Book Reviews

Edited by
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Yordim: *Leaving the Promised Land for the Land of Promise,* by Micha Lev. Woodbine House, 1985. 336 pp. $14.95

There is an old proverb that both cautions and consoles us. "No soup," it assures us, "is ever served as hot as it is cooked." This compressed piece of folk wisdom is meant to point up the inevitable gap between the dream envisioned and the dream fulfilled, the inescapable disparity between the ideal and the real.

The dream of the Return to Zion has not escaped the fate which the proverb foretells. It was firmly believed that the reconstituted Homeland would attract Jews in massive numbers from every corner of the free world. This has not happened. Even more disappointing has been the large numbers who, as the subtitle of Micha Lev's novel puts it, have left the Promised Land for America, the land of promise. Nearly 10% of Israel's population has left with no intention of returning. These people are called *Yordim.*

In Hebrew, *Yordim* is a prejorative label. It carries heavy connotations of abandonment, disloyalty and even betrayal. Former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin called them traitors and deserters. The *Yordim* constitute what one observer called "a national catastrophe." The *Yordim* are a very painful subject for Israel, and the *Yordim* themselves are not free from pain either. Micha Lev's novel deals with this latter pain as we trace it in the lives of members of the Lvov family, those who came to America and those who are left behind in Haifa.

Lev is admirably suited to write this novel for in a sense he too is a *Yored* (singular of *Yordim*). Born in Philadelphia and given an intensive Jewish education together with a secular education our author made *aliyah* with his wife shortly after the Yom Kippur War. In Israel, Lev was appointed a Lecturer in Social Work at Haifa University. In addition, he did vital work on Israel's northern border as a specialist in crisis intervention. After five years he returned to America with his wife and sabra daughter, Elonna. It is here that "Yordim" was written.

Lev's main protagonists are Yosef and Nissim Lvov who come to Philadelphia a few years apart, each impelled by different motivations and each fully intending to return to their native Haifa. Their dreams of America, like the dreams that gave birth to Israel itself, fall short of fulfillment. Indeed, they almost turn into nightmares. In addition, there is the burden of guilt and longing which weighs upon them. How their destinies unfold is the substance of the novel. Whether they will in fact return gives it its suspense.

I found "Yordim" a very difficult book to put down, almost as difficult as it was to pick up. Like so many lovers and boosters of Israel, I have been embarrassed by the very existence of *Yordim.* Like so many unpleasant phenomena, the *Yordim* invite denial. "Let's talk about more pleasant subjects." This has been the attitude both in Israel and abroad. But Lev's novel has forced us to confront the problems of emigration or at the very least, acknowledge its existence. Once I overcame my own reluctance and began to read "Yordim," I found myself unable to stay away from it until I finished it.

This is Lev's first novel but he handles the novelist craft with the deft skill of a veteran writer. The story unfolds swiftly and surely involving us in the lives of its protagonists. We find ourselves sharing

their hopes, feeling their hurts, reeling under their disappointments. We achieve a rare sense of identification with Yosef and Nissim because Lev treats them with so much compassion and empathy. He obviously cares about them. In writing about his protagonists, I suspect that Lev is undergoing some personal catharsis, is revealing a piece of himself, is confronting his own ambivalence and feelings of guilt over having left the Promised Land.

Such is the impression we get from the jacket of the book. We get a rear view of the taxi that Yosef drives in Philadelphia with its Pennsylvania license plates. It faces down Broad Street toward City Hall on the top of whose tower William Penn is quite visible, as are a few other prominent buildings that make up the Philadelphia skyline. But then in smaller scale we see the very familiar and distinctive buildings that are so spontaneously evocative of Israel's landscape. And the taxi's bumper sticker carries both an American and an Israeli flag.

