

BOOK REVIEWS

The Jewish Idea of Community, by SOL ROTH (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1977).

Reviewed by David Shatz

Jewish philosophers, Dr. Roth points out in his preface, have traditionally been occupied with "elaborating the fundamentals of Jewish faith and the bases of Jewish conduct." As a consequence of this emphasis on metaphysical and ethical questions, the domain of Jewish *social* philosophy has remained largely uncharted territory. The present work is conceived as an excursion into this critical but neglected area of Jewish thought.

Roth proposes to analyze a group of concepts and ideas which are fundamental to the development of a Jewish social philosophy, "and to defend them from the criticism that is popularly leveled against them." Over the course of eight chapters, we are offered: a rationale for the principle of *hav-dalah* between Israel and the nations, and an explanation-cum-justification for Jewish particularism; an account of *ahavat yisrael* and *ahavat ha-briot*; an analysis of the

brit between God and Israel; an exploration of the idea of the holy in Judaism, with appropriate comparisons and contrasts to Otto and application to the notion of "the holy people"; arguments for the thesis that the ideal Jewish community is best realized in the Jewish state; and an attempt to resolve some apparent conflicts between Judaism and democratic ideals. The book is not without a practical thrust, however: its writing, Roth tells us, was motivated by concern over an eminently practical problem, that of Jewish survival. In the opening chapter, therefore, we find strong criticism of existing Jewish institutions, followed by the assertion that only the communication of "community - preserving attitudes" — attitudes associated with the concepts clarified in the book — will succeed in transmitting and preserving Jewish identity. Again in the last chapter, Roth turns to the social problems of the Jewish community. We suffer, he thinks, from the "functional segregation" of institutions,

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the tendency . . . to treat an institution's primary objective as its sole and exclusive function and to grant it autonomy so that it will not be governed by any principles other than those that are intrinsic to its own activity (p. 147).

Roth calls for "social synthesis" on the part of Jewish institutions:

The institutions of Jewish life should derive their Jewish character, not from the fact that they are created by Jews for the purpose of serving Jews but from the circumstance that even while they are intended to accomplish a variety of non-religious objectives — artistic, scientific, academic, economic, social, etc — their structure is such that they embody and express Jewish values and attitudes as well (p. 151).

As the foregoing outline indicates, *The Jewish Idea of Community* is a wide-ranging book which takes a stand on a variety of issues in both Jewish philosophy and sociology.

In the theoretical portions of the work, Roth's methodology involves the application of philosophical analysis, an area in which his talent and training are evident throughout. He brings to this project a fine sense for important conceptual distinctions, a firm grounding in the relevant literature, and a lucid, precise style of writing. Even in chapters in which his conclusions are not all that striking, the presentation is singularly meticulous and analytical. Here I would like to comment on certain sections I found especially controversial or provocative.

In chapter IV, Roth carefully differentiates various senses of "universalistic" and "particularistic"

and tries to specify in which senses Judaism may fairly be described as one or the other. One sense in which Judaism is particularistic is that "the Jew believes that he must, first and foremost, concern himself with the needs of his own community" (p. 58). By way of explaining — and justifying — this brand of particularism, Roth tells us that the particularist attaches a value to the person who exemplifies a certain valued trait and that he (the particularist) maintains that "the cherished individual is especially deserving of compassion . . . one who possesses the valued characteristic is, in some significant sense, more deserving of generosity" (p. 60). This comment is amplified later into a more sweeping thesis about Jewish social obligations:

It has already been noted that the Jewish particularist declines to relate compassion exclusively to need. Values must enter as a relevant factor . . . Rabbinic Judaism . . . holds that need may provide the occasion for compassion, but it cannot be its justification . . . (p. 65).

What Roth is advocating might be described as a *meritarian* approach to Jewish social obligations; that is, he argues, with certain qualifications to be noted below, that the Jew's obligation to person A is a function of the merit of A and not solely a function of his need. (The phrase "meritarian," borrowed from social philosophy, is mine, not the author's.)

