# The American Jewish Archives Journal




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# The American Jewish Archives Journal

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Jewish legal (halakhic) responsa serve as important historical sources, shedding light on the issues and personalities contained therein. This article demonstrates how this tool may be utilized in the study of American Jewish history. Specifically, it shows how responsa on the permissibility of turning a church into a synagogue reflect personal and group conflicts on the Lower East Side during the community's formative years. The responsa highlight the local disputes between rabbinic figures, such as Abraham Joseph Ash, Judah Mittleman, and Joshua Segal, as well as broader intra-communal conflicts between those of Lithuanian and Galician origin.

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Truman's decision to recognize the State of Israel in 1948. "A Jew both by birth and conviction," Lehman urged his fellow Jews to be proud of their religion and never to compromise their beliefs.

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# To Our Readers . . .

Isaac Mayer Wise's Plum Street Temple—the strikingly beautiful Byzantine-Moorish synagogue dedicated in 1866—is a historic landmark and a gem of the Cincinnati community. In 1869 Wise reflected in print on the importance and symbolism of the temple's location in the heart of downtown, across from Cincinnati City Hall, St. Peter in Chains Cathedral, and the First Unitarian Church that once graced the corner:

> So it looks in Cincinnati, corner Eighth and Plum streets. It is the most striking monument of civil and religious liberty in this or any other country. It is the most telling demonstration of the spirit of our age and the freedom of our country … the stars and stripes command peace; peace in the name of the law, peace in the name of liberty, and all must submit. This is a wonderful corner. We wish to see one of the same kind in Rome, another in St. Petersburg, and again, another in Constantinople … civil and religious liberty to all and every where.[1]

Wise understood the symbolic importance of place. Where the temple stood, it was monumental in size, aesthetics, and symbolism; elsewhere, the symbolic value of standing corner to corner with the primary civil and religious institutions of the city would have been lost.

The historical record has not always given the location of buildings and monuments their full due. History writing has focused largely on time and chronology, while geography is often taken for granted. Since the 1990s, however, the field of history has witnessed what could be called a spatial turn. Historians now frequently and deliberately incorporate spatial relations, physical settings, mapping, and geography into the historical analysis of their subjects.[2] More recently scholars have proposed the thorough

1 I.M. Wise, "Religious Liberty, Corner of Eighth and Plum Streets, in Cincinnati," *The Israelite*, 15 October 1869, p. 8.

2 Richard White, "What is Spatial History?" https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29 (accessed 11 September 2019); Lila Corwin Berman, *Politics, Race, and Religion in Postwar Detroit* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Shari Rabin, *Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

investigation of the spatial in writing biography: "Thinking about subjects through particular spaces or places can help to draw out the influences of other factors and agents…. Lives are spatial, so their telling should reflect and embrace this."[3] The field of Jewish history has been slower than others in adopting this historiographic turn: "Related disciplines that have been politely knocking on Jewish Studies' door for some time now—anthropology and geography, for example—have long demonstrated that neither individual nor community can experience time in this world without claiming, occupying, naming, shaping, negotiating, and losing 'real' space."[4] Certainly themes such as migration, transnationalism, and mobility underscore how significant movement has been in the study of Jewish history, particularly since the mid-nineteenth century. Although "countries," "cities," and "regions" are well accounted for in studies of Jewish history, the field has done less with smaller spaces, such as city blocks, individual homes, synagogues, and buildings. It has also lagged in thinking about how identity is tied to space, "to place as a lived particularity."[5]

Spaces or sites of lived Jewish experience provide a subtext for each of the three articles in this issue of the journal. In the first piece, Oran Zweiter analyzes halakhic responsa concerning the efforts to turn a church into a home for Beth Hamedrash, the first Russian-American Jewish congregation in New York City. While making a solid case for using Jewish legal literature in the writing of American Jewish history, he also makes us think about how people relate to religious space. The rabbinic authorities and the congregation were forced to confront the ways a building's previous use, even when leaving no visible traces, transforms space. Was the building's use as a church enough to invalidate it for synagogue use?

3 Cheryl McGeachan, Isla Forsyth, and William Hasty, "Certain Subjects? Working with biography and life-writing in historical geography," *Historical Geography* 40 (2012): 178–179.

4 Quote from Mary Minty as cited in Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Vered Shemtov, "Introduction: Jewish Conceptions and Practices of Space," *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2005): 4.

5 Charles W.J. Withers, "Place and the 'Spatial Turn' in Geography and History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70, no. 4 (Oct. 2009): 640. The essential book on this topic remains Dolores Hayden's *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995).

> The heads of the synagogue were forced to purchase a building for a synagogue, and they could only attain a building that was initially built as a home. Later it was purchased by gentile priests who worship a trinity. They prayed to their god for a number of years but did not bring any idolatrous image into it. Now they have sold it, [and we would like to] know whether we can make this building into a house of study for Torah and prayer?[6]

The religious leaders in New York who were posing the questions to halakhic authorities in Europe (the location of these authorities overseas also raises significant "space" questions) understood full well that the building itself had a history, and the issue was whether that history was compatible with their religious needs.

The second article, by Duane Tananbaum, professor emeritus at Lehman College, is an outgrowth of his 2016 political biography of U.S. Senator Herbert H. Lehman. This article explores the role of Judaism in Lehman's long and illustrious career, thus filling a lacuna in the earlier study. In doing so, Tananbaum has provided us with different ways of thinking about Lehman's biography. With his appointment as the first director general of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) under Franklin Roosevelt, Lehman's work directing aid to millions of refugees and his personal signing of affidavits for "dozens of relatives and other Jews trapped in Germany" exposes the possibilities of connecting the life of one person with the histories and geographies of entire groups of people. However, Lehman is a figure most associated with New York—from his life of wealth and privilege on Manhattan's Upper East Side (in geographic proximity, I might add, to other wealthy German Jews such as the Warburgs, as well as to Temple Emanu-El[7]) to his time as lieutenant governor and governor in Albany.

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6 Zweiter, 9. Karla Goldman wrote an interesting article on two Cincinnati synagogues being turned into churches: "*This Is the Gateway to the Lord*: The Legacy of Synagogue Buildings for African American Churches on Cincinnati's Reading Road," in *Black Zion: African American Religious Encounters with Judaism*, ed. Yvonne Chireau and Nathaniel Deutsch (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 187–202.

