

BOOK REVIEWS

Rabbi Kook's Philosophy of Repentance, A Translation of Orot Hateshuvah, by ALTER B. Z. METZGER, *Studies in Torah Judaism*, No. 11 (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1968).

Reviewed by Pesach Schindler

Yehuda Alharizi's *Ki'mesakel Hamesilah Mey'ha'avanim* was for a period of time the aphoristic trade mark of the serious classic translator in the tradition of Alharizi and Ibn Tibbon. They were concerned, in the main, in clearing the road of philological and verbal obstacles, since they had the advantage of a reading clientele conversant with Maimonides, Ibn Gabirol and Ibn Pakudah.

One can thus appreciate what is in store for the translator when approaching a work of the magnitude of *Orot Hateshuvah*. He confronts not only the mundane difficulties of external translation, but also that of providing a key to the inner soul of a creative work which is incomprehensible in any language to the modern reader estranged from mystical thought and its categories.

Dr. Alter Metzger hurdles these difficulties and more. He not only

achieves a two dimensional translation, but also moves beyond into the area of analytic commentary. It is there that the influence of Chabad Chassidut upon Harav Kook is documented in a convincing manner.

Upon re-reading *Orot Hateshuvah* in this context, one must seriously question Gershon Scholem's thesis that productive Kabbalistic thought has culminated in Harav Kook. One in fact must come to the very opposite conclusion. It was Harav Kook who opened up new vistas in mystical thought never before explored. This was achieved not by formulating original doctrines. He faithfully worked with and within the traditional interpretations of *Teshuvah*, *Shekhinah* and *Tikkun*. Harav Kook's creative genius manifests itself in *form* rather than in *content*. By plumbing the depths of the mind and the soul and intuitively charting a course whereby the mystical processes were wedded to inner

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psychological needs and drives, Harav Kook projected Jewish mystical thought into the 20th Century as a live option for modern man. Time and again one is impressed with the "here and now," as one moves through the *Orot Hateshuvah* on a stream of self evaluation. The reader finds himself probing together with the author into the eternal question of the meaning and destiny of life and the role of man.

One soon becomes aware of the paradox that complex mystical ideas are clothed not in austere esoterica, but in poetic simplicity. Simplicity for Harav Kook is not merely a matter of style. It is a reflection of a supreme attribute, serving as the initial guide post on

the road back to the *Shekhinah* via *Teshuvah*. In this sense not only is the medium the message — but the message is directed to the medium — the average man, as embodied in the Benoni of Chabad.¹

Finally, *Orot's* purest emanation is the light of *Ahavat Chinam* (groundless love), which was personified in Harav Kook's own life and immortalized him as a true *Tzaddik* among his people. It was characteristic of him to have written in the preface that he was unworthy of writing a treatise on *Teshuvah*.

Thus, we have here more than a translation. Rabbi Metzger recreates for us an impactful experience — precisely the original intent of Harav Kook. We are indebted.

¹ See Irving Block, "Chabad Psychology and the Benoni of Tanya" in *Tradition*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Fall 1963, p. 30.

Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies, edited by ALEXANDER ALTMANN; Vol. IV of Studies and Texts issued by the Philip W. Lown Institute of Advanced Judaic Studies at Brandeis University, Harvard University Press, 1967.

Reviewed by Jacob Haberman

Alexander Altmann, Professor of Jewish Philosophy at Brandeis University, is to be congratulated on this volume edited by him. Most of the studies gathered here deal with topics of Jewish philosophy and mysticism.

This reviewer has found all the essays without exception to be of high quality. Of the contributors to the volume, about half are es-

tablished authorities prominent in their field, while the remainder are fledgling scholars just starting out to make a name for themselves. It redounds to the credit of the editor, who is a distinguished scholar in his own right, with many contributions in the field of Jewish philosophy to his name, that he has encouraged young men to engage in researching the field of Jewish learning and heartened them by publishing their work.

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It is particularly gratifying to read Herbert Davidson's masterful study on the sources of Saadia's list of theories of the soul. Here is an up-and-coming young scholar, who has forged the tools of critical scholarship with the skill of a master craftsman, to make a significant contribution to our knowledge of medieval Jewish thought. We shall look forward to future contributions from the hand of this young scholar, who heretofore has been known only for a rather jejune dissertation on the philosophy of Abraham Shalom, a fifteenth century follower of Maimonides.

