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The American Jewish Archives Journal



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of the American Jewish Experience*

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Cover Photo: Rebecca Brickner at her wedding to Barnett Brickner in 1919.

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Program Announcement:

Going Beyond Memory III: A Conference on Synagogue Archiving

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center is proud to announce that it is sponsoring **Going Beyond Memory III: A Conference on Synagogue Archiving**, which will be held at The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio on **August 24 and 25, 2003**. The conference will bring together synagogue archivists and librarians from across the country for two days of workshops. In addition to engaging in a hands on approach to archival work with the professional archivists from The Marcus Center, participants will also have the opportunity to study with Dr. Greg Bradsher, Director, Holocaust-Era Assets Records Project of the National Archives & Records Administration. In addition to the workshops, participants will have the opportunity to learn from guest lecturer Dr. Jonathan Sarna of Brandeis University.

All persons involved or interested in the workings of synagogue archives are invited to attend. Further information concerning the conference and how to register can be obtained by contacting:

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To our readers . . .

Having published a series of double issues, *The American Jewish Archives Journal* resumes its semiannual format with the appearance of this edition. Readers will note that the length of the journal has been downsized to approximately one half the size used for the double issues. It is our hope that this new/old format proffers the journal's familiar fare in a size that will now make it possible to ingest its contents in two or three hours of pleasurable reading.

Though the journal's dimensions have returned to its more manageable semiannual measurement, the holdings of the AJA continue to grow. Every year, the AJA acquires dozens of new collections and, among them, there will be two or three institutional or personal collections that are of extraordinary historical value. Our Chief Archivist regularly informs our readers of these new acquisitions in a helpful essay that appears annually.

The scholars and researchers who visit The Marcus Center scour two or three of our many large collections and, oftentimes, they are subsequently able to revise our current thinking or offer new interpretations about past events on the basis of documents that previous scholars may not have seen. In other instances, a newly acquired collection may actually enable researchers to tell a story that has gone untold. Some newly acquired holdings shed light on a subject that has heretofore received scant attention. The arrival of a new collection of documents oftentimes furnishes scholars with data that will ultimately shed new light on a little-known chapter of American Jewish history. The articles in this issue of our journal illustrate how this process unfolds.

For example, Rafael Medoff's essay on Felix Warburg draws extensively from the Warburg holdings here at the American Jewish Archives. His research has enabled him to refine our understanding of Warburg's attitude toward Zionism and his position on the drive to Jewish statehood. Cornelia Wilhelm's interesting article on the United Order of True Sisters (UOTS) examines a critically important Jewish women's association that has been largely overlooked by historians of the American Jewish experience. Dr. Wilhelm's essay was made possible when, just a few years ago, the UOTS voted to place its historical papers in the AJA. Meanwhile, Shuly Rubin Schwartz's documentary analysis of Rebecca A. Brickner's correspondence from

Palestine in the early 1930s took shape after Professor Schwartz was serving as a research fellow at The Marcus Center.

So, as we have repeatedly stressed, the efflorescence of American Jewish history is inexorably tied to the growth of our archival repositories. To the unindoctrinated, sustaining the growth of a major repository like The Marcus Center may appear to be a relatively simple matter. Staff members merely find historical collections and keep them organized on a shelf. In actuality, the task is much more daunting, and The Marcus Center – like any academic center – relies on a vast network of supporters and counselors as it fulfills its mission.

Keenly observant readers will surely take note of the steady proliferation of boards, councils, and consortiums listed in the journal. These various committees play an integral role in the life of The Marcus Center and, as such, we are pleased to publicize in our journal the names of those who give so generously of themselves. Each of the four bodies named herein labor diligently on our behalf, and collectively they contribute to the overall betterment of our institution.

The Academic Advisory and Editorial Board (AA&EB) is comprised of distinguished scholars who provide The Marcus Center with scholarly counsel on a wide range of matters, including the Center's overall academic program, the AJA's acquisition policy, its Fellowship & Visiting Scholars program, and its publication initiatives. The AA&EB also functions as an editorial board for *The American Jewish Archives Journal* (AJAJ), providing the journal's editors with counsel regarding the journal's academic content and to advise the editor in developing the AJAJ's policies.

The B'nai Ya'akov Council is a colloquium of several dozen Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) rabbinic alumni, all of whom possess a special interest in American Jewish history and, concomitantly, in The Marcus Center's *raison d'être*. In addition to the annual support The Marcus Center receives from the individual members of the B'nai Ya'akov Council, this group meets annually to offer The Marcus Center's Executive Director advice on how the institution can better support American rabbis and synagogues in their effort to learn more about the history of the American Jew. Frequently, the members of the B'nai Ya'akov Council also function as scouts for primary source documents that ultimately come to the AJA. In doing so, the members of the B'nai Ya'akov Council perpetuate a tradition that goes back to the institution's

earliest days. For soon after the AJA came into existence in 1947, many HUC-JIR rabbinic alumni found wonderful collections of documents in their student pulpits and a variety of out-of-the-way attics. Many of these same rabbis went on to pursue distinguished careers in the rabbinate and, in due time, these men and women donated their papers to the AJA. In short, American rabbis have played a pivotal role in expanding the size of our collection by identifying and procuring for the AJA an array of significant historical documents. The members of the B'nai Ya'akov Council have come together to carry on the vital work that was done by hundreds of their rabbinic forebears.

Two years ago, nearly two dozen independent scholars and lay leaders came together to create The Marcus Center's Ezra Consortium, men and women who are interested in deepening their understanding of Jewish life in America. The members of this consortium have agreed to attend a conference which focuses on the work of The Marcus Center, the growth of its collection, and academic presentations from some of the leading scholars in the field of American Jewish history. In addition, the members of the Ezra Consortium play an active role in preserving our American Jewish heritage by identifying and acquiring additional documentary collections that will enhance the American Jewish Archives' collection. Finally, the Ezra Consortium seeks to provide much needed financial support for new projects that The Marcus Center is always hoping to actualize.

In this issue of our journal, readers will note the appearance of yet another panel of experts who have agreed to serve The Marcus Center. The Educational Advisory Council has recently convened to provide The Marcus Center's Executive Director with counsel on how the institution can serve Jewish educators who are interested in exposing their students to the study of the American Jewish experience. The distinguished members of our Educational Advisory Council convene semiannually in an effort to clarify The Marcus Center's overall educational vision and to bring those who reconstruct the past into a closer collaboration with those who teach American Jewish history. In the very near future, The Marcus Center will begin offering Educational Fellowships to Jewish educators who are interested in using the AJA's holdings to enhance their work as teachers of American Jewish history. The Educational Advisory Council is

presently at work on the development of a useful framework for a fellowship program of this sort.

The existence of these four boards spurs an institution like ours to reach for novel challenges and to advance steadily toward new achievements. Fresh ideas and diverse opinions fertilize the soil of creative thought. The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives is fortunate in having drawn so many outstanding individuals into these circles of support. In the years ahead, we hope that those who read this journal will sense they are reaping a harvest of new knowledge that has been made possible by the cooperative contributions of so many learned and committed advisors.

GPZ

Cincinnati, Ohio

ARTICLES

Felix Warburg and the Palestinian Arabs: A Reassessment

Rafael Medoff

On a chilly November evening in 1930, Felix Warburg, the philanthropic giant of interwar American Jewry, mounted the speaker's podium at New York City's Madison Square Garden. Although he regarded himself as a non-Zionist—sympathetic to the idea of Palestine as a Jewish refuge, but opposed to creating a sovereign Jewish state—Warburg shared the outrage of the tens of thousands of Jews who had assembled in the Garden to protest new British government restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchases in Mandatory Palestine. Not only did Warburg join his Zionist colleagues in resigning in protest from the leadership of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, but in his remarks at the rally Warburg went much further than anyone could have expected. "Transjordan's soil, for agricultural purposes is, if anything, better than Palestine's," Warburg declared, and "its water conditions are said to be better than Palestine's" as well. That being the case, if the Mandatory government "feels that something should be done for the *fellaheen* [Palestinian Arab agricultural laborers],

it may be well to consider if for the same amount invested much larger quantities of better land could be acquired and that part of the Arab population which is now employed urged to develop part of Transjordan. It is unjust to speak of such an offer of land in Transjordan as expatriation of the Arabs, as Transjordan is distinctly Arab territory and is only separated from Palestine by the Jordan—a smallish river, in some places not broader than the Bronx River.¹

This was a startling departure from what American Jewish leaders typically said in public about Palestine. Indeed, it would seem to contradict what Warburg had been saying about the Palestinian Arabs



*Felix Warburg, 1871-1937.
(American Jewish Archives)*

until then. As many historians have noted, Warburg vigorously advocated making concessions to the Palestinian Arabs in order to facilitate peaceful relations in the Holy Land. Jerome Kutnick's study of Warburg concludes that "Warburg wanted the Jews to adopt a more conciliatory policy toward the Arabs."² According to Ron Chernow, Warburg was "extremely sensitive to the Arab plight" and "intrigued" by the idea of creating an Arab-Jewish binational state, rather than a Jewish homeland, in Palestine.³ Naomi Cohen has summed up Warburg's positions regarding the Arabs as "dove-like."⁴

In the years to follow, Warburg would continue to advocate gestures and concessions to the Arabs that might be described as "conciliatory," yet he would just as vigorously pursue proposals to encourage Palestinian Arabs to leave the country. How can this apparent contradiction be explained? Can contemporary political categories such as "hawk" or "dove" do justice to the complexity of Warburg's attitude toward the Palestinian Arabs?

During the first years after World War I, Warburg exhibited minimal interest in Palestine. Like most other members of America's German Jewish elite, Warburg was unsympathetic to the idea of creating a Jewish state, partly because he feared it might raise questions about Diaspora Jewry's loyalties, partly because of his misgivings about Zionist management of the *yishuv's* affairs. In Warburg's eyes, the kibbutz system smacked of Bolshevism; some of the secular pioneers engaged in immoral behavior; funds were spent carelessly; and development schemes were plagued by inefficiency. Of every dollar that American Jews donated to Palestine, ninety-nine cents were consumed by Zionist activity in America, and only a penny actually reached the Holy Land, according to Warburg.⁵ He is said to have once remarked that "the difference between a Zionist and a non-Zionist is that a non-Zionist considers a debt a liability while the Zionist regards it as an asset."⁶ On another occasion, Warburg joked to friends that a future Jewish state would be so financially inept, it would have to send an ambassador to his firm, Kuhn, Loeb and Company, to negotiate its annual budget.⁷

A visit to the Holy Land in late 1923, at the behest of World Zionist Organization president Chaim Weizmann, changed Warburg's perspective. Surprised and profoundly impressed by the extent of Zionist development, he felt like "kissing every inch of the soil." Warburg was especially moved by the budding Hebrew University,

whose chancellor was his old friend Judah Magnes, formerly a prominent Reform rabbi and pacifist Zionist in New York.⁸ Warburg imagined Jewish students acquiring an enlightened, secular education, and in turn serving as beacons of progress for the entire Middle East. The university's Institute of Jewish and Islamic Studies—to which Warburg contributed generously—would “play an extraordinarily important part as the meeting ground for Jews and other oriental races,” Warburg predicted. He was especially impressed that one of the university's departments would “dwell upon the beauties of Arab literature,” which he hoped would demonstrate the *yishuv's* desire for peaceful relations with the local Arabs.⁹

His interest in Palestine newly kindled, Warburg embraced Weizmann's efforts to establish a formal alliance between the Zionist movement and wealthy American non-Zionists. Non-Zionists hoped to shape Palestine's future much as they had used philanthropy to exercise “social control” to influence (that is, Americanize) New York's Jewish immigrant community. The institutions the German Jewish elite had established in America for East European immigrants were facilitating an assimilation process that transformed the uncouth newcomers with their excessively Jewish ways into acceptable new Americans.¹⁰ Through financial domination of Zionist development, Warburg and his colleagues hoped to prevent the emerging Jewish polity in Palestine from behaving in untoward ways that would embarrass Diaspora Jewry. The analogy between the Zionists in Palestine and the East European immigrants in New York was, of course, far from exact; but from the perspective of the German Jewish patricians, both situations involved essentially the same kind of undesirable people, who were causing the same kinds of irritating



*Felix Warburg with Carl J. Austrian, New York
Chairman, Joint Distribution Committee.
(American Jewish Archives)*



*British troops entering Jerusalem, 1918.
(American Jewish Archives)*

problems and who therefore required similar treatment.¹¹

The "Pact of Glory" which brought the non-Zionists into the newly enlarged Jewish Agency was concluded in the summer of 1929, with Louis Marshall, leader of the American Jewish Committee, named president of the Jewish Agency Council, and Warburg chosen for the chairmanship of the Agency's Administrative Committee. When Marshall died suddenly three weeks later, Lord Melchett, the British non-Zionist leader, took his place—and almost overnight Warburg found himself the sole leader of the newly powerful American non-Zionists.¹² Warburg's unorthodox views on how to manage Jewish relations with Palestine's Arab community quickly came to the fore. At the very first post-pact meeting of the Jewish Agency, on August 13, 1929, Warburg devoted the bulk of his remarks to a plea for the Agency to ensure that the Arab population would benefit equally from Palestine development projects. The Agency leaders then passed a resolution reiterating the Agency's hope for Arab-Jewish coexistence, which Warburg hailed as "the successful declaration of peace between the different Jewish layers and the declaration of good feeling toward

the Arabs.”¹³

Those hopes for peace in Palestine were shattered just days later by the outbreak of nationwide Palestinian Arab violence against Jews, including the slaughter of sixty-seven Jews in Hebron. Warburg, instinctively distrustful of the Zionists and influenced by pro-Arab accounts of the violence in the British press, was reluctant to blame the Arabs for the rioting. He assumed the position of a calm, detached observer who could provide level-headed advice to the impassioned, warring factions in Palestine. Omitting any direct mention of the Arab attackers (or of the Jewish identity of the victims), Warburg's public statement in response to the violence was largely devoted to excoriating a Jewish protest rally that was held near the Western Wall shortly before the Arab attacks began, implying that it was the rally which provoked the massacres. In subsequent statements, Warburg complained that Zionist declarations were “bristling with arrogance and impudence”; he feared the Zionists' use of the term “Jewish Palestine” might anger the Arabs. Warburg even proposed suspending publication of the Zionist Organization of America's journal, *New Palestine*, on the grounds that it irritated Arabs by “barking in the same old tune of ‘National home’ stuff.” In Warburg's eyes, those who “shriek for Jewish domination” and make “chauvinistic, inflammatory jingo statements” in Jerusalem, like their uncouth counterparts on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, were boors who needed patrician guidance.¹⁴

Consistent with the German Jewish elite's preference for using dollars to exercise “social control,” Warburg viewed the Palestine conflict as yet another problem with economic roots and, therefore, economic solutions. Unable to conceive of the Palestine conflagration in terms of clashing nationalisms, Warburg sincerely believed Palestinian Arabs would be mollified by magnanimous Jewish gestures. In the wake of the rioting he called for the creation of small joint committees of Arabs and Jews “that will work for better roads, for better hospitals, for better schools, for better technical education, [and] for better civil service training.” Economic progress would result in social progress, Warburg contended. Citing the economic advances he had witnessed during his most recent visit to Palestine in April 1929, such as “better attire, better housing conditions, and motor cars,” Warburg believed that “a few more years of development of that type, and an understanding would have been brought about and

friendships formed." Since "health, education, cooperation in transportation, markets, the fight against elements, malaria, etc., are everybody's problems," surely everybody would want to work together to solve them, Warburg reasoned.¹⁵

Warburg offered additional suggestions. He proposed that fifty thousand dollars from the funds raised in America for relief of Jewish victims of the rioting be set aside for Arabs who were injured in the violence, and he vocally opposed the death sentences pronounced by the British upon twenty-six Arabs who took part in the rioting. That was not all. At a meeting in New York with British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald in October 1929, Warburg suggested setting up an "impartial radio broadcasting station" in Palestine, sponsored by the government and run by a committee of Arabs, Christians, and Jews, to provide "proper information" and encourage "good citizenship."¹⁶

Yet there were limits to how far even Warburg would go. When the British proposed to establish a democratically elected legislative council to govern Palestine, Warburg urged Zionist leaders to refrain from rejecting it outright lest they seem unreasonable, while at the same time insisting that conditions be attached to prevent Palestine's Arab majority from outvoting the Jews and dominating the council. For example, the Arabs could be required to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Mandate, with its promise to establish a Jewish national home; or the British could deny the Council authority to legislate on issues such as immigration and land purchase; or eligibility to vote in the elections to the Council could be linked to a literacy test—something many Arabs would be unable to pass.¹⁷

Yet for all of Warburg's proposed gestures and concessions to the Arabs, a distinction must be drawn between his short-range plan and long-range vision. Creating joint Arab-Jewish committees, toning down Jewish propaganda, and even commuting the death sentences of Arab rioters were, in Warburg's view, essentially stopgap measures. Seeking effective, practical steps to quickly alleviate tension in Palestine, Warburg counseled his Jewish Agency colleagues to temporarily set aside the "Utopian dream" of a substantial Jewish presence in Palestine and devote themselves to the "immediate establishment of livable conditions and such other safety measures so as to get people to live there quietly for the next few years and so that people will have confidence and back [business] enterprises in [the] immediate future." Careful, quiet, efficient planning would restore

calm to the Holy Land and, most importantly, attract Diaspora Jewish investments in Palestine development enterprises. "If [Palestine] is to progress at all, it must be built up on business lines pure and simple," Warburg contended.¹⁸ Concessions to the Arabs would restore peace; peace would lead to investments; investments would lead to a long-term solution to the Palestine conflict. And a long-term solution was taking shape in Warburg's mind.

Warburg had come to believe that the same practical business planning that was the key to developing Palestine could also be the key to quietly resolving the Arab-Jewish conflict. Dollars could work where diplomacy could not, he concluded: financial incentives could be used to persuade Palestinian Arabs to resettle in other countries, leaving Palestine clear for the Jews.

The chain of events that sparked Warburg's interest in the idea of Palestinian Arab emigration began with England's response to the Arab violence of 1929. The Shaw Commission, appointed to investigate the disorders, concluded in March 1930 that Jewish immigration was causing overcrowding in Palestine, and the overcrowding was leading to violent Arab resistance. Zionist leaders rejected the overcrowding claim; their own surveys had found that the country was entirely capable of absorbing substantial numbers of additional immigrants. But if the British could not be persuaded of that, then what the Zionists needed was an alternative. Chaim Weizmann thought that Transjordan might be the answer.

Transjordan, the vast, underpopulated territory east of the Jordan River, had been considered part of Palestine when the League of Nations allotted the mandate for the Holy Land to England in 1922. At London's request, however, the terms of the Mandate permitted the British to exclude Transjordan from the territory in which the Mandate required the development of a Jewish national home. That same year, the British severed Transjordan from western Palestine and installed as its ruler a local ally, Abdullah.¹⁹ Henceforth, only the territory west of the Jordan, about 22 percent of the original mandate area, would be considered Palestine; the remaining 78 percent, given the name Transjordan, was administered by England as a separate entity (in 1946 it would be formally granted independence). Zionist leaders denied the validity of the Transjordan separation but were helpless to stop it. If they could not get the territory back, Weizmann thought, then they might as well try to take advantage of the situation.

Assuming that western Palestine was indeed overcrowded, Weizmann now argued, then perhaps Transjordan could be used as "a great Arab reserve." He wrote to colleagues in March 1930: "[I]t is a country larger than Palestine, more fruitful than Palestine, and containing a population of roughly about 250/300,000." The development of Transjordan and the settlement there of Palestinian Arabs would "ease the situation in Palestine to a considerable degree," he maintained.²⁰

Writing to Warburg on May 15, 1930, Weizmann reported that an unnamed "Arab leader" (he was referring to the Syrian-Lebanese nationalist Riad as-Sulh) had sent him a message asserting that "the Transjordan Government would like a loan of one million pounds" to develop the country so that it "could be placed at the disposal of Arabs who may choose to leave Palestine" (as well as Jews who wanted to live there). Weizmann told Warburg that although it would be "extremely difficult" to gain British cooperation in the plan, "the whole solution of our difficulties lies in such a scheme" and therefore he had already discussed the loan idea with three prominent European Jewish financial giants: Max Warburg (one of Felix's brothers, still living in Germany), Oskar Wassermann, and Baron Edmond de Rothschild.²¹

Warburg decided to see if he could further such a scheme via his "mouthpiece and earphone" in the Holy Land, Maurice Hexter. Sharing Hexter's fear that a Jewish state in Palestine would be dominated by "a preponderant majority [of] less culturally-developed Eastern European Jewry," Warburg regarded the Bostonian as the ideal man to represent non-Zionist interests in Palestine. In September 1929 he had hired Hexter away from his position as executive director of the Federated Jewish Charities of Boston to become secretary of the American branch of the Jewish Agency's administrative committee. Hexter was Warburg's right hand.²²

When a British government investigatory team headed by Sir John Hope-Simpson arrived in Palestine in late 1930, Warburg sent Hexter to confer with Hope-Simpson. The Englishman mentioned to Hexter the idea of establishing a British government-financed development commission for Palestine, an idea which intrigued Warburg; it raised the prospect of an economic solution to the country's political troubles—particularly if the proposed commission would make use of Transjordanian territory. Warburg hoped the commission could finance Arab agricultural development in Transjordan, in order to "facilitate emigration of [Palestinian] Arabs into Transjordan, and

[thereby] increasing agricultural possibilities for Jews in Palestine." He discussed his idea with Bernard Flexner of the Palestine Economic Corporation who, in turn, brought it to the attention of Joseph Hyman of the Joint Distribution Committee, Justice Louis D. Brandeis, and Baron Edmond de Rothschild. They responded sympathetically.²³

Warburg was buoyed by his colleagues' support for the Transjordan idea. He was likewise pleased by reports from Hexter excitedly describing his own friendly talks with Hope-Simpson about the topic. But Warburg and Hexter misjudged the Englishman. Hope-Simpson was not prepared to venture beyond the traditional Colonial Office position, that Transjordan would have no connection to Palestine and would evolve as a separate Arab entity. His willingness to meet Hexter was merely a reflection of a desire by the Colonial Office to court the non-Zionists in the hope of driving a wedge between the Zionist and non-Zionist factions in the Jewish Agency. The Colonial Office seemed to have had a sort of grudging respect for the Americans' financial clout, but not enough to shake the Office's increasingly pro-Arab orientation.²⁴ The basic premise of Hope-Simpson's Palestine investigation was the belief, reinforced by the views of the British colonial administration in Palestine, that Jewish colonization was crowding out the Arabs. Zionists and non-Zionists alike made their case to Hope-Simpson during his investigation, but to no avail.

On October 20, 1930, Hope-Simpson's conclusions were published: Jewish immigration and land purchases needed to be restricted. The report was released simultaneously with the Passfield White Paper, a statement by Colonial Secretary Lord Passfield which turned Hope-Simpson's proposals into official policy. "[Passfield's] attitude is that it is his role to protect the poor Arabs against the powerful Jews . . . he seems to assume the role of the patron saint of the Arabs," Chaim Weizmann complained.²⁵ The Passfield declaration triggered angry protests throughout the Jewish world, including the resignations of Weizmann, Melchett, and Warburg from the leadership of the Jewish Agency.

