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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Tercentenary

1654-1954

Three hundred years ago twenty-three Dutch Jewish refugees, fleeing from the bigotry of Portuguese Brazil, landed in New Amsterdam, at the mouth of the Hudson. There the American Jewish community had its beginning.

The men and women who first came here were followers of the Spanish-Portuguese ritual; many were themselves of Iberian stock. They were Sephardim. Those hard-bitten émigrés, who had known the rigors of the Inquisition, founded the first Jewish synagogues and called into being the earliest philanthropic confraternities on the North American mainland.

Almost two centuries later, by 1840, the spiritual leadership had passed from the few thousands of Sephardim into the hands of the oncoming Ashkenazim, the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe. Most of these were Germans fleeing from the petty intolerance of the post-

Napoleonic reaction, seeking in the United States the freedom, the hope, and the opportunity which were denied them at home. Of the thousands who crossed the Atlantic, many remained in the eastern ports; many more moved west, crossing the mountains, following the rivers and turnpikes, moving ever westward, until they met their fellow-Jews who had come to California with the Argonauts of 1849.

It was the Germans who followed the frontier wherever it led, peddling and keeping store, stopping, when they caught their breath, to build religious and spiritual foundations in every town and village where they could gather a quorum of ten adult males. Those were the men who organized American Jewry on a national basis, creating unions of congregations, civic defense associations, country-wide lodges, associated charities, religious schools, and rabbinical colleges.

A little over seventy years ago the communal rule of the German-American Jews was challenged by the coming of hundreds of thousands of East Europeans, who brought with them their intense love of Hebrew, their proud Orthodoxy, their expressive Yiddish, their romantic nationalism, their fierce intolerance of any form of persecution and exploitation.

Today, in 1954, there are over five million Jews in this land. For a generation now, Sephardi and Ashkenazi—Iberian, German, and East European—have been coming together to create a new amalgam, a new type, a new man, the "American" Jew. The ethnic adjectives proudly pointing to European provenance are stubbornly but surely beginning to fall away.

Tomorrow there will be a new Jew, the child of all that has come to pass here in the last three hundred years, and of all that came to pass in three millennia in Europe and Asia. What he will do, what he will become, no man knows.

But this we do know: here on these shores some new form of Judaism will arise. There will be new spiritual institutions, new ventures in the field of philanthropy, new schools and colleges, new cultural aspirations. There will always be the age-old pride of the past and, linked with it, a keen and deep understanding of the finest that this land has brought forth: a determination to hold on to the best in Judaism and Americanism for the sake of what they have to offer, and because the Jew knows that he can survive only in an atmosphere of freedom.

The Jew is thoroughly aware that he has a stake in a free America.

Unwritten History

Reminiscences of N. Taylor Phillips

My friends, I have not mounted the platform in order to be "high hatty" or anything of that sort, but merely because I think I may be able to make myself a little better heard, and those at the far end of the hall will have the opportunity of being forced to listen to me, whether they wish to or not.

It certainly is a very great pleasure to have the opportunity of speaking to "my little family," because that is the way I feel towards all of you tonight, and particularly in respect of those things which are very dear to all of us. What I have to say to you is not a general review of the history of the congregation—that would be impossible and tiresome on an occasion like this—but merely to give you a few of the traditions of the congregation as they have come to me, and perhaps a little intimate view in respect of congregational life when the congregation was not quite so large as it is now, although it probably considered itself of very much greater importance then.

As you all know how we began here in New York, I will only dwell on this a moment. We are practically coincident with life on Manhattan Island. It is true that the Dutch made their first real settlement here in 1626, but it was some few years after that before they really got under way, and they had not been under way very long when our people arrived. As you know, in 1654 a handful of twenty-seven [twenty-three?] embarked in the "Caterina" from Recife, Brazil. Brazil had formerly been a Dutch province and had been conquered by the Portuguese and, of course, that meant the Inquisition for our people in Brazil, and, naturally, they got away from there. And it was just as natural for them to have followed into another Dutch colony, which, of course, New Amsterdam was, because Holland had great enlightenment in respect of religious tolerance, and that was something which meant, of course, a great deal to our people.

Captain N. Taylor Phillips is himself the very embodiment of American Jewish history. A New Yorker, a lawyer, and a distinguished public servant, he represents a family which goes back in this country to about the year 1700. His grandfather, who was born before the Revolution, survived to know the captain as an infant! Captain Phillips, now in his eighty-seventh year, is a treasury of family and congregational traditions. The reminiscences recounted here were delivered in the form of an address before Congregation Shearith Israel, New York, in 1927. This congregation is the mother synagogue of American Jewry.

And so they came here after having been captured by pirates and in turn recaptured by the "Saint Charles" in 1654. But they were not the first; there were some few who came here to trade, so we are told by the communications from the minister of the Dutch Reformed Church to the church in Amsterdam, in which he stated that the year before that some Jews had come here to "trade," as he expressed it. In fact, he went on to say that the Dutch Reformed Church had helped them because their own people—who had been there previously, before 1653—some of their own people had been unable or unwilling to assist them and had given them only very slight relief. Probably five or ten years before that there were at least some individual Jews who had come as traders to New Amsterdam. [Historians now do not believe Jews came to New Amsterdam before 1654.]

I am merely mentioning this to show you that the roots of our congregation penetrate practically to the very first life in the city of New York, which are also the very beginnings of this congregation. In fact, as early as 1671, when the Lutherans were projecting their first church in New York, it was one of our people, a member of the synagogue, Asser Levy, who contributed, or, rather, loaned the largest part of the fund that built that church. So you see, we were in it right away; we were bone of the city's bone, flesh of the city's flesh.

There has been a great deal of confusion in your minds as to how we came to have the first synagogue. Well, the first miller in New Amsterdam, Francois Molemacher, erected a mill on what is now South William Street—it was formerly Mill Street—a grist mill, and in that grist mill, curiously enough, the first Dutch Reform services—that is, the first Christian services in New York—were held in 1628. And that was only two years after the advent of the Dutch in the form of a colony here. The Dutch Reform services continued in that mill until the "Church in the Fort," as it was called, at the Battery, was substituted, and it was then—certainly no later than 1660 or 1664 at the very latest—that our people moved into that grist mill and had their services there, their *minyan* [religious quorum].

They continued holding their services there for a considerable number of years before they had the first frame building on the same site, at present Nos. 22 and 24 South William Street, Borough of Manhattan, New York City, which constituted the first regular synagogue of any kind in North America. It is a very curious incident that the stones from that mill are the stones which you see upstairs at the entrance to the synagogue on the 70th Street side. I will, perhaps, tell you a little bit about those stones, because I had something to do with their being taken from their site on South William Street to the synagogue on 19th Street, 100 feet west of Fifth Avenue, in the year 1894.

I remember, when I was a boy, hearing my father say—you are going to hear this expression, "hearing my father say," a great many times during the evening, so I am preparing you for it, because, after all, I think it was Macaulay who said that the firmest foundation of real history is good traditions, and if I can give you good traditions, I am, according to Macaulay, really giving you history—so I heard my father say that he remembered the first synagogue erected by the congregation in Mill Street in 1730 which was 100 feet from the frame building used in succession to the mill—that in the yard of that synagogue on Mill Street, when he was a boy, there were stacked up a great number of millstones which had belonged to the mill on whose site the synagogue was subsequently erected. I heard that and I never thought anything of it. Then in 1894 I met a man who was considerable of a writer, Mr. Albion M. Dyer. He had been on several New York newspapers and had written extensively for magazines. He came to my office one day, and we began discussing the synagogue and similar matters, and he asked me if I had ever seen the millstones which were in the yard in the rear of the old business buildings on the south side of Beaver Street, east of Broad. I told him that I had never seen them, so he took me around there and through the courtesy of the people who owned the building showed them to me. Those stones were then in the pavement, forming a part of the pavement of the yard, and I knew that they were the stones that had belonged to the mill. Unquestionably they were the stones that I had heard had been stacked up in the yard. Subsequently Mr. Dyer found a man who was ninety to a hundred years old, who had assisted in the laying of those stones in the yard in the year 1835, after the fire.

There had been a great fire in New York in the year 1835, which destroyed a great deal of the lower part of the city and also the building where the synagogue had been, although the synagogue had moved to Crosby Street, between Spring and Broome Streets, two years before that time. After the fire the present buildings, that are there now, were erected, and this man had physically participated in laying those millstones and making the pavement out of them instead of stacking them up, as they had previously been. I merely mention that to show the very direct contact. After all, I saw the man who had laid these stones that had stood in that yard and had been there since 1628, showing the contact, as I say, of this synagogue with this very, very, vast past.

The synagogue continued to worship in this mill, as I have told you, until about 1675, when they rented a house practically immediately adjoining it from a man named John Harpoding [Harpendingh], who was a shoemaker, and he had accumulated some money and had been granted some lands by the Dutch West India Company in Hol-

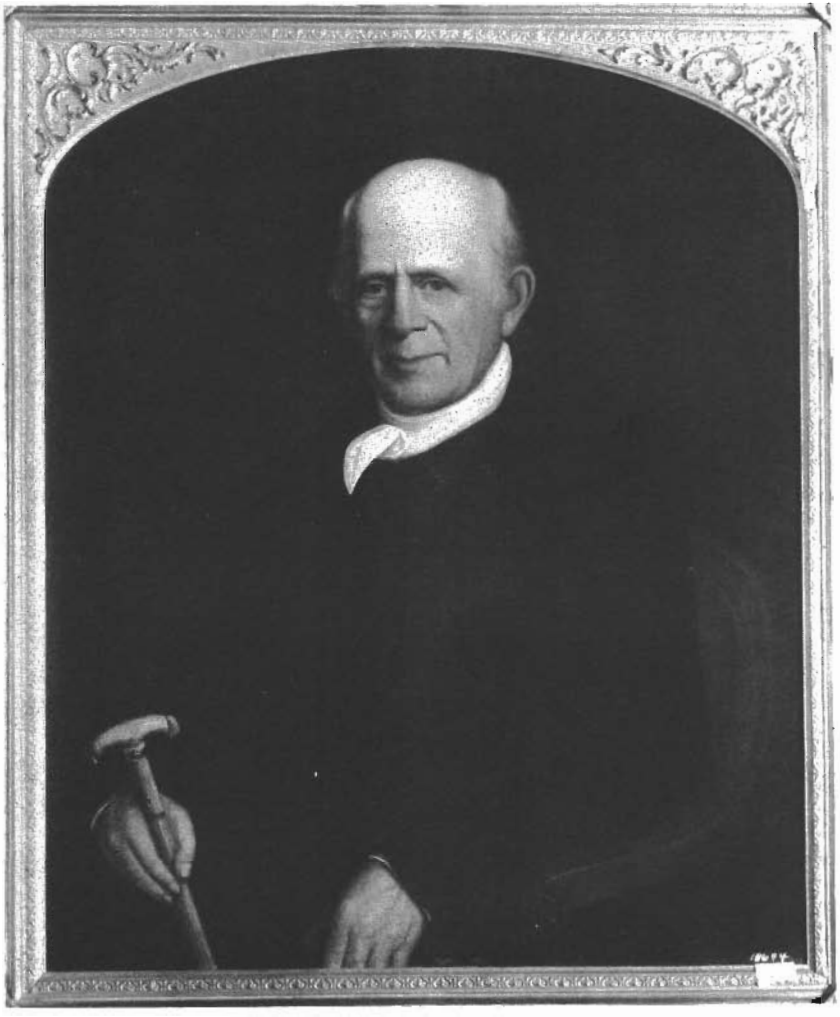
land. He had been granted some lands here in New York, of which this was a part. It was called the Shoemaker's Pasture, because he was a shoemaker. This man Harpoding in turn conveyed most of that land to the Dutch Reformed Church of New York, and, incidentally, it is that land, the result of that transfer from Harpoding to the Dutch Reformed Church, which is the basis of the entire great wealth of the Dutch Reformed Church today in New York.

That house which had been his residence—the congregation, about 1675, rented, and they held their services in it regularly. This house was fixed up, as it were, so as to be a synagogue in the regular way. The congregation then remained there under this rented arrangement until 1728, when they bought the land immediately adjoining for themselves, on which they placed their holy place of worship about 100 feet from the frame building they had been using, the first one that was built by the congregation.

I want to point out this fact to you, that this frame building, which was used by the congregation, was still in existence when the land was bought in 1728 for the new synagogue, and at that time the president of the congregation was the ancestor in the eighth generation of our present president, Mr. Henry S. Hendricks, whom we have greeted tonight, so that is quite a long stretch. And the congregation continued there, in that building which was erected and consecrated on the seventh day of Passover, 1730, until 1818, when they rebuilt another synagogue upon the same site. In 1833 they moved to Crosby Street, between Spring and Broome Streets, and in 1860 to 19th Street, one hundred feet west of Fifth Avenue. That is briefly a résumé of the congregation in respect of the synagogues, in a sort of hurried form.

I suppose, of course, the most interesting thing is to know something about congregational life in those times. The congregation was very early interested in the affairs of the city, as of course many of you have read. They contributed to the reconstruction of Trinity Church in 1711, especially the steeple of it, and some people went so far as to say that the Jewish merchants wanted the steeple and were very much interested in having a steeple on Trinity Church because their ships would be guided by it when they entered the harbor, but they were the scoffers, as there always have been in every generation. But, be that as it may, several of them were substantial contributors to the erection of the church of which it is a part. The church was first built in 1697.

The people who were then interested in the congregation were those who had come mostly, mediately or immediately, from Portugal, and they were Marranos or secret Jews. Nearly all of them were Marranos. In fact, when they came to New York, the early records of the town spoke of them as the "Portuguese nation" whenever they wanted



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NAPHTALI PHILLIPS

Pillar of Congregation Shearith Israel

to talk about the Jews. They spoke about the "Portuguese nation" because all the Jews, practically, were Portuguese. As I said a moment ago, most of them were Marranos. There were a few Spanish among them, the Gomez family and a few others, but the majority of them were Portuguese Marranos.

Many of them, curiously enough, changed their names after they came here. They came here, of course, with Portuguese and Spanish names, but when they came after the Dutch rule, of course, they were coming into an equal colony, and they either chopped off parts of their Portuguese or Spanish names or abbreviated or altered them, anglicized them, or changed them altogether. Many of them took arbitrary names, arbitrary English names in place of their last names. Among those who abbreviated their names was one who bought a portion of the cemetery in Chatham Square, New Bowery, in 1682. His name was Joseph Bueno de Mesquita, the same name and an ancestor of our dear friend, Mr. Julius Bueno de Mesquita, whom I saw here in the early part of the evening. On coming to America, and to New York, he took off the "Mesquita" part and was known generally in the community as "Joseph Bueno," but, of course, in the synagogue everybody knew him as Joseph Bueno de Mesquita, which is a very ancient and distinguished Portuguese name. So this changing-of-name business, which we hear so much about today and which is so considerably discussed, is not quite so new as we think it is. Our ancestors were a little sensitive to that thing as well.

The Gomez family came here about the year 1700 or a little later. One was certainly here in 1710. They were a very important and prominent family—not only wealthy, but people of culture. They had been, so I have heard, grandees in Spain. I don't think they came directly from Spain, but from Holland. I think they had gone to Holland, as most of our ancestors did. After they were discovered by the Inquisition, frequently they would try to get to Holland. That was the first place. Some of them would make it and some would not. If they didn't make it, they were out of luck. That meant they had to go to New Amsterdam or some other colony.

But the Gomez family from the very first time they came here were people of prominence and influence, and they had commissions [papers of denization] related to England, very important commissions, and they enjoyed a great many rights as freemen and all sorts of things. They were the real thing—there is no doubt about that. They also were ancestors of our present president, who had a lot of fine ancestors, I can tell you.

And the Gomez family was the mainstay of the congregation at that time, before the building of the first synagogue in Mill Street in

1728 and 1729, consecrated in 1730. They were very influential in the congregation; what they said went in every way. And, in fact, I have heard it said that they were surrounded with all sorts of affluence and wealth, and when they came to the synagogue—these are the personal touches that I am giving you—when they came to the synagogue on the Sabbath or on a Holy Day, they had their slaves walking behind them through the streets carrying their prayer books and talethim [prayer shawls]. They would walk into the synagogue auditorium with this retinue behind them, and the slaves would deposit their books and talethim on the seats and bow themselves out. That was a regular ceremony every Saturday morning.

The whole Gomez family was very important. Mr. Luis Moses Gomez was president at the time the synagogue was consecrated in 1730, and during the time of his presidency and for many years afterwards, when the Gomezes were present in the synagogue, the lady, the wife of the parnas, had a separated seat in the gallery for herself, a sort of a lady's *banca*. The seat which the parnas sits on is called *banca*, the Spanish word for bench, and the wife had the *banca* upstairs in the gallery the same way. That was pretty early on the women's rights' stuff. The ladies of the congregation then had a good deal to say about it, if they were strong enough to have a presidential seat up there. Then quite a controversy arose because, when one of the Gomezes ceased to be parnas, the lady parnas wanted to sit on the *banca* anyhow. She was not as easy as he was; he gave up the seat and retired, but she could not see it. She still wanted to hold on to the lady's *banca*, but whether the trustees could not see it or whether she was persuaded out of it, she finally gave it up. They did not take it away for many years afterward; it remained there, but she did not occupy it. I merely mention all this to show you how important this family was in the life of the congregation.

Speaking of the Marranos who came here about 1733, there is a very picturesque story in respect of the manner in which Dr. Samuel Nunez, my grandfather's great-grandfather, came here about 1735. He was a Marrano from Portugal, and came to America at the time that Oglethorpe settled Georgia in 1733. Nunez was one of the court physicians in Lisbon, Portugal, and he and his family lived there as Marranos, secret Jews, for many years, two or three hundred years. They finally were discovered by the inquisitors, and they were, in the parlance of New York, "tipped off" by somebody that the inquisitors were "on to them." Dr. Nunez gave a great banquet on his estate, which was on the banks of the Tagus. He had previously arranged with the captain of an English brig to stand out in the bay, and at the proper time to take them away. So he invited all the highbrows to come there

and enjoy themselves, and in the midst of the fiesta, the drinking and eating and merrymaking, the family slipped out, gathering up as much silver and jewelry and other things as they could easily carry, and went on the brig. The brig shot out of the Tagus, and they were carried up to London. That was in 1733.

They remained in London about three weeks, when Oglethorpe and his expedition were ready to come over here, and they came over with him. [Actually they came a few months later.] Dr. Nunez' daughter was then married to the Rev. David Mendez Machado, who subsequently, in 1736 [1737, new style], became the minister of this congregation. After they came to Georgia and settled there, and the Machados, after a very short time the daughter and her husband, the minister, came to New York. In fact the Rev. Mr. Machado had been in New York at the time the synagogue was consecrated in 1730. They were in Georgia only a couple of years—less than that, I guess—and they came up to New York, and her husband became minister of the synagogue. And I have heard it said—and in fact, this was vouched for by Major Mordecai M. Noah as well as tradition—that when they came to New York and for many years after that, the women, especially, had been so used to saying their Hebrew prayers with a Catholic rosary that they could not break themselves of the habit, and that at noontime they crossed themselves when the clock struck twelve, and other things of that kind. I think Major Noah also wrote of one of the male members of that family who had the marks of the Inquisition upon him. [It was Noah's grandaunt.] He had been suspected as a Jew and had been put to some torture, but they called it off and forgot it and let it go at that. At all events, he had those marks upon him for a great many years after he came to New York. That shows you the direct contact between the Portuguese Marranos and our congregation.

Machado had a good deal to do with the building up of the congregation because of his contacts with the Nunez family and the Oglethorpe colony in Georgia. There is much to be said in connection with the relations which the Jews had with Oglethorpe's colony. Of course, many of you know that the first white child born in Georgia . . . was a Jewish child, a member of the Minis family, which had been a part of that Oglethorpe expedition.

Machado died in Hanukah in 1747. I will refer to him again in speaking of the Revolution, during which the bulk of the congregation, be it said to their glory, were Patriots, including the minister, the Rev. Gershom Mendez Seixas. He left New York with almost a price on his head for his speeches and his pronunciamentos in respect of the colonies, and at the appearance of Lord Howe's fleet in New York Harbor in August, 1776, he closed the synagogue and took away the

sefarim ["scrolls"] and the other effects of the building. After he left there was a furrier on Broad Street, a man named Lyon Jonas, who was a Tory, and he opened the synagogue, he and another man, named Alexander Zuntz, who came over here with the Hessian troops. The Hessians were sent to re-inforce the British in the fight over here. Zuntz was quite a man—he was commissary to the general staff of the Hessian Army. Of course, he was deported from New York later—the Patriots threw him out—but he returned and became a prominent broker and was one of the founders of the New York Stock Exchange in 1792. There was another man named Baruch Hays—most of the Hays family, by the way, were Patriots, but this Baruch Hays was not. Other members of his family up in Pleasantville, New York, were not only Patriots, but very staunch Patriots, but Baruch Hays was in business, a merchant in New York, and was a Tory. These three men prevailed on the British not to do with the synagogue as they had with most of the other churches in the city. They had turned them into hospitals, riding academies, barracks, and things of that kind. Nearly all of the churches were used for these purposes.

But they intervened and "got away with it," and the synagogue was not used as a hospital, although it had been designated as a British hospital, and it is so recorded in the British correspondence relating to the occupation of the city of New York. As I said, the synagogue was spared that, but during the Revolution soldiers broke into it and destroyed some of the property that was there, and some of the *sefarim* were injured. By the way, one or two of them are upstairs now. The last time I saw them, a good many years ago, the marks of the desecration were still on these *sefarim* which they spoilt at that time. The soldiers who desecrated them were publicly whipped by the army officers. However, they are not the earliest *sefarim* of the congregation; there are others a great deal older than these. But these are the *sefarim,* owned by private members of the congregation, that were left behind by the Patriots when they took the *sefarim* that belonged to the congregation away with them.

So you see, we had quite a little session at that time. Most of the congregation, as I said, were devoted to the patriot cause. Jonas Phillips, my great-grandfather, was a merchant in New York during and before the Revolution, and had built up quite a large business, but he walked out and left the whole thing, as it was—all his goods on the shelves—everything just as it stood. After Washington was defeated in the Battle of Long Island, he came over to New York and Howe's fleet came in and took the city. And he [Jonas Phillips] and his family—he had about fifteen or sixteen children then; it was no laughing matter, at least to him—he took them away under the cover of the army. Wash-

ington, you will remember, made a stand at the Battle of Harlem, went on to Washington Heights, was defeated there, crossed the Hudson River and went on to Jersey and met successes at Morristown, Princeton, and so on. And under cover of that army Jonas Phillips went on, as did other members of the congregation, to Philadelphia, where he was welcomed by his relations there. And then he went into the army and was there a long time, pretty nearly until peace was declared. That shows you some of the sacrifices they made.

Isaac Moses was a member of our congregation who had a very exciting and picturesque session during that time. He was a very prominent man in town and was one of the founders of the New York Chamber of Commerce, in 1768, which is still in existence. During the war he was a strong Patriot, a violent Patriot, and he fitted out vessels for the Continental Congress. He was a man of considerable wealth, and he fitted out a great many ships, which he gave to the United States—all of record in Washington. He did all sorts of things for the nation and was really a very, very, ardent Patriot.

But at this very time I am telling you about, after Washington's defeat on Long Island, when the British were about to occupy New York, the news was brought to him—his family lived down in the lower part of the city, as almost everybody did—the news was brought to him, on the Sabbath, that the British Army was here and Washington's army was retreating, and if he wanted to save his life he had to go. He gathered up his family and they walked from—if I am not mistaken, they lived in Greenwich Street, the lower part of Greenwich Street—and they walked up to a farm at about the present 23rd Street, just carrying whatever they could carry with them, articles of value, and left business and everything else behind. They remained there—some farmer up there gave them shelter until the Sabbath was out—and then they got into wagons and followed the army in the same way as did the others.

I mention these things to show you how intimately the congregation was wrapped up in the life of the times. Just think, in 1730, when we consecrated the first synagogue which was built (actually the second synagogue) in Mill Street, there were only 8,500 people in New York! Think of it! And of those 8,500, 1,600 were slaves, so there was just a little handful of people, and the congregation hardly had a couple of hundred—something like 150 only! So you see how important they were. The bulk of them were men of affairs—very little poor in the congregation. They were all people that came here with money or else made their contacts very quickly after they arrived. They were all pretty well off. The congregation was of some influence generally in the community.

In 1737, when there was a contest for the election of a member of the Colonial Assembly, a great issue was raised in the matter of the election of one Philipse, on the right of the Jews to vote. They claimed that Philipse's election was void because it was the vote of the Jews that had elected him. That created riots and pretty nearly a revolution in New York, and the whole thing was taken to England and settled in Parliament with great difficulty and with great concern to the colony. And all that, as I say, indicates the great influence which the Jews had, even though their number was small.

Reverting to those Revolutionary days, I am reminded that during that time, when the British were in possession of the city, they fortified our cemetery in New Bowery at Chatham Square (which is there yet) as one of the defenses of the city. That fact is mentioned in correspondence between General Washington and General [Charles] Lee, and is, of course, very well authenticated; but after the war they found that the tombstone of the Rev. David Mendez Machado, who had been a minister of the synagogue, as I have told you, had been desecrated and that a large metal plate in his tombstone had been torn out and used by the British to make bullets. That tombstone is still there—you can see it with the plate taken out, just as it looked when the British took it out in 1776. When Washington evacuated the city, he gave orders that all the Patriots who followed him should take all the brass, metal, and the like with them, and they did, but they had no idea that the British would take the metal out of the tombstones in the cemetery.

