

Reviews of Books

KOHN, S. JOSHUA. *The Jewish Community of Utica, New York — 1847-1948*.
New York: American Jewish Historical Society. 1959. xvi, 221 pp.
\$5.00

Rabbi S. Joshua Kohn's history of the Jewish community of Utica, New York, is a most welcome addition to the several worthwhile community histories that have been written in the past decade. As Dr. Jacob R. Marcus points out in his Foreword, this volume is loaded with "facts" about a comparatively small, stable, traditionally-minded group of Jews whose families have resided in Utica since the year 1847. Luckily for the reader, Rabbi Kohn, who was the spiritual leader of Temple Beth El in Utica for a period of sixteen years, has the ability to distinguish between significant factual information and trivia that are also termed "facts." Utica is fortunate also in that its story is here so feelingly told by one of its leading Jewish citizens who himself played so important a role in the life of the community during the critical years of the Depression and the Second World War. This carefully documented community history, written with an intimate knowledge, understanding, and love of the Jewish and general community, tells us much about Utica, to be sure. It also tells us much about the author.

This volume is most welcome, not only because we need more and more town histories, but also because a close examination of these histories often reveals and helps to explain the points of difference that exist between Jewish communities.

Rabbi Kohn's book carefully records the economic development of the Jewish community in Utica from a group of East European peddlers and manual workers to its present middle-class status. We learn of the concern of these people for the Jewish religious education of their children, of the establishment of a communal Hebrew School and Talmud Torah, which in turn finally gave way to the Congregational School. The central role of the synagogue and its leadership in this traditionally-minded Jewish community are emphasized, as is the community's love for *Eretz Yisroel* and the fulfillment of the mitzvah of *zedakah*.

The people's battles against anti-Semitism, the participation by Jews in Utica's civic life, and the role played by the Jewish Community Council

of Utica in helping to unify the Jewish community — all these subjects are ably presented and discussed in this book.

I wish, however, that Rabbi Kohn had continued his story of the Jewish community of Utica beyond 1948. There are so many questions that remain unanswered in the mind of this reviewer. Within the past decade, too, greater changes have occurred within Jewish communities than took place in the preceding quarter-century. Such questions as the following come to mind: Why did this old community never develop a Reform congregation until so very recently? If it is suggested that these Uticans and their children were "traditionalists," it would prove helpful to know how many of the people refrain from working on the Sabbath, attend their respective houses of worship, and observe the dietary laws within or outside of their homes. And now that a Reform congregation has been established, how is it faring vis-à-vis the Conservative and Orthodox congregations? How effective are the synagogue-controlled Hebrew schools in comparison with the former Community-Talmud Torah system? Are the synagogues and the temple in Utica experiencing the same phenomenal growth in membership that is the case generally?

These are but a few of the questions that, unfortunately, remain unanswered, because the story of Utica's Jewish community is concluded by the author as of 1948.

No two communities are any more alike than are the persons who study them and write about them. However "factual" and objective we may be, what we see is observed through our own eyes and sifted through our own experience and personality. The Jews of Utica and the readers of this volume should be grateful to Rabbi S. Joshua Kohn, whose eyes, mind, experience, and personality have combined to make this volume pleasant to read and valuable as a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the American Jewish community.

Newton, Massachusetts

ALBERT I. GORDON

ROTH, CECIL, Editor-in-Chief. *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1959. 1,982 columns. \$22.50.

The English have a knack for doing fine things. Twenty-one years ago they published the very attractive one-volume *Vallentine's Jewish Encyclopedia*. Today, under the editorship of a notable Anglo-Jewish scholar, another one-volume Jewish encyclopedia has made its appearance — *The*

Standard Jewish Encyclopedia, which obviously owes much to Dr. Cecil Roth, the chief editor. If this is the finest work of its type that has yet been published, it is certainly due to the scholarship, the vision, and the realistic approach of its brilliant editor.

