

chives in Sidon and Beirut—and they were able to put together a “guide for the perplexed” in the Lebanon affair.

Step by step, the authors show, for the first time, how the idea for the Lebanese war was conceived and how, due to the decisive backing of a very few political and military leaders, it came into reality.

One comes away from this book convinced that the war in Lebanon should never have happened. “Born of the ambition of one willful, reckless man,” the authors write, “Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon was anchored in delusion, propelled by deceit, and bound to end in calamity. It was a war for whose meager gains Israel has paid an enormous price that has yet to be altogether reckoned.”

From “The Illusion of Collusion” to the “Anatomy of a Slaughter,” from “The Grand Design” to “Things Fall Apart,” the book reads like a fast-paced thriller—although it leaves the reader without a solution at the end. The future historian may criticize this book for not being an objective work of research—but this is one of its virtues. It is not of mere academic interest; it is vivid, fluent and accurate.

Anyone interested in insights into the power and weakness of a democracy, modern military history, and American and Israeli politics should read *Israel’s Lebanon War*. As Schiff and Ya’ari conclude: “The best one can do now is to learn the lessons well.”

—ERAN DOLEV

**AGAINST THE APOCALYPSE: RESPONSES TO CATASTROPHE IN MODERN JEWISH CULTURE. BY DAVID G. ROSKIES. HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS. 374 PP. \$20.**

This majestic work has a quality, almost unseen today, of being at the same time both erudite and elegantly written. Indeed, the author, an associate professor of Jewish literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary, succeeds in setting a tone and creating an atmosphere so appropriate to the subject of his book that the reader sometimes forgets that he is reading a work of scholarship.

Rather, one feels immersed in an archetypal folk story of the Jewish people’s uncanny adeptness at collective memory.

The point of departure is the Holocaust and our response to it. In an introductory chapter, David Roskies asks: “Is the Holocaust an event or an Event? Does it admit of analogy or is it *sui generis*, an indescribable manifestation of evil that stands at the cataclysmic end of history?” Roskies’ answer is to profess neither blind faith nor apocalyptic despair, but to reach back, across the abyss of Jewish catastrophe, “in search of meaning, language and song.” What Roskies finds is a tradition of hopeful Jewish response—in Scripture, in liturgy, and in all forms of secular artistic expression.

The title of Roskies’ book, *Against the Apocalypse*, has two meanings. The book is, first of all, about the works of those poets and artists who find meaning, however painfully, in Jewish catastrophe—whether the destruction of the Temple, the Crusades, the Chmielnicki massacre, the Kishinev pogrom or the Holocaust. The book is also a polemic against post-Holocaust theologians of the God-is-dead variety and writers who have belabored the Holocaust into a category that stands by itself at the end of history. By making the Holocaust into Everything, Roskies argues, these writers have deprived the

survivors of their pre-Holocaust individuality and made them into Everyman.

*Against the Apocalypse* analyzes works by such major Jewish writers as Mendele Mokher Seforim, Chaim Nahman Bialik, I. L. Peretz, and Sholem Aleikhem. The heroes of the narrative, however, are Abraham Sutzkever (1913- ), the Yiddish poet whom Roskies celebrates as the bard of national rebirth and the standard-bearer of Jewish excellence, and S. Ansky (1863-1920), better known as author of the folk-play, *The Dybbuk*, than as a serious, scholarly folklorist and ethnographer. Ansky locates the analogy between the suffering of Polish Jewry in World War I and earlier catastrophes in the metaphor of the shattered Tablets of the Law, out of whose fragments the Jews have labored to create new tablets.

Roskies saves the most fascinating of his chapters for the end. In “Jews on the Cross,” he traces the development of the theme of Jewish response to catastrophe in several works by twentieth-century Jewish artists. The Marc Chagall we see in these pages is not the familiar painter of colorful *shtetl* life, but one who, around 1940, succumbed to the temptation to transform the destruction of the Jews by the Nazis into an almost universal crucifixion of mankind. Chagall is an exception, however; the appropriate Jewish analogy is not the Crucifixion but the *Akeda* (the binding of Isaac), out of which ordeal a person emerges, to continue life and to assure a people’s continuity.

This book is a worthy complement to Yosef Haim Yerushalmi’s *Zakhor*, a meditation on collective Jewish memory. It teaches why the Jews remember, demonstrates how they go about remembering, and promises a long future of creative Jewish remembering. The end of the world, for the Jews, is nowhere to be seen.

—JOSEPH LOWIN

**DEBORAH. BY ESTHER SINGER KREITMAN. TRANSLATED BY MAURICE CARR. ST. MARTIN’S PRESS. 366 PP. \$13.95.**

Like oil and water, blood and ink