In respect of family life in the congregation before the Revolution, the board of trustees had considerable power in the administration of the lives of men. They exercised a good deal of power—I almost said they exerted their power—very much in the same manner which the Portuguese congregation in Amsterdam, Holland, had done in its day. And, of course, our congregation took all its inspirations largely from the Amsterdam congregation, because New Amsterdam was a Dutch colony when it commenced and the people who came here, many of these Marranos, Portuguese Jews, had been in Amsterdam or Holland and knew the way things were conducted there. Of course, the spirit of the congregation, practically down to the time of the Revolution, was largely the inspirations of the congregation in Amsterdam, and in Amsterdam the authority of the *mahamad* was supreme. The *mahamad*, the trustees, as we call them now, were the absolute masters of the life and liberty and fortunes, I almost said of everybody who was a member of the community. In New York they very much endeavored to perpetuate that idea, but it did not always work. Always there was a great deal of friction in regard to those matters. It was never accepted. I almost said that there probably never was a time—as I gather

it from the best traditions—there never was a time, whether it was the spirit of the new country or not, when there was that implicit obedience from the congregation to these edicts that there had been in Amsterdam. The *mahamad* exercised their power; they declared a person outside the law if he did this, that, or the other thing. He could not be buried or married and all that sort of thing if he did not change the manner of keeping his house kasher, and so on, but in the last analysis, these things were rarely enforced. Sometimes when they were enforced, it was only after a great battle, and they would even go to the courts. The congregation was hostile to the spirit of the thing, and they frequently went into the courts of law of the colony, and they were resisted there, but many times the *mahamad* "let go" and would not enforce the thing after they had obtained a court order.

But nevertheless they were at least nominally the controlling body. Quite as late as 1813 the Common Council of the City of New York passed an ordinance giving the board of trustees of the congregation the absolute power over the matter of *kashruth*—the killing of fowl, etc. They were the controlling body by law, by corporation ordinance, and they decided who could be shochetim, who should kill and who should not kill, what is kasher ["fit"] and what is *treifa* ["ritually unfit"], and so on. The whole thing was absolutely handed over, lock, stock, and barrel, by the Board of Aldermen to the trustees.

But that did not last a great while because at that time there was beginning to be quite an influx of Jews from England. Within less than ten years the Jewish population doubled and trebled, and I do not know whether these ordinances were ever repealed, but whether they were or not, they at least fell into disuse. They were not pursued any further. But the matter of declaring a house kasher or not kasher, that was something that the trustees felt they had the right to do, and they usually exercised it. I don't think the difficulty was very great. Most people kept in line; I suppose some of them got out of step, but taken by and large, they did not have so very much trouble with them.

In the homes the people gave a good deal of thought to their religion. Naturally, they lived the religious life; the things which were of their religion were absolutely part of their lives. For example, during the Passover period—immediately after Purim they started to get ready for Passover. It was a four weeks' job, carrying up the plates and cleaning and polishing and dragging and hauling and making life unbearable for the women. And by the way, at that time, practically for the first century and a half and more of the life of the congregation, the women of the congregation were real actors in this kitchen business. No matter how well off they were, how rich they were, whether they were Gomez or Machado, or who they were, the women either did

the cooking themselves or superintended it. It was not left to the slaves, or to the Negroes. If it was, it was a *treifa* house, that is, the house that permitted the servants exclusively to run the kitchen. People would not eat there, and, therefore, the woman of the house either had to do it herself or had to be on the job and see that it was properly done. If she had a lot of servants, she directed them or could give the final O. K. that everything was "according to Hoyle," but she had to be there personally.

And in that way the different families of the congregation got to be known for their specialties in the culinary art. One house would be celebrated for the pound cake that was made there, another for the "stickies," those masses of dough with sugar stuff over them—my descriptions of the mysteries of the cuisine are not very good, but I am doing the best I can. And still another woman would be famous for her *sopes peridoes*—which was a sort of French toast with a syrup of sugar, water, etc., poured over it, which they ate at Purim. Some women would be celebrated for the way they made them, and when Purim came everyone rushed to their houses to get the last word in *sopes peridoes.*

As I was relating the other day, one of my ancestors, the wife of Samuel Lopez, was vigorously engaged about a hundred years ago in supervising the *kashruth* of her home. She went up on a stepladder to see that there wasn't anything wrong with dishes, etc., or something of that sort—that was the way they went at it—when she fell off the stepladder and was killed. She lost her life in an effort to keep her house strictly according to Jewish law, but, as I say, this is only an illustration of the vigor with which they cleaned up.

I spoke of Alexander Zuntz, who came over here with the Hessian troops, as commissary to the general staff. After the Revolution he remained here and became president of this congregation. In fact, he acted as parnas during part of the time of the Revolution when the city was in the hands of the Tories, and they occasionally held some kind of services. But after the Revolution he became quite an important member of the congregation and amassed some money, before he died, as a result of his contact with the Hessians, because, as you know, they were hired by the British to fight the colonists here. They brought over all kinds of money—"Hessian gold" was a common expression. They brought shiploads of it over to buy and bribe the people to join the loyalists' cause. Alexander Zuntz was, at all events, pretty well off. He was one of the twenty-four merchants and brokers who organized the New York Stock Exchange under a buttonwood tree in front of No. 64 Wall Street, New York City, in 1792, and which is still in existence.

He had two or three sons—none of his descendants, as far as I know, are alive now—and one daughter, Ellen, who gave the trustees quite an exciting run for their money, and I say it advisedly. This is one of the few instances in which the trustees went into the life insurance game, and not with very great success. When she was about seventy years old, she had $400. She was in very wretched health, and she offered the trustees the $400, provided they would give her $10 a month —$120 a year—as long as she lived. From the way she looked they didn't think she could live the year out. I have heard it said she weighed about ninety pounds and you could almost see through her, she was so thin. So they thought that was a pretty safe bet, and they took the $400 and paid her the $120 a year. She lived to be ninety-five!

You would think that would cure the trustees of that kind of thing, but they had a similar experience subsequently with the wife of Mr. David Phillips, who was the *shamas* ["beadle"] of the congregation for thirty years, between 1835 and 1865. When her husband died, they wanted to be nice to her. She was an old woman, about seventy-five then, so when they suggested giving her compensation or a pension, one of the trustees said: "Don't give her what you are going to give her all in one lump sum. She is an old woman and will not live long, and we can afford to be liberal." So they made her an allowance, and she fooled them—she lived to be ninety-five or ninety-six years old. I remember her. She was a very vigorous old lady. In fact, I saw her dance when she was nearly ninety, eighty-eight, or eighty-nine. She used to go to picnics—in those days picnics were the thing—and it used to be an amusing thing for the young people—I was only a boy then; don't get that wrong. It used to amuse my grown-up brothers and sisters to induce the old lady to dance at these affairs. And she used to dance to "beat the band," and they would scream with delight to see her dance. But as I said, that was another actuarial experience which the trustees had, which was not very profitable.

Among the picturesque characters of the congregation was a *shamas* named David Henriques Valentine. He was a full-blooded Portuguese. He came direct from Lisbon in Portugal, and had been a Marrano up to about 1800. And that was going some, because his family lasted in Portugal as Marranos from 1492 to 1800. It was not such a bad proposition; but, however, they say that he had actual marks on his wrists. He had been seized by the Inquisition, and the marks were on his wrists where he had been confined in dungeons. I have forgotten, if I ever knew, the exact details of it, but he actually escaped and came direct to New York from Lisbon. He was the real goods—a genuine, full-blooded Portuguese Marrano. His daughter Rebecca married Jacob Berlin, and their daughter was Mrs. Hannah Krauth. I remem-

ber her—she was a very old woman when I was a child. I think that with her the family died out.

Valentine was quite a "card" in his way. I don't know whether it was the spirit of the *shamas* in him, but he was a very fine fellow, and he was ready to meet all comers at all times. The trustees very much resented it on one occasion in the Mill Street Synagogue, the first synagogue—I don't know whether any of you have ever seen the synagogue in Newport, but it was built in that way. The gallery was approached by a sort of separate building—an entrance on the side of the synagogue—and the women went in that and then up into the ladies' gallery so that they did not come in the same door with the men, as we do here. The men went in one side of the building, and the women went in the other side of the building and went upstairs into the gallery. That was the arrangement here for many years until after the Revolution. It was a little inaccessible to the *shamas* to go outside into the *schul* ["synagogue"] yard and into the separate entrance for the women and then up into the gallery, so they put a flight of steps at one end of the interior of the synagogue that went from the auditorium up to the gallery.

On one occasion, on the Day of Atonement, a dog got up some way or other through the other entrance into the ladies' gallery, and Mr. Valentine went up. Of course, the ladies were very frightened, and Mr. Valentine went up to take the dog out, but instead of picking up the dog in his arms and walking out with it, he picked it up by the ear and held it out at arm's length. As a result the dog was screaming and yelping, and in that way he carried it down the steps and through the *schul* out into the yard. The parnas did not like that performance, and thought it a little indecorous, and it upset the whole service. The whole place was in convulsions, and the parnas thought it would not be proper to wait until after the service to take action, so he called Valentine up to his seat and "bawled him out," as we say now, for his unseemly conduct. But, much to his amazement, Mr. Valentine turned around and "sassed him back," and gave him quite an argument, until someone stopped the debate and took Mr. Valentine out and ended the performance. But he was a fine, clever fellow and could read the service and do lots of other things, and was a very handy man to have around the place.

I want to give you an idea of the manner in which the synagogue was built. The first synagogue did not face on the street—when I say the first, I mean the second, I mean the first synagogue, that was built in 1730. It was inside a yard. All the old synagogues in Europe were built that way. Of course, in Europe they built them in that manner to give them protection from attacks of anti-Semites, and I suppose in

New York they carried out the same idea. South William Street, where the synagogue was, was originally in Dutch times called "Slyck Steege" or "Muddy Lane." Broad Street had a canal in it—Broad Street, you know, runs north and south—and the whole region around there was pretty boggy, and this side street, this "Muddy Lane," was just a rough, unpaved, muddy road. You went into it from Broad Street, and it was like a blind alley. You got up as far as what is now a little street, "Mill Lane"—those of you who are familiar with the section known as Mill Lane—you got up quite a little way past where the synagogue was, and then you turned around and went back again. There was no outlet from it. That condition of affairs existed until the middle of the eighteenth century, when they cut through a little street that is now Mill Lane, as I have just told you, and connected it with Stone Street, which was then one of the important streets of the city. The present Mill Lane was then commonly known as "Jews Alley."

The synagogue was on the left hand side of South William Street, or Mill Street, entering it from Broad Street, and the back or ark faced the east. It was set in a court, and by subsequent additions to the property in after years it finally went through to Beaver Street, the street on the north. In after years they closed the Mill Street entrance altogether and the entrance to the whole thing was through Beaver Street, through an alleyway into a wide court. In that court was the synagogue, a house for the minister, one for the sexton, a ritual bath, and one or two other houses rented to members of the congregation.

I heard my father say that when he was a boy—I mention this to show you what a short span it is, after all, between the past and the present—when he was a boy—now I don't want the boys, if there are any here, or girls to imitate this—on Saturday mornings he and other boys would go to the synagogue early before the congregation would get there, because that was the only time they could get in [and] . . . evade the watchfulness of the *shamas*. The houses on Broad Street were fine residences—that is, no doubt, of interest to Mr. Albert J. Elias, our trustee, whose office is in that section. It is rather difficult to imagine that all those houses there were then the best residences of the city, and that they mostly had gardens around them, and certainly all had gardens in the back. In those gardens were fruit trees—pear trees, peach trees, etc.—and the branches used to hang over into the yard of the synagogue, and the boys used to go there and climb up the fences and steal the fruit on the trees in the gardens of the residences on Broad Street. That just gives you an idea how the town has developed and what marvelous changes there have been.

Boys were boys then just the same as they are today, full of fun or mischief, whichever you like to call it. I remember hearing a story

about the synagogue in Mill Street, that is, the one consecrated in 1730, which story concerns my father's brother, Aaron N. Phillips, and some other boys who, about the year 1810, entered into a conspiracy to tease a member of the congregation whom we would call today a "nitwit," a nice man but without much brain. You will remember that the benches in that synagogue were built with the boxes for the talethim and books under the seats as one sat on them. It was necessary to lift up a portion of the seat to take the things out and then sit down upon it. Some of these benches are still in the small synagogue upstairs. These wicked boys put a black cat in the seat of this respectable but dumb member, and when he went on Sabbath morning to take his books and taleth out of the box, the cat jumped out and raced all around the synagogue, to the utter confusion of the services and the mortification of the congregants. The parents of the boys were subsequently called before the board of trustees to explain the boys' conduct, and their apparent lack of proper control of them, but after a great deal of fuss about the matter, the incident was smoothed over and forgotten.

I have also heard this, reverting to the Passover: no one in the congregation thought of using butter, but they did use milk. However, the only way they used it was if it came to them without the contact with anything else. Before the Revolution, considerably before it, the cow would be brought around to the house and milked into the can of the house owner, and then later on, after the Revolution, when that was no longer possible, the children would be sent up to the farms, up around what is now Greenwich Village, where you now dance at night —there were all farms up there. In fact, before that there were farms beyond the "Fresh Water," Collect Pond, where the Tombs, the City Prison, is now, and also beyond that and up around the Bowery. But in later years I have heard my father say that in his boyhood, at Passover time, he would walk up Greenwich Street, carrying a can. My grandfather lived on Greenwich Street, on the west side just above Rector Street. The house is still there, 96 Greenwich Street; that was a fine, fashionable street, and he would carry the can up Greenwich Street to a farm at what is now Thirteenth Street. After he had left Canal Street, which, as you know, is quite downtown, there was only post and rail fence—just a regular unpaved country road all the way up to that farm—and then the woman who kept the farm milked the cow into the can and he went back through Greenwich Street. As I have stated, the reason was that they would not allow anybody's cans but their own to be used, because the others were not *pesachdech* [fit for Passover food]. These little things just give you an idea of how they lived.

Speaking of the house of my grandfather, Naphtali Phillips, on Greenwich Street, suggests a few thoughts about him. He was born on Whitehall Street near Stone on the site of the present United States Custom House, in 1773, a short distance from where his mother, Mrs. Jonas Phillips, daughter of the Rev. David Mendez Machado, was born on Stone Street in 1747. He was one of those who was with the cavalcade which accompanied General Washington from Philadelphia to New York City for his inauguration as first President in 1789. I was named for him. It is perhaps an interesting fact that I saw him. He was in his ninety-eighth year when he died, and I was a couple years old—rather a short link since the foundation of our country, covering but two lives. He took the first copy of Washington's Farewell Address from the press in 1797, working in the office of Claypole's *Advertiser,* a daily newspaper in Philadelphia. This copy was subsequently, in the year 1846, deposited in the cornerstone of a Washington monument which was projected in Hamilton Square, now a part of Central Park at about 64th Street and Fifth Avenue. This monument was never completed for the reason that Congress proposed a Washington monument in the city of Washington, which was dedicated on July 4th, 1848. The proposal for a New York monument having been abandoned, its cornerstone was taken to Washington and deposited in the cornerstone of the Washington monument where it still remains.

He [Naphtali Phillips] was married in 1797 in Newport, Rhode Island, to Rachel Hannah, daughter of Moses Mendez Seixas of that city, in Mr. Seixas' house facing the park of the State House. This house was subsequently owned and occupied by Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, the hero of Lake Erie in the War of 1812 and whose statue still stands in the aforesaid park. August Belmont, a New York banker in later years, was married to Commodore Perry's daughter in the same house. The house is still as it was originally and is now occupied by the Salvation Army. [It was Commodore Matthew C. Perry's daughter Caroline who married August Belmont. This was the Perry who opened Japan to United States commerce in 1854. The statue is that of Matthew C. Perry, and it is in Touro Park.]

My grandfather was for many years, subsequent to 1800, editor of the *National Advocate,* leading New York City daily newspaper. He was identified as president, trustee, and clerk of this congregation for more than fifty years. He was an extremely pious and observant Israelite, notwithstanding his prominence in the community. After the services on the eve of the Day of Atonement, he always remained in the synagogue, dressed in full evening dress, as most of the congregation did in those days and which custom to some extent is still preserved, and read the *zemiroth* (early morning service) the next day. His at-

tendance at the synagogue was so regular that when the congregation moved from the Crosby Street Synagogue to 19th Street and Fifth Avenue in 1860, the flooring of his seat was so worn away that it was suggested that it be cut out and preserved, but, before this could be accomplished, the purchasers of the building had made alterations which prevented it. When he traveled, which was with considerable frequency, he always carried his own utensils for cooking food, according to the Jewish law, and never found any difficulty in the different communities in having the Christians arrange everything accordingly.

An amusing story is told of him that on one occasion he was traveling to Philadelphia by boat, water travel being almost universal in the days before railroads. As it was very stuffy in the cabin, he laid his tefilin ["phylacteries"] . . . on the deck. One of my uncles, his son, remonstrated with him and suggested that he go below. Whereupon he turned to him and said: "Young man, if you are ashamed of your religion, I am not," and continued to finish his prayers. This incident, however, is merely an indication of how broadminded the Christians were at that time in respecting the observance of religious practices, as no objection would come from them.

And then the matter of decorum in the synagogue: that ran a good deal in spots, if I may say so. It was not long after the erection of the synagogue in 1730 that the *mahamad* was very insistent about the decorum. As I always understood it, previously there had been excellent decorum at all times, even in that frame building. I don't know just where they got it from, except that the elders of the congregation were wealthy people, merchants, who came into contact with the Christians, and they saw how the Christian services were conducted in the churches. They went to the churches very frequently, and in fact, the minister of our synagogue, the Rev. Gershom Mendez Seixas, preached in St. Paul's Church and in Trinity Church. [Historians now question whether Seixas ever preached in Christian churches.] In my father's youth they did that! And their ministers would come to our synagogue and sit on the altar *(teba)* in their canonicals during services. Imagine such a thing now! But then that was an ordinary thing. Our minister would sit on the platform in Columbia College with these very men—he was an incorporator of and a trustee of Columbia College—and that went all right. No one considered it out of the way.

They, of course, were great for decorum. In fact, in my father's youth the sexton of Trinity Church would go out before the sermon was preached every Sunday and would stretch a rope across Broadway, and no traffic could get by. He was the first traffic cop, I guess, that we had in New York. As I said, no traffic could go up or down Broadway during the time the sermon was preached in the church. Of course, in

those days it was not like now. They did not have twenty-minute sermons, like [our rabbi, the] Rev. Dr. [David de Sola] Pool's; they took two hours. Thank God, we did not live in those days, with all respect to Dr. Pool.

But that gives you an idea of what the Christian churches thought in the matter of decorum, and, as I say, we became affected, or infected, with their notion of decorum, and that continued down until about the year 1750. In 1750 or 1760 we got quite a large addition of Ashkenazim. We had them before, but there was quite an influx of them, and they did affect the decorum in the synagogue. Of course, in Europe, they had been used to a little more liberty during services, and this brought on a great many clashes. Frequently, members of the congregation would defy the parnas in the exercise of his power of maintaining decorum during the service, and that was very annoying to him, but, nevertheless, the congregation were going to have order and decorum even if they had to fight for it. And they did fight very hard for it, too, but it went along all right.

Then, again, in my father's boyhood over a century ago [in the early 1800's] we had another large immigration. Jews from London came over, and they had been used to pretty noisy services over there, and the thing broke out again. I have heard him say that he remembered on Saturday mornings, as soon as they commenced *Enkelohenu* [a closing hymn], or during *haftarah* [the prophetical portion read at the close of services], everybody got up and started to walk out, and they put away the talethim, books, and all that, and the parnas would go up on the *teba* and bang on it and make them keep quiet. They fought hard for the maintenance of decorum, and finally won out.

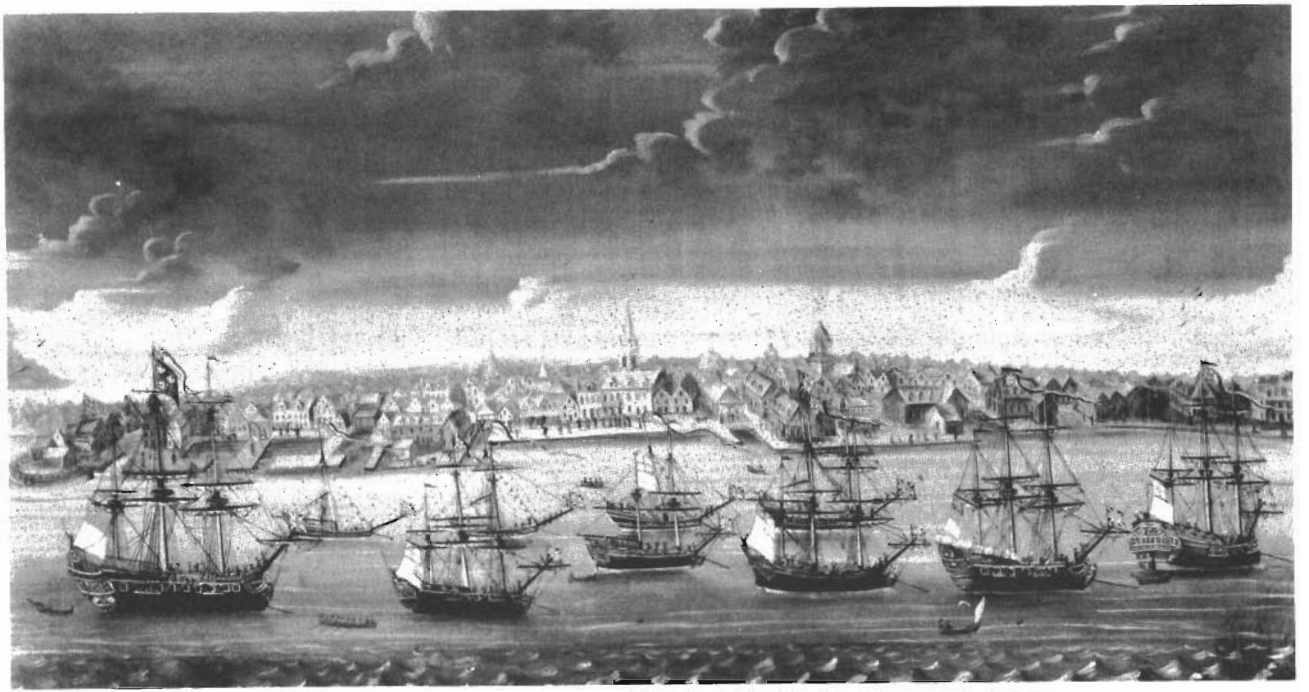
There is a story told about Mr. Solomon I. Isaacs, son of Joshua Isaacs, who was president of the congregation around the year 1830—he was a big, powerful man, a good deal of a fighter—he was parnas and he made up his mind to have order. And he had it, too! When it came to that part of the service which had become disturbing, he would walk up and down the synagogue, like a policeman, and say: "All right, come ahead." And if anyone wanted to start something, he was right there to see it started, and took them outside and started it on the sidewalk. He was a "really to-goodness" parnas, no doubt about that.

And then even in after years things broke out a little now and then. In my father's [Isaac Phillips'] time, when he was president—about 1855, I guess it was—he and Judge Albert Cardozo—not the chief judge of the New York Court of Appeals, Benjamin N. Cardozo, but his father—had quite a run-in. On Kippur [Atonement] night, after the concluding service, then just as now—I won't say "just as now," because

of late years, I must congratulate ourselves that under the influence of the Rev. Dr. Pool and the president we manage to have our services terminate very quietly and nicely—but immediately after the blowing of the shofar everybody, of course, would make a rush for the door, and on this occasion my father gave orders to the *shamas* to lock the door and not let anyone out. Judge Cardozo contested that and demanded that the *shamas* open it, and my father thought that the *shamas* knew better, and the *shamas* thought so, too, and so he did not open it. And the service was conducted and finished according to the proper and decorous way. Afterwards Judge Cardozo was very bitter and wrote officially to my father and demanded that he state whether the *shamas* had acted on his own initiative or under his orders, because if the latter, it was his intention to bring an action against him for damages, and a lot of other things, to which my father replied, I guess, in language not so dignified or elegant either. But Judge Cardozo did not press the matter or did not take it to the courts at all events, and he and my father got together on it and for many years they were the very closest and dearest friends.

This incident is only an indication of how we have really fought to get our services decorous and quiet and dignified, as you see them now. Those who come to the services now and see them all going along so nicely, smoothly, beautifully and with such dignity, of which we are all so very proud, do not realize that we owe our thanks to those who strove in former years to bring them down to us as we have them now. So the matter of order, as I say, was one which gave us great trouble at various times, but we got away with it all right.

I suppose you would like to know something about how the people got married, buried, and so on. All the ceremonies, of course, really entered into the life of the congregation. I don't have to tell you that; you have all heard of it. Such things as anniversaries, weddings, berith milah ["circumcision"] and bar mitzva [confirmation], particularly the last two, were generally a two-day proposition. They ran all Saturday and all Sunday. I suppose people now think that very extraordinary, to have these receptions on Saturdays, but they used to celebrate on Saturdays. The minute after synagogue was out, anybody that was anybody that had a berith or bar mitzva started right in to "blow their heads off." They had open house—there was eating and drinking the limit, no prohibition in those days. And they ran that all off on Saturday for the rest of the day. When night came, they danced, and then they continued the party all day Sunday. Anybody that amounted to anything ran it off over the two days. Before the Revolution the ceremonies of naming both boys as well as girls as we do now, were held in the synagogue itself, if the berith occurred on a Saturday.