In addition to providing the reader with a glimpse into the souls of two *Yordim,* Lev also offers us views of life in Israel and America which are informative and insightful. Consider, for example, this excerpt from a letter that Nissim writes to a friend back home:

"It's funny to me to watch how Americans live. They skimp on time and money, trying to save them in wasteful ways. They go through the newspaper for an hour and clip out coupons that will save them ten cents on a bar of soap. They drive from store to store for 'sales' and spend more money on gasoline than they save on what they're buying. They buy frozen dinners at the supermarket so they don't have to waste time cooking. Then they go home and waste the whole night eating their dinner in front of the TV set. Sometimes I think that too much time can be harder to handle then too little, too much freedom harder to handle then not enough."

The proverb cited at the beginning of this review also contained a measure of solace. It reminded us of a common characteristic of ALL soups, and by extension, of all adventures in nation building. It is sobering to remember that in America itself, 30% of the immigrants who came here between 1890 and World War I eventually returned to the countries from which they came. Even among Jews who came to America to flee pogroms, 10% did not remain. Israel's emigration problem is not without parallels. Indeed we recently witnessed a large group of Russian Jews returning from America to the Soviet Union! Needless to say however, America can far more readily do without its emigrants than can Israel.

"Yordim" has given special prominence to this problem. Hopefully it will also serve as a catalyst to confront it. If it does, we will be even more deeply indebted to Micha Lev.

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Jewish Values in Bioethics, edited by Levi Meier. Human Sciences Press, New York, 1986. 195 pp.

In a rare characterization of different spheres of religious law, the Sages of the Mishnah refer to subjects with ample biblical foundations as "bodies of Torah." *Halakhot* which derive primarily from tradition are described as "mountains hanging by a hair" (*Hagigah* 1,8). Judging by the limited space devoted to medical *halakha* in biblical as well as talmudic sources, one could hardly consider it as one of the major areas of religious concern. Yet it is this area which has in redrawn a surprisingly large share of the attention-not confined to Jews generally committed to the discipline of the *halakha*-directed toward issues of ethical moment. Rabbi Jakobovits' *Jewish Medical Ethics,* originally published in 1959, was the first major work devoted to this subject. As one can see even from the selected

bibliography (all in English) appended at the end of the present volume, there is now a spate of literature which aims at an assessment of new developments in medicine from the perspective of Jewish tradition.

Jewish Values in Bioethics was edited by Rabbi Meier on the basis of the Salick lectures at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, where he serves as chaplain. Part I is primarily concerned with problems relating to the treatment of gravely or terminally ill patients and embraces the following contributions:

1. L. Meier, "Code and No-Code: A Psychological Analysis and the Viewpoint of Jewish Law."
2. F. Rosner and D. Bleich, "Risks versus Benefits in Treating the Gravely Ill Patient: Ethical and Religious Considerations."
3. L. Meier, "Filial Responsibility to the Senile Parent: A Jewish Approach.
4. I. Jacobovits, "Ethical Problems Regarding the Termination of Life."

Part II deals with broader issues of ethical concern and includes theses essays:

1. E. Wiesel, "A Singular Patient."
2. V.E. Frankl, "The Meaning of Suffering."
3. I. Greenberg, "Toward a Convenantal Ethic of Medicine."
4. E. Rackman, "Jewish Medical Ethics and Law."
5. D.M. Feldman, "The Ethical Implications of New Reproductive Techniques."
6. L. Meier, "Visiting the Sick: An Authentic Encounter."

Despite the variety of contributors to the discussions involving Jewish law, one notes a certain implicit methodological concensus. In the area of medical ethics it is not feasible to simply search the *halakhic* literature for answers to specific questions of medical practice. The crucial questions which face the contemporary Jewish ethicist derive from innovations in medical technology for which there are no clear cut provisions in ancient sources. It is true that some decisors have displayed remarkable ingenuity in extracting answers to unprecedented questions from talmudic passages, such as, for example, those concerning artificial insemination and surrogate parenthood. Contemporary responsa on such subjects as eye banks, brain death, and organ transplants serve to give new meaning to the rabbinic injunction, "Turn in it (the Torah), turn in it, for everything is in it:" (Abot 5,26). However, the contributors to this volume have set as their aim the delineation of the ethical concepts which are implicit in the *halakhic* literature.