Although officially separated from the Jewish Agency hierarchy, Warburg remained at the center of Palestine affairs and continued to express keen interest in the development commission idea. He noted that Hope-Simpson's report had strongly endorsed the development commission, as had Passfield (although in vague language). The

thought of linking the commission proposal to a Transjordan plan was entirely Warburg's; neither Hope-Simpson nor Passfield had mentioned Transjordan in their respective documents. In fact, Hope-Simpson, in a private letter accompanying his submission of his report to Passfield, noted that during his survey of the country, "it was frequently suggested that Arabs should be removed from Palestine to Trans-Jordania in order to make room for Jews." Such a scheme, he argued, was "unjust," in addition to being outside the purview of his mission.²⁶

As far as Hexter was concerned, it was precisely "the exclusion of Transjordan from the terms of reference [that had] crippled *ab initio* H.S.'s mission."²⁷ Yet Warburg was not ready to give up hope in the Transjordan scheme. In his view, so long as the Transjordan option had merely been excluded from Hope-Simpson's agenda, rather than specifically rejected on its merits by the British government, it might eventually be adopted. As the Joint Distribution Committee's Joseph Hyman remarked, the development commission might yet be shaped to include the goal of "reducing the land pressure problem in Palestine by enabling Arabs now in Palestine to earn their livelihood in Transjordan."²⁸

Five days after leaving his Jewish Agency post, Warburg raised the Transjordan idea in a letter to the British high commissioner for Palestine, Sir John Robert Chancellor. England should, he proposed, "lend its credit guaranty [*sic*] towards the purpose of acquiring a larger quantity of better land than is obtainable in Palestine, at a lower rate and settle those of the [Palestinian] Arabs who would like to become up to date farmers on such lands." Warburg depicted his proposal as less of a population transfer than an attempt to provide honest work for aspiring farmers. He said he was not interested in "driving out the Arabs who do first class work where they are in Palestine," but merely in "removing those who are not working now to places where they can show their willingness to acquire real skill as farmers."²⁹

It was against this background that Warburg delivered his aforementioned remarks at the November 2, 1930, rally at Madison Square Garden. In the wake of the Hope-Simpson report and the Passfield White Paper, Warburg decided to broach the Transjordan emigration idea, perhaps thinking that in view of the shifts in British policy, it was time for new ideas that would jar London. It was the first and last time Warburg would mention the Arab emigration idea

in public. In the weeks and months to follow, Warburg confined all discussion of the proposal to behind-the-scenes meetings. He directed Maurice Hexter to continue "insisting," in meetings with British officials in Palestine, on "the inclusion of Transjordan" in the development scheme "for at least the Arabs," since London had declared it off-limits to the Jews (when it declared in 1922 that the "Jewish National Home" provisions of the Mandate would apply only in western Palestine).³⁰ Hexter reminded Hope-Simpson that Transjordan was really "an artificial separation deriving from the fortuitous necessity of stopping Abdullah's march on to Syria by giving him a 'kingdom.'" It was simply "unfair" that the Jews should "pay this price by chipping away a portion of what was intended as Balfour Palestine."³¹ Ideally, both the Zionists and non-Zionists would have preferred to have the two regions reunited, with Jews and Arabs allowed to settle freely in both; then there would be plenty of land for the Jews to bring in large numbers of immigrants without being accused of crowding out the Arabs. But with Transjordan closed off to Jewish settlement by British decree, discussion of the development commission focused on that territory as a site to which Palestinian Arabs could be relocated.

Subsequent developments encouraged Warburg and his colleagues to continue thinking along those lines. Undersecretary of State for the Colonies Drummond Shiels revealed during a November 18, 1930, debate in the House of Commons that the British government intended to lend £2.5 million for a variety of development projects in Palestine for the purpose of assisting Arabs whose livelihood was impaired after the land they worked was sold to Jews. The obvious corollary would be to include Transjordan as an "outlet" for Arabs from the "congested hill sections" of Palestine, Warburg and his aides thought—and they were not alone.³²

There was strong support for the Transjordan resettlement idea at a December 1, 1930, meeting of the Jewish Agency's American wing, attended by the top brass of America's Palestine backers: Warburg, Julian Mack, Cyrus Adler, Robert Szold, Morris Rothenberg, Bernard Kahn, and Felix Frankfurter (whose own published critique of the Hope-Simpson report likewise proposed resettlement of Palestinian Arabs in Transjordan³³). The group decided unanimously to recommend that the Transjordan option be moved to the top of the

Zionist agenda. In a cable to Weizmann and Hexter, the group urged the Zionist leadership to "table for [the] present [all] discussion of abstract legal principles in interpretation [of the] Mandate," and concentrate instead on "concrete matters" such as the development commission and England's "inadmissible failure [to] include Transjordan within consideration [of the] development scheme."³⁴

Assuring his New York colleagues of his intention to make "strong representations for including Transjordan" in the program of the development commission, Hexter repeatedly pressed British officials on the matter.³⁵ As the discussions continued into the spring of 1931, Hexter used increasingly strong language. In February he warned High Commissioner Sir John Chancellor that "unless Transjordan was brought within the purview of the scheme, especially for those cases of congestion in the hills which needed relief, it would be impossible to work the scheme." In March he repeated that warning to Hope-Simpson, declaring that without Transjordan as a site for Palestinian Arab settlement, "the [development] scheme would not be workable under any programme whatsoever."³⁶ When Undersecretary Shiels, who professed sympathy for the Transjordan idea, told Hexter of "advices" [*sic*] that the Transjordanian Arabs were opposed to any influx from Palestine, Hexter insisted that data collected by the Zionists, including reports published in the Arab media, indicated precisely the opposite. Reports of Transjordanian opposition to immigration from Palestine were "coloured" by sources who were biased against the Transjordan solution, Hexter told Undersecretary Shiels. The solution to Palestine's problems, Hexter bluntly reminded Hope-Simpson in May, "lies only in opening Transjordan, at least for some Arabs."³⁷

Warburg, in New York, anxiously monitored Hexter's negotiations. He received a steady stream of detailed letters and cables on the progress of the talks and relayed instructions to Hexter on how to proceed. Warburg and his Jewish Agency colleagues urged that the development commission be granted broad financial and administrative powers. As they conceived it, the commission's purpose would be to sponsor projects that would both assist aggrieved Arab farmers and increase the "absorptive capacity" of Palestine in order to facilitate increased Jewish settlement. At the same time, "Transjordan must be considered within [the] ambit [of the commission]" as the site for resettling Palestinian Arabs who were



*Felix Warburg (circa 1929).
(American Jewish Archives)*

inadvertently displaced by Jewish land purchases. The commission's chair would be an Englishman who was "unprejudiced" on Palestine affairs. He would function in cooperation with two advisers, one Jewish and one Arab, who would have "full voting powers" in determining the commission's agenda.³⁸

In the summer of 1931 rumors suggested that British Zionist activist Harry Sacher might be named the Jewish adviser to the commission. Warburg was alarmed to learn from Hexter that Sacher had once made a

remark "to the effect that he would not believe an Arab under oath."³⁹ Warburg lobbied against Sacher's candidacy, warning that the appointment of such a "strongheaded avowed anti-Arab personality" would suggest to the Arabs "that the Jews are their enemies and have no genuine desire to find a *modus vivendi*." Arab-Jewish relations had to be kept out of the hands of belligerent Zionists and managed instead by level-headed patrician types. In Warburg's view, Hexter was the obvious choice for the job.⁴⁰

But there was to be no job, nor any Transjordan option. Although Shiels seemed interested in the idea, and even pressed Hope-Simpson to look into it during the latter's follow-up visit to the region later that year, Colonial Secretary Passfield blocked its progress. "While Shiels is a smart young man, I make Colonial Policy," Passfield remarked sternly in explaining to Hope-Simpson that Transjordan must remain outside the scope of consideration.⁴¹ The British were not about to risk Arab nationalist ire by promoting the relocation of Arabs from western Palestine to Transjordan. The decision to exclude Transjordan from consideration for such purposes was reiterated to Hexter by Lewis French, formerly of England's Indian Civil Service, who in August 1931 was sent by the British government to survey Palestine's development possibilities. French confided to Hexter that it would

indeed be "cheaper and quicker" to resettle "the congested fellahin" across the Jordan. The problem, he told Hexter, was that he, like Hope-Simpson, "was forbidden to speak about Transjordan." *Hinc Illae Lachrymae*, Hexter wrote to Warburg; "from this, tears will flow."⁴²

The collapse of Hexter's efforts did not dissuade Warburg from his core conviction that the sophistication, calm tempers, and considerable wealth of the German Jewish elite could solve problems that the various warring factions in the Mideast could not. Even if the Transjordan plan had so far come to nought, Warburg wrote Hexter in early 1932, it was still their duty to "see if, in the economic way, we cannot force Arab-Jewish understanding when political efforts have surely failed and when the Government efforts also seem to develop more stiffness all around."⁴³ Warburg decided to set his sights on trying to have a Palestinian Arab join the board of Palestine Potash Ltd., a firm that extracted mineral deposits from the Dead Sea. Such a gesture would "give tangible proof of our desire to have the non-Jewish population join us in constructive work in Palestine," Warburg believed.⁴⁴ As a leading member of the board and major investor, Warburg had considerable influence in the company, and its managing director, Moshe Novomeysky, was an outspoken advocate of Arab-Jewish reconciliation. But it was no mean feat finding a Palestinian Arab who was both willing to openly work with Jewish investors and who had the means to meet the company's criteria for board membership. It took Warburg until 1934 to accomplish the task.⁴⁵

It was not long before Warburg was back in the thick of the Mideast conflict. In the spring of 1936 mass Palestinian Arab violence erupted anew, and Warburg again turned hopefully to the theory that Jewish concessions and moderate behavior could facilitate peaceful relations, at least temporarily. While contributing twenty thousand dollars to the *yishuv's* defense needs, Warburg added a rider that its expenditure would need "the approval of Messrs. Hexter and [Judah] Magnes"—so he could be sure the money would be used "to heal the wounds rather than help in inflicting them." Warburg had taken a somewhat sympathetic interest in Magnes's unsuccessful peace negotiations with Palestinian Arab officials in 1929–1930, but, as a Jewish Agency official, Warburg could not endorse unauthorized diplomatic activity that the Agency leadership had denounced; nor was he prepared to accept Magnes's proposal for a permanent Jewish

minority status in Palestine in exchange for peace with the Arabs. Still, Warburg preferred Magnes's pacifist instincts to what he regarded as the heavy-handed ways of the Zionists, and considered him the appropriate person to ensure that Warburg's contribution to the 1936 Palestine defense fund would not end up in the wrong hands.⁴⁶

Warburg urged Zionist leaders to tone down what he regarded as their excessively nationalistic public statements, lest "ardent Zionism and the desire for peace and good business administration collide."⁴⁷ When Moshe Shertok, director of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, used the phrase "Jewish Nation" in an interview with the *New York Times* in late May, Warburg was furious; he immediately fired off a cable demanding Shertok's resignation.⁴⁸ Warburg pressed American Zionist leader Stephen Wise—unsuccessfully—to cancel his planned World Jewish Congress on the grounds that it would "stimulate and may bring about a widespread Pan Arab movement in the Near East with a special anti-Jewish purpose."⁴⁹

Warburg's proposed list of steps to improve Arab-Jewish relations did not end there. A low-cost housing project should be built in an Arab neighborhood in Jaffa where the government had recently bulldozed a number of houses.⁵⁰ The Jewish National Fund's policy of hiring only Jewish laborers should be scrapped. The Zionist leadership should embrace a Legislative Council with Arab-Jewish parity in the distribution of seats "guaranteed" by the British. And the principle of "absorptive capacity"—which had been used by the British since 1922 to limit Jewish immigration to Palestine—should be accepted for determining the number of Jewish immigrants, so long as it was calculated in accordance with "careful economic studies."⁵¹ At the same time, the latest round of violence also prompted Warburg to confer with American Zionist leader Julian Mack in October 1936 about the idea of encouraging Palestinian Arabs to immigrate to the "more fertile soil of Trans-Jordania."⁵²

Warburg was especially enamored with the idea of bringing prominent Jews and Arabs to the negotiating table to discuss their differences. Although he had refrained from endorsing the unauthorized negotiations that Judah Magnes had initiated with Arab representatives in 1929, preferring not to tangle with Magnes's Zionist critics, the renewal of violence galvanized Warburg to take a second look at the feasibility of unauthorized negotiations. But Warburg had always regarded himself as a consummate mediator, somebody who

could "get people to think along the same lines who formerly thought differently." He had helped establish the Educational Alliance out of three related charities; he had convinced the leading Jewish groups in New York to unite under the umbrella of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies in 1917; he worked to unite two of New York's prestigious music institutions, to bring together three theological seminaries, to merge the New York Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonic, and to unify Temple Emanu-El with the nearby Temple Beth-El.⁵³ Finally, he had played an instrumental role in facilitating the 1929 Pact of Glory alliance between Zionists and non-Zionists in the Jewish Agency. Why should things be different in Palestine?

In early 1937 Warburg asked a non-Zionist colleague, Maurice Karpf, to explore quietly the possibility of having American non-Zionists meet with Arab officials in the United States. Preliminary discussions to arrange such a meeting were underway in June, just as the British government's Peel Commission announced its proposal to partition western Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with two hundred and twenty-five thousand Arabs to be relocated from the area of the Jewish state to ensure it would have a Jewish majority. Although the British government had never before looked with sympathy upon the idea of compelling Palestinian Arabs to emigrate, it now accepted the idea of a transfer as the only way to establish a Jewish state within a partitioned Palestine. The Zionist movement was plunged into controversy about whether to accept a state of such small dimensions, and the question of resettling the Arabs barely penetrated the discussion.⁵⁴

Despite his many previously expressed misgivings about Jewish sovereignty, Warburg's initial response to the Peel plan was far from negative. He saw the situation as comparable to the manner that he and his wife had responded to the decisions by his brother and one of his sons to marry non-Jews: in each case "we objected and fought the decision and tried to prevent it," but when it was clear that it could not be prevented, "we made the best of it to achieve happiness for the parties most directly involved... I am afraid we will have to do the same thing in this case."⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, he expressed no objection to the proposal to transfer Arabs out of the Jewish state. Warburg's only serious concern was how the Zionists might behave in the weeks to come. They were sure to be "growling and agitating" in an effort "to improve on the bargain"—in his mind like so many noisy Lower East

Side housewives haggling with untidy street peddlers. How could such people run a state? "I shudder at the representatives whom they will send to the different countries to obtain backing and trade conditions," Warburg fretted, "and I see very little human material that can be reformed from propaganda agents into wise administrators."⁵⁶

But Warburg's view on the subject had not yet crystallized, and as his non-Zionist colleagues rallied against the plan—warning that a Jewish state would provoke "dual loyalty" accusations against Diaspora Jews—Warburg conceded that establishing a Jewish State would indeed "mean putting up a target in the form of this miniature State, for which the whole Jewish world will be held responsible, though it will have nothing to say."⁵⁷ He began to realize that it was more urgent than ever that the uptown stewards come up with a Arab-Jewish agreement, rather than leave the future in the hands of the "growlers" and "agitators" of the Zionist movement.⁵⁸ The impending meeting between non-Zionist representatives and Arab officials in New York suddenly took on special importance. A deal brokered by the German Jewish elite could pull the rug out from under the Peel plan. If the Arabs and non-Zionist Jews could hammer out an "Arab-Jewish joint peace statement," it might persuade the British to suspend their plan and permit Arabs and Jews to settle the Palestine conflict themselves.⁵⁹

The meeting was held at Warburg's lower Manhattan office in July. The Arab delegation consisted of Izzat Tannous, a member of the Arab Higher Committee (the chief Palestinian Arab political body); Amin Rihani, leader of the Pan Arab Movement, an Arab nationalist group; and Dr. J. I. Shatara, chief of the group's U.S. branch. Although they said they had come to the meeting "as individuals," their reported connections to the chief Palestinian Arab leader, Grand Mufti Haj Amin el-Husseini, gave their opinions considerable weight. The Jewish spokesmen were Warburg's business partner, Lewis Strauss; Morris Waldman, executive secretary of the American Jewish Committee; and George Backer, who was active in both the American Jewish Committee and the Joint Distribution Committee. While all three of the Jews were members of the American Jewish Committee, they had no connection to the Jewish Agency; in choosing them, Warburg wanted to ensure "that we cannot be charged with doing anything behind our [Agency] colleagues' backs." As an official of the Jewish Agency, Warburg was subject to its discipline; Strauss and

company, however, could take part as Warburg's stalking horses while Warburg himself kept his hands clean.⁶⁰

The Arab representatives proposed a ten-year truce in Arab-Jewish hostilities, coupled with a level of Jewish immigration that would bring the Jewish population to 40-45 percent of the national total. Although what would take place at the end of the truce was not specified, the implication was that Jews would remain a permanent minority in an Arab Palestine.⁶¹ Warburg's reaction was mixed. Although pleased that the Arabs were "genuine" in their desire "to get on peaceful terms with the Jews," and seemed to merely seek assurances "of no desire to rule or be ruled," Warburg wondered whether Tannous and company truly represented Arab opinion—"how much power they have, nobody can tell." Ultimately, the talks had produced nothing except "an exchange of views," he noted.⁶² When Weizmann reacted harshly to Warburg's cable describing the meeting, Warburg agreed to refrain from further talks—at least for the time being.⁶³

At the Jewish Agency leadership meeting in Zurich the following month, immediately preceding the World Zionist Congress, Warburg led the opposition to the Peel plan. In order to mobilize the largest possible number of opponents to the plan, Warburg's remarks skirted the "dual loyalty" notion and other hot-button issues. Naturally he made no reference to the idea of encouraging Palestinian Arab emigration, a topic he had broached in public only once previously. Instead, Warburg focused his criticism on London's failure to make a sufficient effort to initiate direct Jewish-Arab peace talks. He insisted peace might still be attained by holding "a round table," with Jews and Arabs sitting together. Had this been done, he was sure, the two warring sides "would soon have learned to think of problems and not of their races." The British, like the Jews and Arabs, were too emotionally involved in the conflict to perceive the remedy. They needed cool-headed outsiders like Warburg—"I am a practical man," he reminded them—to take charge. "Sometimes the people further away see things more clearly than in the field of battle." He concluded with a threat: if the Jewish Agency Council went ahead with the Peel plan, "we [non-Zionists] cannot go with you."⁶⁴ Anxious to avoid a break with the non-Zionists, Weizmann and his colleagues agreed to a compromise: the Jewish Agency authorized two sets of negotiations—talks with the British about the Peel plan, and a request

to the British to arrange a Arab-Jewish round-table conference. Warburg returned to New York satisfied.⁶⁵

Unbeknownst to Warburg, his non-Zionist colleague Edward Norman was in the meantime hard at work developing a proposal to finance the emigration of Arabs from Palestine to Iraq. Warburg and Norman shared similar charitable interests: Warburg supported Norman's American Fund for Palestinian [Cultural] Institutions, and both were active in the Joint Distribution Committee, the American Jewish Committee, and the American Friends of Hebrew University. Norman met with Warburg immediately upon his return from Zurich and showed him his forty-eight-page memorandum outlining the Iraq plan. As Norman later recalled, Warburg "became interested in it and urged me to proceed with an exploration of its practical possibilities."⁶⁶ In fact, in the days following his return from Europe, Warburg himself had been at work on the draft of a new proposal for resolving the Palestine conflict. Now he sought to incorporate Norman's Iraq scheme into what he called his "Plan for Readjustment of Arab Palestine and Jewish Palestine." Warburg's plan was based on the notion that the Arab populations of Palestine, Transjordan, and Iraq should be considered as one, totaling, in his estimation, 3,744,000. From this perspective, the Arab world could understand that "a population of a million Jews [in Palestine] would not be endangering their independence." Therefore, he proposed the creation of a sort of federation consisting of three cantons: Iraq and Transjordan as Arab cantons, and Palestine—or some part of it—as the Jewish canton. Jewish financial assistance would help develop the Arab cantons, beginning with the erection of an electric power plant in Transjordan. In exchange, Jews would be permitted to settle in the Transjordan canton—thus "space will be created for additional Jews in Palestine." As for Iraq, "money might be raised" (the source was not specified) for development projects that would be made possible by Arab immigration from the other cantons. "A serious group"—evidently the reference was to Norman—"is considering this scheme," Warburg noted. Although many details of the plan remained unfinished, Warburg immediately circulated his new memorandum to a number of Zionist and non-Zionist leaders.⁶⁷

For data on the potential for settling in Transjordan and Iraq, Warburg turned to his agent in Europe, Joint Distribution Committee official Nathan Katz, an attorney and former secretary to the League

of Nations' high commissioner for refugees. Katz reported on September 24 that Iraq was "a land of great potentiality," but was less enthusiastic about Transjordan, noting that most of the country was desert. Still, he said, something might be done with the western fifth of Transjordan, which "is potentially of high agricultural value."⁶⁸

Although Warburg still "felt that the plan should be further revised and perfected," he was "so enthusiastic in his approval" of Norman's scheme "that he offered to put into it \$10.00 for every \$1.00 which Mr. Norman would invest," according to Norman's later account.⁶⁹ An additional factor influencing Warburg's decision to embrace the Norman scheme was an apparent green light from Chaim Weizmann. After the raucous reaction to the meetings with Arabs in New York the previous summer, Warburg was anxious to clear the Iraq project with Weizmann before proceeding, so at Warburg's behest Nathan Katz had discussed the "Iraq possibilities" with Weizmann on October 5. Katz immediately cabled Weizmann's reaction: he thought the plan might be "premature," but added, "if your people want to I will not interfere."⁷⁰ These preliminary steps toward a Warburg-Norman collaboration went no further, however; Warburg suddenly suffered a massive heart attack on October 18 and passed away two days later.

Viewed from today's perspective, Felix Warburg's statements and actions regarding the Palestinian Arabs would seem to constitute something of a paradox. No contemporary political category would suit an individual who urged the Zionist movement to reduce its political ambitions, opposed capital punishment for Arab rioters, called for massive financial aid to the Palestinian Arabs—and at the same time actively promoted plans to encourage those same Arabs to emigrate from Palestine. Perhaps the mistake of some historians has been to judge Warburg according to contemporary political categories. For ultimately, Warburg's approach was rooted primarily in economics, not politics. Political concessions had their place in Warburg's thinking, but the notion that political problems could be solved through economic action was the common theme linking his seemingly disparate positions regarding Palestinian Arabs. He was convinced that Jewish financial gestures to the Arabs would facilitate peace in the short run, and that a financial compensation package could facilitate his long-term solution, emigration. Warburg never really understood the role played by rival religious sentiments and competing ethnic nationalisms in the Arab-Jewish conflict. Perhaps

because he, like many German-born Jewish patricians, was personally so distant from religion and nationalism, he had difficulty grasping how anyone could be motivated by such sentiments. But the rising tide of Arab nationalist fervor and violence in Palestine was making it increasingly clear that there was, after all, much more to the conflict than Felix Warburg had ever imagined.

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NOTES:

1. Felix M. Warburg, "Transjordan, Part of Palestine," *New Palestine* 19 (November 7, 1930): 126; "50,000 Storm Garden in N.Y. Jewry's Protest Against Britain's Nullification of Balfour Declaration; Speakers Throughout U.S. Denounce Passfield White Paper; Rosenwald Attends Meeting," *Jewish Daily Bulletin* [hereafter, JDB] 7: (November 4, 1930), 3, 6; "40,000 Here Protest On Palestine Policy, Charging 'Betrayal,'" *New York Times* [hereafter, NYT], November 3, 1930, 4; "American Jewry Scores England's Guilt," *The Jewish Tribune* (New York) 97 (November 7, 1930), 6.

2. Jerome Kutnick, "Non-Zionist Leadership: Felix Warburg, 1929-1937" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1983), 209.

3. Ron Chernow, *The Warburgs* (New York: Random House, 1993), 302, 604.

4. Naomi W. Cohen, "An Uneasy Alliance: The First Days of the Jewish Agency," in *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, edited by Bertram W. Korn (New York: Ktav, 1976), 115. Cohen describes Warburg in similar terms in her *The Year after the Riots: American Responses to the Palestine Crisis of 1929-30* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 138-39.

5. Rufus Lears, *Fulfillment: The Epic Story of Zionism* (Cleveland: World, 1951), 246; Vera Weizmann, *The Impossible Takes Longer: The Memoirs of Vera Weizmann* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 105.

