

translated into Hebrew as part of his collection of articles called *Studies in Roman Law* (all in Hebrew), Jerusalem 1968.

The first article deals with the Roman term *vitae necisque potestas*, which is one aspect of the powers of the ancient Roman *paterfamilias*. Yaron deals with the question of the meaning and implications of *vita* in this context, and offers an original answer based on a comparison with legal texts in Hebrew, Aramaic and some other languages of the Near East.

The second article is a review of a study by Walter Selb of the so-called Syro-Roman Law-Book, written towards the end of the fifth century CE, probably in Greek, but preserved only in Syriac and some other oriental languages. Yaron's article constitutes a major contribution to the interpretation of this text, as evidenced by the critical edition by Walter Selb and Hubert Kaufhold, Vienna 2002.

of Aberdeen and started work on a doctorate under the supervision of Professor David Daube. He followed Daube to Oxford, and completed his DPhil there. Yaron, like his teacher Daube, was no 'mere' Roman lawyer. He was also entirely at home in Jewish Biblical and Talmudic law and in the laws of the ancient Near East. He knew the appropriate languages, and based his research on a close reading of the ancient texts in the original.

During the year 1956/7 he taught at the University of Aberdeen. In 1957 he returned to the Hebrew University and began teaching in the Faculty of Law, where he became full professor in 1968. He served as Dean of the Faculty between 1967 and 1971, when he was in charge of moving the Faculty back to the original campus on Mount Scopus. He was a founding editor of *Israel Law Review* between 1967 and 1983; Chief Librarian of the Jewish National and University Library, 1973-1978; Director of the Israel Broadcasting Authority, 1978-1984; and head of the Hebrew University's Magnes Press, 1968-1988 and 1990-1995. He was also head of the Israel State Archives between 1990 and 1992. This beside some political activity in the Likud party.

His many books and articles in Hebrew and English testify to his unusually wide range of expertise. We single out as examples his Hebrew book *Law in the Elephantine Papyri*, Jerusalem 1961, and his English books *Introduction to the Law of the Aramaic Papyri*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961, and *The Laws of Eshnunna*, Jerusalem, Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1969. (2nd rev. ed. Jerusalem, Magnes Press and Brill, Leiden 1988)

We publish, in Hebrew translation (with the author's permission), an article celebrating Yaron's achievements by his former pupil and scholar of Roman Law A. M. Rabello, first published in English in *Israel Law Review* 29, 1995. We also reprint here two of Yaron's English articles which he himself

The reviewer then lists several examples (based on a close, verse-for-verse comparison of the first chant and of excerpts from others with the original) in which the translation is inaccurate (e.g. *causă suae salutis* rendered as *in order for her to be saved* instead of *the source of his well-being*) or unclear (e.g. *dilaceratque comas* rendered as *razes his hair*), as well as cases in which both the letter and intent of the poetry, it seems, could have been better served; consequently his impression is that the rendition fails, on the whole, to convey the meaning and tone of the original as well as it might, while being disappointingly lacking in literary merit in its own right. A final and more subjective remark concerns the exaggeratedly elevated style of the translation, which often yields obscure or pompous lines, and lends the poem an incongruous pseudo-biblical tone.

זכרון לראשונים

Remembrance of Former Generations

Reuven Yaron, 1924-2014

In this issue we commemorate one of the leading twentieth-century scholars of Roman and Ancient Near Eastern Law, a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a man of many parts, Reuven Yaron.

Yaron was born in Vienna in 1924 and came on alyia to pre-Israel Palestine in 1939. He was one of the first law graduates of the Hebrew University. On graduation, he went to the University

Alon Navot

Baebii Italici Ilias Latina. E Latino in Hebraicum sermonem vertit, prolegomena scripsit, adnotationes, appendicem indicemque nominum adiecit Abraham Arouetty. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2015.

