Jewish Life in Nazi Germany—A View "from Below"

Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair, Jewish Life in Nazi Germany,* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, XII + 290

Reviewed by Guy Miron

Marion Kaplan is known for both her studies on the feminist movement and for her work on the daily lives of Jews in Imperial Germany.[1] In her new book, too, Kaplan has combined German-Jewish history with the history of gender, choosing, however, to focus on a later and more tragic period.

The aim to reflect Jewish life in Nazi Germany "from below," from the individual's—specifically, woman's—point of view, underlies the book. This is evident first in the types of sources that Kaplan has studied. Unlike most studies dealing with this era—based on the Jewish press in Nazi Germany until 1938, and the copious institutional material left behind by the main Jewish organizations—this volume is based primarily on a large collection of contemporary testimonies and personal memoirs, foremost by Jewish women. Kaplan has studied memoirs in the Leo Baeck Archives in New York, the collection of memoirs at Harvard University—which held a creative writing contest between Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants from Germany on "My Life in Germany before and after 1933" in the early 1940s—the Wiener Library, and the Yad Vashem Archives. Kaplan also availed herself of additional collections of memoirs, the numerous files published in German in the past few years, and several studies in specific locations. She also conducted several personal interviews.

The results of this compilation and analysis of sources are unquestionably impressive. Admittedly, Kaplan was not the first to portray the daily lives of German Jews during this time on the basis of personal testimonies. While she worked on the book, at least three studies predicated on testimonies appeared—they, too, focusing on women and Jewish family life in Germany. Kaplan lists two of them in her bibliography and cites them on occasion.[2] What makes this book special, however, is the breadth of Kaplan's brushstrokes, the profundity of her contemplation of her subjects' lives, and her empathy toward them—even if at times, especially in the first few chapters, she has nothing new to disclose. The fact that Kaplan's book is written in English is also important, as it can serve a large readership that has no access to the majority of studies and memoirs in this field which are in German.

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[1] Kaplan's previous and most familiar book is *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class, Women, Family and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Kaplan presents her study not only as a contribution to research on Jewish history but also as a study in German history. Her focus on Jews' daily lives, as reflected in their memoirs, she says, can help us discover "how the German *normality* functioned" (p. 9). Thus, the fate and treatment of the Jews exposes the other facet of routine daily life that many contemporary non-Jewish witnesses described in their memoirs—sometimes in conscious or unconscious disregard of the fate of their Jewish neighbors.[3] This genre, the historiography of the day-to-day, may blur—and, according to certain critics, deliberately blurs—the abnormality of the Nazi era. Kaplan, however, manages to attain the opposite result.

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[2] Martina Kliner-Fruck, *"Es ging ja ums Ueberleben," Juedische Frauen zwischen Nazi-Deutschland, Emigration nach Palaestina und ihrer Rueckkehr* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 1995). The first part of this study (pp. 21-109) deals with Jewish women in Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s on the basis of personal testimonies. Sybille Quack, *Zuflucht America, Zur Sozialgeschichte der Emigration, deutsch-juedischer Frauen in die USA 1933-1945* (Bonn: Dietz, 1995), pp. 39-82. Before taking up the lives of German-Jewish emigres in the United States, this study discusses their lives in Germany in the 1930s. Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy 1933-1945* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997). Chapter 5 in this study (pp. 147-178) deals with Jewish family life in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s on the basis of personal testimonies; it cites several of Kaplan's sources, although less extensively. A new study currently being conducted by Daniel Fraenkel, deals with the daily lives of Jews in Nazi Germany as reflected in the archives of the Centralverein. Several studies in recent years have discussed the feminine angle of German society in various aspects. See, for example, Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); Gudrun Schwarz, *Eine Frau an seiner Seite, Ehefrauen in der "SS-Sippengemeinschaft"* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1997).

[3] The repressionist tendencies of contemporary non-Jewish Germans and their manner of reconstructing the past in personal testimonies are discussed, for example, in Gabriele Rosenthal, ed., *"Als der Krieg kam, hatte ich mit Hitler nichts zu tun," Zur Gegenwaertigkeit des "Dritten Reiches" in Biographien* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1990); and Barbara Keller, *Rekonstruktion von Vergangenheit, Vom Umgang der "Kriegsgeneration" mit Lebenserinnerungen* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996).