6. Kutnick, 446.

7. David Farrer, *The Warburgs: The Story of a Family* (New York: Stein and Day, 1974), 103.

8. Vera Weizmann, 105-6.

9. "Warburg and Weizmann Feted At Dinner of Hebrew University Friends," JDB 3: 656 (December 30, 1926), 4. Kutnick (150-51) contends that Warburg derived his interest in Palestine not from Jewish sources, with which he was unfamiliar, but from the general interest of Western Christian civilization in the Holy Land. That Warburg was not well acquainted with Jewish sentiment about the Land of Israel does not automatically mean that Western or Christian sentiment was a decisive influence in shaping his thinking; nor does Kutnick's theory account for Warburg's sudden interest in 1923. This may simply be one of those historical instances in which there are no

motives more complex than those that are the most obvious. An engaging conversation with Weizmann, a moving visit to an ancient land, and a well-established interest in helping the downtrodden all combined to arouse Warburg's interest in the Holy Land. In the wake of surging postwar nativism and restrictions on immigration to the U.S., non-Zionists looked to Palestine as a homeland for the masses of oppressed Jews who would no longer be able to enter the United States.

10. Naomi W. Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership* (Hanover, N.H.: University of New England Press, 1999), 85; Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States 1830-1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), 303-4.

11. For one example of many, see Hexter to Warburg, September 11, 1929, Folder 2, Box 2, MBH.

12. Herbert Parzen, "A Momentous Meeting for the Enlargement of the Jewish Agency for Palestine," in Korn, 401-22.

13. "Address by Mr. Felix M. Warburg at the Jewish Agency Conference, Held at Zurich, Switzerland, Commencing Sunday, August 11th, 1929," p. 2, Folder 8, Box 240, Felix Warburg Papers [hereafter, FWP], The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati; Warburg to Max Warburg, August 26, 1929, Folder 5, Box 247, FWP.

14. Rosenberg to Warburg, two cables, September 14, 1929, File 14, Box 251, FWP; Weizmann to Warburg, November 13, 1929, Folder 7, Box 252, FWP; Warburg to Goldsmid, November 22, 1929, Folder 2, Box 2, Maurice B. Hexter Papers [hereafter, MBH], The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati; Rosenberg to Warburg, July 26, 1930, Folder 1, Box 266, FWP; "Palestine Payments Since August, 1929 - July 1, 1930," Folder 1, Box 277, FWP.

15. "Warburg Invites Arab Cooperation," *NYT*, September 5, 1929, 10; "Felix M. Warburg, Agency Administrative Committee Chairman, Returns," *JDB*, VI: 1458 (September 5, 1929), 3; "Palestine Arabs Shared In Benefits Of Jewish Funds, Says Warburg," *JDB*, VI: 1460 (September 8, 1929), 4.

16. Magnes to Warburg, September 13, 1929, in Arthur A. Goren, *Dissenter in Zion: From the Writings of Judah L. Magnes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 279-81; Warburg to Brown, undated telegram (apparently September 1929), File 9, Box 251, FWP; "Proposed Address to the Prime Minister, to be Presented by Mr. Warburg on Behalf of the American Jewish Deputation" (October 1929), p. 8, Folder 8, Box 240, FWP; Kutnick, 220-21.

17. "Proposals Regarding Legislative Council," Folder 7, Box 341, FWP; Warburg to Hexter, August 14, 1935, Folder 8, Box 3, MBH.

18. "Plan Corporation to Aid Palestine," *NYT*, November 25, 1929, 20.

19. England's aims were to reward an ally, block French penetration of the region, and fulfill a World War One-era pledge made by London to Abdullah's father, Hussein, to permit the establishment of an Arab regime in some part of the area. See Avraham P. Alsberg, "Delimitation of the Eastern Border of Palestine," *Zionism* 3 (1981): 87-98, and Bernard Wasserstein, *Herbert Samuel: A Political Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 251-53.

20. Weizmann to Ethel Snowden, March 16, 1930, Weizmann Archives [hereafter, WA], Rehovot, Israel; Weizmann to David Lloyd George, March 27, 1930, WA.

21. Weizmann to Warburg, May 15, 1930, WA; Weizmann to Warburg, June 17, 1930, WA.

22. Hexter to Warburg, September 11, 1929, Folder 2, Box 2, MBH.
23. Hyman to Brandeis, June 16, 1930, and two enclosures, Reel 90, Louis D. Brandeis Papers [hereafter, BP-PU], Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.
24. Kutnick, 285, n. 118.
25. Weizmann to Warburg, November 13, 1929, Folder 7, Box 252, FWP.
26. Hope-Simpson to Passfield, August 18, 1930, Folder 7, Box 2, MBH.
27. "Outline of Criticism of Hope-Simpson Report—Final Draft, London, April 21, 1931," File 2, Box 3, MBH.
28. Hyman to Warburg, November 1, 1930, File 6, Box 260, FWP.
29. Warburg to Chancellor, October 27, 1930, Reel 90, BP-PU.
30. Hexter to Warburg, November 20, 1930, File 2, Box 2, MBH; Hexter to Hyman, November 22, 1930, Folder 4, Box 261, FWP.
31. Hexter to Hope-Simpson, May 11, 1931, File 3, Box 3, MBH.
32. Zioniburo to Warburg, November 19, 1930, File 4, Box 261, FWP; Hexter to Admincom, December 2, 1930, Folder 4, Box 261, FWP. Also see Hexter to Admincom, December 3, 1930, Folder 4, Box 261, FWP, and Laski and Hexter to Admincom, December 9, 1930, Folder 4, Box 261, FWP.
33. Felix Frankfurter, "The Balfour Declaration and After: 1917–1931," in *The Jewish National Home: The Second November 1917–1942*, edited by Paul Goodman (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1943), 74.
34. Hyman to Brandeis, December 1, 1930, File 4, Box 261, FWP.
35. Laski and Hexter to Admincom, December 9, 1930, File 1, Box 3, MBH; Hexter to Hope-Simpson, December 2, 1930, File 1, Box 3, MBH; Hexter to Hope-Simpson, January 18, 1931, File 2, Box 3, MBH.
36. "Memorandum of Conversation with the High Commissioner," February 6, 1931, File 3, Box 2, MBH; "Note of a Conversation with Sir John Hope-Simpson, Savoy Hotel, London, March 19th, 1931," File 2, Box 3, MBH.
37. "Memorandum of Conversation with Dr. Drummond Shiels, House of Commons, April 24th, 1931," File 2, Box 3, MBH; Hexter to Hope-Simpson, May 11, 1931, File 3, Box 3, MBH.
38. Hexter to Admincom, April 24, 1931, File 2, Box 3, MBH; Admincom to Hexter, May 21, 1931, File 3, Box 3, MBH.
39. Hexter to Warburg, August 23, 1931, File 3, Box 2, MBH.
40. Warburg to Adler, August 24, 1931, File 3, Box 2, MBH; Warburg to Goldsmid, August 27, 1931, File 3, Box 2, MBH.
41. "Memorandum Athens (Greece) Discussions, August 12–16, 1931," File 7, Box 2, MBH.
42. Hexter to Warburg, December 26, 1931, File 3, Box 2, MBH; Hexter to Warburg, July 2, 1932, File 4, Box 3, MBH. The Latin he quoted was from the second-century (B.C.E.) humorist P. Terentius Afer, in *Andria* 1, 1, 99.
43. Warburg to Hexter, February 9, 1932, File 4, Box 3, MBH. Warburg was unaware, until after the fact, of the Jewish Agency's unsuccessful negotiations in 1932 with Emir Abdullah to lease land for Jewish development in Transjordan, and he evinced no special interest in the topic. (For a Jewish Agency representative's account of the effort, see Emanuel Neumann, *In the Arena: An Autobiographical Memoir* [New York: Herzl Press, 1976], 121–30.)
44. Warburg to Simon, April 6, 1931, File 3, Box 277, FWP.

45. Hexter to Warburg, February 27, 1932, Folder 4, Box 3, MBH; "Notes on a meeting between Mr. Musa Alami, Dr. J. L. Magnes, Mr. Julius Simon and Dr. Max Schloessinger, held at the house of Dr. Magnes on Sunday afternoon, November 15th, 1931," Reel 19, Louis D. Brandeis Papers, Zionist Archives, New York [hereafter, BP-ZA]; Bernhardt to Brandeis, September 4, 1931, Reel 18, BP-ZA; Brandeis to Bernhardt, September 6, 1931, Reel 18, BP-ZA; Warburg to Flexner, cable, August 17, 1931, Box 227, Folder 3, FWP; "Minutes of the 13th Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Palestine Economic Corporation," May 26, 1931, pp. 2-3, Folder 4, Box 277, FWP; Flexner to Warburg, October 26, 1934, Folder 3, Box 304, FWP.

46. Warburg to Weizmann, August 18, 1936, Folder 11, Box 332, FWP; Warburg to Rothenberg, August 24, 1936, Folder 2, Box 4, MBH; Warburg to Magnes, August 24, 1936, Folder 2, Box 4, MBH.

47. Warburg to Simon, June 15, 1936, Folder 5, Box 330, FWP.

48. Warburg to Hexter, June 3, 1936, Folder 2, Box 323, FWP; Weizmann to Warburg, September 2, 1936, Folder 11, Box 332, FWP; Hexter to Warburg, June 6, 1936, Folder 3, Box 323, FWP; Warburg to Weizmann, August 18, 1936, Folder 11, Box 332, FWP.

49. Warburg to Wise and Lipsky, May 15, 1936, Folder 4, Box 333, FWP.

50. Simon to Flexner and Warburg, June 17, 1936, Folder 3, Box 330, FWP; Simon to Hall, June 19, 1936, Folder 4, Box 330, FWP.

51. Warburg et al. to Hexter and Senator, November 18, 1936, Folder 8, Box 323, FWP.

52. Mack to Warburg, October 19, 1936, Reel 104, BP-PU.

53. Warburg to Hexter, November 17, 1929, Folder 1, Box 5, MBH; Felix M. Warburg, "Under the Seven Stars" (unpublished memoirs), FWP, 59-A.

54. For background on the debates over the Peel plan, see Yossi Katz, *Partner to Partition: The Jewish Agency's Partition Plan in the Mandate Era* (London: Frank Cass, 1998) and Rafael Medoff, *Zionism and the Arabs: An American Jewish Dilemma, 1898-1948* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997).

55. Warburg to Wise, July 7, 1937, Box 121, Stephen S. Wise Papers, American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass. [hereafter SSW-AJHS].

56. Warburg to Magnes, July 6, 1937, Folder 6, Box 4, MBH.

57. Ibid.

58. Warburg to Hexter, July 13, 1937, Box 340, Folder 2, FWP.

59. Weizmann to Wise, cable, July 17, 1937, Box 122, SSW-AJHS.

60. Warburg to Hexter, July 13, 1937, Box 340, Folder 2, FWP; "Confidential Report on Exchange of Views Between Arab Leaders and Group of Jewish Gentlemen" [hereafter, "Exchange of Views"], 1-3, File: June-December 1937, American Jewish Committee Series, Lewis L. Strauss Collection, AJHS.

61. "Exchange of Views," 5-6.

62. Warburg to Hexter, July 15, 1937, Box 340, Folder 2, FWP.

63. Wise to Zioniburo, cable, July 19, 1937, Folder 20, Box 4, Stephen S. Wise Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

64. "Speech of Mr Felix M. Warburg at the Meeting of the Council of the Jewish Agency, held in Zurich on August 18th, 1937] at 5 p.m.," Box 341/5, FWP.

65. The Arab leadership, opposed to the creation of a Jewish state of any size, unequivocally rejected the Peel plan, thus dooming the proposal from the start.

66. Norman to Rosenberg, November 3, 1938, 2, Edward A. Norman Papers, held

by the Norman family, New York; Norman to Warburg, September 6, 1937, Box 341/4, File B34, FWP; Norman to Warburg, September 7, 1937, Box 341/4, File B33, FWP; Emanuel to Norman, September 7, 1937, Box 341/4, File B32, FWP; Norman to Emanuel, September 8, 1937, Box 341/4, File B31, FWP; Warburg to Norman, September 10, 1937, Box 341/4, File B30, FWP.

67. "Plan for Readjustment of Arab Palestine and Jewish Palestine," undated, 5 pp., Box 341, Folder 6, FWP; Warburg to Hexter, September 28, 1937, Box 340, Folder 2, FWP.

68. Untitled memorandum, September 24, 1937, 9 pp., Box 340, Folder 7, FWP.

69. Memorandum of Conversation, "Proposal for Settlement of Palestine Problem," November 16, 1938, 2, Department of State, Division of Near Eastern Affairs, 867N.01/1618, National Archives [hereafter, NA], Washington, D.C. The source for the Warburg statement is a statement made by Norman to the British officials with whom he met in 1937 and the State Department officials with whom he conversed in 1938. See Vernon to Shuckburgh, December 20, 1937, CO 733/333/75156/35, Public Record Office, London; and Memorandum of Conversation, "Proposal for Settlement of Palestine Problem," November 16, 1938, 2, Department of State, Division of Near Eastern Affairs, 867N.01/1618, NA.

70. Katz to Warburg, cable, October 4, 1937, Box 343, File 4, FWP; Katz to Warburg, cable, October 5, 1937, Box 343, File 4, FWP; Norman to Warburg, October 13, 1937, 341/4, FWP; Norman to Cohen, October 13, 1937, 341/4, FWP; Warburg to Katz, October 13, 1937, 341/4, FWP; Warburg to Katz, October 14, 1937, 340/6, FWP; Warburg to Norman, October 14, 1937, 341/4, FWP; Norman to Warburg, October 19, 1937, 341/4, FWP.

The Independent Order of True Sisters: Friendship, Fraternity, and a Model of Modernity for Nineteenth—Century American Jewish Womanhood

Cornelia Wilhelm

Women, traditionally restricted in public participation and the execution of religious and communal matters, were a major concern of the nineteenth—century debate about reforming Judaism for a modern civil society, enabling the modern Jew to fully participate therein. It has been a theoretical and practical problem for leading Reform Jews to argue for "civic emancipation," while at the same time find a means for expressing religiosity, and participation in religious ceremonies and social activity, in the wider society.¹

Radical Reform leaders, such as Rabbi David Einhorn, argued that women's exclusion from certain religious obligations in traditional Judaism was "barbaric" and "degrading" and especially inconsistent with her position in the Jewish family, in which woman was still the center of religious life, education, and domestic piety. During the Breslau Rabbinic Conference in 1846 the status of women was presented as an issue and addressed to be more equalized, but no major practical action toward the equalization of Jewish women was taken.² Only slowly, from midcentury on, was woman's status in the synagogue changing: separate seating was abolished in the emerging Reform synagogues and family pews were gradually introduced; this made women visible participants of the synagogue and physically placed them within, rather than on the margin of Jewish religious ceremonies.

Similarly, the introduction of synagogue choirs gave women a new and more visible role during religious services. Nevertheless, as individuals women could not be full members of congregations or determine Jewish spiritual life as active participants. While her Protestant sisters were already seeking public spaces for the expression of their religiosity and were playing an important role in the Temperance Movement or among Abolitionists, the Jewish woman's domain was still the home.³ It took until the late nineteenth century for new spaces in women's public performance of Judaism to

❖ GRAND LODGE ❖

— OF —

U. O. T. S.

Manual of Degrees.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

By Worthy Brother Rev. Dr. M. Schlesinger,

OF ABIGAIL LODGE, No. 3, ALBANY, N. Y.

1895.

United Order of True Sisters Manual.
(American Jewish Archives)

open. Women had conquered spaces for their own and independently organized lay activity,⁴ which they began to organize in wider national movements such as the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) and later the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods.⁵

The few early expressions of Jewish female self-awareness and independent organization seen in the 1850s⁶ rarely survived the following decades which were characterized by a tendency toward federation and concentration of smaller charitable groups, putting these active Jewish women under male leadership.⁷ Also, the exclusively Christian spirit of female missionary and social service activists prevented Jewish women from joining hands with their non-Jewish sisters in the emerging Protestant-dominated women's movement.⁸

A remarkable exception to this pattern, however, was an organization which claims to be America's first independent national women's organization—the Unabhngiger Orden Treuer Schwestern, which translates into Independent Order of True Sisters. Founded in 1846, its name was anglicized to the United Order of True Sisters (UOTS) between 1900 and 1918 to maintain the original abbreviation of the German name.⁹ This group used the model of fraternal organization to create a way for Jewish women to enter the public sphere and redefine their new role in both contemporary Judaism and American society.

The formation of a women's lodge was a remarkable development, if only because the character of fraternal organization was a strong expression of masculinity and an all-male society.¹⁰ The Masonic orders and other lodges at the time did not admit women¹¹ and were even regarded as refuges for men who wanted to escape the female-dominated domestic sphere.¹² However, during the 1840s and 1850s the Masonic press published a vivid discussion about the relationship of women to lodges and their interest in lodge life, urging women either to join their husbands' orders or to establish their own lodges.¹³ This was also the context in which the UOTS was founded. The lodge had grown out of an attempt by Henriette Bruckman, wife of the physician Philip Bruckman,¹⁴ to found a ladies' society for women of the newly founded Congregation Emanu-El of New York City.

We know from early records of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith (IOBB) that the activities of this newly founded Jewish fraternal

order inspired mostly wives of the early B'nai B'rith members to create a similar social organization. The IOBB was formed in 1843 to a large degree by the same men who contributed to the founding of Congregation Emanu-El. The lodge helped foster a feeling of distinct community apart from congregational membership or ethnic background, organized charitable and educational projects, tried to promote a modern Judaism inside and outside the lodge, and attempted to find new expressions of religiosity for American Jews. For Jewish men the existence of the IOBB helped them to merge with American social and religious life and express their Jewish identity in a practical Judaism¹⁵ within a typical American social framework.

The earliest record that documents women's interest in lodge life is an address by Leo Merzbacher delivered at a festival of the newly founded B'nai B'rith Zion Lodge #2 at New York City in 1844.¹⁶ We know that Merzbacher, the rabbi and spiritual leader of Temple Emanu-El, spoke in front of men *and* women, mostly wives of the early B'nai B'rith members, who showed a great interest in joining the organization. Merzbacher displayed a rather conservative attitude toward women as potential members of the order as he explained why women were not allowed membership into B'nai B'rith. Generally, he claimed, they would not need a lodge due to their higher morality. But he also argued, since women would feel insecure about revealing such facts as their age, they could not go through the process of installation and consequently could not be members. Furthermore, since they were not used to criticizing actively and publicly, they would be unable to criticize a member whose errant conduct had been brought before the lodge.¹⁷

During the following two years several attempts to found a society for the women of Temple Emanu-El were rejected by the congregation at large.¹⁸ In 1846, however, Henriette Bruckman found enough support among some of her female friends and among some male family friends, who happened to be leading members of the newly founded congregation and the progressive wing of the IOBB. Her husband, along with his business partner Dr. James Mitchel, William Renau,¹⁹ Baruch Rothschild, publisher J. Mühlhauser, and Rabbi Dr. Leo Merzbacher,²⁰ suggested that the women launch their own secret society, similar to the B'nai B'rith, to give them a platform combining benevolence and education with higher and nobler aims for humanity.²¹ Two years after Merzbacher's rather dismissive

remarks about women as possible lodge members, the group of men did not turn down the women's demand for a fraternal organization, but rather supported the initiation of a lodge exclusively for Jewish women. According to Merzbacher's earlier remarks about women's lack of routine in leadership,²² this stance might have been taken in order to teach the women how fraternal organizations worked and how to build leadership; however, they clearly tried to keep the women out of their own all-male lodge.

Consequently, on April 15, 1846, Emanuel Lodge of the Unabhängiger Orden Treuer Schwestern was founded by Henriette Bruckman, Henriette Berg, Marie Bloch, Marie Felsenheld, Regina Klaber, Clara Lindheim, Fanni Mühlheiser [Mühlhauser], Louise Rothschild, Emilie Solinger, Jette Strauss, and Kati Weiss.²³

The first meeting of Emanuel Lodge took place ten days later under the assistance of Dr. Mitchel and his friends, who introduced the women to the performance of ritual, the degree system, and a jurisdiction, as well as office keeping; they also installed the first officers according to the ritual of the new order: Henriette Bruckman as president, Louise Rothschild as vice-president, Marie Felsenheld as treasurer, and Henriette Berg as secretary.²⁴ By 1851 the UOTS had grown enough to introduce a Grand Lodge as an overarching national platform to connect the local lodges and to help the women handle their organizational and legal matters centrally through the authority of that body. This was the time their male "teachers" drew back from the organization and left all business to the women.²⁵ By then Emanuel Lodge #1 counted over one hundred members, and the organization grew continuously. By the mid-1860s six lodges existed: Emanuel Lodge #1 (New York), B'noth Jeshurun Lodge #2 (Philadelphia), Abigail Lodge #3 (Albany), Jochebed Lodge #4 (New Haven), Hulda Lodge #5, and Jael Lodge #6 (New York).

Comparative research suggests that, at the time, the UOTS was the only exclusively female independent fraternal organization. This meant that in organized fraternal life Jewish women were far ahead of their Christian sisters. Although the Odd Fellows were introducing official identification cards to wives and widows of members by 1846, it took them until 1851 to establish only one degree for the wives of some of their more qualified members.²⁶ This was similar to the Masons, who instituted in 1870 the Order of the Eastern Star for the wives, mothers, and sisters of their members who had ascended to a

master's degree. Unlike the UOTS, none of these organizational endeavors gave women full participatory rights. These organizations were women's auxiliaries. Women could only be introduced through their husbands' membership and degree in the main lodge. None of them constituted an independent women's order. The True Sisters, however, were *never* an auxiliary of the B'nai B'rith. They have always been an independent women's organization in which women alone served as officers. Nevertheless, a common pattern in many cities seems to have been that when the men were organized in the IOBB, their wives developed interest in the True Sisters. Usually belonging to the extreme Reform wing of Judaism, these families seemed to have perceived lodge life as a particularly appealing supplement to the expression of Jewish religiosity within the synagogue. For them, lodge life offered more opportunities for meaningful participation in community life, embracing those whose participation in congregational life was disputed, such as women and intermarried couples. The men who were connected to the UOTS as "friends" or "honorary members" were Dr. Emanuel M. Friedlein,²⁷ probably the most constant companion of the UOTS in New York, Dr. Max Schlesinger and Jacob Labishiner of Albany,²⁸ Maier Zunder and Louis Feldman of Hew Haven,²⁹ and Henry Greenebaum of Chicago.³⁰ In later years they were succeeded by Jacob Furth³¹ of St. Louis, Dr. Kaufmann Kohler of Chicago, New York, and Cincinnati, and Dr. Emil G. Hirsch of Chicago.³²

In general "friendly relations" between the two orders grew out of family connections, but this never exceeded an informal level. We can only speculate on the reasons that an independent female fraternal organization was accepted by some of these liberal men. It is possible that a combination of their intention to maintain their separate sphere within the B'nai B'rith may have been combined with a very clear understanding of what social exclusion and religious restriction meant, along with the conviction that it was necessary to find ways to provide women with a means to define their roles in modern American society, and thus enjoy the benefits of the Jews' civic emancipation in America.

