

A Work of Scholarship

A Review by Dr. Solomon B. Freehof

Rabbi Wolf Leiter of Pittsburgh has just completed and published the first of a series of projected scholarly studies. This book will never become a best-seller. It is, first of all, in Hebrew, which makes it not readily available to many who would be interested in Jewish scholarship. Moreover, many who are accustomed to the use of the Hebrew language will not find this book easy reading. Only the higher level among scholars, scattered all over the world, will give this book thorough examination. These

scholars, the choice scholars in the field, will appreciate its worth instantly and will benefit from the material which it brings together and the insights which it presents. This is a book for specialists but its value is for the entire field of Jewish scholarship.

Since this review is intended for the general reader, it would not be amiss if a non-technical explanation be made as to the nature and purpose of this book. It is a textual study of the Talmud. The Talmud is the foun-

dition of Jewish law and of a large portion of Jewish scholarship. Even the Bible itself must be understood in the light of Talmudic interpretation. Therefore, the exact text of the Talmud is of prime importance. If in the course of the centuries (the Babylonian Talmud was completed about the 6th century) the manuscripts became confused in certain passages, then certain later decisions based upon those passages can be incorrect. Many of the great discussions by later scholar may have arisen because the text of the Talmud upon which the discussion is based, is not in good shape.

The task of arriving at a correct text of any ancient work is one of the most difficult tasks in the whole realm of scholarship. The student

must first examine the context of the book being studied in order to form a first judgment as to which part of the text may possibly be incorrect. Then he must find other manuscripts than the one upon which the present edition is based. He must compare these various manuscripts, record all the variant readings and finally arrive, on the basis of his best judgment, at what seems to him to be the correct text.

The work of ascertaining the exact text of the Talmud is especially difficult. Due to the enforced wandering of the Jews from land to land, the burning of truckloads of Talmudic manuscripts, there is finally left in the world only one complete manuscript of the Talmud, namely, the famous Munich manuscript. Who knows whether that is still in existence? Fortunately a few years ago the Munich manuscript was photographed leaf by leaf and copies of the photographed manuscript are available in America.

A famous Talmudic text scholar, Rabinowitz, who lived in Paris, studied the Munich manuscript and published the variants in its text from the text of the printed Talmud. This he did for five of the 6 divisions ("Orders") of the Talmud. The third division ("Nashim") was not dealt with by Rabinowitz in his work "Dikduke Sofrim." It is the text of this third order of the Talmud which Rabbi Leiter is planning to study and to illuminate with the variant readings in order to establish the correct reading.

For this task the author cites the readings not only from the Munich manuscript but also from a manuscript of the great commentator, Rashi; also from other scholarly work which have never been used systematically before for the determination of the text of the Talmud. Many learned works by the great Babylonian teachers have been published from manuscripts discovered in the last fifty years. All this material is full of Talmudic quotations. Rabbi Leiter compares all these readings with the other variants which he has gathered.

His first book, which he entitled "Mi-Toroson Shel Rishonim," (from the teaching of the older scholars) is the text study of the tractate Gittin. He will take up in turn the other tractates until he completes the textual study of the entire Order (Nashim) of the Talmud.

The work is published under the imprint of the Maimonides Institute, and is dedicated to Julius Halperin who has given such devoted service to the establishment of the Institute which makes possible the continuance of these scholarly works. It will be a source of pride to the Jewish community of Pittsburgh that this book by Rabbi Leiter, a book which may be considered the foundation-stone for a monument of scholarship, was written in this city and will be studied and used by scholars all over the world.

Samuel Goldenberg, Yiddish Actor, Dead

NEW YORK—Samuel Goldenberg, fifty-nine, long one of the leading actors of the Yiddish stage, died at Unity Hospital.

His death resulted from a heart attack suffered Oct. 23 during the second act of "Apartment Seven," in which he was starring at the Parkway Theatre, Brooklyn.

He began his stage career thirty-three years ago and starred in Yiddish plays in many capital cities of Europe, Africa and South America. He was known chiefly as a ranking Yiddish actor, but appeared in many non-Yiddish productions.



DON'T THROW YOUR VICTORY AWAY!

Victory isn't just another day you celebrated. It's an *opportunity* to live happily, prosperously—securely. The extra money we have now can be dangerous, if we all tried to buy things not yet available in sufficient quantity.

Prices would go up . . . faster than salaries could keep pace with them. *You* and your family would suffer . . . making victory a bitter memory in-

stead of the prelude to a happy future it should be.

Don't throw *your* victory away—protect it in the years to come. Victory Bonds provide an opportunity to insure your future with *the best invest-*

ment in the world! And the longer you hold them, the better the interest you will get on your money. Buy *extra* Victory Bonds *now!*



BUY BONDS OF THE VICTORY LOAN!

KNOX GLASS ASSOCIATION

KNOX, PA.

This in an official U. S. Treasury advertisement—prepared under auspices of Treasury Department and War Advertising Council