This is a review of Abraham Arouetty's Hebrew translation of *Ilias Latina* (henceforth *IL*), a verse epitome in Latin of Homer's *Iliad*, ascribed to Baebius Italicus and dated plausibly to Nero's reign. The reviewer points out some omissions and potentially misleading digressions in the introduction (such as the discussion of the incidental similarity in unknown authorship between the poems, where the translator admits, yet quickly glosses over, the entirely different circumstances of their composition), as well as mere speculations sometimes advanced as solid arguments (for example the supposed conclusion that *IL* ought to be assigned to the poet's youth). The reviewer likewise questions Arouetty's assertion that *IL* cannot be considered an abbreviated or partial translation of the *Iliad* but rather "a new and independent work, inspired by the Greek model", and argues that the differences between the *Iliad* and *IL* are for the most part a natural consequence of epitomizing and of the latter's Roman context and perspective, and do not necessarily have the far-reaching interpretative implications that the translator attributes to them. A concluding comment on the introduction rejects the translator's categorical claim that any attempt to translate *IL* into Hebrew in a meter other than dactylic hexameter must "distort" the original poem.

Yaron Vansover

Thoughts on School History: A Reply to Arieh Lev's Note

School history views academic history as its only source of inspiration and grants academic historians a central role in determining its agenda, from the wording of the curriculum and the teaching goals to the supervision of its implementation via the Subject Committee. However, as school history and academic history have different agendas, this becomes a problem.

In my opinion, above all, history in schools necessitates creating interest among the students. An academic historian's obligation to his listeners and readers is different. Being interesting is not necessarily a salient issue for academic history but it is so for school history. And it is also critical for public history – history which is conducted in the public sphere: documentary films, historical museums, among others. Both are deeply obligated to arouse interest: in schools, as noted, among the students, and in the public sphere, among the general population. This obligation is less clear when referring to academic history. Thus, I believe that the system would actually benefit if it turned its gaze from academic history as a source of exclusive inspiration, if it also looked towards public history and considered those who make it as sources of inspiration to be used in the classroom. It is from there rather than from the academia, that the hoped-for change in history teaching should come. Because the public historian and the school history teacher share a similar fate: both are captives of the need to create interest.

Italy, and it is being advanced with the aid of religious and cultural institutions in these countries and others.

For the most part, the book deals with the author's discoveries from the European Genizah, which are divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to new discoveries in biblical exegesis, and the second, to talmudic exegesis. The first section consists of five chapters which contain fragments of a commentary to many of the Samson stories in the Book of Judges, as well as fragments/parts of commentaries by relatives of Rashi to sections of Esther and Ecclesiastes, and various commentaries by a twelfth-century Italian rabbi named R. Menahem ben Shlomo. The second section consists of six chapters with commentaries and Tosafot to the Talmud by rabbinical scholars in Ashkenaz and France, as well as fragments from ancient works that until now were known only from excerpts found in later works, and now, for the first time, parts of the original works have been discovered. Each of the eleven chapters contains an introduction followed by the new edition of the work that was discovered and examined – as in any scientific edition of ancient texts.

In spite of several criticisms which are specified in the article, there is no doubt as to the value and importance of this innovative and comprehensive corpus. The author is a scholar of medieval *halakhah* and rabbinical literature, with considerable experience in the subject matter under discussion. The present volume is only the first in a series of the researches conducted by Professor Simcha Emanuel on the European Genizah.

dimensional, "from Luther to Hitler" argument, which is out of date in the context of present discussions of Israel-German relations and post-Holocaust studies.

Hananel Mack

Simcha Emanuel, *Hidden Treasures from Europe*,
Vol. I, Mekize Nirdamim, Jerusalem 2015

The term "European Genizah" refers to pages that were forcibly torn from Hebrew manuscripts in countries throughout Europe and used as material for binding books by non-Jews and as wrappings for various types of documents. Many of these pages were damaged beyond repair, while others remain undiscovered all these years in libraries and archives in different countries. However, many pages are gradually coming to light, and they contain parts of Hebrew works written in medieval Europe, particularly commentaries to the Bible and the Talmud.