One of the oldest sources concerning the character, aims, and purposes of the lodge is its printed 1864 constitution. The constitution itself makes reference to earlier documents, dating back to 1846, while the 1864 version notes that the earlier constitutions failed to clarify the

true purpose of the organization. The 1864 document declared that it was the true purpose of the lodge to foster mutual intellectual/spiritual and physical support, to uplift women, and to create a public space for women to get together. "[T]hrough frequent meetings we want to get to know each other, exchange and coordinate our opinions and principles, improve our capabilities, increase our knowledge and improve and strengthen our character and work towards mutual understanding and respect among us."³³ In addition, the lodge offered its members mutual support for the sick and widowed and provided a decent burial for its members. Self-confident, articulate, and concerned about possible misunderstandings, the ladies remarked that "the third printed edition of our constitution has given us the desired opportunity to make changes and make a clear statement about the purpose of the society."³⁴ This indicates that they had problems being understood in their real purpose and might have been mistaken as a mere benevolent society. The True Sisters clearly specified that their purpose was not only

- "a) mutual aid in emergency and sickness,
 - b) a decent burial of the deceased sister,
 - c) refinement of the heart and mind and moral improvement
- is the purpose of this society,

but particularly the development of free, independent and well-considered action of its members. The women are to expand their activities, without neglecting their obligations as housekeepers, in such a manner, that if necessary they can participate in public meetings and discussions, **besides** [*sic*] the man, not inferior to him."³⁵

Referring to the *Zeitgeist*, the constitution continued to affirm public participation of women in meetings and discussions as the lodge's goal. Since the first article of the constitution stated to exclude anything political and confessionally religious, the lodge likely focused on Jewish social and cultural issues, presumably anything that was in the broadest sense embraced by the concept of *Bildung*.³⁶ Furthermore, the constitution stated that the need to form this society was due to changes in mentality, "thus we have to have the courage, to meet the challenges of the times."³⁷ It is not clear if the women referred to the changes immigration had brought to their lives or, which seems more probable in the historical context, to the challenge

of expressing civic respectability and religiosity, which was so strongly focused on by Congregation Emanu-El.

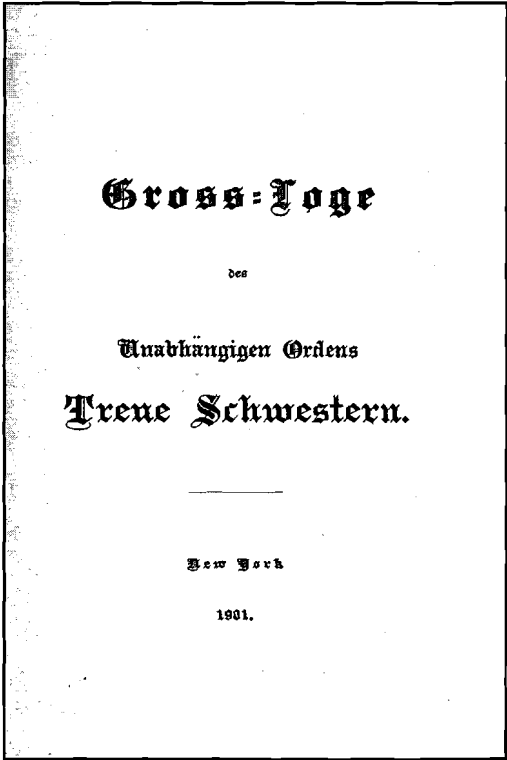
To meet these "challenges" more effectively, they resolved to have "independently and not controlled by anybody founded a free and secret society, the Independent Order of True Sisters" for married and unmarried women from the age of eighteen years.³⁸ This self-confident statement in the order's constitution described a major landmark in the organizational history of American Jewish women. The women clearly say that they printed the 1864 edition of the constitution, since the true purpose of the organization was not made clear enough in the earlier versions. This indicates that Jewish women had already in 1846 consciously tried to step out of their domestic sphere to make a move toward equality as partners with their husbands. They took the idea of partnership very literally and obviously envisioned that women's personalities could grow through fraternal organization, just as their husbands' had in the B'nai B'rith.

In contrast to early female benevolent societies, such as the Philadelphia model led by Rebecca Gratz, the True Sisters were concerned about raising Jewish women's self-awareness; they first wanted to prepare themselves to participate in society and classified themselves as organizationally independent. Unlike the women around Gratz who did not break with the traditional expressions of piety,³⁹ True Sisters consciously did. They understood that a modernized Judaism would also require women to fulfill *their* part of the Jewish mission, which exceeded Victorian womanhood, because it would involve *all* Jews in the public sphere. Although they used traditional figures of Judaism as models, women were more interested in achieving personal morality according to Jewish ethics than in serving as teachers of Israel. Just like the men in their lodges, women needed to grow first in knowledge and morality to raise their self-awareness. For that reason, the True Sisters stepped out of their traditional roles and adopted an organizational framework only known to men.

We have no record showing that in their early years True Sisters were primarily interested in collecting or distributing money for others, like the Philadelphia Female Benevolent Society;⁴⁰ nor was religious instruction of children among their immediate goals at the time. Instead, they focused on the shaping of a new female Jewish identity and awareness to make them fit for participation in the public

arena. To achieve that purpose—spiritually, intellectually, and economically—they founded a mutual aid society, which under their own directors bound them together and established a tight network for mutual learning, training, and personal growth. This rapidly tied them to a network for communication and solidarity beyond their local communities.

Providing economic security for their sisters and supporting each other “physically” with sick care was very important for the women. A financial system of mutual aid, similar to that of the B’nai B’rith, although with lower contributions and benefits, helped them economically and prevented them from having to accept alms in case of misfortune. Compared to the Philadelphia Female Benevolent Society, which sometimes bitterly suffered from a lack of donors,⁴¹ the UOTS offered a system for the prevention of poverty and dependency, which helped women preserve their self-respect. They charged every member at least a five dollar entrance fee and a quarterly membership fee of one dollar and twenty-five cents. Out of these funds a daily benefit of three dollars was paid in cases of sickness for a maximum of thirteen weeks, and funeral costs up to twenty-five dollars were provided for the sisters. In case of the death of a member’s husband, each member of the lodge paid twenty-five cents into a widow’s fund, out of which two hundred dollars were paid to the widow, while the rest was used to establish an endowment fund. This system of mutual aid among the women created a financial and spiritual



*United Order of True Sisters.
(American Jewish Archives)*

system of female solidarity and support and enabled women to develop a financial basis to afford the charitable, educational, intellectual, and social aims and plans for nonsectarian public outreach.⁴²

Although we can anticipate that many of the True Sisters came from rather wealthy middle-class families and did not have to fear sickness or the death of their husbands for material reasons, the financial basis and benefits gave the organization and its members—single or married—independence and security. The women might have also preferred to be taken care of by other women and close friends in case of sickness—as indicated by Mark Bauman⁴³—thus it might not be an accident that the lodge was started in a doctor's household. The mutual aid character of the UOTS, which introduced a dependable system of solidarity on the basis of relatively small contributions, guaranteed that the organization was not exclusively for the wealthy, but for those who spiritually supported the higher aims of the group.

Secrecy, the commandment to keep rituals and details about the inner lodge life and projects of charity secret,⁴⁴ gave the order special significance. This protected the exclusive circle of women from unwanted social intrusion and outside influence, which was particularly important during the first decades of its existence.⁴⁵ Secrecy and the close fraternal network served as both a shield and a bond for the young group and allowed women to develop a platform free of intrusion, to develop transformation, and practice the forms of a "new society" while still living within the old order.⁴⁶

The most important difference from other female benevolent societies, however, was that within this newly created secret sphere, True Sisters could act as *spiritual authorities* in the fraternal ritual, accepting, rejecting, and expelling applicants for membership and especially in conferring the degrees of the order. In this respect the women's lodge was a revolutionary innovation⁴⁷ and absolutely equal to what the men performed in their lodges. For example, unlike the Philadelphia Female Hebrew Benevolent Society,⁴⁸ True Sisters could not simply pay their dues and thus acquire membership in the lodge. They had to be nominated by a full-degree member of the lodge. The main criteria for admission into the order were character and intellectual conduct. A report on the moral conduct, health, and social status of the applicant had to be provided and thoroughly checked by a committee of women before a ballot was cast on the application of a

possible member.⁴⁹ The organization was not only based on friendship and shared values, but also created a sense of moral leadership and authority among the members. Such attitudes restricted membership of the True Sisters to a small circle of women, with the aura of a moral elite. By the late 1890s there were only approximately two thousand members.⁵⁰ Unlike the B'nai B'rith, which quickly grew to a nationwide organization that attracted mainly young highly spirited and mobile immigrant men, the True Sisters were—particularly in their early years—exceptional. All offices of the lodge were held by women only, giving them a chance to build their self-confidence in their organizational capabilities and potential in the articulation of religious and secular issues of women.

The ideal of a “new” Jewish womanhood evolved in the degrees of the True Sisters. This ideal was not really new, but was based on the virtues of traditional figures of Judaism and encouraged the modern Jewess to act within this tradition. A True Sister was supposed to be loyal to her sisters, her people, and her faith, all the while defining a new platform to prove her capable of developing a sense of universal loving-kindness outside the domestic sphere, without neglecting her obligations in the Jewish home.

It is striking that the rules and regulations of the order do not mention anything from which we could conclude that the UOTS was a “Jewish” organization. The Jewish character of the lodge was only developed in the names of the lodges and the ritual and degree system of the order, which named its four degrees after the Jewish heroines Miriam, Ruth, Esther, and Hannah.

On her journey to “true piety” and thus full membership, a True Sister had to pass through four degrees of the order, all connected to a motto that was to heighten virtues based on loving-kindness and friendship. The motto emphasized that Jewish women had additional duties outside the synagogue and home, such as the love of others, friendship in the lodge room, loyalty to the order, and active piety.⁵¹ The availability of a fourth degree, compared to the men’s three degrees, is unique in the fraternal world and suggests that moral superiority was expected from women, a significance which only shows at the UOTS.⁵² The four degrees and virtues connected the women of the UOTS with a strong, sacred bond that was to change their self-awareness and role. To help their members always remember what their commitment was, the UOTS used the phrase

"Love, Faith and Truth" as its motto and greeting, just like the B'nai B'rith did with their motto "Benevolence, Brotherly Love and Harmony."⁵³ Organized as a ritual of questioning and answering with all lodge members present as witnesses, it meant more than mere education about already existing Jewish values: it indicated a strong and definite commitment to the values of the lodge. Meant to be a strong spiritual experience, initiation to these degrees could even be called an experience of "conversion."⁵⁴

In a religiously rooted ceremony the candidates were introduced into the system of the lodge, the only platform on which they could live their religiosity equally to men. In an attractive, decorous, and powerful semireligious ceremony, Jewish women could now act as spiritual authorities and confer degrees upon their sisters, judging the moral qualifications of sisters, who typically received one or two of the four lodge degrees at a time.

During the initiation process the sisters were taught about and sworn to the first basic values of the order: love and friendship. "Love your fellowman as children of one Father in heaven, but manifest your fellow feeling especially towards the Sisters of our beloved Order"⁵⁵ described the first obligation a sister had to dedicate herself to as a member of the lodge. "Love thy fellowman as thyself"—typically the moral basis and first commandment of the orders⁵⁶—reminded sisters to surrender self-love, egotism, vanity, and desire for show, pomp, and glitter, which are the seeds for envy, avarice, malice, backbiting, hatred, and other vices. The first step in becoming a True Sister thus meant accepting a lifestyle of feminine virtues such as "industry and economy, simplicity, cleanliness and neatness in exterior appearance."⁵⁷ Women were to avoid vanity and the emptiness of show. They were to cultivate their minds and hearts so that they grew in knowledge and modesty, in veracity, and in firmness of character. "But we must avoid the vain desire to cover up our lack of culture by a bold conceit, and never imagine that we can elevate ourselves by detracting from others."⁵⁸ To banish envy out of her heart, slander out of the mouth, injustice out of her deeds, and to practice humanity wherever and whenever she could indicated a True Sister.⁵⁹

Stressing the potential of modern Judaism to be a religion of love and not just one of law, Reform thinkers wanted Christians to understand that loving-kindness was common to Judaism as well as to Christianity.⁶⁰ Brotherly love, expressed in exemplary moralism and

charitable behavior, did not only raise the Jew's respectability in the American religious environment, but also legitimized her engagement in the public sphere. Typically, both men and women, the UOTS, and the IOBB made brotherly love, loving-kindness, and sisterly love the prerequisite of any higher degree. In the women's case, they additionally instructed members to "manifest your fellow feeling especially towards the Sisters of our beloved Order. Assist them if they should be in distress, be a comfort and help to them in time of misfortune and sorrow."⁶¹ This meant the order's first degree was based on universal brotherly love, combined with a proto-feminist aspect and a sense of love and loyalty among the women of the order. Female friendship and support, exemplary moralism, education and refinement of heart and soul, *Bildung*, and knowledge, all typically instrumental in the process of Jewish emancipation,⁶² were commanded to the women. They were to abstain from the idleness of the typical lady, who found an interest in fashion, luxury, self-representation, and vain sociability. Active work, decency, altruism, self-improvement, and social service were the basis for the work of the order.

Passwords for the degrees, such as "Miriam" in the first degree, reflected the particular Jewishness of the UOTS. Miriam was lauded and described as "our lawgiver's sister"⁶³ and as the savior of her brother Moses—whom she supported in his service for her fellow men and people—freedom loving and a model of refined womanhood. This reference suggests an explanation as to why the order was named True Sisters, particularly because this motive is used in the first and introductory degree of the order.

In the second degree friendship was made an obligation. Friendship, creating a bond of loyalty among the sisters, was based on mutual understanding and described as the source of support and sharing among the True Sisters. It was also described as bridging social and religious differences among the women. The second degree ordered the sisters to act without regard to education, religious outlook, or class.⁶⁴ Outlining the friendship between the old woman Naomi and the young Moabite woman Ruth, who left her family to stay with her friend, the new sisters were asked to vow, "I will cling to thee, my Sister, and will not leave thee; whatever happens to thee, happens to me, and thy joy shall be my joy."⁶⁵

Thus "Ruth" became the password to enter the second degree in

the ritual of the order and concluded its first powerful part. Brotherly love (charity, respectability, and public sphere) and friendship (proto-feminist loyalty) introduced the new members to the ethical prerequisites for the transformation into a new person. As with the first two degrees, the third and fourth degrees of fidelity and piety were conferred upon the sisters together.

Esther the Jewess, who lived in captivity with her people and was raised to be queen of the mightiest empire of the time but remained true and loyal to her people, ready to sacrifice herself to suffering humanity, was announced the ideal for the third degree. Using the name "Esther" as the password, the True Sister was sworn to fidelity to herself and then to the values of the order.⁶⁶ Fidelity described a major commitment to the activities and inner life of the lodge: it required the women to attend meetings regularly and work toward whatever project the lodge assigned to the member. The sisters were reminded to do anything they could, to dedicate their lives to elevating and strengthening the order, since any shortcomings and failings or neglect would not only reflect negatively on the order, but also on all affiliated with it.⁶⁷ This commandment might have had a strong influence on the long-term survival of the order, since it did not allow the women to fall back into their old ways, reduce their activities, or withdraw from service. This meant that once the women accepted the commitment to constant moral and intellectual improvement and service to the order, they also accepted a lifelong obligation for them.

The height of the lodge's spiritual identity was finally crowned with true piety. After having proven themselves capable and worthy of love, friendship, and fidelity, the sisters were finally ready

to have a vivid consciousness and unswerving confidence, that God's love and power enfolds us; that His wisdom and justice watches and guides us. It means: Always to aspire to the divine, and so to conduct their lives as to bring it into harmony with God's will. Whoever wishes to be pious must be active, industrious, and diligent, temperate and modest, peaceable and forgiving, forbearing and lenient, just and truthful, grateful and obliging, sympathetic and charitable, self-sacrificing and self-denying.⁶⁸

Time for meaningful prayer, daily if possible, in a quiet moment

was recommended to the sister for self-contemplation and self-scrutiny, to strengthen her obedience to God's law and providence, and to be grateful for God's mercies in devotion to His fatherly love. At the gateway of the passage to true piety the name "Hannah"—the strong, loving, and pious mother of the prophet Samuel who stood firm in misfortune, showed fortitude in adversity, and prayed with authenticity to God—served as the sister's password, describing the final ideal of Jewish womanhood as envisioned by the UOTS.⁶⁹

David Einhorn and Moritz Ellinger suggest that some of the radical reformers put a lot of hope in the UOTS.⁷⁰ Kaufmann Kohler strongly approved their ideal of Jewish womanhood, as we know from his 1869 article "Der Beruf des Weibes" in the *Jewish Times*.⁷¹ Here, Kohler praised the True Sisters as an organization to uplift and refine womanhood and expressed his hope for it to reach as many Jewish women as possible. He described the True Sisters as embodying the ideal of a feminine, introspective, active womanhood. Kohler described Jewish women as the biblical heroines and prophetesses who had always made a key contribution to the survival of virtue and who were an inspiration to true religiosity. Now the women of the nineteenth century were the true carriers of humanity.⁷² He explained "that woman, like the suffering messiah, will have to turn into the triumphant messiah of the future to help humanity to triumph over brutality," since woman has preserved a pure sense of religion and piety.⁷³ Thus women would not adopt the "sad, serious and calculating nature of man," nor seek their domain only in the domestic sphere. Kohler argued, "Only men *and* women make the full picture of humankind,"⁷⁴ and thus argued for men and woman to complement, not to compete, with each other. While the True Sisters held on to their domestic role to preserve Judaism within the family, they redefined and expanded their role at home and in society by trying to merge the essence of true Jewish womanhood with modernity and their extended role in society. The order sought to encourage Jewish women to lead a meaningful and active life, reflecting a rejuvenated and adapted understanding of piety.⁷⁵

After the time of formation and learning during the 1850s, a period for which we unfortunately lack documentation, we find a few records that describe some of the order's activities in the late 1850s and during the following years. It is especially in the circles of radical Reform Judaism where the women leave their mark: both David

Einhorn and his friend, the layman and active member of the B'nai B'rith, Moritz Ellinger,⁷⁶ seem to have monitored the development of the women's order closely. We learn from their journals and papers, the *Sinai* and the *Jewish Times*, for example, that in the 1850s, as part of an organized body, UOTS women could actively participate in public discussions and invite community and intellectual leaders to their lodge meetings. Before the Civil War, for example in 1859, UOTS women of New York publicly invited high-ranking intellectual and spiritual leaders, like Dr. David Einhorn, to their festivities and meetings. The tone and rhetoric of the invitation to Einhorn reflected a great self-confidence and self-awareness of the women, who publicly and bluntly criticized the *Sinai* for only addressing male Jewry: "Rev. Dr. D. Einhorn in Baltimore! We take the liberty to send the editor of the *Sinai* an invitation to our festival and would strongly appreciate, to find the courageous fighter for light and truth among our dear guests. **Although the Sinai seeks only his brothers**, it can be assured to find True Sisters in us, sincerely the devoted Festival-Committee of Emanuel Lodge No. 1 of the Independent Order of True Sisters."⁷⁷ As if it were natural for women to belong to the readers of the *Sinai* and publicly communicate their activities through the journal, the women addressed one of the most important intellectual leaders of the American Reform movement in the *Sinai*. Einhorn's public reaction to the invitation, as published in the *Sinai*, leaves no doubt that the UOTS was well known and highly esteemed in Reform circles and that this public type of social and intellectual exchange was seen as typical for the UOTS:

The editor's office feels the need to publicly express its thanks for the honor and deems this expression of religiosity important, since in America it is **generally** still the women who slow down religious progress and are seeking their religious center in the kitchen. And still has woman, who has proven to be in her quiet, but even more intensive work an old and powerful tool for the procreation of religiosity in Israel, the high duty to take on the lead to pass on a lively, not a stiff and old-fashioned Judaism, particularly in this country, where the dollar is worshipped ("der Dollarvergötterung"), where most men are business oriented and neither know the Sabbath nor the holidays.⁷⁸

A quarter century after their founding, we learn that meeting the challenge of secrecy successfully raised the women's respectability and the ability to achieve spirituality, which was frequently in question by their communicative behavior, such as talking and flirting, during the services.⁷⁹ In men's eyes, the ability to be quiet and keep a secret qualified them to propagate their definition of piety, as evidenced in 1871 in the *Jewish Times* by Moritz Ellinger, who praised the order and its potential: "It was claimed that they had shown that they were able to keep a secret and keep silent, the time had come when they must break their silence, and must speak so loud as to enlist the attention of their numerous sisters. They have shown their ability to speak and speak well, they must also write, their lodge rooms must be turned into lecture rooms, and the press must be made and enlightenment diffused. He [Ellinger] had no doubt that the Jewish press would gladly devote a department to their cause and open their columns to their representative women."⁸⁰

It took until the mid-1880s for the True Sisters to follow Ellinger's appeal. In October 1884 they founded their own paper, *Der Vereinsbote*, a monthly publication of the Cäcilie Lorsch Fortbildungsverein, a suborganization of the UOTS, which was edited by them under the assistance of Emanuel Friedlein. In 1897 the True Sisters attempted to reach a larger audience.⁸¹ To meet this goal they discontinued the *Vereinsbote* and started the *Ordens Echo* in August 1897, a monthly publication that addressed women outside the order and served as an important source for identifying the focus of the organization, its history, and charitable projects after the order had come of age. Unfortunately, only copies from the 1890s and later have survived.⁸² Encouraging "*Bildung* und *Herzensbildung*," education and refinement of the intellect and heart was the declared purpose of the order.⁸³ Bianca B. Robitscher, though, stated in the *Echo* that its goal "first and foremost [was] the development of free, independent action of its members."⁸⁴ By the turn of the century the paper actively tried to stimulate discussion among Jewish women about political, cultural, and social issues—some of which were probably carried out silently within the lodges—on such topics as "the Zionistic Question,"⁸⁵ "A Trip through Europe,"⁸⁶ or "Modern Hebrew Literature."⁸⁷ We also learn from the *Echo* that in 1905 a large Schillerfestival was organized in New York by the Hadassah Lodge, which "felt a special calling" to do so, since it was founded on Friedrich von Schiller's birthday,

"Germany's most favorite poet."⁸⁸ The strong cultural involvement these women still had with the Old World found expression in the discussion of the concept of *Bildung* and the advice to use the Maimonides Free Library of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith in New York City, which had, as the *Echo* stressed, a major collection of German literature. However, "in English you will find everything."⁸⁹ The fact that the German background of the True Sisters played a great role culturally in lodge life, and that German was the language spoken in most lodges until the end of the First World War, without a doubt added to the exclusive character of the lodge.⁹⁰ This strong cultural tie prevented Jewish women of non-German background from identifying with the UOTS. From the *Echo* we learn, however, that the women also strongly identified as American citizens in their publication of President McKinley's speech to the American people during the Spanish-American War.⁹¹

Most important, though, modern women was a major point of discussion, and the *Echo* pleaded for the social acceptance of women moving into business and the legal profession and using the opportunity of education to make their lives better.⁹² Indeed, by the 1890s the UOTS, although small in number, had grown into an influential, and most important, a Jewish women's organization.