7 Susie J. Pak's *Gentlemen Bankers: The World of J.P. Morgan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013) is a great example of the wedding of history and geography. Pak

He then took New York to Washington, DC, as a U.S. senator. His decades-long career in politics epitomizes the connection between one person's biography and the history of globalization and global history.

Finally, we are grateful to Ira Robinson for providing us with a translation from the Yiddish of an essay written by Rabbi Israel Porath of Cleveland in 1945. In the piece titled "The Second Destruction of Cleveland Orthodox Synagogues," Porath, a seminal figure of Orthodox Jewry in the city for more than five decades, gives a first-person account of the changes being wrought in his Cleveland community. These he sets in historical context with reflection on the previous uprooting of the Orthodox community, which had occurred twenty-five years earlier. That first communal shift left scars on the buildings and spaces left behind: "After a while there came prosperity and the Jews began to run from their homes. In a short time the entire Jewish settlement there was destroyed. Many synagogues were sold as churches; the rest were left empty and abandoned and a significant Jewish resource was lost."[8] When Porath wrote the article, the community was again at a crossroads, revisiting the same concerns and fears of the years before:

> We see once again how Jewish neighborhoods are becoming abandoned and emptied. It is now a normal experience to see great Houses of Study looking for a tenth man for a minyan. If this goes on we will once more see the old spectacle which we now experience regarding the old Jewish neighborhoods. Parents will travel downtown with their children and show them the churches where Sammy became bar mitzvah, where Eddy graduated, and where Charlie and Penny were married.[9]

Porath observed that Cleveland was not alone in this phenomenon. "Cleveland is but a link in the great American chain…. However, that does not mean that we can ignore our local problems because other Jewish communities suffer from the same troubles. When there is an

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maps the networks of J.P. Morgan's banking firm—including those with the German-Jewish banking firm of Kuhn, Loeb & Co—to show how "private banking was at its core a personal business" that was closely tied to social and geographic relations.

8 Robinson, 51.

9 Ibid., 52.

outbreak of plague each locality must undertake its own measures to protect and save itself from destruction."[10] To that end, he described proactive measures the community could take to ensure survival. He warned that synagogues should not simply move to a new neighborhood and build on a smaller scale. Instead, he encouraged synagogues to combine forces and establish an Orthodox bloc that would ultimately influence the Jewish Community Council. Undoubtedly, Porath's concerns went beyond the buildings themselves, but he clearly understood the importance of these physical spaces and how they should be reshaped in this new reality. The move from urban to suburban was not simply a movement of groups of people but of institutions as well. This appreciation of the physical spaces—the sites, locations, and neighborhoods where time and place meet—is where history can also be found.

As historians are taking a closer look at Jewish spaces, museums and archives are doing their part to preserve that history. The focal point of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews—situated in the historic heart of Jewish Warsaw—is the reconstruction of the timber roof structure and polychrome wooden ceiling of the lost 17th-century wooden synagogue of Gwoździec. The website, synagogues360, which provides visitors with a visual and historical record of synagogues around the world is now hosted by the Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot in Tel Aviv (https://synagogues360.bh.org.il/). Closer to home, the American Jewish Archives works with professionals in Cincinnati and elsewhere to ensure that proper photographs are taken of synagogues and other institutions that are closing or are being demolished. It is our mission to preserve the record of the American Jewish past and that includes the very spaces where that history unfolded.

Dana Herman, Ph.D.
Managing Editor

10 Ibid., 54.



Beth Hamedrash Hagadol at 60 Norfolk St., New York.
(Courtesy Paul Berger)

# *Turning a Church into a Synagogue: Jewish Law Meets Communal Politics on New York's Lower East Side*

Oran Zweiter

In 1858 two halakhic (Jewish legal) responsa were sent from Europe to the fledgling Eastern European Jewish community of New York. The writers of the responsa were none other than two of the leading halakhic authorities of Europe, Rabbi Joseph Saul Nathanson of Lvov, and Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger of Altona, in present-day Germany.[1] The inquirers from New York were Rabbi Abraham Joseph Ash, rabbi of New York's Beth Hamedrash, and Judah Mittleman, a learned lay member of New York's Jewish community.[2] The question at hand was whether an Orthodox community was permitted to use a former church as a synagogue.

European congregations did not have the option of purchasing church buildings and turning them into synagogues. The cultural and religious barriers that existed between Jews and non-Jews in Europe, even in the post-emancipation era, were such that houses of worship belonged to one faith community and stayed that way. Given the deep separation between religious communities, it would have been unheard

1 For more on Nathanson, see Avraham Benedict, "Ha-Gaon Rabbi Yosef Shaul Nathanson," *Shana Be-Shana* (1981–1982): 399–407; M. Leiter, "Ha-Mehaber Shut Shoel U-Meshiv: Kavim Le-Demuto," *Ha-Darom* 29 (1969): 146–170; 31 (1970): 171–202; for more on Ettlinger, see Judith Bleich, *Jacob Ettlinger, His Life and Work: The Emergence of Modern Orthodoxy in Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1978); "Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger and the Movement for Counter-Reform," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 8 (1981): 85–89.

2 For more on Ash, see Moshe D. Sherman, *Orthodox Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 20–21; Judah David Eisenstein, *Ozar Zikhronotai*, 1929, p. 247. For more on Mittleman, see Eisenstein, 247.

of for a European Jewish community to purchase a Christian church and turn it into a synagogue. As such, there is no halakhic literature that deals with this question in a European context.[3]

American Orthodox congregations, on the other hand, had been purchasing church buildings to use as synagogues for years before this case arose on New York's Lower East Side. In the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, a number of prominent Orthodox congregations in New York used former church buildings as their sanctuaries. In 1827, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun moved into 119 Elm Street in Manhattan, formerly the First Coloured Presbyterian Church, and in 1850 Congregation Shaare Zedek moved into 38 Henry Street in Manhattan, formerly a Quaker house of worship.[4] Ashkenazic congregations in particular were prone to purchasing and transforming churches into synagogues; they were generally poorer than the more established Sephardic congregations, due to their constituents being of more recent arrival in the United States. Ashkenazic groups also tended to self-segregate based on specific place of origin, creating smaller, financially strapped congregations.[5] Interestingly, Orthodox congregations would continue to turn churches into synagogues well into the twentieth century, and the propriety of doing so would continue to be an issue. This is evidenced by a 1951 responsum on the issue, authored by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.[6] The case at hand, from 1858, is certainly one of the earliest occurrences of this and the first time it was raised as a halakhic issue.