The direction is already indicated by the title of this volume which refers to Jewish values rather than Jewish law. A number of the contributors address themselves explicitly to the methodology by which the *halakha* operates. Most articulate is Emanuel Rackman who presents what he terms the "demythologization" of the *halakhic* process. Contrary to the impression that the Orthodox view of Jewish law posits its absolute immutability, Rackman underlines the dynamic elements which result in creative development. *Halakhic* innovation results from three factors: logic, the sense of justice, and the social needs. The latter, although subjective in nature, has, according to Rackman, a legitimate place in the *halakhic* process. He illustrates; by citing the lenient position of one decisor who would permit the abortion of a Tay Sachs fetus even in advanced stages of pregnancy.

Rackman is frank in describing his interpretation as that of a minority among traditional rabbis. Yet his observation that "in Jewish medical ethics there are few black and white answers; there are mostly gray ones" appears to be shared by other contributors to this volume. In his survey of the issues involved in experimental treatment for the gravely ill, Rosner poses a host of theoretical questions, but, as he avows, provides few answers. Bleich has elsewhere vigorously espoused aggressive treatment for the terminally ill even at the cost of prolonging pain, a view not shared

by the eminent American legist, the late Rabbi Moses Feinstein. Here he reaffirms the rabbinic concept of human life as belonging to God with man having the responsibility for its stewardship. He also takes cognizance of the legal formalism which characterizes Jewish law. Yet Bleich views the area of bioethics as an exception to *halakhic* formalism. "Here we find problems which lend themselves to multiple answers, situations in which there is room for discretion . . . the answer is not automatically yes or no." His illustration is the question of whether to try a hazardous form of therapy. Ultimately, he feels, this question must be answered by the patient as the steward of the life entrusted to him. In such situations *halakhic* guidance would presumably be secondary to competent medical opinion.

The guidelines for the treatment of critically ill patients now used in many hospitals contain provisions for avoiding the initiation of new curative therapy when no hope for recovery is held forth. The editor of this volume, Rabbi Meier, considers this approach to be antithetical to Jewish law. Yet, Rabbi Jakobowitz in his essay refers to some modern rabbinic authorities who would hold that if a cancer patient in the terminal stage contracts pneumonia, antibiotics need not be applied; they would only serve to prolong the dying agony.

As far as the definition of death is concerned, Jakobowitz does not consider the condition of the brain, as *halakhically* pertinent. Yet, a prominent rabbi and biologist, Moses Tendler, has argued that brain death may be viewed as analogous to decapitation. These differences, far from betokening the irrelevance of the *halakha* vis-á-vis contemporay problems of bioethic, demonstrate the great potential for creative innovation within the framework of the *halakhic* system.

Since this book deals with values, the philosophical essays form an integral part of the presentation. Two witnesses of the Shoah greatly enhance its depth by their simple, yet profound words of wisdom. Elie Wiesel, addressing himself personally to doctors delineates the generally high Jewish esteem for the medical profession. The rabbinic apothegm, *Tov shebarof'im le-Gehinom,* he interprets homiletically to mean "the best of the doctors are *needed in Gehinom.*" Viktor Frankl, the father of logotherapy, writes on the meaning of suffering, but his words are particularly pertinent to the burdens of old age which, for the thoughtful, are more than compensated for by the actualized potentialities of the past.

Greenberg is concerned with the ethics of power. Medical technology is the product of the legitimate exercise of human ingenuity, provided one does not neglect the patient as a person and does not overstep into hubris. Birth control and abortion may also be justified as means to safeguard the quality rather than the quantity of life. David Feldman aligns himself with this perspective, by pointing out that "natural law" is primarily a Catholic, but not a Jewish, consideration. Hence, in-vitro fertilization or embryonic transfer are not in principle objectionable as reproductive techniques.

