The Jewish Publication Society of America

REPORT OF NINETY-SIXTH YEAR

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(Elected June 10, 1984)

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REPORT OF THE 96TH JPS ANNUAL MEETING

The 96th annual meeting of the Jewish Publication Society was held on June 10, 1984 at the Franklin Plaza Hotel in Philadelphia. Dr. Muriel M. Berman, president of the Society, presided over the meeting.

Bernard I. Levinson, executive vice-president, memorialized two members of the official family: Dr. Shalom Spiegel, professor of Hebrew literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary, noted author, and member of the publication committee since 1939; and Stanley I. Sheerr, Philadelphia businessman and trustee since 1978, who was interested in distributing JPS books to those institutions which did not have the resources to purchase them.

It was announced that specially inscribed JPS books will be presented to the Bernard G. Segal Law Library at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, to honor Bernard G. Segal, life trustee of the Society, for his outstanding service to the Jewish Publication Society.

Professor Jonathan D. Sarna, commissioned to write the history of JPS for its 1988 centennial celebration, recounted anecdotes of the early history of the Society.

David Rosenberg, editor of the Society, reported on the new direction planned for JPS. “We need your help,” he told the members, “to reach out further to the caliber of writers who are now publishing with major commercial and academic publishers, for we have something special to offer
them: a Jewish focus that is not parochial in its approach to the market. We want JPS to take the lead in establishing a new context in publishing, one in which important Jewish books are remembered. Today many of these books are not properly noticed precisely because of the wide range of commercial publishers and their constantly varying levels of commitment to the Jewish market, not to mention to the Jewish community itself. Many authors are happy to hear that a new mandate for JPS is to nurture a Jewish context, a sense of community to inspire authors as well as readers.”

Charles R. Weiner, chairman of the by-laws committee, proposed the adoption of a new set of by-laws that were discussed and ratified by the board of trustees on April 12, 1984. The membership voted approval of the new by-laws.

The report of the nominating committee was presented by its chairman, Marvin Wachman. Charles R. Weiner was elected president of the Society. A federal judge since 1967, Weiner was elected to the Pennsylvania State Senate four times. He has served on the executive committee of the Federation of Jewish Agencies and as chairman of the executive committee of Dropsie College. The recipient of numerous community awards, Weiner has served on the boards of directors of many cultural and civic institutions. Since ascending to the bench in 1967, Judge Weiner received a doctorate of philosophy in political science from the University of Pennsylvania. He lectures on political science and law at Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania, and their law schools. Prior to his election, he served the Society as vice-president.

The newly elected trustees were D. Walter Cohen, former dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of Dentistry and active supporter of Hebrew University; Philip I. Berman, Allentown, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Hess’s Department Store and leader of cultural, communal, civic, and business affairs; Judith S. Eaton, Philadelphia, president of Philadelphia Community College; Tom L. Freudenheim, director of the Worcester, Massachusetts Art Museum; S. William Pattis, Chicago, president of the National Textbook Company; Martin D. Cohn, Hazleton, attorney and member of the national board of the United Synagogue of America and the board of overseers of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America; and Arthur Hertzberg, rabbi of Temple Emanu-El, Englewood, adjunct professor of history at Columbia University, award-winning author and past president of the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Policy Foundation. Both Mr. Cohn and Rabbi Hertzberg have served the Society as members of the publication committee.
Re-elected as trustees were Jack L. Cummings, Montreal; Stuart E. Eizenstat, Washington; and Gerald I. Wolpe, Philadelphia. Robert P. Frankel, Norma F. Furst, and Harriet Soffa, Philadelphia, and Robert S. Riffkind, New York, are trustees who have rejoined the board after a short absence.

Elected to serve as vice-presidents of the Society were Robert P. Abrams, Marvin Wachman, and Martin Meyerson, Philadelphia, Max M. Kampelman, Washington, and Jay I. Kislak, Miami. Leon J. Perelman, Philadelphia, was re-elected treasurer; Norma F. Furst, Philadelphia, was chosen secretary.

Dr. Berman, who stepped down as president of JPS following a three-year term, was elected chairman of the board. She is the first individual to serve the Society in this capacity.

The board of trustees approved the appointment of Dr. Chaim Potok, former editor of the Society and secretary to the Bible translation committee, as chairman of the publication committee.

