

BRIEFLY NOTED

A Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel, by Samuel Usque, Translation, Notes and Introduction by Gershon I. Gelbart, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964).

Very little is known about the author of the book which was published in 1553. It is assumed that Samuel Usque was born in Portugal. Brought up as a Marrano, he ultimately made his way to Italy where one of his relatives owned a publishing house.

A Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel is written as a dialogue between a man who is dismayed over the suffering of the Jew and his friends who seek to comfort him through explanations of the purpose and meaning of suffering.

Apart from its intrinsic significance, the volume serves as a valuable source book of Jewish history, providing especially interesting material on the expulsion of the Jews from England.

Dr. Gershon I. Gelbart, who passed away in the prime of his life in 1959, not only translated the text from the original Portuguese but also provided detailed scholarly notes. The posthumous publication of this splendid volume is a fitting memorial to a distinguished scholar and educator.

Abraham Kelman

A Book of Jewish Concepts, by Philip Birnbaum (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1964).

Dr. Philip Birnbaum, who has distinguished himself as an authority on Jewish liturgy and as a translator of our prayer books, has written a useful guide to Jewish knowledge in a most popular manner. It is not merely a dry one-volume encyclopedia but a very readable presentation of various concepts.

Arranged in alphabetical order, the book reflects the author's awareness that some topics are more familiar by their Hebrew names, e.g., *Yom-Tov*, *Maot Chittim*, *Ne'ilah*, *Kaddish*. Dr. Birnbaum has therefore arranged the entire volume according to the Hebrew alphabet accompanied by an English translation of each caption. In view of the fact that many concepts may not be known by some readers either in their original Hebrew or by their English translation, the author provides two indexes, one in each language, to facilitate the use of this important reference work.

Following the traditional point of view, Dr. Birnbaum has compressed in this handy volume hundreds of names and concepts pertaining to Jewish thought, history and ritual.

Jacob I. Dienstag