Courtesy, New York Historical Society

NEW YORK CITY, 1756-57

As to funerals, the cemetery was up in Chatham Square, and interments were made there until forbidden by the city, in 1822, after which only at a penalty of $250. They used to carry the body to the grave from wherever the person lived. Before the Revolution, and in fact after the Revolution until about the year 1800, the body was carried through the streets on the shoulders of the members of the congregation. And by the way, no one was allowed to touch it unless he was a Jew—I mean, in any way. The *tahara,* the preparation of washing and dressing the body, was performed by the members of the congregation. It was considered a great mitzvah [meritorious act]. The members of the congregation did that, and would not allow anyone else to have any part in it at all. Even during the plagues, people would risk their lives—there were actual cases where they did risk their lives in order to perform these ceremonies.

In 1800 the congregation bought a hearse, had it sent from England. That was the first hearse in the city of New York. No denomination had a hearse; everybody was carried to the grave, just as we did it. But we had opened a cemetery "away up on Eleventh Street" (at Sixth Avenue), so we bought a hearse, and it was the first one in town.

Speaking of plagues reminds me that in the cemetery in Chatham Square there is a tombstone of Walter J. Judah, son of Samuel Judah, a prominent member of the congregation, who died in the plague in 1798 of yellow fever. His people had been here since 1690, and that young man was a student in the New York Hospital, which was then at the end of Chambers Street near the North River. Although he was only twenty years old when the yellow fever broke out, he saved I can't tell you how many lives. Finally he was all "worn down," as it says on his tombstone, by his exertions in risking his life saving people, and he succumbed to the disease himself, and was buried there. On his tombstone is an elaborate carving—of course, entirely contrary to our laws [which do not encourage representations of the human form], I don't know how they got it there—they would not stand for it now, but this was 130 years ago. The whole thing is pictured on his tombstone: the New York Hospital right on the river, showing the river carved on the stone, and a flaming sword over the city, showing that part of the city where the hospital was, where he worked—the flaming sword over the city, denoting the plague by which he had fallen in fighting.

My own grandmother, my father's mother, Rachel, daughter of Moses Mendez Seixas, wife of Naphtali Phillips, succumbed to the yellow fever in 1822, it then prevailing as a plague. When they discovered she had it, they lived, as I said before, on Greenwich Street, close by Rector Street. In order to save her, they moved up to a house on the north side of Chambers Street, seventy-five feet east of Broadway,

where the Stewart Building is now, which was outside the infected district. However, she fell a victim to it a few days after they moved there. She is buried in the cemetery on Eleventh Street.

At that time a great many people ran away from the city and settled in Greenwich Village and left behind, in their distress, even their "slaves," as they were called then—they were colored servants—but many faithful women of the congregation remained with the stricken. Mrs. Aaron Desoria and one or two others, whose names I have forgotten now, members of the congregation, notwithstanding that my grandmother was stricken with this most violent plague, stood by her—they were brave women—and did everything for her, and even performed all the last rites.

That gives you an idea of what they thought was required in relation to the last hours of their neighbors and friends, their brothers and sisters. That, as I say, gives you a notion of the general way in which they lived and the manner in which they passed out.

An interesting minister of our congregation was the Reverend Moses Levi Maduro Peixotto, who came to New York City from the island of Curacao, a very distinguished Dutch Portuguese community, about the year 1800. He had been a merchant there of promise and wealth, but was very learned in the Jewish law. After his arrival in New York, he continued to be a prosperous merchant and resided in a fine house on Cedar Street. When the Reverend Gershom Mendez Seixas died in 1816, after a pastorate of about a half century, the congregation was left with no minister in sight. Mr. Peixotto, who was thoroughly conversant with the ritual of the congregation, offered to perform the services without compensation, and agreed that any salary which the congregation would give him might be turned over to the widow of the late minister. Mr. Peixotto subsequently gave up his business and continued to act solely as the hazan of the congregation. While he was proficient in the prayers, he was entirely without any singing voice, but he managed to get through them alright. When it came to the place in the service where the melodies were sung, he would wait and some one in the congregation, frequently the president, would start the melody, and the congregation would sing it. A member of the congregation raised the point that the unmusical rendition of reading the sefer torah ["Scroll of the Law"] was rather unpleasant. Mr. Peixotto, upon hearing of this, said: "You must remember that it says in the Torah that the Lord 'spoke' unto Moses and that he did not sing unto him."

Mr. Peixotto dressed in knee breeches and three-cornered hat long after that style had gone out of fashion, and continued to do so until his death, and officiated in that manner, of course, with a minister's

robe. He used to say that this was the custom in Amsterdam, where he came from originally, and also in the island of Curacao. If I am not mistaken, this custom still prevails in the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam, or certainly did until comparatively recently.

When the Reverend Mr. Peixotto died in 1828, he left a wish that he be buried in the old cemetery of the congregation in Chatham Square, which had been forbidden by the city authorities, except upon a payment of $250 for each interment. The trustees of the congregation rather demurred at making this expenditure, but Mr. Harmon Hendricks, who I think was president of the congregation at that time, offered to make this contribution, and the Reverend Mr. Peixotto was interred there. Curiously enough, in 1856, when the city of New York opened New Bowery through that cemetery, his grave lay within the portion of the cemetery taken and his remains were removed to the cemetery of the congregation on 21st Street, west of Sixth Avenue, where they still repose. It seemed rather fated that the Reverend Mr. Peixotto should not have his wish.

I have not touched on many of the prominent people of the congregation, the men who were really famous on the battlefield and who made history, such as Major David Salisbury Franks, who as one of the staff of George Washington was present at his inauguration in New York and participated in that ceremony as one of the three marshals of the day, or of Rev. Gershom Mendez Seixas, who was one of the thirteen ministers taking part. [It is doubtful if Franks was actually on the staff of General Washington. There is no evidence that Seixas took part in the inauguration of Washington.] I have not attempted to discuss people of that kind, whom you can read about in the American Jewish Historical Society Publications, but rather, those silent, quiet people who made up the congregational life at that time.

One of these men, Mr. Harmon Hendricks, was another ancestor of our present parnas. He was probably one of the most devoted men to our synagogue that ever lived; his whole life was centered in it. He knew a good deal about the service and ritual, and I have heard my father say that when he was a boy he used to see Mr. Hendricks following the reading of the sefer torah (the parasha [the lesson from the Pentateuch]) from a book without points—and he could read the sefer [the unvocalized Hebrew scroll]! He was very well-versed in everything and was familiar with the ritual and the holy things of the synagogue, and took a very great interest in it. He was always ready to assist it financially and every other way. He was a very rich man and in a position to do it. A good many were in a position to do it and did not do it, but he did. He was a very helpful man, but he was a very just man, and whatever he did, he did with an eye to justice. If he gave

something to you, he gave it to you; if he loaned something to you, he loaned it to you.

I am reminded of an amusing incident. On one occasion the trustees of the congregation wanted to borrow $1,000 and they asked Mr. Hendricks for it, and he said, "All right, certainly," and gave them the $1,000. They wanted him to lend it to them for a year, and they said they would pay him interest. He said "No," and loaned it to them without interest. About a month later Mr. Abraham Touro, formerly of Newport, R. I., died [1822] and left the congregation $10,000. Of course, that was a windfall, and they said: "Well, we have this money now," and the first thing they wanted to do was to pay it back to Mr. Hendricks. They probably had it in mind for a future occasion, too. So they decided to return the $1,000 to Mr. Hendricks, but in giving back the money they discounted it for the eleven months, since they had kept it but one month out of the twelve, and gave him back the balance. But Mr. Hendricks could not see it, and he returned the money and said that he had offered to lend them $1,000—without interest, to be sure—for one year, and he wanted the thousand dollars, and they answered: "When you gave us the thousand dollars, you in effect intended to give us a present of one year's interest on $1,000, and inasmuch as we are repaying it beforehand we ought to take off eleven months' interest." Well, he could not see it, and said that was not the proposition. He was helping them out of a hole. They had been in a hole for the thousand dollars, and he had helped them out, but he was not going to lose money by it. They said: "You can put your money out to make up the interest." He said: "Must I be put to all that inconvenience to put my money out? Must I go to all that trouble simply because I was decent enough to save you and give you a hand and help you out?" They wrangled about it, but he was firm. He said: "No; you must pay back the thousand dollars just as I gave it to you." And they did.

That is an index to the man: he was so thoroughly just. When the sexton collected the bills [for membership dues], he had to go around and fight the members of the congregation to get them to give up the money. It was not like now; they had to wrestle over each bill. On one occasion the *shamas* went to Mr. Hendricks and asked him to pay his bill. He, of course, had the money to pay promptly, so he gave him cash. They had generally no checks in those days, as they have now. When it came to pay, he was two cents short, and the *shamas* said—Mr. David Phillips was the *shamas*—he said: "That's all right, Mr. Hendricks. Don't bother about the two cents. I'll fix it up." And Mr. Hendricks said: "It isn't the two cents. When you are sent out by the congregation to collect, if you let two cents go, you will let two dollars go,

and if you let two dollars go, you will let two hundred dollars go. It is entirely the principle of the thing. I have a good mind to report you to the trustees." So Mr. Phillips' proposition fell quite flat, and Mr. Hendricks said: "There is a great, important lesson to this thing. Just wait," and he went to the safe, opened it and gave him the two cents, and said: "Don't ever do that again."

This is all an index to the man. It was the way with everything. He was absolutely straight, absolutely on the level to the last cent. Everything he did was done in just that way, and he did all kinds of things for the congregation—took mortgages for them, and in fact at one time saved them property, which they had in Chatham Square, from a foreclosure suit. He was kind, generous, and just. He lived at No. 62 Greenwich Street a great many years, and there is a story told about him, too, that at the time the synagogue was going to move from Mill Street to Crosby Street—that was quite a distance uptown—Mr. Hendricks was a little disturbed about it. In fact, he opposed it for a long time, and, of course, held it back a good deal, but between 1818, when the synagogue had been rebuilt in Mill Street, and 1833, the population of the entire city had doubled—something, probably, that it had never done before and certainly not since. But the influx was enormous and the population of the town absolutely doubled between these years, and, of course, new territory had been opened further up in the city, and it was impossible to continue the synagogue down on Mill Street.

So when they were going to move, of course, Mr. Hendricks saw that it was going to be very difficult for him to walk all the way up to Crosby and Broome Streets. He lived near the Battery—62 Greenwich Street is down by Morris Street and Edgar Street—the shortest street in New York. So he wrote to the Portuguese congregation, London, and asked the *beth din* ["rabbinical court"] whether he would be justified under the circumstances—he was a man getting on in years—in riding to the synagogue just for that purpose, not in his own carriage, on account of the great distance. They wrote back and asked him if he was a man of means, and he thought that was strange, but he answered "Yes," and they replied: "Move near to the synagogue," which was truly a talmudical manner of answering a question. He did not have to move, because he died about a year after the synagogue was consecrated, so that settled that.

My friends, I have given you just a slight idea of, I might say, the unwritten history of the congregation, some of the things that you do not read in books, and just a little notion of how the congregation lived and breathed and had its being, and what the people were like and the way they did things in those times before the Revolution when

you could rent the best house in the city for $100. Think of that! Wouldn't you like to be able to do that now? And up to 1840 or 1850, even, you could rent one of the best houses in town for five or six hundred dollars. Think of it! New, fine, twenty-five-foot, three-or four-story—three-story, anyhow—houses! Those were the times that I have been trying to describe.

My friends, the whole point of the thing is to do what? Why do I stand up here tonight and tell you all these personal anecdotes, all these little stories, amusing and otherwise, about this institution of ours? Why? It is just to stimulate your affection for it, to let you have some general idea of, after all, what a great, historic structure this is, entirely apart from its religious or holy significance. I want you, if possible, to gather something from that.

I was very much touched last summer when I went to Newport, Rhode Island, and attended the dedication of the Community House there of the Congregation Jeshuat Israel, that so many of you contributed so generously to make possible. It is a wonderful house; I wish we had it! It has everything in it, almost, that you could imagine —Talmud Torah [Hebrew School] and classes and clubs and swimming pools and gymnasium, in a fine old estate, reconstructed and made beautiful. It is a great credit to those people. The bulk of them up there are poor people. A marvelous thing has been done. And I was very much touched at the ceremonies at the consecration of that building, and for this reason: the mayor, congressmen, and judges of the supreme court and a whole lot of other dignitaries were present. The president of the congregation and the trustees and the other officers, all of those men kept constantly referring to the ancient Jews of Newport, all of them gone by the year 1800 or, certainly, by the year 1818—for many years more than sixty—no Jews there at all, not one. The Jews who had been in Newport before the Revolution, who had been the great power of the place, were men of wealth and education and distinction and power, and made great names for themselves, not only in Newport but in New England, and were pioneers not [only] of the Jews, but of everybody. These new Jewish people last summer kept constantly talking of those ancient Jews as "*their* ancestors," "*their* ancestors." Why, they never saw them; they never even heard about them until recent years, until they came to Newport to live, by accident, just tumbled into the place from Russia, Roumania, and other parts of Europe. They had not known that there was such a place as Newport, probably, and they certainly never knew that there were any Jews there.

And yet they kept constantly, affectionately referring to these men and women as "*their* ancestors," and the loving affection in which they

expressed it was perfectly beautiful. It was stirring! These immigrants from Europe coming here into this place had taken it on themselves, that inheritance, had made it a part of their lives, their inspiration. They felt that those old Portuguese Jews were really their flesh and blood—they did not belong [only] to me, although they were physically my great-grandfather, my great-great-grandfather—but they belonged just as much to them. They were *theirs;* they were their ancestors in every sense of the word. They were guided, inspired, and fired by them. They knew just as much about them as I did. They knew everything about them! And they dwelt on it lovingly and devotedly, and in the spirit of religion! Those men in their graves, in the little cemetery up there, on that hilly street—this cemetery which was immortalized by Longfellow in his poem "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport"—those men and women there were the inspiration to them to go forward, to put up their Community House, to keep the synagogue sacred. Why, those Jews in Newport, when an attempt was made a year or two ago to change a flagstone in the street, a mere stone in the sidewalk in front of the cemetery, they resisted it and fought it, and they made the city officials bring back the old flagstone and put it in front of the cemetery in the place where it had been when the ancient Jews had put it there, made sacred to the present Jews by their feet having trod upon it.

That is the spirit the Jews of Newport have—their, their ancestors; their, their people, their flesh; their blood; their inspiration; their guide to God—that is what the ancient Jews of Newport mean to them!

And that is what I want these ancient Jews of our synagogue to mean to you. That is what I am here tonight for, not to get up here and make a speech or to tell you some fascinating tales, some folklore of the synagogue, or something of that kind. No! I don't want that! I want to tell you the things that are going to inspire you and fire you with a zeal for this ancient synagogue of ours, that are going to make you love every stone in the structure, every piece of silver, everything that goes with it, the prayers, the service, the devotion, the decorum, everything that is attached to it as being one great, historic whole! You can't trifle with it; you can't fool with it; you can't alter it; you can't destroy it, except you touch it, and if you lay your finger upon it in any particular, you have wronged it, you have torn down the structure which these men and women I talked to you about tonight erected for you just as well as for me, for every one of you, I don't care whether you came from Russia, Roumania, Poland, or any other place!

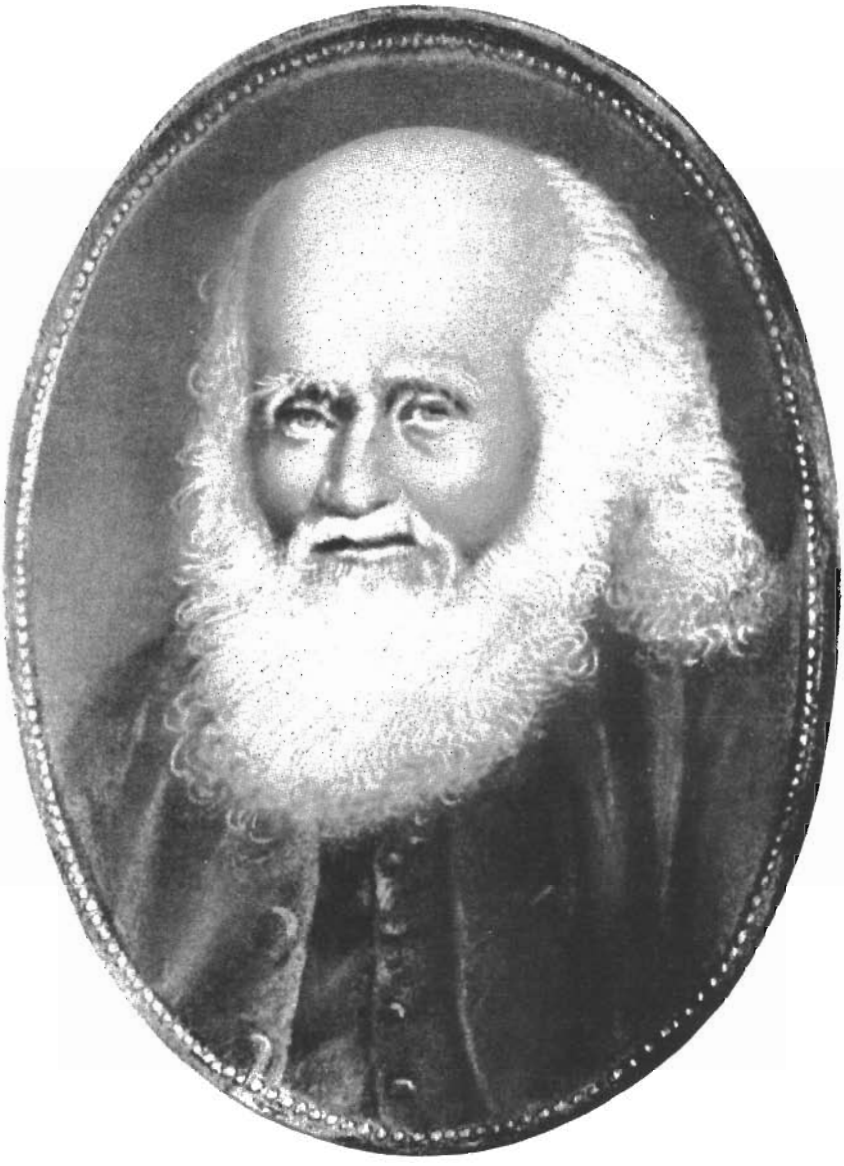
You are a part of this thing—it is yours! You come here as of right—that is the thing! It is your possession, and it is your heritage! It is, like the Torah, the heritage of every one of us! As our sages say, the man who does not teach his child the Torah is a robber, because he has

taken from him his inheritance, robbed him of his inheritance, which is the Torah.

This is your inheritance! It comes to you from your ancestors, be they of your blood or be they not! They are *your* ancestors—they are a part of you!

And so I say to you tonight, to every single man and woman here—and I wish I could say it to every single man and woman in the congregation who is not here: see to it that this is no trifling, idle thing that you have in your midst. It is no ordinary congregation for religious purposes which you join and to which you pay your fees and come and go. You have assumed something more than that! You have assumed the carrying on of one of the finest traditions that our people has ever had, and I say it advisedly. For two hundred seventy and odd years we have stood like a rock in this town—stood up against all the waves of delusion, persuasion, corruption in religious views—stood strong and staunch. You can hear the same words today that these men heard two hundred seventy and more years ago! You can hear the same truths preached from the pulpit that were preached then! You can see the same objects, you can hear the same melodies—you have a true faith when you are a member of this synagogue!

And I say to you who are here tonight that my purpose in coming here was to put the chains of love around you, so that every one of you will adore this ancient structure!



JOSEPH SIMSON
The New York Jew

The New York Jew

In 1784, Arthur Lee, the diplomat and congressman, and one of the Virginia Lees, met the New York Jew Joseph Simson [Simpson]. The latter was born in Germany but had migrated to America, about the year 1718. In New York Simson had a varied career and enjoyed the distinction of being president of Congregation Shearith Israel, where he had once served as beadle. He was known for his knowledge of Hebrew and was occasionally consulted by Christian Hebraists.

The story of the meeting of the two men, reprinted below, is taken from Joseph Dennie's *Port Folio,* VI (1818), 121-22, a copy of which is found in the library of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

The New York Jew

FROM THE DIARY OF THE HON. ARTHUR LEE

New York, 1784. I went to visit a Jew called Simpson, though his true name is Sampson. He was born at Frankfort-on-the Maine, has lived in this city seventy years, and is aged ninety-nine. He married a wife on Long Island, with whom he lived sixty years . . . .

[He did not wear a wig], he wore his hair and beard, both white, but not yet of the silver whiteness of old age. He had some of his teeth remaining, and his eyesight good. His eyes were blue, his complexion fair and florid, both which are uncommon among Jews. He walked well, ate well, slept well, and talked well. His voice was strong; he talked much, but was not prolix, is a very warm Whig, and as such quitted the city when the British took it.

He told us, when he first came hither the whole [of New York City] consisted of one street, and there were orchards where the town is now. He said there was then an Indian king on Long Island, who was very proud and thought there was no one in the world greater than himself, but having heard much of the great King of England, he sent his son to see whether he was bigger, as he phrased it, than himself.

Simpson was present when the son returned. The old king was eating a mess of mush. He immediately inquired of his son whether he had seen the king on the other side of the water and whether he was bigger than himself. The son answered: "A great deal bigger," and gave such a stupendous account of the British King that the old man remained for some time in a sullen reverie. At length he asked his son if the King of England ever died, to which the latter replied in the affirmative. Upon this the chief recovered his cheerfulness and eat his mush with alacrity.

He [Simpson] said he believed General Washington was the greatest warrior in the world and ought to be called Joshua, that the King of France had made him one of his mareschals, and he was sure would never rest till he got him into his service.

On someone's mentioning that the Jews of Amsterdam were about to purchase a large tract of land on the back part of Georgia for the purpose of establishing a colony of Jews exclusively, he observed that it would not do, for that the Jews prospered most when intermixed with other nations.

He delivered his sentiments with conciseness and perspicuity. His only failing consisted in being somewhat deaf. He said in all his life he had not kept his bed two days from sickness, that he had never observed any particular regimen, had used spectacles for forty years, till of late he could see without them. He was easy and cheerful and benevolent of his blessings on us.

A Poem by Joseph Lyons

Joseph Lyons was born in South Carolina, probably in Columbia, in 1813. He received an excellent education in Charleston and, at the age of twenty-two, passed the bar examination at Savannah, Georgia. The following poem is found in his diary under the date of May 23, 1834. Lyons died of consumption the following year in Paris, France.

May 23, Friday. A fool told me today she was sorry for me, and I thought what I here write:

You are sorry for me!!!
Eternal God! am I then that *thing*
As to excite pity!
Give me deep scorn, without disguise,
Most rancorous hate, abhorrence,
Anything but pity!
By heaven, 'tis what you feel
For the unresisting worm you've carelessly crushed,
And you pity it for its impotence
To escape or to retaliate.
Am I so gifted—Am *I* a poor,
Crawling, weak, despicable reptile?
If I am, *then* be *sorry* for me.
But whilst I feel in my capacious soul
A comprehensive power to enfold
Passions that in their expansion
Would shatter your pigmy soul
Into indiscernible atoms,
Dare not to reduce me
To your petty pitiful size
And be sorry for me, as
You would for your fellows.

The World of My Books

ISAAC MAYER WISE

Translated, with an Introduction and Explanatory Notes, by ALBERT H. FRIEDLANDER

INTRODUCTION

Autobiographies are written for many reasons. Primarily, they are a justification for the present. All the memories of the past are drawn up in battle array, arranged to suit the author, and then are marched forward to witness to the glory and the justice of the present.

But then something happens. Age has mellowed the fighter; recognition has been attained. And then the memories become entities in themselves, are relived, are enjoyed for their own sake. They become reminders that dreams are still being dreamed, that the vigor and the ardor of youth are not lacking in old age. And then—well, in the case of Isaac M. Wise almost anything could happen.

This is one of Wise's autobiographies. It is not the official version, and there is a story attached to that. When Wise first published *The Israelite,* one of his greatest dreams was realized: an articulate voice for Reform Judaism had been established, one that could speak to the larger public. But Wise soon realized that he may have moved too fast. An organ of expression in English *was* needed, but his first support was in the home of the German Jew within his community—and the larger, Gentile, community enabled new settlers to continue speaking the language of their native European land. Cincinnati was partially a German town, and so *The Israelite* received a supplement, *Die Deborah,* which repeated in German what *The Israelite* called out to the community in English. But did it repeat the same things? Wise's opponents, with a slight tinge of maliciousness, suggested that *Die Deborah* had a perverse personality of its own, that it often showed a completely different Wise. In a way they were right, of course, but unwittingly they paid tribute to the personality of a man who was firmly de-

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Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, the great organizer and creator of American Reform Jewish institutions, came to the United States in 1846 and died in 1900. He was the prime figure in establishing the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Hebrew Union College, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

Rabbi Albert H. Friedlander is the minister of United Hebrew Congregation in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

termined to be a unifying influence in American Jewry, and had his own way of achieving this.