This is an excellent home reference book, for it contains the essence of Jewish history and literature in a magnificently printed work of almost one thousand pages. There are over eight thousand articles and a host of beautiful illustrations, some of them in color. The book has been published in America, but printed in Israel. As an artistic piece of printing, it is certainly a magnificent tribute to the technical skill of the Israelis.

Conscious of the fact that the center of interest in Jewish life has shifted from Europe to Israel and America — particularly, where population and resources are concerned, to the latter land — the editors have been most zealous in emphasizing the recent developments in both these countries. The material on the United States embraces a wide variety of subjects which have been treated in a most illuminating fashion. Every effort has been made to present an adequate picture of America's important Jewish communities, their institutions, and their leaders, and there is a high degree of accuracy in the articles touching on the United States.

This is not only a beautiful book, this is an invaluable reference work for the Jew who would be well-informed about Jewish life, whether it be in his own land or abroad. We are indeed grateful to the editors for a work that answers a double cultural purpose: it will not only impart sound information, simply and unpretentiously, but it will also serve as a cultural link, binding together Jews of all lands through a common knowledge and a common understanding.

American Jewish Archives

JACOB R. MARCUS

UCHILL, IDA LIBERT. *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim*. Denver: Sage Books. 1957. 327 pp. \$5.00

ROSENTHAL, FRANK. *The Jews of Des Moines — The First Century*. Des Moines, Iowa: The Jewish Welfare Federation. 1957. xv, 213 pp. \$3.75

Mrs. Ida Libert Uchill, a young Denver housewife and mother, has put her spare time to uncommonly good use. Her book, despite its corny title, is a serious, competent, and thorough exposition of the history of the Jewish communities of Denver and the neighboring Rocky Mountain mining towns since the "Pikes Peak or Bust" surge spilled the first permanent Jewish settlers into the area in 1859. She has made a diligent and successful search



Courtesy, the Museum of the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati

BERTHOLD AUERBACH

(see p. 184)

for the raw data hidden in newspaper files, court records, tombstone inscriptions, and the minute books and other records of the local Jewish institutions; has drawn wisely from the dimming memories of the older folk; and has assembled this mass of information in a well-organized and well-written volume which constitutes a valuable contribution to American Jewish historiography.

In its demographic and organizational patterns, the Denver community is quite like the others which have been studied and described in recent years. First the "German" Jews arrived, originally as prospectors for gold, but soon settling down to more stable and profitable careers as businessmen of one sort or another. Then, not long after, the "Russians" appeared, at first so few that they were hardly visible, but before long in sufficient numbers to create the traditional dichotomy between "West" and "East." And, as elsewhere, the East Europeans moved gradually from the lowly status of peddling to the more substantial ranks of business and the professions, where they could challenge on an economic and social level the pre-eminence in the community of the Central- and West-European Jews.

A parallel process occurred in community organization. The initial privately-held religious services on the holidays and the informal burial society of the 1860's blossomed a decade later into a Hebrew Benevolent Society, a Hebrew Cemetery Association, a B'nai B'rith Lodge, a Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society, and finally, in 1873, the Reform Congregation Emanuel, which erected its first synagogue in 1875. The "Germans" had constituted their own tight little community, with its Purim Balls and its Strawberry Festivals to raise funds for charity, and with the B'nai B'rith as the secular arm of the temple.

In West Colfax — the "ghetto" — the "Russians" in turn went through the same process, but with more avidity and fervor, so that the chronicling of the splits and schisms, the splinter congregations, makes for a denser, more complicated account. But Mrs. Uchill is up to her task and faithfully records the dates and the names and the personalities that were involved in these not-unfamiliar maneuvers.

The "Germans" were not enamored of the incoming "Russians." In the 1880's they sought to block the establishment of colonies of East-European Jews in the vicinity of Denver. Their premonition was soon verified: when the colonies collapsed, the B'nai B'rith Lodge manfully came to the rescue, and Denver's own burgeoning colony was swelled by the refugees.

