

SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

MarkKBauman@aol.com

Bryan Edward Stone, *Managing Editor*

bstone@delmar.edu

Scott M. Langston, *Primary Sources Section Editor*

sclangston@charter.net

Stephen J. Whitfield, *Book Review Editor*

swhitfie@brandeis.edu

Jeremy Katz, *Exhibit and Film Review Editor*

jrkatz@thebreman.org

Shari Rabin, *Website Review Editor*

srabin@oberlin.edu

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Founding Managing Editor*

rheimovics@cfl.rr.com

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Book Reviews

A New Vision of Southern Jewish History: Studies in Institution Building, Leadership, Interaction, and Mobility. By Mark K. Bauman. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019. 587 pages.

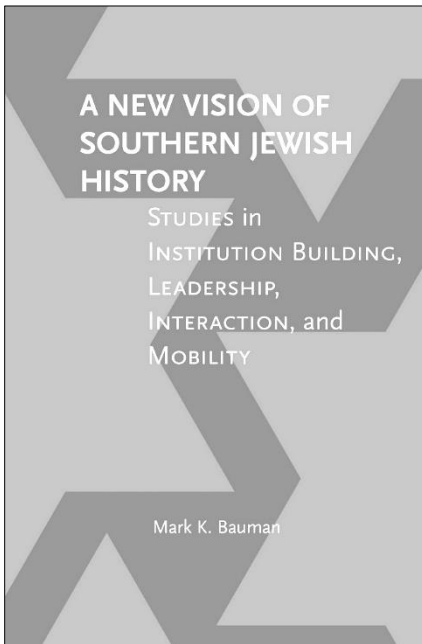
In October 1976, a cadre of academics, independent scholars, and lay people assembled in Richmond, Virginia, to participate in a conference that the Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS) hosted. Its predecessor had begun publishing a scholarly journal in 1958, but only three issues appeared – the last in 1963. The Richmond conference was intended to revive interest in the study of Jewish life in the American South, and the conclave succeeded. The need was evident. According to Melvin I. Urofsky, one of the organizers of the conference, “nearly every speaker prefaced his or her remarks with comments on the large amount of work that remain[ed] to be done and the vast areas of Southern-Jewish life about which we know virtually nothing.” Soon a host of researchers began churning out new historical studies, and the SJHS was no longer dormant.

Since then, works focusing broadly on the history of southern Jewry have burgeoned. Researchers have published hundreds of books, monographs, and articles examining and reexamining the religious, organizational, economic, cultural, social, and familial life of Jews living below the Mason-Dixon Line. Of the many capable scholars who have participated in this efflorescence of research over the past four decades, Mark K. Bauman merits special recognition. In addition to his own scholarly oeuvre, Bauman has played a singularly important role in

promoting this field of study by actively encouraging his colleagues, both junior and senior, to join him in researching the history of Jewish life in the South. Bauman was also the driving force behind the rebirth of the SJHS's journal, *Southern Jewish History*, which he has edited and stewarded for more than two decades.

Bauman's newest volume, *A New Vision of Southern Jewish History*, collects eighteen of his most incisive essays and constitutes the capstone of his prolific career. This volume is in every sense a magnum opus. Its substantial and readable essays have been helpfully organized into five broad sections: Community and Institution Building, Lay Leadership, Rabbinical Leadership, International Leadership, and Historiography and Synthesis. The author begins each of these sections with an exordium describing how the section's articles arose and how they conjoin to shed light on the theme of the section. Although they have appeared previously in various journals, the essays have been amended and brought up to date.

A New Vision examines a broad selection of topics: women's history, politics, sociology, ethnic tensions, institution building, leadership styles, religious life, and much more. Extensive use of new primary source material has enabled Bauman to reconstruct many facets of Jewish life in the South and has often led him to challenge many of the generalizations that had solidified into accepted "truths." For example, the chapter titled "Southern Jewish Women and Their Social Service Organizations" demonstrates how many women across the region worked on behalf of progressive causes, just as their coreligionists had done in the North and Midwest. This historical reconstruction challenges the prevailing impression that southern Jews would avoid confronting the norms of the conservative ethos of the region. For instance, attorney Sophie P. Friedman became one of the leading proponents of suffrage in Memphis and, subsequently, a prominent figure in that city's League of Women Voters. Bauman also documents the role of southern Jewish women who worked on behalf of "Jewish educational alliances, free kindergartens, social settlements, and mission schools just like their counterparts in the North during the 1890s and the early twentieth century" (88). This chapter advances convincing evidence that historians should avoid stereotyping southern Jewish women as they negotiated between "regional unity and distinctiveness" (100).



