

BOOK REVIEWS

Be'Ikebei ha-Dor: Reshimot, Masot ve-Zikronot [Footprints of a Generation: Essays and Memoirs].* By JACOB ZAUSMER. New York: An Ogen Publication for the Histadruth Ivrit of America, 1957. 375+19+8 pp., illustrated. \$5.00.

The appearance of this collection of the youthful octogenarian, Jacob Zausmer, the Nestor of Philadelphia Hebraists, is indeed a felicitous occasion for Jewish culture. This beloved and modest Hebraist has been a tower of strength for more than two generations and his essays reflect only a fraction of his endeavors to perpetuate the Hebrew language and extend the roots of traditional Jewish culture. Zausmer's essays and memoirs are the fruits of nearly sixty years of devotion to Hebrew and Jewish cultural interests. It is also a tribute to Philadelphia and to its Hebrew-Jewish learned milieu which produced not only leading scholars in academic circles but also enthusiastic laymen who supported Jewish scholarly endeavors. This volume, comprising thirty-four articles, falls into four divisions: personalities and movements, memoirs of a more personal nature, holidays and festivals, and miscellaneous papers.¹ Zausmer writes in a classical albeit modern Hebrew — a joy to read for its range and flexibility. But it is not feuilletonistic; it is source material for American-Jewish historiography and biography. Nowhere else can one find such studies on Pinchos [Phineas] ha-Kohen Mordell, American Hebrew grammarian; on the American period of Cantor Pinchos Minkowsky; on Joseph Isaac Blaustein, distinguished physician, Nasi of the Order Sons of Zion; on Z. Balaban, writer of Hebrew juveniles, and American delegates to the first Zionist Congress.² Zausmer pays much attention to the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning and the contributions to Hebrew studies made by such members of the faculty as President Abraham A. Neuman, Professor Solomon Zeitlin, and the late Professors Max L. Margolis, Henry Malter and Benzion Halper. He always keeps in

* The full Hebrew title is: בעקבי הדור: רשימות, מסות וזכרונות מאת יעקב צאזמר. הוצאת עני על יד ההסתדרות העברית באמריקה [תשי"ז]. ניריורק.

¹ Literally, *עני קטנים* small jars, bagatelles. The reference is to *Gen. XXII:22*. See Rashi, *ad loc.*; and *Hulin* 91a: ששחיר על פכים קטנים: "He [Jacob] remained behind for the sake of some small jars (and he returned for them to bring over those unimportant articles to the other side of the river Jabbok)."

² In this group, there were Adam Rosenberg, Dr. Shabbethai Shaffer, David Trietsch, who had lived in this country from 1893 to 1897, and an observer, Rose Sonnenschein, who edited a monthly magazine, dedicated to Zionism and nationalism, *The American Jewess* (1895-1899).

focus the growing Hebrew movement in Philadelphia, tracing its development and the men and women who had contributed to make it viable and a strong cultural force in Jewish life.³

Since his life span is so great, Zausmer writes from personal knowledge and an immediate and warm sympathy. One of his best essays is "The Philadelphia Period in Dr. Mordecai [Max] Z. Raisin's Life," a tribute to that Hebraist and Reform rabbi,⁴ and an important contribution to the study of the Reform movement in the United States.⁵ Long a member of Congregation Mikveh Israel, the author has a deep feeling for tradition with its Hebrew foundation that transcends the denominational divisions and proves that Orthodox Judaism, in its best sense, is not circumscribed by narrowness as many would have us believe. His essays on the festivals and holidays reflect this sense of dedication to traditional Judaism.

The article "Early Pioneers and Contemporaries in the Hebrew Movement in Philadelphia," comprises 75 pages (153-227) and is written with love and devotion. Mr. Zausmer did not omit a single worker in the cause of Hebraism in the city of brotherly love. It encompasses a great deal of historical substance that entered into the construction of Jewish cultural edifices in this country.

In the section *pakkim ketannim*, the author has included two letters that he sent to the Warsaw newspaper *Ha-Zofeh*⁶ and to *Der Freund* in St. Petersburg,⁷ the first in Hebrew, and the second, in Yiddish. Hebraists are indebted to Zausmer for having added a thorough index to his work. It is with grateful pride that we can acknowledge the contribution Jacob Zausmer has made to Jewish culture, and hope that he will continue to do so in years to come.⁸

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³ As a Philadelphian, Zausmer dedicated his bio-historiographical articles mainly to these distinguished Philadelphians. But we also read in this book concerning such men as Professor Chaim Tchernowitz, editor of *Biltaron*, Menachem Ribalow, editor of *Ha-Doar*, and the great Zionist theoretician and editor of *Ha-Olam*, Moshe Kleinman, among others.

⁴ The monograph on Rabbi Raisin was inserted as an addition, comprising 19 pages, since the book was already completed and printed at the time of his demise.

⁵ It is indeed regrettable that many historians ignore similar Hebrew and Yiddish contributions.

⁶ Sept. 24, 1904, p. 518.

⁷ May 9, 1905, no. 98.

⁸ See this writer's review in *Ha-Doar*, vol. XXXVII, no. 30 (1958), pp. 574-575.