The editor of the volume has prepared a critical edition, with an introduction and notes, of Moses Narboni's treatise on the bizarre *Measure of Stature (Shiur Komah)*, a work of the earliest phase of Jewish mysticism. The treatise shows how a Jewish Averroist of the fourteenth century found it possible to interpret the text in philosophical terms. This monograph follows the same format as the author's larger study of Isaac Israeli, written in collaboration with S. M. Stern, which appeared a decade earlier. As we have come to expect of a work by Professor Altmann, the translation is flawless, and the discussions are always enlightening.

Readers of *Tradition* will probably be most interested in the two articles on Maimonides by Professors Isadore Twersky and Arthur Hyman. Professor Twersky of Harvard University, is the author of a definitive study of R. Abraham ben David of Posquieres (RaA-

BaD). Professor Twersky's article in the volume under review is devoted to what may, for lack of a better name, be called "the RaM-BaM-Maimonides Problem," i.e., determining the relationship between Maimonides's legal (Halakic) and philosophical works. Professor Wolfson has posed the problem as follows:

Maimonides was not a rabbi employing Greek logic and categories of thought in order to interpret Jewish religion; he was, rather, a true medieval Aristotelian, using Jewish religion as an illustration of the Stagirite's metaphysical supremacy. Maimonides adheres staunchly to the Law, of course, but his adherence is not the logical consequence of his system. It has its basis in his heredity and practical interests; it is not the logical implication of his philosophy. Judaism designated the established social order of his life, in which Maimonides lived and moved and had his being; and it was logically as remote from his intellectual interests as he was historically remote from Aristotle."¹

By uncovering certain non-Halakic emphases in the *Mishneh Torah* as well as in other popular, mass-oriented writings of Maimonides, Professor Twersky hopes to contribute to a more balanced approach to the entire Maimonidean corpus. Among the factors emphasized is the homage rendered to the supremacy of the intellect and intellectual pursuits, the avowal of the relevance of non-Jewish sources of wisdom, and the emphasis on the need for metaphysical study. Interesting and significant as the factors emphasized by Twersky are, they are far from demonstrating

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that Maimonides's writings are structured and informed by an integrated community of interests embracing philosophical theology and the Halakhah. All the passages referred to by Twersky are equally compatible with Strauss' thesis that Maimonides's writings have an esoteric as well as an exoteric meaning, and that the former can be discerned only by trustworthy and intelligent readers.

The other essay dealing with Maimonides was written by Professor Arthur Hyman of Yeshiva University. Professor Hyman is not only a specialist in Jewish philosophy, but an expert in the history of general philosophy as well. In this volume, his essay is devoted to Maimonides's Thirteen Principles of Faith.² He attempts to interpret the "Thirteen Principles" in the light of Maimonides's general views. To that end, he analyzes the *Introduction to the Perek Helek* in Maimonides's Commentary on

the Mishnah, where the principles are first set down; he collates the *Introduction* with a number of parallel texts in Maimonides's other legal writings; and he compares the discussions in the legal writings with a discussion contained in a chapter of his speculative work, the *Moreh Nebukhim*. Within these self-imposed limitations, he has done an excellent job in expounding Maimonides's views. In general, he shares Dr. Twersky's pre-suppositions.

To conclude, it may be said that the two writers fail to refute Strauss's view of the existence of an esoteric meaning existing side by side with the exoteric one in the *Moreh*. The difficulty of finding the solution to the problem here posed is actually contained in Maimonides himself,³ rather than in the modern scholars. The whole subject calls for continued further study.

NOTES

1. H. A. Wolfson, "Maimonides and Halevi," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. vol. 2 (1911), p. 314f. (pp. 297-337). Wolfson would probably not maintain this view today without modifications; cf. *Halevi and Maimonides on Design*, etc., *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research*, vol. 11 (1941), p. 136, note (pp. 105-163).

2. Anent the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead, Hyman observes (p. 122, note 19) that Maimonides's text of the Mishnah seems to omit the phrase "is not derived from the Torah." It may be observed that the Tosfeta (13:5), Baraita (90a, "Since he denied the Resurrection of the Dead," etc., i.e., he denied the fact of the Resurrection, not merely the deduction of the doctrine from the Torah), and some of the medieval commentators (e.g. *Yad Ramah ad loco*), likewise omit the clause in question, and their reading is supported by Rabbinowicz in *Dikduke Soferim* on this passage.

