

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Yesodei Yeshurun—Part Six—A Study of the Laws of Pesach: the Customs and Traditions*, by GEDALIA FELDER (New York: 1970).

*Reviewed by Israel Klavan*

It is axiomatic that the maturity of Jewish life in any segment of the world where they have come to live throughout a long history is demonstrated by the Jewish scholarship we have been able to develop. A review of Jewish history, particularly of movements across the European continent amply support this thesis.

In the Western hemisphere Jewish life is comparatively new. Even in the United States, which has the largest and most affluent society in the Jewish world, this form of maturity is only now beginning to emerge. Torah scholarship, which is the major indicator of that maturity, is gaining increasing adherents and has gone native to the extent that there are now a substantial number of Jewish scholars on the American continent who do not have a European background.

Canada which is but a few steps behind its big neighbor to the

South is continuing showing signs of this maturity. Canadian Jewry has expanded its educational institutions and has produced scholars of repute. Not the least of the latter is Rabbi Gedalia Felder of Toronto.

A rabbi in the fullest tradition of that historic role, he has not permitted his active role as a spiritual and communal leader to interfere with his scholarly pursuits. While he has gained a continent-wide repute as an active leader in the community it is his reputation as a scholar that has gained him his greatest renown. His *magnum opum* is his *Yesodei Yeshurun*, of which the volume under review is the sixth. Rabbi Felder's wide range of scholarship has permitted him to gather into each of his volumes a vast selection of opinions from a variety of scholars on a number of areas in Halakhah which are of urgent importance both to the observing Jew and the religious authority who must teach his congre-

## TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

gants the right-way. Rabbi Felder rarely interposes his own decisions. Rather he uses the selection of responsa to make the decision. Students will find that Halakhah has great flexibility if they examine the excerpts from the responsa that emanate from many centuries and every segment of the world. They will further be motivated to turn to the original source.

The sixth volume of *Yesodei Yesurun's* primary concern is with the *Erev Pesach*, the pre-holiday preparation. It begins with the customs and laws that prevail in the period prior to Passover through the actual physical preparation for the celebration of the festival. The two most exhaustive sections are those concerned with the purging of utensils from their pre-Passover use to Passover use, and the sale of *chometz*. In the former, we are exposed to a variety of problems, the products of new technologies and new substances from which utensils are made.

Rabbi Felder has delved into the question of glass, pyrex, plastics, rubber and numerous other products and examines them in the light of Halakhah. It is inevitable that in these areas differences of opinion among the authorities should have developed with the result that prac-

tices may vary from one locale to the other.

In general, a study of the responsa brings to our attention the impact of local experience upon the development of certain practices. An illustration is the approach to certain foods such as dried fruits and raisins. In some areas they were dusted with flour during the drying process and, henceforth, were treated with suspicion. It is interesting to note that modern food technology has created many such products which require careful study of many seemingly innocuous foods not only for Passover but for all year.

The other area which has been exhaustively treated is the sale of leaven to a non-Jew to avoid transgression of the commandment of owning *chometz* during Passover. The problem of making this a legal sale and not merely an evasive fiction involves the whole area of Halakhah's approach to sale and acquisition. Suffice to say that arranging proper sale of *chometz* has taxed the genius of our greatest scholars. Rabbi Felder leads us through the highways and byways of these Halakhic premises and principles, revealing both the depth of the problems and their ingenious solutions.

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*The New Left and the Jews*, edited by MORDECAI S. CHERTOFF (New York: Pitman Publishing Corporation, 1971).

*Reviewed by Joseph Telushkin*

"There was truth and there was untruth, and if you clung to the

truth even against the whole world, you were not mad." This exhilarating declaration of Orwell represents the core component of many

## Book Reviews

of the sixteen essays comprising an excellent anthology, *The New Left and the Jews*, edited by Dr. Mordecai Chertoff, executive director of the American Histadrut Cultural Exchange. The genesis of the book was a weekend conference on "Israel, America and the New Left," held at the Arden House in February, 1970. Seven of the papers delivered there are included in the volume.

A key essay is Harvard's Seymour Martin Lipset's "The Socialism of Fools: The Left, the Jews and Israel." Lipset maintains the disturbing thesis that radicals of both the left and right (ostensibly at odds with each other) will often discover an over-riding unity aligning them, though it be at the expense of a Jewish interest which the Left is nominally pledged to defend. Thus, during the early 1930's, the Communists and Nazis on occasion jointly sponsored strikes and referendums in order to defeat the Social Democratic Party in Prussia. In the late thirties, "Molotov actually sent fraternal greetings from the Soviet Communist Party to the German Nazis saluting their mutual interests" (p. 113) and later the party paper, *L'Humanite*, applied to the Nazi occupation authorities for permission to continue the publication in the occupied zone, on the grounds that the party's main concern was the defeat of the Allied "imperialist" forces.