Mrs. Uchill is better at assembling and presenting her data than at

analyzing the phenomena which they reflect. The opposition to receiving East-European immigrants she ascribes to the "fact" that,

while there were many immigrants of refinement, there were also many coarse young men of little learning and less acceptable conduct. Too many of them represented a noisy and disorderly generation which had cut itself from its roots in Europe but was not yet adaptable to the new soil of America.

Such a view provides a neat explanation and excuse for the definition, offered in 1891 by Rabbi William S. Friedman of the Reform congregation, of the function of the American Committee for Ameliorating the Conditions of the Russian Exiles as "not to bring in additional refugees, but to Americanize those already here."

The rationalization is trite, and if Mrs. Uchill had read more widely in the communal histories available (not one is mentioned in her otherwise comprehensive bibliography) she would have recognized how shallow and self-serving it was. The Jews of Denver were not so different from the Jews of other cities at the time, that she should fall for a story so palpably untrue, however convenient it may have seemed to its proponents in the nineteenth century. A serious historian must look deeper for motivations. Denver Jewry was enmeshed in the conventional social-economic conflict between the settled and the newcomers, the prosperous and the poor — a conflict aggravated by the religious-cultural rift that divided the two groups. The older settlers were troubled not only by the cost and the seeming difficulty of absorbing the immigrants, but no doubt even more by the threat to their security which these Orthodox, Yiddish-speaking, more volatile "foreigners" seemed to pose.

That these German Jews were themselves not altogether at ease in Denver is evidenced by several glancing references to their nonacceptance in the upper echelons of local society. Although Jews were prominent in the business and civic affairs of the city, Mrs. Uchill informs us, Jewish names were absent from the lists of those admitted to the "fashionable clubs" and "exclusive parties" during the 80's (p. 87). Speaking of the near-by community of Leadville, she tells us that Jews had excellent relations with non-Jews, except that "the fashionable Assembly appears to have closed its membership to the Jews, who seem not to have regarded this as a snub" (p. 101). One can only comment on this: !! Or again, we read (p. 156) of "the social barrier erected by the exclusive clubs in the early 80s," concerning which the author remarks blandly: "Just how this came about, and exactly why, remains a mystery." To which again the sole appropriate comment is: !!

But there were two uncommon features in the history of Denver's Jewry. (One might add a third: two rabbis who served their respective congregations for half a century — Rabbi William S. Friedman and Rabbi Charles E. H. Kauvar — and who were central figures in the development of community institutions.) The first was the lure of successive discoveries of gold, silver, lead, and coal in the area, discoveries which brought in adventurous spirits and technical experts who sometimes made quick fortunes, but more often channeled their unsatisfied quest for easy money into such other enterprises, unusual in the early annals of other communities, as railroading, breweries, a water company, banking, farming, sugar-beet pioneering, journalism, and agricultural marketing. Although such men did not materially alter the over-all merchandising economic pattern of the Jewish communities of Denver, Leadville, Aspen, Cripple Creek, Central City, Fairplay, Georgetown, and the other settlements which the author ably characterizes, they certainly lent color and dash to the local scene.

The second feature which adds variety to this account was the lure of the mountain air, which brought to the city large numbers of Jews (as well as non-Jews) suffering from tuberculosis. Since many of these were without means, their care devolved upon the local community, which responded to this need in characteristic fashion. In 1899, when there were no more than about 500 Jews in the city, the "rich" Jews established the National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives, a nonsectarian, nonkosher institution with limited means. By 1904, the "ghetto" Jews had created their own Jewish Consumptives Relief Society to care for destitute patients, for emergency cases not admitted elsewhere, and for Denver's incurably ill. The National Jewish Hospital group, faced with acute financial problems, opposed this new venture as a duplication of their own effort, a costly burden to the community, and a flagrant invitation to sick Jews from the East to flock to the city. But a few years later, in 1908, when the Jewish population had grown to about 5,000, many of them sick themselves, both groups joined to found the Denver Sheltering Home to take care of children of tubercular patients. This institution later became the Denver National Home for Jewish Children and has recently undergone a further change as the Jewish National Home for Asthmatic Children. In the same year, 1908, an Aid Association for Ex-Patients came into being, later the Ex-Patients Tubercular Home, now the Ex-Patients Sanatorium for Tuberculosis and Chronic Diseases; a further change to a nonsectarian, national mental hospital is presently under consideration. The Jewish Consumptives Relief Society has by now become the American Medical Center, caring also for cancer patients.

