

Reviews of Books

GOLDEN, HARRY. *For 2¢ Plain*. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co. 1959. 313 pp. \$4.00

Harry Golden's *Only in America* became a tremendous best seller in the astonishing manner in which the late Joshua Loth Liebman's *Peace of Mind* achieved great public reception a decade earlier. It appears now that Golden's current volume, *For 2¢ Plain*, also will make the best-seller category on the impetus of his earlier volume. People are still in the mood to read Golden's writings. Had Liebman not passed away, lamentably, in 1948 while his book was still being widely read, it is reasonable to assume that a second volume from his pen would have met with as much success as his earlier one found. He was actually at work on a sequel to *Peace of Mind*, and planned to call it *Hope for Man*. He never had the opportunity to see a second volume travel on the momentum gained from the first. This is not to derogate Harry Golden's effort. Though his *Carolina Israelite* had only three thousand readers before he became so well-known — it now has some forty-four thousand, by the latest count — he has always been an unusual journalistic figure on the American scene because of his talent, his independent nature, his whimsicality, and — not least of all — his courage of conviction.

There are those who tend to associate Golden's brief and unconnected essays dealing with American Jewish life as a heaven-sent boon in public relations for the Jews. This reviewer would dissent from such a point of view. The advantages of being on the best-seller lists accrue to the author as an individual primarily. American Christians who may enjoy Golden's whimsical writing will not be moved to suspend their economic or social prejudices against Jews. Nor will they consider his "vertical" solution of the Negro problem as anything more than humor. Humor never won a war, and the battles of minorities in America are social wars.

The tides of fortune have made Harry Golden, hitherto an obscure journalist, a preacher whose appeal carries farther at the moment than that of all the preachers of the country combined. If a best seller is instructive of anything at all, it is of the fact that accident and timing are more important than planned effort to literary fame in our age. A Gibbon could write his *Decline and Fall* with the feeling that there was an audience

waiting to read it. This is not exactly so in our day, when the book review section of the *New York Times* announces so many new volumes that are destined to have a very limited sale and end up in the book remainder shops.

There are many sage observations in Golden's unequally brief essays. And there are many irrelevancies and not a few vulgarities to be found in his writing. The latest volume contains almost two hundred pieces on such scattered topics as "Clarence Darrow," "What Are Pickled Pig Skins?" (an essay hardly flattering to the author or his Jewish people), "Fluoridation," "The Issue in the South," "The Bintel Brief," "Yossele Rosenblatt," "A Klug Zu Columbus'n," "A Pulpit in the South," "Beards," "Great Books," "The Vertical Negro," "The Ghetto and the Plantation," "The Verein Doctor," and a host of others.

To those unfamiliar with the life of the Jewish immigrant in the teeming New York area over half a century ago, many of Golden's pieces supply shrewd, humorous, and at times inspiring insights into the lives of the grandparents of present-day Jews living in the suburbs. The very title of the volume offers an interesting example of a world that had its own flavor and character. Golden tells us in his introduction:

It was in thinking of the days before we let comfort corrupt us that I once wrote a story titled "For 2¢ Plain." I wrote about the "polly seed" nuts we used to buy, and of the boys and girls eating grapes as they walked together on the street. I remembered in this story how the entire east side civilization was addicted to seltzer (carbonated water) and of the great variety of sweet drinks mixed with the seltzer. You bought a drink from a man behind a marble counter at any of the hundreds of soda-water stands scattered throughout the sections, a small glass cost a penny — "Give me for 2¢ plain." As the man filled the glass you said casually, still holding tightly to your two pennies, "put a little on the top." You wanted syrup, of course, but you didn't want to pay the third penny. The next time you tried it, though, the man insisted on your two pennies first before he started to fill the glass. "I know my customers," he'd say.