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3 Katrin Kessler, "Halakhic Rules in Synagogue Architecture," *Jewish Architecture in Europe*, ed. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin and Harmen H. Thies (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2010), 243–256; Helen Rosenau, "The Synagogue and Protestant Church Architecture," in *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology and Architecture*, ed. Harry M. Orlinsky (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1975), 309–316.

4 On B'nai Jeshurun see Israel Goldstein, *A Century of Judaism in New York: B'nai Jeshurun 1825–1925* (New York: Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, 1930), 56; On Shaare Zedek see David W. Dunlap, *From Abyssinian to Zion: A Guide to Manhattan's Houses of Worship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 260.

5 Rachel Wischnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture in the United States: History and Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955), 47.

6 Moshe Feinstein, *Iggerot Moshe.* Orah Hayyim 1:49 (New York, 1959), 111.

Turning a church into a synagogue on the Lower East Side illustrates the underlying historical issues implied within rabbinic responsa. Jacob Katz, historian of early modern Jewry, commented that laws sourced in the responsa literature "bear witness to the many theoretical and practical conflicts that affected both the individual and the community."[7] A handful of studies by scholars such as David Ellenson, Adam Mintz, and Jonathan D. Sarna, to name a few, have demonstrated how responsa serve as important resources in the study of American Jewish history.[8] Analysis of these responsa, however, remains a field awaiting more attention.

In the case of the responsa from Nathanson and Ettlinger, close attention to the details and personalities reveals additional dimensions to our understanding of the early Eastern European community on the

7 Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), xiiv.

8 David Ellenson, "The Responsa of Rabbi Solomon Judah Rapoport and Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch on the Proposed Judah Touro Monument: A Translation of Two Texts," in *As a Perennial Spring: A Festschrift Honoring Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm*, ed. Bentsi Cohen (New York: Downhill Publishing, 2013), 163–171; "A Jewish Legal Authority Addresses Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Two Responsa of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein," *American Jewish Archives* 52, nos. 1&2 (2000): 113–128; "A Jewish Legal Decision by Rabbi Bernard Illowy of New Orleans and Its Discussion in Nineteenth Century Europe," *American Jewish History* 69 (December 1979): 174–195; Ellenson and Daniel Gordis, *Pledges of Jewish Allegiance: Conversion, Law, and Policymaking in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Orthodox Responsa* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012), 52–66; Adam Mintz, "Halakha in America: The History of City Eruvin, 1894–1962," doctoral dissertation, New York University, 2011; "A Chapter in American Orthodoxy: The Eruvin in Brooklyn," *Hakirah* 14 (2011): 21–59; "Is Coca-Cola Kosher? Rabbi Tobias Geffen and the History of American Orthodoxy," in *Rav Chesed: Essays in Honor of Rabbi Dr. Haskel Lookstein*, ed. Rafael Medoff (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 2009), 75–90; Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Touro Monument Controversy: Aniconism vs. Anti-Idolatry in a Mid-19th Century American Jewish Religious Dispute," in *Between Jewish Tradition and Modernity: Essays in Honor of David Ellenson*, ed. Michael A. Meyer and David N. Myers (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), 80–95. One study has been conducted on the perception of America and its effects on authors of American responsa. See Rod Glogower, "The Impact of the American Experience upon Responsa Literature," *American Jewish History* 69, no. 2 (1979): 257–269. For a list of responsa written in or sent to America through the beginning of the twentieth century, see Eisenstein, 338–358.

Lower East Side. The issues surrounding turning these churches into synagogues were not merely a matter of pure halakha, but a matter of halakha that was deeply intertwined with local rabbinic and communal politics. On a small scale, the halakhic literature surrounding this particular question reflects a personal feud between Ash and Mittleman. On a larger scale, the literature reflects broader communal disputes and power struggles within the Lower East Side immigrant community, particularly between the Lithuanian and the Galician communities.

## Jewish Legal Background

In Shulhan Arukh, the authoritative code of Orthodox Jewish law, Rabbi Joseph Karo ruled regarding the use of items in a synagogue that were previously used for idolatrous purposes:[9] "Wax candles that a gentile gives to idol worshippers, which were then extinguished by a servant and given or sold to a Jew, are prohibited from being kindled in a synagogue."[10] In his comments to Shulhan Arukh, Rabbi Moses

9 For more on the acceptance of Shulhan Arukh as authoritative see Michael J. Broyde and Ira Bedzow, "History of Codification," in *The Codification of Jewish Law and an Introduction to the Jurisprudence of the Mishna Berura* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 6–17; Joseph Davis, "The Reception of the 'Shulhan Arukh' and the Formation of Ashkenazic Jewish Identity," *AJS Review* 26, no. 2 (2002): 251–276; Edward Fram, "Timing May Not be Everything … but it Helps: Some Historical Factors that Contributed to the Success of Shulhan Arukh," *Report of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies* (2008/2009), 103–115.

10 Joseph Karo, Shulhan Arukh He-Hadash, Orah Hayyim 154:11 (Jerusalem: Makhon Shulhan Melakhim, 2009), 203. All translations of Hebrew texts are my own. The halakhic definition of Christianity as idolatry is a broad question going back to the Middle Ages. For more on this general issue see Louis Jacobs, "Attitudes towards Christianity in the Halakhah." *Friends of Louis Jacobs*, 27 March 2015, louisjacobs.org/articles/attitudes-towards-christianity-in-the-halakhah/ (accessed 30 July 2019); Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), 13–36; J. David Bleich, "Divine Unity in Maimonides, the Tosafists and Me'iri," *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 237–255. For treatment of this question by later rabbinic authorities see Yosef Salmon, "Christians and Christianity in Halachic Literature from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century," *Modern Judaism* 33, no. 2 (May 2013): 125–147.

Isserles (Rama) added: "[These candles] are permitted to be used for mundane use."[11] Based on these sources, it would seem that the question of using a church for synagogue services has a very simple answer: Since it was used for non-Jewish worship, it would be forbidden to use it for Jewish worship. However, in his commentary Magen Avraham, Rabbi Abraham Gombiner drew an important distinction, explaining that only when an object itself is used in prohibited worship does it become forbidden for use in Jewish ritual. Since the church itself was not worshipped but was merely used to house the worshippers, it was not an essential part of the worship; it was only a means by which the worship was carried out.[12] These basic sources, along with the distinction between Catholic and Protestant services, form the foundations with which Nathanson and Ettlinger analyzed the question regarding Congregation Beth Hamedrash.