In the United States, too, the Populist Tom Watson established an alliance of sorts with the Socialist pacifist Eugene V. Debs. *Watson's Magazine* in the South was

largely responsible for the lynching of Leo Frank, an Atlanta Jewish business man falsely accused of murder, in 1915. It also popularized and supported the Czarist persecution of Mendel Beillis on "trumped up" charges of ritual slaughter of a Christian child. Yet in opposition to "blood-gorged Capitalists," Watson fought America's entry into World War I and supported E. V. Debs for opposing the war.

When Watson died in 1922, the Ku Klux Klan sent a cross of roses eight feet high and Debs in a letter to Mrs. Watson said, "He was a great man, a heroic soul who fought the power of evil his whole life." This is the Debs after whom the Jews saw fit to name their own Yiddish radio station W.E.V.D.

The obvious implications of Lipset's article is that political extremes almost by definition are antithetical to Jewish interests. He predicts that the Jewish community, traditionally aligned with left of center political movements, will increasingly find reason to align itself with more centrist groupings.

Much of New Left hostility to Israel seems to spring from the left's repudiation of reason and "reference to the conscience rather than to the intelligence or the community as the supreme arbiter of what is just" (Milstein, p. 300). Menachem Arnoni has an exceptionally perceptive essay on "Why the New Left Needs Israel," wherein he poignantly observes that

the age that saw pornography elevated to the status of art . . . and carnival extravaganzas accepted as

## TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

fashions of attire, has also had to bestow respectability on hooliganism. What has emerged is a politics by temperament, not by reason — the pop art of politics (p. 274-5).

Arnoni himself is an interesting character. A survivor of the concentration camps, he founded, in 1959, *The Minority of One*, a leftist journal which was among the first to denounce American involvement in Vietnam. The journal continually espoused leftist positions until it folded up shortly after the Six Day War in the face of widespread leftist hostility towards Israel. Arnon, who has since gone on *Aliyah*, explains,

I had struggled too long on behalf of the weak against the strong . . . to remain indifferent to an evolving leftist verbiage that would sanctify what had been recognized as appalling when done by Hitler (p. 280).

Robert Alter of Berkeley notes the tremendous dangers in the irresponsible verbiage of New Left theoreticians such as Herbert Marcuse. He quotes from Marcuse's *An Essay on Liberation* (Beacon Press, 1969) that

if legitimate violence includes in the daily routine of "pacification" and "liberation" wholesale burning, poisoning, bombing, (then) the actions of the radical opposition, no matter how illegitimate, can hardly be called by the same name: violence.

Concerning this, Alter rightly observes: "This is a little bit like saying that, after Auschwitz, an individual murder no longer deserves to be called murder" (p.

11). Walter Lacqueur brings an apt quote from Mussolini distinguishing "moral violence and stupid immoral violence" (p. 59) which just serves to emphasize that once one is willing to posit phony distinctions, it is the beginning of the end, if not already the end to well ordered moral society.

The references to Marcuse reminds me of what Michael Wyschogrod said last year, after Angela Davis, Marcuse's star pupil was charged with involvement in a plot that led to four deaths. Trying to ascertain what Marcuse's feelings must be, he recounted a story directed by Kierkegardians against Hegelian idealists. It seems a man saw a sign above a store, "Pants pressed here," and so he brought in a pair of pants to be pressed. The storekeeper, however, said to him, "We don't press pants here. We only make signs." Wyschogrod was obviously unwilling to separate non-violent Dr. Marcuse from the violence he helped generate.

Walter Lacqueur notes in "Reflections on Youth Movements" that college violence is not an innovation of American universities in the 60's. Rather, such violence in western universities goes back to the Middle Ages. "A professor at Bologna . . . should his lecture not meet with favor (had) a good chance that he would be interrupted, hissed or even stoned" (p. 56). Lacqueur is frightened by the boredom and *Kulterpessimismus* characteristic of many young revolutionaries, which constantly provokes them to ever greater acts of violence, and to ever more extreme announcements of apocalyptic

## Book Reviews

doom which bear little relevance to reality. Youth movements have traditionally ignored history because "each generation is always regarded as the first (and the last) in history (p. 65) and they often develop an "anti-intellectual and anti-historical bias, because it is central to revolutionary movements to claim their age as uniquely evil, while . . . history teaches that other periods have broadly speaking, not been much better than one's own" (p. 67).