Does this accurately represent "the Jewish view"? Before judging whether Roth's account is corrob-

orated by an examination of Halakhah, it must be observed that this task is complicated by his lack of clarity as to what trait is valued by the particularist. At the outset of the chapter, Roth explains: "It is the covenantal character which obligates him to abide by biblical and rabbinic imperatives that confers value on the Jew" (p. 59). Since Roth defines the Jewish community in terms of covenantal character (p. 76), this sounds a bit like saying that the Jewish particularist is particular towards Jews — hardly an illuminating account of particularism. Moreover, it is inconsistent with other things Roth says. Thus, we are told that a *rasha* does not exemplify the trait valued by the particularist (p. 65) — even though a *rasha* is certainly *obligated* by the covenant (cf. p. 85); and we learn that the particularist *does* value the *ger toshav* (p. 155, n. 5). Elsewhere, we encounter a different criterion: Roth writes that the Rabbis command "compassion to all who abide by a minimal standard of moral and religious conduct" (p. 65) (including the *ger toshav*, excluding the *rasha*). So "covenantal character" does *not* "confer value" — unless one is valued by this "universalist" criterion; then it confers *added* value (= priority).

Quite a number of sources do render certain obligations contingent on the merit of the potential beneficiary. However, the full details of how this "minimal standard" operates in Halakhah do not fall into place precisely as Roth

suggests. There are, to begin with, obligations owed even to a "*rasha*."¹ Now admittedly, with respect to at least some of these obligations, there are classes of people of a lower status than "*rasha*," to whom the obligations are not owed, so that even these obligations *are* merit-conditioned; however, it is extremely misleading to characterize the criteria of merit which are operative in terms of "moral status," "moral performance," possession of or lack of "mercy," "cruelty," "justice," or being a "scoundrel." The exceptions are categories such as *akum*,* *apikores*, *mehalel shabbat b'farhesya*, *mumar l'hakhis*.² One can be excluded as a beneficiary of the help of another Jew because he fails to identify with Judaism; moral considerations in the ordinary sense enter only secondarily in such cases (though admittedly, they may enter some way). There is a "minimal standard" (of "religious conduct"), but that standard itself is in part, inherently particularistic; hence, it may be that instead of serving to clarify Jewish particularism, Jewish meritarianism is to an extent identical with Jewish particularism. That, of course, leaves us with our original problem of explaining Jewish particularism.

Even if we amend Roth's discussion, however, so that it specifies just those criteria of merit which the Halakhah does employ, adjustments will be called for in other parts of the chapter. On p. 66, Roth implies that "injustice" is prohibited no matter what the stat-

* a censor's term

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us of the victim and that meritarian considerations relate only to "compassion." The difference between "compassion" (= "generosity and unselfishness") and "justice" (= "respect and fair play") is itself hazy, and perhaps what Roth has in mind is the distinction between positive and negative obligations (failing to help A vs. inflicting harm on A). This distinction does not meet the objections to Roth's original discussion (the *rasha* is owed positive obligations) but once we alter the meritarian thesis in the manner suggested above (to exclude *akum* etc. rather than an Israelite *rasha*) it turns out true that in some cases the Halakhah imposes on the Jew only negative but not positive duties to the non-meritorious.³ Nevertheless, it will not be true for all cases.

Within this same discussion of particularism, Roth emphasizes that Jewish particularism is "preferential" rather than "exclusive": the Jew is favored over the non-Jew, is given priority, but the latter is not beyond the scope of the Jew's concern (pp. 71ff.). How is this preference for the Jew exhibited? Roth's answer turns on a distinction between two aspects of the commandment, "love thy neighbor": "unselfishness" and "relation."

. . . the Jewish precept to love those who are beyond the boundaries of Jewish life commands unselfish and compassionate behavior. Such conduct, however, does not necessitate, as a simultaneous gesture, the cultivation of intimate relations. The obligation to love a fellow Jew, on the other hand, demands relation in addition to un-

selfishness (p. 72; see also pp. 55-57).

