

to behave like a machine and treats every other being, animate or inanimate, as a mere object . . . rather than as a subject or person."

Martin Buber's great contribution through his writings — and they stem from the Bible, embody the supremacy of reason of Maimonides, lead through Hasidism, and reckon with modern thought — is his rebellion against the machine-system, asserting the sacredness of the individual soul in whom is reflected God's glory.

Dr. Buber would not be permitted nor his books be permitted in Soviet Russia, where they are more alerted to the danger of books than we are. We in America still permit such books to be published. For the most part they are kept in German so that the masses may not get the books and the people cannot read them, but there will be persons who will delve into Dr. Buber's book and the time may come when this lonely thinker, who already has influenced Christian theology and whose name appears in index after index of theological books as the authority and the source for a new insight, an insight that man is hungry for, in the midst of this increasingly impersonal, mechanized and dehumanized world, will be more recognized.

To sum it all up: Books are centers of dangerous power. Great books are the eternal enemies of prevailing civilizations. We of the Jewish Book Council of America, who are dedicated to books, if we do our work well, must know that we are given to dangerous living and to dangerous lives. The book, the Jewish book, is still the most vital influence that we can give to human civilization. Whether it was the Bible in the ancient world, or whether it was *The Guide for the Perplexed* by Maimonides in the Middle Ages, or whether it be the mystical books that are written by Buber and his followers today, the Jewish book is no friend of any civilization that would deny the human spirit.

Great books are the carriers of the human spirit. The old and worn Midrash, that when Israel stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai, a hand appeared to descend from the darkened clouds of the heavens and in that great hand rested a book and a sword, is eternally true. The book and the sword were bound together, and God's voice was heard speaking, and the voice said: "Choose! choose!"

Every generation and every civilization must choose between the book and the sword. The book is still the most dangerous weapon that man has created with which to defeat the sword in human affairs.

GREAT JEWISH BOOKS: OLD AND NEW*

By LEON ROTH

AS I pondered the theme set to me for this evening's discourse, there came to my mind two sayings from two English authors of recent times. The first was that of Mr. E. M. Forster, who remarks somewhere: "Books have to be read (worse luck, for it takes a long time); it is the only way of discovering what they contain." That seems to me to cover most of what needs to be said under the heading of *one* word in our theme, the word Books. The second was that of G. K. Chesterton, who is reported to have said: "The *Iliad* is great because all life is a battle, the *Odyssey* because all life is a journey, the *Book of Job* because all life is a riddle." That seems to dispose of the word Great: a 'great' book is a book which stirs us by its treatment of a prominent and persistent aspect of experience. It rather looks as though all there is left for me to do is to settle the word Jewish.

I wish I could but, alas, I can't. I used to think I knew what Jewish meant but now I am not sure. You all know much more about it, and much better about it, than I; and if I were honest I should ask for our positions to be reversed — I should go down there and all of you would come up here. It did occur to me to suggest that to the Chairman, but I saw that the procedure, however enjoyable for both parties, might lead to some confusion. And so I had to set to work myself. The problem was, how?

I had to start somewhere, so I took the first publishers' list I could lay my hands on of the Great Books of world literature and asked myself which of them were written by Jews. The list happened to be that of the 990 volumes of the well-known and justly admired Everyman's Library. On search I found the following: *Ancient Hebrew Literature* (the Old Testament and Apocrypha); the *New Testament*; and then, in alphabetical order of authors, Disraeli's *Coningsby*, Heine's *Prose and Poetry*, Josephus' *Wars of the Jews*, Marx's *Capital*, and Spinoza's *Ethics*. That's a fairly mixed bag but it's hardly comprehensive; and it's not all what is commonly known as Jewish.

So I started again. I saw that I had used the wrong criterion:

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a book is not necessarily Jewish because it happens to be written by a Jew. And, of course, the contrary also holds. There might be books fairly to be called Jewish which were written by non-Jews. So I widened my compass and turned to the list a second time — a standard list, remember, of Great Books actually published and put into common circulation — and I looked for Jewish books in a broad sense. The first example I came across (it was in the Bs) may appear to many of you trivial, but I give it to you all the same. It's a favorite book of my own and, however little you may think it to our present purpose, I might perhaps induce some of you to turn to it and enjoy it.

