

Acceptance Speech by the Recipient of the Judaica Reference Book Award

Louis H. Feldman

Yeshiva University
New York, NY

I want to express my sincere thanks to Mrs. Sarah Levy, the Judaica Reference book Award Committee, and the Association of Jewish Libraries for this special honor. Coming as it does from bibliophiles, guardians of and guides to the kingdom of books, it is especially appreciated.

I have been asked to say something about my book, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship*, upon which I worked for approximately thirty years. My goal was to provide a tool for the scholar and for the layperson in the field, not only of Josephus, but also of the history of the Second Commonwealth generally. For the period extending from 1937 through 1980, I have tried to indicate and, in most cases, to evaluate critically all work, both scholarly and popular, that has been done in the following areas:

- bibliography of Josephus and of the Second Commonwealth
- the text of Josephus
- translations into modern languages
- the Latin and Syriac versions
- the Slavonic version
- the Hebrew paraphrase known as Josippon
- Josephus' life
- general accounts of Josephus
- Josephus' paraphrase of the Bible
- Josephus as historian of the post-Biblical period
- Josephus as historian of the Roman period
- Herod
- the period after Herod until the outbreak of the war against the Romans
- the war against the Romans
- special problems in connection with Josephus' works
- Josephus' sources
- views on the Jewish religion
- interpretation of Halakhah
- views on the Samaritans, the Pharisees, and the divergent Jewish sects
- Josephus and Christianity
- Josephus on proselytes and sympathizers
- Josephus and archaeology
- vocabulary and style
- influence.

Each topic is subdivided, with a total of 428 subtopics and 5543 entries, for which the chief problems, the state of the question in modern scholarship, and my own views are presented. There are 78 pages of indices,

which—I want to assure this assemblage—were not compiled by a graduate assistant, but by myself, and which contain references to specific passages in Josephus and other writers, to individual words in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Aramaic, and other languages, and to the names of all cited scholars.

If the student is writing a paper on any topic directly or indirectly connected with Josephus—Josephus' conduct as a general in the Galilee; the relationship between the Jews and the Spartans; the question as to whether the Jews were citizens of Alexandria; Josephus versus the Talmud on the treatment of animals; the relationship of the Zealots to the Essenes and to the Dead Sea Sect; the Arabic version of the *Testimonium Flavianum* (the passage about Jesus in Josephus); or the questions as to whether there was a suicide at Masada and whether it was justified—there are separate entries for each. Moreover, there are no abbreviations of titles of periodicals and no *op. cit.*; if a work is referred to under more than one heading, the full entry is repeated. The book also contains a section of fourteen pages on work that remains to be done—suggested topics for doctoral dissertations or other research, why they are important, and how they should be carried out.

Three years ago, a special symposium was held in Israel devoted solely to Josephus as historian of Eretz-Israel, to which eighteen scholars contributed papers. Two weeks ago I, together with several others, received an invitation to contribute to a symposium which will be published in *Midstream* magazine on the question of the reliability of Josephus.

In December, a symposium on the subject of Josephus as a historian will be held under the auspices of the American Philological Association in Washington where I shall be joined by four other panelists. Why this interest? I believe that there are five major reasons:

1) Josephus is our most important source, by far, for Jewish history of the Second Commonwealth, even if one must read him with a critical eye: To appreciate this, one should compare what we know of the revolt against the Romans in 66–74, about which he writes, with what we know of the War of Quietus in 115–117 or the Bar Kochba rebellion in 132–135.

2) Josephus is our chief guide to the geog-

raphy and topography of Israel; and in the land where archaeology is the national hobby, one digs, as Yadin did at Masada, with Josephus in one hand and a spade in the other.

3) Josephus in his paraphrase and expansion of the Bible is a most important source for our knowledge of Halakhah and Aggadah, antedating the codification of the Mishnah by a century and the Midrashim usually by several centuries.

4) Josephus is one of the most important historians of the Graeco-Roman world, a major commentator on the last century of the Roman Republic and on the first century of the Roman Empire (against which he led an army and to which he ultimately surrendered). He occupies a significant place in the Hellenistic-Roman historiographical tradition and is one of the few major sources for our knowledge of Hellenistic Greek.

5) Josephus is the quintessential modern Jew, who, as I have tried to show, like a recent American president, has left us in his *Autobiography* (the first extant autobiography from antiquity, by the way) and in his *Jewish War* the tapes with which we may indict him. Like the proponents of the Peace Now movement in modern-day Israel, Josephus sought an accommodation with the Palestinians. Moreover, he sought a *modus vivendi* with the two great powers of his day—the Romans to the West and the Parthians (in modern Iraq and Iran) to the East. Like the Ultra-Orthodox Neturei Karta and Satmar Hasidim of our day, he regarded the Jews as a religious rather than as a national group. He was particularly vehement in his opposition to the fanatics of his day, the ultra-nationalist revolutionaries, such as John of Gischala and his followers, who were intent on provoking a confrontation with the Palestinians of their day and who sought to expel them from the land of Israel.

To these five sources of interest we may perhaps add a sixth factor: Josephus is simply fascinating to the point of supplying material for several past and future Hollywood movies or TV extravaganzas. He is the one who tells us, for example, and at length, how a black Ethiopian princess surrendered her

(continued on page 76, column 3)

Sperber, David. *A Dictionary of Greek and Latin Terms in Rabbinic Literature.* Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1984. 230 p. ISBN 9652260509. \$32.50.