This sounds sensible enough. But first of all, I am perplexed as to why Roth thinks he needs the distinction between "unselfishness" and "relation" in order to clarify the notion of preferential treatment; why can't "preferential treatment" consist, as he has said, in the Jew's concerning himself "first and foremost with the needs of his own community"? Waiving this question, I see no warrant for presenting the distinction between aspects of love as a gloss on "love thy neighbor." A number of considerations indicate that the commandment must be construed as an imperative to *act* lovingly, not as an imperative to cultivate the *emotion* of love;⁴ if this is so, then Roth's distinction between the precept as it applies to a Jewish beneficiary ("cultivate the emotion of love") and to a non-Jewish beneficiary ("act unselfishly") does not go through. Moreover, the distinction between types of love — one owed to the Jew, the other to the non-Jew — is gratuitous from the point-of-view of our sources. Though some sources suggest that the scope of *v'ahavta l'reacha* encompasses the non-Jewish beneficiary, and others that its scope is confined to Jews, I know of no source which implies that the commandment applies to both Jews and non-Jews, but in different ways — let alone precisely the ways Roth asserts.⁵ And if there is support to be found, its absence from the present work is a significant omission.

The need for a satisfactory ac-

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count of Jewish particularism and of Jewish social obligations is very real; but although Roth makes a number of interesting and provocative suggestions, their claim to express "the Jewish idea" at points needs better documentation.

A number of other matters also call for comment. Since the Bible abounds in "covenants," it is misleading to draw general conceptual distinctions between "covenantal relations" and other relations on the sole basis of the covenants between God and Israel and between God and Abraham; not all Biblical covenants fit Roth's characterization in chapter V, which therefore ought to have been advanced as an account of a specific *brit*. The chapter on sanctity (VI) devotes more attention to the concept of the holiness of God than to that of the *kedushah* of Israel and thus is somewhat inconsistent with Roth's intention to play down metaphysical questions. Moreover, the chapter contains some questionable assertions, such as the claim that "even Maimonides does not appear to dispute" the thesis that "piety, from the Jewish vantage point, is of greater urgency than theology" (p. 101); the contention is too controversial and too important to the chapter to rest one's case with a footnote to Julius Guttmann. Roth is also too quick in his implied endorsement of negative theology (pp. 96-97) and in any event, application of the theory to the statement, "God is just" is incorrect — the theory applies to "attributes of essence," not "attributes of action."

The effort to reconcile the doctrine of equality with Judaism (ch. VIII) fails to grapple with the real problems. It is true that persons may be equal with respect to one standard but unequal with respect to another (p. 138), but what critics have in mind is that Judaism appears to sanction juridical inequalities which seem difficult to justify (e.g., women, slaves, gentiles).

Finally, it is disappointing to find two highly relevant topics omitted. First, in a work whose center is the concept of Jewish community, there is no sustained attempt at a conceptual analysis of halakhot pertaining to inclusion or exclusion from the community⁶ or halakhot which bear on the theme of individual vs. communal responsibility. Secondly, since people are often puzzled as to how one can incur obligations by dint of one's ancestors having accepted certain commitments, the question as to what does obligate the Jew ought to have been taken up at greater length, in consonance with the promise to defend Jewish concepts against "popular criticism." It is likely that a satisfactory answer would give further support to Roth's stress on a communal orientation.⁷

These criticisms in no way diminish the genuine insight which Roth so frequently exhibits in his analyses. Theoretician and communal leader alike are likely to profit from a careful reading of this stimulating and important volume.

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1. For example, a condemned criminal must be granted a humane execution in fulfillment of "love thy neighbor" (*Ketubot* 37b; see *Shitah Mekubezet*, *ad. loc.* In order to square this passage with *Pesahim* 113b, which counsels hatred of the wicked, some maintain that the *Pesahim* ruling does not apply to one near death.) Maimonides, based on *Avodah Zarah* 26b, holds that a lost object must be returned even to a *rasha* (*Gezelah v'Avedah* 11:2); and, contrary to an implication Roth leaves, he probably holds that a doctor (or anybody else) must try to save the life of a *rasha*. cf. *Sanhedrin* 73a; comm. *Nedarim* 4:4; *Rotseah*, 13:14.