The book, however, is not composed solely of essays inimical to the Leftist position. Noam Chomsky in "Israel and the New Left" denies a uniform leftist antipathy to Israel. He also denies that the anti-Zionist Israel group Natzpen is unbendable in its support of the Arabs, even though Matzpen's international secretary, Arie Bober, has declared that displaced Arabs have the right to use whatever means they deem necessary to regain their territory. Chomsky further contends that the equation of anti-Zionist with anti-Semite is absurd. Whether such an equation is as absurd as Chomsky believes is debatable, in light of a relevant quotation brought by Tom Milstein in his essay "New Left — Areas of Jewish Concern." Milstein quotes the Black Panther Party paper of August 25, 1970, concerning the Chicago Eight:

It was a Zionist judge who allowed the others to go free but has kept Bobby Seale in jail and sentenced him to four years for contempt charges . . . The other Zionists in the Conspiracy Eight trial were willing and did sacrifice Bobby

Seale in his role in the conspiracy trial to gain publicity. Once again we condemn Zionism as a racist doctrine.

As Milstein wisely postscripts "Other Zionists refer to Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman, William Kuntzler and so forth" (p. 304).

Amos Kenan, the leftist Israeli journalist, inveighs against the ultimate lack of seriousness of the New Left. "It is a shocking fact that the Vietnam War has cost the Vietnamese people a million casualties while all it has brought European youth is the new fashion of longer hair" (p. 307). He appeals to the Palestinian nationalists to negotiate directly with the Israelis, and to avoid alliances with insincere allies who will not help them.

You have nobody to appeal to. The world is prepared to give you up for reasons of profit or loss or domestic considerations. And this includes Nixon, Sadat, Hussein, Brezhnev and everybody else . . . You are a card that everybody is cynically prepared to play. You must now decide whether you are ready to talk to us . . . The New Left will save you as it saved Spain, Greece, Czechoslovakia and six million Jews.

Robert Nisbet writing on "The Twilight of Authority" incisively notes that current leftist revolt against the Establishment is directed in actuality against all forces of reason, discipline and responsibility. Ironically, revolutionary responsibility is itself a victim of this anarchic revolution.

Writing about "Political Terrorism: Hysteria on the Left" Irving Howe expresses his fears that youth

## TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

has little sense of the consequences of violence in other societies and lacks awareness of its potential for destruction of our own.

Leonard Fein, writing on "The New Left and Israel" shrewdly notes that much leftist hostility to Israel has less to do with Israel than with the inability of these leftists to cope with their own Jewishness.

Nathan Glazer denies that any legitimate Jewish concerns will conflict with societal or other minority group concerns. I am afraid his dismissal is a trifle glib. I can easily envision a continuation and expansion of Black-Jewish tension over issues such as black academic displacement of Jews, where both sides will find that their self-interests conflict.

The editor of the volume, Dr. Mordecai S. Chertoff has written on "The New Left and the Newer Leftists." Chertoff documents and outlines the evolution of Jewish radical movements which simultaneously affirm radicalism, Zionism and Judaism. He, therefore, concludes on a note of some optimism concerning the growth of a responsible Jewish radicalism.

Nathan Rotenstreich on "The New Left and the Right to Exist" excoriates thinkers like Noam Chomsky who invoke a special standard of morality by which to assess Israel's policy. Such men to-

tally ignore human realities and, therefore, become irrelevant to the situation.

Tom Milstein, a brilliant young thinker writing from a socialist perspective, is most frightened by the New Left's success in dividing and demoralizing much of the Jewish community. He hopes to see the rebuilding of the liberal-labor-minorities coalition as the only response offering any hope for success.

The book suffers from a number of defects. There are five essays constituting a third of the volume devoted to a general critique of Leftism and not touching specifically on the Jews. Though interesting, the book would have profited from more extensive selections directly related to the Jews and the Left, though it be at the expense of these essays. It would have been worthwhile to quote selections from Jewish writers more sharply critical of Israel (Chomsky is the only one represented herein) such as I. F. Stone and Arthur Waskow. Also, a bibliography on a field as emergent as this is a crucial necessity.

Despite these reservations, Dr. Chertoff is to be commended, for his book constitutes an important edition to the limited literature of worthwhile Jewish response to irresponsible leftist antagonism against Israel and the Jews.