## First Conflict: Ash vs. Mittleman

New York's first Orthodox, Eastern European congregation was founded in July 1852 under the name Congregation Beth Hamedrash. In his history of the congregation, Judah David Eisenstein counts twelve men from different countries of origin as the founding members of the congregation, including both Rabbi Abraham Joseph Ash and lay leader Judah Mittleman.[13] Eisenstein describes the first years of the congregation as ones of wandering; they made eight different stops, until they ultimately reached their final destination at Norfolk Street in 1885. The first years of the congregation included their first location in an attic at Henry Street, various storefronts, and even the upper gallery of a former courthouse. (They had to use the upper gallery since a different congregation was using the lower gallery.) The congregation was unified in its leadership and goals during its early years—that is, until

11 Moses Isserles, Shulhan Arukh He-Hadash, Orah Hayyim 154:11 (Jerusalem: Makhon Shulhan Melakhim, 2009), 203. For more on Isserles, see Asher Siev, *Rabbenu Moshe Isserles* (New York: Yeshiva University, 1972); "The Rama," *Tradition* 2, no. 1 (1959): 132–144.

12 Abraham Gombiner, Shulhan Arukh He-Hadash, Orah Hayyim 154:17 (Jerusalem: Makhon Shulhan Melakhim, 2009), 203.

13 Eisenstein, 247.



Interior of Beth Hamedrash Hagadol.
(Courtesy Paul Berger)

the beginnings of the feud between Ash and Mittleman. According to Eisenstein, the animosity between Ash and Mittleman began as a feud over the reliability of the newly arrived ritual slaughterer Aharon Friedman, author of the work *Tuv Ta'am* on the laws of *shehitah*, ritual slaughter. Friedman had arrived in New York from Poland, where some had raised allegations about the conduct of his wife.[14] These allegations sparked a feud within the Jewish community of New York as to the permissibility of eating meat that Friedman had slaughtered. Mittleman came to Friedman's aid, even writing to authorities in Poland to receive their support. Ash, however, ruled that it was forbidden to consume

14 Eisenstein simply says that people spread negative rumors about Friedman's wife, but he does not detail the content of the rumors. For more on Friedman, see Aharon Tzevi Friedmann, *Tub Taam*, trans. Laemlein Buttenwiesser, 2nd ed. (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1904), tuvtaam.blogspot.com/2010/01/tub-taam-book-1.html?m=1, accessed 31 July 2019.

meat slaughtered by Friedman.[15] This episode was the first battle between Mittleman and Ash, but it would not be the last. The next battle would involve Mittleman's objection to Ash's ruling regarding the permissibility of using a former church as a synagogue.[16]

In 1856, with the help of two Portuguese Jews, Congregation Beth Hamedrash, led by Ash, purchased a more permanent building, a Welsh church at 78 Allen Street.[17] The respected Orthodox Rabbi Abraham Rice of Baltimore honored the congregation with his presence at the dedication of the new sanctuary.[18] The question of using the church as the community's synagogue arose at this time, and Ash, acting as halakhic authority of the community, permitted such use. He was quickly met with opposition from Mittleman.

Ash and Mittleman each sent inquiries to leading European rabbis and received answers permitting use of the church. Mittleman presumably sent his inquiry to Nathanson, since they both hailed from Lvov. Ash's decision, however, to send his inquiry to Ettlinger, of Altona, lacks an obvious rationale. They did not come from the same town or vicinity. There are no records of correspondence or a previous relationship between the two. A search through Ettlinger's responsa and writings also does not give the impression that he had a particular expertise in related subjects or that he was a regular authority for inquiries from New York.

15 Eisenstein, 247. Eisenstein presents this episode as a prelude to the splitting of the congregation in 1855. He does not make clear exactly when the dispute took place, other than it happened before the congregation split.

16 Incidentally, years later Mittleman would involve himself in another feud involving *shehitah*, his adversary in that case being Rabbi Moshe Aaronsohn. For more on that, see Jeremiah J. Berman, *Shehitah: A Study in the Cultural and Social Life of the Jewish People* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1941), 289–290. Interestingly, Aaronsohn also wrote a responsum about this paper's topic, turning a church into a synagogue. Lacking information as to the details of the specific case he was addressing, it is difficult to surmise whether he was discussing the same case as Ash and Mittleman or not. Aaronsohn ruled quite vociferously that it was forbidden to turn a church into a synagogue. See Aaronsohn, 142–148.

17 Renee Jo Fine and Gerard R. Wolfe, *The Synagogues of New York's Lower East Side* (New York: Washington Mews Books, 1978), 52.

18 Eisenstein, 248.

Perusal of his responsa does, however, show that he conducted correspondence with communities well beyond his native German lands, including London, Paris, Lvov, Amsterdam, and others.[19] There is no way of knowing for certain, but this international reputation may have influenced Ash, of far-flung New York, to send his question to Ettlinger.

Ettlinger allowed use of the building based on these factors: (1) The building had not initially been designated as a church, but rather as a private residence, which was then turned into a church. It therefore lacked the status of a permanent structure for "idolatrous" worship; and (2) even had the building been designated as a permanent structure for Christian worship, its subsequent sale constituted a form of nullification, following the halakhic principle of *bittul avodah zarah*.[20] Despite these factors, Ettlinger was not eager to allow use of the building as a synagogue, and his response was unenthusiastic. However, he reluctantly gave his permission because the congregation could not afford an alternative.[21]

Mittleman received a permissible ruling from Nathanson based on an entirely different rationale. Nathanson was of the opinion that since the mode of worship in that particular church did not include icons or statues, it was permissible. Nathanson used a substantial amount of space in his responsum delineating the exact form of worship practiced in that church, addressing the distinction between Protestant worship and non-Protestant worship. Nathanson's understanding of Protestant worship is particularly interesting, even amusing. The building was formerly a Lutheran church, and Nathanson described the worship therein as, "The recitation of hymns to 'that man' [Jesus] and dancing. Afterwards a man gets up and preaches loftily about 'that man,' while they [the congregation] stand attentively and listen. And when he finishes [preaching], they sing and dance again." Most important for Nathanson, however, was the absence of icons, which therefore allowed the building to be turned into

19 Moshe Schorr, "Introducing Binyan Zion (as Seen in Ami Magazine)," *HaMapah*, 21 May 2018, blog.hamapah.org/mapping/binyan-zion-1/, accessed 31 July 2019.