Bauman's chapter on Reform Judaism in the American South constitutes yet another example of how extensive use of primary source documents and innovative theoretical approaches can enrich our understanding of Reform Jewish history in America. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Reform became the dominant expression of southern Jewish religious life. Historians have usually focused on the postbellum growth of Reform. Yet in Bauman's important chapter, "Demographics, Anti-Rabbanism, and Freedom of Choice: The Origins and Principles of Reform at Baltimore's Har Sinai

Verein," he concentrates on Jewish reformation in the antebellum South. He points out that, as early as 1824, the leaders of the Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston denounced the imposing authority of Talmudic-oriented rabbis. As Charleston reformer Isaac Harby famously opined, the Jews of Charleston no longer wanted to practice their Judaism as "slaves of bigotry and priestcraft." Bauman then offers new insight by noticing that, in 1842, the Reformist founders of Har Sinai congregation took their antirabbinic attitudes even one step further. The Baltimore reformers not only rejected the traditional authority of the Talmudists but also refused to adhere to the biddings of their own rabbinic leaders! Bauman contends that it was during the antebellum years that social conditions in Charleston and Baltimore provoked Jews to question and challenge *all* rabbinical authority, both historic and contemporary. Accordingly, the beginnings of the general repudiation of halachic authority in Reform Judaism may be traced back to the nation's first organized manifestation of Jewish reform in the South.

Finally, after decades of studying southern Jewry, Bauman has concluded that much of the historiography on Jewish life in the American South has failed to adequately acknowledge the fact that southern cul-

ture is fundamentally analogous to American culture. He argues this case most forcefully in “The Southerner as American: Jewish Style” — an essay that, he contends, may be “the most controversial piece ever published in the field” (249). In this essay, Bauman challenges many of the standard themes that have been used to support the notion of the distinctiveness of the region. He disputes these generalizations and demonstrates that many of its so-called “distinguishing characteristics” transcend the boundaries of the South. “I do not argue against distinctions across regional lines,” Bauman insists, “but, instead, [I] suggest that the distinctions have been exaggerated and that local environments are equally important in understanding how people and institutions adapt” (250).

Bauman’s extensive research, so evident in this fine volume, has led him to three broad contentions. First, the history of Jewish life in the South has been largely mischaracterized as inveterately parochial. Secondly, “the study of southern Jewish history can offer new insights into national Jewish history” (7). Finally, the South has never been a monolithic section of the country as many historians frequently imply. The Jews who lived in Baltimore, Atlanta, and New Orleans faced a different South than did their coreligionists in towns like Cumberland, Maryland, or Albany, Georgia, or Monroe, Louisiana. Bauman has insisted that “local conditions become as important as the regional environment, and the story of diversity adds nuance to the prevailing paradigm” (251). Scholars and researchers will undoubtedly challenge some of the author’s theories. No one, however, can dispute the value and the power of what Bauman has accomplished. He deserves enduring respect for his unflinching dedication to the field and for compellingly illustrating what Marni Davis has called “the limits of southern Jewish ‘exceptionalism’ as a framing device.” Anyone interested in the history of Jewish life in the South will be enriched and enlightened by reading this book.

Gary Phillip Zola, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion
The reviewer may be contacted at GZola@huc.edu.



Extracted: Unmasking Rampant Antisemitism in America's Higher Education. By S. Perry Brickman. New York: Morgan James Publishing, 2019. 340 pages.

On October 10, 2012, James Wagner stood at the Cox Auditorium on the Emory University campus in Atlanta to make a striking announcement: "On behalf of Emory University, serving as its present president, I hereby express in the deepest, strongest terms, Emory's regret for the antisemitic practices of the dental school. . . . We at Emory also regret that it has taken this long for those events to be properly acknowledged. I am sorry; we are sorry." Among the victims of this policy had been S. Perry Brickman, an oral surgeon who concluded that "with that [announcement], the burden of pain so many of us still bore was immeasurably eased."

Extracted is much more than its title implies. It is a history lesson, a biography, and a mystery novel all rolled into one and culminating with Wagner's apology. We are taken back and forth through the history of academic antisemitism in the United States. Brickman traces how universities and professional schools implemented limitations on Jewish enrollment and how the American Dental Association's (ADA) Council on Dental Education (CODE) aided this effort. These factors came together at Emory University in a unique and cruel way, so that virtually every Jewish dental student between 1948 and 1961 was targeted.

Riding the wave of nativist feelings in the 1920s and the passage of legislation to limit immigration, Ivy League schools led the way in limiting their enrollment to "desirable" (native-born, white, Protestant) applicants. In 1943, Dr. Harlan Horner, an ADA executive, presented a report to the organization that evaluated every dental school, outlined their deficiencies, and then recommended ways to remedy their problems. At the time of the report, 36 percent of the nation's dental students were Jewish. CODE adopted the proposal that quotas be imposed in American dental schools to ensure what it considered equitable racial and geographic distribution.