This modest volume was obviously not intended to be a comprehensive treatment of the whole range of Jewish medical ethics. Its perspective is traditional and *halakhic,* but it breaks new ground in attempting to articulate values rather than merely citing the formal decisions found in rabbinic responsa. Practitioners should be cautioned not to assume that the opinions expressed are necessarily authoritive for the entire Orthodox community. The ideological probings of some of the contributors are likely to occasion controversy, but that may be taken as a reassuring symptom of the vitality of the *halakhic* approach to contemporary issues.

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Caring for the Mentally Impaired Elderly, by Florence Safford, Henry Holt, New York, 1987. 323 pp.

This volume, written by a professional social worker, is presented as a family guide to caring for the mentally impaired elderly person. In it, the author expands the parameters of caring to include diagnosing and defining mental impairment, understanding the medical phenomena associated with dementing illness, providing home care, selecting a nursing home, and, finally, accepting the death of the impaired person.

We are introduced to the book via an account of the author's personal experience in caring for her mentally impaired father. This resulted in an intense interest in the dynamics of mental impairment and eventually served as the motivation to write the book.

The first three chapters are devoted to defining and explaining the various terms of mental impairment. By clarifying the multiple terminology used to define Alzheimer's disease, senile dementia and organic brain syndrome, Safford helps guide the reader through these often confusing terms. A chapter devoted to symptoms includes detailed discussion of the emotional and behavioral changes exhibited as mental impairment progresses. Families dealing with these often confusing symptoms will have the opportunity to gain understanding and reassurance about them. Especially helpful is identification of the emotional responses family members are most likely to have when they confront these symptoms.

Chapter three outlines, in a medically oriented presentation, the causes of mental impairment. Alzheimer's disease is thoroughly discussed in terms of brain structure, metabolism, biochemistry, and cerebral blood flow. Multi-infarct dementia, Parkinson's disease, and depression are covered in depth. Throughout this chapter, the advice to the family to provide adequate medical history is stressed, giving recognition to the fact that the patient is most often a poor historian. This type of practical advice is essential to families trying to negotiate the medical system as they seek correct diagnosis and treatment.

After describing symptoms and causes, the book moves away from technical aspects of mental impairment to a discussion of family responsibility. The emphasis here is on the illness' impact on family dynamics: filial, marital, and familial. Families experiencing upheaval as a result of the dementing illness of a member will find validation of their emotional reactions and support in finding solutions to their problems.

The case studies which serve as the book's center provide illustrations of some of the more common problematic situations in families where mental impairment has either just surfaced or progressed to a more acute state. Troubled families reading these six stories will probably be able to find some variation of their own situation. Unfortunately, none of the cases provides a hopeful picture for keeping an impaired person in the community.

In a chapter entitled "Other Upsetting Problems," the often neglected subjects of incontinence, hygiene, and sexual inappropriateness are discussed. The emphasis is again on understanding the sypmtoms, providing practical advice on dealing with them, and understanding one's own emotional responses. A separate chapter on medications suggests the benefits and drawbacks in using tranquilizers. Families are encouraged to explore the use of medication to make the impaired member more manageable.

At this point, the reader has been taken through definitions, symptoms, causes, diagnosis and medical treatment and is then assumed to be ready to deal with what the author calls the "Paradox of Institutional Care." The decision to place a family member in a nursing home is never an easy one, and current social attitudes often look upon this step as a kind of family failure. Safford confronts this con-

cept by trying to alleviate guilt and validate the family who must take the final step towards nursing home placement. Guidance on how to evaluate and select a nursing home, the application process, and the financial aspects of a nursing home placement are all thoroughly examined.

Safford then addresses how to cope with the institution once placement has occurred. She is well acquainted with the operation of nursing homes, their admission procedures, and the prevailing attitudes of a nursing home staff. Safford provides advice on how to get what is needed for the resident without antagonizing those in charge. This is no small feat and perhaps more easily written about than accomplished in reality.

A final chapter, "A Timely Death," focuses on acceptance of death and the process of bereavement. The author touches on the ethics of continuation of life through heroic measures, asking the family member to imagine what type of decision the impaired person would have wanted were he or she capable of such a decision.