Following the business proceedings of the annual meeting, Isaac Bashevis Singer, awarded the 1978 Nobel Prize for Literature, read one of his unpublished stories. Mr. Singer was introduced by Chaim Potok.

*From the Annual Report of JPS President Muriel M. Berman*

It has been said that introspection is good for the soul; indeed, it has been mandated for all Jews during the High Holy Days. On those days, we acknowledge to ourselves what has been good, what has been bad, and what has been omitted or ignored. Perhaps it is time for our organization to take a good look at itself as we approach our second century—and our board started more than a year ago—to do just that, to evaluate and seriously examine many of our policies.

Back in 1888, when this Society came into being, there were specific needs and specific reasons for its existence. Today, even though the goals remain exactly the same, some of the reasons have changed.

Let’s go back in time for a few short minutes and see how it all began, and why.

In the early 1800’s, with the virulent growth of antisemitism and as the horrible inhumane pogroms spread throughout Eastern Europe, many Jews settled in America. Immigration of Jews from Germany also increased, and as the children of these immigrants accepted the English language as their
own, the need for books in English dealing with Jewish history, religion, and literature became apparent.

Jewish social and philanthropic organizations already existed, because the new arrivals had to be fed and started on a new life. Night schools were established to teach the immigrants to read and write English, since the newcomers were anxious to become full-fledged American citizens. But one thing was missing. The new generation, the children, were growing up knowing how to speak only one language, English. Unfortunately, there were no books in English about Jewish culture or history—not even a Jewish prayer book in English. It was not until 96 years ago, 1888, that the need was filled, and the Jewish Publication Society of America became a reality. The story of how we came into being is dramatic and exciting, too lengthy for now. Yes, JPS is an organization born of necessity.

Our evaluation continued, and we found that in spite of an intense effort on the part of a special membership committee, supplemented by professionals, our membership is good, but static. This led to an examination of our marketing and public relations departments, and, eventually, to ongoing discussions with the board in regard to its responsibility for policy in categories of book determination, in relation to and in conjunction with the publication committee. There were healthy and lengthy discussions and decisions.

The publication committee will be activated to read manuscripts in its areas of expertise. The publication committee will have a small editorial committee, which will receive reports of the readers and recommend to the board of trustees those books which, in its estimation, are worthy of publication.

Our new editor is a writer and poet who knows his way around the publishing world. The editorial department will take an aggressive role in trying to capture the best manuscripts written anywhere in the world that fulfill our mandate of content and quality. We will encourage contemporary Jewish authors, and on occasion we will commission books.

We were the first to recognize the need to establish this kind of a society; we will be the first to present whatever is necessary.

Our reputation for excellence in presenting and preserving both contemporary and classical Jewish literature goes back almost a century. We will guard it zealously; indeed, our board of trustees is a vital, concerned group, dedicated to the original goals of the Society while accepting the challenges to insure the future.
And now, a word about our books, for they are the heart and soul of our Society. The most prestigious awards in the field of Jewish writing, the National Jewish Book Awards, were presented at a ceremony at the 42nd Street Public Library in New York. You will be pleased to know that of the ten awards, the Jewish Publication Society received three, the only publishing house to receive more than one. The awards received were in the categories of: History— *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia 1825–1855* by Michael Stanislawski; Holocaust— *The Quality of Witness: A Romanian Diary 1937–1944* by Emil Dorian, edited by Marguerite Dorian, translated by Mara Soceanu Vamos; Children's Literature— *The Jewish Kids Catalog* by Chaya Burstein. Additional awards were: Children’s Literature— *In the Mouth of the Wolf* by Rose Zar (Association of Jewish Libraries); Translation— *At the Stone of Losses* by T. Carmi, translated by Grace Schulman (Kenneth B. Smilen/Present Tense Literary Awards); History— *A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Volume 18* (co-published with Columbia University Press) by Salo W. Baron. Dr. Baron also received a special award for his outstanding lifetime contribution to Jewish literature. Chaim Potok was the featured speaker at the awards ceremony; Highest Standards in Design, Printing, and Binding— *Jewish Legends of the Second Commonwealth* by Judah Nadich and *The Jewish Kids Catalog* by Chaya Burstein (Philadelphia Book Show).