Introducing a national organization for women, the order helped American Jewish women reach beyond their individual communities, as expressed in both their constitution and their degree system. The network they created was so strong that sisters who traveled or moved with their husbands immediately enjoyed the hospitality and sociability of the local UOTS lodge, and thus had a circle of friends sworn to the same values and were free of being marginalized by just following their husbands. Sisters frequently reported about their travels and their experience visiting another lodge as a joyful one: Johanna Kohler, the wife of Kaufmann Kohler, found a friendly welcome and broad support among her New York sisters when she moved to their city from Chicago. Her membership in the UOTS quickly introduced her to a new circle of like-minded women with whom she could share her interests and join the practical and intellectual work of the organization.⁹³ She continued, however, to be identified as the New York representative of Johannah Lodge #9 of Chicago.⁹⁴ Upon moving to Cincinnati in 1903, after her husband became president of the Hebrew Union College, she strongly favored

and actively contributed to the founding of Ruth Lodge of Cincinnati.⁹⁵

Clearly, by the 1890s the self-awareness of the lodge had expanded, and their annual conventions, usually held in New York where the lodge maintained its own clubhouse,⁹⁶ became major social events, framed in large social and cultural programs—smaller but similar to the B'nai B'rith Conventions—which the True Sisters attended with their husbands.⁹⁷ The financial situation and organizational development of the UOTS justified its growing self-confidence: by the late 1890s fifteen lodges of the UOTS controlled the substantial sum of nearly sixty thousand dollars,⁹⁸ which grew to over one hundred and seven thousand dollars by the beginning of the First World War.⁹⁹

In their charitable projects the True Sisters were typically concerned about women, their health, and their education. One of the group's larger charitable projects in the late 1890s was the creation of a hospital fund, a modern kind of health insurance for its members.¹⁰⁰ Besides the hospital fund, the order had two sub-organizations: the Cäcilie Lorsch Fortbildungsververein for women, and the New York Philanthropic League. The Fortbildungsververein was an educational society for women, founded in 1881 in memory of Cäcilie Lorsch,¹⁰¹ which by 1898 owned thirty-five thousand dollars; the New York Philanthropic League,¹⁰² created in 1888, constituted a network for the New York lodges of the UOTS and helped them oversee their finances and coordinate their work in the city. Since substantial amounts of money were dedicated to the league by several New Haven businessmen, we can conclude that the order had earned high respect in the male Jewish world, too.¹⁰³

Historians have proof of countless charitable activities of the lodges in the 1890s besides the Fortbildungsververein, the hospital fund, and the Philanthropic League: fund-raising balls, the financial support of charitable organizations and projects, the People's Synagogue and Hull House of Chicago, the support of Jewish manual training schools, the support of Ruth Home for Working Girls in Chicago, and the Public Art School Society. The UOTS helped create penny lunches for schoolchildren and distributed Thanksgiving Day baskets to the needy. It even helped young girls complete their education.¹⁰⁴

It was more than appropriate when in 1896 Hannah G. Solomon, first president of the National Council of Jewish Women, said that the

council would "cherish cousinly feelings" for the True Sisters.¹⁰⁵ Her cousin Lizzie Barbe and sister Mary Haas grew up with her in the house of Michael and Sarah Greenebaum in Chicago.¹⁰⁶ These young women had developed a strong female friendship and common identity in their youth and likely were introduced to the True Sisters through Sarah Greenebaum, after whom the second Chicago lodge of the UOTS was named.¹⁰⁷ Besides their cosmopolitan and liberal family background, early membership and affiliation with the True Sisters might have taught them a socially active style of Jewish womanhood and encouraged them to run an organization.

In the 1890s the connections between the two organizations were close and supportive of each other,¹⁰⁸ although the exact dynamics among the new and old organizations are not known, and what motives the female membership had to join either group. Nevertheless, during the formative years of the American Jewish women's movement, there was a remarkable overlap of the leadership figures, such as Carrie Simon, Johanna Kohler, Lizzie Barbe, Mary Haas, Julia Felsenthal, Sara Hart, Babette Mandel, Blanche Stolz, and Pauline Witkowsky, most of whom were members of Johannah Lodge #9 of Chicago and who also took active leadership roles in the young National Council of Jewish Women. In addition, another pattern can be surmized: mothers, who were members of the UOTS like Sarah Greenebaum or Mina Schottenfels, successfully passed on a modern notion of Jewish womanhood to their daughters, Hannah Greenebaum Solomon and Sara X. Schottenfels, who became attracted to a more timely form of club life, such as the NCJW.¹⁰⁹

This is just one result of a comparison of leadership among the two Jewish groups in the Chicago area, but it suggests that future research about American Jewish women and their organizational behavior should not neglect Jewish fraternal organizations. Also of importance is Jewish women's participation in the women's lodges of the Masons and Odd Fellows, which allowed them to share religiosity and sociability with their Christian friends before modern women's organizations were born. One can only speculate why Jewish women succeeded in forming their own independent lodge—a rare phenomenon.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the Independent Order of True Sisters must be regarded as a noteworthy and early attempt to bring emancipation to Jewish women by exploring new organizational forms of establishing modern Judaism in America. This endeavor

suggests that fraternal organization served not only as a training ground for the acculturation of Jewish men, but might have been particularly attractive for Jewish women to redefine themselves in the new American environment.¹¹¹ Since they lacked organizational alternatives, the lodge might have provided a rare framework for the expression of religiosity based on the Old Testament and helped to open spaces for the definition of their role in lay activity in modern Judaism.

What we know from the Independent Order of True Sisters suggests a pattern that might modify our current picture of Jewish women lagging behind their Protestant sisters as activists in the public sphere. This pattern and its impact is still to be explored in detail and should include both Jewish women's orders and fraternal lodges in general, some of which started to introduce a limited degree for women in the 1850s or 1860s and might have become an arena of activism for the wives of the many Jewish Masons and Odd Fellows.¹¹² From such research we might also learn about the chances and limits of social interaction across religious boundaries between Jewish women and their Protestant sisters in nineteenth-century America.

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NOTES:

1. Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 137–40.

2. *Protokolle der dritten Versammlung deutscher Rabbiner abgehalten zu Breslau, vom 13 bis 24. Juli 1846* (Breslau: Verlag von F.E.C. Leuckart, 1847), 253–66.

3. Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), 4. See also Pamela Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis, A History of Women's Ordination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 13. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the only possibility for women to speak publicly to their congregations was during their confirmation ceremonies, introduced by Reform congregations in the 1840s and 1850s.

4. Riv-Ellen Prell, "The Vision of Woman in Classical Reform Judaism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50 (1982): 575–89.

5. Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting, The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893–1993* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993) and Linda Gordon

Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause, The Jewish Woman's Movement in England and the United States, 1881–1933* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990).

6. Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*, 141.

7. *Ibid*; 135.

8. *Ibid*; 141.

9. "Independent Order of True Sisters" is the literal translation of "Unabhängiger Orden Treuer Schwestern." It is important to stress this difference with the current English name "United Order of True Sisters," as it gives different information about the character of the organization. We can anticipate that the UOTS was consciously labeled "organizationally independent" from similar orders such as the B'nai B'rith. Similarly, the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith made clear that they were not an extension of the Odd Fellowship and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows to mark their break from the United Order of Odd Fellows in England. When the women increasingly adopted English in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they tried to translate their name and discovered that they would have to change their abbreviation from UOTS to IOTS. Since they wanted to maintain the old abbreviation of the lodge's name, they chose to carry the English name "United Order of True Sisters."

10. Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) and Mark C. Carnes, ed., *Meanings for Manhood. Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990).

11. Mary-Anne Clawson, "Nineteenth-Century Women's Auxiliaries and Fraternal Orders," *SIGNS* 12 (1986): 40–61. An exception were eighteenth-century French noblewomen, who were accepted into mixed lodges; see Janet M. Burke, "Through Friendship to Feminism: The Growth in Self-Awareness among Eighteenth-Century Women Freemasons," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History* 14 (1987): 187–96.

12. Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture 1880–1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 25–26.

13. "Masonry and the Ladies," *Masonic Review* (hereafter, *MR*) (January 1853), 203–6; "The Ladies" and "Ladies and Masonry Again," *MR* (March 1853), 342–44; "The Lady Freemason," *MR* (May 1853), 77–79; "The Ladies—Their Right to Become Freemasons," *MR* (August 1853), 287–88; "A Female Freemason," *MR* (May 1857), 87–91.

14. Dr. Bruckman was a member of the Cultusverein, out of which Emanu-El grew. "The Order B'nai B'rith," *Jewish Times* (hereafter, *JT*), April 15, 1870, 106.

15. Secretary's Report: "Primarily it must be clearly understood, and proclaimed at all proper places and occasions, that the Order B'nai B'rith stands for the Union of the Jews throughout the world, for their higher development, mentally, morally, and socially; that is for 'Practical Judaism' The Synagogue teaches the tenets of our faith; the Order attempts to carry them out in practice in all relations of life. Between both there is full accord." *Proceedings of the General Convention of the IOBB 1900*, 34, IOBB-Archives.

16. Dr. E. M. Friedlein, "Mitteilungen über den Orden," *JT*, March 25, 1870, 58; April 1, 1870, 73; April 8, 1870, 90.

17. *Ibid*.

18. Ibid.

19. Edward E. Grusd, *B'nai B'rith, The Story of a Covenant* (New York: Appleton Century, 1966). Renau was, among others, a founder of the B'nai B'rith. Merzbacher and Mitchel joined soon after the founding.

20. Bernhard N. Cohn, "Leo Merzbacher," *American Jewish Archives* 5 (1954): 21-24; Leon Freeman, "America's Synagogue Supreme," *American Hebrew*, October 6, 1929, 591-94; also see the entry in the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, 497.

21. Mildred L. Braun, "A History of Johannah Lodge No. 9, United Order of True Sisters," (n.p., probably 1955), SC-1841, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (hereafter, AJA); "Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Emanuel-Lodge UOTS," *JT*, April 28, 1871, 13.

22. Friedlein, "Mitteilungen über den Orden," *JT*, March 25, 1870, 58; April 1, 1870, 73; April 8, 1870, 90.

23. "Der Erste Geheime Frauen-Orden," *Ordens Echo*, September 3, 1897, 1; and Braun, "A History," 8, SC-1841, AJA.

24. "Der Erste Geheime Frauen-Orden," *Ordens Echo*, October 6, 1897, 2.

25. "Bildung einer Großloge U.O.T.S." (printed version of original minutes), Festschrift zum 50. jährigen Jubiläum, New York 1896: Press of Philip Frank, 22: Archives of the Temple Emanu-El, New York, courtesy of S. Kirschberg.

26. James L. Ridgely, *History of American Odd Fellowship, The First Decade* (Baltimore: James L. Ridgely, 1878), 330.

27. "Unser Ehrenmitglied Dr. Emanuel M. Friedlein ist nicht mehr!" *Ordens Echo*, July 9, 1897, 3; "Dr. Emanuel M. Friedlein, Ehrenmitglied," *Ordens Echo*, May 15, 1911, 1; "Dr. Emanuel M. Friedlein," *Ordens Echo* August 5, 1897, 3. "Vierzig Jahre," *Ordens Echo*, November 6, 1897, 3; and "Dr. E. M. Friedlein's 85th Birthday," *The Menorah* (May 1892), 328-29.

28. "Vierzig Jahre," *Ordens Echo*, November 6, 1897, 3.

29. Minutes of Meeting of Jochebed Lodge #4, New Haven, First Meeting of September 6, 1863, MS # 21, Box 6, Folder A, New Haven Colony Historical Society (hereafter, NHCHS).

30. Braun, *A History*, 10. According to the history, the idea of a women's lodge was suggested by Henry Greenebaum of Chicago in 1873, who had been familiar with the lodges on the East Coast. The relationship the women developed with Henry Greenebaum must have been very close, as Braun indicates that the women called him "little uncle Henry."

31. "Miriam Lodge #17, U.O.T.S.," *Ordens Echo*, February 15, 1912, 1; "Echoes of the Order," *Ordens Echo*, February 15, 1913, 2.

32. Kaufmann Kohler, "Der Beruf des Weibes," *JT*, May 21, 1871, 188-89; Kohler writes, "Though I am really not a friend of closed societies, I really want to wish good luck to a society, that has strongly contributed to the refinement and uplift of woman, even though it has created a lodge. May-I do not want to suppress this wish-grow a large society of honorable women out of the lodge of the True Sisters. May they in any case be successful in intellectual refinement charity and education, as it has been until now..." See also "An Official Visit to Johannah Lodge No. 9, Chicago," *Ordens Echo*, March 16, 1906, 2; and "Johannah Lodge No. 9," *Ordens Echo*, March 7, 1898, 1. Both daughters of David Einhorn—Johannah Kohler and Mathilde Hirsch—were members of Johannah Lodge #9, which, unlike most of the other lodges that met outside the

synagogue, met in the vestry rooms of Temple Sinai.

33. "Constitution des Unabhängigen Ordens Treuer Schwestern," (n.p., 1864), 5; UOTS, Albany, N.Y., 1. Translated from the German by C. Wilhelm.

34. *Ibid.* 5.

35. "Constitution des Unabhängigen Ordens Treuer Schwestern," bold print in the original.

36. *Ibid.* 1.

37. *Ibid.* 5. According to the historical context out of which the order grew, such as the searching for new forms of Judaism and adapting Judaism to American religiosity and society, "the challenges of the times" might mean to find ways and means for the modernization of the Jewish woman's role as a leader in her faith in America.

38. "Constitution des Unabhängigen Ordens Treuer Schwestern," 1-5.

39. Dianne Ashton, Rebecca Gratz: *Women and Judaism in Antebellum America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 161, 222.

40. *Ibid.* 219.

41. *Ibid.* 219.

42. "Constitution des Unabhängigen Ordens Treuer Schwestern," 4.

43. Mark Bauman, "Southern Jewish Women and Social Service Associations: Some Ruminations Concerning Significance," (unpublished paper presented as a Starkoff Fellowship Lecture, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, August 11, 1999).

44. "Constitution des Unabhängigen Ordens Treuer Schwestern," 1. The order stated its secret character in the constitution. We do not know details about their secret conduct, but we can anticipate the UOTS copied the IOBB or the Odd Fellows in their interpretation of "secrecy." Julius Bien, "The History of the Order B'nai B'rith," Chapter VI, *The Menorah* (January 1886), 289-93; and Aaron Grosh, *Odd Fellow Manual* (Philadelphia: H. C. Peck and Theo Bliss, 1860), 18, 59.

45. For an extensive explanation about the function of secrecy in Masonic and fraternal organizations, see Manfred Agethen, *Geheimbund und Utopie, Illuminaten, Freimaurer und deutsche Spätaufklärung* (München: Oldenbourg, 1984), 127. See Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*, 141, for the problems women's organizations faced in reaching independence from male dominance.

46. Agethen, *Geheimbund*, 153.

47. For more information on the history of women as spiritual authorities, see Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889-1985* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

48. "The Constitution of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, Philadelphia 1838," SC-9574, AJA.

49. See Minutes of Johannah Lodge #9, Chicago, February 21, 1895, MS Coll. 74, Box 1, Chicago Jewish Archives (CHJA); *ibid.* 11 and Minutes of Jochebed Lodge #4 New Haven, January 10, 1864, MS #21, Box 6, Folder A, NHCHS.

50. "Achtundvierzigste Jahresversammlung der Ehrwürdigen Gossloge UO.T.S.," *Ordens Echo*, July 15, 1898, 2.

51. UOTS, ed; *Ritual*, Albany, N.Y., 1895, 1-22.

52. Noel P. Gist, *Secret Societies: A Cultural Study of Fraternalism in the United States* (University of Missouri Studies 15, 1940), 67.

53. See for example correspondence published in the *Ordens Echo*, September 9,

1900, 1.

54. As Margaret Burke described the attainment of all degrees for eighteenth-century French women's masonry. See Margaret Burke, "Freemasonry, Friendship and Noblewomen: The Role of the Secret Society in Bringing Enlightenment Thought to Pre-Revolutionary Women Elites," *History of European Ideas* 10 (1989): 285.

55. UOTS, ed; *Ritual*, Albany, N.Y. (1895). 5. Quoted from the English version of the *Ritual*.

56. Timothy Smith, "Biblical Ideals in American Christian and Jewish Philanthropy, 1880-1920," *American Jewish History* 74 (1984): 3-26. Although Smith refers to a later period, the IOBB and the UOTS seem to fit this pattern.

57. UOTS, ed; *Ritual*, Albany, NY 1895, 9.

58. *Ibid.* 10.

59. *Ibid.* 6.

60. Timothy L. Smith, "Biblical Ideals," 3-26. Although a very early example for this ideal, the B'nai B'rith is a typical example of Jewish philanthropy based on the idea of "brotherly love," which it made its motto. "The fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man" was seen as the sum of the ten commandments and the essence of the ethical values of both Christianity and Judaism. Particularly Reform Judaism took this motto as a platform for the reinterpretation of the idea of the Jewish mission to the gentile world as a sign for strong exemplary moralism. In lodges especially "brotherly love" became a common motto. See "Brotherly Love," *MR* (May 1846), 175, and "Über den Gott der Rache und das 'Princip der Liebe' im Judentum-Ein Brief an einen Freimaurer," *Die Deborah*, in several volumes, May 18, 1866, 183; May 23, 1866, 187; June 1, 1866, 190-91; June 8, 1866, 194-95; June 13, 1866, 198; June 22, 1866, 203.

61. UOTS, ed. *Ritual*, Albany, N.Y. (1895): 7.

62. David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 81-104.

63. UOTS, ed; *Ritual*, Albany, N.Y. (1895): 7.

64. *Ibid.* 8-9 "Therefore, our second degree teaches us: Let not such low incentives rule you within the sacred precincts of our lodge rooms. The opportunity is given to you to study the character and disposition of the Sisters. Examine closely and let your choice be governed not by appearances, but by personal worth. The rich, the older, the more experienced and cultured Sister must elevate the poor, the younger, the less experienced and less cultured, if she be worthy of her friendship."

65. UOTS, ed, *Ritual*, Albany, N.Y. (1895): 10.

66. *Ibid.* 13.

67. *Ibid.* 12. The salute of this degree was a strong symbol of loyalty which the UOTS used in its early seal: "As our salute of this degree, we raise both hands, locked into each other, so to signify that, with united force, we shall work together in Fidelity."

68. UOTS, ed; *Ritual*, Albany, N.Y. (1895): 14.

69. *Ibid.* 15.

70. *The Sinai*, IV (1859): 87-88.

71. Kaufmann Kohler, "Der Beruf des Weibes," *JT*, May 21, 1869, 188-90.

72. *Ibid.*; Karla Goldman, "The Ambivalence of Reform Judaism: Kaufmann Kohler and the Ideal Jewish Woman," *American Jewish History* 79 (1990): 479. Goldman quotes here from two publications of Kaufmann Kohler: "Das Frauenherz oder das Miriamsbrünnlein im Lager Israels," *JT*, February 17, 1871, 812; and *Woman's*

Influence on Judaism, (1906): 274.

73. Kohler, "Der Beruf," 190.

74. Ibid. 189.

75. "The Position of Woman Among the Jews," *Ordens Echo*, April 8, 1901, 1.

76. Ellinger, Friedlein, and Einhorn knew each other from childhood in their old communities around Fürth in Northern Bavaria. Friedlein had first met Einhorn there at the Talmud school of Rabbi Shelome Fegersheim, who was the grandfather of Moritz Ellinger. See *The Menorah*. May 1892, 391–92.

77. *The Sinai*, IV (1859): 87–88 The bold passage is also bold in the original.

78. Ibid.

79. Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*, 101.

80. "Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Emanuel Lodge, U.O.T.S.," *JT*, April 28, 1871, 134.

81. *Der Vereinsbote*, July 9, 1897, 2, MS Coll. 638, Series A, Box 1, AJA.

82. Mary E. Olson and Karl J. R. Arndt, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals 1732–1955*, vol. 1 (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer Publishers, 1961), 387. Olson and Arndt list the *Vereinsbote* and the *Ordens Echo* under the latter's name and claim the paper started in 1885; unfortunately, the first volumes of the paper are no longer available.

83. "Das Goldene Jubiläum," *Ordens Echo*, February 7, 1901, 2. Paper read by Worthy Sister M. G. Haas before Sarah Greenebaum, Lodge No. 16, *Ordens Echo*, February 15, 1908, 3; "Noemi Lodge No. 11," *Ordens Echo*, February 5, 1898, 2.

84. Bianca B. Robitscher, "Our Principles," *Ordens Echo*, May 15, 1912, 2.

85. "Jochebed Lodge No. 4," *Ordens Echo*, February 5, 1898, 2.

86. Minutes of Meetings of Johannah Lodge #9, Chicago, October 3, 1895, MS # 74, Box 34, CHJA.

87. Ibid, December 7, 1895, MS #74, Box 34, CHJA.

88. "Eine Schillerfeier," *Ordens Echo*, May 15, 1905, 3.

89. "Bildung," *Ordens Echo*, March 15, 1905, 2; "Maimonides Free Library," *Ordens Echo*, July 15, 1898, 1.

90. The use of German was gradually abolished after the 1890s. Johannah Lodge #9 had a lengthy discussion about the introduction of English, which was heavily commented on by the *Chicago Staatszeitung*, the local German newspaper. Finally Johannah #9 adopted the English language in March 1895. Minutes of Meetings of Johannah Lodge #9, February 7, 1895; March 7, 1895; April 18, 1895, MS #74, Box 1, CHJA. It took until 1918, though, for German to be introduced as the official Language; see circular of Emma Schlesinger, December 9, 1918, I–58 (United Order True Sisters, Naomi Lodge), Box 6, American Jewish Historical Society, N. Y., (hereafter, AJHS).

91. "Thanksgiving Day for American Victories," *Ordens Echo*, July 15, 1898, 1.

92. "A Plea for Wide Awake Women," *Ordens Echo*, September 15, 1906, 1; "The New Woman," *Ordens Echo*, September 15, 1911, 3; "Why Women Should Study Law," *Ordens Echo*, May 15, 1906, 3; "To Be Or Not to Be a Modern Woman," *Ordens Echo*, May 15, 1913, 4.

93. "Echoes of the Order," *Ordens Echo*, February 15, 1913, 2, and Proceedings of the Meeting of Johannah Lodge #9, Chicago, October 3, 1895, MS #74, Box 1, CHJA.

94. "Achtundvierzigste Jahressitzung der Ehrwürdigen Grossloge U.O.T.S.," *Ordens Echo*, July 15, 1898, 2.

The Independent Order of True Sisters:

95. "A Visit to Cincinnati," *Ordens Echo*, March 16, 1906, 3. "The Installation of Ruth Lodge #18," Cincinnati, Ohio, *Ordens Echo*, July 15, 1911, 2, and "Ruth Lodge #18," *Ordens Echo*, April 15, 1912, 1.

96. Rebekah Kohut, "Jewish Woman's Organizations in the United States," *American Jewish Year Book* 33 (1931), 170.

97. "New York Philanthropic League, UOTS, Grand Concert," *Ordens Echo*, February 15, 1912, 1; "Das Goldene Jubiläum," *Ordens Echo*, January 7, 1901, 2.

98. "Achtundvierzigste Jahressitzung der Ehrwürdigen Grossloge U.O.T.S.," *Ordens Echo*, July 15, 1898, 2.

99. "The Sixty-Fourth Semi-Annual Meeting of the Grand Lodge, U.O.T.S.," *Ordens Echo*, December 15, 1914, 2.

100. "Der Erste Geheime Frauen-Orden, Zur Geschichte des Unabhängigen Orden Treue Schwestern," *Ordens Echo*, September 3, 1897, 1; The Hospital Fund of the U.O.T.S., *Ordens Echo*, February 5, 1898, 1.

101. Cäcilie Lorsch was the wife of a wealthy Munich banker who had immigrated to New York and was friends with Dr. Emanuel Friedlein, who so actively cared about the UOTS. Cäcilie Lorsch was approached by Friedlein in 1866 to join Jael Lodge #6 in New York. After her death in 1881, the Fortbildungsverein was founded in her memory. "Dr. Emanuel Friedlein," *Ordens Echo*, August 5, 1897, 3.

102. Sadie S. Platcow Ratner, "United Order True Sisters, New Haven Number 4," 52. Unfortunately, it is unknown how large the budget of the Philanthropic League was, but New York was a major center for the UOTS.

103. Ibid.

104. Minutes of Meetings of Johannah Lodge #9, MS #74, Boxes 1 and 5, Chicago, CHJA.

105. It is unclear, though, if Hannah G. Solomon was a member of the UOTS.

106. "Autobiography of Lizzie Barbe," SC 718, AJA.

107. "Address by Lizzie T Barbe, President Johannah Lodge," "Address by Worthy Brother Henry Greenebaum," "Address of Worthy Sister Johanna Loeb," *Ordens Echo*, November 13, 1907, 3.

108. "Domestic Notes," *The Menorah* (December 1896), 423. The 1896 Convention of the NCJW in New York is addressed by "Mrs. Beer, Mrs. Kohut and Mrs. Sander of the Treue Schwestern," "Council of Jewish Women," *Ordens Echo*, December 5, 1897, 1.

109. Sara X. Schottenfels was the daughter of Mina Schottenfels of the UOTS. Rogow, *Gone*, 237.

110. "Masonry and the Ladies," MR 8 (January 1853), 203–6; "Ladies and Masonry Again," MR 8 (March 1853), 366–68; "The Lady Freemason," MR 9 (May 1853), 77–79; "The Ladies—Their Right to Become Masons," MR 9 (August 1853), 287–88; and "A Female Freemason," MR 17 (May 1857), 87–91.

