

BOOK REVIEWS

Commentary on the Pentateuch, translated and explained by Rabbi SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH, rendered into English by Dr. Isaac Levy (Genesis — London, 1959; Exodus — London, 1956; Leviticus, Parts I and II — London, 1958)

Reviewed by Simon Langer

S. R. Hirsch's commentary on the Pentateuch has been hailed as a classic since the publication of the first volume, *Bereshit*, in 1867. According to the author, the goal of the commentary was to expound the text by ascertaining the exact meaning of the words, their etymology and origin, and to establish, on the basis of halakhic and agadic interpretations, the Jewish *Weltanschauung*.

As many as six editions were published until the rise of Hitler when Jewish life in Germany came to an end. These attest to the importance of this monumental work which has enriched the libraries of many orthodox and even non-orthodox homes. It has immeasurably enhanced the study of the Chumash. As a fountain of inspiration for young and old, it has

deepened the understanding of, and love for, Torah.

It may be stated, without exaggeration, that no other commentary published in our times, whether in Hebrew or any foreign language, has achieved such wide popularity, and this in spite of the peculiarly complex style characterizing the work. Hirsch reveals himself not only as a brilliant commentator, he is also a thorough-going exegete, a forceful preacher, and a sagacious teacher who solves inherent difficulties or apparent contradictions in the text in a masterly fashion. Thus, the most difficult passages become clear and understandable. His commentary gives eloquent evidence to the reasons why S. R. Hirsch has become the foremost modern exponent of Orthodox Judaism.

His monumental work has now been made accessible to English-

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speaking Jewry in the expectation that its appeal will be as great to them as it was to German-speaking Jews. The translation is by Dr. Isaac Levy of London, a grandson of Hirsch, to whom we owe a lasting debt of gratitude for this singular effort.

It is not within the scope of this review fully to evaluate Rabbi S. R. Hirsch's philosophy or his views on Bible criticism, or even his system of etymology which is based on the interrelation of sounds and which makes his commentary unique. All this has been done in masterly fashion in the profound, searching preface contributed by Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld of London, who is justly considered as the outstanding exponent and connoisseur of Hirsch's writings. The sole purpose of this review is to evaluate the possible impact of Hirsch's commentary, in its present form, upon the modern English reader, and the meaning of his exegesis for our time. Our discussions will be illustrated by some relevant examples.

There can be no doubt that Dr. Isaac Levy was faced with a most difficult task. Indeed it is quite impossible to translate Hirsch literally, since his language is an altogether original blend of prose and poetry. On the other hand, a mere general translation will never give the zest, the flavor, and the pathos which are the ingredients of this commentary and which account for its appeal to the masses.

Hirsch's insights reflect the deepest core of human experience, and his commentary is therefore as relevant to our contemporary scene

as to antiquity. The outer garbs of the classic past and the shifting present may differ, styles of thoughts and fads of practice may change, but man's struggles with his primitive drives, his environment, his conscience, and his basic pattern of behavior are the same in all eras. A sympathetic appraisal of these conflicts involves a perceptive understanding of man's very essence rather than his changing modes of life. The proper understanding of antiquity, therefore, sheds an illuminating light on the present. Hirsch's sensitivity and his ability to gauge deeply the feelings of the various personalities of the *Chumash* invests his commentary with perennial value and timeliness. Hirsch's approach is often so original that the reader is constantly astonished at his profound understanding. Hirsch can elicit, almost casually, a wealth of meaning from simple words and phrases. A nuance of a word, an inflection of a sound, and a seemingly unimportant deviation of syntax, often endow the text with new meaning, perspective, and revelation.

A proper appreciation of Hirsch's unsurpassed qualities as a commentator may best be gained by an examination of his analytical approach to family relationships. In some passages Hirsch's analyses of familial love and power struggles are at least as penetrating as, and probably more sound than, present theories on parent-child relationships. Hirsch was especially concerned with the emotional behavior of parents and children as highlighted in some chapters of *Bereshit*. In order best to comprehend

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the author's gift as a savant of the soul, particularly the Jewish *neshamah*, we ought to make special reference to some crucial biblical texts.