2. These are the exceptions in *Gezelah v'Avedah*; I rely on Maimonides because Roth refers almost exclusively to him in documenting halakhic contentions. Note that if, as many have held, these categories (or some of them) are not applicable today, the amended meritarian thesis these exceptions suggest is not of practical consequence to the Jewish community; this would undercut Roth's stress on practical matters. It might be interesting to explore what distinguishes merit-conditioned from merit-independent obligations or what factors might rationalize the use of certain criteria in a given context. There is an oft-cited exegetical basis for the distinctions involved (duties to "*akhikha*" are of wider scope than duties to "*reakha*"), but a book with aims like Roth's might try to uncover a logical basis. Relevant to some of the issues raised here is Aharon Lichtenstein's paper, "Brother Daniel and the Jewish Fraternity," *Judaism* (1963), pp. 260-279.

3. The difference between *Genevah* 1:1 and *Gezelah v'Avedah* 11:2 vis-a-vis *akum* might be adduced to support the distinction (Roth quotes the former on p. 65), as might be the difference between action and inaction in *Avodat Kohavim* 10:1; but the latter passage also shows that for some categories the positive/negative distinction does not apply. Of course, here as elsewhere one must be wary of diversity in the sources, but I do not know of any source offhand which holds that negative obligations are owed to all those to whom positive obligations are not owed.

4. Among these considerations: Hillel's rendering of the commandment as "what is hateful unto you *do* not unto your comrade" (*Shabbat* 31a); the rabbinic specification of the mitzvah in terms of the performance of *acts* of *gemillut hasadim*; and the use of the dative (*Preakha*) rather than the accusative (*et reakha*), as noted by e.g. Malbim, D. Z. Hoffman in their commentaries to Leviticus 19:18. cf. the comment of Nachmanides on that verse. Interestingly, the commonly-heard argument that the mitzvah is directed to behavior because emotions cannot be commanded, loses its force if the commandments to love God and to love the proselyte (Deuteronomy 10:19, 6:5) are, as appears to be the case, directed to the emotions.

It should also be noted that Roth's interpretation of "love thy neighbor" as addressed to the emotions (in the case of a Jew) may be at odds with his meritarianism. If, as Gregory Vlastos argues, "one of the surest tests" of love is "constancy of affection in the face of variations of merit," then a love contingent

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on assignment of value or merit, is a contradiction in terms. See Vlastos, "Justice and Equality," in A. I. Melden, ed., *Human Rights* (Belmont, California, 1970), pp. 87-88. Roth appears to sense this kind of objection (pp. 55, 59-60), but it is not clear to me how he answers it.

5. On pp. 53-5, Roth cites some modern opinions on love of the non-Jew. For an interesting and important comment on the rabbinic view, see Hoffman, commentary to Leviticus, vol. II, p. 36, n. 8 of Hebrew translation.

6. Cf. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*

7. Cf. Dale Gottlieb, "Collective Responsibility," *TRADITION*, vol. 14, no. 3 (Spring 1974), pp. 48-65. Cf. also Roth, p. 157, n. 20.

Ashkenazic Jewry in Transition, by BERNARD ROSENZWEIG (Wilfrid Laurier University Press: Waterloo, 1975).

Reviewed by
Rabbi Samuel N. Hoenig

The 15th century was the turning point for the European Jewish community. After France, England and Spain had eliminated all Jewish settlement, it was only Italy and Germany that remained as centers of Jewish life in Europe. In Germany, however, the seeds of destruction were being sowed. Attempts were being made constantly to rid Germany of its Jewish population. Waves of persecution, provoked by alleged desecration of the Host, the Black Death, etc., resulted in a thinning-out of German Jewry. More and more Jews were leaving Germany for Poland. The Jewish communities that remained behind were economically and spiritually weak. Nevertheless, the rabbinic leaders of 15th century German Jewry guided their communities in the spirit and traditions of

the classical German *kehilla*. Men like R. Jacob Molin (Maharil), R. Israel Isserlin, R. Israel Bruna, and R. Jacob Weil attempted to uphold the Ashkenazic traditions of the *baalei ha-tosafot*, in restructuring the cohesiveness of the torn Jewish community of post-Black Death Germany.

It is this period of flux which is the subject of Bernard Rosenzweig's fascinating work, *Ashkenazic Jewry in Transition*. Dr. Rosenzweig depicts the 15th century German Jewish community through the medium of the responsa literature, concentrating on the responsa and life of Rabbi Jacob Weil, the leading rabbinic scholar and spiritual leader of Erfurt as well as Rabbis Molin, Isserlin, Mintz and Brina.

