

BOOK REVIEWS

Fellowship in Judaism, by JACOB NEUSNER (London: Vallentine-Mitchell, 1963).

Reviewed by Arnold Ages

It is rare in a scholarly treatise dealing with a problem of antiquity that an author furnishes his readers with valuable and perceptive insights into current problems. Such a work is Jacob Neusner's *Fellowship in Judaism*. In this short but not incomplete essay of some seventy-four pages, Dr. Neusner, Assistant Professor of Religion at Dartmouth College, explores the origins, constitution and function of the various *chavurot* which existed in the last days of the Second Jewish Commonwealth. In the final portion of his study, the author suggests the possible contribution which a *chavurah* might make if adapted to contemporary Jewish life.

During the period of the Second Commonwealth two types of fellowships flourished. One was the wilderness communes typical of the Essenes and the Qumran collective. (Dr. Neusner is careful to distinguish between the Essenes and the ascetic community which produced the famous scrolls). This group represented revolutionary

Utopianism in that it wished to build a new society on the ruins of the old. The other group was the Pharisaic fellowship which represented social Utopianism, an enterprise dedicated to restoring rather than destroying society.

Both of these fellowships concerned themselves with the scrupulous and meticulous observance of *Halakhah*, especially those areas touching tithes and ritual purity. The Pharisaic *chavurah* in addition to the other *mitzvot* had a special preoccupation, that of food. Membership in both kinds of fellowships did not entail elaborate initiation rites. One became a member simply by observing those things the other members did and by refraining from intercourse with the *am ha'aretz*, who was, by definition, ritually impure. In the wilderness collectives certain character traits were also prerequisites. Dr. Neusner quotes copiously but judiciously from relevant passages in the *Mishnah* and *Tosefta Demai* to show the obligations which were incumbent on the *chaver*, suggesting that the lack of agreement on the various

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stages of affiliation can be solved by assuming the *Tosefta* version to be anterior to the *Mishnah*.

The second part of *Fellowship in Judaism* deals with the *chavurot* founded on the study and application of Biblical literature. The group begun by Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, for example, sought guidance on the conduct of daily affairs from the Torah, which was considered the "divine architect's plan for life." Dr. Neusner points out that societies for the study of religious and intellectual problems had antecedents and parallels in Greek and Roman culture.

The final portion of the book is an attempt to apply the lessons of fellowship so successful in antiquity to the spiritual vacuum which is characteristic of contemporary Jewish life. The author believes that the idea of Jewish peoplehood "has lost its referent in historical reality." The synagogue, he avers, does little to advance the cause of Jewish fellowship. The ubiquitous Jewish neighborhoods, moreover,

are not constituted by virtue of common spiritual goals but merely because Jews receive a benefit from them denied to them elsewhere, "the right to be received as an individual and not a type."

Dr. Neusner does not propose that the re-introduction of the ancient *chavurah* concept will miraculously resuscitate Jewish life. He does believe, however, that "it may provide some men and women with a worthier cause than that which now informs their lives . . . the fellowship must be regarded as a tentative and austere step towards meaningful and creative use of that interim between birth and death that each man knows as life."

It is to be hoped that in a future study the author will develop with some greater precision the qualifications for membership in the fellowship which he has shown so clearly to have been so viable in the past and which we hope could serve as a unifying bond with Jews of the present.

Synagogue und Kirche im Mittelalter, by WOLFGANG SEYFERTH (Munich: Koesel Verlag, 1964).

Reviewed by F. M. Heichelheim

This book surveys how the Christian communities of the Catholic European West formed theological and semi-theological ideas about their position with respect to Judaism as a religion and Jewry as a community. Very interesting artistic and literary witnesses are analyzed in this monograph which, perhaps, are essential to understand the Euro-

pean Middle Ages. Especially chapter 8 on the Synagogue and the Jews as they appear in medieval plays is quite brilliant.

On the other hand, this monograph was not written to be a contribution to understanding Jewish civilization during the Middle Ages. Jewish sources are not made use of. Synagogue and Jewry are pictured as they seem to have im-

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pressed sensitive religious Christians of the time. Judaism and Jewry, as they lived their actual lives and worshipped, are practically disregarded. One even may discover a subconscious tendency in this book to picture Jewish existence in Christian medieval Europe as much pret-

tier than, in fact, it was when we follow the evidence of the *Memor* books and the other medieval Jewish sources. This is a treatise which was written to be of interest to all cultural historians, but not to specialists or laymen with a special preference for Jewish history.