In his book *Hidden Treasures from Europe, Vol. I*, Professor Simcha Emanuel of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Talmud Department brings the findings of this "genizah" to the forefront of scholarship. The book's introduction presents a general overview of the phenomenon of the European Genizah, the history of the research, and what it holds for the future. Apparently, knowledge of this phenomenon has existed for several hundred years. However, the research relating to this genizah has developed mainly in the last fifty years, primarily in Germany, Austria and

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development of human potential. Humanist socialism is opposed to any war or violence and solves political and social problems without using force. The principles of this socialism also contend that the citizen's responsibility is not only toward his fellow citizens but toward all inhabitants of the planet. Thus, poverty, injustice, and the other sicknesses of mankind will be eradicated.

I found in this book – despite its Frommian beauty (I believe that nobody would dispute the beauty of Fromm's writing) – a fair presentation of a utopia along with theoretical confusion, accompanied by some very problematic practical guidance. I have always loved utopias – their very impossibility shines a spotlight on what exists and what is desirable, and this is the beauty of this book. However, the combining of the utopias with practice stains them and demonstrates their very impossibility.

Oded Heilbronner

"Classical Germany"

Gad Yair, *Love is not praktish: the Israeli look at Germany*, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, Tel Aviv, 2015

Fania Oz Salzberger, *Israelis in Berlin*, Keter, Jerusalem (2001), 2014

This review article discusses two books about Israelis in Berlin. Both of these books argue that Israeli migration to and living in Germany and Berlin are something like an act of "return" for the "victims", characterized, on the one hand, by a brand new, post-Holocaust European and German interest in Jewish life, and on the other hand by the renewal of the pre-Holocaust German Diaspora. The reviewer believes that both books represent a one-

managed as a thing, his managers themselves become things; and things have no will, no vision, and no plan". The political system has enriched man materially, but impoverished him from a spiritual and human viewpoint by making man and culture material. Man has become alienated from himself "and bows down to his labour". A gloomy result is that the "average [person] feels insecure, lonely, depressed, and suffers from a lack of joy in the society of abundance". At this point Fromm's argument is weakened, since he states that responsibility for man's situation cannot rest with the socio-economic situation. He does not find nefarious intention in the system, but argues that man's character is shaped "by the life practices provided him by the structure of society". Fromm argues for and against the same thing in this part of the essay, and it is difficult to decide whether he was feigning innocence or really being naïve. Is it really untrue that certain people are destructive? Do such people really not have nefarious intentions when they harm freedom of thought, freedom of organization, and in particular, freedom of expression?

The fourth essay is daring and surprising: it contains nothing regarding disobedience. The essay deals with humanist socialism, which was mentioned at the end of the third essay. This socialism closes the circle that started with the critique of modern man and society, and becomes the source of salvation. From the individual's fears, errors, lack of consciousness, and alienation, one can reach liberation, with the correct guidance and in an organized strategic way. Fromm deals with a "different" kind of socialism – humanist socialism. He tries to characterize it, and to formulate its short-term and medium-term aims. This socialism is characterized by not being just a system of things and institutions but also a system of human relationships, and the highest value of any social and economic arrangement is man. Thus, the aim of society is to enable the full conditions for the complete

the masses, it is not just the idea that matters – this is a necessary but not a sufficient condition – the historical constellation that allowed the idea to be realized is also important, and this matter is not emphasized at all in Fromm's thought.

According to Fromm, those who express ideas and live according to them are *prophets*. They do not seek power and are not impressed by the regime's power, but prophesy and often pay a personal price. According to Fromm, a person who feels responsible is impelled to become a prophet – to call out loud and to awaken the rest of the citizens from their usual slumber. The ideas of prophets are exploited by the *priests*: they turn the idea into a formula. This way, the priests control the thoughts of everyone else – through "the right formula". Priests exist not only in religion but also in philosophy, science, and politics. Fromm presents Russell, Einstein, and Schweitzer as prophets. For example, Bertrand Russell, who plays a central role in this chapter, embodied in his life and thinking the idea of disobedience and the right and duty not to obey, stemming from the love of life. The problem with this chapter is that from the moment Russell and citations from his work are presented, Fromm loses direction, and so does the reader.