To place matters in their proper historical perspective the author introduces us to the "Origins and Development of Ashkenazic Jew-

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ry." He closely follows the theories of his "master and teacher in Jewish history" — Professor Irving A. Agus. Rosenzweig maintains that the cultural advancement of early Ashkenazic Jewry, bolstered by their ancestral activism and idealism, helped them resist the unrelenting attempts of conversion by the Christian Church and the invasions of the Barbarians.

Rosenzweig's utilizes well the halakhic material for historical purposes. As a historian and rabbinic scholar Dr. Rosenzweig is singularly qualified to understand the technicalities and analyze the complexities of the responsa literature. He is objective in dealing with the factual data of the responsa. But at times, however, he gets emotionally involved. For example, at the end of chapter one, concerning Christian-Jewish relations, though factually accurate, he becomes polemical and emotional.

The book is divided into many chapters with numerous sub-headings because of halakhic technicalities. Thus, chapter seven, entitled "Rabbi and Teacher," has approximately twenty sub-headings, ranging from "Rabbi and Taxation" to "Substance and Methodology of Scholarship." On occasion, these excessive sub-headings create a splintering effect and detract from the over-all unity of the book. An attempt to integrate the various topics and sub-headings and present them as a homogeneous unit, no doubt, would have enhanced the readability of the book.

Before discussing the intricacies of a responsum, Rabbi Rosenzweig supplies the reader with the neces-

sary background material, making the book enjoyable as well as scholarly. Thus, Rosenzweig discusses the Lateran Council of 1215 and its impact on Jewish moneylending (pp. 53-56); likewise, prior to discussing the judicial system of the 15th century, a concise summary is given of Jewish autonomy' as based on the *takanot* of R. Gershon and R. Tam (p. 81).

Though dealing with a complicated area of Jewish literature, the author's presentation is such that both scholar and layman will find the volume suitable to their particular interests. The sections on the selection and certification of rabbis, the role of lawyers in Jewish courts, the extent and forms of capital punishment are all relevant to the contemporary scene. Of special interest to the reader is the infamous Anshel-Bruna affair.

Rabbi Anshel of Regensburg attempted to prevent Rabbi Israel Bruna from opening a yeshiva and rendering rabbinic services in Regensburg. Rabbi Anshel claimed that his prior residence in Regensburg has established a *hazaka*. Thus, Rabbi Israel's intrusion was in violation of the *herem ha-yishuv*. Rosenzweig describes Rabbi Jacob Weil's involvement and reaction to this incident as "strong and uncompromising . . . he demanded of the community that the rights of Rabbi Israel should be recognized forthwith, and that the divisive quarrel should be brought to a close" (p. 38). Actually, R. Jacob's decision in this matter had far reaching consequences. R. Jacob in categorically stating that *herem ha-yishuv* and *hazaka* are inapplicable in such

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cases, categorized the rabbinate as an "open" profession. This view was later to be codified by R. Moses Isserles (Rama) in *Shulhan Arukh Yoreh Deah*, 245:22.

Ashkenazic Jewry in Transition is written in a clear and lucid manner. Dr. Rosenzweig has successfully demonstrated that an accurate picture of medieval Jewish his-

tory is to be found in the halakhic sources, such as the responsa which "truly mirrors the reality of Jewish life at a given time" (p. 113). One eagerly looks forward to the appearance of a new edition of the *Responsa of Rabbi Jacob Weil*, critically annotated and documented by Rabbi Rosenzweig.

The Jews of Rhodes: The History of A Sephardic Community, by MARC D. ANGEL (Sepher-Hermon Press, New York, 1978).

Reviewed by S. Robert Ichay

Recently we all had the opportunity to watch another program about the Holocaust. While the number of victims who died at the hands of the Nazis is staggering, the impact of this tragedy is made even greater when we think in terms of the many once thriving communities which were wiped out. These communities were the body and soul of the Jewish people and contributed immensely to the wealth, variety and beauty of the Jewish heritage.