3. Cf. *Moreh* (Pines, translator), Introduction p. 106, The Seventh Cause. "The seventh cause. In speaking about very obscure matters it is necessary to conceal some parts and to disclose others. Sometimes in the case of certain dicta

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this necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of a certain premise, whereas in another place necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of another premise contradicting the first one. In such cases the vulgar must in no way be aware of the contradiction; the author accordingly uses some device to conceal it by all means."

Commentary of Rabbenu Meyuchas on the Book of Deuteronomy, edited by MICHAEL KATZ (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1968).

Reviewed by
Abraham R. Besdin

Dr. Michael Katz has presented us with an annotated edition of an ancient manuscript which had been relegated to obscurity in the Hebrew and Samaritan section of the British Museum.

The commentary is of unique interest to Biblical scholars because of the bold originality of the author in combining an incisive analytical approach with a thorough mastery of Talmudic and Midrashic sources. Historians will be interested in the light it sheds on a relatively obscure, but highly significant, chapter of Jewish history — the period of Byzantine supremacy in Eastern Europe.

Little is known about Rabbenu Meyuchas ben Elijah, author of the commentary. From the manuscript's literary style and its frequent allusions to other scholars and works, one can reasonably deduce that the author lived in the latter half of the twelfth century, somewhere in the area of northern Italy or Greece. Jewish religious life was then under ideological and

physical siege from Christian missionaries and crusaders who insisted that the Bible foretold in numerous references the advent of their savior. They bitterly attacked the authenticity of the Oral Law which interpreted the Biblical text in a manner precluding Christological exegesis.

Internally, too, the Jewish community was beset with violent dissension regarding the binding status of the Oral tradition. The Karaites regarded the written text to be of Divine origin but questioned the authenticity of the interpretations, edicts, and traditions of the sages. The schism between the Rabbinic and Karaite communities became so pronounced that an actual physical separation in the form of a wall was constructed to separate the two groups within the same ghetto.

Rabbenu Meyuchas' commentary sought to counter these external and internal challenges by anchoring the Oral Law in the verses of the written text. The relation of the Oral Law to the Written Law had been classically affirmed by the sages of the Talmud and con-

stituted their basic methodology. The latter, however, affirmed an independent status for the Oral Law as an authentic expression of the Divine will, even where its connection to the written text seemed tenuous. The Masorah, the tradition as transmitted through the generations, assumed its own independent authenticity.

Rabbenu Meyuchas, however, could not content himself with this approach in face of the overpowering derogation of the status of the Oral Law. The Halakhah, he felt, must be shown to be inextricably bound to, and logically implied in the written text in order to evoke acceptance. Consequently, his commentary delineates all *halakhot* which pertain to each verse. He was uniquely qualified for this task by his mastery of Hebrew grammar which is suggested to us by his authorship of the now extinct *Sefer Hamidot*, an exposition on grammatical construction. In the pursuit of his method, the author at times is impelled to choose a legal opinion which, though in seeming harmony with the verse, is nevertheless at variance with the decision of other halakhic codifiers.

As an exegete, Rabbenu Meyuchas may be classified as of the French rather than the Spanish school. While the latter interpreted the text with frequent allusions drawn from outside cultures, such as Greek or Arabic philosophy, the French school, most notably the school of Rashi, maintained a greater fidelity to Rabbinic interpretations. Rabbenu Meyuchas was even more singleminded than Rashi and other commentators in his ad-

herence to *peshat* and the halakhah implicit in the verse.

To the author, a jumbled, abbreviated or overly verbose phrase was full of halakhic implications. Having derived his Halakhah from the verse, he invariably accumulated all related material and legal prescriptions which pertained to the subject. Each verse is thus the foundation for an elaborate Torah exposition. To buttress his conclusions, the author marshalls numerous verses in other sections of the Bible, including the Prophets and Writings.

The fundamentalism of Rabbenu Meyuchas is clearly illustrated in his decision that a count of three judges suffices in the case where a husband publicly questions the virginal status of his newly-acquired wife. In the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 2), Rabbi Maier's requirement of three judges is disputed by a majority of the sages who insist that the dire implications of such an accusation warrant a court of twenty-three judges, a judicial body reserved for serious offenses such as capital punishment. Halakhic procedure prescribes that the majority view be accepted, in accordance with the verse, "Be inclined after the majority" (Exodus 23:2). Rabbenu Meyuchas, however, violates this regulation and espouses the minority view because he feels unable to depart from the textual prescription that three judges suffice in cases of material damages. In this accusation, the prime result is a monetary loss of alimony rights to the woman.