Many families do choose to keep their mentally impaired members at home until death occurs and they do successfully provide the necessary care. Often this is not a matter of economics, but is based rather on a personal conviction and demonstration of their love. What is lacking in this book is in-depth support for this choice. More options within the community have become available such as Respite Care, Day Care, and other programs offered by family service agencies.

Safford does not focus strongly enough on community options and clearly has a bias towards institutional placement. Her suggestions for community care, where they exist, are weak and often not appropriate. For example, her chapter on support groups appears to be an afterthought and comes after the chapter on nursing home placement. To expect that exhausted family members caring for impaired elderly have the time and energy to organize a support group is unrealistic. There are, however, many self-help groups of this type available. To say that they are scarce is not accurate.

Families about to make a decision in favor of nursing home placement will find support for their position in this book. Since families feel a great deal of guilt and anxiety when going through this process, Safford's work is well recommended in these instances. The medical orientation of this book will be helpful to families who must deal with symptoms and terminology without prior medical knowledge. The medical explanations are more fully developed in this book when compared with other volumes on the subject of the care of the mentally impaired elderly. Helping professionals would best recommend this book once they know that a family has made a decision in favor of institutional care.

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From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change Among Italian Immigrants, 1880–1930, by Donna R. Gabaccia. SUNY Series in American Social History. State University of New York Press, Albany, 1984. 174 pp. $34.50 cloth, $10.95 pb.

Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900–1940, by Judith E. Smith. SUNY Series in American Social History. State University of New York Press, Albany, 1985. 228 pp. $39.50 cloth, $12.95 pb.

Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism, by Jonathan Rieder. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1985. 290 pp. $22.50 cloth, $8.95 pb.

F*rom Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change Among Italian*

Immigrants, 1880–1930 by Donna Barr Gabaccia focuses on the relationship of environment and behavior and asks one overriding question: how did the exchange of houses in south Italian settlements for houses or apartments in New York affect lives of people who moved from Sicily to the lower East Side?

Gabaccia criticizes the basic thinking of early social scientists and American housing reformers that better housing would eventually cure the societal ills of American cities. She denies the validity of the claims made by Jacob Riis and others that better housing leads to better people or, in more contemporary terms, that there is "some sort of linkage between environmental form and social behavior." Gabaccia rejects this form of social determinism which is the basis for much of social engineering, city planning, and housing policy today.

Interestingly, she did not believe that she would be able to capture Sicilian social ideals and values as they existed before the emigrés left their homeland. "Too much—mass migrations, two wars, fascism, and 80 years of economic change—has intervened. Except as they are deducible from behavioral data, (a tricky business at best), the social values of southern Italians in the past remain elusive." Gabaccia often had to rely on Sicilian folklore. The comparison with Jewish experience might be the dilemma that would be posed if the history of eastern European Jews in the *shtetlach* were almost totally dependent on Hasidic tales.

If we look for a powerful contrast between Sicilians and Jews in the 18th and particularly the 19th century, it would have to be in the highest social goal that Sicilian families would set for themselves, the transfer of property or home ownership from parents to children. The high valuation of family and kinship among Sicilians gave rise to considerable attempts to cluster the family in a single geographic area. Given the primacy of kinship as a neighborhood determinant, economically and socially mixed neighborhoods were quite possible. Rich or poor could live side by side, with the rich living in far more beautiful houses.

In fact, as Gabaccia points out, it was the family or the kin group that made a space into a house or a home, and family under its own roof and united under the family head that constituted the casa (translated not as house or even as home, but as family).

The Sicilian concept of family was "a product of migration and life in the United States" that sought to preserve the kinship values of the immigrants, rather than a value that was imported from Sicily. "As Sicilians defined new social ideals, blood ties became more culturally *and* socially central than they had been in Sicily. Kinship now differed categorically from other social ties . . . kinship became the immigrants' main tool for organizing a social network that more nearly replaced rather than surrounded the once jealously bounded nuclear family and a positively evaluated *casa*." Gabaccia concludes that American Sicilians resisted cultural and social change and that the conservatism of the Sicilian immigrants was generated by their migration experience. As such, she argues, "Inevitably, perhaps, immigrant minorities view change with greater suspicion than their non-emigrant cousins who are spared that threat."