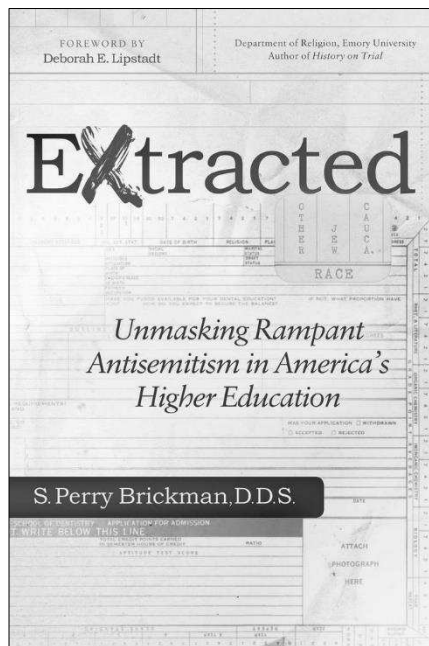
Those quotas altered the life of Perry Brickman. Growing up in Chattanooga, he typified a generation of southern Jews who were raised in the 1940s and 1950s in communities with small Jewish populations. This reviewer was typical too. Other than exclusion from certain social

clubs and golf courses, we experienced little overt antisemitism in our daily lives. In 1949 Brickman enrolled at Emory University, joined a Jewish fraternity, and met his future wife, Shirley Berkowitz. In 1951, after two years as an undergraduate, the dental school at Emory accepted him into its program. It is not surprising that he would expect his years at Emory's dental school to be equally rewarding. His three Jewish classmates shared these expectations, but would suffer the same fate.

On May 22, 1952, Brickman received a letter that dismissed him from Emory's dental school. Without warning, the promise of a career in dentistry was seemingly over. The devastation of that day, magnified by the words of his mother, is impossible to grasp. His book describes the journey from the worst of times to the best of times. He enrolled at the University of Chattanooga, worked in a dental laboratory, and was admitted to the University of Tennessee Dental School in 1953.

Extracted is a deeply personal story of family, friends, perseverance, love, success, and, ultimately, discovery, exploration, and closure. Hard work, a supportive family, the perfect spouse, strong faith, and good luck all were evident. It might have remained as just a good story had it not been for the events of September 10, 2006.

For fifty-four years, the reason for Perry Brickman's dismissal from dental school was a mystery—a mystery that might never have been discovered if the Brickmans had not been invited to the special exhibit, "Thirty Years of Jewish Studies at Emory." The exhibit was part of an upcoming event celebrating the thirtieth year of Emory's Jewish studies department. There an Anti-Defamation League (ADL) bar graph revealed that 65 percent of the Jewish dental students at Emory failed during the decade from 1948 to 1958,



while John Buhler served as dean. The ADL bar graph inspired Brickman to make it his mission to uncover the story behind the statistic. He realized that his dismissal was not an isolated case but was one of many that permanently changed the careers and lives of other Jews.

Brickman's retirement enabled him to pursue a second career as an investigative journalist. He asked several questions. How did I not know what had happened at the dental school at Emory? Why did I not know? Why was nothing done, even when suspicions of antisemitism were stirred? What happened to those students who came before and after me? Brickman provides answers in *Extracted* and in his video, *Emory University School of Dentistry: The Buhler Years, 1948-1961*.

The road to discovery would prove to be as difficult as any oral surgery procedure that Brickman experienced in his career, and *Extracted* could not be a more appropriate title for this book. Finding and extracting information from files, long forgotten; locating and interviewing other victims and people who knew vital information; and putting the pieces together would take the next five years of his life.

In 1961 the organized Atlanta Jewish community offered little cooperation. In fact the Jewish Federation and the Community Relations Council (CRC) even resisted the ADL's efforts. The prevailing attitude was to accept the resignation of Dean Buhler in 1961 and move on. "Here the matter rests," the ADL's Benjamin R. Epstein and Arnold Foster wrote the following year in *"Some of My Best Friends . . ."*: "All concerned—students, faculty, administration, community—are convinced that the long period of foul air at Emory University Dental School caused by religious discrimination has been finally cleared—for good." This would, however, not be the end of the investigation.

Extracted also has a hero in Arthur Levin, the southeast regional director of the Anti-Defamation League. Levin was determined to make Emory admit and deal with its record of anti-Jewish bias, and he offered irrefutable evidence of Buhler's treatment of Jewish dental students. The CRC, however, wanted to reduce the pressure on the university. Faced with denials from Emory's president, Atlanta's Jewish leaders were willing to let bygones be bygones. Levin left Atlanta in 1962, and his role in this story was not revealed until 2010, when Brickman interviewed him at the age of ninety-three.

For readers of this journal, the revelations of *Extracted* will be invaluable; however, for those of us who attended the school, it has a deeper meaning. I entered Emory Dental School in 1963, just two years after the departure of Dean Buhler. Emory was a different place, even though several of the instructors identified in this book as Buhler's co-conspirators remained on the faculty. My Jewish classmates and I heard stories of the Buhler years. As far as I can remember, we were not treated differently from our non-Jewish classmates.

