for further reading. The authorities know their men and their periods and the writing in general is good.

Though full-length biographies and studies of all these individuals are available, there is no book this reviewer knows of which contains the biographies of outstanding Jews representing the entire sweep of Jewish history yet which is authentic in scholarship while being popular in approach. There is great need for such material for adult Jewish classes and institutes of Jewish studies, particularly since most pedagogues are agreed that history can best be taught on the elementary level in the form of biographies.

Unfortunately, in spite of all its good points, this book cannot be recommended for adoption as a text in such classes. This is because of flatly-made anti-traditional statements in the first two chapters. On page 39, for example, Dr. Orlinsky says, "It has long been recognized that Moses is not the author of the Torah." I am indeed surprised at Dr. Orlinsky, whose scholarship I respect very much, and who has given evidence elsewhere of a strong feeling for Jewish traditions, for not having at least qualified such a statement by preceding it with some such words as "Most modern scholars follow the school of biblical criticism and believe that . . ." While the B'nai B'rith can not be expected to issue a strictly traditional work, at least the material could have been presented in a way less bluntly offensive to Orthodoxy.

In addition, the book unfortunately shows evidence of careless editing. There are all too many typographical errors, as for example: page 224, Maimmi should be Maimuni; p. 245, *habon* should be *nabon;* p. 276, *Mesiho* should be *Meshiho;* p. 279, Kamenatz-Podosk should be Kamenetz-Podolsk; p. 297, Neshemah Yeteiarah should be Neshamah Yeteirah; p. 335, the name of Louis Ginzberg is misspelled; p. 336, J.O.R. is an error for J.Q.R. Many names are not quoted in standard, accepted form (if they are not also typographical errors): page 43, Jepthah should be Jephthah and Nazarite should be Nazirite; p. 49, Ishbael should be Ishbaal; p. 59, Shimai should be Shimei; p. 79, Carcemish should be Carchemish.

The names of many books in particular are not quoted correctly: page 279, the word *Financier* is left out of the title of Netanyahu's book on Abravanel; p. 304, *Paaneoh* should be *Paaneach;* p. 312, *Shakhk* should be *Shakh*; p. 318, *Meshulach* should be *Meshulash* and *Tekunnah* should be *Tekhunnah*; p. 327, *Studies of Judaism* should be *Studies in Judaism* and *Alath Eliyahu* should be *Alioth Eliyahu* and its author's name is better given as Levin than Halevi; p. 337, *Kirya Neamanah* should be *Ne'emanah.*

The transliteration, while generally following the accepted sci-

entific systems, is often inconsistent: If *h* is always used elsewhere for a *chet* and *kh* for a khaf, why *Shulkhan* (instead of *Shulhan*) *Arukh*? Why is the name of Khmelnitzki spelled in two different ways in the same chapter? Why *Gemarah* instead of *Gemara*?

Other evidences of careless editing are on page 58 where Joab is called Saul's general instead of David's; p. 294, where the date of death of the Besht is given as the fifth(!) day of Shavuot instead of the second; and p. 300 where "Samuel, the false deceiver" should be Samael.

The glossary, while helpful, also contains some errors. For example, Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi is called the seventh president of the Sanhedrin; he was the seventh member of the Hillel dynasty, which is not the same thing. The definition of Mekilta is wrong, and for the purposes of this book it should have been defined simply as the tannaitic midrash to Exodus.

For all these reasons, and particularly the uncritical acceptance of the "Higher Criticism" theories in the first two chapters, the book should not be used as a text in Orthodox synagogues and schools. However, teachers can use the book profitably, and individual chapters, particularly those in the last half of the book, can be assigned with great advantage, and for these purposes the book can be recommended.

M. S.

Point of View
by ISRAEL H. LEVINTHAL

As the subtitle indicates, Dr. Levinthal has attempted a much needed analysis of what have come to be known as the denominations in American Jewish life. He lists four: Reform, Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and Reconstructionism, in that order. The volume is the result of a series of lectures delivered by the author.

Dr. Levinthal is a master of the written word as he is of the spoken, and he has made excellent use of his rich homiletical gifts to illustrate his material.

As far as the substance of Dr. Levinthal's thesis is concerned, however, one must recognize that he is a part of the Conservative group and his volume must be considered an apologetic for that persuasion. His theories, in the opinion of this reviewer, are based upon assumptions which simply do not hold water and can best be characterized as wishful thinking.