One of the most wayward of the many wayward eccentrics who make up the richness of English literature is George Borrow. Borrow was a wanderer with a taste for boxing and philology; and he cherished all wandering peoples, particularly Gypsies, Armenians, and Jews. True, he did not like the Jewish bruiser (as indeed, I may remark in parenthesis, I don't either), and he spent a whole chapter of *Lavengro* in dispraise of the great Daniel Mendoza. But this is as nothing compared with his descriptions of the mysterious Jews of all kinds who are made to pass before our eyes on his crowded pages. Let me read you a short section from his *Bible in Spain*, an alleged record of his travels in Spain and Portugal in the service of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the eighteen-forties. He has just described a figure he came across when riding at night near Talavera. He then goes on:

There was something peculiarly strange about the figure; but what struck me the most was the tranquillity with which it moved along, taking no heed of me, though of course, aware of my proximity, but looking straight forward along the road, save when it occasionally raised a huge face and large eyes towards the moon, which was now shining forth in the eastern quarter.

'A cold night,' said I at last. 'Is this the way to Talavera?'

'It is the way to Talavera, and the night is cold.'

'I am going to Talavera,' said I, 'as I suppose you are yourself.'

'I am going thither; so are you, *Bueno*.'

The tones of the voice which delivered these words were in their way quite as strange and singular as the figure to which the voice belonged. They were not exactly the tones of a Spanish voice, and yet there was something in them that could hardly be foreign; the pronunciation also was correct, and the language, although singular, faultless. But I was most struck with the manner in which the last word, *bueno*, was spoken.

I had heard something like it before, but where or when I could by no means remember. A pause now ensued, the figure stalking on as before with the most perfect indifference, and seemingly with no disposition either to seek or avoid conversation.

'Are you not afraid,' said I at last, 'to travel these roads in the dark? It is said that there are robbers abroad.'

'Are you not rather afraid,' replied the figure, 'to travel these roads in the dark — you who are ignorant of the country, who are a foreigner, an Englishman?'

'How is it that you know me to be an Englishman?' demanded I, much surprised.

'That is no difficult matter,' replied the figure; 'the sound of your voice was enough to tell me that.'

'You speak of voices,' said I. 'Suppose the tone of your own voice were to tell me who you are?'

'That it will not do,' replied my companion. 'You know nothing about me. You can know nothing about me.'

'Be not so sure of that, my friend. I am acquainted with many things of which you have little idea.'

'*Por exemplo*,' said the figure.

'For example,' said I, 'you speak two languages.'

The figure moved on, seemed to consider a moment, and then said slowly, '*Bueno*.'

'You have two names,' I continued, 'one for the house and the other for the street. Both are good, but the one by which you are called at home is the one which you like best.'

The man walked on about ten paces in the same manner as he had previously done. All of a sudden he turned, and taking the bridle of the burro gently in his hand, stopped her. I had now a full view of his face and figure, and those huge features and herculean form still occasionally revisit me in my dreams. I see him standing in the moonshine, staring me in the face with his deep calm eyes. At last he said —

'Are you also of us?'

Remember this was written over a hundred years ago, a full eighty years before Schwartz came again on the tracks of the still-existing Marrano communities during the First World War. But I'm not thinking of that. My point is that here we have a great book of permanent, although peripheral, Jewish interest because of the human character of its many Jewish episodes, a book which may therefore be included, with charity perhaps rather than with pedantic accuracy, in our tentative list of Great Jewish Books.

Borrow is unique, but the triumph of uniqueness is that it admits the existence of other varieties of uniqueness; and now that we see the sort of thing we may look out for in our Everyman list, we can find plenty more. I shall not delay you with the names of well-known compositions of Byron, Dickens, Marlowe, Scott, or Shakespeare. But I think we can fairly call the Jewish reader's attention to, say, Matthew Arnold (the chapters on Hebraism and Hellenism in *Culture and Anarchy*; Spinoza and the Bible and other essays in his *Essays in Criticism*); and while we're mentioning critics, there is Quiller Couch's *Cambridge Lectures* with the admirable essay on reading the Bible. Then there's Browning — Rabbi Ben Ezra, Cleon, even Bishop Blougram's vindication of the United Synagogue (though you won't find it by that title in the table of contents); George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and Macaulay's *Speeches*; and after Macaulay (I am still on the Index of Everyman) I see Milman's *History of the Jews*, a book not to be sneezed at even now. Talking of history reminds me that all history has a background, and the background of Jewish history is illumined by such books as Ford's *Gatherings from Spain*, De Joinville's *Memoirs of the Crusades*, Irving's *Conquest of Granada* and the *Life of Mahomet*, and of course Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and Mommsen's *Rome*. But I see we're going too far afield and I must pull up. But I shall first, greatly venturing, point a moral.

