

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Rabbi and the Jewish Social Worker*, edited by MORRIS N. KERTZER (New York: Commission on Synagogue Relations of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, 1965).

*Reviewed by Hayim Donin*

*The Rabbi and the Jewish Social Worker* is a collection of essays and addresses of varying lengths by twenty-two contributors. They are of uneven quality—ranging from excellent to mediocre. The title as well as the preface suggests that the purpose of the book is to explain the relationship between the rabbinate and the Jewish social worker, between “our spiritual institutions, represented by organized religion, and those institutions which most effectively translate our social idealism into reality—our agencies for community betterment.” However less than a third of the essays are directly related to this theme. The first two essays by Rabbi Isaac Trainin and Graenum Berger do a fine job in delineating the relationship that ought to exist and the relationship as it does exist. There is not much that is added to the theme beyond that. All the writers are positively oriented to Judaism; all

recognized the need for Jewish social workers to be grounded in Jewish knowledge and to possess a sensitivity for the teachings of Jewish faith.

All the writers are equally aware however “that the overwhelming number of professional workers in the center field (as in the other agencies) today have a limited Jewish background,” and that this provides not only the sources of friction between what ought to be two allied and cooperating professions but also restricts the social workers’ capacity for dealing with the specifically Jewish factors that may be inherent in the problems of Jewish clientele. For if there is no specific *Jewish component* in social service—if it is really, as some contend, an impersonal science dealing very objectively with a situation, then non-Jewish agencies should be equally adept at dealing with the problems, thereby eliminating whatever justification there may be for the maintenance of separate Jewish

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social service agencies. Although Martha K. Selig insists that a Jewish social service agency, be it a child care agency, a family agency, a community center, a camp, a home for the aged, and even a hospital must reflect Jewishness (in its program and structure) she raises the question as to *who* is to define Jewishness. This is begging the question and is one way to rationalize Judaism out of *de facto* existence. She states that "each of the ideological groups apparently wishes the agency to practice casework in its own image." This reviewer doesn't believe that the problem can be reduced to such simple terms. While it is true that every ideological group wishes the agencies to be sensitive to those things which touch their deepest convictions, the resentment against the agencies does not lie in the fact that they lean towards one ideology or another, but that in trying to be neutral and reflective "of the entire Jewish community" they end up shedding all Jewish values in favor of the purely secular ones, without realizing that the social ideals of Judaism to which they provide a measure of practical application cannot be divorced from the religious idiom, the principles of faith and what must be the halakhically-based mores of the people. There are no other firm guidelines for Jewishness. Actually, however, the problem is not the conscious pursuit of neutrality which the social worker ostensibly seeks, but his lack of personal commitment to Judaism coupled with a profound ignorance of its valuesystem.

That the rabbi today needs the guidance of the trained social scientist and experienced social worker is also not in dispute. However, just as the rabbi insists that Jewish social service is also a Jewish field that needs to reflect Jewish values and not only a social science area independent of Jewish thought, that it is a service to our people that must be Jewishly grounded, so the Jewish social worker ought to demand that the rabbi have a measure of training in guidance and counseling and in basic psychological theory before he takes it upon himself to provide some guidance to the troubled who come to him. Obviously there are those who will continue to come to the rabbi to pour out their troubles although they are fully aware of the existence of social agencies that deal with their problems. While disposing of the minor problems himself, the rabbi must have enough insight to recognize the severe problem cases and to direct them to the more qualified professionals. It is as objectionable for a rabbi to provide unsound and potentially harmful psychological or medical guidance as it is for a Jewish social worker to provide solutions outside the framework of Jewish religious values.

Two-thirds of the book, while containing a few excellent articles, has little to do with the central theme. There are essays dealing with the aged, autopsies, child adoptions, unwed mothers, and charity. While these are all areas of concern both to the rabbi and the social worker, the essays do not attack these problems in the light

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of how they affect the relationship between the rabbi and the Jewish social worker which is the original purpose of this collection.