The book is divided into eight chapters, which reconstruct German-Jewish life in diverse fields in both chronological and thematic sequences. The first four chapters depict Jewish life in the public, private, and family domains, including the lives of children and youth. Chapter 5 deals with the events of November 1938, and their impact. Unlike many researchers who confront this period, Kaplan does not halt her discussion of the fate of German Jewry at the beginning of the war. Her last three chapters discuss the lives of Jews who remained in Germany during the war—enduring forced labor, transports, and underground existence until the liberation.

Reliance on retrospective testimonies and memoirs can be problematic. Kaplan addresses herself to this problem in the introduction: ". . . The interpretation arises from these women's actions, not from how they framed them in later memoirs or interviews" (p. viii). In note 7 to the introduction (p. 239), she devotes greater detail to the question of the effect of the memoirists' retrospective viewpoint on the way their past is portrayed and discusses the possibility of revision in the representation of the past from various present-day perspectives. While Kaplan promises to contend with this and similar issues by perusing the sources, this promise is not always kept. When two women report having experienced daily fear from the first few months of Nazi rule (p. 21), for example, one cannot determine the extent to which this report reflects their actual experiences in 1933, and the extent to which it reflects the impact of subsequent experiences on their earlier recollections.

Kaplan does attempt to tackle the problem of the memoirs' reliability by corroborating them frequently with other testimonies and sources from the 1930s and the early 1940s. However, her book does not show an awareness of the time of the memoirs' authorship—the 1940s, 1960s, or even the 1980s. The memoirists' personal circumstances and the locations where the writing was undertaken are also far from evident. A memoirist in Israel, for example, may believe it more necessary than a counterpart in the United States to present the "Jewish heroism" in his or her past.

A systematic discussion of the tension between "life as experienced" and "life as narrated" may of course be a research topic in its own right; if it were taken up here, it would divert the focus from the main issues that concern Kaplan in her book. Nevertheless, one might expect to find a more probing discussion of these problems on occasion, if only in the footnotes.

The basic issue that Kaplan repeatedly addresses and tests from various angles is the effect of gender on the turbulence that buffeted German Jews and their fate. She asserts that men and women were exposed to different facets of Nazi antisemitism stage by stage and that gender was one of the factors that affected their responses. In the last few lines of her book she explains the place of gender in her study:

To raise the issue of gender also does not place it above racism. . . . I have emphasized the importance of gender not only because it helps us to tell a fuller, more intimate, and more nuanced story but also to give Jewish women a voice long denied them and to offer a perspective long denied us (p. 237).

According to these remarks, awareness of gender differences provides an additional point of view in research on the daily lives of German Jews. The author also considers this awareness a way to correct the injustice that historical research has inflicted on the feminine point of view. Yet her remarks make one inquire more sharply about the main theme of Kaplan’s book. Throughout, the reader asks whether the book deals, as it claims, with the totality of Jewish daily life in Nazi Germany—albeit with emphasis on the gender aspect—or whether it concerns itself more with the lives of Jewish women at this time, with men serving as mere background pieces. These research topics are, of course, interrelated, but not identical, and at times one gets the impression that Kaplan’s intention in addressing one or the other is not clear.

Much of the first chapter, for example, focuses on Jewish women and describes the economic boycott and the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (April 1933) through their recollections. Kaplan occasionally avails herself of the memoirs of men, but, for the most part, they are cited briefly and anonymously, without direct quotation (for example, “One man recalled that. . .” [p. 21]). A gender test of the pictures included in the book—all of which are culled from the Leo Baeck Archives in New York—shows that most of the persons shown are women, even when the picture deals with a "general" Jewish domain such as the *Jüdische Winterhilfe* (pp. 30, 31, 139) or a sports event involving Jewish youth (p. 110).