"The World of My Books" ("Meine Bücherei") appeared in *Die Deborah*. This is a fact that must not be forgotten. Wise here displayed himself to his German parishioners. He evoked old memories of a bygone era that were shared by his readers. Does not every emigrant share in the dreams and successes of his fellow-journeyer? Oscar Handlin's *The Uprooted* deals with these people, with the poignancy that is part of the dreams of the past. Wise knew the power of those dreams. He conjured them up from the depths, and thus another link was forged between Wise and his devoted followers, who felt themselves represented in all his actions in the fields of politics and religion.

There were other reasons, of course, that caused these columns to see the light of day. For one thing, Wise needed material to fill the paper. By turning to incidents of his own life, he eliminated the research work which any other topic would have entailed, and in those days he had little time. The reminiscences flowed from his pen onto the paper; then, scarcely dry, they were transmitted to the printer. Often they were not even checked; a variety of errors attests to the fact that neither printer nor writer was a perfectionist in this work. Surprisingly enough, however, Wise rather faithfully followed a general outline. He might number the columns wrongly (there are two "Reminiscences No. X"); some long story from the Midrash or the Bohemian woods would fill up needed space; or a continuation would be promised, only to be blithely forgotten. But the overall plan was there and found expression in the title.

"Meine Bücherei" is more accurately translated as "my library"; but Wise was actually speaking of "the world of my books," for this is a literary autobiography, tracing the forebears, birth, and growth of every book that the amazingly versatile Isaac M. Wise wrote. It is his contention, expressed in these pages, that this versatility was forced upon him. He constantly repeats that he detests writing books, and yet there is a strong pride implicit in the defense which he puts up for every one of his writings.

Books lived for Wise; they had a definite life of their own. Only on that basis can we understand this work. He constantly speaks of the conspiracy of silence which "tries to kill" his writings. Each of his works is shown in a world of its own: *The Cosmic God* lives in the world of the natural sciences which Wise felt he had to enter; *The Origin of Christianity* emerges out of a field of polemics Wise wanted to avoid; the *History of the Israelitish Nation* lives in a world of books which Wise entered through the portals of the State Library in Albany; and so forth. Wise wandered among these worlds. For that reason the title

"The World of My Books" is proper; it gives us a clue to the content of these pages.

The humor, striving, and ambition that are part of Wise also belong to his words. Sometimes they show us the all too human side of a great man: contempt for the masses who follow atheistic mountebanks, who will not listen to him. But the irritation the reader may sometimes feel when he reads what seems to be a partisan discussion of Wise's life quickly gives way to affection for a man who had so deep and strong a love for the traditions of Judaism, for the traditions of liberalism, and for what we may term the hopes of the common man.

This is a casual autobiography. It is incomplete; sometimes it strays into pedanticism, and often it lacks objectivity. But why should it be objective? As it stands, it is a most enjoyable and instructive occasion, a stroll with Wise into the Ohio Valley, one hundred years after the event, letting us see a strong and vibrant personality unfold the pages of a history that is an important part of our life today.

THE WORLD OF MY BOOKS

I

Bulky books and tight shoes have always been most uncomfortable for me. "How in the world is this going to end?" I would think to myself, and I preferred not to start reading at all. Folios—I was accustomed to them from the talmudic academy, and I knew that they were not too dangerous. For they have little content; most of it is commentary and sub-commentary, and little enough space is left for the text. Moreover, there are ways of dealing with the text. One arrives at a long piece of *Aggadah* [non-legal material] and skips it. But a book of eight or nine hundred octavo uniform-sized pages filled with dried out, arid, and boiled-down scholarship was always most painful for me. The end is too far removed from the beginning, and life is short. In the case of voluminous novels, novelettes, or other kinds of stories, I simplified my task. In the fashion of book reviewers, I simply read the beginning, middle, and end, leaving the in-between to my imagination. But scholarly books, which cannot be treated in this fashion, demand a complete reading, and I lacked the courage to do this.

Finally, it occurred to me to do my reading like a homeopathic dosage, in approximately the same manner as an average man might read Klopstock's *Messiah,* Milton's *Paradise Lost,* or Hartwig Wessely's *Shire Tifereth.* That way, I succeeded in reading many a thick, scholarly, and dry book to its *finis.* This took time, twice as much as usual. First of all, I read slowly; secondly, time itself passed all too slowly

during this occupation. Furthermore, I had the unpleasant habit of always reading with pencil in hand, of quarreling with every author, and of throwing my displeasure into his face in marginal notations.

Hence a cruelly long time was needed to finish a bulky volume. On top of all, I would then have to read the book again, and generally I would then like it! I probably liked my marginal annotations, just as every fool delights in his cap. After I had brought all these sacrifices to the altar of the thirst for knowledge, nothing could induce me to look at the book again. I had no further need of it and laid it to eternal rest upon the shelf, next to its comrades. This drudgery mellowed my resolution never to torture humanity with a book; if at all possible, I would never write one.

When I had tortured myself long enough, I even acquired the wild insight that most of the heavy volumes contained very little that was unique and original; most of the contents had been plagiarized. The best often could not be said, and what they had copied was not always germane to the issue. It often happened with them as with the old Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus who, according to the Talmud, declared that he himself had never taught anything which he had not heard from his teacher. There, at least, was a modest and frank man, who deserves the gold medal of merit.

I often remembered an old *maggid* ["teacher"] who interpreted this verse from Psalms: . . . "Then all the trees in the forest will rejoice."[1] "This," he thought, "must refer to the coming of the Messiah and of the day of judgment, for the trees of the forest do not now rejoice. But why should they rejoice then? he asked himself. What will the trees of the forest gain from that which God will do for us? Surely, the *maggid* said, it has to be understood thus: On the day of judgment all the dead will have to appear before the judgment seat of the Most High and enumerate the merits which might justify their resurrection. All men will be called up by occupations; the authors, too, will present themselves. Proud and sure of himself, each writer will indicate the book, or even books, which he has written, and claim the merit of having directed humanity to the true understanding of God and his works. The Almighty Judge then orders: 'Let every one of you take from his writings that which is his; to that which he has borrowed, he has no right. He who can show anything which is his own shall be resurrected; the others will return to the silent grave. Whatever is original in each book will be preserved for eternity; all else will be burned.' Such gigantic heaps of books will have to be burned that the resurrected will have fuel for a century, without having to fell a single tree in the forest! For this reason the prophet tells us: 'Then all the trees in the forest will rejoice.' "

I've always liked that. I marvelled at the old *maggid* who plumbed the depths of the seas of writing. Were the old man now alive, and had to see how the hypnotized professors and doctors repeat each other's words, and how they, standing over their ears in the waters of current theories, boast of their wisdom—how maliciously he would mock them: "Comes the resurrection, and they'll all be left lying!"

Pardon! I've strayed from my theme. All I wanted to do was to relate how I came to hate bulky books and how the decision against writing books grew within me.

Decision and instinct are two different drives of the will. We can make a decision, but we are seized by instinct. Decision is a product of the mind, which we can trace back to its causes; instinct is a secret of nature, a riddle which cannot be solved by reason. I made a decision, but I was seized by an instinct which took hold of my will. Early in life there wakened within me an unutterable instinct to achieve something in the world, preferably in Judaism, and that not words, but works. Passion in man grows stronger much earlier than does reason; hence I was forced to act contrary to my resolve. I had to write, without a material reason; often without desire and against my conviction I had to write. How this drive developed in time, and what resulted from it, I will tell you presently.[2]

II

If a man lives long enough, he can meet many learned gentlemen who are able to do everything better than they can keep their promises. Already before the evening arrives, they forget what they have promised in the morning. This sickness eventually becomes so bad that the patients do not keep word with themselves; within the day they forget their own decisions and purposes, and every day, every month, or at least every year, they become so completely changed that they can barely recognize themselves. My schoolmaster, essentially a pedant, said to me: "Boy, if you want to amount to anything, pray to God three times a day to teach you to keep your word to others and to yourself." I have done this diligently, and I wrote into my prayerbook, after the first verse in [the prayer] *Elohai Nezor:* [O my God, guard my tongue from uttering evil, and my lips from deceitful speech.] . . . "Teach me to watch the utterances of my lips."

I therefore at least kept word with myself: I wrote neither book nor articles for the press while I was still in my salad days, which in my case lasted quite a long time.[3] During that period, I strictly observed the well-meant instructions of my schoolmaster, something not every lout can do.

Dr. Starkenstein was more than a medical practitioner and a witty writer, as most doctors were at that time. He was also the husband of a great lady, the older sister of the director of the present rabbinical seminary in Budapest. He had the audacity to claim that he had discovered poetic talent in me, something he said right to my face. This flattered my vanity considerably, and I wrote poems (German-Hebrew and Hebrew-German), all of which I condemned to a fiery death, without even submitting them to the judgment of my friendly doctor. Apparently I was already an improver of prayerbooks and a philanthropist at an early age. I wanted to save suffering humanity the trouble of having to read my poems. How beautiful this world could be, if all the products of the mind created during one's cubhood were fed to the fire as soon as they are produced! How the many unfortunate persons who are now ashamed of what they once wrote, and the many others who will later be ashamed of what they are now writing, would rejoice in the memory of the generous, joyfully sacrificial deed: "I burned the junk"!

Need breaks iron. The soil under my feet grew cold; the soles of my boots wore out. My garments were threadbare; no money, no credit, no staunch friends who had anything to spare. All this topples the principles of a man in his cubhood. What should one do? Stop! Had not Starkenstein said—but of course! And so I wrote a story, "The Siege of Milan," full of gun smoke, the clash of sabers, and the thunder of cannons, gallant deeds of heroism and cruel pangs of love, rude soldiers' songs, and delicate women sutler episodes, in such profusion that the publisher of a weekly paper called *Bohemia,* then issued in a little country town, paid me a nice price for the stuff and published it anonymously. I was saved, and so were my boots. In deep contrition, I begged my schoolmaster for forgiveness and in the alphabetical list of sins for the Day of Atonement I changed the letter *Zayin* in "kozavnu" ("we have lied") to a *Sav* "kosafti" ("I have written" extraordinary junk), which, after all, amounts to the same thing. I have never been able to read that story again, from fear that my conscience would force me to return the honorarium to the publisher who had paid for the worthless stuff.

To my not inconsiderable surprise, I was called, some time later, naturally, to a respectable rabbinical position, although I was still in my cubhood. (S. L. Rapaport, then chief rabbi of Prague, was responsible for this.)[4] Then all the clownishness ceased. Each day I was tortured by the heat of the classroom, and by the chill of the writing, revising, decanting, memorizing, and reciting of sermons. For I had a prejudice against public preaching and writing. I lacked the necessary self-confidence for both these functions.

There was another misfortune. A close friend and relative of mine had wasted his youth as a teacher by doing nothing for his own development, a common failing among the teachers in Bohemia at that time. The whole week he did nothing save learn the *tropp* [melody] for the *sidra* [pentateuchal portion] of the coming Sabbath, read novels, and play cards with his people. He married, got some money, went into business, and lost it. Now he wanted to resume congregational work. But he lacked the [rabbinic] *morenu* diploma; and his previous learning was all but forgotten. Every day I had to devote several hours to help him review the required sections in the codes *Orach Chayim* and *Yoreh Deah*. But these dry, legal paragraphs did not satisfy the man. He wanted to know the origin and development of every law, and I was forced to accompany him through the whole Talmud and to read the codices of different centuries in their chronological sequence. My professional duties in addition to these talmudic studies left me time not even for the thought of writing anything. I was happy if I had time for reading the German-Jewish literature, along with Jean Paul, Herder, and the current poets. This was the end of my salad days.

The worst was yet to come. My friend received his *morenu* diploma from District Rabbi Kufka and speedily found employment. In the meanwhile, however, I had started on the wrong track. The Talmud, not as a scientific but as sheer legalistic study, had again captivated me to such an extent that I entertained every impoverished traveling talmudic scholar in my house for weeks (and at that time the number of those expelled from Russia was great), so that I might spend countless nights quarreling over talmudic subjects. Once again, I became a Talmud student in the strictest sense of the word. To this day this infuriates me.

Chance led me into another pathway. The only little daughter of one of my teachers, the famous "appealer" [judge?] (Dayan) Rabbi Samuel Freund of Prague, was sent by her parents to me in the country. (I had married long before this.) The dear girl, reared in the center of talmudic atmosphere, soon observed my favorite occupation with the Polish Talmud students, and reported this to her father. In a letter, opening with the scriptural verse: . . . "May the Lord order blessing upon you" (Deut. 28:8), the erudite father praised me so extravagantly for my "industrious study" that I realized that I was on the steep track to onesidedness.

"I must give up my concern for the Talmud," I thought, and changed my library. I threw myself into the arms of Samuel Hirsch, Formstecher, Reggio, Krochmal, Mendelssohn, and Spinoza, until I thought I was convinced that I had mastered Spinoza and had survived Mendelssohn.[5] By means of such detours I returned to the Jewish

thinkers, poets, and commentators of the Middle Ages. I reveled and waxed enthusiastic in this literature until my desire to emigrate drove me out of old Bohemia and out of the world of letters. An extended journey in Germany and then the sixty-three days on the ocean brought me back to my first love: to make some substantial contribution rather than to write something. While on the ocean, I forged mighty plans for the future. I read English literature but a few hours a day; the rest of the time I reveled in plans and ideas for the future, until my nightly dreams were filled with them. Thus, half sleeping, half waking, always dreaming, I crossed the ocean, and in this abnormal condition I reached land. The first chapter of my world of books was ended. A new life and new strivings begin for everyone in the New World.[6]

III

My first purchases in New York were Addison's *Spectator,* in eight volumes, and Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric.* In my dreams aboard ship I had decided to conquer America, but since no weapons save the living word were at my command, I had to acquire the means of gaining some skill in the language, at least in its style and form. A teacher from Boston, whose closer acquaintance I had made aboard ship, directed my attention towards these books, and I later came to realize that, next to the Bible, Addison was, in his day, the writer of classical prose, and that Blair was the only master of the form of speech; he had developed rhetoric into a science.

My conquests proceeded slowly and tediously. My first conquest consisted in my becoming a tutor. A number of earlier emigrants, mostly factory workers, promoted me to be the English teacher for their night school of sixteen students. After a few days I was known [in New York] throughout the German quarter, from Houston Street to Grant [Grand?] Street, as a tutor. The only man to introduce me to the public as a rabbi was the late Dr. Max Lilienthal. I ruled my conquered terrain for four weeks; then I retired. My successor in the field was a tailor's apprentice from Posen, whom I met again two years later, when he was an itinerant salesman of artistic objects and attempted to sell me various phylacteries, prayer fringes, and mezuzoth [biblical passages on parchment, attached to the doorposts].

My second conquest was more brilliant; I became an extemporaneous speaker. This happened in the following way: before I left my old fatherland, I presented a relative, the religious teacher *(moreh zedek)* in Stannowitz, near Pilsen, with all my written sermons which had not been annexed by my neighboring colleagues. To this very day I still re-

joice in this stroke of genius; there must have been over a hundred of them. Thus I came to America without sermons. Dr. Lilienthal sent me to New Haven to dedicate a synagogue—thus I lost my office as teacher —and I wrote two German sermons. No sooner had I returned thence when Lilienthal again chose me to dedicate the synagogue at Syracuse. J. D. Walter, the Croesus of New York at that time and president of a congregation, was present when Lilienthal made me an "assistant bishop."[7] "You'll have to travel through Albany," Walter told me. "Albany has a considerable congregation, and my brother-in-law, Moses Schloss, is its president. Those people have never heard a preacher in America; they'll be happy to hear you. I'll write Schloss to meet you in Albany and to invite you to preach the following Sabbath."

No sooner said than done. He wrote to Schloss, and I had to write three sermons, one for Albany and two for Syracuse. On Thursday of the following week I took a steamship up the Hudson to Albany, with three finished speeches in my traveling bag. Moses Schloss gave me a regular reception, and invited me to preach, and so I preached on the Sabbath (Ki Seze [when the biblical portion beginning at Deut. 21:10 is read]) and dined with the parnass ["president"]. He told me how much he liked my sermon, and regretted only that so few of the congregation were able to understand much of it. "Your language is too lofty and your thoughts too deep for these people," Mr. Schloss said, adding: "If you wish to preach for us during the coming high holidays, I can promise you an honorarium of $100." I merely promised to write something definite from Syracuse, because, in the first place, his criticism was unpleasant to me, and secondly, I contemplated making a trip to Cincinnati.

I went to Syracuse, but arrived almost two weeks too early. The building had not been completed, and I had to walk about in idleness a fortnight. During that time, I established close contacts with the members of the congregation and made ethnological studies, in which I was assisted by Mr. Stein, a brother-in-law of the Henochsberg brothers of Fuerth [Bavaria]. This Mr. Stein was a highly educated and intelligent person. He had closely studied his environment and taught me to know it thoroughly.

Gradually I began to see that the parnass of Albany might have been right. While I was still in Syracuse, I reworked my written addresses so as to give them a more popular form.

On the night before Erev Rosh Hashanah ["New Year"], I boarded the train for Albany. I had earlier informed Mr. Schloss of my decision, since, after the dedication, I could no longer arrive in Cincinnati before the holiday. Sleepers were unknown then, nor were any writing materials to be had on the train. I reached for the calling cards I had

received in Syracuse, and in pencil wrote upon their backs a memorandum of all the sins and shortcomings that could possibly have been committed by people at this cultural level and under the prevailing circumstances. Before I fell asleep, I had a long list of sins ready. When I awoke, I also had the texts for two sermons, taken from the passages from Genesis which are read on these holidays. "Now it's in God's hands," I thought.

I reached Albany early in the morning. Next day I preached to a packed house on the first half of my register of sins. When I had finished, I was the hero of the day. I had conquered Congregation Beth El. The following day I finished my register of sins in the second synagogue, and the effect was the same as on the first day.

After this victory I never again wrote a sermon. Holiday lectures, which generally appeared in the newspapers, had to be written ahead of time, so that the reporters might have them immediately after the holiday. My printed sermons, however, were not written down until they had been delivered from the pulpit. Thus I became an extemporaneous speaker. And that was a conquest for me, for I hated to write.

The third conquest which I made in America was this: while I was on the steamer, going downstream towards New York and my family, to share with them my laurels and the great sum of money I had earned, Congregation Beth El of Albany, without my consent and without any suggestion on my part, elected me its rabbi, at a yearly salary of $250. When, early in the morning, I entered my temporary home in Elizabeth Street, Friedmann, my good-natured landlord, handed me a telegram which informed me of my third conquest. The next evening the official letter arrived, wherein I was told also that the congregation expected me to establish a school to which all the members had pledged to send their children and to pay an annual tuition fee of six dollars per child.

I had no idea how much a family needed in order to live decently; still reckoning in terms of the Austrian standard of currency, I considered this to be a great deal of money. Therefore I accepted the position, brought my family to Albany, preached abundantly, and opened a school in which instruction was given also in Hebrew and German. Once again I was in my old workshop, with the single difference that, while in [my Bohemian pulpit in] Radnitz I had to change an old fashioned *cheder* [school] into a real school, in Albany I had to make a new start, for there I found a *tabula rasa* ["clean slate"] and complete freedom to act in accordance with my own judgment. I did have to spend my days again in the classroom, but I wrote no more sermons, was not beleaguered by talmudic students, because there were none there, and after five o'clock was a free man.

I was satisfied. I could even earn as much money as I desired, for in a short while I was recognized by the non-Jewish aristocracy, which was of considerable importance in that Knickerbocker city, as a teacher in certain fields, and the people paid well. How did I achieve this fourth conquest?

It happened like this: in America a rabbi was an unknown quantity, and to the Bible-loving Americans he was an interesting personality. It was assumed that I was a great scholar, since I was the rabbi of the Jews, and the only one these good people had ever seen. Added to this was the miracle that the "greenhorn German" could speak a passable English which did not offend the sensitive ears of educated persons. All this was so new and unusual that the new rabbi became a phenomenon. Furthermore, the city had two important libraries: the New York State Library, in the Capitol, and the library of the Young Men's Association (no Christian institution of that type existed then). Within those friendly walls I at once made myself at home as a member of the Association and as a regular guest of the State Library. I rapidly became acquainted with the staffs and with the best readers, that is to say, with the educated world. These well-meaning people made a great man out of me, long before I had the faintest idea of my "greatness." Thus, in all innocence, I made a fourth conquest in America. I was thus, as it were, drawn into the best society of distinguished American minds, and thus, through these detours, I have returned to my theme, "The World of My Books." We will see each other again in the libraries of Albany. Adieu![8]

IV

My dreams aboard ship and the enthusiastic phantasies that had delighted me on my ocean voyage vanished into the mist as I slowly settled back into the same old rut of weekday teaching and Saturday preaching. This filled up my time, it is true, but not my mind. I yearned after a nameless Something, which I found nowhere. Earlier, the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages had been the most suitable means by which I temporarily overcame my vague longings. But I had left my library in the old country, and in the entire city of Albany, with its two large libraries, no Jewish book, except the *Chumash* [Pentateuch] and prayerbooks, was to be found. Even the monthly *Occident,* the only Jewish organ in the country, had no readers in the capital of New York. I lamented my needs to Lilienthal, and begged him to lend me a few books, and the dear friend sent me an *Eben Ezer* [a legal code], which I have never returned to him, and a *Nachlath Shivah,* which I have never again seen since that time until, a few

weeks ago, I was reminded of it by lawyer Amram's book on the talmudic laws of divorce, as this study of his draws heavily on both books. And there I had the eternally feminine: the rabbinical marriage and divorce laws in the first [*Eben Ezer*], and their legal formulations in the second, volume [*Nachlath Shivah*]. I did not even attempt to entertain myself with these volumes. I wrote to Joachimsen, who sold Jewish books on Houston Street in New York. He sent me a copy of the cabbalistic *Reshith Chochmah* with the excuse that he had nothing else in stock which might interest me. This was very good, for I had even less money in my pocket to pay for it than he had books in stock.

The situation was painful. In my need I searched out all the historical writings in the libraries, but found nothing substantial on Jewish history or culture. Not even my Maimonides, my Albo, or my Abarbanel was mentioned in any place. The Bible had been deformed at the hands of baptized theologians; *Josephus* and *Josippon* were the historical sources to which recourse was had. I became furious, rushing impetuously through the materials on hand, but in vain. I found nothing, for there simply was no Jewish literature in the English language. And then the desire to write awoke in me, weakly at first, then ever more strongly, until I had overcome my dislike of writing and had forgotten my lack of knowledge. I wrote. But what did I write? Articles in the *Occident*. God forgive me!

A young Presbyterian clergyman published a series of articles in the *Occident* which sought to prove, from the cabbalistic writings, that the Christian dogmas were *sub rosa* Jewish teachings. I was invited to enter the lists against the learned gentleman, and in order to do this, I had to write. But I had no library, and my opponent displayed a fairly good acquaintance with cabbalistic literature. What could I do? In my need I turned to the *Reshith Chochmah,* wherein I found enough citations from the *Zohar* and similar [cabbalistic] works to undercut a dozen quarrelsome priests. When I was again in possession of my library, a peace treaty was speedily agreed upon by my opponent, M. R. Miller, and me. We remained friends throughout his lifetime, although he often joked about the things we had perpetrated in our innocence.

Another cause which forced me to overcome my hatred of writing was my reformer's instinct. It had mocked and tortured me from my earliest youth, and I was unable to overcome or to palliate it. I found enemies, was attacked, and we had no organ of expression through which we could bring our cause before the public. I had to cringe and bow low, so that once in a while I might humbly say an audible word in the *Occident*. I boasted to myself in my lonely study (but only when completely alone), uttering the threat: "Just wait, you goosequill-

heroes, till I get a chance to write. I'll teach you manners!" But the chance was not to come for several years.

However, this was not what I wanted. I was only involuntarily drawn into the field of polemics. What I really desired was to write something that would transplant Jewish Science [the scientific knowledge of Judaism] into the English language. My first thought was to translate, into English, Jost's history of the Jews, the last volume of which had appeared just then.[9] But I soon saw that this would be a foolhardy beginning, for the public certainly would not read such a many-volumed work as this. I then conceived the desire to write a general history of the Middle Ages, that I might show, in its true light, the influence of the Arabs and the Jews on the general development of humanity. Although everything I needed was available in the two libraries, or perhaps precisely because of it, I soon realized that with my occupation I would need a decade to work through the material. Finally, the thought occurred to me to write a history of Jewish literature from the tenth to the fifteenth century.

On this history, which also determined the nature of my lectures, I henceforth concentrated my attention. History and philosophy became my favorites, gaining ascendancy over me to such an extent that I lost all other interests. It was understandably easy for me, walking in this ecstasy, to wander into mythology and the Asiatic religions, particularly since English literature tapped the richest sources from India, China, and Persia. For years I sat behind this Chinese Wall, cut off from the world, dreaming, thinking, weaving phantasies, and speculating. That was my desire, my world, with which I was connected only in my capacities as schoolteacher, preacher, and reformer, a somewhat stale, prosaic, strange person. This was my library, until new circumstances called me back to life out of my mummy-like existence.

My dear friend Dr. Joseph Lewi was the trumpet of my resurrection. He had just arrived from abroad and stayed in my home for a while. Dr. Lewi found me so run down, and so neglectful of myself, that he forced me to eat, drink, sleep, and live in a normal manner.