The third essay in the book, "Let Man Prevail", is more practical than its predecessors. It starts by describing the two camps: capitalism and socialism, which present themselves as intended to ensure the individual's freedom and autonomy, which Fromm doubts. Fromm seeks to examine the status of western man in the light of the intolerable gap between his immense intellectual achievements and his moral-emotional retardedness. He shows how the concentration of capital led to the formation of giant companies managed through organized hierarchical bureaucracies that treat people as "things" and manage them the way they manage "things"; Fromm says: "When man becomes a thing and is

the majority to obey the minority, the minority has created two tools: first – identifying virtue with obedience and sin with disobedience; and second – fear of force that is instilled so that people wish to obey. These enslaving tools have led to few disobeying with the majority obeying.

Fromm can be criticized on these points for relying on general philosophy to explain human actions and their results from a dialectical point of view, with the aid of history, psychology, and sociology, while completely ignoring politics. He speaks about the disobedient person rather than the *political* disobedient person, and in this chapter does not even approach the realm of politics, where it would be easy to locate the acts of disobedience and to discuss them clearly. In this, Fromm is no different from an entire generation, or many generations, who located the issue of obedience and disobedience in the realm of morality and its study in the personal-social field (with psychological, sociological, anthropological, philosophical, and historical explanations, whether dialectical or otherwise). In the last generation, a significant shift has occurred toward the political explanation, and today it is hard to see a serious discussion of disobeying the law that is not at least tangentially related to the field of politics. I believe, as I have argued in my book, *Civil Disobedience*, that the discussion of disobedience should be located, to the extent possible, within the realm of politics.

This criticism which I have just raised against the direction of Fromm's thought is well-demonstrated in the second essay, "Prophets and Priests". Fromm writes that "Ideas do not profoundly influence people when they are studied only as ideas and thoughts... Ideas can have an influence if they are realized by the person teaching them". Are iconic figures like Gandhi or Luther King influential? Without the masses who followed them, nothing would have happened. While their ideas do trickle down to

Chemi Ben-Noon

*On Disobedience: Thoughts about Thoughts on
Liberating Man and Society*

Erich Fromm, *On Disobedience: Why Freedom
Means Saying "No" to Power*, Resling 2015, trans.
Yotam Steinbock, scientific editor Prof. Moshe
Zuckermann, 120 pp.

Erich Fromm's book, *On Disobedience*, is composed of four short essays. Three of them deal with the issue of disobedience, while the fourth is completely unrelated to this topic. Most of the ideas in these essays have previously appeared in Fromm's other writings. The first essay, "Disobedience as a Psychological and Moral Problem", contrasts two positions. One, that obedience is a virtue and that achieving a better reality involves obedience, while disobedience is a sin; and the other, that human history is paved with acts of disobedience that have led to man's moral, spiritual, and intellectual development, and that it is precisely obedience that can lead humanity to total destruction. This follows Fromm's assumption that most people in positions of power are emotionally living in the Stone Age. As a result, Fromm argues, we are controlled by fear, greed, and hatred, along with old-fashioned clichés about state sovereignty and national honour. The tendency to obey stems, in Fromm's opinion, from a sense of personal security and the obedient individual's being protected within the community and state, not isolated, and perhaps even strengthened by this act, while in order to disobey one requires personal strength, courage, and personal development. Moreover, Fromm claims, due to the minority always ruling the majority, in order for

Ben-Gurion's time and age would be faulty if not impossible. Only lately, with the full opening of BG's Archives, new perspectives have been gained through these documents concerning Ben-Gurion's resignation in 1963 and his criticism of Levi Eshkol, his successor as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence all the way to the Six Day War. These issues seemed to have overcrowded the historiographical horizon to a degree that now allows a more balanced judgement by Professor Shapira herself.