It is this. I doubt whether there is at all a book of purely Jewish reference, much less of purely Jewish greatness. A great book, as we saw, is a book which deals worthily with a prominent and pervasive human interest. It may deal with it in its Jewish aspect or in its Jewish connections, or purely in its Jewish manifestations; but it is great only if, in the particular Jewishness, it manifests the universally human. That is why the Bible is great. As the rabbis say of the Book of Genesis, it is the "Book of the Generations," not of Priest or of Levite or of Israelite but "of man."

I say this in view of a theory which is widely held and to which in practice I have given some support myself. Those who hold it will tell you that in my search for Great Jewish Books I have started from the wrong end altogether. A Great Jewish Book, they will say, is only in Hebrew; and if by inadvertence it allows itself to be written in any other language, it becomes its real self, as it were, only when translated (they say: translated *back*) into Hebrew. The standard example is offered by Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*. The Arabic in which it was written (they say) moulders in libraries. It is the Hebrew version which is great and which lives.

I think I can fairly dodge the issues raised by that interesting, but not necessarily sound, theory, for two reasons. The first is that tomorrow you will have the opportunity of listening to a special lecture on Hebrew literature. The second is that, for all our interest in Hebrew, we are most of us (regrettably) not Hebrew scholars. It is therefore just the translation from the Hebrew into English rather than the repatriation (as it were) of the English, or whatever language it may be, into Hebrew, which is important for us. I shall then, if I may, beat a retreat, using as a smoke-screen the old Rabbinic dictum on the Shema, the "Hear O Israel" . . . "Hear in whatever language you *can* hear;" and turn to the possibilities offered by translation.

Translations are of two kinds. We may start with a glance at the easier and more obvious.

And first let us express our gratitude to the men who have labored so successfully that we have now, in addition to *Humash*, a Bible, Prayer Book and *Maḥzor*, *Mishnah*, *Midrash*, *Talmud*, *Zohar*, and a whole series (in extract) of Jewish philosophers, in English dress for English readers. This work has been done for Anglo-Jewry in our own day and is just cause for pride. Nor should we forget the Schiff Library published in the United States by the Jewish Publication Society of America. These pocket volumes, modelled on the Loeb series of Greek and Latin Classics, offer in admirable form editions of some typical Rabbinic texts and of some poets and moralists of the later period, in both the Hebrew original and English translation. I need only instance the delightful Zangwill *Gabirol*, the Nina Salaman *Jehudah Halevi*, the Israel Abrahams *Hebrew Ethical Wills*, in witness of the vigor and attractiveness of the English side; whilst the names of Brody, Malter, and Davidson on the Hebrew side are sufficient to quieten (I do not say silence) the suspicions of the experts. This series, so admirably planned, so carefully executed and so charmingly produced, has one fault only: it stopped almost as soon as it started and comprises no more than about twenty volumes.

I said it has one fault only. I was wrong. It has two; and I feel so strongly about the value of this series, and of the more ambitious Rabinowitz series inaugurated by Yale, and of the versions of the classical literature made in this country which I mentioned to start with, that I'm going to risk a ride on an old and favorite hobby-horse and be, for a moment, apparently — but not really — ungrateful.

You will remember my opening text from Mr. E. M. Forster: "Books have to be read (worse luck . . .); it is the only way of discovering what they contain." May I add the rider that, if books

are to be read, they must be easily procurable, that is, be cheap. The books I've mentioned, with their wonderful paper and print and binding — I am not being ironical: they *are* wonderfully produced — are magnificent but too dear.