Many more significant books are forthcoming, some long awaited. I will mention only one as an example, *Cyrus Adler: Selected Letters.* Adler was truly an extraordinary man. His influence was felt in every aspect of Jewish life in America and abroad, and always on the highest levels. It is almost impossible to fathom that he founded, chaired, and was involved with practically every major institution of Jewish learning and culture (all still in existence today), among them the Jewish Publication Society of America, the American Jewish Historical Society, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Dropsie College, and the American Jewish Committee. This book of Adler’s letters is truly a window into history.

About 180,000 books were distributed last year, with the famous JPS Bibles leading the list. Of the 11 most popular books, four were in the category of children's literature. The best-selling children’s book was *The Jewish Kids Catalog.* The others on the list were *The Jewish Catalog; Blu Greenberg’s On Women and Judaism; At the Stone of Losses,* a sensitive book of poetry by T. Carmi; *Jewish Legends of the Second Commonwealth* by Judah Nadich, an incomparable source of learning, Jewish wisdom and values; and the *American Jewish Year Book 1983.* The latter, published each
year since 1899, is the authoritative source on events in Jewish life around the world.

An important milestone was achieved this year with the inauguration of the Society’s Heritage Library, a project unique to our history. The Heritage Library committee has a number of vital goals, among them: to create an enduring, quality library of JPS books in every Jewish home; to increase our readership by having books in public libraries; to give the Society greater national visibility, by holding heritage library meetings in cities throughout the nation. Last month the New York committee hosted a gala cocktail reception at the Plaza Hotel, where Chaim Potok was the featured speaker, followed by a tour of the exhibition “The Precious Legacy” at the Jewish Museum. The show presented Czechoslovakian art treasures confiscated by the Nazis from the Jews, who they believed were destined to become an extinct race. Other successful Heritage Library committee meetings have been hosted in Philadelphia and Chicago, and one is scheduled this summer for New Jersey. More are in the planning stage.

Members of the Heritage Library committee contribute $1,000 annually. They receive a complete set of prestigious JPS books which they designate as a gift to a college, university, high school, synagogue, hospital, Hillel house or any other institution of their choice. In addition, they receive a duplicate set for their personal libraries, or for gift giving. Each volume bears a handsome, specially designed bookplate identifying the donor and the recipient.

Sponsors are asked to pledge their participation for a five-year period, in order to enable the Society to undertake long-term research and publishing commitments of significance to the Jewish people. Participants, of course, have the right to withdraw from the five-year program at any time for any reason.

This project, still in its infancy, already boasts 37 members, and we are proud that a choice collection of books has been distributed to 24 institutions in 11 states and Israel. One of our new board members, Irvin J. Borowsky, conceived the idea, and the project is on its way. We thank him, the sizeable committee, and the board, who have been devoted to the Heritage Library committee idea.

Meanwhile, our Israel office is thriving, memberships are increasing, and our visibility has been enhanced through stimulating symposia and lectures. The office receives manuscripts from established writers and can be a haven for aspiring authors.

Hadassah magazine, with a circulation of 380,000, devoted a three-page spread in its December 1983 issue to a symposium entitled “The Israeli
Writer and His Public,” held during the Israel Book Fair last year in Jerusalem. Participants included many of our most noted authors.

Numerous other lectures in Israel are sponsored by JPS. These highlight the authors of our books. Rabbi Moshe Rosen of Romania spoke to mark the publication of Emil Dorian’s The Quality of Witness: A Romanian Diary, which I mentioned as a prize winner previously. The rebbetzen, Mrs. Rosen, was instrumental in getting some of the manuscript to the U.S. by memorizing large portions of Emil Dorian’s work.

In anticipation of our centennial in 1988, work has been stepped up on the Bible commentary project. Some of the most eminent Bible scholars in the world—Michael Fishbane, Baruch Levine, Jacob Milgrom, Nahum Sarna, Jeffrey Tigay, and the literary editor, Chaim Potok—are involved in this work.

As you know, our Hebrew Bible consists of Torah, Prophets, and Writings; it is the most sacred and cherished work in the Jewish tradition. It has been transmitted to us together with its commentaries, so that in Jewish tradition Bible has come to mean Torah, Prophets, Writings, and their commentaries. Since the time of Rashi, each major period of Jewish history took the commentaries of the past and then created its own commentaries, for its own time and its own needs.