This reviewer has known Perry Brickman for more than half a century, beginning with my days as a dental student at Emory. He was already an established oral surgeon, and the Brickmans were always welcoming to the members of Alpha Omega, the Jewish dental fraternity. The names and places in *Extracted* are not just a history lesson. Many of my Alpha Omega brothers had begun their dental education during the Buhler years. *Extracted* is Brickman's first book and may be his only one. He has brought closure to the individuals who were forced to alter their lives because they were born Jewish. Those of us who followed him at Emory can never be more grateful and proud of our colleague and friend. *Yasher Koach!*

Carl L. Zielonka, DDS, Tampa Bay History Center
The reviewer may be contacted at doczonk@tampabay.rr.com.

Touched with Fire: Morris B. Abram and the Battle Against Racial and Religious Discrimination. By David E. Lowe. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. 287 pages.

Morris B. Abram first achieved fame as the civil rights attorney who successfully argued *Gray v. Sanders*, the "one man, one vote" case that the Supreme Court decided in 1963. The majority decision rejected as unconstitutional the state of Georgia's discriminatory county unit voting system for statewide primary elections, which had effectively expunged the urban and black vote. This eight-to-one ruling marked the culmination of a seventeen-year legal battle that pitted Abram against the formidable rural political machine of the Talmadge family. Overcoming a previous aversion to drawing political maps, the high court thus

repudiated the warning of retired justice Felix Frankfurter (the third Jew to serve on the Court) against entering the “political thicket.” In making elections more democratic, *Gray v. Sanders* served as a testament to Abram’s tenacity.

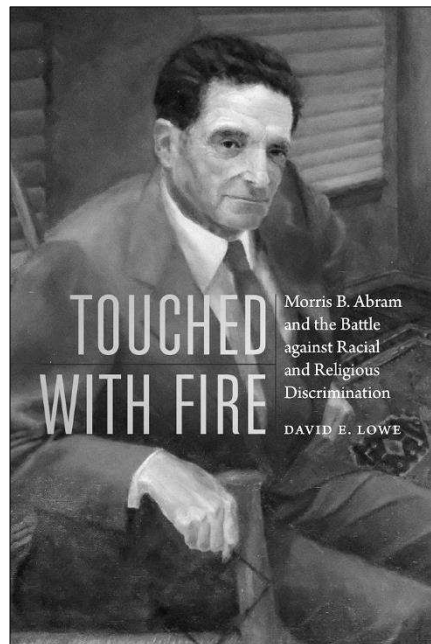
In this new biography, David E. Lowe is at his best in describing this significant chapter of legal history and also in recounting Abram’s later stint as a self-styled human rights crusader during the final decades of his life, when he helped found the pro-Israel NGO UN Watch in Geneva. He previously served there as United States ambassador to the UN. The author had at his disposal an extensive collection of Abram’s speeches, correspondence, subject files, interview transcripts, press clippings, and audio-visual materials comprising over 110 boxes housed at Emory University. Abram would doubtless have appreciated Lowe’s unadorned but buoyant prose, which floats easily off the page. So too does the reader, who also reaps the benefit of the author’s access to dozens of individuals who interacted with Abram during the various chapters of his career, from Vernon Jordan and John Lewis to George Schultz and Linda Chavez, besides members of the Abram family. Lowe ably navigates the reader through the major chapters of Abram’s career: his years practicing law in Atlanta and New York, his governmental work in five American presidential administrations (Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, Reagan, and H. W. Bush), his presidency of Brandeis University, his leadership role in the Jewish community as national president of the American Jewish Committee and chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, and his Israel advocacy as founding director of UN Watch.

It is unfortunate that the author was unable to interview Abram’s first wife, Jane Maguire Abram, who died in 2009. She was at Morris’s side for thirty years and was the mother of his five children. Yet we only get glimpses of their marriage and the impact that this woman had on his formation and career. What we learn begs for greater elaboration. Despite excelling academically and socially at the University of Georgia, Morris was apparently still a bit of a country bumpkin. Jane played Henry Higgins to Morris’s Eliza Doolittle. Ironically, his blue-blooded Methodist-born wife (who converted to Judaism sometime after the wedding) also appears to have helped Morris come to terms with his Jewish identity, particularly its ethnonational component. In the summer

of 1946, while Morris was serving on the prosecutorial staff in Nuremberg, directly confronting the horror of the Nazi genocide, Jane emphatically told him that “either you’re a Jew with no heart or a Zionist.”

But *Touched with Fire* reveals that Morris came to resent Jane’s domineering personality; she reminded him too much of his mother. The book’s early pages paint a picture of Abram’s parents’ strained marriage —the emasculation of the ineffectual eastern European Sam at the hands of the genteel Alsatian-descended Irene. Lowe does not doubt that Abram loved his father but internalized his mother’s haughtiness, her belief that she and her progeny were too good for their home town of Fitzgerald, Georgia, including its small community of eastern European Jewish immigrants. In wooing and wedding Jane, Morris may well have been emulating his own father by marrying a Methodist incarnation of his mother.