It is when Harry Golden writes of the South that he is at his best. He has an uncanny intuitive grasp of the problem of integration and of the problem of the Jew living below the Mason and Dixon line. Of Negro-White relations he tells us in the short essay, "The Issue in the South":

The issue is not whether a Negro boy or girl can walk to a public school unmolested. The issue is racism. The issue is arguing that all are

created equal and practicing the opposite. The issue is depriving citizens of unrestricted participation in tax supported institutions. The issue is to allow a Negro to supervise your household and care for your children and then place a million obstacles in his path when he wants to vote in an election. The issue is to grant a Negro wearing a white coat unrestricted access to the rooms and corridors and not allow a Negro scientist to sleep in one of the rooms. The issue is to give the Negro everything except recognition as a man, to grant him everything except humanity.

Of the Jews in the deep South Golden says in his essay, "A Pulpit in the South":

Rabbi Geller reviewed in his mind the never ending effort of Jewish middle class life in the South to become one with the population mass surrounding it For one thing he pointed out that the few Jewish "non-conformists" in the South such as the union organizer, the public welfare worker, or the member of the Urban League, were sources of great anxiety to the Jewish community at large who feared the Gentile reaction. Yet somehow these very same Jewish odd fish seem to have more contacts and friends within the white Protestant society than do the main body, for all their desperate efforts to reflect the habits and prejudices of the majority. Rabbi Geller had noted that the main Jewish community's desire to mix seems to express itself chiefly in a man's ambition to join the Gentile country club or his wife's to join the Gentile book or garden club. When these attempts fail he gives up aggrieved and seeks consolation in a more intensified "Jewish Work."

In all fairness to Harry Golden, I believe that he would probably be the first to say that he is not offering guideposts of the kind presented by distinguished clergymen. One could suspect that he has written the numerous pieces for his *Carolina Israelite* for personal satisfaction. If the multitudes who now read these pieces in book form are shown a larger and kindlier outlook, then the many years which Golden devoted to his labor of love must now afford him as much satisfaction as the fame which has come to him after a period of relative obscurity.

New York, N. Y.

CHARLES E. SHULMAN

Dr. Charles E. Shulman is Rabbi of Riverdale Temple, New York, N. Y.

GORDON, ALBERT I. *Jews in Suburbia*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1959. xxv, 264 pp. \$3.50

Jews in Suburbia describes competently the round of life of very large numbers of American Jews in the United States. For nine years Rabbi Gordon has been the rabbi of Temple Emanuel in Newton, Massachusetts, one of the half dozen suburbs on which he leans most heavily to develop his picture and to make his points. For sixteen years he was the rabbi of a synagogue in Minneapolis; and his earlier book, *Jews in Transition*, indicated how solidly based was his knowledge of the life of Jews of earlier generations — those of the areas of first and second settlement in our large cities. A suburb of Minneapolis forms another one of the group on which he concentrates. For a few years after the Second World War he served as Executive Director of the United Synagogue of America, and one assumes that a good deal of his knowledge of Levittown, New York, of Skokie, near Chicago, of the suburbs of Washington, D. C., and of Cleveland, Ohio, and of the new communities of the San Gabriel Valley, near Los Angeles, has also been gained at first hand, on the basis of his service in this post. In addition, he has drawn on the general literature on suburbia which has been developing in recent years, and on questionnaires filled in by the rabbis of many suburban Jewish communities, and by many of the members of their congregations.

The picture that emerges is the fullest we have of Jewish suburban life, though there are not many surprises. We read of the general reasons for the movement to the suburbs, of the family-centered and “child-centered” existence typical of them, of the central role of the synagogue in these new communities — central, that is, as compared with its role in the city — of the degree to which we may find spiritual strivings, and what kind, as the basis of the growth of new congregations, of relationships with non-Jewish neighbors, and of the role of Jews in community life and in politics. The book is not a philippic against contemporary American suburbia, of the kind with which we are all familiar, nor is it a full defense of suburban life. In the many direct quotations from his interviews which Rabbi Gordon has reproduced, and in his text, few of the elements that occasion concern are slighted — the materialism and vulgarity of many newly rich Jews, the peculiar functions that synagogues and rabbis are called upon to serve, and the tendencies towards segregation imposed both from within and from without.