## Book Reviews

*Faith and Doubt: Studies in Traditional Jewish Thought*, by NORMAN LAMM (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1971).

*Reviewed by*  
Michael Wyschogrod

This book is a collection of eleven essays which have previously appeared in various journals such as *TRADITION*, *Judaism* and other places. This is apparently true of all the essays in this volume except perhaps one, entitled "Scholarship and Piety," for which no prior source is given and which may be appearing here for the first time, though this is not specifically asserted. In any case, we have here a collection of essays which have been revised "partly," the author tells us, "in response to criticism by colleagues and readers, partly as a result of hindsight and second thought, and partly in an effort to update the original material to include more recent research that has come to light since."

The reviewer of a book of this sort can either address himself in detail to two or three representative essays of particular importance to him or he can focus more on the impression created by the new juxtaposition, since the essays were originally read in isolation and can now be seen in a new light which they shed on each other by their proximity. The second is, of course, potentially the more unfair because the temptation is great to focus on tendencies, attitudes, stylistic habits which are very often hard to pin down and may in the final analysis, be inventions of the reviewer as much as anything else. On

the other hand, tendency and style are very important and can only be discovered by looking at a fairly large number of articles, poems, paintings or other works of a given producer. It is simply not possible to fathom the Van Gogh style without looking at a large number of his paintings and when we fathom his style we discover that it is more important than the success or lack thereof of any one or two of his paintings. What then emerges from a reading of eleven of Norman Lamm's essays dealing with topics such as "Faith and Doubt," "A Jewish Ethic of Leisure," "Self-Incrimination in Law and Psychology: The Fifth Amendment and the Halakhah" and "The Religious Implications of Extraterrestrial Life?" What impressions are we left with?

We are struck by the fact that Norman Lamm, Professor of Jewish Philosophy at Yeshiva University, Rabbi of The Jewish Center in New York and founder and first editor of *TRADITION*, is an uncommonly hard working individual. This emerges in many ways but perhaps most clearly from the perusal of the footnotes to the articles. Choosing one article at random, I find numerous references to Scripture, Talmud and Rishonim (which is as one would expect) but also to Harry Wolfson, H. Richard Niebuhr, Martin Buber, H. H. Price (the British analytic philosopher), Paul Tillich, Rollo May and others. And I rather suspect that other articles would yield an even more

## TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

impressive roster. Norman Lamm reads widely, keeps in touch with developments on many fronts and he marshalls his forces in the service of his cause.

There is, furthermore, an admirable clarity of thought. Rarerly, if ever, is one in doubt as to the meaning of a passage, a page or a whole article. Again and again, the problem is set out, the alternatives considered, the authorities expounded, after which the author proceeds to explain why he finds one of the options the most viable. In one article it is a matter of surveying various kinds of doubt and determining which of them Judaism can coexist with and which it cannot. In another we are told about various kinds of leisure, some better than others. And so it goes with a host of topics. In each case, Jewish sources are brought to bear on modern problems and the impression left with the reader is that Judaism does have something to say to the problems of the day. Judaism is not irrelevant. "My . . . premise" writes Lamm, "is that Judaism has a message of overarching significance to address to modern man who lives, not only in 'secular city,' but in a 'secular megalopolis.' The insights of our tradition are straining for expression, waiting to be released, like the legendary picture of Messiah chained in Heaven and trying to break his shackles." When this attitude is wedded to a high degree of Talmudic literacy, we have a product that is not only eminently worth reading but is often a genuine contribution toward that living Orthodoxy to which *TRADITION* has been dedi-

cated ever since its inception by the very author under discussion.

In terms of the actual content, the positions taken and those rejected, I find relatively little that I can disagree with. And yet, I am left with some degree of unfulfilled expectation. Everything is too clear. Too many bases are touched, too many books cited, too many "authorities" referred to. If we are told that "contemporary nihilism . . . is a moral protest against a hypocritical society," the thought is documented in a footnote as belonging to Michael Polanyi who delivered himself of this bit of wisdom in an interview in *Psychology Today* in May of 1968. For a definition of "legalism" we turn to a Herbert McCabe who gave one in the January 14, 1966 issue of *Commonweal*. There seems to be a necessity to identify a point of view with an authority, or at least an author and then the discourse can continue.