It is interesting to note that the commentators were at liberty to disagree with one another as to the meaning of the texts. It is the very nature of the rabbinic Bible that on one and the same page, existing together in harmony, will be found divergent and often contradictory interpretations. Each has its validity in Jewish tradition.

Now, for the first time in history, we have the information and the methodological tools, including the study of archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls, to explore the Biblical text in a way that could never have been done before. This new world of knowledge will be seen through the eyes and minds of our Jewish scholars, who are ever conscious of the fact that they are writing commentaries to the most sacred, primal, formative book in Jewish existence.

To date, more than 30 pledges of $5,000 each have been received for the JPS Bible commentary project. We are forming a committee of 100 persons and foundations to be patrons. We invite you to participate.

Being president of this Society has been a rewarding experience. The last three years have passed swiftly, and many programs were implemented, but the big story of this administration was the presentation to the world of a new translation of the Jewish Bible. As you know, this new translation was the product of a committee of learned and distinguished professors, as well
as rabbis of the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform traditions. Who can ever forget the magnificent dinner celebrating this great occasion (the first dinner to be held since 1917)? We honored the translators, the rabbis who participated, past presidents, trustees, the publication committee, and the editors. The honored guests read like a Who’s Who of intellectual Jewry. Toasts were proffered to our special guests, the descendants of scholars involved in the original 1917 project. Elie Wiesel was the featured speaker and the theme was “Hope.” It was an historic occasion.

Incidentally, we plan to bring out the new Bible in one volume next year.

A symposium with some of the brilliant Bible translators was held both at New York University and in Jerusalem. Our public relations activities were particularly outstanding. Time magazine devoted a full page to our Bible story. The New York Times reported on our New York symposium at length, and there were literally hundreds of newspaper articles throughout the country. We were honored with numerous awards from many institutions, among them the American Jewish Committee and the Layman’s Bible Institute. The award from the city of Philadelphia became an official part of the city’s Century IV celebration and will remain in its archives for posterity.

Another highlight was the presentation of our Bible to the President of the United States in the oval office at the White House. Present were Vice-President Bush, Pennsylvania senators Heinz and Specter, and all the JPS vice-presidents. President Reagan was truly appreciative and impressed with the history of our Society, briefly related by your president, and expressed the wish that other ethnic groups would emulate the Jews by translating their holy books into English, along with their research and creative writing. He was particularly sensitive to our mission, since he was going to a huge meeting for survivors of the Holocaust in Washington that very evening.

You will be interested to know that we received thoughtful letters of congratulation and appreciation upon the presentation of our Bible to President Navon of Israel, Pope John Paul II, Hebrew University president Avram Harman, John Cardinal Krol, and other dignitaries.

Our books seem to be everywhere. Our executive director, Bernard I. Levinson, attended the Moscow Book Fair, left a large number of catalogs, and showed books to the hundreds of Soviet Jews who eagerly explored our booth. Many came several days in a row, including the secret police. Some people hand-copied portions of the books to take home with them. One woman copied a Rosh Hashanah recipe; another spent a whole day copying
words and music to a Yiddish song, and a grandfather wanted the music for *kol nidre*. Mr. Levinson showed him the music in the *Yom Kippur Anthology* and whistled the melody as he pointed to the notes. Tears came to the old man's eyes; he still remembered learning the song at home as a child.

In a few short years we shall rededicate ourselves to our second century. We have already embarked on a number of exciting programs. First and foremost will be the completion and publishing of magnificent volumes of the Bible commentaries. A comprehensive history of the Society has been commissioned.

Under consideration are an index of all the books published by the Society since its inception; a program of JPS scholars-in-residence; and an alumni reunion weekend-symposium, to include every living author who has ever had a book published by JPS. We plan *onegei shabbat* throughout the U.S. and Israel featuring JPS books. There will be sophisticated JPS book and art exhibitions.

We are overflowing with ideas; we would appreciate hearing some of yours. And now, I bid you "Shalom" as your president.

I want to sincerely thank each and every one of you: the members, the truly devoted staff, the executive director, the editorial department, the many committees and their chairmen, and especially the board of trustees for their dedication and cooperation.