Dr. Levinthal's major thesis is that there are few doctrinal and theological differences between the various religious groups in Jewish life. The differences that do exist are equally present within each group and do not necessarily identify any particular one. What does distinguish them is their attitude toward Halakhah. One wonders, however, if this is a mere detail. What better way can doctrinal difference be made apparent than through one's attitude towards the Halakhah, an attitude which necessarily reflects the individual's

concept of God and our relationship to Him?

For the purposes of this review we shall confine ourselves to the two sections of the volume which deal with and compare Conservative and Orthodox Judaism. Since Dr. Levinthal is an advocate of the Conservative viewpoint who seeks to justify its philosophy as an extension of historic Judaism, it is necessary to examine carefully the arguments which he musters in defense of his thesis.

Dr. Levinthal is an excellent advocate but even his eloquence cannot cover the weakness of many of his assumptions or the conclusions which he draws from them.

The author asserts that "The strength of Conservative Judaism lies in its acceptance of Judaism's historic attitude toward the Halakhah or Jewish Law . . . this proposition Conservative Judaism asserts in common with Orthodox Judaism . . . Conservative Judaism recognizes the principle of *Torah min Ha-shamayim*" (p. 67). However, Conservative Judaism views Halakhah as dynamic and creative and "this developing and adapting quality of Jewish law is emphasized and re-emphasized by Conservative Judaism" (p. 70). With regard to Orthodoxy the author contends that its fault lies in the fact that it regards Halakhah as a static mold, ignoring its great potential for further development, and that "it has congealed Jewish Law."

This reviewer is becoming impatient with such statements which have no basis in fact but which achieve credence through constant repetition.

Orthodox Judaism would have been happy to welcome the contributions of the Conservatives if they had truly sought the dynamic development of Halakhah. Perhaps this was the intention of some of the founders of that movement, but we can judge only by the words and deeds of its present spokesmen. And these give ample evidence that there are many who do *not* accept the principle of *Torah min ha-shamayim* (revelation) and that there is, in their movement, an outright rejection of Halakhah. We have yet to understand what halakhic creativity was involved in permitting driving to the synagogue on Sabbath. Which principle of Halakhah was used by the Conservative leader who permitted a national Jewish women's organization to arrange dairy or fish luncheons in non-kosher eating establishments although non-kosher utensils as well as forbidden ingredients were being used? We have seen no halakhic justification for such dispensation. We can only conclude that this is rejection of rather than creativity in Halakhah. It should be obvious that creativity in Halakhah is possible only by those who are loyal to its principles and have a deep faith in its divine origin and sanction.

It is necessary also to expose for what it is worth that oft repeated assertion that Orthodoxy is stultified. If the failure to justify every departure from the practice and discipline of the Torah means that

we have congealed Halakhah, then we must proudly admit the truth of the charge. If, however, creativity means the attempt to cope with the problems which modern life presents to the faithful Jew, then Orthodoxy need not be apologetic.

The author tells us that Conservative Judaism has become known to many as "the 'middle road' between the two extremes." This is in truth the most serious criticism of that movement. It implies a religious philosophy which is utterly pragmatic and makes a virtue of accepting the compromise of half a loaf. The fact is that Conservative leadership has in most instances followed the masses and acclaimed their departure from normative religious practices. The final result has been that many of these religious leaders who are charged with the responsibility of conserving and preserving the practices and principles of Judaism have instead become the advocates of their rejection.

The author's efforts to defend Conservatism and his desire to prove it a legitimate heir of traditional Judaism should serve to confirm the wary reader in his loyalty and devotion to Orthodox Judaism as the legitimate expression of Judaism throughout the ages.

I. K.

Joseph Carlebach and his Generation
by NAPHTALI CARLEBACH

Conceived as an epitaph for a great rabbi, this book is really a living, moving kaleidoscope of our era. The author tells us that "Carlebach was born at a time which had little, if anything, in common with the present." Yet his work is informative and inspiring because the similarities between the period it describes and our own are so much more significant than the differences.