To those of us who have had the benefit of a Talmudic education, the methodology of the Talmudic lecture is not difficult to detect. The purpose of the discourse is to identify the various *shittot* or rabbinic points of view in the Talmudic passage in question. Next, one attempts to identify the available *shittot* among the Rishonim (post-Talmudic rabbinic commentators) in regard to the question under discussion and, finally, one attempts to show how the divergences stem from some more basic differences of opinion concerning this or that basic definition, classification or what not. In this process it is necessary to display *bekiut*



## Book Reviews

(wide learning) such that no significant point of view has escaped the author's notice. Once this method becomes internalized, it is difficult not to apply it to non-Talmudic subject matter except that instead of the authorities being Rashi and Rambam, they now also include Paul Tillich and Rollo May. Given the complexity of the legal issues to which this method is usually applied, its application to more general matters is almost irresistible. I remember, as a graduate student, having a distinct sense of advantage because of my training in Talmud whose method of sharp reasoning seemed to be just what was need in philosophic debate.

The fact of the matter is, however, that method is never neutral. Method creates a sense of reality so that what any method yields is, to a large extent, inherent in its nature. Instead of method, perhaps we ought to speak of style. Both are difficult to define.

I think it might be more helpful to speak of the magazine *TRADITION* rather than Norman Lamm because the problem is more apparent in the magazine where it shows itself in more concentrated form and sometimes without the high level of craftsmanship so apparent in everything Lamm writes. I am referring to the term-paper syndrome: article after article (not all, but many) reads as if it were written as a term paper: a topic is largely chosen for its manageability then to be outfitted with good documentation and judicious conclusions. Reading term papers is rarely interesting because, in the vast majority of cases, they are

written out of a rather unreal world of books rather than the living experience of the student. In term papers, the footnote is surrogate for the world, which explains why students, especially those who have recently mastered the intricacies of footnote propriety, find it necessary to document everything from a printed source, no matter how obvious or commonplace. In the term paper, as commonly understood, there is no place for autobiographical reminiscence to the extent that the "I" is frequently thought to be out of place with its place taken by impersonal constructions or references to "the present writer" or other such circumlocutions. The focus is on the problem rather than the writer and the later is required to make himself as inconspicuous as possible. Because halakhic scholarship aims for just such impersonality, because the process of legal decision is so heavily dependent on precedent and sound reasoning, the instinct of the halakhist tells him to stay away from the autobiographical so that the objectivity of his reasoning is not compromised.

In the religious domain, however, who it is that is speaking does matter so very, very much. We seek something that I can only call weight. It is a sense of seriousness that comes from the page, a sense of scrupulous honesty, a sense that the writer is really addressed by the reality of the spirit about which he thinks and to which he listens. In my experience, this comes about in many ways, most of them mysterious but all of them in some sense autobiographical, either explicitly or, as is sometimes the case,

## TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

as a background that is sensed even when not directly reported. And it is this quality that I find somewhat lacking in this book. "The Religious Implications of Extraterrestrial Life" is the longest essay in the book and opens with this statement: "The existence of rational, sentient beings on a planet other than earth is no longer a fantastic, remote possibility conjectured by imaginative and unrealistic minds." It then proceeds to discuss in detail the question whether Judaism would be hopelessly refuted were such extraterrestrial intelligent creatures to be discovered, a question which is answered in the negative because Judaism could adjust even to such a development. Now I am no astronomer nor in any other sense expert in this domain. But my children do watch "Startreck" and I know science fiction when I see it. Though I am not a real science fiction addict I do appreciate good science fiction for what it is, great fun and often considerably more. But it is, after all, only fiction. To apply the whole machinery of *halakhah* and Jewish philosophy to this possibility (or is fantasy a better word) is not quite serious. It gives me the feeling that we are dealing with some sort of exercise

rather than reality.

The recent excursions to the moon, the only real human extraterrestrial exploration to this date, impresses me by the totality of the desolation revealed. The moon is just a total wasteland, the antithesis of a setting in which any life is conceivable, much less intelligent life. And I rather suspect that the same scene will be unfurled on planet after planet until it will begin to dawn on us that our planet, with its rivers and mountains, forests and cities, is the only inhabited oasis in an endless desolation that surrounds us in the infinities of space. It is in the light of this that the momentousness of human history must be seen. If the experiment that is human history were to fail, God would return to that unspeakable loneliness which would be the state of the Absolute Mind in a mindless universe.

I have expressed these reservations because Norman Lamm demands evaluation by high standards. He is one of the few Orthodox scholars who is willing to address himself to important issues which agitate Jews who think. Like the earth, he is something of an oasis in a rather mindless desert.

## *Book Reviews*

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