Now I know what I'm going to be told, and I'm not going to argue about it because I can't. In these days no books, and certainly not fine books, can be produced cheaply, especially when the market is so restricted. But a way out exists, and it must be noted. It is an intermediate way, and like most intermediate ways it is far from being the best. But it is a refuge from the worst. The best is, of course, that everybody should have his own books. The worst is that nobody (except the rich) should have any books at all. The middle way is that libraries should be provided everywhere possible, and thoroughly and generously stocked.

I happen myself to be living in a city where there is a synagogue on the walls of which there are bookshelves; and on the bookshelves are books, rows upon rows of them. On my first visit I inspected them and found they were — quite rightly — sets of prayer books and Pentateuchs; admirable books and in their place. I am not grumbling or contemning or criticizing; very much to the contrary. But suppose that *in addition to* the rows upon rows of prayer books and Pentateuchs (I am reminded of the old jest which I shall not translate: סדור, מחזור, חומש, הארץ הזכר.) — suppose that *in addition to* the prayer books and Pentateuchs there were sets of the Schiff Classics, of the various Soncino Press publications, of the East and West Library, even of the books from the Everyman list I have mentioned — let them be in a separate room but let that room be properly equipped; and the center chosen need not be only a religious one although the synagogue is a, if not the, natural place to start in: — boys' clubs, committee rooms, dance halls, night clubs, Woburn House — any place where Jews go: I myself should like to see such collections in the public libraries; suppose . . .

How to do it? One obvious and easy way is to devote to it the next *Kol Nidrei* collection. But alternatively you can look out for a Jewish Carnegie, or run Book Clubs, or start a Publication Society, or consult Mr. Gollancz; anything you like: but so long as your Schiff Classics cost what they cost and your Soncino Midrash costs what it costs — and I say yet again that with conditions as they are these books are not overpriced — the only way to get Jewish books into Jewish hands is by a collective effort whereby the individual, if he can't have all of a book all of the time, can have all of a book, or a part of a book, at least part of the time. Jewish libraries everywhere and the books in many copies — what

better investment for the Jewish communities of any country! We cannot, of course, force the horses to drink, and it may be difficult even to bring them to the river; so we must bring the river to them.

I said there were two sorts of translation, and one of them, the more obvious one, has been mentioned. The second is the translation of a classic not only into the language, but in terms of the thought, of the present time. In order to avoid confusion, I shall call this kind of translation, interpretation, with the remark that, without this second sort of translation, interpretation, the first sort, which is often not much more than transliteration, is (regrettably) useless. Putting a translation of the Talmud (for example) into the hands of untrained everyman is like giving him a ticket for a visit to a coal-mine when he asks for fuel for his sitting-room fire.

Of interpreters Anglo-Jewry has had very few. Schechter was one, Israel Abrahams was another. These scholars realized that although erudition is the foundation, it is not the end, of scholarship. An interpreter brings books home to men's "business and bosoms." He re-lives, and helps others to re-live, them. In Greek studies this is what Gilbert Murray has been doing (in addition to some other things) for over half a century. We need similar work, that is, similar workers, in Jewish studies. Our scholars must be taught that this work, what the French call "vulgarization," is not, as many of them seem to think, something to be ashamed of; but it is not, as they also suppose, easy. It demands the most finished scholarship, the keenest sympathy, and the most profound understanding. It is the finest and possibly the most rewarding, as it is certainly the most requested, fruit of the tree of learning.

But we cannot hope for many Schechters or Israel Abrahams, and I should like to mention a few examples of books written by scholars-on-holiday, or intelligent laymen, which seem to me to be of the type required today. I take them at random from the bookshelf. Here is the unforgettable (but, alas, forgotten) volume of essays, *Jewish Ideals*, by the Australian-English-American Jewish scholar Joseph Jacobs, whose centenary has just been celebrated by the Jewish Historical Society; here the translations by Elkan Adler of the largely autobiographical *Jewish Travellers of the Middle Ages*; here that splendid account of Biblical and post-Biblical Jewish moral ideas *The Old Testament and After* of Claude Montefiore; here the fascinating collection of historical sketches called *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, by Israel Zangwill. No one of these

books is a work of pure scholarship though much scholarship went to their making; yet every layman will remember them with gratitude. They come from great Jewish hearts and are full of bursting with great Jewish themes. They are, each in its own way, interpretations, of one kind or another, of great episodes in the Jewish tradition; and they are all stimulating in the real sense that they make the reader want to know, and even to think, more. What we need today is the stimulating book in this sense, the book that helps us to make our first plunge.