A specialized dictionary consisting of almost 200 Greek and Latin legal terms in Rabbinic literature. The author provides the user with the following types of information for each term: definition in English; illustrative texts in translation; parallels; related references; variant readings; comparative material from Hellenistic, Roman and juristic papyrological sources; and full bibliographic references. The work includes a Greek and Latin index. Rabbinic scholars, philologists and students of ancient law will find this dictionary helpful.

Wallach, Jehuda L. *Israeli Military History: a Guide to Sources.* New York: Garland, 1984. 291 p. ISBN 0824090616. \$40.50.

A bibliography of books published largely in the 20th century, in Hebrew or Western languages, pertaining to the military history of the Jewish people from antiquity to the present. Each chapter includes an essay on the historical period under discussion, as well as a description of the major sources in the accompanying detailed bibliography. Relevant archives, libraries, and museums in Israel, as well as selected journals, are listed in an appendix. The work is indexed by author.

Dr. Charles Cutter is Head, Judaica Department, Brandeis University Libraries. Micha F. Oppenheim, is Senior Cataloger, Jewish Theological Seminary of America. They are co-authors of Jewish Reference Sources: A Selective, Annotated Bibliographic Guide. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982).

Judaica Reference Book Nominated (continued from p. 72, column 3)

American Libraries might have been accompanied by corresponding Freimann numbers and more usefully placed with each text as opposed to constituting a separate index. Nonetheless, Gershon Cohen has done a commendable job in the preparation of this catalog, and Yeshiva University can be proud of its fine incunabula holdings. [See related cover story by Menahem Schmelzer in this issue.—Eds.]

(continued in column 2)

Books Nominated (continued)

de Lange, Nicholas. *Atlas of the Jewish World.* New York: Facts on File, 1984.

This beautifully illustrated work, intended to chronicle the history of the Jewish people, is divided into three sections. The first, dealing with the historical background of the Jewish people, is highlighted by maps depicting the distribution of Jewish population. The second focuses on the cultural heritage of the Jews throughout the ages and around the world. The final section is devoted to the Jewish world today, providing a survey of world Jewry by regions and countries.

Appended reference materials include a gazetteer, glossary, bibliography and index. While this lovely book will find its rightful place on most Judaica library shelves, its value is primarily pictorial. Textually, most of the information is cursory at best, and can be found in many other sources.

Zubatsky, David; Berent, Irwin. *Jewish Genealogy: A Sourcebook of Family Histories and Genealogies.* New York: Garland, 1984.

The authors attempt to provide a comprehensive bibliography of "published and unpublished Jewish genealogies, family histories and individual family names." Similar in format to Dan Rottenberg's *Finding Our Fathers* (New York: Random, 1977), this book has been researched more extensively and refers readers to archives as well as articles and monographs.

The body of the work is arranged alphabetically by family name. Entries in the bibliography are cross-referenced. Annotations and/or biographical descriptions are provided to aid the user in identifying the cited family. Locations of cited materials are given, except for journal articles. Coverage is world-wide. The work is enhanced by the authors' use of the genealogical entries in the "Judaica Americana" section of the journal *American Jewish History*, with citations of family histories and their location in the American Jewish Historical Society.

Only a limited number of foreign and domestic repositories were surveyed, and the authors do not provide a clear statement of scope, leaving doubt as to the comprehensiveness of the work. Inconsistent transliterations are an additional weakness of the book.

Nevertheless, until something better replaces it, this will prove a standard bibliographic tool for the genealogical researcher.

Feldman (continued from p. 73)

capital city to Moses out of her love for him; how Cleopatra attempted to seduce the infamous Herod; how a certain Mary devoured her own child during the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans; and, of course, how 960 religious fanatics committed mutual suicide rather than surrender to the Romans at Masada, the original Jonestown. Moreover, Josephus is by far our most important source for our knowledge of that strange, monastic-like sect, so reminiscent of the later Christians, known as the Essenes, who refused to marry to protect themselves against women's wantonness, as Josephus puts it, being persuaded that no woman ever keeps her pledge to one man. He is, in short, one of the most unlovable of men, except that at least three women did marry him.

I shall close with the anecdote which I cite in my introduction from Cicero (*Pro Archia* 10.25), about the worthless poet who had composed an epigram about the Roman dictator Sulla, and who was rewarded by him with a gift of property from proscribed persons, on the condition that he should not write anything thereafter. On the basis of my critical evaluation of the scholarship in the field, perhaps I shall be forgiven for expressing the hope—or prayer—that one of the wealthier and more merciful foundations will establish a fund to give grants on similar conditions, or, at the very least, on the condition that scholars will read what has been written in their field before they embark with pen in hand.

Reference Books in Jewish Studies from Garland

- * *Jewish Genealogy: a Sourcebook of Family Histories and Genealogies*, by Davis S. Zubatsky and Irwin M. Berent. 452 pp. \$33.
- * *Jewish Mysticism: An Annotated Bibliography*, by Sheila A. Spector. 426 pp. \$50.
- * *Josephus: a Supplementary Bibliography*, by Louis H. Feldman. 712 pp. \$90.

Watch for These:

- * *Encyclopedia of Jewish American History and Culture*, edited by Sanford Pinsker and Jack Fischel.
- * *Bibliography of Antisemitism, 1984-85*, edited by Sue Fox, for the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism.

Garland Publishing Inc.
136 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016