*Or Ha-Chayim; Sefer Aruch Liyediat Chakhmei Yisrael Vesifre-
hem*, by HEIMANN JOSEF MICHAEL (New York: Hermon Press,
1964).

Reviewed by Jacob I. Dienstag

Scholarly reference materials are usually published in limited editions for the use of specialists in their respective fields. The authors and publishers of reference materials consider it superfluous to make such materials available in large quantities.

The usefulness of a work is measured by the frequency of reference to it in a particular field. The result is that works which originally appeared in limited editions, with the passing of time, gain popularity in geometric proportion. Such works are then very much in demand by students and scholars. The impossibility of obtaining out of print books has long been a serious handicap to scholars.

Our generation has witnessed the development of the offset method of reproducing books. This method is widely used to reprint popular classics which are sought by a wide segment of the population. Scholarly books, on the other hand, are shunned by commercial publishers because reprinting would not be profitable.

It is, therefore, with great pleasure that we welcome the establishment of the Hermon Press which is dedicated to the reprinting of these specialized items which have been out of print for many years. The publisher, motivated by a profound love for Jewish scholarship, has embarked upon this project in order to provide scholars with the necessary tools for their research. The list of titles already published and those to follow displays a very keen sense of discrimination and is a tribute to the editorial policy of the publisher.

The volume before us was written by the bibliographer and bibliophile Heimann Joseph Michael (1792-1846). Born with a phenomenal memory, he was of great help to scholars who applied to him for information and was in correspondence with the great savants of his day such as Wolf Heidenheim, S. D. Luzzatto, and Leopold Zunz. His work *Or ha-Chayim*, which was originally published in Frankfurt - on - the - Main in 1891, is a bio-bibliographical and literary-historical dictionary of rabbinical litera-

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ture alphabetically arranged according to the Hebrew names of the authors. The work includes the names of 1230 authors and lists of their writings, both published and those remaining in manuscripts. Many of these names cannot be located in any other biographical dictionary or encyclopedia.

This work eventually went out

of print and those copies which are extant are in very poor condition due to the inferior quality of paper used for the second half of the volume in all copies. The beautiful photo-offset reprint of this volume is, therefore, an important addition to the reference shelf of rabbi and scholar alike.

Jewish Landmarks in New York — An Informal History and Guide, by BERNARD POSTAL and LIONEL KOPPMAN (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964).

Reviewed by Solomon Burack

Bernard Postal and Lionel Koppman must be congratulated for their courage and fortitude in producing *Jewish Landmarks in New York, An Informal History and Guide* for the popular market. They had to sift through mountains of materials in order to collect historical and sociological data on the largest Jewish community in the world. They had to use their judgment in selecting or omitting particular points of information. The book succeeds in presenting a concise historical survey of the Jewish Community of New York and an extensive guide to many points of interest within the City.

To be sure, there will be many criticisms of this book. A number

of the places mentioned in the "Guide" are really not places of Jewish interest but are mentioned merely because a Jew was somehow connected with the institution. The authors admit that they did not seek rabbinical aid in determining the *Kashrut* of eating places and simply listed them as Kosher if there was any type of supervision, without mention of Rabbi or agency involved. On occasion, the "Guide" portion gives a great deal of information about incidental details without going to the core. There is some looseness in the definitions and categorizations used. It is questionable why some institutions were listed and other omitted.

This book is, however, important in that it represents and meets the challenge of fulfilling a public need.

Men of the Spirit, edited by RABBI LEO JUNG (New York: Kymson Publishers, 1964, 739 pp.).

Reviewed by Emanuel Feldman

In his distinguished service as a

rabbi, Dr. Leo Jung has, during the past 36 years, made available to the Jewish public various studies

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and essays on Jewish life and thought, under the general title of "The Jewish Library." These volumes have become classics in their field, indispensable aids to those English reading Jews who would have a deeper understanding of the sources of Jewish life.