His view of the Jacob-Esau struggles is typically original and daring. The author prefaces his interpretation with the principle that our Sages do not refrain from revealing the errors and limitations of our ancestors since they all provide instruction and guidance for us. As the patriarch Jacob is openly criticized for favoritism toward Joseph, Isaac and Rebecca are taken to task for their educational policies. In the great emphasis on the nuances of language characterizing Hirsch's exegesis, the phrase *va-yigdelu ha-nearim* serves as a point of departure for his views:

As long as they were little, no attention was paid to the slumbering differences in their natures. Both had exactly the same teaching and educational treatment, and the great law of *chanokh le'naar al pi darko*, meaning that each child must be treated according to its own potentialities with an eye to the latent tendencies of his nature, was forgotten.

Although all of Abraham's descendants were to be bearers of the same ideal — the dissemination of justice and righteousness — each was to fulfill his destiny in a fashion proper to his personality and endowment by nature or inheritance.

Strength and courage, no less than brain and lofty thought and fine feeling, are to have their rep-

resentatives before God, and all, in the most varied way of their callings, are to achieve the one, great common task of life.

This principle, Hirsch maintains, was overlooked by Isaac and Rebecca. Had Esau been allowed to develop according to his own innate abilities and propensities he might have become a different man. (Our Sages believed in the finer side of Esau's temperament as evidenced in their criticism of Jacob's hiding his daughter Dinah from his brother. Rashi mentions the possible rehabilitative effects on Esau that might have resulted from his marriage to Dinah [Gen. 32:22].) Some may disagree with Hirsch's conclusions, because heredity also plays an important role, yet his conclusions are original and ring true.

The relevance of this historical and psychological analysis to our own day is manifest. All readers know of many instances where children are coerced by well-meaning parents into studies for which they have no capabilities, or into professions for which they are unsuited. Such an attitude may result in a life-long self-reproach by parents and at a lasting dissatisfaction and burden for the children.

Let us take another example: the dissenting individual in society. Hirsch's unique analysis of Abraham's debate with God, regarding the righteous men in Sodom, is most pertinent. Through Abraham's efforts Sodom and Gomorrah might have escaped their terrible fate, had there remained within the cities some righteous men. The usual interpretation is that God

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would have spared the wicked cities for the sake of the righteous.

Hirsch, however, has a different interpretation. He states that the progressive development of depravity had not yet reached its lowest depth in a society where righteous and good people are merely derided, but still tolerated. As long as public tolerance is accorded to the righteous, evil is not absolute. Only when the practice of goodness is forbidden as a crime against so-called public welfare does a city plumb the depths of wickedness. The sin of the Amorites was not complete as long as an Abraham and his household could publicly erect an altar to God, to truth and goodness. Thus, the presence of some righteous individuals in Sodom would have prevented the latter's destruction because *tolerance still prevailed in the wicked cities*, and they therefore merited some leniency. (To a certain degree this may be relevant to our own time, where in a democracy one may ideologically freely differ with the majority without being exposed to retaliation, while the same attitude is unthinkable and punished in a totalitarian regime.)

This idea is further clarified by Hirsch's analysis of the righteous man in the "*midst of the city*." Relying on talmudic sources, Hirsch differentiates between a man concerned merely with his own salvation and the Abrahamitic approach of standing *be'tokh ha-ir*, "in the *midst of the city*." The truly religious person is one intent on improving the lot of his fellow citizens and their spiritual welfare rather than standing in splendid isolation

of self-righteousness and the contemplation of his own perfection. The truly religious Jew should be concerned not with his own microcosmic universe, but with the welfare of society as a whole. He constantly has to strive for what is good, decent and righteous, even if the ideal materializes only when he is no more.