A subject in which this need is especially urgent is our own greatest original book, the Bible itself. My own interest was first aroused by my form-master in the City of London School before the First World War who, when we were all tired at the end of term (and sometimes in the middle) of Cicero and Demosthenes, used to read out in class chapters from the Bible (and, alternatively, George Meredith). He afterwards published a small book, *The Literary Genius of the Old Testament*, which I heartily commend to you. The author is P. C. Sands; the publisher, the Oxford University Press. Another most stimulating little book, published by the Cambridge University Press, is E. G. King's *Early Religious Poetry of the Hebrews*. It was this book which first brought home to many of us the fact that a great deal of the Hebrew Bible is in recognizable verse form. Your expert will point out that these books are by amateurs, that they are no more than a hundred small pages each, and that anyhow they are out of date; and he will endeavor to persuade you, as I have been persuaded recently, to spend a vast sum on the 909 octavo pages of a Harvard professor. My advice to you is, don't. Avoid professors. They know too much. And they're so anxious to put you right on every detail that they smother any live interest you might have ever had. We ordinary folk can afford to be wrong. We cannot afford to have our interest smothered.

And how exciting the Bible has become with all the new discoveries. Take the latest book of M. Dupont-Sommer carefully translated for us from the French by Mr. R. D. Barnett of the British Museum and produced at a human price by Vallentine, Mitchell — for 10s. 6d. you get a story which for anyone with a mite of imagination opens up undreamed of vistas. We've all heard dimly of the Essenes; but here we are told of the contents of a huge Essene library (or so the author thinks), and together with it, in other caves which have now been found and investigated, data and information affecting most subjects connected with Judaism and Jewish history for a whole hitherto almost unknown epoch covering, possibly, some hundreds of years. Fancy reading in a

casual footnote that a portion of a pre-*First-Destruction* book of Leviticus has been found! And whether we accept M. Dupont-Sommer's views or the even more exciting theory of the Reader in Rabbinics at Cambridge who thinks that the library is Jewish-Christian and that at least one now famous document contains references to the central figures of the New Testament, we have ample opportunity to follow out ideas — Jewish ideas — which have touched and influenced the world, and, incidentally, to sharpen our wits in a field where even scholars disagree.

This leads me to note that the new finds, and the controversies over their history and significance, only serve to emphasize, what is sufficiently obvious from other considerations too, that we Jews ought to interest ourselves in, and know more about, the documents and doctrine of Christianity. I shall not labor the point that its authors were Jews and that its subject-matter — how man should live — (although not necessarily its conclusions) is Jewish. I only ask you to remember how closely the new finds, the Apocrypha and the so-called Pseudepigrapha, the New Testament, the writings of Philo (available in the old Bohn version and in the Loeb library), the works of Josephus, the earliest Church Fathers, the Midrashim, both Halachic and Aggadic, and the Mishnah and Tosaphta, all hang together and illumine one another in the panorama of Jewish and world history. And this epoch was crucial not only in the social and political, but also, and far more importantly, in the *religious* history of Jewry; for the understanding of which by English readers we have the incomparable *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, by the great student of Rabbinics and the history of religion, the late George Foot Moore, of Harvard, a book which I hope will be found in many copies on the shelves of all our community libraries.

I have had several occasions to mention Josephus. Anyone interested in Jewish psychological types should read and re-read Josephus' *The Wars of the Jews*. To one who has been at all mixed up in modern Jewish public affairs it reads, in its majestic way, like a contemporary satire. But Josephus is more than *The Wars of the Jews*; and I earnestly draw your attention to the second part of his short work *Against Apion*. (It is not available, unfortunately, in Everyman, but it forms part of the first volume of the Loeb edition by the late St. J. Thackeray). It is strangely ignored by Jewish writers but it contains one of the best accounts ever written of the genius of Judaism. It is extraordinary how firmly the essentials are grasped and how clearly and boldly they are expressed. I say, turn to the *second* part. Scholars of course will send you to the first with its citations from long-forgotten authors, and so

weary you before you get to the real point. The second part, where Josephus, instead of quoting other people, speaks in his own name and on things for which he cares deeply and intimately, is not only readable; it is genuinely alive and fine; and that, I suppose, is a principal reason for our scholars to ignore it.