20 For more on this concept, see Gerald J. Blidstein, "Nullification of Idolatry in Rabbinic Law," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 41/42 (1973): 1–44.

21 Ettlinger, *Responsa Binyan Zion*, 63 (New York: Moshe Aaron Kampler), 28.

a synagogue.[22] Nathanson even went further, saying it was a positive act, a mitzvah, to do so. "In conclusion, according to my humble opinion, it seems that here since there is no statue or image, it is permissible to turn it into a synagogue, and according to my opinion it is a *mizvah* to sanctify the name of heaven [and turn it into a synagogue]."[23]

The key to understanding the intertwining of this halakhic question with the rift between Ash and Mittleman, however, is not in the answers they received from their respective European authorities; it is in the inquiries they sent, which reflect their different positions on the issue and, perhaps more importantly, the outcome for which each was hoping.[24] Ash's question, as cited by Ettlinger in his Responsa Binyan Zion, connotes a positive feeling toward the congregation and their desire to use the church building:

> The heads of the synagogue were forced to purchase a building for a synagogue, and they could only attain a building that was initially built as a home. Later it was purchased by gentile priests who worship a trinity. They prayed to their god for a number of years but did not bring any idolatrous image into it [the building]. Now they have sold it, [and we would like to] know whether we can make this building into a house of study for Torah and prayer?[25]

22 For further understanding of the halakhic distinction between various Christian sects and their modes of worship, see J. David Bleich, "Survey of Recent Halakhic Periodical Literature: Entering a Non-Jewish House of Worship," *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 44, no. 2 (2011): 73–84, 101.

23 Joseph Saul Nathanson, *Responsa Sho'el U'Meshiv*. Mahadura Kama 3:72 (Brooklyn: Kelilat Yofi Publishing, 1980), 29.

24 Both responsa, to Mittleman and Ash, are dated 1858, while Congregation Beth Hamedrash moved into the church in 1856. It is not entirely clear why there is a two-year gap. The slow pace of mail between the United States and Europe could certainly account for part of the gap but not for all of it. It is possible that Mittleman was waiting for a more opportune time to prove Ash wrong. This explanation is plausible, given that the congregation experienced another split in approximately 1857 over a completely different issue, which caused Ash to leave and start his own congregation, Beth Hamedrash Hagadol. It is possible that Mittleman was waiting to see how Ash would emerge from that situation before firing his next shot. Admittedly, however, available sources do not definitively explain this gap.

25 Ettlinger, 28.

Ash described how the congregation was forced to buy the church building for lack of other options and explicitly stated that the Christian worship that took place in the building did not include any images. In the words and tone used, Ash seemed to be leading Ettlinger toward the answer he desired—in this case, one that would permit the Jewish congregation to use the church building.

Ettlinger's ruling, while permissive, was more tentative than the one Nathanson gave to Mittleman. Mittleman's inquiry reflected his desire to see Ash's initial ruling permitting use of the building proven wrong. He saw this halakhic issue as yet another opportunity to confront Ash. Nathanson recorded Mittleman's question:

> A letter arrived from New York, in the land of America, from Rabbi Judah Mittleman. He asked regarding a house of prayer [Lutheran church], which at first belonged to an individual. Later this individual passed the building on to be used as a church … and the worshippers are Protestant, without any statues or images … and his honor [Rabbi Mittleman] brought the words of the Magen Avraham, saying that even if the building was used permanently for idol worship, it is permissible to pray inside it … and you were in doubt whether he [Magen Avraham] meant that it was used for permanent idol worship, but was not designated as such, or perhaps it is only permissible to pray there infrequently, but not permanently, all the more so a public house of study [would be prohibited].[26]

Mittleman presented the facts of the case to Nathanson—the history of the building, as well as the form of worship that was practiced in it. When asking his question, however, Mittleman seemed to lead Nathanson on by presenting two possible interpretations from Magen Avraham. The second interpretation—which would have led to a stringent ruling prohibiting use of the building—distinguished between using the building for infrequent worship and turning it into a permanent public synagogue. But this was never even mentioned in Magen Avraham. It seems clear that Mittleman was trying to bait Nathanson

26 Nathanson, 29.

into prohibiting Beth Hamedrash's new building, but Nathanson did not take the bait. Instead, he ruled that the congregation could use the former church building as their synagogue, even expressing that it would be a mitzvah to do so.

Mittleman, however, did not desist from trying to gain a ruling that would prove his position. In that responsum, printed in Nathanson's collection, Mittleman raised a follow-up question pertaining to the nature of the building and the type of worship therein. Once again, Mittleman's inquiry is recorded by Nathanson: "Later, his second letter arrived from the third of *Sivan* explaining at length how the building was designated for [forbidden] worship." Nathanson once again rejected this claim outright. "I do not understand, since anything that does not have a statue or image is not considered designated for idol worship."[27] This second inquiry provides clear evidence that Mittleman was pressing Nathanson to change his answer and prove Ash wrong. Mittleman's objective in sending both inquiries to Nathanson seems less about a halakhic ruling and more about his personal feud with Ash.

Such use of halakha in rabbinic wars has a long history, especially in the modern period, so in this sense the conflict between Ash and Mittleman was nothing new. Even in cases where the halakha could be interpreted in multiple ways, rabbinic leaders often came out loudly and strongly against a particular position due to broader considerations. This was especially true in the early conflicts between Orthodoxy and Reform in nineteenth-century Europe. Often the rabbinic positions voiced therein created and solidified boundaries between Orthodoxy and Reform.[28] One prime example was the battle over the Prague organ and whether that could serve as a model for using an organ on the Sabbath, as numerous Reform congregations wanted to do.[29] In the American context, halakhic rulings also proved to be tools in the ideological wars between Orthodoxy and Reform in the nineteenth century. For example,

27 Ibid.

28 David Ellenson, "The Role of Reform in Selected German-Jewish Orthodox Responsa: A Sociological Analysis," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 53 (1982): 357–380.