In this rather short and limited biography, BG remains the one and only father of the nation, an indispensable – if undemocratic – source of courage, of devotion to the national cause, and especially as the leader who studied and comprehended the reality of Israel's birth and the powers at work at home, in the region and abroad. Action followed the study, sometimes reversing previous decisions at such a speed, that contemporaries had difficulty in following them – Shapira included. This "analytical" sort of active leadership required an understanding of BG's strategy regarding territory, including the areas in and around East Jerusalem and in the Arab-populated West Bank; it required a domestic political infrastructure that was needed to make decisions, and when missing, the personal weight of the leader would make the difference.

And finally, it required paying the ultimate price: about one percent of Israel's population, the 1948 generation, which fell in the War of Independence. In these circumstances, Ben-Gurion's recognition of the limits of power, his decision not to allow, in 1948, the occupation of the West Bank, which was possible militarily but not politically and morally, remained a matter of debate, to which Shapira's most recent book adds more confusion than clarification.

completely accurate. But then, one asks, could it have been otherwise? Has any Israeli prime minister been able to limit his work to just one realm? Even Ben-Gurion, who always claimed to be focused on one issue or another, worked "in multiple realms."

I also take issue with Lammfromm's contention that: "At the end of 1960, Eshkol became the leader of Mapai in practice. Ben Gurion failed in his leadership of Mapai while contending with 'the Affair,' and Eshkol was regarded as the one who resolved it by means of the Committee of Seven." In actuality, the reverse was true: Ben-Gurion remained all-powerful until 1963, doing whatever he pleased in the government and the party on every issue, and viewing Eshkol as his faithful aid who, he knew, would rescue him from any trouble that might arise.

In addition, I would expect a professional historian such as Lammfromm to refrain from expressions of opinion beginning with the problematic words "if only" (p. 534), particularly in Hebrew and in Israel, where the futility of such speculation is often emphasized with the well-known sarcastic retort: "If only grandma had wheels..."

Shlomo Aronson

Anita Shapira, *Ben-Gurion, Father of Modern Israel*,
Am Oved, Tel Aviv 2015.

Anita Shapira's reputation is well established, and her major contributions to the study of Israel's history during the mandatory period and the early years of independence have been recognized for several decades as a tool without which the study of David

This highlights a larger problem related to Lammfromm's decision to write what he calls a "political biography." The meaning of the author's classification of the text as a "political biography" is crystal clear. It means that he trained his attention on Eshkol's political activity and did not stray from it; that personal, intimate, and family matters were not of interest to him; and that the same is true of Eshkol's financial problems, the character of his social milieu, his cultural aspirations, and other such issues. Also of no interest to Lammfromm was Eshkol's work in the realm of foreign policy and defense, which were undoubtedly of critical importance to the history of the State of Israel and certainly to the life of Eshkol himself. This raises the question of whether it is truly possible to explain Eshkol's political life without considering his attitude toward his own kibbutz, Degania Bet; without an explanation of his complex relationship with David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir; and without an account and an analysis of his complex relationship with his three wives and four daughters, and his tempestuous love life. Most problematic, however, is the distinction he makes between Eshkol's 'political' work on the one hand and his work in the realm of foreign policy and defense, to which the author intentionally pays no attention, on the other. In the case of such a major Israeli leader, can such areas be effectively considered in isolation from one another?

I conclude by pointing out a number of problematic comments that appear in the text. The first is Lammfromm's assertion that Eshkol "was not a charismatic leader" and his characterization of him instead as a "bureaucratic leader." I disagree with this assessment. In reality, Eshkol possessed unique charisma that enabled him, among other things, to become one of the most important prime ministers in the history of the state of Israel. Another problem relates to his observation that Eshkol was "a man of multiple realms." Here, Lammfromm's characterization is

providing a professional historical account of Eshkol's life. By the end of the book we have obtained a clear understanding of its protagonist, especially of his virtues and successes, but also of some of his problems and the disagreements associated with him that emerged in the course of his life.