A further indication of textual fidelity is found in Rabbenu Meyu-

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chas' ruling that a child born from cohabitation of a non-Jew with a Jewess is "a Jewish and kosher child," presumably not requiring any procedures of conversion and not subject to any marital disabilities, even with a *kohen*. In the Talmud (*Kidushin* 68: and *Yevamot* 23 and 45:) we find divergent opinions affecting the legitimacy of the child. One view regards the offspring a *mamzer*, eliminating all further possibilities of marital association within the Jewish community. Another position requires a formal conversion for the child, who is regarded as a non-Jew. A third opinion accepts the child's Jewish identification except for minor disqualifications and the possibility of a rabbinically prescribed procedure of induction. Rabbenu

Meyuchas refuses to place any disability upon the child because of the verse in Deuteronomy 7:4 which calls him "your son," suggesting a status pure and unlimited.

The Torah world is indebted to Dr. Katz for bringing to light this brilliant commentary and thereby enriching our understanding of the Jewish legal system as well as the precise meaning of the text. Dr. Katz compares the manuscript with the interpretations of the *Sifri*, the *Targumim*, the two Talmuds, the *Midrashim*, the *Lekach Torah*, and the *Rishonim*. In addition, Dr. Katz provides us with his own commentary on the entire work, including a fuller reproduction of all sources which are presented in the manuscript in fragmentary form or merely in allusion.

Israel, Politics and People, by LEONARD J. FEIN (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968).

Reviewed by Louis Bernstein

One of the frustrating aspects of writing a book on contemporary politics is that by the time the volume appears in print, the rush of unfolding events relegates the basic thesis into past history. This is especially true of Israel. With its volatile political situation, its plethora of political parties, Israel's complex political life must be the despair of even the most competent political scientists and sociologists. A non-resident of Israel must possess a unique "feel" to accurately measure the throbbing pulse of Is-

rael's national life.

Professor Leonard J. Fein, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has that fine "touch." Not only does he understand Israel's politics and people but he has successfully and concisely summarized them. Although some of the events described are but of a few months vintage, they seem to have occurred ages ago in light of changing political facts. Included is a postscript updating the problems added as a result of the Six Day War.

There is much that can be said and substantiated about Dr. Fein's excellent book. But in the limited

space at our disposal, we would prefer to concentrate on that section of his book with which we disagree and find in error.

No book on Israel's political life can avoid discussion of the friction between Israel's religious and non-religious elements. They are realities of political life. His assertion that the religious elements are stronger than their numbers indicate because of their self-discipline, the failure of either left or right to gain a parliamentary majority, and the reluctance for a showdown at this time is correct.

He is wrong, however, in his presentation of the religious position. Writing about National Religious Party sponsoring legislation, he states "Since such laws intrude on areas not manifestly related to religious life, such as family law, hotel management, and public transportation, NRP policies have wide affect and are as widely debated (p. 123). Family law from earliest times has exclusively been a religious province. And public transportation involves the Sabbath and hotel management kashruth.

What is perplexing on Israel's religious scene, and this Dr. Fine either does not know or fails to state, is that non-religious groups demand and receive representation in Israel's religious councils. Ma-

pam has a voice in electing rabbis. The Haifa municipality is currently attempting to manage the new "mikveh" without support of the rabbinate or religious council.

Dr. Fein writes of the "Theocracy issue." The overwhelming majority of religious Jews do not view the issue in that light. For them, it is far more practical. It is a bread and butter issue. Religious Jews are discriminated against in employment and education. They are a most productive chalutzic force in Israel but since they do not carry a Mapai card, few, very few, are employed in the foreign ministry, for example. The law requires equal educational facilities for the religious and non-religious Jew. Reality, however, dictates that the religious parent on occasion, because of financial pressures, enroll his child in the general school.

"There is some evidence that at least some sections of the secularist community the readiness to resist the ultra-Orthodox is growing" (p. 66). This is true. It is the result of a Marxist, doctrinaire education. It is, however, compensated for by a restlessness in the same non-Orthodox circles seeking a way back to Jewish identity and Jewish living. This last point is an area we hope Dr. Fein explores further in a future book.

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