29 David Ellenson, "A Disputed Precedent: The Prague Organ in 19th Century Central European Legal Literature and Polemics," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 40 (1995): 251–264.

in 1864, Rabbi Bernard Illowy of New Orleans banned *mohels* (ritual circumcisors) from performing further circumcisions if they circumcised a child born to a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother. Illowy's ruling, as well as the debate that ensued in America and Europe, was not merely an issue of halakhic analysis; it also illustrated the ideological battles within the Jewish world on both continents.[30]

In the Lower East Side case, as in the two cases above, rabbinic authorities used their halakhic decision as a tool in rabbinic confrontation. This episode was different, however, for two reasons. First, in the cases involving organs and *mohels*, halakha had been used to engage in intercommunal struggles, but in the case of Ash and Mittleman it was being used internally, between two members of the same community—and a very small one at that. Second, in those same cases, the ideological flashpoints were clear, so the agenda for a particular halakhic opinion was also clear. In the case of Ash and Mittleman, however, no significant ideological division was apparent. The halakha, rather, seemed to be an instrument in a personal battle, and the particular issue of turning a church into a synagogue seemed to merely be another link in a chain of squabbles between these two leaders.

These communal battles continued on the Lower East Side toward the end of the nineteenth century, including battles surrounding the very same issue, albeit with different personalities.

## Next Round of Conflict: Lithuanians vs. Galicians

Ash passed away in the spring of 1887, and immediately after that the members of his congregation, Beth Hamedrash Hagadol,[31] joined with members of other congregations to procure a chief rabbi for New York's Orthodox congregations.[32] The leaders of these congregations chose Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Vilna, who not only became chief rabbi of

30 Ellenson, "A Jewish Legal Decision," 174–195.

31 The congregation had split again in 1857 and took the new name Beth Hamedrash Hagadol. See fn. 24.

32 Abraham J. Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," *Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society* 44, no. 3 (1955): 135.

New York but used Beth Hamedrash Hagadol as his main pulpit.[33] Soon after Joseph's arrival, his attempts to standardize much of the kosher food supervision in New York were met with intense opposition from both lay leaders and other rabbis on the Lower East Side. [34]

Resistance to Joseph was not limited to his kashruth supervision. Instead, it was one component of infighting between congregations from various countries of origin. These feuds were common in Jewish communities on the Lower East Side. In the words of one immigrant to New York, "The Russians hate the Lithuanians; the Lithuanian is an enemy of the Pole; they unite against the Rumanian, and all alike are contemptible in the eyes of the Galician."[35] Individuals defined themselves not only as Jews in the wider non-Jewish society but also as Jews from a particular country within the Jewish community. For Jewish immigrants, it was critical what *kind* of Jews they were. The Jew from Lithuania was not merely a Jew, but a *Lithuanian* Jew. This particularistic identity may have stemmed from inherent, natural tribalism but also was likely to have had a more pragmatic basis: In the process of creating smaller communities based on more specific places of origin, immigrants created tighter networks they could use to gain employment, do business, and access funds provided by various relief organizations.[36]

The Association of American Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, which hired Joseph, was primarily led by Lithuanian Jews, who had a history of infighting with the Galician Jews on the Lower East Side. When the association hired the candidate from Vilna, this seemed a

33 Kimmy Caplan, "Rabbi Jacob Joseph, New York's Chief Rabbi: New Perspectives," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 67 (1996): 12. For more on Joseph's first sermon delivered at Beth Hamedrash Hagadol see Karp, 157.

34 Karp, 162–167.

35 Kimmy Caplan, "Rabbi Isaac Margolis: From Eastern Europe to America," *Zion* 58, no. 2 (1993): 231. Translated by and cited in Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 157.

36 For more on identity forming of immigrant ethnic groups, see Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, no. 1 (1992): 3–41. For more on Jewish immigrant retention of ethnic identity see Zev Eleff, "An American Tale," *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 48, no. 1 (2015): 106–108.

snub to New York's Galician Jews, who felt that they were seen as inferior.[37] Many of New York's Galician Jews turned to Rabbi Joshua Segal to lead them, in opposition to Joseph's chief rabbinate. Segal had previously declined an offer to serve as head of Joseph's rabbinical court, feeling it beneath his dignity to serve under Joseph. A short time later, Segal became leader of approximately twenty congregations and assumed the title of "'Chief Rabbi of Congregations of Israel of New York,' in direct opposition to Joseph's leadership."[38]

The year of Segal's arrival in New York is a matter of dispute. Some claim he came as late as 1884, while others claim it was as early as 1875.[39] In either case, he was in New York before the appointment of Joseph as chief rabbi. Segal was constantly in conflict with other New York rabbis, due to both his country of origin as well as his strong personality.[40] He voiced his opinion harshly regarding the state of halakhic observance he found in New York.[41] In one case, Segal lambasted New York's rabbinic leaders by saying, "The teachers made them [the masses] wild, and degraded them before all who know the law, by forbidding that which is permitted, and permitting that which is forbidden."[42]

Congregation Beth Hamedrash Hagadol purchased its permanent building on 17 June 1885 and moved in on 16 August of the same year.[43] The building was a former Methodist church, which once again raised the issue of using a former church as a synagogue. Joseph, who would arrive in New York two years later, clearly did not have a problem with using the former church as his main pulpit. There is no record of whether he thought that use of the building was ideal, but clearly it was not enough of a problem to prevent him from using it to lead the

37 Karp, 173–174.

38 Ibid. For a document signed by Segal using this title, see Yosef Goldman, *Hebrew Printing in America, 1735–1926: A History and Annotated Bibliography*, ed. Ari Kinsberg (New York: YG Books, 2006), 188. For general information on Segal, Goldman, 998.

39 See Sherman, 193; Mintz, 239n. 512.

40 Sherman, 193.

41 For examples, see Joshua Segal, *Aznei Yehoshua* (Jerusalem: Moriah Publishing, 1914), 1–8, 91–98.

42 Ibid., 91–98.

43 Eisenstein, 250.

congregation. Segal, however, thought otherwise. Since his responsum on the matter of turning churches into synagogues does not cite a date or specific congregation, we cannot be sure that he was directly referencing the situation of Beth Hamedrash Hagadol. However, there is some suggestion that he may have been discussing the same congregation that Ash and Mittleman had fought over nearly thirty years earlier. Even if not, his tone and vociferous disagreement with the opinion of Joseph demonstrate how this halakhic question once again was a point of contention between opposing rabbinic forces on the Lower East Side.

Segal's forceful tone was apparent from the beginning, from the way he presented the question in his responsum:

> This has already been made for them here [New York] completely permissible to purchase houses of idolatry, their places of prayer, from the Gentiles. They make them into synagogues, for prayer, synagogues for the public. And this is for them a simple matter of permissibility, and in addition it is a mizvah to turn the impure into pure. And [this is like] the way of all the ignorant, who have their own unique Torah for themselves. Therefore I was asked to share my opinion on this halakha.[44]

Segal did not mention who asked him or if he is referring to a specific synagogue but, interestingly, he used the same phrase that Nathanson had in permitting Congregation Beth Hamedrash to turn a church into a synagogue—namely, whether worshippers would be sanctifying themselves and God by doing so. He returned to this point again at the end of the responsum.