Kaplan is, of course, making a contribution to the research by focusing on women—a contribution that may redress the injustice of a male focus in most studies. This is indeed her intention, as she explains; on the other hand, it is inconsistent with the author's pretension to reflect general Jewish life in Germany in her study. Just the same, the book treats several themes within the ambit of the "general" social history of German Jewry without focusing on the feminine point of view; for example, the prohibition of Jewish ritual slaughter and responses to this ban (pp. 33-34) and Jews' relations with their neighbors in rural and urban communities (pp. 36-40).

When one examines Kaplan's gender allegations individually, one discovers that while some of her insights are well founded and shed new light on events, others are less convincing. The author claims, for example, that the civil-service law was more harmful to Jewish women than to Jewish men in the first stage of Nazi rule. She explains this logically: many men were exempted from the stipulations of the law, either because they had fought in World War I and were army veterans, or because they had entered the civil service before 1914. Hardly any women could exploit this loophole; they had not served in the army and, because of traditional discrimination, had entered the civil service later than men (p. 27).

Another important distinction, presented in a subsequent chapter, is between two types of miscegenation: marriages between Jewish men and Aryan women, and vice versa.[4] In the racial matter, the Nazis followed the long-standing European practice of defining citizenship and national affiliation by determining the spouses' status on the basis of the husband's affiliation.

For the most part, the Nazis defined marriages of Jewish men and Aryan women as "non-privileged"—the spouses were removed to "Jew houses" (*Judenhäuser*), and the husband was required to wear the yellow badge from 1941 on. In contrast, couples in which the husband was Aryan were usually given "privileged" status; they were not consigned to *Judenhäuser,* wives were exempt from the yellow-badge rule, and husbands even served in the military until April 1940. Kaplan’s explanations for the differentiation in Nazi policy, as elaborated in late April 1939, are illuminating, although the attribution of men’s high status to German society and Nazism seems inaccurate:

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[4] The precise distinction between the two categories of marriage is more complex; it also concerns itself with whether the couple had children and, if so, with their status; see pp. 148-149.

The Nazi decision to privilege male over female “Aryans” [married to Jews] reflected Nazi misogynism and the higher status of males in German society. The “household” was defined by its male head. In addition, “Aryan” men married to Jewish women still served in the military … and the Nazis feared that the morale of these men would suffer if their families were treated like Jews. In addition, Nazi leaders may have assumed that women were passive but that men would protest their own forced transfer—or that of their wives and children—into a *Judenhaus*. Finally, the Nazis probably transformed into racial law the sexist German legal practice regarding marriages with foreigners: when German women married foreigners, they lost their German citizenship, but when German men married foreigners, their wives became German citizens. In other words, German women lost their blood ties to the *Volk* when they married “out”, and Jewish women gained some protection from being “incorporated” when they married “in.” (pp. 149-150)

Kaplan draws another interesting distinction between the fate of men and of women. After deportations to the east began, she argues, Jewish men who went into hiding or attempted to blur their identity and mingle in the cities were in greater danger than Jewish women who did so. Since a large majority of German men had been inducted into the armed forces, any man observed in the street was deemed a suspect and, therefore, was much more susceptible to inspection of identity than a woman (p. 203).

In other cases, Kaplan’s distinctions are more difficult to accept. One example is her sweeping claim that the deterioration in the social treatment of Jews after the Nazi accession was more harmful to women than to men. Women, Kaplan asserts, were the family’s liaison with their surroundings. They were better acquainted with neighbors, in closer contact with government officials, and more active in volunteer organizations. Therefore, she adduces, they were more seriously affected by the change in the social climate. Kaplan does not dismiss the possibility that the change in attitude also caused men to suffer at their places of work, but: “Although men now suffered the loss of courtesy at work, they were used to competition and a certain degree of conflict in their everyday work life and may have made more allowance for unfriendly, or even hostile, behavior.” (p. 39)