But Lowe declines to put Abram on the couch. Nor does *Touched with Fire* draw sufficiently upon its subject’s copious writings and the transcripts of the lengthy and revealing interviews that historian Eli Evans conducted with Abram to provide needed depth to this character study. Lowe mostly invites the reader to see Abram through the eyes of his friends, family, and colleagues. Too often, the adulation seems virtually boundless. The Abram in this biography resembles the vainglorious memoirist who wrote *The Day is Short* (1982), which *New York Times* reviewer David Margolick observed reads more like “advocacy than autobiography.” Margolick cracked that “in *The Day is Short*, the humility is even shorter.” The approach that Lowe takes thus denies the reader a fuller appreciation of Abram’s complexity —not least how his self-perception as an



underdog might have factored into his civil rights and human rights work.

Too favorable an authorial stance especially interferes with the need to explain Abram's political transformation. Rather than interrogating Abram's flummoxed response to the radicalization of the civil rights movement, Lowe mostly settles for reportage and occasional morsels of facile analysis from his subject's associates. (A perceptive reflection by David Harris, the longtime American Jewish Committee CEO, is a happy exception.) Lowe appropriates Irving Kristol's by now all-too-familiar quip that liberals like Abram were simply "mugged by reality" and accepts at face value Abram's claim that it was the world that had changed, while he held steadfastly to his principles. *Touched with Fire* thus declines to piece together the puzzle of how a champion of racial equality, a southern liberal who initially hailed Lyndon Johnson's 1965 executive order mandating "the full realization of equal employment opportunity through a positive, continuing program in each executive department and agency," later changed his mind, unmoved by evidence that the white backlash against desegregation rendered colorblind constitutionalism an inadequate means to achieve a racially egalitarian society.

Lowe registers Abram's dismay at the anti-Zionist rhetoric that emerged from the black nationalists and the New Left in the wake of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Yet the author might have more aggressively explored a connection between Abram's emerging Zionist consciousness and his souring on the civil rights movement, including ameliorative racial preference programs in employment and higher education. But Lowe seldom turns to the secondary historical literature when situating his subject's actions. A fuller treatment of the disintegration of the black-Jewish alliance in the mid-to-late 1960s would have provided needed context for radical black leaders' sense of American Jews as ethnically undifferentiated from other white Americans, as well as such militants' growing sympathy for the Palestinians as victims of white colonialist oppression.

Such contextualization also would have helped to explain Abram's exaggerated sense of the threat posed by the black students occupying Brandeis University's Ford Hall administrative building in January 1969, during his brief and traumatic stint as that university's president. Those students, like their counterparts at other universities, were rejecting the

Cold War liberal consensus that Abram epitomized. But where he saw wild-eyed radicals hell-bent on violence, his aides as well as student body president Eric Yoffie (a future leader of the Reform movement) saw socially isolated and desperate young people. Many of them were woe-fully unprepared for the academic rigor of an elite university and were nervous about their upcoming final exams. Many were tired of enduring casual racial indignities, both intentional and unintentional. All of them felt patronized and misled by Abram's predecessor as president and were radicalized by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and by takeovers at other campuses like San Francisco State University.

Curiously, Lowe overlooks Abram's fascinating relationship with one of the black student leaders, Roy DeBerry, which is well documented not only in Abram's papers and his autobiography but also in J. Anthony Lukas's *Don't Shoot—We Are Your Children* (1973), a volume omitted from Lowe's bibliography. Unlike most blacks on the Brandeis campus, who hailed from urban communities in the North, DeBerry was a Mississippi native. "He and I understood each other as well as anybody on that campus understood each other," Abram confided to Eli Evans. "There was between us a common experience—the South." There is much to unpack about Abram's attitudes toward race and his southern Jewish identity in those reflections and in the Abram-DeBerry relationship as a whole. But Lowe declines to go there, choosing not to see the extent to which Abram's political evolution was intertwined with his bruised psyche. This is all the more surprising because Abram practically invites such probing. "It was Brandeis that would resonate within me when the Bakke case arose a decade later at the University of California," he wrote in his autobiography, referring to the 1978 landmark affirmative action Supreme Court case. Abram was far more comfortable doling out scholarships to aspiring young black students attending historically black colleges and universities as chairman of the United Negro College Fund than he was tussling with ungrateful northern black radicals who were unimpressed with his civil rights bona fides.