In Judith E. Smith's *Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island* 1900–1940, the leitmotif in the immigrant experience was the family and family memories were the richest fund for new immigrants. Families directed new immigrants to cities and neighborhoods, and family networks "mediated the experience of work and neighborhood." Smith turns her attention not to the theories of economic determinism, acculturation and absorption that explain change, but to the evidence of the social, economic and personal behavior of the immigrants. She does this against the background of the social and economic changes in Providence beginning with the burgeoning and open

economy at the turn of the century and culminating in the almost catastrophic economic changes that resulted from the decline of Rhode Island's textile industry and the ultimate decision of textile mill owners to move their operations to the South. "The seemingly impersonal changes," Smith writes, "struck at the very heart of the immigrants' daily and personal lives; in response, immigrants transformed family economic cooperation, familial patterns of exchange, neighborhood networks of association—and even family itself."

In both Italian and Jewish households in Europe, all members of the household pooled their economic resources, work and wages. The entire family was a unit of work. The immediate market was the new townspeople who moved into the area. This home economy and cottage industry could not withstand the competition of mass production. Smith argues that economic tribulations, rather than persecution, convinced Jewish families to come to the United States. That economic considerations were primarily responsible for Italian families emigrating to America is clear.

Smith is extremely valuable in portraying the bonds of kinship (Chapter 3) that existed in southern Italy and in eastern Europe at the turn of the century and in the early part of the 20 th century. Her delineation of the change in the world of women is particularly fascinating. Smith makes wonderful use of folksongs and proverbs and memoirs to provide a warm human touch that supports her overall analysis. While no substitute for reading Smith's richly woven narrative, a few Jewish folk examples tell a great deal:

> "When the father gives to the son, both rejoice: when the son gives to the father, both weep."

> "Love is like butter; it goes well with bread."

> "Rich kin are close kin."

The existence of a dowry for a young woman was no small measure of security and a very large symbol of status. As the novelist Mario Puzo (who wrote more than *The Godfather*) wrote about the migration of his mother from Naples to New York City, "There had come a time when her father, with stern pity, had told her, his favorite daughter, that she could not hope for bridal linen . . . in that moment she lost all respect for her father, for her home, for her country. A bride without linen was shameful. What man would take a woman with a stigma of hopeless poverty?"

When parents sent their children to America to build new lives, they sacrificed the hands and income they would need for their old age and brought an end to the core of the nuclear family even though children continued to send a portion of their wages home to their parents overseas.

For American Jews, Smith's chapter on "Circles of Assistance: Reciprocity and Associational Life" and particularly her discussion of mutual-benefit traditions in Europe and their reconstitution in Providence are extremely valuable. That the past intrudes on the present and the present gives meaning to the past is illustrated by the economic self-help which Italian mutual benefit associations provided by creating savings and credit institutions. Even today, despite the savings and loan scandals that rocked Maryland, the neighborhood bank in Baltimore's Little Italy has evidently made no attempt to associate itself with a larger umbrella of federal protection or to modify its hours of service (2 nights a week) while it does offer a higher passbook rate than larger banking institutions throughout the state.

Smith's delineation of Jewish self-help is wonderfully illuminating. From the middle of the 19th century onward, the *Bet Midrash* and the *Chevra,* the learning/meeting house and the community association, served as a framework for groups that espoused the multitude of new ideas and ideologies which sprang up in eastern

Europe during the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. They provided possibilities for women to organize within their own groups, a mixture of traditional and new values, and the transmission of older traditions within new settings and through novel means. All were made possible by the existence of this impulse and this framework for communal self-help and organization. Religion played an omnipresent role at times in unusual ways. In Sicily, a socialist-led society's leaders could hang pictures of the king and queen, Karl Marx, and a crucifix in their offices. During one strike, Jewish workers swore on a Torah scroll that they would not serve as strike breakers. The illustrations of this metamorphosis of values are legion. Smith's conclusion is striking:

> The result of this transformation was not the isolated nuclear family, rampant individualism, or the shedding of the generalized ethnic identity, stereotypically defined as the fruits of modernization and Americanization . . . [R]efashioning their family lives in the currents of historical process while preserving cherished traditions at the center was a striking accomplishment.