The publication of this latest in the series contains 31 biographical essays by various authors and records the lives, achievements, and influence of some of the major rabbinic leaders of the past 300 years. Here we meet again the beloved Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev and the contemporary Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog; the famous R. Yonasan Eibenschutz and the fiery HaRav Velvele Soloveitchik; R. Naphtali Tzvi Berlin and the saintly Chazon Ish. There is intellectual stimulation, as in Nima Adlerblum's essay on the rabbinic spirit, and there is emotional quickening, as in the loving and affectionate portrait of the renowned "Mr." Shraga Mendlowitz, the founding spirit of "Torah Umesorah," written by Joseph Kaminetsky and Alex Gross.

If some of these names are not

well-known, it is because heretofore their fame has been limited to those who had a first-hand knowledge of rabbinics and a fluency in Hebrew.

While some of the writing in this volume is uneven — each author has his own style and method — the cumulative picture is an inspiring and moving one of the great spirits of modern Judaism. As Rabbi Jung writes in his preface, there is no typical rabbi. While the true disciple of *Halakhah* must inevitably become a man of truth, justice, and piety, no two *Talmidei Chachamim* are alike. There are differences in personality, attitude, method, and emphasis — all within the framework of *Halakhah*.

This volume reveals the infinite variety of saints and scholars who have enriched Judaism in modern times; it underscores the profound influence which Torah study can have both upon individual and community; and it emphasizes the essential vitality — and viability — of Torah and *Halakhah* in our day. For this reaffirmation, we are indebted to Rabbi Jung.

Hebrew Myths. The Book of Genesis, by ROBERT GRAVES and RAPHAEL PATAI (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964).

Reviewed by Carl Cohen

This strange book was intended to be a parallel or successor volume to Graves' *Greek Myths*. It could have been expected that in Raphael Patai, Graves had found a co-author to make this a book of extreme interest. However, the reader feels disappointed; he seems to

agree with the mathematicians who claim that one plus one does not always make two. Both Graves and Patai deserve high respect from the reading public, but this volume does no honor to their names. The best part is the short introduction where the word "myth" is defined; the major part consists of a large number of Midrashic stories and

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parallels with stories from other nations. The Midrashim are not differentiated as to the time of their compilation, nor is there any information about the role the different Midrash - collections have played in the consciousness of the Jewish people. Even the basic questions: what the Midrash is and why it was formed and handed down from one generation to the next are not discussed. One likes to ask the authors Judah Leib Gordon's question: "For whom do you toil?" The reader who had the benefit of Jewish education knows this material; the uninitiated reader learns nothing from it, except perhaps that Midrash collections exist. Frequently we find: "others say" or "according to others," as if these others were at the same level with those with whom they disagree.

The authors attempt to present the first book of the Bible not as a divinely inspired document, but as consisting of parallels with many non-Jewish scriptures. This in itself could be interesting, though it would invite opposition. But in its pseudo - scholarly way the book gives nothing to the demanding, and in its peremptory tone it misleads and bores the uneducated reader.

An unfortunate remark about the discovery of the fossils (whether it had troubled the Rabbis) may be

forgiven; but that the only reference here to the eternity of the Jewish law is the New Testament (Matth. 4:18) (p. 45, 46), to say the least, is in bad taste.¹ The beautiful Midrash of how Jacob's sons originated the *Shema* at the end of the patriarch's life is omitted here and mentioned only in a note (p. 117); forgotten is the Midrash recounting that Moses himself carried Joseph's bones out of Egypt and his reasons for doing so. Comparison of the "Ugarit blood-thirsty goddess Anath" with the God of the Jews (p. 28) is especially ludicrous. It reminds us of the early days of biblical criticism which had the avowed purpose of discrediting everything Jewish. (e.g. the younger Delitzsch). We hardly need to say that this comparison is simply wrong: The prophet who is quoted here (Is. 63:3) reports (or warns against) God's justified wrath with the sinners, while the Ugaritic goddess appears to kill for killing's sake.

Robert Graves, who occupies the Chair of Poetry at Oxford University, and Raphael Patai, who taught anthropology at several major American universities, should leave Hebrew literature and lore to those who make it their major field of interest.

1. Maybe they did not want to quote Deut. 4:2?