An association of scholars, bishops, and statesmen had been founded in Albany. Its purpose was the founding of a United States University. This did not materialize, but a teachers' college, a school of medicine, a law school, and a geological museum were established. I was drawn into this group quite early, had to join in everything, and, besides, keep the minutes, deliver talks, participate in debates, and represent the sciences. Since the natural sciences occupied the chief position within this scholarly body, I felt compelled to leave my heavenly abode for a while and to look squarely into nature's face. For a while, this changed my world of books.

I did not experience a complete revolution until the year 1850. I was a guest preacher in the Reform congregation in Charleston, S. C., and was a non-participating witness to the public debate between Dr. Raphael [Morris J. Raphall] for Orthodoxy and Posnanskie [Gustavus Poznanski] for Reform.

I said nothing until Dr. Raphael invited me to state my opinion on the disputed points. Then I spoke clearly, freely, and with determination. The result was that all the Orthodox, both Jews and Christians, attacked me relentlessly, charged me in the press with heresy, and secretly agitated against me, so long and so fanatically, that on New Year's Day I was thrown out of my temple in Albany.[10] That wakened me from my dreams, and I put new strings on my bow.

Once the new Reform congregation was founded [in Albany], I turned to my pen, not in order to avenge myself, but rather to establish Reform within Judaism. A few weeks later, Robert Lyons' weekly paper in New York [*The Asmonean*] had a new section entitled "Theological and Philosophical Matters," edited by Isaac M. Wise. I had an organ of expression in which I could say anything in the way I wanted to say it. And I did this, showing consideration for others, but with complete honesty. A few weeks later I thoroughly altered my library and decided to write the history of Israel, or rather, to gather the material. The desire for action had once again awakened within me. Old plans revived in my soul; the ponderer became once again the enthusiast. I was freed from my bonds. Had these experiences of mine not awakened me, it is likely that I would have taken American citizenship as a professor, or as a lawyer, or perhaps as an impractical enthusiast."[11]

V

A German scientist once posited: "Man is what he eats."[12] This is not absolutely true, since our inner laboratory decomposes everything and changes it into human fluids and blood. It would be better to say: "Man sometimes is what he drinks—drunk!" Experience teaches that, apart from his spiritual and ethical activities, man is what circumstances make him. They made me a teacher, a preacher, a journalist, and an author, without my volition, and I did not even know whether I was fitted for such tasks. I entered into apprenticeship for these occupations because circumstances impelled me. It was not easy for me, with my universal and cosmopolitan outlook, to limit myself to Jewish problems, to attain one specialty, but I accommodated myself to the despotic force of circumstances.

As a journalist, I considered it my task to found Reform in Judaism and to win adherents among the public for the Science of Judaism.

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Both were lacking. Reform had many adherents, but it lacked an English or German organ, and Jewish science was limited to a few men who were incapable of writing. As far as the public was concerned, neither had any real existence, but the two factors seemed to me to belong together. Reform without science seemed capricious and not without danger to the religion which was to be elevated by such reform. And the teaching of Jewish knowledge without new foundations and modern points of view, without reform attitudes, I considered to be no more than a second edition of the Polish Jewish [unscientific] methods, which life in the new world teaches us to overcome, and which the majority of our Jews had already accomplished. I thus had to follow in both directions. This I did every week also in the *Asmonean*, without going beyond the comprehension of the public or the needs of the time. I wrote simply, democratically, popularly, evenly, and thoughtfully.

Professor Amos Dean [of Albany], a student and friend of the late statesman Daniel Webster, who became a very close friend of mine, told me how his master, famous for his rhetoric, had been elected to Congress soon after finishing his studies. In those days, a certain wealthy Virginia planter, who could neither read nor write, attended the sessions of Congress in order to acquaint himself with the important happenings in America. After Webster had made his maiden speech in the House and had delighted his public, this illiterate man came over to him. He thanked Webster profusely for his fine speech, and said: "Mr. Webster, I understood exactly everything you said!" Webster used to tell his students that this was the highest praise he ever received as a speaker: "He understood everything I said." Mr. Dean added: "In Webster's speeches, the most exalted aspect was their simplicity." I always held to this dictum, and was therefore able to satisfy the public, and in this way I started to write in the *Asmonean*.

My contributions were, however, read also because of their novelty. The open and free discussion of the Reform question was not only new, but was congenial to the majority of my readers. The [higher] Bible criticism, which was a by-product of my historical studies, was not so new, but it was original, and was read by many in order to arouse their ire. As an antidote I presented, under the heading "Talmudic Selections," a weekly selection of talmudic and midrashic sayings, particularly such as were characteristic of the moral and social viewpoint of their time, many of which were assimilated into English literature. Less widely read, in all probability, were my larger essays, of which I can now recall only three: (1) "The Nature and History of the *Bath Kol* ["Divine Voice"] Which Is Believed to Have Replaced Prophecy"; (2) "The Life and Teachings of Hillel 1, the Reformer of

His Time" (I treated this material before Graetz and Geiger did); (3) "The Constitution of Ancient Israel According to the Code of Maimonides."

This brought me into correspondence with the late Zecharias Frankel. I came into contact with the late Abraham Geiger by translating his *Judah Halevi* into literary English, which I published serially in *The Asmonean.* I had given Geiger's book to a poetically gifted lady whom I taught German, for practice in translation. She executed the assignment most elegantly but did not wish to appear before the public as its translator. The same talented lady wrote, on a manuscript which I had given her to read: "Truth and clarity, logically arranged, is classic style in all languages."

Shortly after the appearance of the first articles in *The Asmonean,* I began to write history. My intention was to write the complete history of Israel in four volumes: volume one, up to the destruction of Jerusalem [586 B.C.E.]; volume two, up to the second destruction [70 C.E.]; volume three, up to the discovery of America [1492]; and volume four, up to 1850, as may be seen in the general introduction to the *History of the Israelitish Nation.*[13] The first volume, of nearly 600 octavo pages, became quite bulky. I made the mistake of beginning my history with Abraham and of adding a great deal of exegesis. Rothek's [Rotteck] *History of the World* was my pattern in arranging my material. For each period there was to be an outline of the literary and cultural history of that time span, since the entire life of the people had to be portrayed within this framework. I entered into all the details of national life and attempted to show origin, causes, and results, and that took up a great deal of space.

My position, in English literature at least, was new and unique. I treated the biblical history as secular history, establishing in the preface that only God creates miracles; it follows that these fall into the category of theology, for history is limited to the acts of men. But then I made the mistake of explaining miracles from a rationalistic viewpoint, and this diluted my history with exegesis. Trade, finance, shipping, factories, customs, morals: all that which is a part of a people's life is as important an aspect of history as are religion, ritual, and liturgy. This was not only new, but also strange and surprising, in Jewish history, which had always been approached and presented as history of religion.

The most novel, however, was the democratic point of view from which I examined and depicted this part of history. Like the prophet Samuel, I viewed the introduction of the monarchy as a revolt against the Mosaic theocracy, which I could not consider as anything save democracy. I considered the division of the kingdom as the natural

consequence of the sin of a hereditary dynasty [of David]. Justice was on the side of Israel, not Judah. With the exception of Ahab, who was a weakling, the kings of Judah were even worse than the kings of Israel. The line of David was completely destroyed in Athaliah's time. We have no conclusive evidence for the Davidic descent of the boy Joash. Ahaz and Manasseh are responsible for the utter destruction of the nation. Joash murdered prophets; and the last Davidic descendant [Ishmael], the murderer of Gedaliah, completed the dissolution of the old kingdom. This approach deprived the monarchy of any justification, played up the dark side of the Davidic dynasty, and removed all support from the messianic expectation. No room was left for messianism, either in the Mosaic law or in history.

In the late autumn of 1853, two thousand copies of this bulky volume were distributed throughout the country. The storm that broke over me can easily be imagined. I was reviled, cursed, called a heretic, and literally destroyed in the same measure by Jews and by Christians, or rather, in the same measureless fashion. I was condemned, rejected, and damned. After three years of hard work, and in spite of all my conscientiousness and my "truth and clarity, logically arranged," of which I was aware, I stood there like a scolded street urchin who has stolen his playmate's lunch.

Only one man came to my defense: Dr. Arnold, the Baltimore physician, whose article . . . "The Philistines Are upon You, Samson!" appeared in the *Occident.* No one else spoke up to defend my honor. I have never been able to forget that cowardice. I could not answer my opponents, since none of them had discussed my book critically. Not a single mistake, no grammatical error, no careless conclusions, no mistake in source quotation, nothing of that sort was alleged against me. Heretic! heretic! heretic! was their entire battle cry, and no thinking person can answer that. I replied to only one person, my friend and countryman, Dr. [Bernard] Illowy. He attacked me in a letter in Hebrew, published in the *Occident,* probably thinking that I could not answer it. I wrote an answer in Hebrew, for him exclusively, and Isaac Leeser was decent enough to publish my letter, too, in the *Occident.*

One day I received a letter from Theodore Parker, the famous Unitarian preacher in Boston. He praised my book exceedingly, but added that it was still a bit too orthodox for him. It seems there are those who are even worse than I! Only a few days later, Horace Greeley wrote to me that his paper, the New York *Tribune,* was at my disposal, should I want to bring my defense before the public. He added that he was in complete agreement with me, and then paid me some more compliments. This sufficed me, for these two men were the only

Americans known to me who were familiar with German philosophical literature. Their judgment satisfied me, and the shouts of "heresy!" no longer embarrassed me. I have always been easily satisfied.

But my fellow-Jews, for whom I had really written, what did they say to this uproar? Within my community I did not have to fear, for close ties of brotherhood united us. But abroad, had I not lost all confidence, all influence, had I not written the death sentence of my sacred task and myself? That was the thought that tortured me. "What's this?" "A telegram." I read and read, motionless, as if struck by lightning. I read again; there it was, and so it was written: "In the congregational meeting of K. K. Bene Jeshurun of Cincinnati just concluded, you have just been elected unanimously as rabbi for life, on your own terms." Signed: Fischel, Secretary.

Well, the gentlemen with their shouts to the Jews of "heretic!" have accomplished nothing. The congregation, except for one or two members, has never seen me, never heard me. They know me only through press reports. It seems, then, that the heresy hunt has failed. Good night! We'll meet again in Cincinnati.[14]

VI

When a man who could do better turns journalist, the angels in heaven weep for his lost soul. His dear ones appear to him in his dreams, symbolically showing him how he will be attacked, torn ripped apart, and spattered with filth, while a grateful public is highly amused and applauds. "Nonsense," the stubborn man replies to this; "it's just hypersensitivity. No one with hair on his teeth will be bothered by anything of the sort." And the angel turns angry and shouts into the ear of the dreamer: "Go your way then, fickle fool! Become superficial, sink in the morass of journalism, become a slave of the times. Write on everything, without thinking, without investigating, as quickly as the typesetter demands it, and as tersely as space permits."

All this is quite true, but I had already been trapped, and my best friends demanded that I found an independent organ for Judaism. They had no money, and I had an excess of debts. It was impossible to find a publisher for such an undertaking, since Reform Judaism had not proved its right to exist. To realize the impossible is the passion of the adventurer, from which I had not been emancipated. Thus I went to work. Before I left Albany, I visited my friends in New York and acquainted them with my project. I received very encouraging promises, many of which were even kept, but money simply was not available at the time, at least not for me. I was amply supplied with

fine promises in Albany as well, where, because of my debts, I could not hope for money. I visited also Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo, and everywhere received encouraging promises, many of which became actualities. Thus did I arrive in Cincinnati, in April, 1854, with a great many promises.

Everything was favorable for me in Cincinnati. Bene Jeshurun Congregation was young, barely twelve years old. The members were young South Germans, mostly from Bavaria, and belonged to the better element that had been taught by Rabbis Levy, Rosenfeld, Aub, Stein, and Gutmann in Bavaria, and by Mayer and Frankfurter in Württemberg. Of course, everything was still officially Orthodox, but the leaders of Orthodoxy were weak and clumsy and never got in my way. In a short time they even became my friends, for they found that I was not as bad as was my reputation. The petty quarrels and jealousies between English and German Jews I had met and conquered earlier, through my acquaintance with Elias Mayer, Louis Abraham, and other English [-Jewish] leaders. The Germans of all congregations followed me immediately, and the Poles, or rather, the Poseners, then already aspired to be Germans, something they already were in thought and speech. I therefore was among friends.

I planned the publication of the new organ together with Louis Abraham. He and his brother-in-law, A. Louis, succeeded in getting Dr. Schmidt, the publisher of the *Republican,* to publish the paper for a year, after Mr. Louis had guaranteed to make good any losses incurred during the year. By the end of May the advance notices for the new organ, called *The Israelite,* appeared. By the middle of June enough subscriptions had been secured to cover the immediate costs of the undertaking. On the first of July the first number of *The Israelite* saw the light of day. The gripping motto, "Let there be light," appeared on its masthead, and it received a friendly reception in all cities, east, west, and south.

The *Occident* predicted a brief existence for the Reform organ. The *Asmonean* thought that there was not much to it. Christian organs found it ridiculous that *The Israelite* should assert that the core of Judaism was the brotherhood of man and a universal religion. The daily press contented itself with praising the patriotic sentiments of the Fourth of July speech. Thus did the Reform organ of expression enter the world, without fuss or fanfare.

For me, however, this was the beginning of a new era, for it radically changed my library. Henceforth I had to deliver a certain number of lines of manuscript to the typesetters, for I had given my oath to Gutenberg and Dr. Faust [the first two printers] not to wield the scissors, but to assume full responsibility. *The Israelite,* as earlier the

Asmonean, each week contained lead articles rationalizing the founding of Reform and spreading the Science of Judaism. These articles were not challenging, neither did they urge people to convert to Reform; they were didactic, intended to enlighten. Then there were the national and international news, poetry, and a story on the first and second pages. Everything had to be written or edited, except the contributions of Louis Abraham, who wrote a pure English. I thus had enough to write.

My lead articles were by no means tame, but they were carefully considered. I did not act hastily. Many friends of Reform, including the *Asmonean,* which was then in the hands of Dr. Lilienthal, expected that, now that I was completely on my own, I would act as did my neighbor, Karl Heinzen, with whom I shared an office. I would move mountains, break off granite blocks, and throw them about myself; I would thunder Reform and cast forth lightning-bolts of progress.

They felt cheated. I was never one to storm heaven; I no more wanted to change the world than I was weary of it. The schoolteacher still resided within me; I wanted only to teach, and that in my own fashion only. To me, Reform never was an end in itself; I considered it only a necessary means to clarify the teachings of Judaism, and to transfigure, exalt, and spread these teachings. I never assumed the role of a Reformer, and never called *The Israelite* a Reform organ; it was an organ for Judaism.

Success proved the merit of my method. From the very beginning, therefore, I not only had to write a great deal; I had to read a great deal more, and I had to study the public. Boredom never bothered me. I followed the same method in my pulpit lectures. I did not want to moralize or even to edify. The way to the heart appeared to me to be through reason, and Judaism seemed to me to be a religion of reason. I therefore turned to exposition and to enlightening, to the explaining of Judaism with and through Reform.

All this was very good, but poems and stories had been promised the public in the advance notices of *The Israelite.* Where could they be found, if in all of English literature nothing useful could be found? Except for Grace Aguilar, Penina Moise of Charleston was the only Jewish poetess here or in England. Both of them were already very much on the decline, and little could be expected of them. No one had entered the field of English Jewish fiction. My closer friends, who had urged me to found an independent organ, had promised me translations from the German and French, but nothing was there when it was needed. In this desperate situation, nothing remained but for me to do the work. God forgive me for writing ten short stories and historical novels in English and German, and later, for manufacturing

rhymed verses in both languages. I did not lend my name to them, called the author the "American Jewish Novelist," and to this day I would deny their authorship had Mr. Edward Bloch not published two of the short stories with my name on the title page, viz., *The First of the Maccabees* and *The Combat of the People, or Hillel and Herod,*[15] and did the hymnal of my congregation not mention my name. That was an entirely new world of books, which I had entered only out of dire need. And I had to keep writing novels until I was relieved by Dr. Nathan Mayer, M. M. Moos, and Lichtenberg in New York, by which time I had collected from the history of the Jews and sketched out material for twelve more Jewish historical novels. One part of my material I gave to some friends to work up, namely, "Menasseh ben Israel and His Times." No one dared to tackle it.

How did I write my novels? Each week I wrote a chapter exactly as long as the space in the paper permitted. Usually the manuscript went red hot from my pen to the printing press, often without being checked, and generally without even having been outlined in advance. Once I forgot the name of the sweet heroine and gave her a different one the following week. It became plain that I had given the good Oppenheimer [the hero] two sweethearts. One of them had to go, and so, in spite of all the efforts of the rabbi, Naphtali Cohen, I let the poor girl burn to death in the Frankfurt fire. That Friday, when this terrible chapter appeared, I spoiled the appetites of my dear lady readers for their fish. But Oppenheimer was saved; he had to marry only one girl.

Thus, to my regret, I became a journalist and novelist, changing from the high-spirited steed of the historian to the lean nag of the daily press, something I wouldn't, and probably shouldn't, have done had not circumstances forced me to do so. I am not responsible for this excursion.[16]

VII

In a village on the emperor's highway, near the Bavarian border, before 1848, one had the particular pleasure of seeing many wagons, mail coaches, and Austrian soldiers, all coming from or going to Mainz. The wagons and coaches angered only the dogs that chased them, barking and howling. The soldiers, however, were a plague to the poor inhabitants of this miserable village in the Bohemian Forest. These uninvited guests were billeted with the peasants, who had to give food and lodging to one or more soldiers, a task for which they were repaid with brutalities and often with a slap in the face. The peasant was helpless and powerless, while the soldier had his rifle,

bayonet, or saber, and so the peasant had to honor the imperial uniform, just as in Germany, lest he offend the emperor. Already at that time an insult to the crown was a capital offense, which was then already construed to include the imperial coat and undercoat, and the peasant was just as stupid as the soldier was coarse and arrogant, while possessed of no more reason than the peasant.

The mayor, who was the judge and pasha of the village, fared worst of all. He had the honor of receiving, in advance, orders demanding room and board for a certain number of soldiers, horses, dogs, and personal attendants for a certain day. Should those billeted find things not to their liking, he was the more exposed to their mistreatments and brutalities. Although no one was ever killed for insulting the uniform, a large number of kicks were distributed.

It happened in that village that a lieutenant was quartered in the mayor's home, and neither the soup nor the whiskey was to his liking. The dolt in the imperial coat became furious and started to rail and shout in Bohemian, whereof the mayor could not understand a word, which angered the soldier even more. He cursed in broken German, the children laughed at him, and he became very angry. He drew his saber, waved it in the mayor's face, and drove the wife and children out of the house. The mayor stood there, rigid with fear, and whimpered: "Gracious sir, I am the mayor, and I can't stand for that sort of treatment." The lieutenant blustered on and continued cursing until he had somewhat cooled off. Then, pityingly, he asked the man how much salary his office brought him. "Not a kreutzer," was the answer. "Then why, in the devil's name, are you mayor?" "Well, kind sir, you see, it's really for the bit of honor," the mayor smirked. "Well," [said the soldier] "I guess you had enough of it this time!"

I have just remembered this story . . . because I recall the publication of *The Israelite,* the first year of which, apart from the work I put into it, cost me $600. I had to pay this in cash to Dr. Schmidt, out of my own pocket. In return, I had "the bit of honor" to be an editor, to sit with Karl Heinzen in an office, to drink beer with [Emil] Klaubrecht, and to argue with [Frederick] Hassaurek. These men were German-American leaders. All of them were prophets of salvation, who did not respect me just for my black coat, although they and their followers were strongly atheistic and anti-clerical.

Practical people, when they have lost money in an enterprise, give it up or limit their expenditures. But I did not belong to that group of reasonable people and did just the opposite. Because I had lost money, I added a German supplement in the second year, which I named *Die Deborah.* I also added my brother-in-law, Edward Bloch, as a business partner, so that I would not be alone in losing money in

the coming year. Thus was founded Bloch & Co., printers and publishers, the first Hebrew printing firm west of the Atlantic seacoast cities, with a *deficit* of six hundred dollars and two partners rich in imagination.

In the field of writing, I could expect collaborators in Rabbis Lilienthal, Kalisch, and Rothenheim. All of them had poetic talents, although Rothenheim could write in German only. Thus I had enough time left for the defunct Zion College, and could work on it and on the Cleveland Conference [of 1855] without neglecting the two papers. With the Cleveland Conference, however, my world of books again changed considerably, and once more against my will. Man is not what he eats, as Buechner asserts; he is what circumstances and conditions make of him. I was not forced into a new field by the violent polemics which followed the Cleveland Conference. I left all polemics to the above three rabbis. My sole contribution to the long literary war was but one completely objective lead article, wherein I defended talmudic morals, as I had previously done against non-Jewish opponents.

What forced me to change my world of books was my election as chairman of a three-man committee which was to formulate and submit to a forthcoming synod a *Minhag America* ["The American Ritual"], a new liturgy with a modern ritual suitable for America. The synod never convened, but the *Minhag America* was developed, printed, and introduced in about one hundred congregations. [This was the most widely used Reform prayer book before the adoption of *The Union Prayerbook* in the early 1890's by the Central Conference of American Rabbis.]

While the polemical storm outside raged furiously, the three of us, Kalisch, Rothenheim, and Wise, were at work together almost every evening, engaged in this task. First we determined how much Hebrew we would use for the annual cycle of the prayers. The services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, however, were not touched. Nothing new was created; the old was shortened, in consideration of the length of the services. The *piutim* ["liturgical poems"] were, of course, discarded; everything cabbalistic and everything dealing with the sacrificial cult, the messiah, the return to Palestine, and the prayers for the heads of the Babylonian academies, as well as all laments about persecutions, were simply eliminated and were replaced by modern concepts. We had to sacrifice everything related to throne, crown, and dynasty to the land of freedom, and lifted the narrow nationalism as much as possible to universalism. Thus, in the Eighteen Benedictions . . . "redeemer" was changed to . . . "redemption" and . . . "loving deeds of our fathers" became . . . "covenant of our fathers." The *teka* [prayer for the return of Israel to Palestine] became the prayer for

the deliverance of all nations and their brotherhood. In the *Alenu* [Adoration] the fourth [universalistic] sentence replaced the second [particularistic] one. That which did not conflict with basic principles remained unchanged, and we kept the old form.

Now the book had to be provided with a free translation into German and English, so that, as had been planned, congregations could hold services in one of the three languages [English, German, or Hebrew]. I could, with an easy conscience, leave the German to Messrs. Kalisch and Rothenheim, and they did it quite well. The English I had to do myself. Thus did I enter a new world of books, to which I brought little knowledge and less practice.

When it became necessary, in response to congregational pressure, to publish the second part, for New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement, Kalisch procrastinated and Rothenheim was no longer able to work. I had to undertake the task by myself. The Hebrew text was exactly determined, according to the above principles. I had to rewrite, in its entirety, only the Hebrew *Abodah* [the part dealing with the old sacrificial system], for the mention of the sacrificial cult had to be discarded. But I could translate into English only. The German had to be left out, with the exception of a few sections I had translated earlier, such as the introduction to and conclusion of the evening service of the New Year, the memorial service on the evening preceding the Day of Atonement, and a few hymns. I did not want to translate into two languages. The congregations, however, seemed quite satisfied with this second part.

However, a third and final section had been promised to the public: hymns, psalms, and prayers, in English and German, for alternate use in worship and for other ritual acts. The plan had long been known. Several selections, for the introduction to services, for the conclusion of worship on evenings, mornings, sabbaths, and feasts, and for the taking out and returning of the Torah were to appear in the book, as well as songs before and after the sermon, for Chanukah and Purim; and rituals for confirmation, burial, synagogue dedication, cornerstone laying, and also school songs.

When I was ready to start this work, to keep faith with the public, my hair rose up straight, although it was quite long and unkempt. Rhyme, write poetry? I? And in two languages! To steal and plagiarize went against my nature and against the honor of Israel. The nations sing the songs of Zion, but we did not borrow from them. The Trinitarians can't be trusted [for their songs are often Christological], and the Unitarians are themselves poor in original contributions. Even so, I went to work, for I had to. How I moved about in this new world of books, I will relate soon.[17]

[VII A]

Concerning My World of Books

"Poets are born, not made," the poets assert, not because the prophet Jeremiah said so, but to make excuses for their poor poetry: "I can't help it if you don't like my poetry; God is to blame!" It is certain that poets are not trained, since even without Blumauer, Heine, and Byron, there are many untrained sons of the muses who have composed pretty nice poems. We are therefore forced to conclude that there are two kinds of poetic souls: (1) those who have to write because they are born for this, and (2) those who rhyme because necessity drives them. After all, children are born, people marry, men die; and all that has to be rhymed in and out of the world. The boots of an imaginative youth are torn; he writes a poem and pays the cobbler. A man or a woman is in love—and they create verses as quickly and roundly as the baker makes matzos. Everyone can rhyme; why not I?

These and similar reflections gave me the courage to undertake the work on the third part of the *Minhag America*.[18] Walking alone in the dark forest, beset by fears and anxiety, one whistles a gay melody to deceive oneself. Conscious of the fact that I was not born to be a poet, I began the work as I had formerly begun to write novels. (Interruption! Having written this, I left the house for a little while, went into the street, fell flat on my face, and—no more writing for the time being. As soon as possible, the continuation will follow.)[19]

VIII

What I wrote for the New Year and for the Day of Atonement breathes forth a completely different spirit and met with more recognition. The cause of this, it seemed to me, was that I approached the sanctification of these holidays in a different, far more joyous manner than did the old prayer books. The depressing, dark, crushing aspects retreated into the background. . . .