The book contributes to a sound basis for the discussion of contemporary Jewish life, a discussion of the kind that has now been going on for some

years. Rather than add to the discussion at this point, the reviewer would like to underscore a problem that the book raised sharply in his mind, a problem which is posed not only by this book, but in general by contemporary sociology, and by the sociological mode of discussion of the social world around us. The problem is that we can see all too easily, all too well, what Rabbi Gordon is talking about — it lies all around us. The main lines of Rabbi Gordon's study were already clear ten years ago — indeed, Herbert Gans's study of Park Forest laid down these lines that many years ago. Under these circumstances, one wonders what the role of the scholarly investigator is. As we know, many sociologists have taken the position that it is to tell us, in greater detail, what we think we already know, on the grounds that a further and fuller documentation of the obvious is required and that additional investigation may demonstrate that what we think to be obvious is not so, but requires modification. We also know that what seems obvious to many informed observers fascinates large audiences, for people seem to be delighted to read accounts of lives that they themselves live and that differ from what they can see with their own eyes only by way of giving a statistic in place of a generalization and in replacing the name of suburb X with that of suburb Y.

In describing the problem as I see it, I am somewhat unjust to Rabbi Gordon's book, which is often much better than a scholarly development of the obvious, particularly (to my mind) in his discussion of relationships with non-Jewish neighbors, where some new material is developed and some new perspectives are suggested. Nevertheless, the problem remains — one knows that what has been established about Skokie will not be very different from what is established about Silver Springs or Shaker Heights, after one makes an adjustment for average income.

The problem, of course, is how to talk about an America in which we are all increasingly self-conscious and increasingly better supplied with data on what is happening to us. Perhaps the chief example of the dilemma involved in talking about ourselves, when we know ourselves so well, is Max Lerner's *America as a Civilization*. And what is perhaps suggested, when contemporary journalists trod so closely upon the heels of scholars (in fact, very often outpacing them), is that it might be better to leave the mopping-up operations to the journalists and to push ahead more rapidly, asking at this point less what kind of life is led by Jews in suburbia than, in more daring fashion, what its inherent tendencies are and what its implications are.

New York, N. Y.

NATHAN GLAZER

Dr. Glazer is the author of *American Judaism* and other sociological works.

REZNIKOFF, CHARLES, Edited by. *Louis Marshall: Champion of Liberty*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America. 1957. 2 volumes: Vol. I, xliii, 500 pp.; Vol. II, vi, 696 pp. \$10.00

Louis Marshall was a vigorous and constructive giant fighting unceasingly for civil rights and civil liberties late in the nineteenth century and in the first three decades of the twentieth century. His classic battle for equality in the immigration laws of the United States, consonant with the spiritual greatness of the nation he loved so dearly, can be taken as a model by all who are pricked into action when they behold a deeply-ingrained civic injustice. He was a general needing only a small cadre of lieutenants in his battles against discrimination and bigotry. No official was too highly placed for Marshall to address directly and with candor; no detail in the assembling of his grand strategy was too homely for him to consider. He was factually astute, eloquently persuasive, astoundingly successful in his unending championship of Jewish causes. He knew how to stand up to recalcitrant foes, and he did. He knew how to inspire slow-to-awaken friends, and this he did also.

The selected papers and addresses of Louis Marshall — “Champion of Liberty” — are now available in two handsomely printed volumes, effectively edited by Charles Reznikoff, with a preface by Oscar Handlin. Here one finds Marshall sadly reminding Israel Zangwill that “what our enemies were unable to accomplish in twenty centuries, we are bringing about by our own acts.” Here one reads Marshall’s simple statement on Zionism written only three years before his death: “I have never been a Zionist or a politician. The platform on which I have stood has been that of Judaism. Everything that concerns the Jews has had my sympathetic interest.” And one finds here the touching picture sketched by Horace Stern, as Dr. Chaim Weizmann introduced Marshall with great affection to an audience attending the historic Jewish Agency meeting in Zurich just a few days before Marshall died there.