And while the author devotes a few pages to Abram's bout with acute myelocytic leukemia, he writes virtually nothing about Abram's role in the emerging patients' rights movement, a topic dwelt on in *The Day is Short*. Abram's proactive involvement in his medical care was almost unheard of in the 1970s. Here was a case where Abram's stub-

bornness, determination, egotism, and sense of entitlement might have made the difference between life and death, endowing him with the chutzpah to cajole, argue with and even threaten his care team when it appeared that bureaucratic issues and scientific research protocols would preclude the most aggressive and cutting-edge treatment. Even if medical historian Barron Lerner is correct that the chemotherapy regimen rather than the experimental treatments likely accounts for Abram's remission and survival, his example, which received prominent coverage in the *New York Times*, inspired other patients to demand a voice in their treatment.

An iconic champion of civil rights who became a vehement opponent of affirmative action, an ally of Reverend King who became a Republican who worked for Ronald Reagan, a small-town southerner who died in cosmopolitan Geneva, Morris Berthold Abram was a bundle of paradoxes. They make him at once fascinating, inspiring, exasperating, and infuriating. While *Touched with Fire* does not quite succeed in presenting an unvarnished and sufficiently deep portrait of Abram the man, David Lowe offers a highly readable and far-ranging exploration of his notable career.

Jonathan B. Krasner, Brandeis University

The reviewer may be contacted at jkrasner@brandeis.edu.

Between Dixie and Zion: Southern Baptists and Palestine before Israel. By Walker Robins. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2020. 235 pages.

Over the course of the last generation, American evangelicals in general and Southern Baptists in particular have been supporters of Israel—more so than members of most other religious groups. That has led to the assumption that Southern Baptists have favored the Zionist cause since their denomination was founded during the 1840s. Walker Robins, a historian at the University of Oklahoma, has researched the Baptist involvement in the Holy Land, as well as the Baptist relation to both Arabs and Jews before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. He has unearthed a more complex and varied picture than was previously held. *Between Dixie and Zion* therefore corrects standard mis-

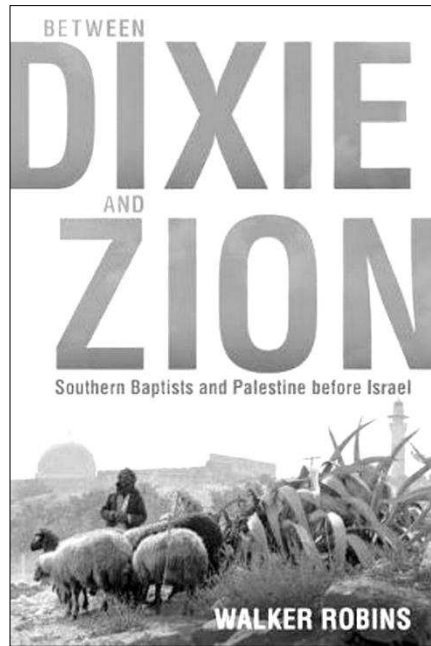
perceptions, providing a subtle and rich analysis of Southern Baptist opinions on and interaction with the land of Israel, its people, and those wishing to own and transform it.

Like other Protestant groups, Baptist interest in the Holy Land came about during the nineteenth century. Safer and quicker means of travel to the Middle East, coupled with more friendly Ottoman policies in the later decades of that century, enhanced the actual Baptist engagement with Palestine (chapters 1 and 2). A series of Southern Baptist ministers and writers visited Palestine, sharing their experiences in articles and travelogues. The images of the country they promoted fitted Western Orientalist attitudes. The Ottoman rulers, they reported, abused the inhabitants and neglected the country. In the Baptists' view neither the Muslims, who comprised the majority of the population, nor the overwhelmingly non-Protestant Christian minorities, were very competent. These inhabitants of the Holy Land, including the Jews, needed the transforming power, Baptists believed, that only Jesus could provide (Introduction, chapter 2).

By the mid-nineteenth century, other Protestant denominations, such as Anglicans, Lutherans, and Presbyterians, began evangelizing in Palestine among the local Christian and Jewish population. The goal was to establish Protestant communities and to install medical and educational facilities. Baptist missionary efforts started later. The first Baptist missionaries were Arab converts who had been born in Palestine and had immigrated to America in the late nineteenth century. They returned to Palestine as Baptist-sponsored evangelists seeking to create large and permanent Baptist missionary stations and congregations. These attempts were only partly successful (chapter 3). In the 1920s the Southern Baptist Convention began sponsoring more systematic missionary work in Palestine. The British, who gained control after the military collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1917, protected and nourished Christian communities and institutions, enabling several Protestant denominations, including the Southern Baptists, to enlarge their presence in the country. Missionaries served as the representatives of their denominations. But diversity of opinion regarding the role and viability of Zionism characterized these evangelical efforts, reflecting the absence of consensus in the Southern Baptist community back home (Chapter 4).

The most dramatic spurt of activity in the missionary network in Palestine occurred in the aftermath of World War II, when Robert Lindsey emerged as the senior evangelist of the Southern Baptists. Armed with a charismatic and energetic personality, Lindsey presided over the growth of an extensive network of missions, congregations, publications, and educational work. He was decisive in turning the Southern Baptists into one of the more visible and influential Christian groups in Israel.