One of the finest books on the American ethnic groups is *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* by Jonathan Rieder. Rieder's book is lots of fun and exciting scholarship. He is colorful, deft, insightful—the best writing that you can find. His opening is a promise of good things to come:

> Perched along Jamaica Bay on filled marsh land in a corner of southeast Brooklyn, Canarsie is a house proud neighborhood of 70,000 people, mainly middle income Jews and Italians. A haven in a seamy metropolis, the community exudes an air of shabby but respectable domesticity. . . . The residents see themselves as the plain, doughty backbone of America—cabbies and teachers, merchants and craftsmen, salesmen and police—who stoically bear their burdens, raise their families, and serve the country.

Canarsians protected their interests in the Fall of 1972 by participating in a white boycott of the schools for a week after the school board of Canarsie accepted a few dozen black children. For many Canarsians, the test was regarded as a test of liberalism they had espoused all of their lives and which they now felt was betraying them.

Rieder's description of middle America in the '60's and '70's is a marvelous expression of its own laments:

> Economic need and psychic strain incline the middle classes toward a certain fractiousness, but these alone did not prod them to action. Middle America rose from a conjunction of internal and historical events and bedeviled them: the civil rights revolution, the problems of the city, black power, the war in Viet Nam, the disaffection of the young, stagflation, the revolution in morals. All these played havoc with the normal routines of politics, cleaving the country in two and fragmenting the Democratic party. As the British journalist, Godfrey Hodgson, described it, "the schism went deeper than mere political disagreement. It was as if, from 1967 on, for several years, two different tribes of Americans experienced the same outward events but experienced them as two quite different realities."
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> Middle America felt molested by formidable powers: blacks and liberals and bureaucrats. Reaction to these forces gave middle class politics its distinctive imagery of danger and dispossession. the middle classes never lost this wish to preserve, although the various factions never agreed precisely on what was to be saved or how the task was to be accomplished. So convinced of their righteousness, they felt helpless to enforce their authority, at least for a time . . . They went on to withdraw their pledges of trust from a liberal state depleted of credibility. Unwilling to give the government a blank check, the middle classes delivered their votes on a straight quid pro quo basis: stop the change.
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> Middle America felt itself a victim, the object of others' will. Later, it took the initiative, becoming a preacher, often a punisher. The resentment of the white middle classes gave conservatives a change to ply the politics of revenge.

The settlers in Canarsie during the '60's were not fleeing from a radicalized urban inner city. They were attracted by a new neighborhood where they could build a happier and more prosperous life for themselves and their children. This edenesque scenario changed as Blacks moved to Canarsie. "As numbers grew, and proportions altered, some mysterious threshhold was crossed, and racial antagonism began to snowball."

Rieder distinguishes between Italians and Jews in a fascinating manner. "The coincidence of living in the same place conferred on the Jews and Italians of Canarsie the same risks, needs, and destiny. But the two peoples did not react to racial pressures in the same fashion. In the local wisdom that Jews run while Italians stand fast, there was a larger truth about each group's distinct style of dealing with threats. A variety of differences, both in politics and culture accompany that capacity for stubbornness and pessimism. Historically, the Italians had epitomized the values of particularism, represented by loyalty to family, reliance on personal networks, and private settlements of disputes. In contrast, the Jews reflected the mode of universalism, represented by their idiom of humanism, allegiance to cosmopolitan ideals, and faith in the democratic state. The shift of the position of local Jewry from optimistic universalism to nervous provincialism symbolized the vulnerability of Jewish traditions, and liberalism more generally, under conditions of urban racial strife."