My greatest success, I am told, is my memorial service. On the eve of the Day of Atonement I replaced the many Hebrew prayers and songs in the old *machzor* ["holiday prayerbook"] . . . with the memorial service. It begins with a meditation in three parts, appropriate to the day and the occasion. It closes with the simple, sigh-like words, repeated by the choir: "What is man, O Almighty, what is man?" Then follows the song, "Immortality." . . . Now follows the silent meditation, the actual *Mazkir Neshamoth* [commemoration of the dead]. A holy silence reigns in the light-filled temple. Then a mighty choir

intones: "Thy dead live. . . . " The impression is powerful; all doubts disappear, a holy sense of consecration transfigures the entire congregation.

This is followed by the service for the members of the congregation who died during the past year, as well as for all men and women of special importance, regardless of their religion or their place of origin, who departed from the earth during the past year, and then by the *Alenu* [closing prayer] and the *kaddish* [prayer for the dead] for all by all the congregation.

I still detest long prayers, ceremonies, and hymns, particularly the last, because they repeat a boring, monotonous melody tiresomely. I therefore wrote a number of short hymns and prayers. . . .[20]

IX

"The students of the wise have no rest either in this world or in the next," the old book (*tractate Berachoth* [in the Talmud]) tells us. It never occurred to me to be one of those students. My learned opponents speedily disabused me of any little self-esteem I may have had. And yet—even today I am angry because of it—I could never find peace in this life. Fate threw me from one fight into the next, from one work to another, and granted me no hours of relaxation. I am sure there must be, like myself, many other badly paid lackeys of Providence, who do not conceive of themselves as students of the wise [scholars]. I call them as witnesses against the old scholar, to prove that the old man didn't know what he was talking about. He should have said: "There are court jesters of Providence who never find peace." For we restless idealists are none other than the court jesters of Providence, who even pay for their own fools' caps. And still, theirs is not the worst lot, for they expect no reward, no gratitude. Worst off are the day-laborers of Providence when they have not received their daily wage for services rendered. They whine the loudest, as, for example, the Neo-Orthodox pious hypocrites in the "Far East." [Some New York Jews? Followers of Samson Raphael Hirsch in Europe?]

But I did not want to talk about that at all. I wanted only to tell how, having barely finished the work on the *Minhag America,* and the poor publisher Bloch having thrown his money to the wind, I was forced to return to my world of books. Questions from Christians kept pouring in, as to what this so-called Reform Judaism might be, and there was nothing in English which could answer those questions, in some measure, in a clear and concise fashion.

The poverty of American Judaism in apologetic literature was disgraceful (England was no better), but even more disgraceful and im-

poverished was Reform Judaism. Except for that which had reached the public through *The Israelite* and a few English sermons published elsewhere (and that wasn't much), there wasn't a thing. Letters, regardless of how many were written, could not fill the need. Moreover, there were the teachers who wanted to give religious instruction in English and from a Reform position. Among these were the teachers in my congregational school, who wanted, and, as they said, needed, a manual. Worst of all were the frequent reproaches by our opponents, to the effect that only the Reformers desired to destroy Judaism, that only they preached and talked about what not to do, what not to believe, that only they offered a negative program and had nothing positive.

I pleaded with several friends, who I knew could write in English, to undertake the work; I even offered some of them an outline of the work. No one would touch it. To this day I am ashamed when I think of how I shirked my tasks in those days. Everyone thought the duties of his office occupied him completely. Every teacher, like every congregation, considered himself a secluded isle unto himself, connected with the rest of the world in some watery fashion only.

A rabbi may not curse; I, too, could but swallow my anger. Whether or not I did then and often later secretly curse the lack of community spirit and willingness to work is something I really cannot remember.

For better or worse, therefore, I had to go to work, to write a short booklet which would cover the subject. A short booklet which would still cover the subject: that was the worst of the task. It is much easier to write a long book than a short one. My friend in Paris, with whom I corresponded, once wrote a rather long letter. At the end was a postscript: "I beg your pardon, but I really had no time to write a short letter."

The art of defining, short and pointed, was, to my mind, best understood by Spinoza. I imitated him the best I could and thus I succeeded, after a great many erasures, in writing a short booklet. Here are a few examples:

> God is the cause of all being, the source of life, of love, and of reason, the ruler and preserver of all.
>
> God's love is revealed to us in the eternal rule of his justice and holiness.
>
> Man is a son of God, endowed with attributes similar to God.
>
> Through the teachings of God, humanity is delivered from its sins and mistakes and from their evil consequences, and is united

in truth, freedom, justice, and love, and formed into one brotherhood.

God is almighty. He is the eternally active First Cause in all creation.

God is all-wise; all possible consequences of all causes are known to him.

God is omniscient, because he is almighty and all-wise.

God is holy; all moral perfection is united in him; etc.

The booklet has these peculiar features: each sentence is biblically supported by a proof text and by a reference to other texts. It is a portrayal of biblical Judaism in its entirety. The Talmud is neither used nor quoted, except in the preface, where the Talmud, the New Testament, and the Koran are referred to as three different expositions of the Holy Scripture.

> The foundation of Judaism is the threefold covenant of God: with humanity (Adam and Noah), with the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), and with Israel. The Sinaitic revelation contains the conditions which have to be met. The laws and teachings of the Sinaitic revelation are unchangeable, as are all other laws in principle, if they derive from the Sinaitic law. All laws, ordinances, regulations, commands, etc., which are not grounded in the Sinaitic principles are not included in the covenant laws and are not valid for eternity. This is the basis of our teachings on obligations, ceremonials, and holidays (except for the rabbinic [post-biblical] holidays), and the worship service.

This was the first time that Reform Judaism appeared to the world completely and basically founded upon the Bible. Christian friends said that this was a philosophy of religion. Our Orthodox thought that the doctrinal theology was strictly Orthodox, the moral theology and ceremonial teachings ultra-radical. The press was silent, and this time the silence seemed significant, although a few years later Rabbi Mayer, of Hartford, published an Orthodox textbook in the same form and closely following my definitions.

My booklet was called *The Essence of Judaism*.[21] But even before the end of the first year, I had to rework it into a catechism, entitled *Judaism, Its Doctrines and Duties*.[22] It was printed by a stereotype method, and, from that day on, not a word in it was changed, although it received a nation-wide distribution of many thousands of copies, and even today [1897] it is used in the schools, as well as by Christians eager for knowledge. During this large span of time a great number of catechisms have appeared here; but none of them could replace this little booklet.

I went to work under compulsion, and, as I have said, it cost me no little trouble to put out this little booklet. But I have never regretted it, even though on this, as on previous occasions, silence surrounded me. After all, I had the knowledge of having been the first to base Reform Judaism on the Bible and to define its forms. The influence on the development of American Judaism which this little book exercised is a memory I shall never forget.[23]

X

Even today I cannot understand how this patient Bohemian child of Jews [I, Isaac M. Wise] managed to fight and argue with the whole world, without being forced to abandon his narrow views on the world and on man. The most bitter need could not budge me from my limited position.

Only once, as a schoolboy of tender age, did I dare to defy the world, and I was gruffly scolded. A rich butcher lived in our neighborhood. His son Peter, who was a few years older than I, found pleasure in beating Jewish children. His allies were many, and they were more pugnacious than the Jewish children. One day we met outside the village. Peter attacked me, stick in hand, and was ready to rain blows upon me. Like Moses in Egypt, I looked about, and, perceiving that no one saw me, I wrested the stick from his hand, and Peter got a good thrashing. Bawling, he rushed home and told his mother exactly how, when, and where he was beaten. Enraged, his mother stormed into our house, even before I returned (filled with guilt, I was afraid to come home), and recounted to my blessed father the misdeed of his son. My good father, a completely humble imperial-royal-Bohemian protected-Jew [a second-class citizen] and schoolmaster, was horrified at the misdeed of his son and promised the butcher's wife that I would be properly punished as soon as I got home.

I came home and was called to account. "Don't you realize, you bad boy," said my dear father, "that we mustn't create any *rishus* ['prejudice']? Don't you know that we are in *golus* ['exile']?" I did not quite understand the word *golus;* I thought it meant that we were to be beaten, and became defiant. I answered my father: "I've been in *golus* long enough. Let Peter be in *golus* from now on. If I catch him again, he'll be beaten!" Although my father had to laugh at my misunderstanding, he continued to preach to me regarding the morals of *golus*. Finally, he proved to me from the Talmud that those who are beaten and do not fight back are the favorites of God, shining with the splendor of the sun at its fullest. I had the greatest of respect for the Talmud, and the argument convinced me that I must never again

thrash Peter. Hence I must indeed have been a very patient Bohemian Jewish child, but still I subsequently fought and argued with the whole world, even if only with the pen. How did that happen? Circumstances determine the man. Every man must do what his surroundings force upon him.

On the thorny path of a Jewish teacher there was many a stumbling block which I could not bypass. I had to remove it, and that puts calluses on soft hands. When I had to sink or swim in the floods of Reform, I encountered stumbling blocks, boulders, and floes that repulsed me and often hurt severely. On the one side was Orthodoxy; on the other, ice-cold indifference; next to both, thoughtless radicalism. They fought me at every step; I had to fight back, and courage grows with the battle. The long-suffering Bohemian youth became a ruffian, who gave a sound thrashing to every Peter who, stick in hand, dared to attack him. Circumstances forced him to this.

I have always treated the Christian religion and its founder with appropriate respect, not only because I had so many dear friends, honored teachers, and able allies within Christianity, but also because I understood and appreciated the civilizing work of Christianity. At the time when Dias [Benjamin Dias Fernandes], [Selig] Newman, [Isaac] Leeser [Jewish apologists], and others polemized against Christianity, using their biblical approach, Kalisch, Schlesinger, and I were also drawn into this conflict, but I confined myself to dogmas, and my polemics were exclusively philosophic. This did not alienate me from my opponents, as we never had anything unpleasant to say to each other. Where reason speaks rationally, malice cannot exist.

It was not until the arrival of Christian missionaries from England, mostly baptized Jews in the pay of the English conversion society, that the tone changed, first among the Christians, then also with me, who was considered the representative of Judaism. First, the missionaries appeared with soft and pitiful pleas concerning the persecuted, downtrodden, conversion-hungry Jews, who had to be saved. That evoked sympathy among the people and their preachers, who knew the Jew and Judaism from hearsay only, or, in rare cases, from the Bible and from Flavius Josephus. For a while this worked nicely; the missionaries received the money, and the preachers always had a ready subject on hand: "the poor Jews!"

When this theme lost its appeal and the influx of money decreased, the missionaries adopted another tone. They painted Judaism as despicable, mocked Jewish customs and ceremonies, and deplored the ignorance of the Jews. "The Jew hates Jesus and Christianity because he does not know the New Testament!" "We must have money to teach the New Testament to the Jew; then he will gladly be chris-

New York Convention and Visitors Bureau

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After 300 Years

tened!" That attracted the people for a while and gave the pulpit a new slant, so that each Sunday every little cleric and his female devotees had something unpleasant to say about Jews or about Catholics. This tone permeated even the literature, and the rabbis could not answer in English. Hence I was conscripted for the battle. Against my wishes, against my aesthetic inclination, in disregard of my pecuniary and moral interests, I had to appear in the public arena as an author against Christianity.

My plan of battle never changed. It consisted of these basic rules:

1. To change the scene of battle to Egypt, in the land of the enemy; always to wage an offensive, rather than to fight a defensive, war.

2. To let nothing move me from my broad, liberal, humane, and independent position, no matter how I was treated, or condemned, or ignored by the critical or non-critical world.

3. To discuss all questions in a purely objective and factual manner, as clearly and concisely as possible, and staying within the boundaries of the argument, without any mockery, sarcasm, bad jokes, scorn, or empty play on words.

With the exception of hasty newspaper articles, often written in the heat of the moment, I believe that I have followed this plan of battle consistently, particularly in the fight against dogmatic Christianity, wherein I found more of St. Augustine than of Jesus.

I opened my campaign with the translation of the second part of [G. A.] Wislicenus' work on the New Testament, which I published serially in *The Israelite,* as a temporary answer to the accusation of Jewish ignorance . . . . Then I published at short intervals:

1. *The Origin of Christianity, and a Commentary to the Acts of the Apostles* [1868], a critical investigation of this book with the aid of the rabbinic sources.[24] In this [Wise's] book there first appeared the claimed identity of Paul as the rabbinic Acher [Elisha ben Abuyah].

2. The origin of Christianity, in three lectures on Jesus, the Apostles, and Paul, which I presented to the larger public in most of the big cities of the country [*Three Lectures on the Origin of Christianity,* 1873].

3. *The Martyrdom of Jesus of Nazareth* [1874], a critical treatment on the last chapters of the gospels, and compared with the rabbinic sources.[25]

4. Similarities and dissimilarities in the teachings of Judaism and Christianity [*Judaism and Christianity, Their Agreements and Disagreements,* 1883], a criticism of dogmas.[26]

5. A protest of Judaism against Christology and the conversion

mania [*A Defense of Judaism Versus Proselytizing Christianity,* 1889].

I could not complete a work on the life of Jesus, part of which appeared serially in the *Am.[erican] Israelite,* since once more surrounding circumstances forced me into another field of literature.

The discussion of that aspect of my world of books I will reserve for the coming week. I wrote until the expression, "The Jews do not know the New Testament," was dead. I exploded the notion that "The Jews hate Jesus and Christianity." To the Jews I brought a milder, purer, and more conciliatory view on Christ and Christianity, the while I induced all of liberal Christianity to adopt a friendly and brotherly attitude towards Judaism. Perhaps I owe all this more to my plan of battle than to the whole work itself. I offended no one, insulted nobody, left the sacred unprofaned, and cheerfully recognized every truth. And I stopped the missionaries, so that outside of New York they could accomplish nothing with the immigrants.[27]

X [*sic*]

God's police in uniform, mostly Jews converted in England in consideration of money and fine words, and then sent to America on a soul-hunt, were no problem for me. I stopped them from pursuing their task in any part of the country. For many years no missionary has succeeded in bringing an American Israelite to baptism. The converts in New York are all immigrants from the European East. The part played by the world of my books in this connection will never be established, for no one will undertake the task of studying the pertinent contemporaneous [Christian] literature, to portray truthfully this chapter in our cultural history. One would have to work through the relevant Christian literature in order to determine how, year after year, it became more tolerant and fair-minded towards Judaism. The contemporaneous Jewish literature could be discarded unread, for no trace of this conflict can be found in it. The Jews remained completely neutral, which was the best they could do.

Even while this battle was going on, Judaism had to face another enemy, one which attacked it even more violently: that was atheism, which later rebaptized itself as agnosticism. Our contemporary literature is silent on this score, too. No trace can be found in it of the fact that the cultured classes of its time were crisscrossed by the poisonous arrows of atheism. Without saying a word, as if dumb and blind, they walked past this dangerous, threatening cliff. I felt alone, lonely, deserted, without support in my own camp. But I could not reject the assignment, at least to try to attack this Goliath.

This was not so easy as the battle with the missionaries. There I

was much better equipped than my opponents. Here, however, I had to face all of the natural sciences. On the one hand, there was materialism in the form of the atom theory, the complete denial of the indwelling spirit in man and in nature. In educated circles, in literature, and in the pulpit, words such as God, immortality of the soul, or soul, spirit, teleology, theology, life-force, metaphysics, or philosophy were scrupulously avoided; that was the blind faith of the peasant.

On the other hand, Darwinism reared its head, as it did in Germany, where it was driven to its ultimate consequences, and in England, where it philosophized itself into the Unknowable, exalting or debasing itself to the highest point of agnosticism, ultimately culminating in Schopenhauer's pessimism, in Hartmann's Unconscious, and in Dühring's phantasies. A gaping public gathered around these monuments, babbling atheism in every nook and cranny.

Of course, these people knew precious little of the natural sciences which were supposed to provide the foundation for these philosophic formations, and of the total picture they understood still less. But that did not prevent them from gaping and babbling, each repeating the other's words, dipping into atheism until they had convinced themselves that all intelligent men were atheists, although many of these soft-pedalled their beliefs, but only in order to be exalted by the stupid people. They often claimed that Dr. Wise, whom they recognized as the representative of liberalism, was also an atheist, who was unable to say so publicly since he would lose the support of his Jews.

This spirit of the times had to be opposed, but in our circles not a single voice was raised which seemed to accept the challenge. The preachers preached in their old ways, the journalists followed the old patterns, and beyond that there was no literature. Then something happened to me, as it did to many others who are aware of their shortcomings. I felt the need, I felt the ineffable compulsion to speak up strongly, but I was keenly aware of my ignorance in the new natural sciences. In our day we learned little of them in school, and once only, for a little while, in Albany, did I look a bit more closely into the face of nature. I was well aware of my weakness. One cannot enter into battle with people by means of the Bible, Talmud, history, and philosophy; they don't understand anything of this; and teachers and students cannot be convinced with them. There I stood, like Moses before the burning bush.

It was Purim. I had stayed in the city overnight, to participate in the evening and morning services. A heavy storm raged over town and country that night, uprooting trees along the highway, and the logs blocked the road. A number of workers were occupied in removing them. They looked hot, but I was freezing in the carriage. There I

learned that the heaviest blocks can be put out of the way if one has the right kind of strength for the task, and that, if the work is strenuous enough, one does not freeze, however cold it may be. After passing several obstacles, I finally reached my home. The first thing I did was to compile a list of books that I wanted to read, and sent it to the bookstore. Then I gathered together everything in my library which dealt with the natural sciences. I, too, can work; I can remove the blocks from the way, and I'll certainly get hot doing it.

For quite a long period of time, whenever I happened to be free from my official duties, I devoted myself to this study. I read, visited several laboratories, made my own experiments, thought, investigated, and formed hypotheses in competition with Buechner, Vogt, Haeckel, Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, and Spencer. Half the night, or even entire winter nights, I sat at my desk. Whole nights? Yes, whole nights. The most painful misfortune of my life occurred to me in those days: pain, a nameless sorrow, embittered every pleasure of life and would not let me sleep at night. There I sat, whole nights long, by my lamp, immersed myself in the sciences, and deadened my pain with fatiguing intellectual work. In the dedication and the closing words of my book, *The Cosmic God,* I revealed some of this to my readers.[28]

In time I achieved a certain insight into the various branches of the natural sciences to which I had paid particular attention. But a considerable amount of time was still needed to connect the results thus won with earlier studies to form a whole, and to turn them into evidence supporting my final aim.

Having completed the sweating-cure of this long process, I felt sufficiently warmed, strengthened, and encouraged to turn to my pen for the fifth time, to try to fashion a firm foundation in opposition to the deviating spirit of the time. Again I did this not because I wanted to, but because I had to, not to discover the Golden Fleece, but to follow the drive of my heart: my conviction, which I have never deserted. That my convictions were tantamount to the teachings of Judaism was, of course, no coincidence; but in the writing of the book, it was nevertheless coincidental, for I had emancipated myself from all preconceptions (as much as it is possible to do this), before I wrote the first line, and I was strongly determined to write and to assert only that which, by the strict logic of the inductive method, was obtained from the results of the sciences.

Thus was created the 181-page book, *The Cosmic God, A Fundamental Philosophy, in Popular Lectures,* in the year 1876, containing a so-called accounting with the sciences, leading to the conclusion that the true recognition of God emerges clearly, plainly, and certainly from the results of science, a concept of God which is in full

accord with Judaism, of God who reveals himself in world history as the Creator and Guide of the world, and as exalted moral Ideal.

On twenty-two Friday evenings of the winter 1875-76 the twenty-two chapters were presented as independent lectures before a large public, at least half of which consisted of persons with some atheistic leanings. The book achieved its goal; from that time on we were no longer plagued by atheism. To the men of science it proved that the theistic world-view is justified. From the heights of science, as from the top of Mount Sinai, one can, without being a split personality, be a believer in and worshipper of God, living and moving in faith, at the peak of morality, in confidence and hope.[29]

XI

No thunder of cannon, no ringing of bells announced to the world, which cared little enough, the great event when, in October, 1875, the Hebrew Union College opened at Bene Israel Temple in Cincinnati, one story below the surface of the earth. There sat the wise men of Israel, namely, the good old teacher Solomon Eppinger and fourteen noisy boys, most of whom had come only to kill time and at the command of their parents. Four of them wanted to study; ten wanted to make noise.

Since Mr. Eppinger could not manage the class by himself, the exalted president [Rabbi Wise] had to condescend to become a schoolmaster and to share the joys and sorrows of a schoolteacher with good old Eppinger. The class was divided into two sections. The president and the faculty alternately took each group. No one who failed to see the embryonic college can imagine how ridiculous was this little hole-in-the-wall of a school, in its not-too-bright cellar, carrying the pompous name of a college. Fortunately, we did not have to be ashamed in front of visitors, for none came. Also, no book was stolen, since each evening the whole library was locked up in a two-and-one-half-foot box, not because of thieves, but because of mice.

What we lacked most of all was English textbooks [on Judaism], and the students did not understand German [in which language there were many books on Jewish subjects]. No useful Hebrew grammar, no Jewish history, nothing except the English Bible, was available. We had to help ourselves. The grammar was dictated, and Josephus replaced the history. But when we got to the Talmud, we were in a bad way. Things went from bad to worse when we reached Maimonides. Nothing had been prepared in English. We had to create a new English to make these old writings available to our students. Never before had the Talmud been translated into English anywhere

for the students; everywhere the old Polish-German jargon [Yiddish] prevailed. After much hesitation and delay, although overwhelmed by work, I once more had to take up my pen. I long rebelled against it, but it had to be, for no one was interested in us (except for our opponents, who attacked or mocked us), and again I went to work.

I began by translating haggadic [non-legal] portions of the Talmud, and selections from the [Maimonidean] *Sepher Hammada, Moreh Nebuchim,* and other philosophical writings. But since I had to have the translations for the classes, I could make a sufficient supply of duplicate copies only by printing them each week in *The Israelite* (as I did later with the [discussion of the] *Massorah* and the theological lectures as well), so that every student could have a copy at hand. That was a rewarding task for me. First of all, the students rapidly busied themselves with the difficult task of translating these selections into English; secondly, I was criticized mercilessly and learned from this that haste makes waste; and thirdly, the readers of *The Israelite* complained about the unreadable material. This gave me the proud consciousness that my writings were even read, something of which few religious periodicals could then boast. It did not stop me from engaging in this profitable business as long as it was needed.

Meanwhile, I worked on a textbook on history from 536 B.C.E. to 70 C.E., and had it printed at my own expense. The book is entitled *History of the Hebrews' Second Commonwealth.*[30] Actually, it is the second part of my *History of the Israelitish Nation,* which was published in 1854, but I had to change the form, since this book was primarily required as a textbook on history. I made critical use of the investigations of Jost, Graetz, Frankel, Herzfeld, Zunz, Geiger, Rapaport, Loew, Weiss, Bruell, Salvador, Raphael [Raphall], Prideaux, Munk, and others, together with the findings of geographers and numismaticians. To all this I added my own researches, particularly those on the origin of Christianity, and scattered notes in the Talmud. The material was digested in a strictly logical and pragmatic manner, and condensed into short paragraphs to avoid a heavy volume. I succeeded in presenting a history of six centuries clearly and completely in this thin volume, although I devoted much space to literature and culture.

I now had an exhaustive and complete textbook for this important period of history, and that was all that I wanted. It never occurred to me to consider whether or not anyone would read or buy the book. Nevertheless, the critics got hold of it — how, I do not know — and did their best to destroy it, but they did not succeed. One was highly incensed that I translated *pammalya shel maalah* as "the family on high," and called this a profanation of the Holy One. A second one

felt hurt because I depicted Agrippa I as a law-abiding king, and there were dozens of similar trifles. Best of all, however, was the contention of a native-born Jew who did not like my English. I did not laugh, neither was I angry at the reviewers; but I have learned to despise them and, because of their weaknesses, to pity them, and I did not reply. The book has gone through several editions, and will long remain as a textbook.

Now I had a period of rest and I did not have to write a book. Dr. [Moses] Mielziner had relieved me. At the college I could use my earlier books and take from *The Israelite* what I had put into it for that purpose. I did not want to publish sermons and other lectures, since most of them had already been distributed by the press. Then came the Pentateuch or Hexateuch criticism and it aroused me once again. When the scholars and half-scholars had gone so far as to portray the Books of Moses as a late creation and as a patchwork, stitched together by deceitful priests, and as to deny the existence of Moses, and to explain all biblical history down to David, or even later, as myth, and to declare all of biblical Judaism to be a product of the Babylonians and Aryans [Persians], I was seized with fear for historical Judaism on the one hand, and on the other hand I had to speak against this to the students of the college.

If the Pentateuch was a lie on which all of historical Judaism based itself, then all our great spirits were either deceived deceivers or despicable hypocrites. If this is so, why is there Judaism in the nineteenth century? Why all the sacrifices offered on the altar of our faith, so often with bleeding hearts, not only by our fathers, but also by us? If this is so, whence do I know that there is an only, unique, and eternal God, who is merciful, just, loving, and true? Whence do I know that justice, righteousness, and virtue are what we claim them to be? Whence do I know that there are a moral order of the universe and immortality, when all the world has gone off into materialism, all philosophy into the unconscious and into agnosticism?