The stories of these institutions, their inception, rivalries, growing pains, development and expansion, the personalities associated with them, and their ultimate cooperation, against a background of shocking illness and destitution, constitute a veritable saga of Jewish social responsibility, which the author has ably and often movingly recounted. As she points out, "the young community had led the way in the nation in caring for the sick on a non-sectarian basis."

Frank Rosenthal has made an equally valiant attempt to uncover and recount the history of the Jews of Des Moines. If the result seems meager and colorless by contrast with Mrs. Uchill's book, the fault may be ascribed partly, no doubt, to the nature of the data at his disposal. It is difficult to muster up much interest in the petty details concerning business firms started, merged, and liquidated, or the listings of names, derived from the local press and City Directories, which comprise the opening chapters.

Nor, when the author gets down to the business of describing the internal development of the community, is there any novelty. The "two branches, Polish and Reformed," as a newspaper account of the time had it, were already in evidence by 1873. And in time each developed its own set of institutions, even to the to-be-expected schism in the Orthodox congregation (1881) and the emergence (1901) of an English-language-oriented Conservative congregation.

The writer faithfully reports the pertinent information concerning the early philanthropic, fraternal, and social groups, and the ultimate emergence of a Jewish community center, Jewish social service, Jewish welfare federation, a city-wide system of Jewish education, a home for the aged, a hospital, the familiar process of amalgamation and unification to which all groups contributed and in which all participated.

We must be grateful for the effort which went into the making of this book and for the information which it contains. But is it really too much to expect that a book be written, rather than merely compiled?

However humdrum the data may be, a writer with even a faint spark of style can infuse them with the breath of life, or, if he has a point of view, can arrange them in a meaningful pattern. Mr. Rosenthal simply cannot get his material off the ground.

Teaneck, N. J.

JOSHUA TRACHTENBERG

Brief Notices

BETSKY, SARAH ZWEIG. *Onions and Cucumbers and Plums: 46 Yiddish Poems in English*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 1958. xxiii, 259 pp. \$5.00

Dr. Betsky, of Montana State University, has edited a volume unique in American Yiddish publishing. The poems included in this collection are by twentieth-century Yiddish poets, among them David Einhorn, Jacob Glatstein, Moyshe Leyb Halpern, Moyshe Kulbak, Mani Leib, H. Leivick, and Melech Ravitch. They are presented here in their original Yiddish script, supplemented by Roman-alphabet transliterations, with English translations by Dr. Betsky, who has written also an introductory essay for this exceedingly handsome volume. Included also are biographical notes about the poets represented.

DAVIS, DANIEL L. *Understanding Judaism*. New York: Philosophical Library. 1958. 119 pp. \$3.00

This book by Rabbi Davis, Director of the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, undertakes to present a basic account of Judaism, its concepts, institutions, and practices. It contains a brief, but authoritative, chapter on "The Organization of Jewish Life in America." The work is supplemented by a glossary and a reading list.

GALE, JOSEPH, Edited by. *Eastern Union: The Development of a Jewish Community*. Elizabeth, N. J.: The Jewish Culture Council of Eastern Union County, New Jersey. 1958. xvi, 127 pp.

This attractive volume, illustrated by Louis Spindler, gives an account of Jewish life in a New Jersey county with a substantial Jewish population. The work contains chapters on New Jersey Jewish history from 1654 to 1854, on New Jersey's outstanding Jew of the early nineteenth century, David Naar, of Elizabeth, and on Jewish synagogal and societal annals in the eastern part of Union County. Also included are a register of synagogues and organizations in the area, and a bibliography. This is a welcome addition to the community and regional histories which are so important for a true understanding of the nature and growth of American Jewish life.