Even as a little girl, I was always cognizant of our great Jewish heritage, instilled by my parents and their Zionist ideals. The greatness of our legacy is what it says to Jews as yet unborn, a legacy for our children and their children. It is a legacy of a living, vibrant people. Sometimes we wonder what has kept us alive through all these centuries. One of the explanations, I believe, is that we are people of the book, involved with learning and perpetuating our culture, continuing our devout prayers, respecting our traditions.

This, my friends, is one of JPS' contributions to the society in which we live. We publish outstanding books which teach and inspire, and have done so for almost a hundred years. Proud and cognizant of our historic accomplishments, we must approach our second century respecting our distinguished past, but knowing that the future is as important as the past. We are dedicated to fulfilling the dreams and visions, the goals and aspirations, of this Society. It has been said that the past is prologue to the future. If this be true, we face the future with confidence and anticipation, as we look toward our second century.
JPS Treasurer's Report for 1983

In my first report as treasurer, it gives me great pleasure to inform you that our financial situation is a sound one.

Income from the sale of books and memberships was $1,249,168 in 1983, a seven per cent increase over the previous year, while the costs of our books and administration expenses were $1,430,692, a four per cent increase over 1982. Income from donations and investments resulted in a bottom line of revenue exceeding expenses by $39,134, a five per cent increase for the year.

During 1983 we changed our accounting system so that our costs, which were previously expensed, are now treated on a cost-of-books-sold basis.

Our endowment funds, under the guidance of our investment committee and advisor, are carefully selected so that the Society may continue to publish important books in the future.

JPS Publications

In 1983 JPS published the following new volumes:

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<tr>
<th>Title and Author</th>
<th>Printed</th>
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<tr>
<td>THE QUALITY OF WITNESS: A Romanian Diary 1937–1944 by Emil Dorian</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<td>TSAR NICHOLAS I AND THE JEWS: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855 by Michael Stanislawski</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<td>THE JEWISH KIDS CATALOG by Chaya M. Burstein</td>
<td>11,400</td>
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<td>JEWISH LEGENDS OF THE SECOND COMMONWEALTH by Judah Nadich</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<td>THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL: Three Novellas by Nathan Shaham</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>TO DWELL IN UNITY: The Jewish Federation Movement in America 1960–1980 by Philip Bernstein</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>IN THE MOUTH OF THE WOLF by Rose Zar</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>THE RESCUE OF DANISH JEWRY by Leni Yahil (paperback edition)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>A SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE JEWS: Late Middle Ages and Era of European Expansion 1200–1650 Vol. XVIII by Salo W. Baron (joint publication with Columbia University Press)</td>
<td>1,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK—Volume 83 Edited by Milton Himmelfarb and David Singer (co-published with the American Jewish Committee)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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AT THE STONE OF LOSSES
by T. Carmi
(joint publication with the University of California Press)

IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL
by Amos Oz
(co-published with Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)

ELIJAH'S VIOLIN AND OTHER JEWISH FAIRY TALES
Selected and retold by Howard Schwartz
(co-published with Harper & Row)

1983 Reprints

During 1983 JPS reprinted the following books:

THE ALEPH-BET STORY BOOK by Deborah Pessin (3,000); A BOOK OF HEBREW LETTERS by Mark Podwal (2,000); THE BOOK OF JOB (2,000); HONI AND HIS MAGIC CIRCLE by Phillis Gershator (2,000); A HISTORY OF THE JEWS IN CHRISTIAN SPAIN by Yitzhak Baer (2,000); THE HOLY SCRIPTURES (25,000); THE JEWISH KIDS CATALOG by Chaya M. Bernstein (7,500); THE JEWISH CATALOG edited by Richard Siegel, Michael & Sharon Strassfeld (15,000); JEWISH WORSHIP by Abraham E. Millgram (2,000); JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION by Mordecai M. Kaplan (2,000); THE JEWS OF ARAB LANDS by Norman A. Stillman (2,000); LEGENDS OF JERUSALEM by Zev Vilnay (2,000); LEGENDS OF THE JEWS, Vols. II and V, by Louis Ginzberg (1,500); MA'ASEH BOOK translated by Moses Gaster (2,000); ON WOMEN AND JUDAISM by Blu Greenberg (6,000); THE TORAH (10,000); VOICES OF A PEOPLE by Ruth Rubin (2,000); THE WRITINGS (5,000); THE YOM KIPPUR ANTHOLOGY by Philip Goodman (2,000).