Segal went on to debate the question based on his understanding of the halakhic sources, including the aforementioned texts from Shulhan Arukh and Magen Avraham. In the end, he concluded that it was forbidden. Using Maimonides as his starting point, Segal described the practice of using a church building for a synagogue as 'abominable.'[45] It is important to note that Maimonides never actually used this strong term; it is Segal's addition, reflecting his aggressive stance. Finally, Segal

44 Segal, 32.
45 Ibid.

returned to the point he referenced in presenting his question, which was originally cited by Nathanson in his permissive responsum: "And every person from Israel is obligated to distance himself from them and their masses, and to sanctify oneself, as scripture states 'You shall be holy,' and not turn our prayers into sin, God forbid."[46] Nathanson had said that it would actually be a positive act, a mizvah, to turn a church into a synagogue, and by doing so one would be sanctifying God's name. But Segal, also relating this to the sanctification of God's name, ruled in the exact opposite manner, claiming that distancing oneself from such a synagogue would be an act of sanctifying God's name. That Segal, in both his presentation of the question as well as in his conclusion, related the matter to one of Nathanson's main points may suggest that he was discussing the same synagogue—Beth Hamedrash Hagadol—as Nathanson had been. Whether this is true or not, it is clear that Segal was vehemently against the position that Joseph favored.

## Conclusion

The halakhic literature produced by America's immigrant rabbis and their communities reflects important elements in the formation of American Jewish communities, Orthodox and beyond. Responsa related to Beth Hamedrash Hagadol specifically, and the issue of turning a church into a synagogue generally, opens a particular window to the personalities and communities active on the Lower East Side between the arrival of the first Eastern European Jewish immigrants to New York in the mid-nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. This is a prime example of the value responsa may yield in opening up new avenues of research in American Jewish history.

It is clear that the halakhic issue of turning a church into a synagogue continuously served as ammunition in the wars between individuals and communities on the Lower East Side. In its first manifestation, this controversy remained quite local, serving as a point of contention between two personalities vying for leadership position in the nascent Eastern European community. Later, however, the very same halakhic question

46 Ibid.

became part of broader conflicts, pitting rabbi against rabbi and, more significantly, community against community. The issue at hand shows how personal and group allegiances expressed themselves in multiple ways, including in the realm of halakha. The question of whether a church may be turned into a synagogue, therefore, was not purely a halakhic one. It was symbolic of the splintering and maintenance of identities so central to the Jewish immigrant experience in New York.

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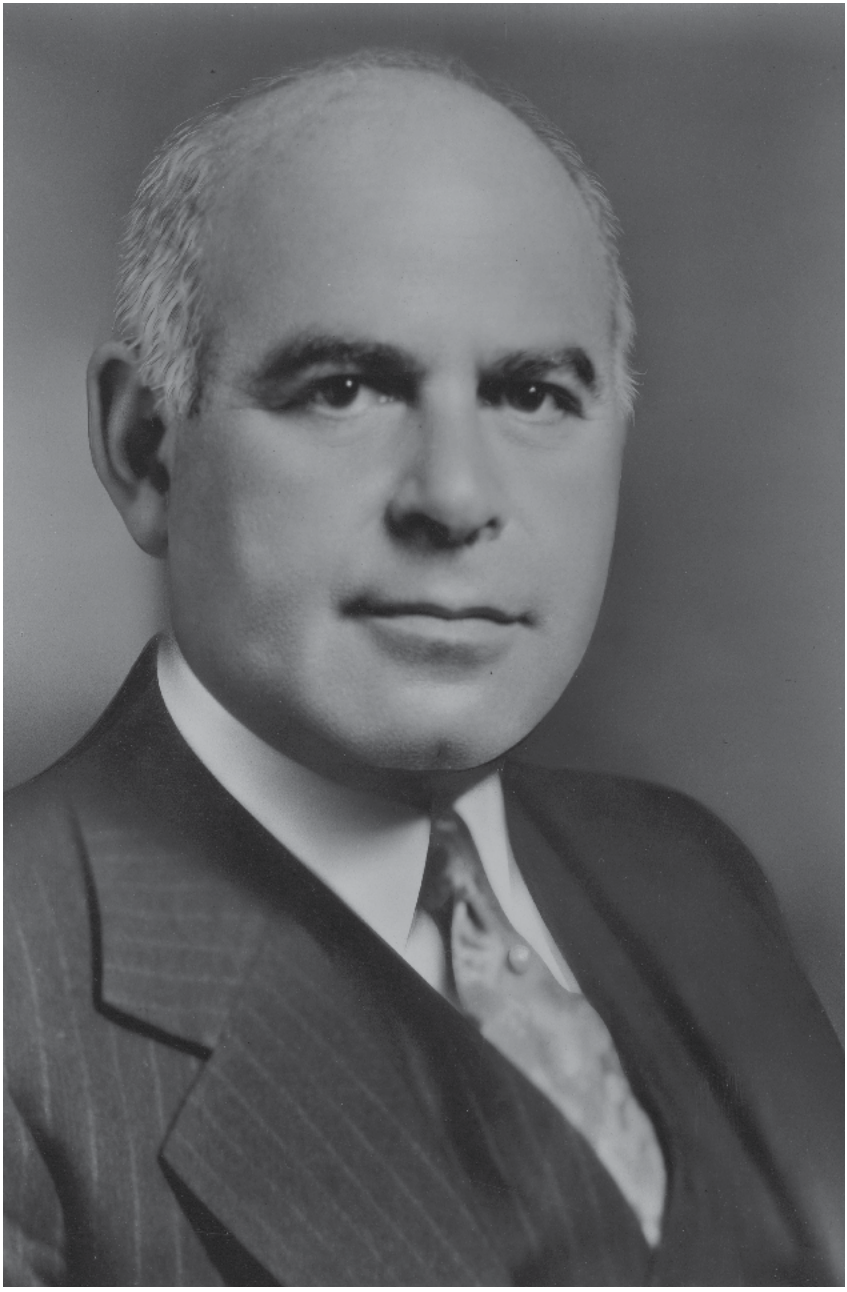