The essays on *tzedakah*, particularly the ones by Rabbis Leo Jung and Immanuel Jakobovits, are excellent, containing some fresh insights which is quite an achievement when dealing with such a common theme. Nevertheless this reviewer questions their inclusion in such a volume. The concept of *tzedakah* is not an issue in Jewish life today (though the philosophy of its system of priorities in allocations most definitely is, and several essays on this issue would have been relevant) and no rabbi or social worker will disagree as to its central role in the Jewish value system. The rabbis serve only to lend endorsement from the different ideological groups to the worthwhile efforts of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. Actually, this reviewer is getting somewhat weary of the notion which is oft implied that because *tzedakah* is the one *mitzvah* about which no one disagrees, it must therefore serve as the unifying force and salvation of American Jewry.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, the longer this *mitzvah* remains disassociated from an acknowledgment of all the other *mitzvot*, the more susceptible will American Jewry become to self-annihilation.

One also wonders whether the Commission on Synagogue Rela-

tions has really helped establish a bridge of understanding between the rabbi and the social worker as claimed by the editor, or whether it has merely served to smooth out the feelings of resentment that have existed between the rabbinate and the central fund agency, not only over questions of agency practices, but over differences of opinion as to its system of allocation priorities and its generally meager support for those institutions whose primary purpose is the spiritual survival of our people. As long as hospitals, homes for the aged, centers, camps, etc., continue to reflect what is essentially a secular Jewish orientation, as long as they continue to look upon themselves not as Jewish non-denominational but as non-denominational *vis a vis* Christian groups the tension will exist.

What was also missing from the book was some sort of report or evaluation on the extent to which Jewish consciousness has begun to pervade the Jewish social agencies *on the operational level*. Except for some positive statements by the authors in the book, one gets the impression that the major change consists of a lessening of the anti-Jewishness and self-conflict that marked the Jewish social worker of the 30's, a sympathetic acceptance of Judaism, and an awareness that Judaism is and ought to be a factor. This is however a far cry from it actually playing such a role. As a matter of fact, one gets the distinct impression that no

1. Martha K. Selig—"Perhaps the concept of *tzedakah* with its universality of appeal and application, will become the single unifying factor in Jewish life." p. 42

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great impact has as yet been made.

By Rabbi Trainin's own admission, he has had more success in softening the rabbinic attitude towards Federation agencies than in making any marked changes in the agencies themselves in their attitudes towards rabbinic goals. If this is so, it was certainly good public relations on the part of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies to establish the Synagogue Commission, a move the sincerity of which is not questioned but which must have been dictated no less by the realization of the increased mass support that rabbinic good will could bring to it. The situation may be better than it ever

was, but to the extent that "a distance still exists" between the two allied fields, it is doubtful whether the publication of such a book will profoundly improve their relationship. The existing problems which gave rise to the publication of this volume will become ameliorated only when the vast proportion of Jewish social workers begin to approach their tasks fortified not only with the technical and social science skills of their profession but also with a commitment to the basic values of Judaism. The authors of the essays offer the same solution but how long it will take to become a reality, no one can venture to say.

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*Keeper of the Law: Louis Ginzberg*, by ELI GINZBERG (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1966).

Reviewed by  
Philip Zimmerman

Western thinkers are now much occupied with the topic of the "two cultures." Scientists and humanists are said to be incapable of really understanding each other's disciplines. Should this be correct, one might add that as far as Jewish thinkers are concerned, the question is not one of *two* but of *three* "cultures." Over and above the general fund of worldly wisdom required, a thinker must possess specific Torah learning which should integrate all his other knowledge. Without such learning, he rarely can be given serious consideration in the field of authentic Jewish thought. This fact is brought home by the volume *Keeper of the*

*Law: Louis Ginzberg*, by his son Prof. Ginzberg. The author informs us (p. 206) that he has never mastered any Hebrew. Nevertheless, he has undertaken a book dealing with some of the most important and delicate matters of Jewish Law and thought.