Pointing to a rather critical difference between Italians and Jews, Rieder reflects that "Italians never achieved the leverage that comes from belonging to organizations that recruit members on other personal criteria. While Canarsie Jews fluently cited aspects of a formal high culture or the fear of persecution that unites all Jews in perpetual vigilance, a high official in the National Italian American Civil Rights League was capable of retorting, 'don't identify with anything in Italy except the family.'"

Jewish parents raised their children "as bundles of possibility who required an unhampering environment to flourish as individuals. Provincial Italians, by contrast, stressed the timelessness of human nature and the corollary need to hedge in that restive individuality with the web of communal rule."

In the '50's, '60's, and '70's, Rieder writes, "The Italians resisted cultural, political, and racial change. And when not entirely backward glancing, they ignored revisions of culture and politics that did not touch the family or neighborhood . . . At the same time, Canarsie saw the birth of a gentler, softer brand of backlash, practiced chiefly by Jews." And here Rieder is at his best: "Yet, that generality must be qualified as soon as it is uttered. Too many supremely decent Italians and too many Jews twisted with resentment disproved the suggestion that all Jews were temperate ***menschen,*** all Italians racist *gabons.*"

Among Jews, there was also the fear of danger and the omnipresence of the Holocaust, particularly among Holocaust survivors. For Canarsie Jews, as to Jews anywhere, Zionism and the anxiety of Israel's survival was a paramount issue. Jews feared anti-Semitism in general. Jews relied on the law. Only the law had ever protected the Jews against populism, radicalism, and pogroms. To Canarsie Jews, McCarthyism was a form of fascism because it threatened the viability of the law. The same passion for equal treatment under the law conditioned Jewish allegiance to the civil rights movement in the South. Voting for the Democratic Party was a reflex. Jews preferred Kennedy far more than their Italian Catholic neighbors in Canarsie did.

Still, the Italian/Jewish fusion in Canarsie politics represented an interlocking of interests which differences could not break apart. Canarsians viewed the growth of

the black population as "the contraction of safe and usable space as a mockery of a liberal society." The exodus from liberalism proceeded from Jews and Italians beginning to see "liberalism as being out of key with the requirements of urban living and to equate it with the self destructive idealism. In this revised interpretation, liberalism did not embody a vision of transcendent justice; rather, it ignored the demands of bodily survival."

When affirmative action, busing, quotas and the like hit Canarsie, the reactions of Jews as contrasted with those of the Italians were very telling. Rieder writes, "Italians warned against threat with unembarrassed candor. They did not so often apologize for seeming mean or unenlightened. Puzzled by the tenacity of Jewish liberalism, the Italians railed against it from across a great divide, as if liberalism were a strange poltergeist. For Jews, it could not be so simple. They were wrestling with a very part of their past that seemed to have turned against them, with the live pressures of parents and rich relatives on the west side of Manhattan, on the campuses and the Great Neck suburbs. A simple coding of responses misses the caveats, the little hesitations, the tortuous reasoning in the Jewish search for an appropriate Jewish idiom. The fine shadings, the timbre of voice, the intricacy of the apologetic—all these things point to a world of critical differences in the meaning of liberal betrayal."

In the end, Rieder writes, "Reaction was a disorderly affair. Backlash contained Democratic, populistic, conspiratorial, racist, humanistic, pragmatic, emeritocratic impulsive . . . Jews and Italians exerted influence, punished enemies, and forged alliances in different fashion. Distinct taboos and sensitivities speeded or impeded the mobilization of each group. Their partisan loyalties determined which institutional forms were available to channel discontent . . . Italians and Jews were 'combat ready' in unique ways and in different spheres."

In the '70's, when excluding blacks as a strategy moved to recruiting whites, the influx of emigré Jews from the Soviet Union was particularly attractive. The Russian Jewish children were bused from Brighton Beach in the Canarsie public schools and a borough-wide Russian language program was introduced in Canarsie's public schools.

Rieder's book is eminently worth buying and reading. It is a caring but unrelenting mirror of Italian and Jewish value-laden responses to impersonal, inexorable, political and social forces, a calibration of a neighborhood's heartbeat under stress, a premonition, perhaps a warning.

L.S.