

The People and The Book

"A Memorial To A Living Soul," Nathan Leiter, Jerusalem, 1964, issued by Maimonides Institute, Pittsburgh.

By **SOLOMON B. FREEHOF**

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There are at least fifty great Jewish communities in Eastern Europe which had been centers of Jewish life and learning, and which have ceased to exist as Jewish communities after Hitler's mass murders. Every one of them deserves a reverent eulogy recalling and perpetuating its life and its service.

High on such a list would be the great Galician metropolis of



Lemberg, the capital of Galicia. The city was founded in the 13th century and Jews were among its first settlers.

The Jewish community of

Dr. Freehof Lemberg had an honored history and its contribution to Jewish learning was immense.

One need only recall the names of the more famous ones who through their works earned a permanent place in the ever-expanding library of Talmudic legal studies. Joshua Falk, the author of "P'nei Jehoshua;" Zvi Ashkenazi and his work "Chacham Zvi;" and two generations ago the unforgettable Joseph Saul Nathanson and his great compendium of legal responsa "Shoel u-Meshiv."

The last Rabbi of Lemberg was Nathan Leiter, the father of the honored Rabbi of Pittsburgh, Wolf Leiter. Nathan Leiter was known by his book of responsa, "M'Oros Nathan."

Of course, as rabbi in a great Jewish metropolis, he had received many questions on Jewish law and practice, enough to fill three or four additional books of responses, as his son Wolf Leiter records in the preface of the book we are discussing:

"Before the deluge of blood which that wicked man (Hitler) brought over the lands of Europe, my father, my teacher, may his memory be a blessing, wrote from Lemberg that he would be sending me from time to time numbers of his legal responsa. He asked me to gather them and publish them under the title "A Memorial to a Living Soul," in memory of his mother who had died in Vienna in 1916."

"To my great sorrow, the correspondence between us ceased because the great destruction came and the Germans started their murderous attack on the

Jews of Europe. My father of blessed memory was one of the first to be killed as a martyr for the sanctification of God's Name."

Therefore, Rabbi Leiter now has published this book of responsa of his father, retaining the memorial title which his father had suggested but making it now a memorial for his martyred father as well as for his grandmother.

There are, all in all, 29 responsa from the late Rabbi of Lemberg and Rabbi Wolf Leiter then adds to the book one hundred and eleven responsa of his own.

The responsa are of the high grade of learning and clarity characteristic of the best type of this important literature. Wolf Leiter's responsa are of the special sort which he has developed in his earlier responsa collection, "Bes David;" that is to say, they avoid the intricacies of over-elaborate analysis and are rich in relevant references.

Any scholar writing on a specific legal subject is fortunate if Rabbi Leiter has discussed the subject in this book or his previous book, because he will find virtually every relevant reference to the other scholars who dealt with the theme.

While this book, "A Memorial to a Living Soul," was published in Jerusalem in 1964, it was issued by the Maimonides Institute of Pittsburgh.

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