Another reason may be that it is an attempt to set out the meaning of the great themes of Judaism in plain terms. Josephus is not a theologian, but he has observed the basic fact that Judaism is primarily a theology in the strict sense of the word, that is, a doctrine of God. This doctrine of God leads to a doctrine of man; and Josephus describes in some detail the main features of the way of life which the Jewish doctrine of God involves. In particular he explains, and follows out in its practical consequences, the root idea of regulation and law.

I mention this because it seems to me that one of the main (and many) deficiencies in modern Jewish life is an appreciation of the necessity of giving positive, though not necessarily dogmatic, information on these and similar themes. We seem to be concerned to spread knowledge about everything except the nature and doctrine of Judaism.

And that leads me to some wider points which I feel it essential to touch upon. The first is the general question why we should worry about books at all; and on that I shall have some reasonably conventional remarks to make although I may have to give them an irritating application. Another, which I propose to take first, is a little more elementary and obvious, although necessary. You may take it as the effete moralizing of a former pedagogue, or the death-bed growlings of a dying Tory, or the last fling of an Enemy of the People. But addressing myself in particular to the younger and more important elements in this audience, may I say that in matters of books, or if you like, literature and particularly great literature, or, in general, things of the mind, nothing can be achieved without personal effort. And by personal effort I mean something more than the turning of a knob. Unless you're prepared to give your time and your brain and your will, all talk about books is empty. I'm afraid of using the word Study. But I looked up my old Latin dictionary the other day and found that the word *Studium* from which Study is derived means application, assiduity, zeal, eagerness, fondness, inclination, desire, exertion. Well, I can only tell you that without application, assiduity, zeal, eagerness, fondness, inclination, desire, exertion, you won't get anywhere with books. Reading a book isn't just flipping over pages. And reading once only isn't reading. There's a great deal to be said

for the old-fashioned Jewish practice of *שנים סקרא ואחד תרגום*, reading, translating into your own idiom, and then reading a second time; or even (again the recommendation is Rabbinic) setting aside so much of your spare time every day to a regular grind — say, an hour a day, and two hours Friday evening, and three hours Sabbath afternoon: that makes ten hours regular reading a week; and try learning a Psalm, or a chapter from Isaiah, by heart every day. It'll stand you in good stead, both in good times and in bad.

For I am afraid that we shall have bad times as well as good, and that will serve as introduction to the final, and cardinal, point I want to raise with you this evening: Why read at all, and if we do, why Great Books?

I have first to return a general answer; and having stated why we, as human beings, need books, I shall ask why we need them as Jews. And I shall now have to take the word Great in my theme a little more seriously: not only, Why books, but Why Great Books? If one must read at all (and the necessity is not demonstrated), why should we not be satisfied with the daily, and (of course) the weekly, press?

I should say in brief reply that books are necessary, first, as nourishing the conservative element in life; they keep before us the best that has been felt and thought in the past: and, second, as offering a platform to the progressive elements in life; they give expression to new vision. Books — all books — both preserve old standards and are the occasion of the creation of fresh ones.

The *Great Book*, I should say, is the book which fulfils either, or both, of these functions in a conspicuously successful manner. It keeps our eyes fixed on the horizon; but it may also have to point out where the horizon is or may be hoped to be. And it reflects basic themes in a way which invites re-interpretation in every age. If I may crib the words of my title — and I congratulate its framers on their power of definition — a Great Book is a book which is at once both old and new.

And now that we know what a great book is, it is obvious what is our interest as Jews in great Jewish books. Our deepest need, now more than ever before, is to keep hold of ourselves; to know what we are and what we can be because we have been it; to hold tight to our best when there is danger that we are falling to our worst; to retain in fact our better selves. In the turmoil of the transitory (however real) crises in which we find ourselves continuously embroiled, we need, more than any other people and

more than at any other time, the strength that comes from self-recognition.

Such self-recognition and such strength will come, as they have always come, only from the books. From them we shall learn that the crises are not so critical and the forces making capital of them not so unusual. We have outlived many hopes and survived many disappointments. We have learned by experience the sad wisdom of the Latin saying that there were kings before Agamemnon.