Hirsch's psychological insight is apparent in another passage dealing with the future of Israel as a nation. His comments on the words *chessed ve'emet* (love and truth) in Gen. 47:29, sounds like a sermon which is as timeless as it is timely. It is an exhortation to Jews everywhere in the *Galut* not to forget their Jewish destiny once they have been well established for two, three, or more generations in the country of their adoption, and to be always mindful of their homeland. Thus, Hirsch teaches, Jacob did not doubt that his son Joseph would bury him with great honors and thus fulfill towards him the obligation of *chessed*. Yet, he begs him not to overlook the *emet*, for his concern was not to be buried in Egypt. The patriarch was well aware that his request would make a bad impression upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, for it would be an indication that Joseph and his brothers did not consider themselves citizens of the country which had given them asylum, and that they still have retained a nostalgia for their homeland Canaan. Therefore he asked Joseph to swear that he would bring his body back to Machpela. But the motive for Jacob's demand might still be deeper, Hirsch adds. During

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the seventeen years of his stay in Egypt, Jacob became fully aware of the profound influence which Egyptian life had exercised upon his descendants. He was afraid that they would more and more substitute the Nile for the Jordan, and no longer look upon Egypt as a land of *Galut*. To him, Jacob, this alone was reason enough to insist upon burial in Canaan, as a solemn reminder to his descendants that this, and not the evanescent glitter of Egypt, was their homeland, their future. (See Gen. 47:29.) What a lesson for present-day Jews in many countries!

Hirsch's comment on that portion of Jacob's blessing directed to Simon and Levi (Gen. 49:7) is of perennial importance. Without individual and national standards of morals and ethics, no decent and peaceful living is possible. The heartless principle, "the goal justifies the means," is often the guide in many realms of life, in business and in politics. In his comment on the above verse, Hirsch attacks such an attitude with the utmost vigor, and warns his people against it. It is of the greatest importance, S. R. Hirsch writes, that at the very beginning of the history of the Jewish nation any breach of ethics and morals, be it even in the general interest, was severely and absolutely condemned. Nations often claim the right to flout, for the sake of so-called higher interests of the state, commandments and principles for which an individual would be punished or might even forfeit his life. There can be no double standard of ethical behavior,

one for the individual and the other for the state. Judaism, right at the outset, condemns the use of cunning even in the interest of a good purpose and has laid down for all times the immutable principle that societies and individuals alike must pursue clean goals and employ clean means to realize them.

Hirsch's comment on the first chapter of *Shemot* (Exodus) has been tragically vindicated in contemporary history, particularly in Hitler-Germany and the countries which were enslaved by this scourge of mankind. In his analysis of the words *asher lo yoda et Yosef* ("Who knew not Joseph" — 1:8), he states that anti-semitism was at first non-existent among the Egyptians, but was imported by the new ruler of foreign origin who had usurped the throne. He used Jew-hating as a political weapon against a helpless minority, making it a scapegoat to divert the attention of the masses from the difficulties which the change of regime had brought about. When the seed of hatred had taken sufficient root, it became easy to deprive the Jews of their civil rights, and to subject them to unbearable, heavy taxes. Hirsch translates *sarei missim* as "fiscal agents," deriving the word *missim* from *mas*, taxes (see Esther 10:1). Thus the stage was set to declare the Jews as slaves of the state. There is truly nothing new under the sun, and — except for the crematoria — Hitler imitated Pharaoh's pattern.

We may conclude that these examples chosen at random illustrate concepts which are as relevant today as they were in Hirsch's days

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and in antiquity. Hirsch's gifts as an exegete, thinker, philosopher, theologian, and psychologist render his work as fresh and dynamic to American Jewry as it was to European Jewry a hundred years ago. His commentary is a wide panorama of experience rather than a constricted, telescopic view of the *Chumash*.

The present English version may not be considered a perfect translation. In addition to technical errors and shortcomings, including faults in grammar and syntax, what we have is a word-for-word translation from the German rather than a happy transposition from the

idiom of German to that of English. It seems that the translator was so inspired by the laudable goal of making this wealth available to Anglo-Saxon Jewry, that the necessary care for continual revision was sometimes overlooked. Still the translation is usually clear, notwithstanding some awkward passages. For the translator had an immense task in converting a complex German style into correct English, and conveying the classic explorations of the human and divine spirit to the English reader. All this can be amended in future editions which, we fervently hope, will soon become necessary.

