



Alan Rosen. *The Holocaust's Jewish Calendars: Keeping Time Sacred, Making Time Holy.* Jewish Literature and Culture Series. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019. Illustrations. xv + 251 pp. \$35.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-253-03827-2.

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Alan Rosen's volume on wartime Jewish calendars adds a fascinating contribution to the historiographical scholarship on a "temporal turn," particularly research focused on experiences of time during war.[1] A qualitative study, Rosen's book presents forty calendars produced during the Holocaust, divergent in form, authorship, circumstances of creation, circulation, and postwar preservation. For the author, these artifacts show "Jewish time and culture as an important facet of the Jewish Holocaust victim's wartime experience" (p. 226). Rosen's novel contribution specifically lies in his assertion that Jewish calendars created during World War II attest to the Jewish attempt to create a *continuity* of time. This stands in contrast to previous scholarship, which attempts to understand the Holocaust as a historical rupture—an event of such momentous upheaval that it severs Jews' link between past and future, thereby disrupting the experience of continuous time.[2]

The forty "wartime calendars" presented in Rosen's book are sourced from the collections of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem, the Ghetto Fighters' Museum, the Polish State Archives, and the Jewish Museum of Prague, as well as private collections. Geographically, the calendars were produced or were circulated in Germany, occupied Poland, Netherlands,

France, and Belgium. The "Jewish" calendars studied by Rosen, most often in pocket form, have as their common feature their marking of time by the lunisolar Jewish calendar, for the most part alongside the Gregorian calendar. Weeks, months, and years are graphically differentiated in the cyclical rotation between the sacred and profane, essential for observant Jewish practice.

The first chapter outlines the use of Jewish calendars in prewar Europe, "a taken-for-granted aspect of Jewish life" until World War II (p. 24). The following three chapters present wartime calendars, grouped by their places of creation: wartime ghettos, concentration camps, and in hiding. Rosen points out not only the challenges faced by material scarcity during the war but also the difficulty, even for those well-versed in religious teachings, of re-creating from scratch an accurate Jewish calendar. Throughout, Rosen provides historical context and detailed descriptions, as well as photographic reproductions of fifteen calendars. He attempts to trace the conditions of the calendars' creation and afterlife, though much remains open to speculation due to lack of information. Rosen's fifth chapter merges his study of calendars with diary writing as a practice of individual structuring of time, showing entries dated according to the Jewish calendar. The sixth chapter, in line with

Rosen's focus on Orthodox Jewish calendars throughout the volume, presents a calendar-book created by the founder of the Chabad movement, Rabbi Menachem Schneersohn, in New York City in 1943.

The diversity of Rosen's sources makes a comparative approach daunting. His case studies include calendars produced under conditions relatively favorable to religious practice, such as the one composed by Rabbi Yisrael Simcha Zelman, interned in the Dutch transit camp of Westerbork. Charting the year 5704 (1943-44), it apparently circulated in numerous copies in typed form. This possibility, to a certain extent, of communal religious practice stands in stark contrast to those calendars whose form evidence the restrictive conditions of their creation and use. Pointing to the wartime scarcity of material resources, a "recycled" calendar by an unknown author marks in pencil the Jewish year of 5704 (1944) in the margins of a Polish pocket calendar printed for the year 1939. It includes holidays, Rosh Chodesh, and Torah portions, which stand in contrast to the Christian holidays marked in the printed calendar.

Rosen's book, overall, serves as a detailed study of Jewish calendars in their form and substance to show a "distinctive manner of organizing time" (p. 16). His is a well-written and immersive contribution to Jewish experience during the Holocaust as well as the study of temporality generally, illuminating Jewish calendars as attempts to structure time. For the reader fluent in their cultural language, they reveal a plethora about strategies of attempted continuity of communal religious practice. Though of little value in Rosen's present work, a detailed study of "calendars without memory," wartime calendars that map time exclusively by Gregorian counting, could point to strategies of structuring and experiencing time for secular Jews during World War II (p. 111).

Underlying Rosen's work, then, is an appeal to scholars of the Holocaust to increase their fluency in Jewish sources, though he himself provides a

glossary of terms as well as detailed explanations of the Jewish time cycle. After all, Rosen writes, those studying this time period learn "more about the significance of the Jewish calendar during the Holocaust—even about the very existence of a Jewish calendar—from the enemy's manipulations of it than from the Jews' dedication to it" (p. 4). Familiarity with the religious and cultural background of one's subjects of study can only serve to increase our understanding of testimonies and documents and the individual narratives within, creating a fuller picture of individuality and agency during genocide.

Notes

[1]. For example, Mary Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); or newly established research groups, such as the Gewalt-Zeiten project at the University of Hamburg, 2020-23, which focuses on temporalities in episodes of collective violence.

[2]. For example, see Barbara Engelking-Boni, *Holocaust and Memory: The Experience of the Holocaust and Its Consequences; An Investigation Based on Personal Narratives*, trans. Gunnar S. Paulsson (London: Leicester University Press, 2001).

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