111. See Tony Fels, "The Square and Compass: San Francisco's Freemasons and American Religion, 1870–1900," (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1987).

112. Aaron B. Grosh, *The Odd Fellows Manual* (Philadelphia: H. C. Peck and Theo Bliss, 1860), 170. Mary-Anne Clawson, "Nineteenth-Century Women's Auxiliaries and Fraternal Orders," *SIGNS* 12 (1986): 40–61. UOTS was in existence since 1846. Mary Anne Clawson, "Brotherhood, Class and Patriarchy: Fraternalism in Europe and America," (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1980), 323.



Rebecca Brickner
(American Jewish Archives)

DOCUMENT

Rebecca Aaronson Brickner: Preacher, Teacher, and *Rebbetzin* in Israel

Shuly Rubin Schwartz

Barnett Brickner was one of the foremost Reform rabbis of the first part of the twentieth century. Senior rabbi of one of the most prominent congregations in the movement, he also served as president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Brickner was ahead of his time as one of the few Reform rabbis who championed the cause of Zionism in the interwar period.¹ Yet little has been known of the important role that his helpmate and partner, Rebecca Aaronson Brickner, also played in shaping the course of American Jewish life. Indeed, Rebecca Brickner—*rebbetzin*, teacher, educator, lecturer, and organizer, the first professional woman in Jewish education—was a formidable leader in her own right. In examining her life and achievements, one gains insight not only into her own accomplishments, but also into the way rabbinic couples worked together to build up American Judaism in twentieth-century America.²

Born and reared in Baltimore, Md., Rebecca Aaronson was one of thirteen children. Her parents were Jewishly knowledgeable and involved, and they transmitted that love to her. Brickner attended a German-English school during the day; after school and on the Sabbath she went to the Jewish school whose principal was the young, brilliant Jewish educator Samson Benderly.³ Brickner was deeply influenced by both Benderly and his school. Here, she developed her life-long love of Hebrew language and literature and of the land of Israel. Early on Brickner decided to devote herself to promoting the Hebrew language and the Zionist cause. When Benderly was appointed director of the first Bureau of Jewish Education in the United States in New York City in 1910, Brickner moved to New York to serve as his secretary and curriculum writer while attending college. A member of the initial group of Benderly trainees, Rebecca studied at Columbia University with John Dewey; at the Jewish Theological Seminary's Teachers Institute, she took classes with Mordecai M. Kaplan and Israel Friedlaender. Though female,



*Inside the old city of Jerusalem during the late 1920s.
(American Jewish Archives)*

Brickner was very much part of the original group of maverick Jewish educators known as the “Benderly boys.” Barnett Brickner was also among the original “Benderly boys,” and he and Rebecca met when seated next to each other in class. They were married in 1919, the year of Barnett Brickner’s ordination from the Hebrew Union College.⁴

In 1920 the Brickners moved to Toronto, where Barnett Brickner became rabbi of the Holy Blossom Temple. Five years later they moved to Cleveland, where Barnett served as rabbi of the Euclid Avenue Temple (later called Fairmount Temple) until his death in 1958. Here, the Brickners perfected their two-person career, and the synagogue flourished under their leadership. Rebecca entertained, did pastoral work, helped found the Young People’s Congregation of the Temple, and served in the role of spiritual leader to the Temple’s Sisterhood. She gave countless invocations, talks, lessons, and speeches to its members on a wide variety of topics in Jewish life.⁵ Brickner also became active in Jewish organizational life in the larger Cleveland community. She was active in the Cleveland branches of the traditional Jewish women’s organizations of the period, including the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and the Organization for Rehabilitation and Training (ORT). She was especially devoted to Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization, with which she had been involved since its founding in 1912.⁶

Rebecca Brickner, always conscious of the significance of her life,

saved both her sermons and her letters, several of which are excerpted below. Since so few rabbis' wives saved their papers, this combination of both public sermons and private correspondence gives us a unique glimpse into the inner workings of this role. From the personal correspondence between husband and wife written during times when they were apart, we learn how this particular rabbinic couple worked out their partnership. The sermons printed below illustrate Rebecca Brickner's oratorical skills, pedagogical prowess, and political savvy. Many *rebbetzins* served in similar capacities; thanks to Brickner's own words, we have a deeper understanding of the power and pitfalls of their precarious position. Dozens of Brickner's sermons, course outlines, and talks, as well as other published newspaper clippings and brochures, can be found in a rich collection at the American Jewish Archives. For her personal correspondence I am grateful to her son, Balfour Brickner, who generously shared this priceless scrapbook with me. I feel privileged to be able to give these letters a wider audience of readers.

The first two excerpts date from 1927, when Barnett traveled to visit Jewish communities in Europe and Palestine and to attend the Fifteenth Zionist Congress in Basle (which took place August 30–September 11). Rebecca's letters to Barnett reveal her ambivalence about her helpmate role. On the one hand, though she missed him terribly, his absence gave her increased power and influence in the congregation. As the one on site at the Temple and in the community, she served as Barnett's eyes and ears, giving her the power to shape his rabbinate. She reminded him to keep up with social graces by corresponding with various congregants and the office staff. Yet she also expanded her own leadership role, especially with regard to her area of expertise—Jewish education. She met in her husband's office to hire a new principal, Nathan Brilliant. She also engaged new teachers and prepared curricula for the coming school year. And, as Barnett himself wrote, "I am relying on you to see that Brilliant gets started."⁷ On the other hand, Barnett's absence forced Rebecca to come to terms with the limitations of her subordinate role. Asked to perform a wedding in his stead, Rebecca declined; she was not herself an ordained rabbi. Moreover, her generous spirit began to wear thin as her husband's long trip dragged on. She chafed under the gender expectations of her time and resented playing a secondary role in their partnership. She bridled at being the one left behind with the children

while her husband pursued *their* shared Zionist dreams. Rebecca's hopes for a different future come through even as she expresses happiness for him.

Saturday, July 15, 1927:
My dearest darling:

I can't imagine that this letter is going to reach you in the land of our hopes and dreams. Even though I shall not be there with you, I eagerly look forward to the time when we will all travel there together, even our little Arthur Balfour and Joy. I hope you will not be the least bit disappointed because that is one of my hopes that I refuse to have shattered. I feel that even the, *רעות* ⁸, you'll meet in the land will be covered with gleams of hope and optimism. Here is where I begin to feel sorry for myself and only a feeling that we shall travel it together makes me bear up....Those cards you have been sending to friends mean more than you will ever know. Don't forget Dr. & Mrs...The girls in the office should hear from you again. David Dietz had wanted to know why the Press had not as yet had something from you.

We have been living in hopes and fears. The Palestine earthquake made me feel very uneasy, and I'm thankful for the fact that you chose to go to Russia first. Then today's papers tell of a new outbreak in Vienna. God certainly is with you Beryl dear. It is most wonderful how He guides you, I have still about two months wait, but I am not lonely. I fill my time to the utmost and our many friends are being over-kind to me. I just miss you so terribly that some nights feel as though the day will never come....If I don't look out I'll be m[aking] you homesick and that would [not] be fair with you so far from h[ome.] I want you to know that I feel every moment away means wealth gained for you and therefore I am happy.

....To business:

[Nathan] Brilliant, as I cabled you was elected at [\$]5000, to begin his work [as educational director] on Sept. 15th. If

necessary we will begin our school a week later because we don't want to start without you here. Everything will be running smoothly by the time you get back. I have engaged quite a few good teachers both for school and High School and also Hebrew. Only 2 more to get. Brilliant came to Cleveland on the morning of July 14th. I met him and had him on my hands all day and he left again on the 6:15. Dave Kohn called a meeting for the same afternoon at 2, in your study....Max Rosenblum and Judge Blum? had a deal on for Benny Friedman at that same time & could not come. However, I took Brilliant to Rosenblum's office before the meeting and R. [Rosenblum] had a session with him then. I am mailing Brilliant the curriculum and all the school stuff for his perusal during the summer....

Kisses & Kisses
from Rivk

August 3, 1927:

My dearest beloved Beryl,

....As hard as it has been to be without you this summer there had been a joy in spite of separation to know that what you have done has been to enhance your outlook and will in time redound to the glory of our children....

No wonder you did not understand the word Brilliant in the cable. Surely by now you must know that Nathan Brilliant of New York was elected to take Pearlman's place as educational director. He will be here Sept. 15th when all announcements will be made. Things at the Temple are very quiet right now. All those who received cards from you were flattered beyond words. Jasha Veissi? & Hilda Bloch, Will Kohn's daughter, got married today. In your absence they wanted me to perform the ceremony, but I in turn recommended Dr. Huebsch.

....Naturally I should like to be with you in Basle. If we had the money to spare I might have surprised you. I feel more and more daily that Palestine and Palestine only is the solution. Jewish life in America is so empty. All our idealism is on the

minus side. Perhaps persecution is the only thing that keeps us Jewish. I'm anxious to hear what you have to say.

....My very fondest fondest love and beautiful yearnings to you my precious. God keep you well and unite us all in safety.

Your eternal love girl.

Rivkah



Jerusalem in the late 1920s.
(American Jewish Archives)

Five year later Rebecca Brickner took action to make her dreams a reality. She left her beloved Beryl for six months and took her children with her for her own sabbatical to Palestine. The next set of letters reveals how restorative the trip was—not only in that it fulfilled her Zionist longings, but also because it restored her sense of herself as a competent, engaging woman in her own right. In keeping with the expectations of her era, Rebecca justified the trip as having been necessary for the children—so that they would learn Hebrew and become devoted to the land. Her letters, however, also reveal how essential the trip was for her own well-being. Joy and Balfour did learn Hebrew in Palestine, but, more to the point, Brickner also accomplished her personal goals. One senses how starved Brickner, as a *rebbetzin* in Cleveland, must have felt for intellectual stimulation and validation. Once in Palestine she took it all in—sightseeing, university

study, lectures, reconnecting with old friends, and finding a place for herself within the intellectual elite of the period. She took advantage of every opportunity with an almost desperate urgency. Stretching herself academically, Brickner loved discovering S. Y. Agnon and Rahel⁹ before they were well known. She basked in the sense of liberation that she felt being on her own and especially in the knowledge that she was appreciated for her own intellectual gifts. Living among scholars and educators, she established herself squarely at the center of Jewish cultural and intellectual life of the period—and she did so in her own right, not as a rabbi's wife.

13 Apr. 1932.

....I am getting to like Jerusalem more and more every day....and when I can arrange for my lessons and get in swing, then I know I shall be in my element. At present, I seem to be the wonder to all those at this Pension [Goldsmith], coming from America and speaking Hebrew.

2 May 1932.

....I had my first lesson with Livnie my Hebrew teacher today and what a teacher he is. Simply wonderful....He sat with me for two and one half hours steadily today and marveled at my thorough knowledge of Bible, Literature, and Hebrew but thinks nothing of my Ashkenazic pronunciation. He swears that the Jews should never have adopted the Ashkenazic one since the Spanish is the truer one according to all the rules of grammar. However, he has no fears for me because he says I am the most talented student that has ever come to him Michutx La-Aretz and he will hate to give me up....I read the morning paper with him, then Bialik's *Aggadah*¹⁰ since I want to learn all the Midrashim and then now I am reading Agnon [whom she earlier described as "the Hebrew modern Ilue {prodigy} and writer who is a neighbor of mine and whose works I am now reading"] and Devorah Baron¹¹, the two Iluyim in the land that everyone raves about. I am simply delighted with Agnon's style. He is a Chassid and such spirituality that I get from him is indescribable. After I have

read some more of his stuff I'll go and call on him and tell him how much I enjoy him.

....I feel myself rejuvenated every day. Much fresher in spirit and lighter in body and keener of whatever mind I have. I love Palestine with all its lack of much that it deserves.

Yet even in the midst of her glory, Brickner couldn't completely shed her old role. Still worried about her work at home, she responded to her husband's letter to her about the possibility of salary cuts for Temple personnel because of the Depression. Focused on what she referred to as "our school," Rebecca responded,

Maybe you can have a real talk with B. [Brilliant] and ask him to wake up to facts and reduce his salary radically. Maybe he could get some part time position elsewhere. I hate to have our school get a shaking down. I'm so afraid of undoing a lot of good work.

Aware of how limited her time in Palestine was, she remained acutely conscious of the significance of every moment. She noted wistfully that

8 May 1932:

....I shall hate to leave Palestine because I love it so and the children are just beginning to get the feel of the language and the land and everything....

Of course I feel that this trip has already done so much for me. It has opened up new vistas for me and lifted me out of the rut I was falling into.

But such an attitude merely emboldened her to make the most of her stay. And in so doing, she focused especially on furthering her knowledge. She took full advantage of the advanced resources at the Hebrew University, for nothing of this caliber was available to her in Cleveland.

17 May 1932.

....I went to see [Joseph] Klausner¹² yesterday and after talking to me one minute he gave me his letter of admission not only to his classes but also to his Seminar and the same thing with Yellin.¹³ I will be carrying 15 hours of University work and 4 hours of private work in Haggadah and modern Hebrew essays. The university is wonderful. It makes me feel as though I were living those [Israel] Friedlander days over again....He [Klausner] was amazed to know how much Hebrew I knew. It was thrilling to find yourself finally acknowledged. When the students saw me taking down my notes with accuracy and speed, they didn't believe their eyes.

6 June 1932:

Everybody is simply astounded at my knowledge of Jewish culture and Hebrew. They can't understand how it could have been done in America. Even Dr. Klausner marvels at me. And how I enjoy my work at the University. I don't know how I shall be able to g[o] on without this fresh stream of Mekor Mayim Chayim [this source of living waters] when I get back. It will be hard.

14 June 1932:

Since my being in the Land I accidently came across some of the poems of Ra-hel [sic], while browsing in a bookshop. I tell you Beryl that I couldn't leave them. I practically stood in that store and read a whole volume and then she haunted me by her beauty and images of Palestine. Beside[s] her vocabulary is so rich. Suddenly I saw modern Hebrew used in all her riches and glory and I made it my business at once to find out who this Rachel was. To my great sorrow I learned that she had died last year at the age of 40, had come from Russia where at the age of 26 she became imbued with Zionism not having heard a single Hebrew word before and came on to Palestine, worked in the fields in the colonies by day and wrote poems

by night. She had tuberculosis I think when she came because her poems are full of her lack of physical strength and [she] finally dies at so early an age. The reason I think of her is because she has a beautiful poem to Kinnereth that haunted me all the while I was there. I have it and have got the music to it by now. It wasn't until I got to Haifa and was talking to Ussishkin¹⁴ when he told me all about her....I have her poetry now and will tell you more about it when I see you.

Once back from Palestine, Brickner channeled her new knowledge and energy into teaching and fund raising. Her talents blossomed still further in the years following her husband's death. Brickner grew more and more polished as a speaker, and she continually incorporated her learning and experiences into her words. The collection of her papers at the American Jewish Archives provides a powerful counterpoint to the personal letters. Here we see a powerful preacher, as effective as any of the male rabbinic counterparts of her era. As the following two examples demonstrate, Rebecca was erudite and inspirational. Her talks were continually enriched with Hebrew quotes from biblical and rabbinic sources, as well as popular citations from American literature and government. At the same time, she continually referred to the significance of the role of Jewish women both in history and in her own day.

Temple Sisterhood—Chicago—March 27, 1959¹⁵

Dear Friends: This is Sisterhood Sabbath, when we, presumably the WEAKER SEX, take over our responsibilities as JEWISH WOMEN along RELIGIOUS LINES in a worship service this evening.

This is really in keeping with the week just ending, when we celebrated the FESTIVAL of PURIM, when the heroin [sic] of the story QUEEN ESTHER, rose at the right moment to help her people from the cruelties of the Hitler of that day, HAMAN the AGAGITE. Mordecai her cousin admonished her in the famous lines contained in the BOOK OF ESTHER "think not with THYSELF, that thou shalt escape in the King's house, more than all the Jews. For if Thou altogether holdest

thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance come to the Jews from another source, but Thou and thy father's house will go down in shame, and who knoweth whether thou art not come to royal estate for such a time as this?"

Her answer was "I will go to the king even though unbidden, and if I perish, I perish. **כִּאֲשֶׁר אֲבֹדְתִי, אֲבֹדְתִי**"¹⁶

Her name was Esther, Her Persian name was ASHTORES, the morning star, the star that shines all through the night into the dawn of the new day, and is not extinguished until the sun rises, the Venus of the Skies, and we Jewish women can be likened to that star, that shined [*sic*] throughout the darkness of history, and preserved our loyalty until the dawn of our new day. The Hebrew name for Esther is Hadassah, Myrtle, the healing balm, whose mission it was and is to heal the daughter of our people (taken from the book of Jeremiah) and it was Hadassah who accepted HEALING as their mission even before the beginnings of Statehood. Hadassah has a very real connection with Queen Esther.

Let me go back a little in History. In 1873, about 85 yrs. ago, A Rabbi, who ws [*sic*] ministering in Albany, New York, was reprimanded by his Cong[regation] because he had WOMEN singing in the choir of that Synagogue. Who ever heard of women singing in a Temple at a religious service.

That reprimand was heard around the world, and that Rabbi wa[s] no other that [*sic*] the sainted and far visioned Isaac M. Wise, who promptly left Albany, came to Cincinnati and founded the Union of American Hebrew Cong[regation]s, and thus Reform Judaism was launched, and dedicated to a liberal and progressive interpretation of our Religion.

Nowhere has the position of WOMEN IN THE SYNAGOGUE been as strong as it has been here in America.

Reform Judaism has removed her from the BALCONY, and from behind the curtains, and brought her down to an equal footing with men in every phase of our religious and

educational life, even to a place on the Boards of Trustees of the congregations and today we have a woman, our immediate past President of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods acting in the capacity of President of one of the oldest and most respected Congregations in America. I am referring to Mrs. Hugo Dalshimer [sic] of Baltimore.

She did not have to take any risks for her Judaism as did Queen Esther. She came to her position as of rights, for we in Reform believe that women are not the WEAKER SEX, that the MIND HAS NO GENDER...

Sisterhood- 60th Anniversary, Jan. 20-1970¹⁷

אלוהינו ואלהי אבותינו

Our God & God of Our Fathers, who are the source of all life, We Thy daughters in Israel stand before Thee at this great moment of our history, with hearts filled with gratitude, for 60 full years, dedicated to Thy service.

Thy divine guidance has been our inspiration & our trust.

Our trust has not been in man, nor in princes, but in Thee alone.

Thou who art the Source of all Sources, & the root of all roots hast been our mighty rock & fortress of strength.

Thou hast been the guiding light of our spiritual life.

We Jewish women have always been sensitive to the purposes of our religion.

With awe & humility did we ever seek to fathom Thy great mystery which has sustained our fathers, & has preserved us & our people against hatred, persecution, & death.

Again we stand ready to re-dedicate ourselves anew to the principles of our faith even in this turbulent decade now aborning, & we ask for Thy continued inspiration & guidance. Help us to realize that that great Moral Ideal, which is the basis of our faith, may again be established in our world of strife with safety & security for all & hunger for none. We are our brother's keepers.

Many have lost their way & are stumbling in the dark.

But we, the Ladies of the lamp, still carry Thy torch, the torch of Judaism.

Help us we pray Thee to lift that torch high again for our children & for our unborn generations, for Israel is נצח , eternal.

Therefore We beseech Thee O Heavenly Father to endow us again with warm heartedness,—with sympathy—with knowledge & understanding & wisdom reaching out to all who would come to us for Thy inspiration & Thy guidance.

Grant us we pray Thee pride & dignity in the days ahead, & make our task again divine & grant us Thy blessing.

Amen.

In 1971 Brickner was the first recipient of an honorary doctorate in Hebrew Letters from the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies, in recognition of her pivotal role in establishing that institution some twenty-five years earlier. In her response to the degree, Brickner again championed the causes she held dear, again singling out the importance of women. One can still see the impact of her 1932 trip on these words spoken almost forty years later, for Brickner began her remarks by quoting from the poet Rahel.

December 13 1971.¹⁸

Dr. Goldstein, Rabbis, Teachers, Family, & Friends

I am deeply moved as I stand before you, here in my spiritual home, so dear to me in gratefulness & deep appreciation for the honor you have just bestowed upon [me]. I shall carry this honor with humility & dignity, ever grateful to God almighty for

- 1) having kept me alive all these years, for
- 2) having opened my eyes to life's values, contained in my rich heritage &
- 3) who has endowed me with some responsibility to work for the future fulfillment of our ideals.

I feel like our own Poetess רחל felt, when she saw the Sea of Galilee for the first time

“ההייתי, אם חלמתי חלום,”

Is this real? Or am I dreaming? Seeing you before me is believing. This is real.

I have been a student, a wife, a mother, a teacher, but never a doctor. I shall never be able to cure the body, but I shall continue to try & heal the Jewish Soul. Not alone, but with all of you here this day. Therefore I share this honor with our

1) Community - Federation

2) our Bureau of Jewish Education

3) our College of Jewish Studies &

4) **אחדן אחין חביב**¹⁹ with our Women's Association

... אבן מאסו הבונים היתה לראש פנה. this stone which the Builders had neglected, nay rejected, has become the Chief Cornerstone.

We are determined that our Survival as Jews in America must be a qualitative survival & not merely a numerical one.

We are the people of the Book & we want to keep it so.

We want to create a Jewish cultural environment for ourselves, for our children, for our unborn generations & above all for our country & for democracy. For Judaism & Democracy are the 2 sides of the same coin.

Our Founding Fathers based the future of America upon precepts contained in our Torah, in our Religious Constitution. The inscription on the Liberty Bell is taken from our Book of Leviticus: "Proclaim ye Liberty throughout the land, to All the inhabitants thereof."

As Jews in America we must survive, spiritually & that we can only do through a well planned continuing system [of] Jewish Ed[ucation], which is the life-blood of our survival. We have a long chain of tradition, & we are here today, because we are a link in that chain.

We want to perpetuate something so real & so vital, yet to many so abstract & so remote. Our problem then is to survive spiritually in America & to cultivate a qualitative Jewish environment.

For our Brethren in Israel, survival presents a different aspect. Their problem is to survive physically. They are beset by hostile enemies & With God's help, they too will survive.

נצח , **כִּי עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶצַח**, Israel is eternal.

....When we say "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One," we affirm the Universality of the One True God & we accept Obedience to the **תּוֹרָה** & His Commandments—His Moral Law—which has become our Jewish way of life.

This Torah, This Moral Law was transmitted to us by Moses Our law-giver nearly 3000 yrs. ago at Mt. Sinai. No word in this Sacred Law dares to be changed. It was inscribed on tablets of stone forever & to be inscribed in our hearts in the same way. Though no word in Torah can be changed, the spirit of the Torah can be changed from time to time only by interpretation & re-interpretation as is manifested in the Mish[n]a-Talmud & Oral Law not as strict constructionism but as Re-constructionism, pointing to a way of moral life & living in every age. This Torah reveals our secret weapon. It is not the A Bomb nor the H Bomb but the God Bomb. Which means our faith in God.

Our people in the Nazi gas chambers, marched to their death with tears streaming down their cheeks & kept on singing **אֲנִי מֵאֲמִין** I still believe. This is real faith. This is the kind of faith we want to transmit to our children. We Jews make every sacrifice that our children be given a religious education not to die as slaves but to live with dignity as free human beings & in a better world. There are Bureaus of Jewish education now 60 yrs. old in every large & small community all over America. These Bureaus have converted an uncharted ocean of Jewish knowledge & wisdom & Inspiration into a well organized system of Jewish Education that continues for American children born in an American environment....

It takes a leap of money & skills to transmit a 4000 yr. old heritage to American children who have to go to classes after Public School hours, when baseball & football beckon. But—We have not fought a losing battle.