One may find convincing Kaplan’s principled arguments that women were indeed more affected by the hardships of the times in certain respects, but her claim that business rivalry “prepared” Jewish men for the new hostility is hard to accept. The father of Benjamin Sommer of Mannheim returned from his business trips and “told mother . . . [about] the difficulties he had encountered while at work, the arrogance of several customers, nonpayment of debts . . . a dog that had been set upon him.” He certainly noticed the change in climate and responded by traveling sparingly after that time, as his son relates, because “he [no longer] had as much confidence.”[5] The deterioration of business relations with rural Jewish livestock traders such as Erich Lucas’s family cannot be likened to a seasonal downturn that commercial experience prepared them to handle; instead, it was prompted by pressure from the local Nazi leadership that suspended business relations even among long-time friends—something that the Jewish traders certainly felt.[6]

Kaplan may deem men’s experience with the new hostility of their surroundings less painful than women’s because she has read many more memoirs of women than of men. Furthermore, her conviction concerning the existence of such a difference may also stem from a gender difference in the way men and women memoirists represent the past. It is quite possible that men who experienced this reality felt as dejected and helpless as women but were ashamed to describe these feelings in detail or preferred to focus their autobiographies on the professional careers or other active endeavors that they continued to pursue despite the attitude of the surroundings.[7] For example, when Kaplan discusses the way Jewish emigrants parted from Germany, she compares the reconstruction of the parting of a man and a woman—the Lewises, who emigrated to Great Britain in late 1930s—and adduces sweepingly the existence of a basic difference between the perceptions of most men and most women in regard to this emigration:

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[5] From testimony of Benjamin Sommer, Yad Vashem Archives, 03/10479, pp. 9, 13. I thank Irena Steinfeldt for calling my attention to this part of the testimony.

[6] Erich Lucas, *Juedisches Leben auf dem Lande, Eine Familienchronik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1991), p. 122.

[7] Men who describe their past usually tend to focus on their careers and professional accomplishments, whereas women—even if they had careers—tend more strongly to mention family, social environment, and—above all—experiences that engaged their emotions more directly. The discourse on female autobiography has explored this tendency in the past few years. See, for example, Estelle C. Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women’s Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), p. 187. For discussion of the

> Even as both parents experienced relief, their farewell thoughts echoed the general orientation of women and men when contemplating emigration: most women covered their pain and maintained a courageous front, while many men looked back, mourning for the country and culture they had once loved and had now lost (pp. 137-138).

The basis for this generalized conjecture, apart from excerpts from the Lewises memoirs, is not clear. Kaplan supports her claim by saying that men were more fearful than women about difficulties in making a living after emigration. Although this statement is logical in itself, it fails to explain why men and women would react differently to parting from their homeland. One who studies the memoirs of Jewish emigrés from Germany discovers that the authors frequently describe the memory of the parting experience as the trauma of being torn from a country to which they had been bonded in every fiber. However, accounts in this vein are common among men *and* women.[8] Bertha Katz, who settled in Palestine with her husband in late 1933, after he persuaded her to leave Germany—the opposite family dynamic of that described by Kaplan—describes the strange sensation that beset her as she prepared to leave Germany:

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theory that stations the relationship with a significant "other"—which may be the social milieu generally—at the forefront of women's memoirs, in contrast to men's memoirs, which focus on the authors themselves, see Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography, Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 18.

[8] For a discussion on the reflection of the experience of leaving Germany in the autobiographical memoirs of German Jews who emigrated to Palestine, see my doctoral dissertation: Guy Miron, *German Jews in Palestine/Israel—Self-Consciousness Viewed through Patterns of Autobiographical Memory* (Hebrew) (presently under review, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, submitted 1998), pp. 109-114; for two accounts that display a similar level of intensity in the persons' attachment to the German homeland, see Martin Feuchtwanger, *Zukunft ist ein blindes Spiel* (Munich: Langen Mueller, 1989), p. 173; and Charlotte Stein-Pick, *Meine verlorene Heimat* (Bamberg: Bayerische Verlagsanstalt, 1992), pp. 76-78.