Like Koheleth [Ecclesiastes], I was almost forced into despair. I was pushed to the very edge of the abyss of pessimism, of nihilism, from which suicide alone can free one. I had to speak, I had to write again, once again pushed and forced by tormenting circumstances. It took a long time for me to work through the constantly growing critical literature. It took me even longer to oppose the apparatus [of biblical criticism], rich in hypotheses and contradictions, with a system [of my own]. When I had found out how to confront the documentary hypothesis with a priori proofs, I went to my desk and produced the introduction to the Holy Writ under the title *Pronaos to Holy Writ*,[31] which is still [1897] used as a textbook at the Hebrew

Union College. Since I am still in a unique position in relation to this book, I shall have to give more information about it, which shall be done soon.[32]

XII

The year 1889 brought to us American rabbis a new institution: an association of rabbis, exclusively for them and independent of the whole world. The minutes tell us that thirty rabbis, who were present in the city of Detroit as delegates of congregations to the council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, formed the Central Conference of American Rabbis. It is true that I had written, and ordered to be printed, the first draft, but it was presented to the pre-convention group anonymously. Dr. Philipson assumed the chair, Dr. Berkowitz acted as secretary, and the constituent committee appointed by the convention consisted of Drs. Mayer, Mielziner, Sale, Berkowitz, and Aaron. My name was not mentioned at all, and in the first draft the late Dr. S. Adler, of New York, was nominated for the presidency.

I was happy that I was going to escape this time without any further responsibilities. I had passed my seventieth year and had no desire to enter upon new obligations. My colleagues, however, were of a different opinion. Once the conference was organized and proceeded to the election of officers, Dr. S. Adler was elected honorary president, and, against my will, the presidency was placed upon my shoulders. "In spite of his strenuous protests," the minutes read, "the unanimous sentiment was in favor of Dr. Isaac M. Wise, of Cincinnati, as president." I could not escape, although this seemed to be a new burden for me.

I made the job easy for myself: I let the gentlemen of the conference do everything while I learned to be silent in the chair. With the exception of the opening speech I did only one thing, and that was the commission's report on the abolition of circumcision for proselytes, which was approved by the Conference in New York on July 8, 1892. The report took up twenty-six pages in the yearbook, and I had to work it out by myself, since my dear colleagues Moses and Landsberg were in Europe at that time.

But matters soon changed. The Conference decided that this body would have to represent Judaism at the religious congress of the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. That stirred me greatly and woke me from my lethargy. I well knew that we had enough strength to do justice to the task. But I was not ignorant of the extent to which opinions differed among us. It was to be feared that, instead of

Judaism, we would present a hybrid before the world. That had to be prevented at any price, and it was at least in the main stopped by deciding on a program of what was not to be discussed, and on who was to work on the suggested themes. Since we, that is to say the commission, knew our people well, the apportionment of the themes worked out quite well, as may be seen from the collected addresses in the book, *Judaism at the World's Parliament of Religions.*

With brotherly love the commission overwhelmed me with work. It entrusted me with three subjects: "The Theology of Judaism," "The Ethics of Judaism," and "The Bibliography of the Jewish Periodical Press." The last mentioned, despite the help of Dr. Louis Grossmann, I could not cover completely. For the two other works, which filled twenty-five pages of the above book, I hold myself responsible. The difficulty I had to consider in this work lay not in the material; that was easy and readily at hand, since I had moved in this atmosphere for fifty years, and for the last eighteen I had taught these subjects at the Hebrew Union College.

The difficulty was in the method. How could I present these important teachings truly and intelligibly to a public consisting of the learned representatives of almost all the religions of the world without suppressing what I should and must say, and without giving offense? Furthermore, how could I present all that I had to say to the public in the short time allotted to me? Added to this was my awareness of the great importance of this assignment. For the first time in the history of Israel, I was to glorify and worthily present the God and the teachings of Israel before the adherents of all religions, on an occasion that had never happened before and which was unlikely to recur.

I appeared to myself as the high priest on the Day of Atonement, who fearfully and tremblingly enters the holy of holies. I was afraid to approach the task; with trepidation I wrote every sentence, only to improve and shorten it the moment it was written down. As I, in the silence of the night, alone in my room, reread what I had written the previous night, the painful thought came upon me: "You are not big enough to master this task." It took a long time before my enthusiasm for the high task, and my conviction that I would only have to tell the truth, overcame my fearful timidity and I could approach the task with joy and love.

Thus I did not come to Chicago unprepared. If I did not carry out my assignment completely, it was only because I could do no better. But I do know for certain that I was the only one at the congress who spoke on the theology and the ethics of Judaism as a

system, thus bringing the Jewish teachings to the larger public through the proceedings of the congress. My colleagues accomplished much that was good and beautiful; but it was always separate segments that were treated and presented. No one had gone so far as to submit a complete system of theology and ethics. They all spoke as Jewish scholars; none spoke as a Jewish theologian, not because they could not, but because they would not. The scholar and the apologete were heard in every lecture, but positive Judaism always remained in the background, often almost concealed from the view of the uninitiated.

I was very much satisfied with the achievements of my colleagues, if only because they did not speak of all that which divides us, of that which runs counter to the idea of Judaism as a world religion, or which devaluates other religions or incites to polemics. I cannot, however, say that they were satisfied with my contributions; that I discovered only later. Had I known it right then and there, I would have been even more satisfied with my achievements, for it would have convinced me that I must have said something which the scholarly gentlemen did not know before, and I would have been quite proud of that.

Anyway, except for establishing theology on a philosophical foundation, I did not wish to present anything new in Chicago, and I will report on that matter later.[33] [Wise never completed these memoirs.]

NOTES

[1]I Chronicles 16:33; Ps. 96:12. If we view Wise's notes and comments in their actual context, we can realize that he often draws on the vast storehouse of his mind in a casual manner, quoting from the Bible with easy assurance. (The modern scholar, in contrast, may be visualized in the cartoon of a writer surrounded by dozens of open books, penning the sentence, "if memory serves, the following quotation . . . ".) Wise correctly shows the verse to exist in two versions.

[2]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 12, September 17, 1896, pp. 5-6. This is No. I in the series "Meine Bücherei." In it Wise makes some basic contentions which he maintains throughout the series. They are: that he did not want to write, preferring deeds to words; that circumstances always impelled and forced him to enter the field of literature; and that a man is forced to follow the influences of his environment, even against his will.

[3]"My salad days," in the German, is *Flegeljahre.* "Cubhood" is an English equivalent; but in context, and as a literary allusion, the Shakespearean term brings us closer to Wise's intentions.

[4]The pulpit was in Radnitz, Bohemia. And Rabbi Rapaport, here mentioned, was one of the three rabbis of the Prague *beth din* from whom Wise received his *hattarat hora'ah;* the other two rabbis were S. Freund and E. L. Teweles.

[5]In this literature we find Wise discovering the Science of Judaism, which he considered such a basic part of Reform Judaism.

[6]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 14, October 1, 1896, p. 5.

[7]The friendship and strong ties uniting Lilienthal and Wise form part of the larger history of Reform.

[8]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 15, October 8, 1896, pp. 4-5.

[9]Jost was originally a member of the Verein fuer die Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden. Wise's desire to transplant Jewish Science into English, and even his preoccupation with the Middle Ages, made him a kindred spirit.

[10]Wise had already introduced many important innovations at Albany. Family pews, sermons in the vernacular, mixed choirs, and confirmation were some of his achievements before this unhappy occasion. A new congregation, Anshe Emeth, was quickly formed by his supporters, and Wise served it until his departure for Cincinnati.

[11]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 17, October 22, 1896, pp. 4-5.

[12]Apparently a favorite bete noire of Wise, repeated later on and credited to Buechner.

[13]*The History of the Israelitish Nation from Abraham to the Present Time,* Albany, 1854.

[14]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 18, October 29, 1896, pp. 4-5.

[15]Other novels included: *The Convert; The Catastrophe of Eger; Fidelity, or Life and Romance; Romance, Philosophy, and Cabalah, or the Conflagration in Frankfort-on-the-Main* (in which Wise committed the literary murder alluded to later); and *The Last Struggle of the Nation.* Some of the German novels published serially in *Die Deborah* were: *Die Juden von Landshuth; Der Rothkopf, oder des Schulmeisters Tochter;* and *Baruch und sein Ideal.* There were also two plays: *Der Maskierte Liebhaber* and *Das Glueck Reich zu Sein.*

[16]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 19, November 5, 1896, pp. 4-5.

[17]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 21, November 19, 1896, pp. 4-5.

[18]The actual beginnings of this can be placed in 1847, when a committee appointed by Lilienthal heard one of its members, Wise, make the plea for a *Minhag America,* to end the confusion in American liturgy. The Cleveland Conference of 1855 saw the committee formed. As might be surmised, Wise was the guiding spirit of the group.

[19]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 23, December 3, 1896, p. 4. This, strictly speaking, is an interlude. Wise apologizes for the poetry he has created, and, mentioning that he has had an accident, explains the absence of his column, "The World of My Books." The inclusion of Blumauer with Heine and Byron was a contemporary failing. Alois Blumauer (1755-1798) was a very popular Austrian poet, chiefly noted for his travesty of Virgil's *Aeneid.*

[20]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 27, December 31, 1896, pp. 4-5. This is the only selection which is cut; however, the greater part of the material deleted is poetry from the German edition of the *Minhag America,* and the continuity of the narrative itself is preserved.

[21]*The Essence of Judaism,* Cincinnati, 1861.

[22]*Judaism, Its Doctrines and Duties,* 1872.

[23]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 28, January 7, 1897, p. 5.

[24]*The Origin of Christianity, and a Commentary to the Acts of the Apostles,* 1868.

[25]*The Martyrdom of Jesus of Nazareth: A Historico-Critical Treatise of the Last Chapters of the Gospel,* 1874.

[26]*Judaism and Christianity, Their Agreements and Disagreements,* 1883.

[27]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 30, January 21, 1897, pp. 4-5.

[28]*The Cosmic God,* 1876. The event referred to is the death of his first wife.

[29]From *Die Deborah,* Vol. XLII, No. 32, February 4, 1897, p. 5. A simple mis-

take gives us two successive issues marked as chapter ten. Apart from making us realize that this is, and has to be, a casual autobiography, it seems to have no significance.

[30]*History of the Hebrews' Second Commonwealth*, 1880.

[31]*Pronaos to Holy Writ*, 1891.

[32]From *Die Deborah*, Vol. XLII, No. 34, February 18, 1897, pp. 4-5. Some interesting sidelights on the beginnings of the Hebrew Union College can be seen here. Withal, it is a reminder that this must be read in the context of his *Reminiscences* and of other histories of the time.

[33]From *Die Deborah*, Vol. XLII, No. 38, March 18, 1897, pp. 4-5. This ends the reminiscences, as informally as they were begun. Yet, in their own way, they touch on the important aspects of Wise's life. And they leave him, at the peak of his career, surveying a past which any man might prize.

That Ebrew Jew

BY BRET HARTE

On May 31, 1877, Joseph Seligman, a financier, was refused a room in the Grand Union Hotel at Saratoga, New York, because he was a Jew. The order against Jews had been issued by Judge Henry Hilton, administrator of the hotel for the A. T. Stewart Estate. Stewart, who had recently died, also operated a large wholesale and retail dry goods business.

The following poem, from the pen of Bret Harte, the well-known American writer, deals with the Hilton-Seligman *affaire*. Harte himself was the grandson of a New York Jewish merchant, Bernard Hart.

The poem originally appeared probably in the Washington *Capital* in June, 1877. It is here reprinted from the Detroit *Post* of July 1.

Apparently Hilton, who had no love for Jews, had no prejudice against "Hebrews," whoever they may have been. The tradesman referred to in the poem is, of course, A. T. Stewart; the lawyer is Hilton, and the "Israelite" in mind here is Seligman. Harte identified Giuseppe Verdi, the operatic composer, as a Jew. In this he was mistaken.

THAT EBREW JEW

There once was a tradesman, renowned as a screw,
Who sold pins and needles, and calicoes, too,
Till he built up a fortune—the which, as it grew,
Just ruined small traders the whole city through.
Yet one thing he knew
Between me and you:
There was a distinction
'Twixt Christian and Jew.

Till he died in his mansion a great millionaire,
The owner of thousands, but nothing to spare
For the needy and poor who from hunger might drop,
And only a pittance to clerks in his shop,
But left it all to
A lawyer who knew
A subtle distinction
'Twixt Ebrew and Jew.

This man was no trader, but simply a friend
Of this gent who kept shop, and who, nearing his end,
Handed over a million—'twas only his due,
Who discovered this contrast 'twixt Ebrew and Jew.
For he said, "If you view
This case as I do,
There *is* a distinction
'Twixt Ebrew and Jew.

"For the Jew is a man who will make money through
His skill, his *finesse,* and his capital, too.
And an Ebrew's a man that we Gentiles can 'do.'
So you see there's a contrast 'twixt Ebrew and Jew.
Ebrew and Jew,
Jew and Ebrew—
There's a subtle distinction
'Twixt Ebrew and Jew.

So he kept up his business of needles and pins,
But always one day he atoned for his sins,
But never the same day (for that wouldn't do)
That the Jew faced his God with the awful Ebrew.
For this man he knew,
Between me and you,
There was a distinction
'Twixt Ebrew and Jew.

So he sold soda water and shut up the fount
Of the druggist whose creed was the Speech on the Mount;
And he trafficked in gaiters, and ruined the trade
Of a German whose creed was by great Luther made.
But always he knew,
Between me and you,
A subtle distinction
'Twixt Ebrew and Jew.

Then he kept a hotel—here his trouble began—
In a fashion unknown to his primitive plan.
For the rule of his house to his manager ran:
"Don't give entertainment to Israelite man."
Yet the manager knew,
Between me and you,
No other distinction
'Twixt Ebrew and Jew.

"You may give to John Morrissey supper and wine,
And Madame N. N. to your care I resign;
You will see that those Jenkins from Missouri Flat
Are properly cared for, but recollect that
Never a Jew
Who's not an Ebrew,
Shall take up his lodgings
Here at the Grand U.

"You'll allow Miss McFlimsey her diamonds to wear,
You'll permit the Van Dams at the waiters to swear,
You'll allow Miss Decollete to flirt on the stair,
But, as to an Israelite, pray have a care.
For, between me and you,
Though the doctrine is new,
There's a business distinction
'Twixt Ebrew and Jew.

Now, how shall we know? Prophet, tell us, pray do,
Where the line of the Hebrew fades into the Jew?
Shall we keep out Disraeli and take Rothschild in?
Or snub Meyerbeer and think Verdi a sin?
What shall we do?
Oh give us a few
Points to distinguish
'Twixt Ebrew and Jew.

There was One—Heaven help us!—who died in man's place,
With thorns on his forehead, but love in his face;
And when "foxes had holes," and the birds of the air
Had their nests in the trees, there was no spot to spare
For this "King of the Jews."
Did the Romans refuse
This right to the Ebrews,
Or only to Jews?

The Social Philosophy of Emil G. Hirsch

BERNARD MARTIN

I

In the period of almost half a century spanned by his ministry (1876-1923), Emil G. Hirsch was accorded well-nigh universal recognition as the most eloquent and able Jewish preacher in America. He was a man of towering intellect and rare oratorical power whose views, spread far beyond his immediate audiences at Chicago's Sinai Temple through the medium of the press, exerted a pronounced influence on the thinking of contemporary American Jewry.

The range of Hirsch's interests, manifested in his pulpit utterances, was tremendous. Theology, science, philosophy, literature, psychology —all were included in his intellectual domain, and from all he attempted to extract for his listeners some moral lesson. In his view, the office of the Jewish preacher was primarily that of moralist and ethical guide. Thus it is natural that, notwithstanding his far-flung interests, the most fundamental and frequently recurring theme in his sermons throughout his lifetime was social justice. It is not unlikely that Hirsch's place in the annals of the American synagogue will remain secure largely because of his great sermons dealing with social problems.

Hirsch's years in the ministry coincided with a period of profound change in American life and thought. Under the impact of new social forces and revolutionary intellectual discoveries, many of the most deeply cherished institutions and conceptions of the early nineteenth century were crumbling and disappearing. Out of the ruins of these old forms and ideas, which in their heyday had been considered by the contemporary American as eternal and axiomatic, were to rise new and radically different ones, requiring novel adjustments and perspectives.

The stresses and strains of this transitional period are clearly reflected in Hirsch's sermons. Believing, as he did, that the message of the pulpit must always be vital and of immediate relevance, he addressed himself in his preaching to the pressing problems of the day—economic, social, political, cultural, and religious. Though in many respects a creative and original thinker, Hirsch was basically a child of his age. In his sermons are to be discovered most of the major currents

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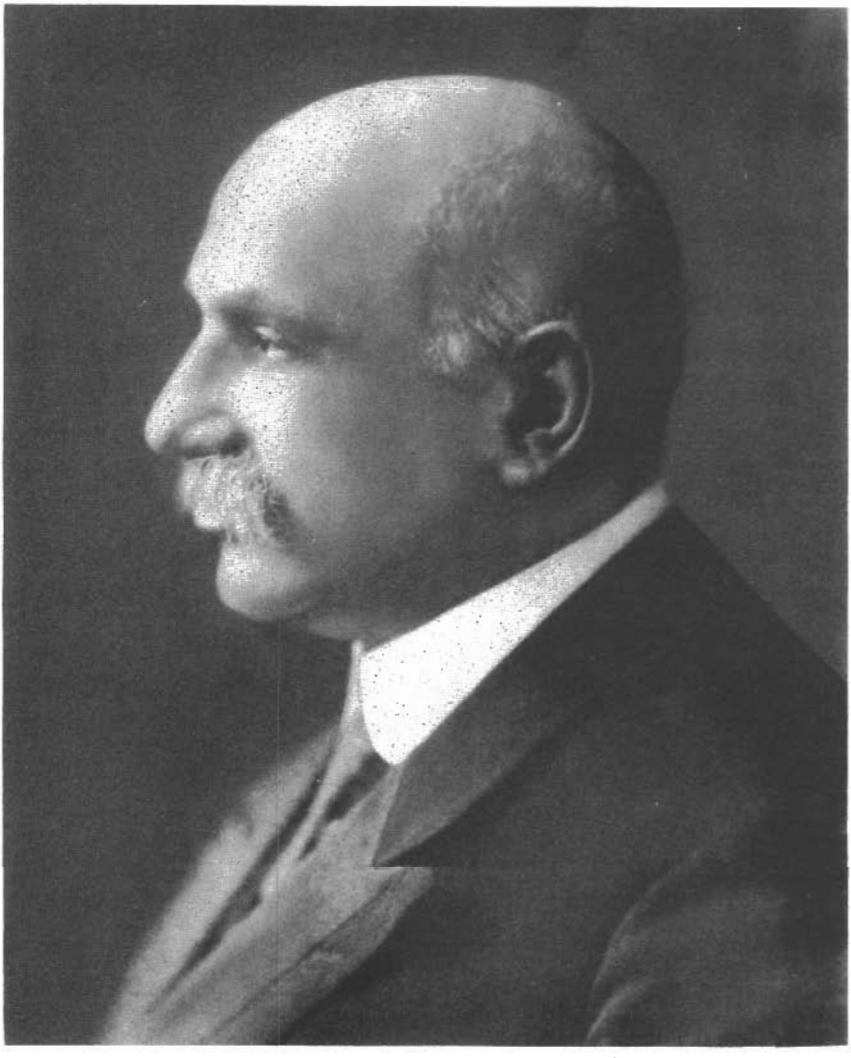
and many of the minor eddies of contemporary American thought. A familiarity with these and with the most important historical developments of the period is, therefore, indispensable for a proper understanding of his message.

II

The year in which Hirsch began his career as a rabbi saw in progress that thoroughgoing metamorphosis in the structure of the American economy which had been inaugurated by the Civil War. Already the consequences inherent in the process which was transforming America from an agricultural into a primarily industrial land were beginning to manifest themselves. The rise of the great cities, the development of big business and investment banking, the increase in immigration, the development of a class system based on the possession of wealth, the rise of labor unions and industrial conflict, the growth of America as an important power in international affairs—these and other phenomena too numerous to mention were part of the American environment to which Hirsch returned from his studies in Germany in 1876. In the years that followed, the influence of industrialization was to become so pervasive and far-reaching that Henry Adams was not indulging in mere poetic fancy when, upon seeing the dynamo at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, he concluded that its discovery was the most important event in modern history.

Hirsch was to ponder deeply the host of new problems that industrialization brought to America. Among the questions that vexed his mind in these years, and concerning which he spoke to his congregation, were the proper distribution of wealth, the effect of unemployment and poverty on the working classes, the maintenance of political democracy in an oligarchic and royalistic economy, and the general moral legitimacy of a social order based on selfishness and competition.

The economic system which permitted the creation of vast business empires and immense aggregations of capital such as those controlled by the Goulds, the Carnegies, the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts, and the Swifts found its theoretic justification in the doctrine of the Manchester school of economics, a doctrine with which Hirsch was to find himself, as we shall see, in bitter disagreement. One of the cardinal principles of Manchester liberalism, or laissez-faire capitalism, was that given expression by Jay Gould: "Labor is a commodity that will in the long run be governed absolutely by the law of supply and demand."[1] The great Old World exponents of laissez-faire capitalism had been Quesnay, Smith, Mill, Bentham, and Ricardo. Their intellectual heir and the chief living representative of their economic doctrines in the



Stadler Studios, Chicago

EMIL G. HIRSCH

1870's and the 1880's was the renowned Englishman, Herbert Spencer, whose influence on American social and economic thought of the post-Civil War period is incalculable. Spencer's economic philosophy, based on a combination of Manchester liberalism and the Darwinian concept of "the survival of the fittest," was the gospel of the American industrialist and businessman of the age. To Hirsch and to a growing band of liberals, in both the religious and secular worlds, it was anathema. But the champions of Spencerian economics were still dominant. Among the greatest of them was the famous William Graham Sumner, whose work has been thus described by a recent social historian:

> No one applied more rigorously to the social realm the Darwinian doctrine of the survival of the fittest than this Episcopal rector turned sociologist, who conceded to the commandments from Manchester an authority he could not concede to those from Mt. Sinai. He elevated laissez-faire into a social and economic law and assigned to it the same standing as the law of gravity.[2]

Many of the great industrial magnates of the last decades of the nineteenth century were "self-made" men, risen from obscure and lowly stations to fabulous opulence and power. An expanding economy and a government which, though espousing an attitude of laissez-faire toward the working class and its economic problems, abandoned this attitude in the interests of the railroad promoters and the manufacturers by handing them large land grants and establishing high protective tariffs, made possible great concentrations of wealth in their hands.[3] Their success stories, presented in fictional form by writers like Horatio Alger and in biographical form by industrialists like Andrew Carnegie, nourished the flame of optimism in the hearts of millions. Anyone, it was thought, could be rich if he only wanted to, and everyone wanted to. Jay Cooke, writing of the expanding commercial life in St. Louis, commented: "Through all the grades I see the all-pervading, all-engrossing anxiety to grow rich. That is the only thing for which men live here."[4] Hirsch found it necessary repeatedly to rebuke his congregations for similar tendencies.

But the bright hope that a million dollars was just around the corner for anyone willing to work hard enough was rudely dispelled by events which showed the fallacy of that hope and dramatically pointed up the inherent weaknesses of the economic system on which it was founded. In 1873 a great financial panic occurred in which thousands of persons were ruined. Four years later the great railroad strike introduced large-scale industrial violence in America, a phenomenon destined to recur with terrible frequency in the years that followed. In 1886, six years after Hirsch took up residence in Chicago,

there occurred in that brawling, bustling capital of the Midwest the great McCormick Harvester Strike and the riot in Haymarket Square, which culminated in the unjust conviction and execution of several alleged anarchists. Six years later, in 1892, came the Homestead Strike, in which a bloody battle was fought in the small Pennsylvania steel town. The following year another financial panic occurred, far worse than the one which had taken place twenty years before. In 1894 the great Pullman Strike occurred, and in the same year bloody industrial warfare broke out in the Cripple Creek coal fields of Colorado. Unemployment in that year had become so widespread that the quixotic Jacob Coxey led a huge army of jobless workers to Washington, there to find himself and his lieutenants jailed for walking on the grass.

Throughout these years Hirsch constantly preached about the nature and causes of this economic unrest and joined his voice to the chorus of opposition against the prevailing economic order.

The movement of opposition toward the rampant individualism and unbridled competition of the Manchester philosophy became progressively stronger in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Many groups—farmers, labor union members, Socialists, single-taxers—were rising to demand responsible government action for the alleviation of the economic distress of the masses.

The liberal and reform movement of the late nineteenth century reached its climax in 1896, when the Democratic Party, which had absorbed most of the progressive elements, ran as its candidate for the Presidency the "Great Commoner," William Jennings Bryan. Though Bryan lost, the liberal and agrarian movement did not really fail. For the quest for social justice which it heralded was continued in the decades that followed and, in considerable measure, attained. The twenty years between Bryan's first struggle for the Presidency and Wilson's second has become known in American history as the Progressive Era. In this period practically all the major social and economic institutions of American life were subject to criticism and reform. The very term "reform" was the catchword of the period, and its theoretic exponents in all fields were legion.