Such growth was hardly a coincidence. In the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, the British government had expressed support for the Zionist aim of creating a national home for the Jews and the growth of a Hebrew-speaking community in Palestine. That explicit support affected the Baptists as well as other Christian groups, even as Zionism was turned into a more viable option in the Jewish world than in the previous centuries of dispersion. The geography of Palestine, the ideology of Zionism, and the emergence of Arab nationalism captured the headlines and became topics of international political discourse. Adoption of new theological convictions also shaped Baptist attitudes as the premillennialist Messianic faith made inroads into Baptist circles. Some Baptist leaders, such as J. Frank Norris, adopted premillennialism and came to view modern Jewry as the heirs of historic Israel and as the subjects of biblical prophecies envisioning a restored Davidic kingdom (Chapter 8). Norris was a maverick who by no means represented the denomination at large. But other Baptists also promoted a premillennialist and pro-Zionist outlook (chapter 7). For example, a Jewish convert named Jacob Gartenhaus advocated a pioneering brand of Hebrew Christianity and premillennialist pro-Zionism while serving as a missionary from the 1920s through the 1940s. To oppose the Zionist hope,



he declared, was to oppose God (73), although his position did not prevail.

Between Dixie and Zion promotes the idea that before the birth of Israel Southern Baptists either gave secondary place on their agenda to the realities of the Holy Land and the Zionist endeavor or held multiple – and at times opposing – views. No party line existed. No decisive resolutions managed to pass on the subject of the Holy Land. Robins’s claim is therefore convincing that Baptist views did not lend themselves easily to such categories as “pro-Zionist” or “pro-Arab.” Instead Southern Baptists formed their opinions within the framework of American evangelical and southern categories (chapter 9). The author nevertheless points to a few general trends that the denomination eventually displayed. Taking an Orientalist line, Baptists who formed an opinion on the Holy Land saw the Arabs as a passive or backward people and the Jews as more worthy and capable of developing the country. Likewise, while Messianic understandings of the developments in Palestine were not yet universal among Baptists, premillennialist convictions began to inform Baptist opinions (chapter 7). Such beliefs would later become decisive in crystallizing Southern Baptist attitudes towards Israel and toward the vicissitudes of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Between Dixie and Zion is impressive in the extent and depth of its research. Unearthing a large array of primary sources and refusing to follow conventional perceptions, Robins weaves a fresh and complex portrayal of Baptist images of and involvement with Palestine and its peoples. The author has also presented a gallery of fascinating personalities and pertinent publications, which give voice to Baptist opinions, activists, and institutions up to the mid-twentieth century. Students of religion in America will therefore find Robins’s book highly instructive. They will join readers who are interested in the history of Christianity and the Holy Land, as well as the development of Christian attitudes towards Jews, Zionism, Arabs, Muslims, and Eastern Christianity. Because *Between Dixie and Zion* constitutes a serious scholarly contribution to these fields, I highly recommend it.

Yaakov Ariel, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

The reviewer may be contacted at yariel@email.unc.edu.



Jews of Florida: Centuries of Stories. By Marcia Jo Zerivitz. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2020. 412 pages.

By her reckoning, Marcia Jo Zerivitz has spent three and a half decades amassing the records of memories and oral histories, the documents and the other material objects about the scattered Jewish communities of Florida. Many of the items were displayed in the traveling public exhibit MOSAIC, which she organized, and are housed in the Jewish Museum of Florida in Miami Beach, where she was the founder and first executive director. With the publication of *Jews of Florida*, the fruits of her research and travels are now available to a much wider and more permanent audience. This large volume is sumptuously illustrated yet is available for just sixty dollars in hardback, a bargain for a book of this magnitude.

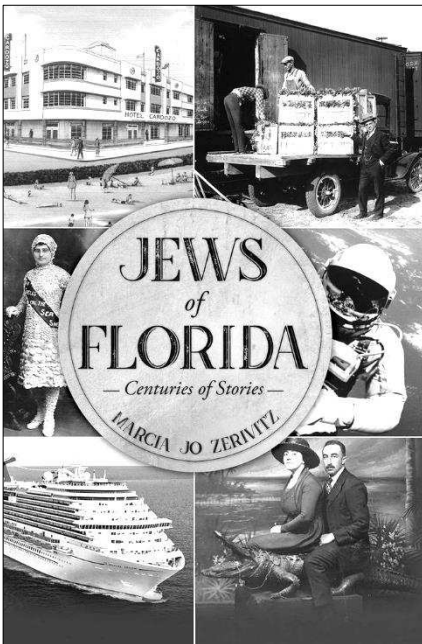
This tome stirs memories of my own. A third of a century ago, when I embarked on my first trip to South Florida as the newly minted director of the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Florida (UF), I rode along with Samuel Proctor. Sam, as he was universally known, was the doyen of American Jewish studies at UF and was also the leading scholar of Florida Jewry. For hours, he regaled me with tales of Florida from the nineteenth century onward, tutoring me about the history of Jews in the Sunshine State. Reading this book reminded me of that pleasant excursion, and I was glad that Ms. Zerivitz has paid posthumous homage to him as one of her own mentors.