The Psalms, translation and commentary by Rabbi SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH, rendered into English by Gertrude Hirschler (New York: The Samson Raphael Hirsch Publication Society — Philip Feldheim, 1960)

Reviewed by Fabian Schonfeld

I recall very vividly that when during certain tragic moments in my life I sought refuge in the songs of David I felt as if King David had written his words not for himself but for me, not about his life and his troubles but about mine. It is this personally inspiring quality of the Psalms that Hirsch was able to perceive and to clothe in his inimitable, beautiful flow of poetic language. Perhaps the greatest achievement of Hirsch is the fact that his insight into the Psalms was so keen and so clear that David's themes and songs take on new

meaning for our present age of confusion. They contain a message for the scientist and for the thinker, for the scholar and for the artisan, for Jew and for Gentile. They are addressed to the human being in the throes of despair and to nations threatened by grave dangers.

One or two examples will perhaps serve to illustrate the manner in which Hirsch treated his commentary on the Psalms. For, as he points out in his own introduction, to Hirsch the Psalms were the emotional, spiritual, and moral complement to the Pentateuch itself, at once objective and subjective.

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etive, emanating both from the mind and the soul of King David.

His comments on the first verse of the opening chapter are replete with a full understanding of human emotions and the psychological conflicts that rage in man's soul. His interpretation of "nor stood in the way of sinners" is especially noteworthy. Pointing out that David did not say *lo halakh* — "nor went" — but *lo amad* — "nor stood" — Hirsch shows that no human being can truly say of himself that he never found himself in the way of the sinners. No one can truly avoid being involved in evil. But it takes great strength of character to decide not to *remain* in that path. God does not expect of man *lo halakh* but He does expect of man *lo amad*. Society makes demands upon us which bring us in contact with evil, wrongdoing, malice, and temptation, both in the narrow and in the wider sense, in our personal as well as in our national and international life. We must, by mere force of circumstances, "walk" in the way of sinners. But certainly it is our sacred obligation not to remain standing on that road, not to tarry on that path.

Yet the great danger lies not so much in being confronted with our adversaries as in spending our moments of leisure with them. In our professional life, in our daily business activities, in our day to day contact with the rest of society, we cannot help being in close proximity with those who are in the opposite camp. Hirsch is enough of a realist to concede this point. What is one to do, however? The answer

is given in the words following: "nor sat in the seat of the scornful." There is no rule of society that can compel us to waste our precious moments of leisure in the company of those who live a different life. This time belongs to us, to be utilized for the purpose of study, reflection, and self-improvement. Surely in these uncertain times this admonition of Hirsch has great significance.

A subject of heated controversy is verse 12 in chapter 2. *Nashku bar* has been rendered in various ways. The best known, perhaps, is "kiss the son" which is the official Christian translation and which has implications and insinuations that surely do not need to be spelled out in detail. Hirsch sees in this entire chapter a warning to the world at large that only through a great moral re-armament can mankind be saved from impending disaster. What does *nashku bar* mean? Very simply: Gird yourselves with purity. Hirsch has excellent source material to prove that his translation is not only correct in the grammatical and philological sense but also in the context itself. Again, his insistence upon moral re-armament is most relevant.

To what may we ascribe the moral deterioration which plagues mankind at such frequent intervals? Hirsch has this to say "the wicked (*naval*) says in his heart: there is no God." Hirsch points out (chapter 14 verse 1) that *naval* means "to fade." When man's spirit withers and his moral strength fades the result is atheism in its many facets. Hirsch's treatment of this entire chapter is most inspiring.

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The human heart is a tremendous battlefield of emotions and feelings and the struggle that goes on within it leaves its mark upon the soul of man. Hirsch displays his understanding of the conscience of man in his commentary on 16:7, *af leilot yisruni khilyotai*. In the dark of night, when man's lusts and desires strive to gain the upper hand, the battle is joined and its outcome depends upon the measure of strength and courage which he is able to summon. Only a man of the calibre of Hirsch could write in such manner, full of sympathy and understanding of man's innate frailties, but yet firm and stern in his admonition.

In chapter 19, which is well known to us through our Sabbath liturgy, Hirsch has a message for our space age scientists and the common people whose fortune or misfortune it is to be part of that new era in human history. A finer exposition of *Torah im Derekh Eretz* is hard to find.

Suffice it to say that looking at the Psalms through the eyes of Hirsch is a religious experience unequalled in contemporary Jewish literature. Not only is his commentary as such inspiring, but his word for word translation of the text bears the hallmark of religious genius.

