

THE JEWISH RELIGION IN THE SOVIET UNION. By *Joshua Rothenberg*.

New York: Ktav Publishing House and the Philip W. Lown Graduate Center for Contemporary Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, 1971. vii, 242 pp. \$10.00.

This is an immensely important book, a milestone in the study of Jews in the Soviet Union. It has the brilliant and possibly unique virtue of confining its purview strictly to the religious aspects of its subject, without succumbing to the temptation to confuse the issue with cultural and national repressions suffered by Jews in the USSR. Not that the author is unaware of these other matters. However, he exercises extraordinary self-discipline, bringing them into the account only as they are relevant to the strictly religious subjects under consideration. The postwar suppression of Yiddish culture, for example, is mentioned in connection with the decline of Purim (p. 79), and national discrimination is treated in the chapter on circumcision in contrasting Soviet policy toward Moslems.

After a brief but masterful introduction the author commences with a chapter on laws on religion, which is an abridged version of his contribution in Richard H. Marshall, Jr., ed., *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union, 1917 to 1967* (Chicago, 1971). The chapters on holidays, ceremonies, and education are tours de force. The argument on circumcision may be slightly overstated, but the treatment of funerals is a model of objectivity and balance. The concluding treatment of propaganda is perhaps a bit cursory.

The major faults are those of the publisher: there are far too many typographical errors, footnotes are hard to find, and there is no bibliography but rather an extensive, occasionally inaccurate, and always unworkable index incorporating footnote references. Regrettably, conclusions are lacking. It would seem to this reviewer that, on balance, Judaism has received par treatment from Soviet antireligious policy—a bit worse than some (Orthodox or Baptists), a bit better than others (Pentecostals or Buddhists). But judging from his profound immersion in the subject of this book, Mr. Rothenberg possesses the best qualifications in the Western world (certainly better than mine) to draw conclusions about such problems, and one wishes he had done so.

The tragedy of the situation is that Jews in the Soviet Union suffer not only religious disabilities but also severe restrictions owing to Soviet cultural and nationality policies. This book is absolutely essential for an accurate understanding of their situation.

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SOVIET NATIONALITY PROBLEMS. Edited by *Edward Allworth*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1971. x, 296 pp. \$9.95.

This collective work, the product of a Columbia University Seminar on Soviet Nationality Problems, is distinguished from previous studies of nationality in tsarist Russia and the USSR by its focus on theoretical issues (e.g., pp. 13–14), its deliberate avoidance of concrete treatment of “different nationalities as individual groups” (p. viii), and its almost total dependence upon Soviet published materials. It includes nine substantive chapters, covering theory (Allworth), imperial policies (Raeff), Communist views (Kohn), implications for the Soviet state (Brzezinski), legal reflections of national differences (Hazard), the Islamic legacy (Bennigsen),