We have been successful. We in this city have just succeeded in establishing a Hebrew High School, & our plan to keep on teaching during the summer in the camps, & via tours to Israel, have been a boon with good results. As for qualified teachers—you have the answer today. Teacher training schools were organized which today are developing into colleges for

Higher Jewish learning, as this college has developed. There are today 11 such accredited colleges in the U.S. Our College, though barely 20 yrs old has this year become accredited by the State of Ohio & can boast 400 students—

- a) dedicated Dean and Pres. &
- b) an outstanding Faculty.

Last year, our College granted 2 Masters Degrees. This Honorary degree today is the first & I'm very honored to be the recipient. We share our College with the entire community & with all who wish to learn. We have students of every age. Learning is a Jewish sport. One can become a Professional or just an Educated Jew. We never stop learning. This College augers to become a diadem in the crown of Cleveland's Jewish Community.

The College badly needs a home of its own—a new facility, & toward this new home, we shall bend every effort. We are literally bursting at the seams. In some classes, there is standing room only.

Last but by no means least, I want to share my honor with the Women's Asso[ciation] of the College who have helped mightily to bring this convocation before you. Under its inspired & most capable leader & President, together with a consecrated & dedicated Cabinet of Women with vision, this Asso[ciation] barely 2 yrs old, has already shown great strength. It is already the Right Arm of the College. It is working 1) for scholarships....It was the Jewish Woman at Mt. Sinai over 3000 yrs. ago, who assumed the responsibility of implementing the teachings of the Torah. They knew that Mothers were the best teachers. They knew the job would be theirs. They had no choice. These women are continuing in their original role....

Today is the first day of Chanuka, a time when we commemorate the ancient victory of 2000 years ago, when a small band of Maccabees won the first victory in the world for religious freedom over the mighty Syrian hordes & over Antiochus, the Hitler of that day, who dared to uproot the Jews

& Judaism but failed. Tonight we shall light Chanuka candles in every Jewish home. Chanuka means Re-dedication, Education. Light means freedom. Education means Learning & commitment....God of Might. God of right. We pray for Thy help & may Peace come soon to the entire world.

Brickner remained exquisitely attuned both to the possibilities and limitations of her era and her gender. In choosing to marry a rabbi, she ensured that she would attain status and authority in her community. As her husband's partner, she affected the congregation and community in ways far beyond what she might have been able to accomplish on her own. She especially exerted an enormous influence on the women in her synagogue, on Jewish education in Cleveland, and on Reform Zionism. When Brickner traveled on her own, she pushed the envelope of gender limitations still further. She moved beyond the constraints of her role, renewing her learning, self-confidence, and independence. Thanks to her own words, we gain special insight into the *rebbetzin* role. Surely countless other rabbis' wives experienced similar frustration as they walked the tightrope of female leadership within the constraints of the helpmate role. It is through her own words that Rebecca's unique talents, passions, commitments, and achievements shine most brightly.

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NOTES:

1. Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 318-19.
2. For more on the rabbinate as a two-person career see Shuly Rubin Schwartz, "'We Married What We Wanted to Be': The *Rebbetzin* in Twentieth-Century America," *American Jewish History* 83(June 1995): 223-46; and idem, "Ambassadors without Portfolio: The Religious Leadership of *Rebbetzins* in Late Twentieth Century American Jewish Life," in *Women in American Judaism: New Historical Perspectives*, eds. Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001).
3. Samson Benderly (1876-1944) emigrated from Safed, Palestine to Baltimore in 1898. He earned a medical degree at Johns Hopkins University but abandoned the field of medicine to pursue a career in Jewish education. In 1910, he became director of the Bureau of Jewish Education in New York City, the first such organization in the United States. He pioneered the *Ivrit-be-Ivrit* methodology of teaching Hebrew by

using Hebrew as the language of instruction, and also took a special interest in the education of Jewish girls, in adolescent and secondary Jewish education and in Jewish camping. Benderly's influence was far-flung and long lasting. His bureaus became the prototype for similar institutions in other cities, and the individuals that he trained became nationally renowned Jewish educators in the decades that followed.

4. Rebecca A. Brickner, "As I Remember Dr. Benderly," *Jewish Education* 20, no. 3 (Summer 1949): 53; interview with Rebecca Ena Aaronson Brickner, February 23–24, 1983; notes for "B'nai B'rith Great Books Series" talk, undated, 7/1; and "Biography—Rebecca A. Brickner," 8/7, Barnett R. and Rebecca A. Brickner papers, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (hereafter, AJA); *The Jewish Communal Register of New York City 1917–18* (New York: Kehillah of New York City, 1918), 459; Jacob Kohn to Herman Rubenovitz, February 18, 1914, in Herman H. Rubenovitz and Mignon L. Rubenovitz, *The Waking Heart* (Cambridge, Mass.: Nathaniel Dame & Co., 1967), 135–36; Mel Scult, *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century: A Biography of Mordecai M. Kaplan* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 392, n. 56; Alexander M. Dushkin, *Living Bridges: Memoirs of an Educator* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1975), 10, n. 11. Dushkin lists the Benderly boys and then after an "also," he lists the women; and Samuel M. Silver, *Portrait of a Rabbi: An Affectionate Memoir on the Life of Barnett R. Brickner* (Cleveland: Barnett R. Brickner Memorial Foundation, 1959), 13.

5. Balfour Brickner, "Rebecca Brickner: Luncheon in honor of her Seventy-fifth birthday," Fairmount Temple, January 28, 1969, tape recording, AJA; Helen-Rose Klausner to Rebecca Brickner, February 13, 1964, 8/8; "Y.P.C.s 15th Anniversary," 8/2; and "YPC Celebrates 15th Anniversary on March 21st," *Mosaic* (March 1964), 1, in 9/2; "Mrs. Brickner Tells of Her Faith in Girls of Today," *Cleveland News*, April 25, 1926, in 9/3; 7/1–6, Brickner papers; and Balfour Brickner, taped interview by author, New York, N.Y., February 3, 2000.

6. Lauren B. Tishkoff, "Jewish Scholar Rebecca Brickner leaving Cleveland," *Cleveland Press*, October 25, 1981; "Biography—Rebecca A. Brickner," 8/7; 7/1–6; 8/5; Stephen S. Wise to Rifkahleben, April 27, 1936, 6/10; and "How Hadassah Was Born," April 20, 1950, 6/8, Brickner papers; Irving I. Katz, *The Beth El Story, with a History of the Jews in Michigan before 1950* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1955), n.p.; and Transcript of Ninth Biennial Assembly (1931), Box 2, Folder 4, *PNFTS*, Women of Reform Judaism Collection, AJA.

7. Barnett Brickner to Rebecca Brickner, August 10, 1927, personal files of Balfour Brickner.

8. Poverty. The Hebrew word that Brickner uses is of rabbinic origin.

9. Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888–1970) became a renowned Hebrew writer who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1966, the first granted to a Hebrew writer. The first edition of his collected works in four volumes appeared in 1931. Rahel Bluwstein (1890–1931) was a Hebrew poet whose clear, uncomplicated style made her very popular with the public. She died of tuberculosis at the age of forty-one. At that time, the writers were virtually unknown in the United States except among a select group of Jewish Studies scholars and Hebraists.

10. Hayyim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934), renowned Hebrew poet, settled in Palestine in 1924 and was a dominant figure in the creation of Jewish cultural life in Palestine. *Sefer Ha-Aggadah*, compiled with Yehoshua Hana Rawnitzki between 1908–11, is a collection of rabbinic lore.

11. Devorah Baron (1887–1956), was known for her Hebrew short stories depicting Jewish life in the small towns of Eastern Europe and in Palestine. Her first

volume of short stories was published in 1927, and she was the first recipient of the Bialik Prize in 1934.

12. Joseph G. Klausner (1874–1958) was a literary critic, historian, and Zionist who settled in Palestine in 1919. When the Hebrew University was established, he was appointed to the chair of Hebrew literature. Klausner was especially interested in the transformation of the Hebrew language into a modern spoken tongue.

13. David Yellin (1864–1941) was a distinguished scholar, writer, and teacher. From 1926 on, he served as professor of Hebrew poetry of the Spanish period at the Hebrew University.

14. Abraham Ussishkin (1863–1941) was a Zionist leader and president of the Jewish National Fund from 1923 until his death. He settled in Palestine in 1919 as head of the Zionist Commission and was instrumental in establishing the country's Hebrew school network and the Hebrew University.

15. Brickner papers, 8/1.

16. The English translation precedes the Hebrew, which is a quote from Esther 4:16.

17. Ibid, 8/1.

18. Ibid, 7/1.

19. "The very last is dearest." This is a well known maxim from the Midrash.

Review Essays

Remembering the Lower East Side

Hasia R. Diner, *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 219 pp.

Hasia R. Diner, Joseph Shandler, and Beth S. Wenger, eds., *Remembering the Lower East Side: American Jewish Reflections* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 291 pp.

Roger Daniels

In April 2001, a few months after these books were published, the Lower East Side was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Such a designation does not forbid alteration or even demolition, but does provide tax credits for owners who make approved restorations. The district is an L-shaped area extending from Allen to Essex Streets and from East Houston to Division, only a small portion of what the scholars in these books and most New Yorkers have thought of as the Lower East Side. Anyone who wonders why this has happened—and why now—would do well to consult the two books under review here.

They are united by their common topic and by Hasia Diner, author of one and co-editor of the other. Diner tells us that the anthology grew out of a conference, “Remembering the Lower East Side,” held at New York University in May 1998, and it was while involved in the conference that she decided to expand an unpublished essay into a book. These two books are thus complementary but not congruent; each is a significant contribution to our knowledge, and Diner’s *Lower East Side Memories* is the most important work on the area since Moses Rischin’s *The Promised City*,¹ which will solidify her position as one of the premier historians of American immigration and ethnicity. Rischin, the doyen of American Jewish historians, also has a connection with each of the books under review: he contributed an essay to the anthology and read Diner’s manuscript for the Princeton press.

After my first reading of Diner’s book, I reacquainted myself with the classic *The Promised City*, thinking that it might be instructive to

compare the two. The latter shows the influence of his mentor Oscar Handlin. But where Handlin's Boston was "a city where no promise dwelled," Rischin's immigrants—and their children—speak with "the voice of stubborn hope." His book is crammed with history, statistics, sociology, and insight. His mission was to "tell the story of New York's first great meeting with the social problems of the modern city as told through the experience of East European Jews." (vii)

Diner, appropriately for a *fin de siècle* historian, is concerned as much with memory as with history. Her book is not a history of the Lower East Side: as she points out, no such history has yet been written. (n. 47, 186) She writes as "a historian interested in furthering our understanding of how American Jews made sense of their past as they contended with a particular kind of present." (14) And although as the author of, among other things, the second volume in a five-volume *History of the Jewish People in America*,² she knows very well that American Jewish history did not start on the Lower East Side, she can still call it not only "the sacred place of the American Jewish Past" (x), but also "the American Jewish Plymouth Rock." (8; see also p. 130)

Raised in Milwaukee and without familial background in New York, she describes a personal epiphany "when for the first time I, with my husband and children, took a walking tour of the Lower East Side sometime in the 1980s. I felt that I had 'come home,'" (12) It would have been unthinkable for a scholar of Rischin's and my generation to write something like that and, I must confess, there were moments in my first reading of the early pages that I was a bit uneasy about what was to come and what I would have to say about it. I need not have concerned myself; her post-modern sensibilities embellish this book, but the mature scholar almost always remains in charge.

In addition to the traditional literature and her personal experience, Diner relies on a wide variety of sources, many of them from popular culture. These include a 1951 children's book "that located the Lower East Side as the site of American Jewish memory" (11); the comic Mickey Katz's "Ballad of Duvid Crockett"; two animated cartoons by Stephen Spielberg about a family of mice, the Mousekewitzes, who immigrate to America; an acute comparative analysis of the three film versions of *The Jazz Singer* (1927, 1953, and 1980), as well as an episode of the television cartoon series, *The Simpsons*, that does a takeoff on it; and, of course, more traditional texts by such authors as Abraham Cahan and Anzia Yezierska, as well

as some appropriate photographs.

Her well-argued and persuasive thesis is that the sanctification of the Lower East Side was a product of the last half-century:

the "discovery" of the Lower East Side as a powerful theme in American Jewish memory culture and the "discovery" of the Holocaust as a cornerstone of American Jewish identity happened together. In the 1960s the Lower East Side, as a shrine of memory, became universalized and firmly established. After that *all* American Jews referred to it; *all* public presentations of Jewishness emanated from the image of the Lower East Side. (175–76)

I am much more comfortable with the first part of that defining quotation than the second, with "a powerful theme" rather than "*all* American Jews...*all* public presentations." In the city where I have lived for a quarter of a century—I was born on the corner of Second Avenue and Eleventh Street—many public presentations of Jewishness have been totally independent of the Lower East Side or its image. In fact, Cincinnati, the home of Isaac Mayer Wise and Jacob Rader Marcus, appears in this volume only to note that Stephen Spielberg was born there. But the book is so rich that one can almost—but not quite—ignore the occasional hyperbole.

Remembering the Lower East Side, an anthology of thirteen essays preceded by excerpts from online "conversations" among the three editors, is wonderfully and profusely illustrated with photographs, maps, cartoons and other images. Because I cannot do justice to all the essays in a review, I will list them in order of appearance and then comment briefly on several: Moses Rischin, "Toward the Onomastics of the Great New York Ghetto: How the Lower East Side Got Its Name"; Deborah Dash Moore and David Lobenstine, "Photographing the Lower East Side: A Century's Work" Paula Hyman, "Beyond Place and Ethnicity: The Uses of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire"; Riv-Ellen Prell, "The Ghetto Girl and the Erasure of Memory"; David Kaufman, "Constructions of Memory: The Synagogues of the Lower East Side"; Stephan F. Brumberg, "The One-Way Window: Public Schools on the Lower East Side in the Early Twentieth Century"; Suzanne Wasserman, "Re-Creating Recreations on the Lower East Side: Restaurants, Cabarets, Cafes and Coffeehouses in the 1930s"; Jack

Kugelmass, "Turfig the Slum: New York City's Tenement Museum and the Politics of Heritage"; Eve Jochnowitz, "Send a Salami to Your Boy in the Army: Sites of Jewish Memory and Identity at Lower East Side Restaurants"; Seth Kamil, "Tripping Down Memory Lane: Walking Tours on the Jewish Lower East Side"; Joseph Dorman, "The Lower East Side in the Memory of New York Jewish Intellectuals: A Filmmaker's Experience"; Aviva Weintraub, "Performing Memory: 'The Matzoh Factory' on the Lower East Side;" and Mario Maffi, "Translating Abraham Cahan, Teaching the Lower East Side: A View from Italy."

In view of the rich menu of essays it may seem churlish to complain about omissions, but it does strike me that, not surprisingly, the focus is on places and not on intangible institutions. For example, *landsmanschaften* are ignored except for brief references to *landsmanschaft shuls*, and there is no real discussion of ethnic variety among Jews on the Lower East Side. At least one essay might have been devoted to the numerous non-Jewish neighbors among whom the Jews lived.

When he published *The Promised City* Rischin was not concerned with how the Lower East Side got its name; in his essay here, while unable to pinpoint "exactly in what year or month or on what day or hour" the name giving occurred, it is clear to him that it was done in the first five years of the new century. He prints a 1905 map which is the earliest such "to come to my attention." For two-plus decades before that, he argues, the prevailing term, popularized by Israel Zangwill and Abraham Cahan, was "New York Ghetto," although Jacob Riis, who never used the current name, often called it simply "Jewtown."

While I neither prayed nor went to school on the Lower East Side—I never really lived there until the mid-1940s—I did eat there, so I can relate to and salivate because of the essays by Wasserman and Jochnowitz. Both even mention Ratner's where, when one was a little short—which for me was most of the time—you could fill up on the baskets of rolls that were always on the tables while paying for a bowl of soup. I was pleased to learn that it survives, but disappointed though not surprised to learn that it now has a back-room martini bar called Lansky's Lounge and that it is no longer cheap. And although no one ever sent *me* a salami, there were two guys from Cleveland in my outfit in Korea who got them regularly and sometimes would give

me a hunk.

Finally, I want to comment on the one exotic essay in the book, the "outsider's view" by the Italian Mario Maffi, a professor of American literature at the University of Milan. The author of a cultural history of the Lower East Side,³ he gives a fascinating account of his personal discovery in 1975 of America, the Lower East Side, and the novels of Abraham Cahan whose translator he has become. And, although he does not refer to it here, he has organized a wonderful slide show of what the contemporary Lower East Side looked like in the early 1990s and which he presented to a fascinated audience at the *Institut für Amerikastudien* in the University of Innsbruck when I taught there in 1996.

In history, of course, there is no such thing as a last word. But together these books give us an end-of-century, state-of-the-art look at perceptions of the Lower East Side. It seems to me that we need not only the detailed history of the territory whose lack Diner points out, but also some comparative studies of the similarities and differences between the Lower East Side and other Jewish American neighborhoods. Only when those tasks have been completed can we test the validity of many of the claims made in the works under review here.

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NOTES:

1. *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870–1914* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1962). It was based on his 1957 Harvard dissertation.

2. *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820–1880* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962).

3. *Nel mosaico della città Differenze etiche e nuove culture in un quartiere di New York* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1992); American edition, *Gateway to the Promised Land: Ethnic Cultures on New York's Lower East Side* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

The Sociological Study of Conservative Judaism in America

Jews in the Center: Conservative Synagogues and their Members, edited by Jack Wertheimer (New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 407 pp.

Dana Evan Kaplan

Jews in the Center is the culmination of a project funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts to study the Conservative movement and its members. The project was organized in 1994 by the Ratner Center for the Study of Conservative Judaism at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Jack Wertheimer, the director of the Ratner Center, recruited a number of sociologists to work together on the project. This is the main feature that distinguishes this collection from most other such volumes, where numerous contributors each send in a chapter and a single editor works them into a cohesive volume. The result is a uniformly impressive series of studies that helps us to understand the dynamics taking place within the Conservative congregation today. Although there are no “bombshell” conclusions similar to the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) finding of a 52 percent intermarriage rate, the research is superb and the final articles are illuminating.

In this case, a group of sociologists worked together for several years with approximately six thousand Conservative Jews who provided data in one form or another. The Ratner Center undertook a number of original studies that were intended to complement the information available in the 1990 NJPS. These included a congregational survey conducted by Ariela Keysar and Wertheimer in which the rabbis of three hundred and seventy-eight out of the seven hundred and sixty United Synagogue congregations participated. Also, Steven M. Cohen and Paul Ritterband conducted a membership survey that studied the responses of seventeen hundred individuals from twenty-seven randomly selected congregations in North America. In addition, Barry A. Kosmin conducted a survey of nearly fifteen hundred recent Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrants, along with one parent for each youth. Finally, Samuel C. Heilman and Riv-Ellen Prell undertook two separate ethnographic studies. Heilman studied two

Conservative congregations in New York while Prell studied two in Minnesota.

The research team met regularly over the course of about two years in order to discuss the findings and to coordinate the various research activities. Although some of the information gathered has already been reported upon, this volume is the first in which that data is presented in a comprehensive manner. As Wertheimer explains in his introduction, "The goal throughout was a coherent and unified study rather than a series of loosely connected projects."¹

The Centrism of the Conservative Movement

All of the authors stress the "centrism" of Conservative Jews and Judaism. Although many of its leaders do not particularly like this designation, the Conservative movement is usually considered to be the "middle-of-the-road" Jewish denomination. Despite the fact that this may not please the ideologues in the movement, it may very well be precisely because of this centrism that the movement has been able to appeal to such a wide spectrum of people. Sidney and Alice Goldstein write that they expected that individuals who identified themselves as Conservative Jews would show levels of religious identification lower than that of the Orthodox and higher than that of the Reform, and indeed the data from the 1990 NJPS confirmed this presumption. It also indicated that Conservative Jewry have sociodemographic characteristics that in many cases are also between those of the Orthodox and those of the Reform. As an example, it appears that Conservative Jews have higher levels of general education than the Orthodox, but lower levels than the Reform. In terms of mobility, Reform Jews are the most likely to move and the Orthodox the least. Conservative Jews fall somewhere in the middle.

The Goldsteins point out the obvious but important fact that just because someone identifies as a Conservative Jew, it does not mean that he or she necessarily follows a certain line of belief or a certain approach to ritual practice. Rather, "Jews identifying themselves as Conservative cover a broad spectrum of behavior, from the very observant to those who are only marginally connected to Judaism."² The authors then try to differentiate between members and nonmembers, finding that nonmembers tend to be younger people who never marry or who have been divorced, while members tend to

be older, married, and with children age fifteen and older, living at home.

A Smaller But Stronger Movement

Steven M. Cohen argues that despite the fact that many Conservative Jewish leaders have expressed an almost constant sense of disappointment with their movement over the course of many decades, the movement remains relatively "strong," "healthy," and "vital." While the Conservative movement is in the process of shrinking in terms of its relative percentage of the American Jewish community and perhaps even numerically, the Jewish "quality" has been increasing. Cohen writes that the "quality" of the younger generation "generally surpasses that of the older members."³ The author argues that "they are more observant, more active in the synagogue, more Jewishly educated, and more committed to Conservative Judaism."⁴

Cohen attempts to explain why it is that the Conservative movement will experience a decline in its numbers at the same time as its younger generation appears to be more committed than the previous generation. His explanation is that very few Conservative-raised adults now in their twenties, thirties, and forties who have intermarried have joined Conservative synagogues. Since the intermarrieds come disproportionately from homes that were less active in their synagogues, their departure means that a higher percentage of those left come from much stronger backgrounds. Cohen explains that "[t]he selective impact of intermarriage...is part of the explanation for the changes in the character of Conservative Jews now underway."⁵ The author argues that the Conservative movement is better off stressing that it remains committed to retaining high formal and informal demands and that any effort to slow numerical decline by lowering standards will fail in the long run. Cohen argues that the Conservative movement should sharpen and exploit its qualitative edge rather than attempt to compete with the Reform movement for the less committed.

Regional Differences In Affiliation Patterns

Sidney and Alice Goldstein, the authors of *Jews On The Move*,¹¹ not surprisingly stress that one of the key factors in the growth of the Conservative movement in the 1950s and 1960s was the dramatic

population movement from cities to suburbs. Though this resulted in a massive synagogue building boom, a lack of congruence between the official ideology of the Conservative movement and the beliefs and ritual behavior of the congregants created an anomalous situation. The Goldsteins believe that since only about 41 percent of American Jews affiliate with a synagogue, the many American Jews who are unaffiliated with a synagogue, but nevertheless identify themselves as adherents of a particular denomination, are ignored. Therefore, they argue that any sociological study should include not only those formally affiliated, but also those who are unaffiliated but still identify themselves with the movement.

The American Jewish population has been extensively redistributed throughout the United States, and this has had a dramatic impact on the Conservative movement. Many Jews who had lived in the Northeast and the Midwest have moved to the South and the West. Large numbers of new residents have arrived in cities such as Phoenix, San Diego, Denver, Las Vegas, and Atlanta. As a consequence of this demographic shift there has been a dramatic growth in the number of Conservative Jews living in the South and the West. As an example, nine out of ten Conservative Jews living in the Northeast in 1990 were born in that region, whereas only one out of four Conservative Jews in the South were born there and one out of three of those in the West. But the Goldsteins state that during the period of 1985-1990 the pace of change slowed down, and this may give the communities in the various cities in the South and West time to reorganize. Also, migration has been multidirectional. Nevertheless, the migration patterns suggest that Conservative synagogues in the Northeast and Midwest will have a very different type of social profile than their counterparts in the South and West. Although the Goldsteins do not explore this question in great depth—such a task could take a book in itself—the data that they do bring indicates that it is becoming increasingly difficult to speak of a uniform Conservative movement nationwide.

There were also significant regional differences in affiliation patterns. A high percentage of members are concentrated in the Northeast, whereas nonmembers are most likely to live in the South and Midwest. Members are more likely to have higher levels of education—both general and Jewish—while nonmembers are more likely to have less. Since affiliated Conservative Jews are the most

visible to the leadership of the movement, their characteristics have been assumed to be representative. But this is not the case, since nonmembers are far less active than are members. The Goldsteins argue that these individuals therefore "...represent a population in need of outreach through special programming geared specifically to younger persons, to those not in traditional families, to those who may be financially constrained, and to those alienated from the formal structure of the Jewish community."¹² Reaching these unaffiliated individuals who nevertheless identify themselves as Conservative Jews is critical for the future of the Conservative movement. This is particularly true because other potential sources of new members such as the non-observant Orthodox have been depleted or because, as in the case of the intermarried, the Conservative movement is unlikely to successfully attract large numbers.

Dramatic Socioreligious Changes

What becomes apparent throughout the book is just how many socioreligious changes have occurred in the Conservative synagogue. One of the most noticeable and important has been the acceptance of egalitarianism. Whereas a generation ago virtually every congregation restricted the ritual roles that women could assume, today the situation has changed dramatically.¹³ The Jewish Theological Seminary has been ordaining women as rabbis for more than fifteen years¹⁴ and women can also become Conservative cantors, ritual directors, educators, and administrators. Seventy-nine percent of Conservative synagogues have had a woman president.¹⁵

There has been much discussion in recent years over how the baby boomers approach religion and how that has changed the American religious landscape.¹⁶ In terms of the Conservative movement, the shift in leadership from an older generation to the baby boomers has had a dramatic impact on how lay leaders and synagogue professionals interact. As a result of their high educational and occupational achievements, younger leaders tend to be much less deferential to rabbis and other synagogue professionals. They also expect to play a much more central role in shaping congregational policies and programs, and exhibit a much greater willingness to innovate than did their elders.

The baby boomers have been strongly influenced by a new

approach to culture and society. Americans today are much more informal than they were a generation ago and they expect to actively participate at a far higher level than did their elders. They like being spontaneous and are far more willing to "seize the moment." When applied to the Conservative synagogue, these sensibilities have had a dramatic impact on the religious and social atmosphere.

The younger generation of Conservative Jews has on the whole been exposed to a much broader range of Jewish educational experiences than have their elders. In addition to a Hebrew afternoon school or even a day school, many participated in a youth movement, a Jewish summer camp experience, one or more visits to Israel with their family or a group of teenagers, and so forth. Whereas for many of their parents being Jewish was a "Phillip Roth" type of experience, the baby boomers see it as a logical manifestation of a multiplicity of formal and informal educational experiences.

Conservative Judaism as a Postmodern Phenomenon

One of the most interesting essays in the collection is the conclusion by Nancy Ammerman of Hartford Seminary's Center for Social and Religious Research. She suggests that there are "deviant cases" or "outliers" that do not seem to fit into the modernist paradigms that have created two major alternatives for those who would continue to be religious. Either one develops a creative synthesis that takes modern sensibilities into account along with traditional faith or one retreats into a cloistered community which actively works to keep out any modern influences that are felt likely to be corrupting. A third group is of course those who choose to reject or ignore religion entirely.⁶ Ammerman sees the case of Conservative Judaism as not fitting in with any of the above three options. She finds this particularly fascinating because by spotting nonconformist trends, the astute sociologist of religion is perhaps able to see how patterns are changing and developing. Ammerman sees the survival of the Conservative movement as part of an emerging new paradigm that she calls postmodernist. This is not the postmodernism of radical deconstructionism, but rather

[T]he postmodernism I mean is one that has a "yes, but" character. It begins with the realities of modern reason, individualism, and pluralism and looks for the ways in which

those modes of explanation are no longer sufficient. To invoke a postmodernist paradigm is to suggest that the realities of the modern situation are still with us, but their limits are recognized and overcome. Reason, specialization, and pluralism are not likely to go away, but we are beginning to recognize that what looked solidly modern has all sorts of cracks and crevices in which new forms of life are emerging, and old, unnoticed ones have been thriving all along.⁷

Ammerman reaches conclusions similar to that of Cohen. "While losing adherents is never good news, it has had a kind of winnowing effect, shedding those least involved in belief and practice and leaving the more devoted core."⁸ This core will seek out higher levels of Jewish education alongside a new-found commitment to the centrality of God in a manner that exemplifies the "postmodern acceptance of multiple modes of knowing."⁹

Ammerman writes that the fact that Conservative Jews are building a distinctive denominational culture while at the same time increasingly interacting with the broader culture is typical of urban religious communal identities of all types. It doesn't surprise her that under these circumstances you have a new paradigm emerging. Young committed Conservative Jews are increasing their levels of observance by modern (or postmodern) choice rather than premodern necessity.¹⁰

Recent Controversy

Orthodox Rabbi Avi Shafran recently attacked the Conservative movement in *Moment* magazine. In an article titled "The Conservative Lie," Shafran argues that while the leaders of the Conservative movement proclaimed loyalty to Halacha, they have actually "trampled" it.¹⁷ This essay has generated a great deal of discussion and anger. *Jews in the Center* does not provide any clear-cut answer to Shafran's charge, in large measure because there is no simple sociological answer to what is a complex ideological and theological debate. But the book will certainly provide a great deal of information that can be useful, not only by scholars but for partisans arguing with each other through the pages of the *Forward* or from the dais of the 92nd Street YMHA. This controversy is only one aspect of a broader

debate over the future of Judaism in the United States. The Conservative movement will play an important role in reconnecting with the many alienated Jews who constitute a hefty percentage of the American Jewish population.

One can expect that as the debate over how to stimulate a "Jewish Renaissance" heats up, the question of how the Conservative movement can best market itself will attract more and more attention. Already one can see a heightened interest in the Conservative movement. The Wertheimer volume is one indication of renewed scholarly interest. The late Daniel J. Elazar and Rela Mintz Geffen published another work just a few months later. Their effort is titled *The Conservative Movement in Judaism: Dilemmas and Opportunities*.¹⁸ This second work is a very different type of manuscript. Although Elazar and Geffen touched on the same issues, they write on a much more popular level and are not hesitant to confront difficult realities. Already on page 5, they bluntly state that the Conservative movement faces a major problem because of its "lack of clarity of ideology, mission, and purpose." The authors outline this and other problems and make detailed suggestions for confronting and overcoming them. For the serious reader interested in the subject, the Elazar/Geffen book is a highly suitable complement to the Wertheimer volume.

Jews in the Center is a masterful collection that shows how scholars, religious leaders, and members of congregations can work together to produce a manuscript of the highest caliber. Although not an easy book to read for the casual browser, the book is a source of a great deal of valuable information and insightful analysis. I recommend it highly.

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NOTES:

1. Jack Wertheimer, "Introduction," in *Jews in the Center: Conservative Synagogues and their Members*, edited by Jack Wertheimer (New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 6. Unless otherwise stated, all essays come from the Wertheimer volume.

2. Sidney Goldstein and Alice Goldstein, "Conservative Jewry: A Sociodemographic Overview," 78.

3. Steven M. Cohen, "Assessing the Vitality of Conservative Judaism in North America: Evidence from a Survey of Synagogue Members," 46.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid. 47.

6. Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 286. Roof has recently charted the emergence of five distinct subcultures: dogmatists, born-again Christians, mainstream believers, metaphysical seekers, and secularists. Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

7. Nancy T. Ammerman, "Conservative Jews within the Landscape of American Religion," 366.

8. Ibid. 375.

9. Ibid. 385.

10. Ibid.

11. Sidney Goldstein and Alice Goldstein, *Jews on the Move: Implications for Jewish Identity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

12. Ibid. 80.

13. For an overview on Jewish women in twentieth-century America, see Joyce Antler, *The Journey Home: Jewish Women and the American Century* (New York: The Free Press, 1997). For a slightly dated but still useful introduction to American Jewish feminism, see Sylvia Barack Fishman, *A Breath Of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community* (New York: The Free Press, 1993).

14. On women in clerical positions, see Paula Nesbitt, *The Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational And Organizational Perspectives* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). For an overview of the impact of feminism on religion, see Rita M. Gross, *Feminism & Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

15. Jack Wertheimer, "Introduction," 7.

16. See for example Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys Of The Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).

17. Avi Shafran, "The Conservative Lie," *Moment*, February 2001, 52–55. Shafran stood by his article but did note that the title was chosen by the *Moment* editors.

18. Daniel J. Elazar and Rela Mintz Geffen, *The Conservative Movement in Judaism: Dilemmas and Opportunities* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

Book Reviews

Jeffrey Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 165 pp.

The murder trial, dubious conviction, and lynching of Leo Frank remains one of the most sensational episodes in American Jewish history, and many scholars have examined its importance. Leonard Dinnerstein's *The Leo Frank Case* (Columbia University Press, 1968), written more than thirty years ago, is still cited often in survey histories of American Jewish life, anti-Semitism, and nativism. Some historians of American Jewish life even have used the affair to mark a dividing point between the golden era of Jewish immigration and the rise of nativist sentiments after 1915.¹ International comparisons also have been recognized; Albert S. Lindemann (like some observers in 1915) compared the Frank trial and its aftermath to France's Dreyfus affair and the Beilis affair in Russia.² And Nancy MacLean has offered a strong interpretation of the Frank affair based on gender and power relations.³

With the subject given its due in the historiography, one might ask why another book on the Frank affair is necessary. In *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial*, Jeffrey Melnick, assistant professor of American Studies at Babson College, claims that the Frank affair provides a lens through which to examine some of the intricacies of black-Jewish relations in the United States. He reads portrayals of Frank, the Jewish boss at Atlanta's National Pencil Company, alongside those of Jim Conley, a black sweeper at the factory where Mary Phagan, a thirteen-year-old employee, was murdered in 1913. Most recent works profess Frank's innocence despite his conviction and some argue that Conley is the more likely perpetrator; Melnick does not enter into this debate. Melnick aims instead "to suggest the myriad ways we might explore anew the relationship of African Americans and Jews." (133) And Melnick convincingly argues that these relations cannot be understood without context; thus, in the Frank affair, Melnick rightly argues, black-Jewish relations must be considered in conjunction with gender, labor relations in the new South, and whiteness. In his effort to provide rich, textured readings of the gender, regional, and racial

components of the Frank affair, Melnick is successful. At the same time, the book lacks narrative flow; the individual chapters all read as self-contained articles on various aspects of the Frank case, with the chapters on perversion and "narrating villainy" reading much more convincingly than the others.

In one of his strongest chapters, Melnick argues that the perversion charge against Frank so central to the trial allows readers "to explore the often uncomfortable and certainly unacknowledged differences in the ways Jews and African Americans have been objectified." (47) Relying on primary sources including the trial transcript and newspaper accounts of the trial, as well as a broad reading of secondary literature, Melnick deliberately examines the multiple meanings of the rumor that Frank performed oral sex on Phagan before her murder. He convincingly demonstrates that, in contrast to the stereotypes surrounding black male sexuality, Frank was vilified in part "because his sexuality seemed unhealthy: it is partial, unwhole, nongenital." (73) Melnick shows that, despite the feminization of Frank and stripping of his male power, Frank could still be portrayed as a sexual predator, guilty of abusing and killing a thirteen-year-old girl. Melnick successfully weaves class and sex together as he argues that Frank's power in the capitalist system (as the employer of the victim) was central to the ability of his opponents to label him a predator.

Melnick does not address the portrayal of Jim Conley with the same level of depth as he does Frank, but that may be because the sources are not available to do so. Nevertheless, one salient point Melnick makes about Conley is that, in an interesting reversal of contemporaneous African American experiences, Conley's illiteracy effectively allowed him to be set free. During the trial, Conley took and failed a literacy test; his failure supposedly proved that he was incapable of writing the notes found near Phagan's body after her murder. This evidence was instrumental in exonerating Conley. Melnick rightly points out the irony here: literacy has so often been a key to liberty throughout African American history, whether it be for a slave able to write an autobiographical narrative or for African Americans denied the right to vote based on literacy requirements. In Conley's instance, that relationship between literacy and liberty was upended.

Melnick also provides insight into the relationship of Jewishness

and whiteness through his close readings of the many portrayals of Leo Frank. Frank's whiteness was uncertain and contested during the trial and its aftermath; Melnick clearly explains his own aim in this study: "What I want to stress most of all is that differing economies of racialness competed with each other throughout the case; that is, we do not have to decide whether Frank was *always* considered white, but rather *when* he was assigned that position." (140, n. 14, emphasis in original) This important insight about the relationship between a Jew and whiteness, unfortunately relegated to a footnote rather than underscored within the text, reveals the importance of the instability of whiteness for Jews during the early twentieth century. Melnick's demonstration of whiteness as a shifting and contested characteristic deserves to be developed beyond the one instance of Leo Frank, and future considerations should take note of Melnick's deft analysis of Frank's relationship to whiteness.

Melnick has also made an important contribution by putting black-Jewish relations on trial in an instance during which there was relatively infrequent direct interaction between blacks and Jews. He shows that relationships to a variety of other identities—including those of labor and capital, blacks and whites, whites and Jews—are always central to black-Jewish relations. Black-Jewish relations are thus not a fixed thing, but a process "made up of the constant shifting of gears" (132), continually refigured based on a variety of identities including (but not limited to) blackness and Jewishness. Melnick hopes that his work will bring black-Jewish relations out of the current "comforts of the linear 'rise and fall' narratives that have heretofore defined this subject." (133) He has taken a very good step in this direction, albeit with only one, admittedly influential and crisis-ridden, episode in American history.

Daniel Greene, a Ph.D. candidate in history at The University of Chicago, is writing a dissertation on the Intercollegiate Menorah Association and The Menorah Journal.

NOTES:

1. In his survey, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), Howard M. Sachar begins his chapter, "The Golden Door Closes," with the Frank Affair. See also, to name just two of many examples, Hasia Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks 1915–1935* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, 1995); and John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955).

2. Albert Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs Dreyfus, Beilis,*

Frank 1894–1915 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

3. Nancy MacLean, "The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism," *Journal of American History* 78 (1991).

Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880–2000* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 366 pp.

In recent years there has been a renaissance in the field of American Jewish history. In view of the Jews' success as a group and their influence on cultural, political, economic, and social life in America during the twentieth century, many studies have emerged attempting to explain this historical phenomenon unprecedented in other western countries. Recent examples are Stephen Whitfield's impressive study *In Search of American Jewish Culture* (1999) and Sylvia B. Fishman's *Jewish Life and American Culture* (2000). Very few scholars, however, have attempted to explore how the history of the Jews in modern America was influenced by the host Christian society, especially its Protestant culture. This is indeed the unique historical perspective offered by Professor Yaakov Ariel's excellent book.

Ariel's study shows for the first time the full extent of the rich history of Protestant missionary efforts directed toward the Jews in America, examining it in the broader context of the Christian-Jewish relationship. Based on an impressive array of primary sources, and placed within a wide historical and theological context, Ariel's study is a model of scholarship. Despite its title, the book in fact deals with both the history of Protestantism and the history of the Jews in modern America, thus greatly contributing to a better understanding of the important role assigned to religion in American society during the twentieth century. It will undoubtedly serve for many years as the authoritative study on the issue of the Christian-Jewish relationship in the United States.

During the 1960s and 1970s many Jews and Christians were surprised to see the rise of a large and vigorous movement of Jewish converts to Christianity. The ideological and social roots of this movement can be traced back, as Ariel skillfully describes, to powerful nineteenth-century pietist and evangelical impulses among Protestants in Europe, England, and America. Based on a premillennialist messianic view that "considered the Jews to be the chosen people, heir to the covenant between God and Israel" (220), Christian missionary efforts accorded the Jews a singular role in the events leading to Christ's second coming and the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God, thus emphasizing the "central role of the Jews in the divine program for the End of time." (9) Such

an eschatological and apocalyptic approach is indeed one of the great merits of Ariel's study; he looks at Protestant Christian missionary efforts toward the Jews in the wider context of the Protestant philosophy of salvation history. The book is thus an important continuation of the author's previous pioneering study, *On Behalf of Israel: American Fundamentalist Attitudes toward Jews, Judaism, and Zionism, 1865-1945* (1991). In the present work he shows how essential this apocalyptic and eschatological attitude is for the understanding of the content and form of Protestant missions to the Jews in America.

Within this broad ideological and theological context, the author traces the inception of the movement to evangelize the Jews in America through three distinct and well-defined stages. If in the 1870s there was only one mission laboring among the Jews in America, by the 1910s dozens had sprung up, employing hundreds of missionaries. During this first period, premillennialist missions were directed at the thousands of Jewish emigrants from Eastern Europe, concentrating especially on young people and offering a variety of social services in order to win them to the Christian faith. (9-78) The second stage, between 1920 and 1965, saw the adjusting of Christian missions to the changing face of Jewish society in America, focusing more and more on the second generation and increasingly moving to middle-class Jewish neighborhoods. With the great transformation that took place in American society in the 1960s and 1970s, during the third stage, 1965 to 2000, missions became part of Jewish life. Jews are now accustomed to encountering missionaries on the streets and to be invited to visit their centers. With the information revolution of the last decades of the century, Jews faced missions through advertisements in newspapers and magazines as well as on the Internet.

Professor Ariel's study takes the reader on an extraordinary journey to learn about a variety of people, institutions, and movements, all aiming at evangelizing the Jews. He describes the host Christian religious culture that nourished these missions and the changing attitudes toward Jews among Protestants, as well as the various ways in which Jews reacted to them. This broad survey of the Christian-Jewish relationship exposes an important and generally unknown terrain in American religious history. In contrast to Christian states in Europe, where there is an established church, in America the lack of a formal religious structure offers the opportunity for a

dialogue and negotiation among different groups. The book, therefore, deals not only with the Christian mission to the Jews, but also with the unique religious space that made it possible due to the separation of church and state. Thus, unlike Europe where Jews formed separate cultural groups, in America "the social and cultural separateness of the Jews has been seriously eroded" during the twentieth century, resulting also in the expansion of "the number of converts to evangelical Christianity." After a hundred years, as Ariel's study shows, "the movement to evangelize the Jews is as energetic as ever" and "the missionaries are more than optimistic about their future stature and growth." (291) Such a prognosis says much about the Jews, as well as about the Protestant movement in America.

With this impressive book, Professor Ariel has established himself as a leading scholar of the Christian-Jewish relationship in America. It will surely serve as a model for future analysis of the rich negotiations taking place among other religious denominations in America. Further, the valuable insights provided by this study will enhance understanding of the important role of religion in American history.

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Michael A. Meyer and W. Gunther Plaut, *The Reform Judaism Reader: North American Documents* (New York: UAHC Press, 2001), 228 pp.

This compilation of documents related to the development of Reform Judaism in North America will make a concise and useful companion for any student of Jewish denominational history. The editors have divided their texts into twelve topical chapters, tracing historical patterns of practice and belief under each heading. For example, in examining Reform perspectives on "Zionism and Israel" (Chapter 8), the selected texts bring the reader from the official anti-Zionism of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1897 to the same organization's "Zionist Platform" a century later.

The intended audience for this book, as noted in its preface, is "individuals and... study groups in universities and synagogues." (vi) One can imagine different academic and social settings for which this text would be appropriate. Its most apparent use would be for congregational adult education programs seeking English-language text study. (Though some of the earliest documents cited in the book were in German, they have been translated by the editors.) A twelve-week course might be built around the different chapter headings. A synagogue ritual committee might find it interesting and beneficial to study the chapters that discuss the changes in liturgy and practice. This book might also be appropriate as a confirmation class text, providing high school students with access to original documents.

The structure of the book is nicely organized and easily followed. The editors selected texts that represent both mainstream and peripheral ideas, and their introductions to each chapter put the selections into their appropriate contexts. Some of the selections are available in other works (such as Plaut's *Growth of Reform Judaism: American and European Sources Until 1948* or Meyer's *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*). The uniqueness here is that in this new volume one can easily find texts that are of immediate relevance to the contemporary Reform Jewish community. *The Reform Judaism Reader: North American Documents* would be a valuable addition to any home or synagogue library.

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Kurt Stone, *The Congressional Minyan: the Jews of Capitol Hill* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 2000), 582 pp.

In Congress there are numerous groups and caucuses that represent any number of ethnic backgrounds and special causes. There is no official "Jewish Caucus." But that is not to say that Jews have not been represented in Congress. Nor does it indicate that Jews have not been influential in Congress. Instead, it shows that they have taken a different path. This book is an invaluable reference aid to those interested in the history of Jews in the American government. It contains over five hundred and sixty-eight pages of biographical sketches, followed by sources used. It is arranged alphabetically, from Gary Ackerman, a New York Democratic representative (1983–) to Edward Zorinsky, a Nebraska Democratic senator (1976–87). Each sketch details the personal life and the political careers of the individuals. One such individual, the Whig Judah P. Benjamin (also a noted Confederate and the last southern senator to resign his seat prior to the Civil War) never denied his Jewish heritage. However, when a Swiss-American treaty restricted the presence of Jews in Switzerland, Benjamin chose not to speak on the issue. Benjamin later became the Confederate secretary of state, and still later a lawyer while living in exile in Paris. For the purposes of this work, a Jew has been defined as one with a Jewish parent, though they might practice another religion. An added bonus to this book is the appendix, which gives numerous statistics about Jewish representation in Congress. If you need to know the number of Jews from Iowa, or their political parties and dates, this is the place to look.

Robert Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Charleston: University of South Carolina, 2000), 518 pp.

The Jewish Confederates adds greatly to the knowledge about the Jewish Confederate—not only the David Yulees, but also the Rosanna Ostermans of Galveston, Tex., who gave comfort to Southern soldiers. (226) Thoroughly researched, this book details hundreds of Jews who participated in the Confederate dream at all levels. The bibliography itself is a valuable research tool. It begins with Jewish views prior to the start of the Civil War. It then examines the subject topically, rather than chronologically, with chapters on Jewish gentleman officers, the Jewish Johnny Rebs, and the occupied home front. The final chapter comments on the post-Civil War era and how the Jewish Confederates

came to be forgotten. At times, Rosen reintroduces individuals who appear earlier in the narrative, which can be confusing. However, despite the immensely detailed nature of this work, it remains extremely readable. Extensive use of photographs and direct quotations enliven the individuals' stories.

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THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

COLLECTION POLICY

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives identifies, collects and preserves records of enduring value that document American Jewish life. Its collection development program reflects the diversity and distinctiveness of the North American Jewish community.

CORE AREAS OF INTEREST

As one of the world's largest archives for the study of North American Jewry, the American Jewish Archives collects major records that relate to Jewish life in the Americas. It focuses intently on four core areas of interest:

- The records of American Jewish personalities and institutions deemed to possess historical significance;
- The records of American Reform Judaism — its institutions and significant personalities;
- The records of American Jewish communities — with a special focus on the records of Cincinnati Jewry
- The records of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

The American Jewish Archives may periodically elect to acquire and maintain other records of special significance. When considering collections that relate to Jewish life outside of the United States of America, the American Jewish Archives will carefully consider accepting those records that have extraordinary research or historical value.

ADMINISTERING THE COLLECTION POLICY

It is the responsibility of the Marcus Center's Executive Director — in consultation with the archival professionals on staff at the American Jewish Archives — to set policy vis-a-vis the accession or deaccession of records. In certain instances, the Executive Director may consult with various experts or members of The Marcus Center's Academic Advisory and Editorial Board regarding the materials being considered for acquisition.

As a rule, The Marcus Center does not purchase any manuscripts or archival materials. We urge both individuals and organizations to contact the American Jewish Archives before sending unsolicited donations. Unsolicited records will be subject to review on the basis of the foregoing criteria. With respect to historically significant records and documents that do not belong in its collection, the American Jewish Archives attempts to ensure their preservation in an appropriate archival center.

All donors to The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives will be expected to complete a Donor Agreement Form.

ADVANCING THE FUNDAMENTAL MISSION OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Our institutional motto, "Preserving American Jewish History," gives expression to the fundamental mission of the American Jewish Archives. As part of this mission, the American Jewish Archives will cooperate in the development of local, regional, and synagogue archives by promoting their development and maintenance, and by fostering a fruitful interaction.



The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
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