Rabbi Joseph Carlebach was born in the year 1883. His father was the rabbi of Luebeck in northern Germany. He and four of his brothers (there were twelve children in all) became rabbis. He received a thorough education in the Torah. In addition, he studied science and the liberal arts at the University of Berlin, where he became a brilliant mathematician. He served as instructor in mathematics at a teachers' seminary in Jerusalem and at a Reich *gymnasium* for girls in Berlin, and organized a Jewish *gymnasium* in Norvo during World War I for the German High Command.

When his illustrious father died in 1919, Joseph became the rabbi of Luebeck. From there he was summoned to Hamburg to the post of principal of the Talmud Torah. In 1926 he was installed as Chief Rabbi of Altona. Six months later he was invited to become Chief Rabbi of Berlin. After three years of negotiations he rejected the invitation because the womens' gallery and other synagogue features would not be arranged according to his specifications. In 1935, he became Chief Rabbi of Hamburg. On March 26, 1942 he died a martyr's death at the hands of the Nazis in Riga, Latvia.

Rabbi Naphtali Carlebach has

written a vivid biography of his brother Joseph. He has filled it with golden memories of conditions in the Holy Land at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, invaluable history of the early beginnings and internal struggles of Agudah and Mizrachi, and rare sketches of men like Rabbi Samuel Salant, Franz Rosenzweig, and the Chafetz Chaim. The clashes between extremists and moderates, secularists and religionists, Reform and Orthodoxy, are all timely for the modern reader.

It is noteworthy that in the heat of ideological conflict, Joseph was taught by his father to be tolerant and to respect even the opponents of Tradition. Solomon Carlebach, the father, frequently quoted the words of his master, Samson Raphael Hirsch, as set down in the seventeenth of the *Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel*: "Be angry at none, respect all. Deplore the attitude of the opponent—grieve over apostasy, and combat his erroneous opinion with all the spiritual armor of our great and exalted literature. But guard yourself against any personal animosity, for it is mostly not only the opponent, but all the past before him that bears the burden of guilt."

When Joseph reminded his father, one day, that Hirsch himself did not deal any too gently with his ideological adversaries, Solomon Carlebach replied, "I shall pay you one thousand marks on the spot if you can show me one word of personal insult or animosity in any of Hirsch's writings." In later life Joseph wrote, "I have searched for years and years, but I have not yet been able to attain that prize."

Tolerant and understanding as he was of the sinner, Joseph was the uncompromising champion of Tradition and its strongest defender against Reform. In 1912, the "liberals" sought state recognition as the representatives of all Jews in Germany, making their interpretation of the Jewish religion the official one. Had they succeeded, the state might well have abandoned those provisions enabling Jews in state-sponsored institutions to practice their religion in accordance with the Torah. To further its aims, "liberal" newspapers and magazines published "conclusive evidence" that the new interpretations were not really new at all but corresponded to traditional practices that had fallen into disuse during some earlier period.

An illustration of the extent to which the Reformers were willing to go is the attempt by Moses Bruck to prove that there is reason to doubt that fasting on Yom Kippur is prescribed by Jewish law. "It seemed," he said, "that mice had attacked the parchment of the Torah during the seven months during which the Ark had been kept in an open field in Philistia. It was impossible now to know just what had been written about the Day of Atonement." Rabbi Carlebach effectively demonstrated the ludicrousness and stupidity of this and other "conclusive evidence." (Rabbi Bruck's argument was based on an incredible misunderstanding of I Samuel Chapters 5 and 6, which describe the capture of the Holy Ark by the Philistines. When they refused to return the Ark to

the Jews, according to Rashi they were invaded "by mice which attacked them severely.")

Unfortunately, while Orthodox Jews withstood the severest attacks of Reform, it was unable to unite internally. At Katowice, when the Agudath Israel was founded, a speaker had said: "How much longer is Orthodoxy to continue in the role of a Cinderella, looked on askance and belittled by all because its true worth remains hidden? How awesome and influential Jewish Orthodoxy could be if it were to comprise the faithful Jews of all nations!" But differences in political opinions and different *minhagim* kept Orthodoxy apart.

Joseph Carlebach was bitterly disappointed. "It is painful to think," he wrote, "that the quarrel between brothers has not yet been settled. We must continue to resolve the differences between Mizrachi and Agudath Israel and to ever widen the circle of those who see and understand that we belong together. We have no right to let the future of religious Judaism suffer because of our different interpretations." Many of the problems that confronted Joseph still face American Orthodoxy. Their description in this biography makes enlightening reading. Joseph's letters, articles, and excerpts of some of his sermons are truly brilliant.