During my last 90 days in Frankfurt, I sometimes felt like a schizophrenic. One part of me, the realistic one, knew that until now I had lived a life of culture-illusion, that until now I was not wanted as a Jew. . . . The other part of my schizophrenic soul still belonged to the until now beloved present and I suffered deeply by all these farewells. . . .[9]

The parting accounts are diverse, and one may probably discuss them in view of factors much more important than gender, such as the authors' social background and their point of view at the time they committed their recollections to writing. The adjustment to life in the new country where the memoirs were written, or even identification with this country and reference to it as a "homeland" (*Heimat*), as can be seen in the memoirs of several emigrés may even have alleviated the person's sense of having been uprooted from the old country. The opposite may also have occurred: unsuccessful integration and separation trauma in the new country may have aggravated the sense of uprooting, as reflected subsequently in the person's memoirs.

The attitude of German society toward the Jews preoccupies Kaplan throughout the book, foremost because it is reflected in the Jews' observations and is mirrored in their memoirs. The book seems to have no new conclusion to offer on German attitudes. Kaplan quotes from David Bankier's studies (pp. 46, 199)[10] and adds analysis and illustrations that are important in themselves.

Kaplan describes how the anti-Jewish actions of the Nazi regime were received with understanding from the very start and how many Germans profited from them. In various professions, such as medicine, rivals speeded the banishment of their Jewish colleagues to enhance their own advancement (pp. 16-27). Neighbors posted signs such as "Do not leave notices and parcels next-door. THEY ARE JEWS" at their own initiative (p. 38). Extremists arranged the Jews' expulsion from a variety of associations and organizations, such as the Teachers' Union, the Association of the Blind, and the Chess Association, and other activists refrained from opposing this demand (p. 43).

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[9] Bertha Katz, *Autobiography* (mss.), Leo Baeck Institute Archive, New York, ME355, p. 54.

[10] David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

In her chapter on the lives of children and teenagers, Kaplan calls attention to another pattern in the treatment of the Jews: a pattern of hostility toward Jews as a collective, yet decency toward Jewish individuals. As examples, she cites teachers who made antisemitic statements at every opportunity but who still gave Jewish pupils fair grades (p. 96).

The book describes the “silent treatment” that Jews suddenly experienced in relations with many erstwhile friends and acquaintances—a reflection of their apprehension about being identified with Jews—as part of a more general social disintegration brought about by the Nazi regime (p. 37). This treatment did not always reflect hostility; it usually surfaced among Germans who had not decided how to respond to the Jews’ situation, but gave them the cold shoulder lest their own fate be compromised. This treatment magnified the impact of the anti-Jewish propaganda songs of the Hitler Youth and others, the acts of violence that spread through villages and peripheral towns as early as 1933, and epithets such as “A Jew just kicked off. Thank God, Now we have one Jew less!” uttered during Jewish funerals (pp. 37-38).[11] Kaplan also mentions the other side of this coin; for example, the two villagers who demonstratively participated in the funeral of a Jewish acquaintance in order to pay their last respects despite threats they had received.

As the Jews sank into deeper distress—and what Kaplan calls “social death”—many Germans exploited their plight for personal gain. Various government bureaucrats and agents attempted to extort money and property from emigrating Jews, and instances of sexual exploitation occurred (p. 72). At a much later stage—starting in late 1941, as the Jews were being deported to death, neighbors gathered at their homes to loot what remained of their property. Government bureaucrats also dipped into the booty (p. 186).

Antisemitic attitudes became entrenched even among anti-Nazi Germans, as many believed that the Jews were at fault for the war and the aerial bombardments that Germany was experiencing (p. 160). The Aryan perspective on the Jews’ situation is illuminated by ostensibly cordial remarks made by two Aryans in parting from Elizabeth Freund, who managed to obtain an American visa and leave Germany in October 1941. Kaplan presents and analyzes the parting remarks:

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[11] Kaplan does not always explain where and when these actions took place.

Upon finally receiving permission to emigrate in October 1941, Freund walked to the factory gate with an “Aryan” who had to accompany her. . . . The man said: “I wish you good luck, you will be better off than all of us here”. Similarly, a salesman, curious that she wanted to purchase sunglasses, exclaimed: “What, you’re going to America, a land without war! I wish I could switch places with you!” Neither exchange revealed any recognition of the terrible persecution of the Jews—not even from the “Aryan” who witnessed their forced labor—and in both cases the Germans perceived the Jews as luckier than they (p. 169).