Most of the communities which disappeared as a result of the Holocaust were of Eastern European origin, but since the foundation of the State of Israel, communities which thrived in the Middle East have also disappeared through *aliyah* to Israel, caused in most instances by the intolerance and antagonism of the Arab countries in

which these communities existed. These communities, whether of Eastern European origin or Oriental origin, had many things in common, such as their religious life, the structure of their welfare or charitable organizations, the Rabbi's authority, as well as the organization of lay leadership. Yet, each one differed in many other aspects, such as: different customs and traditions, food, music, folklore and sometimes even in their relationship with their non-Jewish neighbors. Not enough has been written, nor probably will ever be written, about all these communities, and this is why a history of the Jews of Rhodes written by Rabbi Marc D. Angel is a most welcome addition.

As a rabbi who served for the past 20 years with two communities whose members originated from the Island of Rhodes — 10 years in Salisbury, Rhodesia and

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10 years in Atlanta, Georgia — I eagerly awaited this publication. Even though, or because, I was born in North Africa, where many of the customs and traditions are similar to those of Rhodes, I was able during those 20 years to identify with these communities to such an extent that I considered myself as a Rhodeslie by adoption. Even before my first and only visit to the Island of Rhodes in April 1977, I was familiar—through the many descriptions and discussions with my congregants—with the synagogues on the Island, the educational organizations, its food, its music, its streets, such as Calle Ancha, which I pictured as a huge place until I learned otherwise, as well as the beautiful Mandrake and different parks.

The Island of Rhodes is situated in the Aegean Sea, just a little over half an hour's flight from the city of Athens, Greece. Jewish communal life prior to World War II was indeed very vibrant. What I did not know was that Jews settled on the Island long before the 16th Century. The author states that there are indications that the Jewish community in Rhodes did exist during the first quarter of the First Century B.C.E. (p. 6).

As we read through the book we can see that the author must have spent years of research, and his love for that community from which his grandparents came is apparent in many passages. The book is well written, enlightening and

full of detailed information about the Jewish life on the Island. Not meant to be a novel but rather a scholarly work, which it is, the *Jews of Rhodes* reads easily and interestingly. I could not help smiling when I read about the clashes between the spiritual leadership and the lay leaders of the community, since I was faced with the same situation on many occasions in Rhodesia with those we knew as the "old-timers."

The Jews of Rhodes established a few congregations, one in Rhodesia, one in the Congo, and a few in the United States, such as Atlanta, Seattle, and Los Angeles, and until recently many of the traditions, songs and behaviors described in the book could have been experienced in any one of these congregations. Unfortunately, the Congo congregation disintegrated after the country acquired its independence and some of its members resettled in Capetown, South Africa. Because of the political situation, the one in Rhodesia is dwindling. As for the United States, we already have second and third generation Americans and the whole character of these original Rhodeslie congregations is unfortunately losing more and more of its distinctiveness. This is why *The Jews of Rhodes* is a most timely book and the author deserves our gratitude for his efforts, which I hope will be followed by more scholars for the preservation of our past history.

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The Days of My Years, by SAMUEL ROSENBLATT (Ktav, 1976).

Reviewed by Joseph A. Feld

The Days of My Years is the story of what it takes to be a first-rate communal *rav* in America in the 20th century, at a time when competition from the Conservatives could be stiff, and the demands superhuman. Samuel Rosenblatt came to New York from Hamburg at an early age, leaving behind the order and dignity of a country where Orthodox Jews prided themselves on their organized communities—*kehillot*. Rosenblatt attended New York City schools, City College, Jewish Theological Seminary and Columbia graduate school. He was sidetracked for a year in Jerusalem as a Hazard Fellow at the American Academy — just long enough to also acquire *semikhah* from Rav Kook. Thereafter, he opt for the most difficult of lifestyles for a Jewish boy—the rabbinate. After serving one year in Trenton, he proved that a Conservative *kehillah* could be convinced to return to traditional Judaism. In 1927 he accepted the pulpit of the recently-founded Beth Tfiloh *kehillah* in Forest Park, the garden suburb of Baltimore, then known as the “Jerusalem of America.” For the next half-century Rosenblatt demonstrated what a creative and sensitive Torah scholar could do to build a broader and wider *kehillah*, revealing the power of Torah to transform the problems of the present into the enhanced traditions of the future.