I have urged you to read Josephus. You may remember that he tells us that in the last siege the defenders built a second wall behind the first so that the Romans, having effected a breach in the first, were amazed to find a second wall waiting in its place. I suggest that the present generation of Jews relies too much on one wall; and that if we were wise we should busy ourselves while there is yet time with the erection of a second wall to act as a substitute in case the first does not hold. The last word on this too is to be found in Josephus, and in the mouths of the Zealots themselves: for he tells us that, recognizing that their real strength was not in the Temple wall or indeed in any wall or any physical or geographical consideration, they cried out to Titus: "The world is a better Temple for God than this one." We are sometimes told today that our generation is so busy building the future that it need not worry to read about the past. To which it is a fair retort that greater attention to the past might suggest better methods of construction.

I come to my last point.

The most tentative list of Great Jewish Books brings a reader in contact with a dozen literatures and languages and civilizations. He is caught up in the life of Alexandria and Rome, of Cairo and Baghdad, of Troyes and Narbonne and Montpellier; of Toledo and Cordova, Naples and Palermo, Padua, Venice, Amsterdam. He treads the streets of Prague and Wilna and Odessa as well as of London and Paris and New York. The finds at Elephantine and Ras Shamra, Lachish and the Roman Catacombs; Demotic Greek, Norman-French, Hoch Deutsch, Old Castilian; Roman Law; Gnostic heresies; Scholastic philosophy; medieval geographers — he meets all these and much more as he is drawn to follow out leading threads in Jewish literature. There is much truth in the Rabbinic saying that the Torah was given in the desert — that is, everywhere and anywhere — and in every language. If to be an educated man is to have the chords of one's mind attuned to the greatest number of human sounds, Jewish literature is one of the great instruments of education.

So may I conclude with a word of practical advice? Start anywhere and read anything. Start — why not? — with the *Bible in Spain*, and you are plunged at once into the story of the Marranos which will lead you to the story of Spain, of the Inquisition, of the discovery of the New World, of a hundred episodes and incidents of the Old. Start with *The Wars of the Jews* of Josephus and you are introduced to a whole ancient civilization in its variety and its stresses and tensions, as well as to the universal phenomenon of militant messianism so tellingly analyzed for our own day by M. Albert Camus in his *L'Homme Révolté*. Start even with a page of the ordinary *Humash* (and by a page I mean the whole of a page, all the contents of a page), and see where it will bring you. Take the marginal Masorah, and it leads you to the history of the text on which so much has been written and so much remains to be written. Take the *Toldot Aharon*, and you are led to consider the use made of the text in Talmudic literature which is in fact Talmudic literature. Take the Aramaic versions and ask what they are, and where and why they were made, and what is their relation to others in other languages. Take the commentators: the French school, Rashi, Rashbam; the Spanish school, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, and ask yourself in what they are alike and how they differ, and how their views stand today, and what is the aim and character of exegesis in general. Note even the different sorts of type used; and you are brought to the general history of typography and, eventually, to the general history of the alphabet on which an eminent Jewish scholar in this country has just produced a standard book. Begin on any one of these lines (and they are all bursting to view on every page of the most ordinary Rabbinic Pentateuch) and you are embarked on a hobby for life which, unlike some other hobbies, will make you at home in all periods and all times and places.

And read the books and don't trouble about the greatness. Greatness is a quality, I sometimes think, imputed to things by us. A book for us is great, I have urged, when we perceive its human significance and are stirred by it; but what we perceive depends on our powers of sight. I always think of the story of Whistler who, when he heard a critic say of one of his pictures "But I've never seen the Thames like that," retorted: "Don't you wish you had?"

The retort is of universal application. Our powers of appreciation, like our muscles, need developing, and, like our muscles, they are developed by exercise. We grow through activity. Books cannot be great to us unless we make them so, and we cannot make them so except by reading and re-reading them. He who reads a book for the hundredth time, goes the old Rabbinic proverb, is not

to be compared with the man who reads it for the hundred and oneth. G.K.C. was certainly right when he said that the Iliad is great because life is a fight, the Odyssey because life is a journey, the Book of Job because life is a riddle. But the prosaic statement of Mr. E. M. Forster is to the point even more: "Books have to be read (worse luck, for it takes a long time); it is the only way of discovering what they contain."



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ESSAYS
on
JEWISH
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