committed to the ethical as a value (and the red herring of whether the ethical exists outside the legal norms themselves), one expects more discussion of the different forms of the ethical: How does halakha judge, for example, between the good of the community (social ethics) and the needs of the individual? What is the halakhic ethic? "Feasibility," especially, seems a bit glib. Judaism and the Jewish people owe much, after all, to their refusal to knuckle under to the "feasible" throughout history. What, then, governs the evaluation of the "feasible" in its confrontation with religious law? When is adjustment the order of the day and when is stubbornness the norm? The reader may suspect that historical Judaism has expected to find the answer in specific legal sources rather than by an appeal to vague over-reaching concepts.

Eliezer Berkovits, for many years, functioned within the "Orthodox" community. On the surface, at least, his insistence on the ethical and the feasible as the dominant categories of halakhic development and his view of Oral Law as the historical creature of the Jewish people, would seem to bring him far closer to the ideology propounded for decades by Conservative Judaism. If so, what is new in Berkovits? Is he simply mounting a better Talmudic defense of Gordis than Gordis himself provides? Or are the methods honed in Not in Heaven to be used differently so as to achieve a different result? Is it a matter of who makes the decision?

Be all this as it may, Not in Heaven is a powerful and provocative book which makes a good case for a dynamic, responsive halakha.

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Although many books have been written about one phase or another of the Arab-Israeli dispute, very few books have attempted to embrace and to analyze the course of the dispute from its origins in the late 1940s to the present. One of the many merits of the work by Steven L. Spiegel, of the Political Science Department of UCLA, is its comprehensive consideration of the ebb and flow of the dispute over the years. But the novelty of this outstanding work does not end there; it is the unique focus of the study—the Washington vantage point—which gives it a special place in the growing literature on the Arab-Israeli dispute. Spiegel is especially well qualified to offer insight into the making of America’s Middle East policy. Besides being the author of numerous articles on the subject, he was a member, together with Brzezinski, Quandt, Bowie and Klutznick (all subsequent administration appointees), of the Brookings Institution Middle East study group which issued a
famous report in 1975 on how to bring peace to the area. It would appear that the Brooking report had a considerable impact on the Carter administration and, as Spiegel points out, supposedly provided “the intellectual basis of Carter’s policy” leading up to the attainment of the Camp David agreements.

Spiegel’s method is to follow a chronological pattern in analyzing American policy, not from crisis to crisis, but from president to president. (A brief but excellent chronological chart is provided at the beginning of the book.) This method of surveying the dispute is very salutary since in this way the different approaches of the key personalities involved in the formulation of U.S. policy can best be assessed. Circumstances were, of course, different at each stage, but Spiegel is fully justified in focusing on the presidential role since the last, if not always the first, word in any given policy decision is the sole prerogative of the president. Moreover, the president sets the tone of policy, and this often proves decisive in determining the shape of decisions.

It is interesting to compare the reaction of three administrations, those of Eisenhower, Johnson and Nixon (Kissinger), to three near-confrontations with the Soviet Union in three Arab-Israeli wars—the Suez campaign, the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War. Eisenhower, bent on teaching his European allies a “lesson” for their “Suez escapade,” never appreciated the extent to which his policies contributed to greater Russian penetration and domination of the Middle East. He seems never to have comprehended the degree to which Moscow would take advantage of the split between the Western powers to make new inroads into the region. When the Russians proposed joint Soviet-American action to end the warfare in Egypt, the White House seems to have become alarmed. It declared any joint U.S.-Soviet action to be “unthinkable” but did not really respond vigorously to the Russian challenge. As a result, the Soviet Union, and not the United States, reaped the benefits of Eisenhower’s myopic view of the Suez enterprise.

In contrast, both Johnson in 1967 and Nixon/Kissinger in 1973 realized the importance of adopting a firm stand without being provocative. When Johnson learned of Soviet military maneuvers, he ordered the Sixth Fleet into position to interdict any possible Russian move. Likewise, Kissinger (on behalf of Nixon, who was engrossed in Watergate) ordered a world-wide alert of U.S. forces when Moscow threatened to send forces to Egypt. In neither case was the response timid or vacillating. As a result, the image of the United States as an effective superpower was greatly enhanced.

This is a sober, restrained and balanced account of American policymaking. Fortunately, it is not marred by the emotional polemics which so often pervade books on the Arab-Israeli dispute. Spiegel presents the facts and lets the facts speak for themselves. He analyzes the inputs and outputs in the policymaking process but is careful not to put his own stamp on these facts. It is refreshing to observe his judicious treatment of the sources and his clear, forthright presentation of such controversial material. Students of the Arab-Israeli dispute will find his work an indispensable source.

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