When Rosenblatt saw that girls in Beth Tfiloh were not attending

Hebrew school and that some attended confirmation programs of the non-Orthodox synagogues and schools, he adapted the *bat mitsvah* program to suit the needs of an Orthodox community. He himself taught the *bat mitsvah* classes for over a generation. The success of the program was confirmed when shortly after the program was initiated nearly ninety girls a year being presented as *b’not mitsvah*. By 1941 Rosenblatt’s long-time dream reached fruition — a full-scale day school modeled on the Talmud Torah Realschule of Hamburg. This school was to be a genuine *Torah im derekh erets* institution, combining a broad, modern approach to Torah with sound principles of secular education.

Beth Tfiloh grew to such size that attendance at Sabbath worship numbered in the hundreds and festival worship in the thousands (between three and four). As was customary with such a large gathering decorum became a problem. He therefore inquired from the generations of leading Torah scholars concerning microphones. When permission was given Beth Tfiloh acquired a system of microphones. Occasional English readings and explanations were also added to help less knowledgeable congregants. To this date the sight of microphones in an Orthodox synagogue surprises out-of-town visitors. To retain its pivotal role in Jewish communal affairs in an age of growing secularization, a community center was built offering a wide variety of programs catering to

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1,500 children, aside from massive adult programs, such as the monthly lecture forums which featured such speakers as Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt, Senator Hubert Humphrey, Dr. Stephen Wise, Professor William Foxwell Albright, Ludwig Lewisohn, and Cantor Moshe Kussevitzky, among others.

He founded and led the Baltimore *Vaad Hakashrut*, which placed *kashrut* on a stronger footing; founded and led the Baltimore Board of Rabbis, an effort to unite the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform ministries on matters of mutual concern; helped to mold Bar-Ilan University; and sat on the boards of literally every Jewish communal body in Baltimore, serving often as president.

When he was not presiding over the seventy-member Beth Tfiloh staff, Rosenblatt was serving as Fellow, lecturer, associate professor and finally Professor of Oriental Languages at the Johns Hopkins University, beginning in 1928. He published critical editions of Abraham Maimonides and Saadia Gaon,

studies of the Mishnah and Tosefta, a biography of his illustrious Cantor-Father, Yosselle Rosenblatt, and a half dozen other works on Jewish themes. These were written in addition to his weekly column for the general press.

Rabbi Rosenblatt was also very active on the international Jewish scene, too; he attended several World Zionist Congresses and led pilgrimages to *Erets Israel* (then called Palestine) beginning in the mid-1930s. He toured South America where he preached in Spanish on behalf of Torah Judaism.

The Days of My Years is an inspiring picture of what American Orthodoxy could be and what in Baltimore it has been. The younger generations of American Orthodoxy who advocate increased isolation from the non-Orthodox, will be amazed to see that it is possible for a genuine Torah scholar to provide broad and sensitive leadership, encompassing the entire Jewish community. We must be thankful to him for recording this golden age of Baltimore Orthodoxy.

From the Pages of My Communal Diary — History of the Department on Religious Affairs 1952-1977 by RABBI ISAAC N. TRAININ (Commission on Synagogue Relations, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, 1977).

Reviewed by

Rabbi Solomon J. Sharfman

From the Pages of My Communal Diary is a volume of modest pretensions that turns out to be a

fascinating analysis of the subtle transformation in the thinking, goals and directions of the secular community. The book focuses in on the developments that overtake the Federation of Jewish Philan-

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thropies of New York when it establishes the Department on Religious Affairs in 1952, as a bridge to the religious community. It is a lively account that is only a refreshing and stimulating reading experience, but a vivid description of the inner machinery and the problems of modern communal institutions and the influences that affect them.

The major part of the book is the story of the Department on Religious Affairs as it comes to life in the experiences and activities of the Director, Rabbi Isaac Trainin, through the Commission on Synagogue Relations and the Committee on Religious Affairs which he organized. In addition, the book contains some of the publications and speeches of Rabbi Trainin, as well as articles by rabbis and social workers on a number of outstanding social problems. These discuss Mixed Marriages, Open and Closed Marriage, the Jewish Poor, the Aged, Alcoholism, Drugs, Jewish Education and Medical Ethics and offer valuable insights into some of modern society's greatest challenges.