Despite its virtues, *Levi Eshkol: A Political Biography* also suffers from a number of significant weaknesses. We begin with method. Lammfromm's genre of writing is based on the premise that by depicting some parts of Eshkol's life it is possible to understand the whole of it. In the case of this book, however, I am not certain that this is the case. This problem is compounded by the fact that the biography begins at a curious point in time – Eshkol's forty-eighth birthday – for which there is no justification. At this point in his life Eshkol had already been a well-known figure and a prominent member of the Mapai leadership for some ten years. A possible explanation for Lammfromm's decision here is the fact that his book is based on his doctoral dissertation, for which, due to the technical limitation on the number of pages permitted, he chose 1944 as a starting point. Whatever the reason, the biography's failure to address some parts of Eshkol's life prior to 1944, beginning in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s, is problematic.

In order to effectively explore Eshkol the politician, as claimed by the book's title, Lammfromm would have had to begin his account many years earlier. After all, how is it possible to explain Eshkol's political activity after 1944 without an in-depth understanding of how he entered political life in the first place; how the powerful bodies he joined influenced the political system of the Yishuv in Palestine; and how he succeeded in accruing such power and influence? Simply stated, without analyzing Eshkol's life during the 1920s and 1930s, it is impossible to understand Eshkol as a politician in the 1940s and 1950s.

includes stories and anecdotes. If this serves as an introduction to the study of the original text of the Tanya, it is then an important accomplishment.

Yossi Goldstein

A Political Biography?

Arnon Lammfromm, *Levi Eshkol: A Political Biography*, 1944-1969 (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2014), 573 pp.

The book in question is a biography written by a professional and competent historian, Dr. Arnon Lammfromm. In this biography, Lammfromm presents readers with many of the major events that make up the life story of Levi Eshkol, from 1944, the year in which Lammfromm maintains that Eshkol became a leader of the Mapai party, until his death in 1969. In doing so he highlights major events in Eshkol's life: his emergence as a central political figure in Mapai and, subsequently, his appointment as treasurer of the Jewish Agency and as the head of its Settlement Department; his appointment as a minister in the government of David Ben-Gurion in 1952 – first as the Minister of Agriculture and Development and a few months later as Finance Minister, a position he would hold until 1963; and finally, his tenure as Prime Minister and Minister of Defense until the Six Days War of 1967, and his continued tenure as Prime Minister until his death less than two years later. The biographer has done thorough work,

considerations to every aspect of human life. It aims for the moral and religious advancement of the person. The psychological and physical well-being, in this context, is perceived only as a necessary condition for moral and spiritual progress. Hence, the combination of religious ethics and psychotherapy undermines the foundations of both disciplines. When ethical or religious judgments interfere with the scientific objectivity of medical considerations, therapy may well be compromised. Alternative medicine, based on Kabbala, is medically unreliable. On the other hand, religious ethics, perceived as fulfillment of God's will, loses its sense when it becomes utilitarian, centered on the psychological needs of the patients.

Fortunately, there is little support for this thesis either in the book of Tanya, or in the biography of its author. The Tanya as a book of Hasidic thought uses an impersonal style, unlike the dialogic and personal style found, for instance, in some writings of Braslav Hasidism.

The comprehensive historical biography of R. Shneur Zalman by Prof. I. Etkes reveals that he was inclined to refrain from any kind of personal and psychological counseling. Instead, he concentrated on religious and spiritual guidance, consolidated in his book of Tanya, which functions as a substitute to personal counseling. In addition, he even issued some formal rules, "Takanot de-Liazni", intended to limit any kind of personal counseling.

The Tanya is a book that may appeal to people who are interested in its moral, spiritual and religious teachings. The motivated reader is inclined to overcome linguistic and terminological difficulties. At the other end, the average reader, who lacks motivation, is deterred by the language and the contents of the Tanya. *The Psychology and Biography of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi* tries to appeal to this reader by presenting the Tanya as a method of psychotherapy. It is legible, interesting and

Shneur Zalman of Liadi, which is similar to a therapy. The Tanya is well known as a book of Hasidic ethics and Hasidic thought. Obviously, none of its scholars and interpreters would classify the Tanya as a book of applied psychology. Hence, the question arises whether and to what extent this book reflects the main contents and the most important values of the Tanya? Does the book of Tanya support the thesis that it is a current method of psychological therapy?