GUTSTEIN, MORRIS A. *To Bigotry No Sanction: A Jewish Shrine in America, 1658-1958*. New York: Bloch Publishing Co. 1958. 191 pp. \$3.95

Dr. Gutstein, rabbi of Chicago's Shaare Tikvah Congregation, was at one time rabbi of the Touro Synagogue in Newport, R. I., and has now written again on the history of Newport's Jewish community and its old colonial synagogue. The volume is illustrated and contains a selected bibliography.

HANDLIN, OSCAR. *American Jews: Their Story*. New York: The Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith. [1958.] 48 pp.

Part of "The One Nation Library" pamphlet series published by the A. D. L. in cooperation with the Joseph Kaplan Project in Intergroup Education, this work by Harvard University's Professor Handlin is a brief history of American Jewry. It includes a glossary and a bibliography, and is handsomely illustrated.

HERTZ, RICHARD C. *Prescription for Heartache*. New York: Pageant Press, Inc. 1958. 138 pp. \$2.75

Dr. Hertz, rabbi of Temple Beth El in Detroit, draws upon years of experience in counselling to present his views on the problems of daily living. Included are chapters on overcoming fears, on self-pity, on mature marriage, on teen-agers, and on old age, among others. The book seeks to bring the reader "a bit of serenity of spirit for troubled hours."

HERTZBERG, ARTHUR, Edited by. *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., and Herzl Press. 1959. 638 pp. \$7.50

Rabbi Hertzberg, Columbia University faculty member and spiritual leader of Temple Emanu-El in Englewood, N. J., presents in this imposing volume a comprehensive survey of the origins of modern Zionism. Included are selections from the thought and writings of such Zionist figures as Moses Hess, Theodor Herzl, Ahad Ha-Am, Martin Buber, Judah L. Magnes, Ludwig Lewisohn, Louis D. Brandeis, Mordecai M. Kaplan, Abba Hillel Silver, Chaim Weizmann, and David Ben-Gurion. The editor has also supplied a lengthy introduction and biographical notes, and there is a foreword by Emanuel Neumann.

JANOWSKY, OSCAR I. *Foundations of Israel: Emergence of a Welfare State*. Princeton, N. J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc. 1959. 191 pp. \$1.25

Professor Janowsky, of the City College of New York, has written a history of the State of Israel, which includes chapters on the pre-independence establishment of the *Yishuv*, its struggle for national sovereignty, and the economic, political, and demographic problems

which the *Yishuv* and, later, the new state have had to face. Included also are documentary readings relating to the period and problems under discussion. The author is especially concerned with Israel's "efforts . . . to foster social idealism and human welfare."

Jewish Book Annual: Volume 16. New York: Jewish Book Council of America. 1958. vii, 213 pp. \$3.00

Sponsored by the National Jewish Welfare Board, this valuable reference work surveys the contemporary world of Jewish literary interest. With articles in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish, the book deals primarily with Israel's tenth anniversary and with American Jewish literature. Bibliographies of books published in America and elsewhere during 1957 and 1958 are included. Among the contributors to this volume are Joseph Klausner, Shimon Halkin, Jacob Kabakoff, Meyer Levin, Alexander Alan Steinbach, Sol Liptzin, Herbert C. Zafren, I. Edward Kiev, and Fanny Goldstein.

KIRSHENBAUM, DAVID. *Mixed Marriage and the Jewish Future.* New York: Bloch Publishing Co. 1958. ix, 144 pp. \$3.50

Rabbi of the B'nai Moses Ben Yehuda Congregation in London, Ontario, the author is much concerned with problems of Jewish family life. He has written this book in an attempt "to dispel the apathy of the Jewish public in the hope that it may save the Jewish home from the destructive fire of mixed marriage."