In an era when a comparatively small number of American Jews had the leisure, the means, and the inclination needed for striking forcefully and effectively at the shackles of discrimination and prejudice blocking their way to fulfillment, Marshall had every weapon the arsenal required; and skilled he was in their use. He knew how to probe the soft underbelly of those opposed to equality before the law. When, with the finesse of the enlightened and resolute, he applied the proper pressure, he often registered historic progress. He brought off the American abrogation of the Treaty of 1832 with Russia and thereby struck away a source of

humiliation to Jews by the Czar's government in his time. He sensed the historic proportions of the Leo Frank case and actively participated as counsel for the Jewish victim of lynching. He engaged valiantly in the campaign to end Henry Ford's strictures against the Jews.

But always he was the passionate and compassionate learner. "Nothing Jewish is alien to me" might well have been engraved upon his armor. Deploring the jeers at Yiddish as an uncouth jargon, he took pains to learn the language. Desiring unity of purpose and action, he supported an early project to create a *kehillah*. Reading the vigorous statesman's own words — now blunt, now pleading, now harsh, now tender — words of advice to the unbefriended, words of encouragement to the embattled — one can even smile inwardly with great understanding when Marshall writes to President Calvin Coolidge's secretary, C. B. Slempp, in 1924, anent the resurgent Ku Klux Klan: "As President of the American Jewish Committee, I am in a sense the spokesman for our citizens of the Jewish faith."

Nor was he parochial. He measured well the handsome potentialities of an American tapestry woven with the multicolored strands, the diverse threads. He loved America's forests, her music, her citadels of education. He was the complete citizen of the United States and of the world.

Marshall's family and friends, in providing his papers and addresses, and Charles Reznikoff's patience and skill in bringing them to publication place us all in debt. For there is about the Louis Marshall story a contemporaneousness as fresh as the current disquiet about the approaching legal encounter over the Sunday closing laws; there is about his work as a protagonist for fair immigration policies a prime example of planned and executed action, as applicable today as it was at the turn of the century.

Boston, Mass.

ROBERT E. SEGAL

Robert E. Segal is Executive Director of the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Boston, and has served as consultant, lecturer, and writer in the field of human relations since 1940.

SACHAR, HOWARD M. *The Course of Modern Jewish History*. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co. 1958. 617 pp. \$6.00

The Jewish experience in the area of what is commonly called "Western civilization" has been, since the French Revolution, so eventful and so complex that it has spawned a voluminous library of historical studies.

None of these works, however, have essayed a detailed survey of the entire panorama. It is only with the publication of Howard M. Sachar's *The Course of Modern Jewish History* that an attempt has been made to comprehend, between the covers of one book, the whole sweep of Jewish life from eighteenth-century Frankfurt's *Judengasse* to mid-twentieth-century America and Israel. Dr. Sachar, well aware of the prolixity of writings on modern Jewish history, has attempted in his book "a distillation of some of the basic research of the last few decades." His achievement is virtually without precedent; his book, frequently as admirable as it is ambitious.

It is truly an impressive work, this book whose 600 pages trace the modern history of the Jews, primarily in Europe, America, and Palestine. There are chapters on the Emancipation, on Jewish economic and cultural life, on the emergence of anti-Semitism, on Jewish socialism, on Zionism, and on Nazism. Dr. Sachar also devotes a good deal of attention to American Jewish history and the development of the American Jewish community. He writes skilfully, often movingly; *The Course of Modern Jewish History* is surely among the best-written Jewish histories ever to have been published in America. His narrative glows with spirit and feeling; it is alive with the excitement of its subject.

Jewish history, Dr. Sachar tells us at the outset, "cannot be understood without an evaluation of the influence of non-Jewish factors," particularly in the modern period; "until the eighteenth century Jews still lived . . . locked off in a hermetic and backward ghetto world. Modern European capitalism, mercantilism, and rationalism were directly responsible for battering down the walls of that ghetto, emancipating the Jews physically, politically, and intellectually, and enabling them to move into the bright sunlight of nineteenth-century civilization." The author has, as he says, made an effort "to demonstrate the interaction between these Jewish and non-Jewish factors." It is a highly satisfactory effort, but not a wholly satisfactory one.

This book, competent and scholarly as it is (and it is a work of real value and distinction), is not without faults, and these cannot be passed over in silence. The faults are primarily of two kinds: the first may be called historiographical; the other is largely methodological.