The author claims to present the main contents of the Tanya. However instead, he selects only themes and ideas which support his main thesis and discards what is, in his judgment, irrelevant to psychological therapy. Thus, he concentrates on the first part of the Tanya, dealing with ethics and psychology. On the other hand, the meditative and contemplative contents of the second part of the Tanya, "Shaar ha-Yichud v'ha-Emunah", is excluded, as it is considered irrelevant to the thesis. Thus, the highest value of Chabad Hasidism, love of God and adherence to Him, becomes marginal.

The Tanya recommends contemplative observation as a way to generate love and awe of God. In this book, however, observation becomes a means of psychological diagnosis and treatment. The author has the good intention to make the book of Tanya more accessible to the average reader. Nevertheless, his utilitarian approach limits the scope of the book, distorts its main values and portrays the great spiritual and religious leader as a psychotherapist (a "shrink")

Psychotherapy and religious ethics are fundamentally different. Psychotherapy, as a branch of medicine, is non-judgmental. It assumes that moral and religious judgments are not supposed to interfere with medical considerations. Psychotherapy aims for the physical and mental well-being of the patient. The book of Tanya, on the other hand, as a book of religious ethics, applies moral

distortion, as it overlooks Popper's straightforward assertions that the classical theory of rationality as certitude is erroneous and that rationality is open-mindedness, namely, willingness to accept criticism.

This review presents the author as the current national philosopher, the heir of the late Yeshayahu Leibowitz as a rationalist religious Jewish political thinker. He is highly critical of Israel as a theocracy and, even though his political position is right-wing whereas that of Leibowitz is more centrist, yet they share the love for peace. Like Leibowitz, Abraham implies that the position of non-observant Jews – both Jewish and philosophical – is inferior to that of observant Jews. The converse is not true: non-observant Jews may view observant ones as equals. As a non-observant Jew, this reviewer is understandably disappointed at the absence in this book of discussion of this 'fact'.

Leah Orent

The book of Tanya as a Method of Psychotherapy:
English Abstract

Yehiel Harari, *The Psychology & Biography of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi*, Tel Aviv, Miskal Yedioth Ahronoth and Chemed Books, 2015

"The Psychology and Biography of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi" aims to present the book of Tanya as a method of psychological therapy. This book claims that the Tanya is a kind of an invitation to an intimate conversation with its author, Rabbi

irrationalism. This book is scathingly opposed to such leanings. This is refreshing.

This book claims to present fundamentalism as the most acute problem that faces the West today and the West as unable to stop it. (Its Hebrew subtitle reads, "*On Fundamentalism, Skepticism, and Philosophical Maturation*".) This is inaccurate; for the book offers new and idiosyncratic definitions of the terms "fundamentalism", "skepticism", and related terms. What is defined here as "fundamentalism" is one kind of dogmatism, namely, the claim for certitude that rests on some authority; but the term is used here as the label for any dogmatism, including the one that rests on science. And what is here defined as "skepticism" is not only the denial that certitude can be rationally achieved, but Pyrrhonist skepticism, namely the proposal that skeptics should avoid taking any position. Dogmatism and Pyrrhonist skepticism share the proposal that certitude is a necessary condition for advocating any position. The book is a monograph that claims to explain current global crises – both philosophical and political – in a manner that suggests a simple cure: allow yourself to advocate a position in a "not steadfast" manner, namely, as a conjecture, but keep an open mind and listen to criticism. This is a most important and obviously viable contribution to both philosophy and politics – national and international alike. This option, the "synthetic option", is claimed to be both new and far-reaching: the only reasonable way to conduct an effective struggle – philosophical and political – against both dogmatism and Pyrrhonist skepticism.