Rabbi Joseph Carlebach could have escaped with his family from Nazi Germany. He chose instead to remain at his post of duty and service. No one can read the pages that describe his last years without being deeply affected.

The writing is sometimes archaic and clumsy. Better editing would have avoided errors in grammar and style. But these are relatively minor faults in the graphic presentation of a memorable epoch and the precious record of a saintly man.

S. J. S.

The Religious Foundation of Internationalism
by NORMAN BENTWICH

This book is a reissue of an earlier edition first published in 1933. It formed the substance of a series of lectures given by Col. Bentwich on the occasion of his inauguration as Weizmann professor of the international law of peace at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

The basic assumption of this book is that the problems of man and mankind are primarily moral and spiritual and that the rule of law in international relations cannot come about unless man is spiritually prepared for it. This spiritualizing process can best be undertaken by religion, all religions cooperating towards that end. This would only be, according to the author, bringing up to date a role religion did or should have performed throughout all human history.

With much erudition Mr. Bentwich traces the influence of the different religions of the world on the furtherance of peace between nations and on the development of international relations and international law. He does not close his eyes to the sorry fact that all too often religion has failed in its mission and that religion itself has been the cause of too many wars in the life of mankind. There is much

truth, he sighs, in the observation that the churches are always against the wars of the past and the future, but are for the wars of the present. Thus Christianity has been the cause of much bloodshed, all in the name of religion, as have also been other religions, notably Islam. This sad condition was well expressed by Thomas Hardy in the following couplet:

After two thousand years of Mass
We have got as far as poison gas.

The author, however, chooses to stress the positive side of religion. By studying the basic precepts of man's religions, from the pagan religions through Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Indian and Far Eastern religions, he discovers that they all possess two basic beliefs, and on these he bases his hopes for a just and peaceful world. These beliefs are: the solidarity and unity of the human kind, and the rule of justice in all human affairs. Together they form the motive for the unification of mankind.

Already in antiquity the Egyptians and Hittites, in conducting their international relations, spoke of "being animated with a single thought" and "to have henceforth but one heart." Peace between pagan nations meant that their respective gods laid down their arms and concluded treaties. Even Pax Romana was invested with a religious sanction. Much hope and great encouragement for future world peace is drawn from the fact that in recent generations religion has ceased to be a cause of war, and freedom of religion has spread to more and more lands. It is true religious toleration was accomplished by a diminishing role of organized religion in the life of man. But this need not be so, contends Mr. Bentwich. Religion, as a matter of fact, should keep step with the development of political organization and establish parallel bodies to it. Specifically he suggests the creation of a League of Religions, comprising all religions of the world, whose task would be the supplementing of all political efforts towards bringing about a better world.

In the last chapter of the first edition, and in a new chapter, "Epilogue," which the author added in the second edition, he expresses the hope that just as religion in ancient times was able to form a nation out of warring tribes, so may it now unite mankind under one God and law.

Historically the Jews were the first to preach a universal God with the rule of justice in all human relations. The Jewish God is international and ethical.

Even the Jews of the present generation have a specific task: to make man more conscious of the values of the spirit. For "the Jews have been of all peoples the most international, yet on the basis of a deeply marked Jewish consciousness," and they were tied together by a religious bond. In this the Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion, is in complete agreement with him, for he has stated the aim of the State of Israel to be "the national and social redemption of the Jewish people by its own powers, combined with the aspiration for the redemption of the human race." A similar idea was also expressed by Prof. Jean Izoulet of the Collège

de France who put forth a definite plan for an International League of Religion based on the assumption that such an organization would be the fulfillment of the mission of Israel. As if to illustrate the above, the author cites the interesting fact that the World Congress of Faiths, one of a number of international religious associations, founded in 1936 by the Englishman General Sir Francis Younghusband, is presided over by Lord Samuel, the English Jew who was the first High Commissioner for Palestine.

The advent of Nazism, the Second World War, and its aftermath — the division of the world between East and West — somewhat dampens the author's high hopes for a better world in the very near future. But if mankind is to survive at all, it must be united, and united spiritually. It is in this area that the world's religions must become active, and this action cannot come too soon.

A. M. M.