KUHN, LOIS HARRIS. *The World of Jo Davidson.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, and the Jewish Publication Society of America. 1958. 181 pp. \$2.95

This book about the noted American Jewish sculptor, Jo Davidson, is part of the new "Covenant Books" series, designed for young readers between the ages of eleven and fifteen. An attractive book, it is illustrated by Leonard Everett Fisher.

MARX, KARL. *A World Without Jews.* Translated from the original German, with an introduction by Dagobert D. Runes. New York: Philosophical Library. 1959. xii, 51 pp. \$2.75

Dagobert D. Runes, the well-known writer on philosophical themes, presents here "the first English translation in book form, of the unexpurgated papers of Karl Marx on the so-called 'Jewish Question.'" The two essays, "The Jewish Question" and "The Capacity of Today's

Jews and Christians to Become Free," underscore Marx's unsympathetic attitude to Jews and Judaism.

OFFENBACH, JACQUES. *Orpheus in America: Offenbach's Diary of His Journey to the New World*. Translated by Lander MacClintock. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press. 1957. 200 pp. \$4.50

Offenbach, the celebrated composer of the opera *The Tales of Hoffmann*, visited America in 1876 and recorded his droll and charming impressions in his journal. Professor MacClintock, of Indiana University, has added to the diary a biographical study of this "most Parisian" composer whose parents were German Jews. The volume is further enriched by contemporary prints and photographs and by drawings by Constantin Alajálov as well as by background notes and a selected bibliography.

PATAI, RAPHAEL. *Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East*. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1959. 282 pp. \$3.95

In this study of Middle Eastern family life and sexual practices, Dr. Patai, the distinguished Middle Eastern anthropologist and Director of Research at the Theodor Herzl Institute, documents a rapidly changing *modus vivendi*.

ROBINSON, NEHEMIAH, et al. *Dictionary of Jewish Public Affairs and Related Matters*. New York: Institute of Jewish Affairs, World Jewish Congress. 1958. 232 pp. \$1.75

This useful volume presents concise information on international as well as domestic political and organizational affairs of interest to Jews. Brief surveys of Jewish communities throughout the world are included, and the work contains a large number of references to anti-Semitism.

SHINEDLING, ABRAHAM I. *History of the Los Alamos Jewish Center*. Albuquerque, N. Mex.: Privately published. 1958. 68 pp.

The author, formerly rabbi of Temple Beth El, Beckley, West Virginia, and presently on the staff of the American Jewish Archives, has written a detailed historical study of the Jewish Center in Los Alamos, New Mexico, from 1944 to 1957. In addition to the nine chapters dealing with the religious, social, and intellectual life of the Los Alamos Jewish community, the book contains a number of illustrations. It is an interesting contribution to the monographic literature on American Jewish history.

STEINBACH, ALEXANDER ALAN. *Faith and Love*. New York: Philosophical Library. 1959. 114 pp. \$3.00

This is a book of essays expressing an affirmative faith in the face of many of the problems, struggles, and sorrows of modern man. The author is rabbi of Temple Ahavath Sholom in Brooklyn, N. Y., and a former president of the New York Board of Rabbis.

WEINREICH, URIEL and BEATRICE, Edited by. *Say It in Yiddish*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1958. 183 pp. 75¢

In this little volume, Dr. Weinreich, Associate Professor of Linguistics and Yiddish Studies at Columbia University, and Mrs. Weinreich have prepared what, according to the publisher, is "the first extensive serious phrase book ever compiled for Yiddish." The work includes over 1,000 phrases, based on the best modern colloquial and literary usage.

WHITE, LYMAN CROMWELL. *300,000 New Americans: The Epic of a Modern Immigrant-Aid Service*. New York: Harper & Bros. 1957. xiv, 423 pp. \$4.00

Dr. White, who was formerly on the staff of the United Nations Secretariat, gives an extensive account of the United Service for New Americans (USNA) and of its efforts — the first comprehensive, large-scale effort — to resettle in America refugees from Nazi persecution. The book, which includes several appendices and an index, has a foreword by Eleanor Roosevelt.