This review translates the author's contentions from his idiosyncratic presentation to one that follows standard terminology. This suffices to show that the author's view was heralded already in 1945 – by Karl Popper in his *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Chapter 24. The author discusses Popper's position and ascribes to him Pyrrhonist skepticism; this is a gross

'tradition, way of life, values' and the like. What they all have in common is lack of precision, which is tailored down to the needs of a politician in persuading a rather confused public. Mr Zohar claims that if a nation departs from its 'national conception/tradition/values' and their ilk, not only does it cease to be this particular nation, but it ceases to be a nation *tout court*. I question this historical ruling, giving as an example the Egyptian and the Greek nations. But my main point is that such expressions as 'the Jewish conception' can be interpreted in various ways both by Mr. Zohar and by his various opponents, since unlike the *halacha* it does not, and cannot, give us detailed guidance at every step of our daily life. Such concepts may not be empty, but they are wide open.

Joseph Agassi

The Current National Philosopher

Michael Abraham, *Truth and yet not Steadfast*,
Yedioth Ahronoth, 2016.

The present reviewer finds this book highly inaccurate and very problematic, while welcoming it nonetheless as a clear and reasonable addition to the discussion of state and church in Israel. This is a very important political issue in Israel, yet it is being suppressed in current Israeli public discussions, mainly because prevalent attitudes to it are increasingly leaning towards

My second example is the Hebrew word *maarechet*, which means something between 'setup' and 'establishment'. I recount a story concernint the appointment, in an Israeli university, of a new incumbent of a prestigious endowed chair. The committee was given the names of three candidates, one was plainly a bad scholar; the other an average scholar in the proper sense: neither too good nor too bad; and the third was a great original scholar with a well-deserved international reputation. The one finally elected was not the great scholar, but rather the average one. When I asked the head of the committee about the reasons for that choice he explained to me that, well, yes, in a previous generation the great scholar might well have been preferred, but nowadays the *maarechet* would rather appoint someone who has done much for the university in terms of getting external grants, sitting on important committees, supervising a large number of graduate students, and the like. His words about the *maarechet* reminded me of what Goethe's Faust says in lines 575-577 of Part One of *Faust*:

Was ihr den Geist der Zeiten heißt
 Das ist im Grund der Herren eigener Geist
 In dem die Zeiten sich bespiegeln.

My third example comes from Israeli politics. Some time in the winter of 2016, a member of the Knesset, Miki Zohar, proposed a bill which would retsrict the opening of shops and supermarkets on the Sabbath in the midst of towns and vllages (but not in outlying shopping malls), and would limit public transport on the Sabbath to vehicles owned by private companies, not by the state or a city council. In both cases, this would still imply an infringement of the *halachah*, Jewish religious law. Mr. Zohar made it clear that his proposed legislation was not a matter of *halachah*, but rather of keeping to something which he calls 'the Jewish concept' or 'conception' (*Raayon Yehudi*). He also uses expressions like

English Abstracts

John Glucker

No Mere Semantics

In this essay I discuss the use – or rather abuse – in contemporary Hebrew of a number of words and expressions in a sense which is somewhat remote from their proper and original meaning, and argue that this is being done not as an accident of linguistic usage, but out of deep-rooted social and political convictions, often (but not always) also representing 'Politically Correct' standards.

My first example comes from ordinary Israeli academic jargon, where a university teacher can be decribed as 'good' (and similar expressions like 'excellent', 'brilliant', 'great') or 'average' (*beinoni*), but never as 'bad' (or 'incompetent', 'ignorant', not to mention 'charlatan'). Common sense tells us that 'average' is something in the middle between 'good' and... well, it must be 'bad'. Why not say of a bad scholar that he is what he is, bad? I argue that this is due, at least partly, to plain PC. One does not wish to be offensive to a professor who is a bad scholar, so one uses a 'middling' expression. It may also be due to a misplaced need to honour the university: 'my' university is so very distinguished that it has good scholars, average scholars, but – by implicaton – no bad scholars. And what about honouring the plain truth? My colleague, Israel Prize winner Professor Meir Sternberg, was once faced, in an interview, with a question concerning 'average universities', and answered unhesitatingly: "An average university is plainly a national disaster".

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