Kaplan does not devote a separate chapter in her book to the Jews’ responses to the situation. Instead, she discusses them throughout the book. She bases herself on Jewish sources and inserts a description of the development of the anti-Jewish policy and the way the Jews perceived their own plight. Here and there she also spends a few pages describing and analyzing their behavior in view of their distress. This integrated narrative reflects a balanced picture; one does not get the mistaken impression that the Jews did not respond to the Nazis’ actions. By presenting these responses in their tragic context, however, the author overstates their heroism.

A pattern of response that the book mentions in various contexts is adjustment to the new situation—acceptance of the inevitable reality, change in the perception of life, and lowering of expectations.[12] Thus, the prohibition of ritual slaughter induced most Orthodox Jews to learn to live without meat and use vegetarian recipes (p. 34), and public social estrangement on the part of German women friends prompted several Jewish women “to redefine their own understanding of ‘friendship’ to include friends who were no longer willing—or, as they saw it, able—to be seen with Jews in public” (p. 42).

Articles in Jewish newspapers advocated education of family members to restrain their demands. Women’s organizations preached simplicity and frugality (pp. 55-56); couples tended to repress anger to keep the family intact (p. 58). Humor gave Jews a refuge from the helplessness and the grim reality that had overtaken them. Stories about Jews with fair skin and light hair, whom the Germans mistook for Aryans and sometimes cited as exemplars of the master race, circulated by word of mouth (p. 35). In whispered undertones, Jews ridiculed antisemitic graffiti and Nazi organizations (p. 59), and pupils in Jewish schools mimicked Hitler and Goebbels derisively (p. 104). Dreaming provided another escape from reality. Kaplan describes an eight-year-old girl who had been humiliated in class and revised this reality in a dream:

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[12] Kaplan explores this insight on p. 51, on the basis of psychological research performed at Harvard on memoirs and on the basis of interviews with emigres from Nazi Germany.

In the dream, classmates showed her their Nazi swastika pins, taunting her that she could not have any. She replied that she could and produced an armband full of swastikas. The children protested, and the teacher tore it away from her and said she could not wear it. Triumphantly, she announced that Hitler had met her, had said she was a good child, and had given her all the swastikas. Thereafter, the teacher and children were kind to her (p. 108).

Kaplan deals sparingly with the institutional Jewish response and hardly mentions entities such as the Centralverein, the Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden, and the Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland. Had she dwelled on the impact of these agencies and the community system of German Jewry, Kaplan would have swerved from her focus on private life; furthermore, these issues have already been discussed at length in the research literature. However, the role of women in these settings definitely seems worthy of further research, which would integrate the organizational and the gender points of view.

The book stresses the family and community cohesion of German Jewry during the Nazi era and explains that their isolation from general society prompted Jews to gather regularly and cultivate their interrelations. Kaplan glosses over a subject discussed at great length in other studies: the educational and cultural activity organized by the Jewish establishment, followed by vocational training and language-study programs in advance of emigration (pp. 43-46).[13] She also describes the establishment of Jewish schools (pp. 103-104) and notes that Jewish youth groups—not all of them Zionist—became increasingly a source of education and hope (pp. 109-111).

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[13] In these matters, see, for example, Yehoyakim Cochavi, *Jewish Spiritual Survival in Nazi Germany* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters House and Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1988).

Kaplan also touches upon a matter much less researched: manifestations of Jewish solidarity under the grim conditions of the *Judenhäuser* in the early 1940s. Notwithstanding the harsh physical conditions, overcrowding, lack of privacy, and hunger, Kaplan asserts that a community consciousness of an "extended family" developed there: Jews sharing each other's food, exchanging gifts, and helping each other. Social relations sustained people even though they had not originated out of choice but under the pressure of the circumstances, and Jews of different social and religious backgrounds, including some who were actually Christian, usually interrelated well (p. 155).