Dr. Sachar writes from a decidedly nationalist standpoint, which, while in itself certainly not objectionable, has permeated his account with a certain "present-mindedness." The result, in a number of instances, is a measure of distortion. His bias moves him, for example, to view rather too harshly the so-called "National Affirmation" whereby West Eu-

ropean — and American — Jewry effected a “solemn renunciation of separate Jewish nationhood.” The Napoleonic Sanhedrin’s “renunciation,” Dr. Sachar feels, inspired Western Jewry “to divest Jewish identification of all but its narrowest religious connotation” and “provided a rationale for ‘salon Jews’ and *Kaiserjuden*; for Germans, Frenchmen, and Americans of the ‘Israelitish’ or ‘Mosaic’ persuasion; for Jews in a hurry to assume the protective coloration of their Christian neighbors.” Ultimately, in Dr. Sachar’s view, it came to constitute a “sanction . . . for some Western Jews to reject Jewish civilization in its wider ethnic and cultural implications.” He has rather overstated the case. It is undeniable that, from the vantage-point of, say, 1955, the “National Affirmation” was hardly an unmixed blessing. But the vantage-point of 1955 is *not* the vantage-point of 1790 or 1810; yet, in attributing to the earlier period the notion of “Jewish civilization in its wider ethnic and cultural implications,” Dr. Sachar seems to be confusing the two chronologically and spiritually disparate vantage-points.

Jewish “nationhood” simply did not mean, 100 or 150 years ago, what it means today; it did not mean national independence, national self-determination, national sovereignty, national allegiance — *except in a religious sense*. It is possible today to be at once a Jewish nationalist *and* a secularist; it was not possible, perhaps not even thinkable, in 1800. Dr. Sachar quotes Portalis’ statement that, as a result of the Napoleonic Sanhedrin’s affirmation of allegiance to France and her institutions, “the Jews ceased to be a people and remained only a religion.” Portalis, who may have been thinking of “a people” in political and ethnic terms, was mistaken. What the Jews of France ceased, or would cease, to be was not “a people,” simply because, in our sense of the term — that is, a politico-ethnic, but not necessarily a religious, sense — *they had never really been a people*; they had ceased, or would cease, to be a precapitalist, socio-economic enclave. They would cease to be a feudal category; they would become citizens of a modern, middle-class nation-state in which religious background was considerably less important than ability to play a creative and functional role. It was not “separate Jewish nationhood” that the Sanhedrin renounced; it was the precapitalist orientation of the ghetto. Yet of this Dr. Sachar shows little awareness in his account.

The book’s methodological fault is closely related to its historiographical weakness. It is that, while Dr. Sachar describes, often quite feelingly and comprehensively, events and situations, he does not explain them. The difference between conditions of Jewish life in Western and in Eastern Europe is a case in point. Speaking of the first half of the nineteenth

century, Dr. Sachar writes: "In the West . . . the destruction of corporativism was followed by the extension of the full rights of citizenship to the Jews. But this was hardly to be the case in backward Russia. Here the Jews were left in limbo, without access to Russian governmental services, without Russian funds for municipal needs, without even the assurance that honest justice would be dispensed by Russian courts." The description is undoubtedly accurate; yet Dr. Sachar fails to tell us *why* the Jews achieved emancipation in the West, but found their position deteriorating in the East. He never makes it explicit that the emancipation in the West was largely a product of the West's expanding economic structure in which the Jews were able to perform a creative and needed function, while the economic structure of Eastern Europe was in a state of collapse.

His future historical efforts, it is to be hoped, will be free of such flaws. In the meantime, if *The Course of Modern Jewish History* is not the last word on the subject, it is an enviable accomplishment, and it is a genuine contribution to the field of modern Jewish history. Its value is further enhanced by an extensive bibliography which Dr. Sachar has appended to his book.

American Jewish Archives
Cincinnati, Ohio

STANLEY F. CHYET

Rabbi Stanley F. Chyet is the Harrison Jules Louis Frank and Leon Harrison Frank Research Fellow in American Jewish History at the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati.

