

**DAY BOOK OF SERVICE AT THE ALTAR
AS LIVED BY SAMUEL S. COHON, 1888-1959**

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Samuel S. Cohon was a *yeshivah bachur* from Eastern Europe who became an American Reform Rabbi and for many years was Professor of Theology at the Hebrew Union College. He carried a heavy teaching load and was the mentor of his rabbinic students long after they had graduated. He was a sought-after preacher, speaker and lecturer and a prolific writer whose way with words was such that he was often called upon to draft important statements on behalf of the Reform movement and other American Jewish organisations.

In this book an unnamed group of admirers has lovingly put together a record of his career, "built out of his daily calendared programs, out of his mammoth manuscript and correspondence files, out of Synagogue records and announcements, the daily and periodical press, Hebrew Union College curricula, out of published works and out of the memory of associates."

They have revealed a picture of a man of immense scholarship with a remarkable gift of exposition, who was no *dalet amot* scholar but an energetic worker and influential correspondent and controversialist.

In Australia, even more than the United States, the work of leading Rabbis still awaits its historians, and one would like to have seen a work such as this as suggesting a method of historical writing from which others might learn.

But more has been obscured in this book than has been revealed. The compilers have performed a mammoth task but the result is hard to read because there are 358 pages without a single chapter division and with no apparent set of priorities to govern which matters warrant inclusion and which are sheer triviality.

The material has been presented chronologically, but one would have preferred a more organised approach, with leading themes (such as the metamorphosis in Cohon's attitude to Zionism) pursued systematically.

Controversies are touched on but treated with little scope or balance. And for a work published nearly 20 years after the subject's demise, one suspects there is too much of the uncritical, adulatory *hesped* about it.

(Rabbi) Raymond Apple