It is difficult to assess the reliability of these accounts and to determine whether and to what extent the post factum recollections of the survivor-witnesses beautified the grim and complicated reality. Kaplan may not have been critical enough in judging the after-the-fact testimonies; perhaps she should have circumscribed her remarks slightly. However, her empathy for the excerpts of testimony that she quotes is one of the salient virtues of the book. This virtue surfaces again in the discussion of the last remnants of bourgeois life in the congested *Judenhäuser,*[14] by the author whose previous book explored the formation of bourgeois norms and ways of life among German Jews:

Parents continued, even with limited means, to provide some of the remnants of bourgeois education for their children. Anneliese Winterberg fondly recalled the six months of piano lessons she received as a child in Bonn, where 474 Jews were squeezed into a former cloister during their last months before deportation. Only 9 ultimately survived. In some *Judenhäuser*, younger residents created a small theater and staged performances. In Leipzig, teenagers gathered to listen to a forbidden gramophone that belonged to an "Aryan" woman married to a Jewish man (p.156).

Alongside these behavior patterns, which illustrate the norms and basic values of pre-1933 German Jewry, Kaplan also mentions breaches of law. During the first few years of Nazi rule, Orthodox Jews continued to perform ritual slaughter despite the threat of severe punishment (p. 33). Defiance of the law became more serious in the 1940s, as manifested in the struggle for life itself. The bourgeois background of older Jews, says Kaplan, left them utterly unprepared for illegal life in hiding; younger Jews, raised under Nazi rule, adjusted to this reality more effectively (p. 203). Kaplan's description of the activity of a "halutsic circle," a group of several dozen young Jews that functioned in Berlin clandestinely throughout the war and met occasionally in forests and parks for cultural activities, sports, and to mark Jewish festivals (pp. 212-213), is especially interesting. The Jewish-Marxist Herbert Baum group fared less auspiciously; the Nazis captured and murdered all of its members (pp. 214-215).

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[14] Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class.*

One of the important contributions of the book is its preoccupation with the problems and fate of converted Jews, *Mischlinge,* and mixed couples. Since these people did not live in organized communities, documentation about them is scarce. In the absence of documents, the research discourse has marginalized their history thus far. In the aftermath of the Nuremberg Laws, families and individuals who had long considered themselves Christian discovered that they were still "Jewish." The fate reserved for them was in a sense even harsher than that of the Jews; they were subjected to the anti-Jewish discrimination and humiliation but, apart from the Organization of Non-Aryan Christians that they established, were not supported by a community-based social and cultural array such as the Jews'. In July 1939, the government forced the Reich Association of Jews in Germany (Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland) to include the out-converts and *Mischlinge* among its members. However, this imposed organizational affiliation was not necessarily enough to meet their need for a social and cultural setting and actually may have aggravated their estrangement.

Aryan relatives of these "Jews" alternately supported and dissociated themselves from them. Those who evidently encountered the greatest difficulty, however, were people who had internalized Nazi antisemitism before discovering that they were among its targets (pp. 85-86). In the lives of mixed families—most of which survived the entire Nazi period despite the regime's efforts to separate the spouses—situations that Kaplan correctly calls "bizarre" were often the case. One example was an out-converted Jewish woman who married an Aryan man and gave birth to a son. After the woman died, her husband married an Aryan woman. Regarding his son as an obstacle, he forced the son to leave the family and emigrate to the United States. In other cases Aryan parents led their “Jewish” children to deportation (p. 87).

“Jews” who were Christian by religion continued to visit churches to worship and to seek shelter, but in many locations they were forced to occupy separate pews and, at times, to attend services at separate hours (p. 160). At the deportation stage, *Mischlinge* and Jewish spouses of Aryans were better off than Jews. The authorities’ attitude toward them was uneven; not in all cases were they doomed to death. In certain instances in which the Gestapo persuaded Aryan spouses to divorce Jews—usually on the basis of false promises—both spouses were murdered immediately afterward (p. 190).