One of the most positive things about this work is the expression of filial respect, which is maintained by the son towards his father. And it seems worthy of note that the elder Ginzberg also possessed this virtue as we are informed in his son's book. Yet, greater knowledge of what is meant by a "Keeper of the Law" would have caused the author to eliminate many of his trivial anecdotes which can only lessen the stature of his father. What is

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gained by telling us that Prof. Louis Ginzberg attended "a church ceremonial on the Sabbath" at the christening of a friend's child (p. 302), sanctioned use of the telephone in his home on the Sabbath (p. 216), or rode in an elevator on the Sabbath immediately after *paskening* for a colleague that this was forbidden (p. 214)? There are many more examples of this type. I do not suggest that all personal matters ought to be *tabu* — indeed one of the most important chapters in the book gives the Ginzberg side of the relationship between the Professor and Miss Henrietta Szold. The historian of Jewish life at the turn of the century will also find many other facts of interest not formerly known.

Sufficient time has not yet passed to properly assign Louis Ginzberg his place in the history of Jewish thought. Surely the near-idolatry with which he was treated in his lifetime was not justified. One reads in amazement such statements as ". . . he is the first Talmudist in modern times who combines in himself the learning of the Talmud student of the Yeshiva and the knowledge of the university graduate . . ."\* Ginzberg's works were singularly free of the published criticism of fellow scholars during his lifetime—with a notable exception in Dr. B. M. Levin's critique of the *Geonia* in Vol. I of *Ginze Kedem* (1922). More vital than this aspect is the fact that Prof. Louis Ginzberg espoused the entire apparatus of Biblical criticism (see his essay on

"The Codification of Jewish Law" in *On Jewish Law and Lore*.) Indeed his son informs us, in his own introduction, that his father "initially questioned whether he should republish in its entirety his article" which was based on Wellhausen, as it first appeared in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, in whose creation Louis Ginzberg had so large a part. Louis Ginzberg overcame his qualms and so his article was reprinted with the entire worn-out apparatus of Biblical criticism. These facts would seem to indicate that Ginzberg, despite his immense erudition, cannot be basically classified among the scholars of the Torah tradition (*Talmidei Chachamim*), but rather among the exponents of "Jewish Science." What will be his ultimate place in the pantheon of *Chakhmat Yisrael* — will he be ranked with scholars like Zunz and Stenschneider, or with figures of a lower rank? This will not be known until his works in totality are subjected to scholarly criticism as to their validity and originality. At the same time, one must not overlook the fact noted in 1964 by Herbert Parzen, who lists him as "the proponent of Halakhah" among the *Architects of Conservative Judaism* (p. 128-154), that Ginzberg held back the forces in the Conservative movement which might have overthrown the Halakhah completely, and especially took a stand against the excesses of Kaplanism, as in the noted 1945 protest against the Reconstructionist Prayer Book. Prof. Ginzberg *filis* also records some

\* *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, p. 613, (by Isaac Landman).

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of this aspect of his father's activities, and especially the fact that he tended to become more traditional in his elder years.

To quote all of the historical errors and oversights in the present volume is both unnecessary and tedious, and only those of some importance will be cited. For example, on page 205 we are given a vivid picture of the "shock and chagrin" which Prof. Eli Ginzberg's wife "has not yet overcome" when the late Chief Rabbi Herzog "ignored her outstretched hand and turned his back." This writer has had the privilege of seeing the late Chief Rabbi (incidentally our first example of a harmonious combination of Yeshiva and University) at social gatherings, and it seems impossible to believe that this model of tact and gentleness acted in the manner described. (Hand, perhaps — back, never!) In any case, Prof. Ginzberg the elder ought to have at least informed his daughter-in-law that certain orthodox rabbis do not shake hands with members of the opposite sex, and that the reasons have to do with *Leviticus* and not etiquette.