HURST, FANNIE. *Anatomy of Me: A Wanderer in Search of Herself*. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1958. 367 pp. \$5.00

When the present writer was a member of the English department of Bennington College, he used to advise his students who wanted "to write": "Write about what it is really like to be a young woman, because it is what you know best, and because you will then make it unnecessary for men, who can only *imagine* what women are really like inside, to go on trying to write about them." His complaint was, and still is, that the most revealing books about women, e. g. *Madame Bovary*, *Anna Karenina*, *Sister Carrie*, are not written by women but by men, whose knowledge of womanhood is necessarily limited because it is not firsthand — a knowledge

which men are greatly in need of if they are ever to achieve the ability to make a good life with their mates.

It is interesting, in this connection, that this quandary of man is reflected even in the Bible. In Proverbs, where knowledge and wisdom are apostrophized as female, and which ends with that paean of praise to the *eshet hayil*, the woman of valor, man is repeatedly warned against the dangerous seductive charms of woman.

This writer has eagerly welcomed any book by a woman which offered a firsthand insight in this area, and he read with avidity *Anatomy of Me* which promised precisely what he has sought, from a writer so well equipped to express her findings as is Fannie Hurst. He read the book with greatly mixed feelings, often fascinated and sometimes embarrassed, but finally, alas, disappointed by its failure to fulfill its promise — as do most books by women about woman. Why women, who have a reputation for volubility, are so reticent about themselves, this writer cannot say with certainty.

Although Miss Hurst in the very beginning of this "search of herself" lists some of the pitfalls of the autobiographer, e. g. "egotism" and "name dropping," this does not prevent her from falling into those very pits; for many of the activities and associations here recorded have no apparent warrant for their inclusion other than the fact that they were hers; they throw no light upon the inwardness of Fannie Hurst, the woman; nor does the book as a whole reveal that promised "anatomy." What it does reveal in good measure, often unintentionally, are some of the forces which powerfully influenced the form and growth of that anatomy, notably the characters and relationship of her parents, and the atmosphere of her childhood and adolescence; but here, too, the revelation is often obscured by a sentimental need to repudiate the evidence where it is considered unpalatable, as, for example, the obvious ambivalence of the feelings between her mother and herself. It is this sort of prevarication that this reader finds embarrassing. It is as if the analysand on the couch, while moved to tell "the whole truth," were not constrained to telling "nothing but the truth" in the hope of making out a better case for herself with the analyst — a vain hope, since this kind of repudiation is in itself a symptom. And Miss Hurst has evidently heard enough of Freud to make her anxiously aware that a psychoanalyst might have a field day with her book.

The present writer, however, is here concerned with what a lay reader, like himself, can find in this book. To his mind, the best thing in it is the fascinating portrait of her parents: Jews who had no use for Judaism and set up in their daughter a dread of her Jewishness which plagued her a good

part of her life and afflicted her with the essential self-dissatisfaction one senses despite the apparent gratification her success as a writer finally gave her. This alone — this presentation of the traumatic effect on a young spirit of the derogation and ignorance of its origins and background — makes the book worth reading, especially by Jewish parents. And if Miss Hurst had given us as clear and complete a picture of her own spiritual anatomy as she gives of her mother, but etched, so to speak, with unsweetened acid, we might have had that rare book about women this reader has been hoping to find.

Shaftsbury, Vermont

IRVING FINEMAN

Mr. Fineman, novelist, author of *Dr. Addams*, *Hear Ye Sons*, *Ruth*, etc., is presently engaged in writing a biography of Henrietta Szold which will be published by Simon & Schuster on the Centennial of her birth in December, 1960.

The AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES takes pride in announcing the publication of a compendium of American Jewish genealogy.

AMERICANS OF JEWISH DESCENT

containing the family trees of every Jewish family
known to have been settled in America by 1840.

Compiled by

MALCOLM H. STERN

Rabbi, Ohef Sholom Temple, Norfolk, Virginia
Genealogist, American Jewish Archives

Available in the Fall of 1960

Published by

Hebrew Union College Press

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio