

Thoughts From The Lubavitcher Rebbe

G-d's Kindness Draws Us Closer To Him

By Rabbi Yoseph Groner

The Torah tells us many times how the children of Israel were blessed by G-d. One would expect that blessings are granted only to worthy people. Yet we see that the Al-mighty G-d often grants blessings of health, wealth, happiness, success, etc. to individuals who seem most undeserving of such blessings.

In Deuteronomy we find that ... there will come a time when upon you will come the blessings and the curse, etc... When this will happen, then, you will return (with Teshuvah - sincere repentance) to G-d.

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of chassidism, poses a question: It is understandable that one can be brought to repent through suffering. The unplea-

sant experience can awaken within him a feeling of return to G-d. That is why the Torah mentions curse. But why mention the blessing? Why should a person be moved to remorse for his misdeeds as a result of receiving blessings from G-d.

The Baal Shev Tov replies with the following parable: There was once a peasant who did not conduct himself properly towards the king. How did the king take "revenge?" By giving him all kinds of grants and blessings. The king appointed the peasant to an honorable position, made him an officer and a prince and heaped other honors upon him.

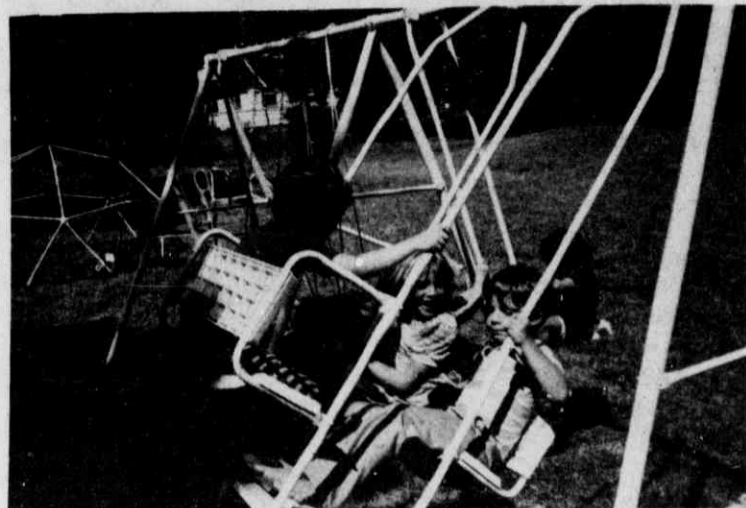
When the former peasant contemplated on the greatness of this mighty monarch and on the king's magnificent generosity, goodness and benevolence towards him, he was

overcome with a deep sense of shame. How could there have been a time when he behaved improperly towards the king? The more he thought about it the more he was aroused to intense feelings of distress and remorse for his earlier improper conduct.

When the king saw that the peasant was so distressed and had reached the level of ... and you shall return to G-d your G-d... then the Al-mighty King (G-d) accepted his Teshuva, forgave him, and cured him of his imperfections.

This beautiful parable can be aptly applied to our own conduct. Our material wealth comes from G-d, though we do not deserve it; receiving this benevolence from above should ultimately cause us to feel remorseful for ever having doubted G-d's kindness to us.

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Children enjoying playground equipment at "After-school Care."



"After-school Care" children on "excursion" to Providence Square.



Part of the festivities of Succoth was learning about the Lulav and the Ethrog.



Jewish Books in Review

is a service of the IWB Jewish Book Council,
15 East 26th St., New York, N.Y. 10010

Life On The Western Frontier

We Lived There Too. Kenneth Libo and Irving Howe. St. Martin's/Marek, NY 1984. 344 pp.

Mid-America's Promise. Joseph P. Schultz, ed. The Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City and the American Jewish Historical Society. Kansas City. 1982. 405 pp.

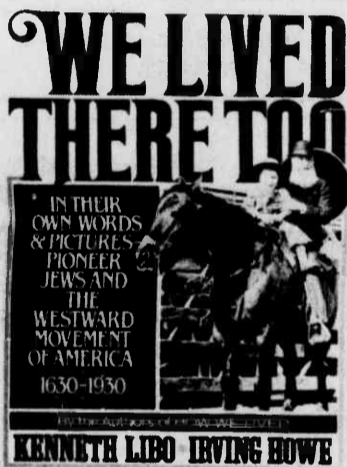
Pioneer Jews. Harriet and Fred Rochlin. Houghton Mifflin Co. Boston. 1984. 244 pp.

Reviewed by Jeffrey S. Gurock

Having earned their "home and fortunes" as chroniclers of New York Ghetto life and culture, Kenneth Libo and Irving Howe have now "turned (their) faces to the Great West" and in accord with Horace Greeley's century-old dictum have sought out new horizons for their considerable talents.

Their collection of documents, photographs and ephemera offers a reminder to American historians, in an appropriate and non-triumphalist way, of the important role immigrants in general and Jews in particular played in the opening and development of the West. And it strongly argues to students of American Jewish history that the story of their people in this country extends beyond the borders of the Lower East Side and its sister ghettos of the East and Mid-West.

To be sure, Libo and Howe's correctives are not new: More than 40 years ago, Marcus Lee Hansen argued for the significance of the New American in the Manifest Destiny story. And for more than a generation, local Jewish Historical Societies from Kansas City to Colorado to California to Oregon have patiently col-



lected the miscellanea that make up the texts of this book. Indeed, some of these documents have been published elsewhere: Abraham Kohn's peddler lament is, for example, one of the most widely quoted passages in American Jewish memoir literature. Libo and Howe's contribution lies rather in their uncommon abilities to assimilate and to masterfully introduce documents usually of interest only to scholars to large and appreciative lay audiences.

As noted above, Libo and Howe could not have done their work without books like *Mid-America's Promise*, a compilation of essays and documents on Kansas City Jewish history. A work typical of many produced by local historical societies over the last 30 years, they provide scholars possessed of sensitivities to national trends in Jewish economic life, politics, demographics and religion with important case studies from whence they ultimately draw wider conclusions.

Finally, it should be noted that the spade work of Western Jewish history continues to be undertaken by loving and devoted members of historical societies. Harriet and Fred Rochlin's richly illustrated and handsomely produced record of Jewish life in the Far West is a case in point. *Pioneer Jews* covers much new ground even as it retells the sagas of Jewish peddlers and entrepreneurs in 19th Century frontier society.

Jeffrey S. Gurock is the author of *When Harlem Was Jewish* (Columbia University Press).

Correction

The telephone number for "I Can't Believe It's Yogurt" is 334-3854.

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