Of a more serious nature, we are told (p. 40-41) that Levi Ginzberg in his youth disqualified the great educational pioneer and scholar Rabbi Dr. E. Hildesheimer because he found him unacquainted with an obscure passage indicating that seven men could constitute a *minyan* for prayers. The present writer checked with several noted scholars before finally getting a hint of the source, which is in *M. Soferim*, Chap. X:7. (A major commentary interprets this pass-

age to mean that among ten, seven men are required who have *not yet prayed*, and not merely six, as is the Halakhah). In any case, both Profs. Ginzberg ought to have realized that this was not sufficient evidence to disqualify a scholar.

Professor Eli Ginzberg informs us that students at the Yeshiva of Telz, where his father studied, ignored "the classic commentary on the Talmud (Rabbenu Hananel) that was published along with the text" (p. 29). This commentary was largely unknown until recent times, and never constituted a basic text in a Yeshiva. This error would be overlooked were it not for the fact that the commentary in question was largely discovered through the work of Rabbi Dr. David Hoffman and Rabbi Dr. Abraham Berliner, teachers at the school which young Levi Ginzberg felt could teach him nothing — the Hildesheimer Seminary. Both of these scholars, who incidentally predated Ginzberg both at Yeshiva and secular schools, combined Talmudic knowledge with scientific scholarship in a total halakhic unity.

A more profound misunderstanding than any of these is found in the view recorded concerning Rabbi S. R. Hirsch: "Neither Samson Raphael Hirsch, the founder of the ultra-Orthodox community, nor his successor Rabbi Breuer, contributed significantly to the development of Jewish thought." One does not have to be a follower of Hirsch to realize the immense influence he has had on Jewish thought. Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld's *Three Generations* (1958) lists

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hundreds of outstanding figures nurtured on his approach. We are further informed that the elder Ginzberg felt that the followers of Hirsch "did not fully understand the intricacies of the law and that they appreciated its essence even less: consequently, they were its prisoners" (*ibid.*). Prof. Ginzberg *filis* would profit from a reading of that great masterwork on the essence of the law, Hirsch's *Horeb*. One fact seems overwhelmingly clear from a historical perspective: the Hirschean synthesis — *Torah im Derech Eretz* — is one of the very few basic approaches which has been able to integrate Western and Jewish thought. For this reason Hirsch's works are reaching an ever-growing circle of readers (especially the commentaries

on the Pentateuch and the Psalms) while Louis Ginzberg's works are mainly library curiosities.

The book ends on a touching note, with a picture of the last days of the sick scholar, penning the introductions to his *Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud*, in which his illustrious ancestors receive glowing tributes in the traditional vein. Here, too, we are given his fears for the future of Judaism. One wonders how his son, an expert on manpower, feels about the future of those spiritual powers which his eminent ancestors maintained in so high a degree under such difficult circumstances. How different a book might he have written had he some mastery of the "third culture" — the world of authentic Jewish knowledge.

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*Encyclopedia Talmudit*, edited by RABBI SHELOMO YOSEF ZEVIN, vol. 11, *Harkavah — Zeh ve-zeh gorem* (Jerusalem: Rabbi Herzog World Academy, 1965).

*Reviewed by Aryeh Newman*

The monumental project of a Talmudic encyclopedia conceived and initiated by the late Rabbi Meir Berlin, nearly two decades ago, is gathering momentum and has now reached the seventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet with the recent appearance of the 11th volume. The latter begins with the item *Harkavah* — "Grafting" — under four headings: (1) in respect of *Orlah*, (2) as a valid cause for exemption from combat duty (the vine-yard planter is sent back home, see Deut. 20:6), (3) as a Sabbath and Sabbatical year

labor and (4) in respect of the space to be preserved between the vine-grafting and other species so as to preclude the violation of *kilayim*. The foregoing may sound rather far removed from everyday problems, but, of course, that is no criterion of importance in the Jewish setting. We have, even in the Torah, regulations which were never meant to be put into practice such as *ir ha'nidachat* and *ben sorrer u-moreh*. They were there for the purpose of *derosh vekabbel sechar* — for the reward ensuing from their study and exposition. Sufficient that they were part of the Divine word and as such con-

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tain a lesson of immortal significance.

But even such a remote sounding item as *Harkavah* is far from being a theoretical regulation. *Orlah* is an everyday problem in Israel, scrupulously adhered to by religious farmers. Its observance on non-religious settlements is supervised by rabbinic inspectors so as to ensure that no *orlah* produce reaches the market or is processed into foodstuffs. But the purpose of the Talmudic Encyclopedia is neither codification nor religious guidance but to serve as a source of information on halakhic literature and Jewish law from the Tannaitic period to the present day, arranged in alphabetic order. Naturally, the more thorough and orderly its presentation, the more valuable its use by scholars for a variety of purposes, including sometimes the coming to a decision on new religious problems. The grasp of any Talmudic concept is vastly facilitated by having all the dicta on the subject both in the Talmud and later authorities condensed into an encyclopedic item. The student can proceed from there to the sources indicated and enrich his knowledge and understanding.

Perhaps the most "topical" item of this volume is *lashchatat zerah* — wasting of seed (semen), a perusal of which gives us an insight into Halakhic attitudes to masturbation, onanism, artificial insemination and birth - control methods. The source of the prohibition itself is a matter of debate which has a bearing on practical issues, such as its connection with the prohibition of fornication and

onanism and with the abomination of idolatrous cults and their fertility rites. The item summarizes all the interpretations of the famous dictum in *Niddah* regarding the three types of women who may use a certain contraceptive precaution, because of the danger inherent in their becoming pregnant. Although the subject has endless ramifications and complexities, it is clear that no *carte blanche* is given for the human being to tamper at will with the processes of conception and birth. They are holy and have to serve the Divine will.

The different topical issues involved in such an item as *hashchatat zerah* underline one grave failing of the Encyclopedia, which this reviewer brought personally to the notice of the illustrious editor, Rabbi S. Z. Zevin, some years ago. Since the project is obviously inspired by a contemporary approach and designed to increase the accessibility of Talmudic law, it should be possible for the student who is not an expert Talmudist to find at a glance what this great body of literature has to say on a specific subject. It requires quite a thorough grounding in the Talmud to find, shall we say, material on the question of abortion or artificial insemination. Who is to know that the former is to be found in the item entitled *en dochin nefesh mipnei nefesh*? The *sabra* would naturally search for the item *hapala melachutit* and not find it. The Encyclopedia aspires to become a handbook for law students in Israel and academicians of all kinds. Without an appendix containing an index of subjects ar-

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ranged under modern headings, the Encyclopedia will remain a work for a very limited readership of Talmudic scholars. The production of such an index should not be postponed to the completion of the whole monumental enterprise which will take many years. Such an index should be produced for the volumes that have already appeared, and each subsequent one should carry its own. In this way the reader will be able to determine which headings contain information on an everyday subject or concept which interests him, without having to know beforehand the nearest Talmudic formulation

of his problem.

This reservation does not of course detract from the tremendous scholastic achievement embodied in the volumes already produced by a team of dedicated scholars at the Jerusalem Rabbi Herzog Academy. The items are a masterpiece of condensation and clear formulation and are unique in the comprehensiveness of their information. Let us hope that the necessary support will continue to be forthcoming to speed the completion and perfection of the project in order to meet the legitimate requirements of the public for which it is written.

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### REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

HAYIM DONIN of Congregation B'nai David in Southfield, Michigan, recently received his Ph.D. in the Philosophy and History of Education from Wayne State University.

RABBI PHILIP ZIMMERMAN, a graduate of Yeshiva University, has previously contributed to this DEPARTMENT.

ARYEH NEWMAN, Director of the Religious Education Department of the Jewish Agency, is a frequent contributor to TRADITION.