Many of the reforms which Hirsch and his fellow-liberals in the rabbinate and in the Christian Social Gospel movement advocated were effected in this period. Slum clearance, government regulation of the hours and wages of labor, factory safety legislation, compulsory workmen's compensation and insurance laws, the protection of women in industry, the regulation of child labor, prison reform, the spread and improvement of public education, public health and welfare programs, the graduated income tax, the reform of political machinery—all these were products of the Progressive Era.

The thinking of Hirsch and of many other public men who, in this period, urged the abandonment of the old laissez-faire philosophy and supported governmental social welfare legislation, was influenced by numerous scholars, writers and politicians. There were sociologists like Lester Ward, who (in the very year [1883] that William Graham Sumner, that vigorous proponent of absolute individualism and complete laissez-faire, published *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other*), wrote his famous *Dynamic Sociology,* containing an elaborate argument for intelligent social planning and insisting, against Spencer and Sumner, that social progress is not natural and inevitable. Economists like Richard T. Ely urged that economics must be related to ethics and denounced Manchester liberalism, and Thorstein Veblen realistically bared the irrational psychological motives underlying the contemporary economic system, while publicists like Henry George advocated the single tax as the panacea for all social ills. Novelists like Edward Bellamy, who in *Looking Backward* (1888) portrayed a utopian society in which there was complete social, economic, and political equality; revolutionary socialists like Johann Most and David De Leon, and moderate socialists like Eugene V. Debs, the group of journalists known as the "muckrakers," who wrote exposés of the corruption existing in many social, political, and economic institutions, and many others too numerous to mention represented this trend.

To all of these Hirsch was indebted for much of his thinking on the great public issues of his day. Their influence will become manifest when we consider, in the next section, the social message of his sermons.

III

Hirsch's overriding concern with social problems began quite early in his preaching career. As the years progressed and industrial conflict and social unrest increased, his concern waxed. He began to feel that the social question was the essential problem of religion in general and of Judaism in particular. It must take precedence over theological and soteriological interests. In 1894, when strikes and industrial violence were already a fairly familiar phenomenon in American life, Hirsch wrote:

> In days like these when the foundations of civilization seem to tremble; when distrust stalks everywhere; when man has learned to regard man as only a machine and tool; when incendiary torches are lit and dynamite bombs explode; when rulers of republics are killed by the dagger of the fanatic, and cities quiver for days in anxiety and anguish lest the firebrand be thrown into

> peaceful homes, and busy hives of commerce be reduced to ashes —shall we have nothing else to do but lose ourselves in metaphysics about the existence of God and to sigh and to pray and to fast for our own self-satisfaction? . . . The world waits once more the prophet; would once more hear the word of a nobler view of life than gain and profit and greed and hurrying and chasing after the booty. We need once more to be taught to feel that humanity is more than a pack of wolves fighting for the carcass by the way-side; we need once more the stern sacramental words of duty and obligation; of righteousness and justice—justice, mark you, not charity. Away with this pretender. Off from the throne with that usurper. Away with all this charity. Justice we need. Social justice everywhere.[5]

To Hirsch, the social conflict of his time seemed not essentially a struggle between capital and labor for the greater share of wealth. It seemed to him to hinge, rather, on the worker's demand and right that he be not regarded merely as a tool or machine, a "hand" hired out by the hour, but as a human personality, a child of God made in his image.[6] Fundamentally, Hirsch declared, the social problem was an ethical and religious one.[7] A system in which self-interest was the supreme motive and in which human beings were regarded as commodities the value of which was subject to the law of supply and demand was, he constantly reiterated, both immoral and irreligious.[8]

Hirsch never minced words in his denunciation of the worst excrescences of the contemporary economic order. The ill-ventilated and unsafe sweatshops, in which men and women worked fourteen hours a day at wages insufficient to support themselves, particularly aroused his anger:

> Sweatshops are an expedient of hell, and no matter what commercial morals may say, God in heaven and Judaism protest that he that works shall eat and eat sufficiently, and not be robbed of his manhood . . . . Ye Jewish merchants,—profit or loss—, what are these considerations? Do ye, at least, whatever others may devise, your duty to stamp out this barbarous system. It is a blot upon the face of our civilization.[9]

Very early in his career, as has already been pointed out above, Hirsch developed an extreme antipathy to the doctrines of Manchester liberalism, in which, like many other thoughtful men of his age, he saw the root of all the economic injustice and unrest of the time. His denunciations of Manchester liberalism were frequent and violent.[10] His criticisms of the system included numerous elements: that its assumption of an "economic man," motivated only by self-interest, is artificial;[11] that its making of selfishness the basis of social organization is

immoral;[12] that its exaltation of the idea of freedom of contract is a fraud, for, since the worker and the capitalist can hardly be conceived to be on equal bargaining terms, "freedom of contract is a beautiful phrase and nothing more";[13] that it prevents social amelioration by insisting that the government may not interfere to protect the underprivileged;[14] and that it prospers no one but the capitalist.[15]

Hirsch admitted that originally Manchester liberalism, being a revolutionary protest against the authoritarianism of existing society, had been a valid and beneficial movement. But because of the mistakes noted above it had, he insisted, become pernicious and destructive, and must, therefore, be abandoned.[16]

In his reading of history Hirsch saw in the Middle Ages a society based on social function and on the responsibility of the individual to contribute to the welfare of society. This seemed to him a more reasonable and ethical system than the individualistic doctrine of Adam Smith and the Manchester school, and he urged its re-adoption:

> Thus history has judged of Adam Smith's theory. The theory, so brutal, has failed. It is Chronos devouring his own offspring. We are not individuals. We are not made to be individualistic. We are human beings that live in and with others and through others. History has spoken. What the Middle Ages had we must have again, the sense of our belongingness one to the other. If we have it, the social problem and the social contest loses much of its sharp edge.[17]

Over and above its other faults, Hirsch declared, Manchester liberalism erred in the tremendous importance that it assigned to personal rights to the neglect of social duties. This fault is an oft-repeated theme in his criticisms of the system.[18] In two sermons preached in 1895 and significantly titled "The Inalienable Duties of Man," Hirsch set forth his thesis that the doctrine of individual rights which, when first proclaimed, had held forth the promise of maximizing freedom and opportunity for the masses, had now become an instrument of class oppression.

> Can it be denied that the mere doctrine of the rights of man has played into the hands of the selfish? While it has been the lever to lift up a few, it has also, contrary to the hope and confidence of its first coiners, proved a weight to drag down the millions. The bald theory of rights has prospered the capitalist and none other. It has sponsored a new kind of selfishness of which the former ages knew nothing.[19]

The basic error of the theory of rights, Hirsch held, was that it failed to recognize the primacy which society does, and by right should, have

in the life of the individual. "It undermines the essential life of society by putting the individual first and society last, reducing the latter to a sum in arithmetic, an equation in statics, instead of regarding and treating it as a theorem and function in dynamics."[20]

Hirsch declared that the time had now come for a new emphasis on the duties of man toward society. For, he insisted, the solution to the social unrest of the time cannot come merely through mechanical or external remedies. There must also be a recognition by men that, in addition to the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness which they possess, they are bound by certain inalienable duties toward society. Hirsch indicated quite clearly what he considered the nature of these duties to be:

> If the right to life is inalienable, the duty to make the proper use thereof is as emphatically inalienable. The individual is always under the social relation. This is the fulcrum for his lever. Not as he lists, but as the social welfare and his power for social service suggest, must the individual shape his own career.
>
> To own the fruit of one's labor is an inalienable right; to dispose of one's earnings by will and testament may even be included in this category, though some theorists would question the legitimacy of such latitude. Yet property is our own only to do therewith what shall prosper the common life. The right to possess is limited by the duty to utilize one's own for the social good . . . . Nor is property ever more sacred than humanity. Wherever the right of property clashes with a duty toward humanity, the former has no credentials that are entitled to consideration.[21]

Hirsch believed not only that society should take precedence over the individual, but that it had, in fact, always done so. In his extensive reading of history Hirsch discovered a practically complete societal and historical conditioning of the individual. Single men and single generations, he maintained, are conditioned by their historical antecedents. This is especially true of social and political institutions. The abstract theories concerning the origin of government formulated by a Hobbes or a Rousseau are, he declared, false and artificial because they do not take account of the historical forces which have produced human institutions.[22] Hirsch discovered historical and societal conditioning even in those areas in which the individual seems to be most free and undetermined. Thus, he insisted even that the individual human conscience is nothing more than the internalized judgments of the society, a doctrine later taught by Freud and his disciples. The content and expression of conscience differ in different individuals, declared Hirsch, because the value judgments of the societies and environments within which they live differ.[23]

Yet though Hirsch, in his early years, constantly preached that society in fact is, and by right should be, primary in the life of the individual, who has the duty to suppress his own desires in order to further the common good,[24] he was not to retain this view throughout his life. In his later years he emphasized, as we shall see, the dignity and value of the individual personality above the welfare of society and condemned socialism, which he at one time had praised, for placing society before the individual. The tension between his Kantian philosophic outlook, in which were emphasized the dignity and supreme worth of the individual, and his understanding of history, which led him to assign the dominant place to society, issued ultimately in a triumph for Kantianism. Individual self-determination became the supreme value.

Hirsch's faith in man, especially in the *great man,* was strong even in the years when he was proclaiming the dominance of society. Thus, he modified his conception of the origin of conscience and declared that though, in the generality of men, conscience is only the reflection of the dominant values of the society, in extraordinary men it is much more. Men of genius, he argued, transcend the notions of morality current in their time and replace them with higher ideas. These then become the conscience of the age, only to be replaced by further advances.

> Defining conscience as I do, I still cannot be blind to the fact that certain men are gifted with a keener appreciation of the wrongs and the evils, and thus rise from society above society. These men are the prophets in the present of the things that must be if humanity is to live in the future.[25]

> The theory that men must forever abide the mirror of their environments is not true. Environments furnish prejudices that are as those come to us by heredity. Still ours is the power to rise above our surroundings. We can throw the usurper out of the windows and fill the room thus made by new and better impulses.[26]

Hirsch insisted that progress is not mechanical[27] and protested strongly against the enervating Spencerian principle that time and evolution will ultimately set everything right.[28] With Lester Ward he believed that social progress is effected through intelligent planning, and with Thomas Carlyle he believed, as we have seen above, that the creative thought which leads to progress is the work of great men of genius.

Of progress itself Hirsch never had any doubt.[29] In this he was entirely in accord with the dominant optimistic mood of contemporary America. His sermons are filled with buoyant and exalted paeans to progress: "I believe in moral progress. As the years roll by, the minds

of men are widened, their sympathies become broader, and their conduct is attuned to higher music. This I will not have disputed. It is the staff and the stay of my intellectual creed."[30]

The doctrine, shared by John Fiske and most of the liberal reinterpreters of Darwinian evolutionism, that man is ever advancing to higher levels, Hirsch declared to be one of the great distinctive ideas of Judaism: "The future has better things in store than had the past; upward runs the course of humanity, not downward; this is a fundamental distinction of the philosophy of life preached by Judaism at all times and the doctrines taught by other organized systems of social life or the dogmatically fixed thoughts of other religious bodies."[31]

In 1899, on the eve of a new century, Hirsch surveyed the decade that had just passed and, despite his recognition both of the injustice, violence, and suffering which had characterized it, and of those incipient forces—nationalism and racialism—that were to plunge the world into darkness in the twentieth century, nevertheless insisted that progress was bound to come. The present gloom, he argued, was merely "the darkness before the dawn."

> In all Messianic legends the thought is central that the advent is announced by disorganizing and disrupting wars . . . . I for one cannot concede that revived nationalism and racial bigotry, of which the Jews above all other men have most to dread, portend more than that the day of battle is upon us. The Messianic agony is stirring the depths. The century to come will not belie the promise of our deeper and wider sympathies.[32]

The specific content of the progress which Hirsch expected, at least in his early years, is quite clear. It was the emergence of a socialistic order of society. In 1891 Hirsch declared that the different forms of political and economic organization that had existed in human history—despotism, aristocracy, feudalism, and individualism (Manchester liberalism) —were only successive steppingstones. Now the last of these is itself about to be transcended.

> And thus he who has eye to see understands that the individualistic age is at an end, and that soon (shudder at the name if you cannot understand it) the socialistic period will begin, for the individualistic time is but a stepping-stone to that form of society where the individual knows that beyond his rights, and before his rights, come certain duties and certain obligations. That will be the next succeeding stone.[33]

Though here proclaiming the coming of socialism, and in numerous other places, as we have seen, scathingly denouncing Manchester economics,[34] and in still other places declaring that Jewish ethics de-

mands a socialist economic order,[35] Hirsch was not, even in his early years, entirely unambivalent in his advocacy of socialism. In a sermon preached in 1891 and entitled "Government and Society," he criticized not only anarchism and Manchester individualism, but collectivism as well. The latter, he declared, assumes that government can be omniscient, ordering society for the welfare of all men. Not only is this not true, he argued, but collectivism would also destroy hope, ambition, and incentive, and thereby degrade men.[36]

But, though challenging the validity of orthodox socialism, Hirsch, in this very same sermon, formulated a conception of the function of the state and a program of specific social legislation which can only be termed socialistic. The purpose of the state, he maintained, is to "guard, not merely preventatively, but by way of initiative, the common interests of all, and more specifically, to return to the original intention of law, which was to protect the weaker against the aggression of the stronger."[37]

Specifically, Hirsch declared, a legitimate program of state action would include a system of differential and progressive taxation, safety and sanitation regulation of factories, workmen's insurance the cost of which would be borne primarily by capital, regulation of hours of work, prohibition of child labor, protection of women, strict control of monopolies and large corporations, and the guarantee to labor of the right to assemble and to organize.[38] All these were included among the reforms demanded by the liberal movement of Hirsch's time and most of them were achieved in the Progressive Era.

In 1897, in a sermon dealing with "The Problem of Poverty," Hirsch urged even more liberal social legislation by the government: the implementation of a system of co-operative buying which would eliminate the middleman, compulsory sickness and accident insurance, public housing for the poor, and the establishment of institutions to lend money to the needy without the requirement of collateral which they do not possess.[39]

Though Hirsch did not urge, as the orthodox socialists did, the nationalization and government ownership of industries, his recommendations for social legislation were certainly a radical departure from laissez-faire capitalism and an approach to socialism. Still others of Hirsch's statements concerning the right of property and inheritance and concerning capitalism clearly indicate the socialistic cast of Hirsch's economic thought, at least in the first part of his ministry:

> The contention that inheritance and ownership of immeasurable wealth are fundamental principles which cannot be modified is not true. Truth and righteousness are fundamental principles; justice and sympathy are, and not the right of inheritance. It is

> not a natural right, it is an acquired right, an artificial right. The time may come when society will rise to a better constitution, when what is created by all will revert to the uses of all.[40]

> I am not of the opinion that private property is ethically and fundamentally wrong. Against the capitalist I have nothing to urge; but against capitalism, against a capitalistic order of society, my religion—the religion of Jeremiah and Isaiah, the religion of the best among all men—has everything to urge.[41]

From the discussion thus far it appears that Hirsch was completely in sympathy with the growing liberal movement in both American secular and religious life of the late nineteenth century. He shared both in its protest against the heartless selfishness and brutality of the contemporary economic system and in its advocacy of a more just and humane distribution of wealth. He agreed with its challenge of laissez-faire capitalism and with its advocacy of ameliorative social legislation. He rejoiced in the concrete accomplishments of the reform movement, in support of which he so frequently raised his voice. That he was actuated in his social thought both by an intellectual appreciation of the inadequacies of Manchester liberalism and by a deep sympathy for the masses who suffered under that system is obvious. Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that he was as truly a democrat in politics as in economics. He certainly did not share the democratic faith of a Paine or a Jefferson in the ability of the people to govern themselves well. Even his sympathy for the masses seems to have been that of the kindly and generous aristocrat rather than that of the impassioned and convinced democrat.

That Hirsch accepted Carlyle's "great man" theory of history has already been noted above in the discussion of his view of the method of social progress.[42] That he also shared Carlyle's aristocratic contempt for the masses must also be stated. He went so far as to borrow and use, with approval, Carlyle's vulgar phrase for the masses—"them asses."[43] Hirsch considered the granting of suffrage to the Negroes of the South as one of the most serious errors in American political history. Indeed, the whole idea of universal suffrage was repugnant to him. In it he saw the source of all political corruption.

> "Them asses," as Carlyle pronounces the phrase, are always susceptible to the blandishments and the tricks of the crafty demagogues. . . . Therefore, in all countries where political dogmatism has not brought forth its natural offspring, political demagogism, the municipal franchise is conditioned by property tests or by tests of educational attainments, certainly by a clean bill of moral health.[44]

It is rather surprising that a man who was not an ideological democrat in politics should have kept his liberal economic principles fairly intact throughout his life. Yet Hirsch managed, in considerable measure, to do so. Even after the disillusionment with socialism which came to many American liberals after the Bolshevik revolution, Hirsch did not return to a full-throated cry for capitalism. It is true that he was no longer the flaming radical he had been in his youth, but he was also not completely the tired and disillusioned liberal. The criticism of socialism which he had voiced in 1891[45] was, indeed, intensified now. Thus, shortly before his death, in the year 1923, Hirsch made the following statement with regard to socialism:

> [It] denies the one fundamental factor of our personality. It denies the initiative of the individual, it denies the scope and the sway of individual action and ambition. It kills individual ambition, for Socialism is really the most consistent scheme of militarism. It puts us all into battalions and into regiments. We are all regimented and we are all under discipline, and our individuality is chilled and killed.[46]

Yet capitalism did not even then recommend itself fully to Hirsch. He still saw its inadequacies: its degradation of men into machines with price tags attached, its failure to prevent recurrent panics and depressions, its inability to solve the paradox of simultaneous excess production and widespread want. Nevertheless, a modified and restrained capitalism, which recognizes the infinite worth of every human personality, is to be preferred, declared Hirsch, to the regimentation of socialism. "Of the two, the capitalistic scheme allows much more scope for the assertion of individual power and individual ability than does Socialism."[47]

It is entirely characteristic of Hirsch that when he made his final choice, the deciding factor was his conviction that modified capitalism was more in keeping, both really and ideally, with the dignity of man. For the latter was a dominant theme in Hirsch's thought throughout his life. In spite of the contradiction and paradox in his thought—in spite of his insistence that only the great men of genius influence human history, and in spite of his belief, simultaneously held, in the primacy of society and the societal conditioning of man—Hirsch always affirmed one cardinal dogma: the value and dignity of every man.

In the end the tension inherent in Hirsch's simultaneous belief in the supreme importance of society and of the individual was resolved by his conviction that that system which recognizes the supreme importance of the individual and seeks his highest welfare leads also to the highest welfare of society.

NOTES

RA=*Reform Advocate,* the Jewish journal of Chicago in which Hirsch published most of his papers and addresses.

[1]Nevins, Allan, and Commager, H. S., *A Short History of the United States,* New York, 1945, p. 326.

[2]Commager, H. S., *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's,* New Haven, 1950, p. 201.

[3]Faulkner, H. A., *American Political and Social History,* New York, 1946, Fourth Edition, p. 231.

[4]*Idem.*

[5]"The Radical's Religion," *RA,* Vol. 8, 1894, pp. 107-8.

[6]"The Value and Influence of Utopia," *RA,* Vol. 5, 1893, p. 205.

[7]"New Year's Reflections," *RA,* Vol. 8, 1895, p. 336.

[8]"Thy Kingdom Come," *RA,* Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 279-81; "The Value and Influence of Utopia," *RA,* Vol. 5, 1893, p. 205.

[9]"A Discourse on the Eve of the Day of Atonement," *RA,* Vol. 8, 1894, p. 205.

[10]See the following sermons: "Government and Society," *RA,* Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 343-46; "Conflicting Tendencies," *RA,* Vol. 2, 1891, pp. 51-54; "Hard Times," *RA,* Vol. 5, 1893, pp. 363-66; "The Psychology of Sin," *RA,* Vol. 7, 1894, pp. 132-35; "New Year's Reflections," *RA,* Vol. 8, 1895, pp. 334-38; "Modern Heretics," *RA,* Vol. 11, 1896, pp. 340-43, and "The Inalienable Duties of Man," Parts I and II, *RA,* Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 187-90, 205-8.

[11]"Government and Society," *RA,* Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 343-46; "Modern Heretics," *RA,* Vol. 11, 1896, pp. 340-43; "The Inalienable Duties of Man," Part I, *RA,* Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 187-90.

[12]"Modern Heretics," *RA,* Vol. 11, 1896, pp. 340-43.

[13]"Government and Society," *RA,* Vol. 1, 1891, p. 345.

[14]"The Inalienable Duties of Man," Part 1, *RA,* Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 187-90.

[15]*Idem.*

[16]*Idem.*

[17]"New Year's Reflections," *RA,* Vol. 8, 1895, p. 337.

[18]See the following sermons: "Individual and Society," Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 247-50; "Stepping Stones," Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 264-66; "Conflicting Tendencies," Vol. 2, 1891, pp. 51-54; "Hard Times," Vol. 5, 1893, pp. 363-66; "The Inalienable Duties of Man," Parts I and II, Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 187-90, 205-8 (preached in 1895); and "Democracy Triumphant," Vol. 17, 1899, pp. 43-48.

[19]"The Inalienable Duties of Man," Part I, *RA,* Vol. 13, 1897, p. 188.

[20]*Ibid.,* p. 189.

[21]"The Inalienable Duties of Man," Part II, *RA,* Vol. 13, 1897, p. 208.

[22]"The Dangers of Democracy," *RA,* Vol. 6, 1893, pp. 282-86.

[23]"Individual and Society," *RA,* Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 247-50; "A Growing Conscience," *RA,* Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 241-44.

[24]See notes 17 and 20.

[25]"Individual and Society," *RA,* Vol. 1, 1891, p. 249.

[26]"A Growing Conscience," *RA,* Vol. 13, 1897, p. 243.

[27]"The Dying Century," *RA,* Vol. 18, 1899, pp. 249-55.

[28]"Thy Kingdom Come," *RA,* Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 279-81.

[29]See the following sermons: "Stepping Stones," *RA,* Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 264-66; "The Value and Influence of Utopia," *RA,* Vol. 5, 1893, pp. 202-5; "The Citizen," *RA,* Vol. 15, 1898, pp. 112-13; "Justice and Judgment," *RA,* Vol. 15, 1898, pp. 192-95; "Our Disenchantments," *RA,* Vol. 15, 1898, pp. 223-24; "The Dying Century," *RA,* Vol. 18, 1899, pp. 249-55; "The Twentieth Century," *RA,* Vol. 19, 1900, pp. 49-50.

[30]"The Citizen," *RA,* Vol. 15, 1898, p. 112.

[31]"The Value and Influence of Utopia," *RA,* Vol. 5, 1893, p. 205.

[32]"The Dying Century," *RA,* Vol. 18, 1899, p. 254.

[33]"Stepping Stones," *RA,* Vol. 1, 1891, p. 266.
[34]See note 10.
[35]"Modern Heretics," *RA,* Vol. 11, 1896, pp. 340-43; "Modern Prophets," *RA,* Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 293-96; "Proper Themes for the Pulpit," Vol. 17, 1899, pp. 239-45.
[36]"Government and Society," *RA,* Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 343-46.
[37]*Ibid.,* p. 346.
[38]*Idem.*
[39]"The Problem of Poverty," *RA,* Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 3-6.
[40]"A Discourse on the Eve of the Day of Atonement," *RA,* Vol. 8, 1894, pp. 202-5.
[41]"The Inalienable Duties of Man," Part I, Vol. 13, 1897, p. 188.
[42]See note 25.
[43]"The Day of Small Things," *RA,* Vol. 14, 1897, pp. 453-56; "The New Discipline and Duty," *RA,* Vol. 16, 1898, pp. 244-47.
[44]"The New Discipline and Duty," *RA,* Vol. 16, 1898, p. 245.
[45]See note 36.
[46]"The New Social Adjustment Suggested by the Implications of My Religion," in *My Religion,* p. 136.
[47]*Idem.*

Letters to Moses Montefiore

from Oliver Wendell Holmes and John Greenleaf Whittier

[In 1884, Sir Moses Montefiore, of London, the most distinguished Jew of nineteenth-century Europe, celebrated his one hundredth birthday. Many Americans, who admired him for his generosity and broad humanitarian sympathies, sent him greetings. Among them were the two letters which follow. They are found in the Montefiore Papers at Ramsgate, England.]

Beverly Farms, Mass.
October 5th, 1884.

Venerable and Beloved Sir:

I send my congratulations across the Atlantic to join the unnumbered tributes which will greet you on your first centennial anniversary. A useful and noble life has made the occasion memorable. Others have counted as many years—how few have filled them so full of good deeds!

If the God of Israel would prolong your days until you counted as many centuries as the oldest of the Patriarchs, the world would still feel that you were taken away prematurely when you were called to leave it.

This note comes to you with all the best and warmest wishes for your prolonged life and health and happiness from one who has climbed three quarters of the way from the cradle to the summit of years upon which you are now standing.

Believe me, with the highest respect,

Most truly yours,

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

To Sir Moses Montefiore, on His 100th Birthday.

Let me earnestly and reverently congratulate thee on reaching the great age of one hundred years, years devoted to the service of our Common Father in heaven by ministering to the needs of his children on earth, and by promoting every good cause which he has inspired and blest. His love and peace be with thee!

JOHN G. WHITTIER

Oak Knoll
Danvers, [Massachusetts] U. S. A.
Oct. 5, 1884

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