Jews of Florida is a remarkable accomplishment, bringing together a wealth of material that covers Jewish life in this large, diverse state from the eighteenth through twenty first centuries. The volume is organized into eight parts, with multiple chapters under each heading. The major portion of the book, encompassing nearly two-thirds of the pages, is devoted to the individual Jews who have achieved renown in Florida. In some senses, it is like reading a biographical directory with photographs showing these historic figures, their families, homes, and businesses. Such an approach might be derided as antiquarian history, but I was fascinated by the stories of how Jews made their way to Florida from elsewhere, put down roots, and built lives of significance. The last third of the volume covers a variety of topics, including religious life, communal institutions, antisemitism, acculturation, and the meaning of Jewish

identity. Although not intended as a reference book, *Jews of Florida* will serve that function for some readers. Fortunately, a superb index helps make that possible.

The book represents a labor of love by an author who has made it her life's work to chronicle the Jewish experience in what is now the nation's third-most-populous state. No other published work captures so thoroughly the breadth of the state's Jewish community nor the scope of Jewish engagement with Florida. Driven by stories presented in a conversational tone, the book is accessible to general readers. The author is especially generous in citing those who have provided her with information for the production of this book. These include individuals who shared family stories as well as scholars who have paved the way for aspiring historians of Florida Jewry. Although quick to credit the contributions of others, Zerivitz uses her own voice in telling the stories that thread through *Jews of Florida*.

The coverage of individuals is astonishingly comprehensive. In my almost three and half decades living in this state, I have met numerous accomplished Jewish Floridians, and the author seems to have a photo and capsule account of most of them. She knows where they came from,



how they got here, and where they settled. It seems fitting that two of the five people who provided her with advance praise for the volume are friends of mine (and, in one case, also a former student). At the same time, I was occasionally surprised to learn that some of the people I had known by their general reputations were members of the tribe, like the swimmer Dara Torres.

Scholars should be aware that this is not a conventional narrative history with a clear overriding theme. The author does draw conclusions, but they tend to celebrate the achievements of Jews in

Florida while recognizing instances of antisemitism that have marred the Jewish experience. I suspect most academics will use *Jews of Florida* as a reference, but others will also enjoy dipping into Zerivitz's pages to see how images and text are artfully combined to engage the reader. I most enjoyed Part 4, which deals more with objects and photos than with biographical capsules. The author nicely breaks down how Florida's Jews commemorated life cycle events and holidays, practiced their religion, and grieved their loved ones.

Anyone who writes a book will receive instructions from reviewers who tell the author how it should have been written. *Jews of Florida* may be something of an exception, because, although I have some criticisms, I do not think the volume should have been written differently. It admirably suits the author's purpose, which is to convey the history of Florida Jewry through the medium of storytelling. The main omission of this book is greater coverage of the communal institutions Jews developed over the decades—a sphere of Jewish life in which the author has been deeply involved. Those myriad institutions are mentioned when individuals who donated time and money to them are celebrated, but accounts of the institutions are not developed in adequate detail. They are present, as it were, but largely immanent, disembodied because of the author's emphasis on individual biography. The section on the Jewish contributions to Florida education is also thinner than warranted. Judging by the interviews in the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, the University of Florida played a key role in developing Jewish communal leadership. UF admitted Jewish students well before (from the 1930s through the 1960s) and in larger numbers than many public and private institutions elsewhere. Notwithstanding the genteel antisemitism that still existed on campus, the university provided an opportunity for Jewish students to network across communities, thereby building lasting relationships that helped them achieve important positions in the professions, various industries, and eventually politics.

I was also disappointed that the first paragraph in the foreword—written by long-time Jewish communal activist Mark Talisman—denigrated my academic discipline as “so-called political science” (xiii). Yet it evidently takes a political scientist to capture the error when the book claims that 78 percent of American Jews practice their religion. The Pew Center report that Zerivitz cites for evidence actually says that 78

percent of Americans who have Jewish parentage report that they *identify* as Jews, not that they necessarily practice Judaism with any rigor. Indeed, less than a quarter of self-identified Jews in the Pew survey said that observing Jewish law was central to their Jewish identity. Zerivitz's error does not fundamentally affect the quality of her book, nor is she responsible for the snarky comment in the foreword.

Despite these quibbles, I deeply admire the author for her doggedness, commitment, and care in writing and assembling a book of this caliber. A fitting testament to her career in Jewish communal service, the book will help Florida Jews better understand how they came to be a small but influential force in the development of Florida as a major state.

Kenneth D. Wald, University of Florida

The reviewer may be contacted at kenwald@ufl.edu.