Rabbi Trainin encapsulates a quarter century of endeavors to cement a relationship between Federation and the religious community by excerpts from his diaries of daily activities. He outlines the first tentative touching of hands, the growing tolerance and understanding that develops between rabbis and social workers and the emergence of cooperative undertakings between Synagogue and Federation leaders through meetings, committees, commissions, task forces, con-

ferences and seminars. What is most important is not what happens, but how it happens—that what was a house divided, is in the process of gradual unification.

From the end of the 18th century, attempts have been made to create different forms of Jewish identification, distinct from the religious, offering positive values, ideologies and goals. These ranged from the novel Judaism of extreme assimilationists to those of secular movements of a social and nationalist character. Having once constituted a majority, the religious sector was gradually reduced to a minority. In the past, religious leaders had known and successfully coped with problems and challenges no less baffling than those posed by the Age of Enlightenment. In his despair, the prophet Jeremiah spoke of withdrawing from his surroundings into the desert. But Jeremiah and other prophets and leaders remained within the community, refusing to retreat into an isolated corner. Their role was an active role from within that preserved the unity of Jewry.

In the modern era, the religious community drew inward for self-protection, adopted a policy of isolation and permitted a wall of separation to arise between itself and non-religious Jews. This led to a wide gap between the different sectors of the community, with disastrous results for both. A divided Jewry was overwhelmed by the Holocaust. A divided Jewry faces a spiritual loss of vast numbers of Jews. The status and influence of religious Jewry was undermined, the secular sector gained preemin-

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ence, took control of the major social and communal institutions and determined Jewish policy according to its lights. Separation from religious roots produced a dynamics of its own, and heightened the process of assimilation, through intermarriage and a negation of Jewish identity.

Conditions were ripe for a reconciliation between the two sectors when the Department of Religious Affairs was established; but it took the capacity of Rabbi Isaac Trainin for hard work, infinite patience and a brilliant genius as conciliator and administrator to initiate and accelerate the process in New York City. *From the Pages of My Communal Diary* describes the process and results in New York; but it is a manual for the reunification of Jewry as a whole.

The pervasive emphasis in Federation today is on Jewish survival and a Jewish future. There is a recognition that religious needs are as important as those that are purely humanitarian. Federation has established agencies to serve the needs of the poor and the handicapped in the religious community. Jewish education has become a prime priority in Federation thinking. A re-ordering of Federation priorities has begun.

Public dinners are kosher. Federation camps are kosher. Guidelines have been set forth with rules for the Sabbath that are to govern Y's and community centers. A "Compendium on Jewish Medical Ethics" in strict accordance with Halakhah, disseminated by Federation, is in demand throughout the world. It is the official policy of

Federation that hospitals, child-care agencies and institutions for the aged must satisfy the religious needs of their clientele.

Federation supports the Beth Din of the R.C.A., Colpa, to protect the rights of religious Jews in employment, Jacy, to maintain ties with Jewish students on the college campus, Jasa, to serve the aged, the New York Conference on Soviet Jewry, and the Community Council of Greater New York which deals with neighborhood problems and is now heavily engaged in counteracting missionary activities and promoting Holocaust studies and Jewish Heritage studies in the public schools. Federation founded the Educational Development Fund that has already disbursed millions of dollars to aid Jewish Day Schools, and is now being expanded to provide direct support for Yeshivos.

As Sanford Solender, the Executive Vice President of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, writes, "The pages of this volume reflect the spectrum of Rabbi Trainin's knowledge and prophetic vision of the New York Jewish community. His personal reminiscences are an invaluable primary source of data about modern Jewish experience. His articles and speeches reveal a striking capacity to recognize incipient Jewish community problems and to point to potential resolutions of them. The articles by his colleagues and associates reflect Rabbi Trainin's rare talent for uniting all of the diverse elements of this vast Jewish community in a common sacred cause. *From the Pages of My Communal Diary*

TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

provides penetrating insights into the life of the New York Jewish community during the past quarter century as it has been reflected in the career of one of its most devoted leaders.”

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