Kaplan also discusses the famous demonstration on Rosensrtasse in Berlin. In February 1943, Aryan women demonstrated for the release of their Jewish husbands who had been arrested and designated for deportation to Auschwitz. This mass demonstration achieved an unexpected victory—thousands of men were released, and several, in an unparalleled occurrence, were actually sent home from Auschwitz on the grounds of having been deported “by mistake.” According to Kaplan, the demonstration succeeded mainly because of its timing. Shortly after the defeat at Stalingrad, the Nazi authorities were afraid to demoralize the Aryan public and clash with public opinion (p. 193). The success of this isolated protest underscores the Germans’ thundering indifference to all the other deportations.

The last three chapters discuss the condition of the Jews in Germany during the war, as they experienced deportations, and life in the underground. To this reviewer, these are the best and most evocative parts of the book. This period has been researched from the Jewish point of view much less than the pre-war period—presumably because of the paucity of sources—and is less familiar to the public because the focus shifted to Eastern Europe at this time. Here, too, Kaplan adroitly illuminates the events with minute details and personal accounts. Jews who remained in Germany were not literally starved as were those in occupied Poland, but they were systematically limited in the types of food they might buy and when and where they could make their purchases. In addition, restrictions on their property and mobility caused hunger to spread, although not to a lethal extent. In 1941, Jews in Germany were not allowed to buy meat, preserves, fish, coffee, or milk (except for young children); even their access to fruit and vegetables was confined to only certain kinds. Shop owners sometimes actually stiffened the terms by saying, for example, “We do not sell Jew-restricted food” and denying Jews basic staples such as potatoes. Sweets such as honey and chocolate were not sold to Jewish children. In 1941, when Jewish children were barred from playing in forests and playgrounds, Aryan neighbors who lived near their daycare centers complained; from then on, they were allowed to play only in Jewish cemeteries (p. 163).

Chapter 7 begins with a description of the grim daily realities of slave labor; those who attempted escape were candidates for summary deportation. The author also attempts to explain the proliferation of suicides among German Jews defeated by despair (pp. 178-183). The exhausting and lengthy hours of labor aggravated the existing hardships in obtaining food and heating fuel; sometimes the time it took to procure basic necessities even prevented spouses from meeting each other.

Kaplan presents an especially grim account of working women who brought their toddlers to the “Ahava” daycare center in Berlin every morning at 5:00 and, fatigued and spent, reclaimed them late in the evening. “They were serious children,” an employee of the center related in testimony that Kaplan quotes. “They laughed less than others, they also cried less. It was as though they wanted to make as little trouble as possible for us” (p. 176). In February 1943, this cruel routine was terminated in one stroke, as the Nazis deported the children and their caregivers with no prior warning. The mothers who came that evening found the center empty. “Neighbors watched the mothers’ mounting horror as they realized that their children had been taken from them: ‘The mothers stood there for hours crying’ ” (ibid.).

Life in the last period—up to the deportations and survival in hiding, including the various sorts of hiding—are adeptly illustrated in several accounts (of the type known as “test cases,” in the dry jargon of research) that Kaplan reconstructs in detail. The account of the elderly couple Anna and Salomon Samuel of Berlin shows how the Jews oscillated between melancholy and the will to continue living normally, despite everything, until the deportation (p. 172). A detailed account composed of three stories of Jewish women who went into hiding and survived, each in a totally different way, exemplifies the severe by-products of these cases (pp. 216-228). Kaplan presents three accounts that ended in rescue and “success”- otherwise, there would be no one to tell them. Still, they capture something of the spirit of the events, since the hardships continued even after the liberation: families fell apart, people became ill. In no case did matters end happily.

Kaplan’s book offers its readers—including those not familiar with the research literature that precedes it—a direct, almost unmediated encounter with Jewish life in Germany during the period in question. This is its main virtue. In a manner typical of Kaplan, it sheds especially strong light—interestingly and originally, if controversially—on the lives of women and on the importance of women in the overall historical picture. This readable and lucid book will undoubtedly become a basic text in understanding how German-Jewish women—and men— coped during the tragic era in which their world collapsed.

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