

REVIEW

Steven Leonard Jacobs, ed.

Maven in Blue Jeans: A Festschrift in Honor of Zev Garber

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This remarkably rich collection of essays gathered and edited by Steven Jacobs to honor Zev Garber will be of value to any scholar interested in the several often-overlapping fields covered: biblical and rabbinic literature, interfaith dialogue, Judaism and Jewish thought, educational matters in a range of settings, Shoah and post-Shoah theology among Jews and Christians, Hebrew studies and literature, and, all too briefly, Zionism. Of the 42 contributions only 18 here represent the whole.

Within the first category Scott Bartchy insists that the apostle Paul is a far more radical teacher than most Christian scholars recognize. And Herbert Basser shows how Jesus fit the rabbinic style of teaching. Both Joseph Edelheit and James Moore tackle two difficult chapters of *Numbers* to argue a) on behalf of the essential need for dialogue to undergird the post-Shoah survival of the Jewish people, and b) on behalf, further, of the need for changes in Christian liturgy so that exclusionary language, especially toward Jews and Judaism, is eliminated. In the only dialogical essay Eugene Fisher engages in a “conversation” with Garber about a number of Jewish-Christian relational issues, including areas of difference. A very thorough overview of new teachings of the Catholic Church about Judaism and its relations with the Jewish people since 1990 is provided by John Pawlikowski. He does not hesitate to state what he, and other Catholic scholars, see as shortcomings in some of the Church documents, especially the insistence that the Church itself is a “sacramental reality” uninvolved in, and unaffected by, the “sinful realities of history” (p. 136). He finds Pope Benedict XVI less ready to acknowledge the Church’s failings than his predecessor. Pawlikowski also deals with the recent Jewish development of a theology of Christianity, along with Jewish readiness to insist that the State of Israel be brought into the dialogue for a better Catholic appreciation of how the land of Israel is pertinent to Jewish identity, concern, and survival.

A consideration of how rabbis expanded the concept of divine suffering and merged it with human suffering and sinfulness during medieval times, and more fully during the Holocaust is undertaken by Michael Fishbane. Harold Kasimow’s essay points out that Abraham Joshua Heschel carried this thinking forward in his insistence on God’s suffering, and on God’s need for humans. Both Heschel and Martin Buber saw revelation and co-revelation at work in divine action and human response.

Shoah theology and other post-Shoah developments receive the most extensive attention. Samuel Edelman foresees the eventual development of a body of sacred literature for use in worship which will utilize some of the most powerful writings from within the Shoah itself. This will impact on Jewish theology just as writings from other devastating times in Jewish history helped shape the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, Maimonides’ *Mishnah Torah*, the Kabbalah, and the *Shulhan Aruch*. The author sees poetic works by Yitzhak Katzenelson as particularly pertinent for this with their twofold elements of curse and lament along with consolation and instruction.

Henry Knight focuses on drawing new insights from Scripture through midrashic dialogue with interfaith colleagues, as well as students, and moving beyond Christian supersessionism. David Patterson finds martyrdom no longer a valid means of sanctifying God. It is replaced by affirmation of life, “*living* for the Holy One,” or living-for-the-other. Thus Patterson finds “Holocaust”—burnt offering—the wrong word for the Nazi annihilation of the Jews. Instead, “Shoah”—abyss, or destruction—is the appropriate term since “Shoah is made of murder” (p. 341).

Have we really learned from the unprecedented genocide of the Shoah? John Roth replies “Maybe something?” “Not enough?” And history has already negated “Never again.” He argues that disrespect for human life and disrespect for the natural world are intertwined. Yet despair is not the answer; we must recognize that “even small deeds and modest actions can be life-saving” (p. 349) as were those of the French village of Le Chambon.

Another life-affirming and teaching resource is found by Lev Hakak in the folk tales of the 19th century Iraqi Rabbi Yosef Hayyim. Writings about the Holocaust for children below the 7th grade are reviewed by Peter Haas. And Louanne Clayton Jacob has written most helpfully about how to do Holocaust education.

Klaus Hödel looks at the “staggering expansion” of Jewish Studies in Germany and Austria (p. 198). Yet most of this teaching, and the creation of Jewish cultural exhibits, are done by non-Jews to non-Jews, without a supporting Jewish population. While Klezmer music has captured the public’s fascination, the musicians are also non-Jews.

The far more serious issue of the European adoption of a pro-Palestinian, pro-Arab and anti-Israel stance in order to secure the oil their economies need so desperately is addressed by Richard Rubenstein. The only article with a focus on Zionism and the State of Israel is Gilead Morahg’s in which he looks at two Israeli literary works—one by Haim Hazaz (1942), and one by A. B. Yehoshua (1990). Both see a “national pathology” which subverted Jewish history and “repeatedly led the Jewish people to the brink of annihilation” (p. 455); and both find Judaism ultimately responsible. Yehoshua argues that even the military prowess of Israel “recapitulates the self-destructive patterns of the past” (p. 460).

I urge readers to make use of this valuable book and discover the further wealth of insights.