In view of what has been said, it is unnecessary to state that translating both his commentary and his own original translation is a task of near-herculean proportions. Hirsch himself, in his introduction, speaks of the impossibility of adequately translating the Hebrew text. The Samson Raphael Hirsch Publica-

tions Society must be complimented, therefore, for having the vision and courage to sponsor this translation into English. All translations suffer from the loss of originality. This is the danger that any translator must face. In this case Miss Gertrude Hirschler had to resort to all her literary skill and talent as a translator of great experience in order to present the American Jewish public with this work. She has done so with admirable patience and has demonstrated her deep understanding of Hirschian thought and philosophy. Her effort in the total picture is successful and certainly laudable. While, one must concede, the thrill of Hirsch's majestic speech could not possibly have been rendered perfectly into English or any other language, Miss Hirschler has been able to convey his ideas and his thinking in very lucid fashion and in clear and concise form. Above all, she has shown great courage in taking certain liberties with the original German text. Thus while the word *kelayot* is rendered even by Hirsch as *Nieren* (kidneys, reins), Miss Hirschler has quite rightly translated it as "passions"; this is fully in accord with Hirsch's interpretation of that term. For this and similar deviations she has been taken to task by certain Hirsch enthusiasts. Unfortunately, they do not realize that it is the message of Hirsch which must be brought to the attention of the reading public in America and that a misplaced, pious adherence to the literal text will only do violence to that which he endeavored to teach. One might

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have wished, however, that some of the style be a little less archaic, especially with regard to the use of thou, thee, etc. There is also evidence, in at least one instance, of careless copying of original errors. Thus in his German comments on 16:7, Hirsch refers to his own comments on 7:11, when it obviously should have been verse 10. This same error is carried over into the English translation. However, in an undertaking as gigantic as is

this, such criticism becomes quite insignificant.

One other note of criticism that comes to mind is the omission of Hirsch's notes on the Accents of the Psalms to which he attaches a great significance and which are not included in the present translation. It is to be hoped that they will find their way into the second volume, the appearance of which we anxiously await.

Religion in Israel Today: The Relationship Between State and Religion, by JOSEPH BADI (New York: Bookman Associates, 1959)

Reviewed by Lawrence Kobrin

Both the title and subtitle of this book may well lead readers to believe that the work contains a more or less objective and informative presentation of an important facet of present-day Israeli life, religion, and religious institutions. Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. Regardless of the usefulness of the appendices, or the range of quotations and material cited, the author's bias and animosity is so great that it leads him to distortion and falsification. As a result, the book presents to the American public little more than a tirade against the political and quasi-political aspects of religion in Israel.

This last comment serves to indicate one of the disservices which Mr. Badi has accomplished. He per-

sists in confusing political activities of religious parties with all religious and spiritual activity, political and otherwise. Granted that much can be said with respect to the participation of religious parties in partisan political life. This does not serve, however, as justification to degrade all religious activity or all statements by religious figures to the status of disputation. Mr. Badi does so, and in the process has reduced all statements of opinion of religious leaders to a two-fold lowest common denominator. On the one hand, statements made in an obvious political context are made to stand as statements of general religious and spiritual outlook and presented as apparently all that can ever be "expected" from religion. On the other hand, statements made by non-political but ultra-religious groups are inter-woven in

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the narrative to give an impression of general religious political radicalism and anarchy.

Such a presentation not only lacks objectivity; it is as irresponsible as it is inaccurate. Specific examples cannot completely convey the general tone of bitterness and invective in which this book is written. Perhaps a few illustrations will serve, however, to indicate the author's approach.

We are told categorically that 85% of Israel's population is "not religious." (p. 25). No support or even definition of this classification is ever given, but the "fact" is assumed. The author ignores the facts that neither the combined religious party vote in Knesset elections, nor the proportion of children enrolled in religious-trend schools, nor the other available statistics on religious outlook support his bald assertion. Instead, the claim remains unsupported but unchallenged, and underlies much of the discussion that follows.

In the next breath, the author states that "there are not many instances of callous indifference to the sensibilities of religious Jews" (p. 25). Again, the lack of any definition or clarity is misleading. One is left wondering just what the author means by "many" or "callous." His own recital of protest activities of various groups at various times must indicate that at least someone's "sensibilities" were offended.

Other examples of an enthusiasm which overrides accuracy abound. The reader familiar with the present or historical facts will realize that many of his statements are

nothing more than a parody of reporting. Thus, the statement that Bar Ilan University's existence dictates the need for a "progressive" and reform religious movement is a hopeless *non sequitur* (p. 28). An attempt at describing the views of Prof. Lebowitz and Rabbi Goren is at best ludicrous (p. 54). The random discussion of various incidents concerning religious participation in military service in Israel (p. 58) bears no relation to the present-day facts and certainly disregards the kind of activity that Rabbi Goren represents.

No listing of single errors can convey the flavor of this book which fairly bristles on each page with innuendo, mis-statement and half-truth. The value of the book, in a negative sense, lies in the presentation of an anti-religious cast of thought in a most advanced stage. Almost one-half of the book's pages are devoted to appendices of some usefulness containing English texts or translations of various relevant Israeli laws or legal sources. The bibliography, however, is neither complete nor objective. Aside from legal source texts, it offers a random mixture of treatments in no particular sequence. The omission of Rabbi Rackman's work [*Israel's Emerging Constitution*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1955] and of any mention of the symposium which appeared in *Sura*, edited by Prof. Samuel K. Mirsky, both Orthodox authorities and spokesmen, is obviously the result of the author's bias rather than any decision as to merit of source.

Often as disturbing as the au-

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thor's bias is his trying syntax and style. These lead one to believe, incidentally, that the book may well have been originally written in Hebrew and then translated into English, no doubt as a "public service" to the American community. To mix the historical present, past, and perfect tenses all in one sentence, not to speak of one paragraph, is confusing and annoying. To speak of the "observation of the Sabbath" (p. 41) leads one to wonder if perhaps this is not one of our real problems: too much "observation" of the Sabbath and not enough "observance."

Equally disconcerting is the author's attempt to "prove" his case by endless quotations from partisan newspapers and political organs. Such sources, regardless of their persuasion, are not noted for their objectivity or reliability. The quotation of a series of views from religious party publications, quite possibly wrenched out of context, followed by an attempt to "counter" these with equally impassioned anti-religious editorials, is not the process best designed to reach an understanding of the truth. One be-

gins to suspect after several pages of this diatribe (pp. 42-49), that the author is more interested in building a "case" than in any other goal.

In a sort of last-gasp effort at objectivity, we are presented with an almanac-like listing of statistics (pp. 55-57) and then a numbered series of "problems" and "conclusions" (pp. 57-61). Neither numbers in the thousands, nor singly, can bestow upon a one-sided presentation an aura of scholarship or repertorial accuracy.

It is indeed unfortunate that the presentation in book form to the Anglo-American public of the subject matter of this work while cast in a pseudo-objective form (and reviewers in other publications have apparently accepted it at "face value") offers so biased and misleading an outline. The book jacket promises further efforts in a series of books by Mr. Badi dealing with Israeli law and legal documents. A greater degree of objectivity will have to be shown by the author before the general public can accept his efforts as accurate analysis.

Judaism as a Philosophy: The Philosophy of Abraham Bar Hiyya, by LEON D. STITSKIN (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1960)

Reviewed by Hayim Donin

In a refreshing departure from recent tendencies to present Judaism in mystical and existentialist terms, Dr. Leon D. Stitskin in his

Judaism As A Philosophy reemphasizes the rational basis of Jewish doctrine. It is the central thesis of the author that the philosophical approach of Abraham Bar Hiyya (1065-1143), medieval Jewish sci-

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entist, scholar, and philosopher, is indigenous to the Torah and the Hebraic tradition, and harmonizes with many current philosophical notions.

The contents of the book, a doctoral dissertation published by the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Yeshiva University, can be divided roughly into two basic components, interwoven by the author. The title and subtitle indicate these integrated elements. One consists of a highly creditable and original bit of research on the life and philosophy of Abraham Bar Hiyya, his writings serving as the primary source for this analysis. The other deals with a projection of Bar Hiyya's basic philosophy as one which is timeless in scope, applicable to every generation, and useful to meeting the philosophical challenges of our own day and age.

The importance of the first part can be judged by the contribution it has made in highlighting the hitherto little known but major role played by Bar Hiyya in Jewish philosophy. According to Stitskin, Bar Hiyya was the first Jewish thinker to reject the basic doctrines of neo-Platonism and to combine the Biblical-Hebraic tradition with Aristotle's philosophy. Bar Hiyya considered the conceptual terms of Aristotelian philosophy as sound biblical doctrine, accepting them as an organic part of the Hebraic tradition. In this he preceded both Ibn Daud and Maimonides, both of whom drew upon the principles laid down by Bar Hiyya.

The strength of Bar Hiyya's philosophical approach lies in the fact that he did not use the Bible

simply as a book into which one could read all sorts of metaphysical concepts, or upon which one could graft all kinds of philosophy, but rather as the standard to which to compare and analyze the validity of other philosophical notions. "Our authority is the Bible," he says, "and we must test the views of the philosophers by the teachings of the Bible." "For the Torah is the embodiment of all truth, including philosophic truth, and the errors to which our beliefs and practices are often exposed are due in part to a miscomprehension of the biblical concepts, which may be veiled in secrecy, requiring a thorough knowledge of the sciences to unravel them. This can be accomplished not through some mystical or intuitive apprehension, but only through an intellectual discipline born of a knowledge of existing things as well as of their transcendental implications and ethical ends." To Bar Hiyya, a "religious philosophy is really not an investigation of phenomena per se as it is a refinement of concepts already explicit in the Torah."

An interesting assertion by Bar Hiyya is that the specific contribution of the Prophets were the concepts of repentance and *acharit ha-yamim*, rather than the doctrines of social justice and ethical ideals which are also to be found in the Pentateuch.

The book takes up in great detail Bar Hiyya's concepts of reality, first cause, soul, matter and form, potential and actual, the universe, time and space, etc. showing their similarity to Aristotelian ideas. At the base of these theories is the re-

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jection of the Platonic doctrine of the reality of heavenly incorporeal entities (ideas), and the acceptance of Aristotle's combination of form and matter as the essence of reality.

As scholarly a contribution as this might be to the history of philosophy, it seems to this reviewer, however, that the second part of the book succeeds much better in arousing the interest of the modern reader who is not a student of the history of philosophy but who has a deep interest in the philosophical challenges currently facing religion in general and Judaism in particular.

These challenges are no longer phrased in Aristotelian terms, or concerned only with questions that troubled the ancients. And Dr. Stitskin has increased the usefulness of his dissertation by discussing Bar Hiyya's philosophy in modern terms.

According to Stitskin, Bar Hiyya anticipates the philosophic notion of personalism — the stress on the development of man's immortal self. There is great merit and strength to Stitskin's argument that this approach is indigenous to biblical thought and Hebraic philosophic modes. The distinct nature of the Hebraic world scheme, he says, is a consideration of man as the crown of creation. In addition, "no higher responsibility rests upon the philosopher than that of involving himself in the search for ways of expressing the meaning and purpose of life." Reality in the Hebraic world scheme is rooted in personalism. "The Torah is essentially not a document of man's concepts about the Divine as of God's pre-

cepts for man's progressive spiritual development."

Three important ideas flow from the notion of personalism as expounded by the author. In the first place, man's central position in the universe is derived not from the organic structure of his being, but rather from the limitless possibilities for his creativity and self-development. The stress is on an optimism of possibilities and man's infinite capacities to learn and understand and ultimately control rather than on the tragic dimension of life which is often underscored by contemporary thought. The existential activity of man is future directed — the *acharit ha-yamim* of the prophets and the final cause of Aristotle.

Second, if man's task is to realize his capacity for immortality, the latter is not simply a reward bestowed by grace or faith but the actualization of a potentiality. This is accomplished through the striving for an intellectual excellence by means of ethical and religious perfection. The *mitzvah* in this scheme serves as the basis for the uplifting of a crude act into a consecrated deed which ultimately has an effect upon our perceptive and conceptual qualities.

Third, a philosophy of personalism challenges us to actualize our inner divine potential — the *Tzelem Elohim* — and thus establish evidence of the reality of God's presence. For an "awareness of our unique nature and exalted destiny brings into focus the image of a living God as the Author and Revealer of our infinite capacities to move into a state of moral and in-