Herbert H. Lehman
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

# *Herbert H. Lehman: A Jewish Patron Saint*

**"I am a Jew both by birth and conviction."** [1]

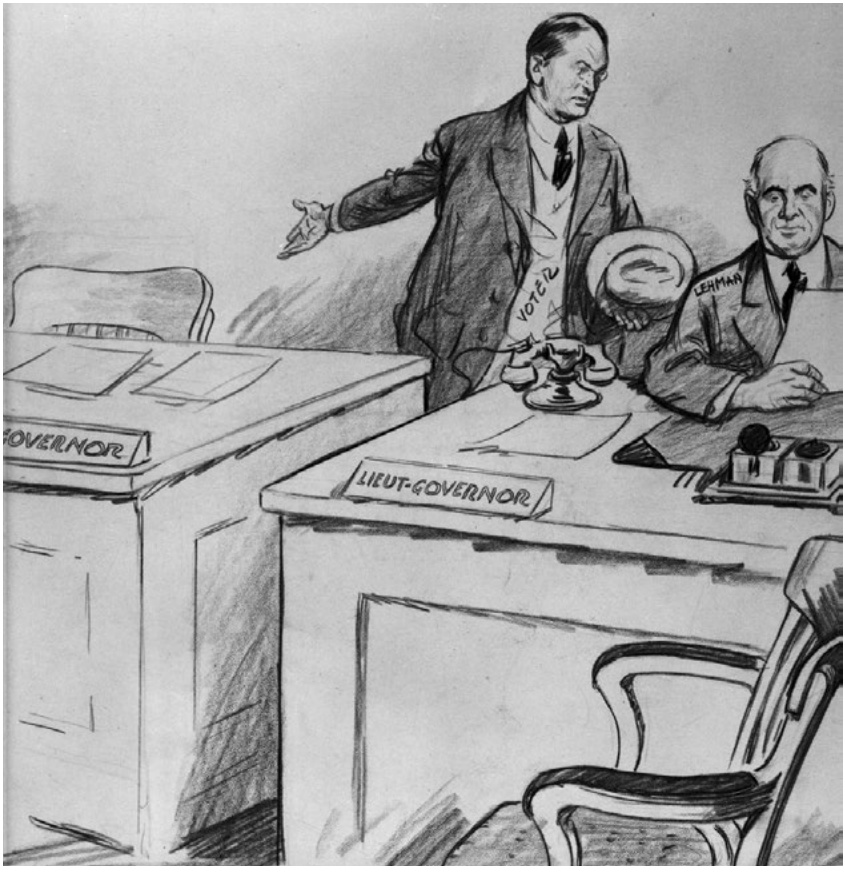
Duane Tananbaum

In 1955, when a writer for *Look* magazine asked American Jews to name the "five top leaders of U.S. Jewry, their answers differed widely;… there was general agreement about only one man—Senator Herbert H. Lehman of New York." Similarly, Lawrence Fuchs of Brandeis University, in his 1956 book *The Political Behavior of American Jews*, described Lehman as "a political hero to American Jewry." However, in February 2003, when Lehman College of the City University of New York commemorated the 125th anniversary of the birth of Herbert Lehman, *The New York Times* reported that most Lehman College students had no idea who Herbert Lehman was or why the college had been named in his honor.[2]

That Lehman is little known today would have shocked his contemporaries. Lehman was born in Manhattan in 1878. After graduating from Williams College in 1899, he worked in the textile business for ten years before becoming a partner at Lehman Brothers, the investment banking firm founded by his father and uncle. In 1928 and again in 1930, he was elected lieutenant governor of New York, serving as Governor Franklin Roosevelt's "good right arm." In 1932, Lehman was elected governor of New York, a position to which he was re-elected in 1934, 1936, and 1938. As governor, he used the power of the state government to help New Yorkers survive the unemployment and poverty

1 "Don't Hide Faith, Lehman Told Boy," *New York Times* (9 December 1963): 30.

2 William Attwood, "The Position of the Jew in America Today," *Look* 29 (November 1955): 31; Lawrence Fuchs, *The Political Behavior of American Jews* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956), 163; "The College Remembers Lehman: Its Students, Not So Much," *New York Times* (26 February 2003): B-1, 2.




"Lieutenant Governor to Governor," by Rollin Kirby, November 1932. Original cartoon in the Herbert H. Lehman Center for American History, Columbia University.
(Courtesy of the estate of Rollin Kirby Post.)

caused by the Great Depression. In 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed Lehman to head the State Department's Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations (OFRRO). A year later, Lehman was unanimously elected director general of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), a forty-four-nation organization established to provide food and other supplies to countries liberated from the Axis Powers.[3]

3 Jewel Bellush, "Roosevelt's Good Right Arm: Lieut. Governor Herbert H. Lehman," *New York History* 41, no. 4 (October 1960): 423–443; Robert Ingalls, *Herbert H. Lehman*

In 1949 Lehman was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he fought for civil rights, immigration reform, and legislation protecting working people and helping the less fortunate. He also led the fight against McCarthyism and the anticommunist hysteria that were sweeping the nation. Lehman was the only senator who was up for re-election who voted against the 1950 McCarran Internal Security Act, a bill that trampled on the rights and liberties of the American people by, among other things, providing for internment camps where people could be detained if they were thought to be potential threats to America's security. As Lehman explained to his colleagues,

> I will not compromise with my conscience. I am going to vote against this tragic, this unfortunate, this ill-conceived legislation. My conscience will be easier, though I realize my political prospects may be more difficult. I shall cast my vote to protect the liberties of our people.[4]

Lehman chose not to run for another term in the Senate in 1956, when he was seventy-eight years old. However, while supposedly in retirement, he worked with Eleanor Roosevelt and others to free the New York Democratic Party from the iron grip of Tammany Hall leader Carmine De Sapio and other party bosses. Lehman died in December 1963 as he was preparing to travel to Washington to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Lyndon Johnson.[5]

## Herbert Lehman and Judaism

Herbert Lehman described his father, Mayer Lehman, as "a religious man throughout his life" who "may have been Orthodox when he came over here" from Germany in 1850. By the time Herbert was born in 1878, however, the Lehmans, like most of the wealthy German Jews

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*and New York's Little New Deal* (New York: New York University Press, 1975). For a detailed account of Lehman's political career, see Duane Tananbaum, *Herbert H. Lehman: A Political Biography* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016).

4 "Senate, 70 to 7, Passes Bill to Register and Intern Reds," *New York Times* (13 September 1950): 1–2; 96 *Cong. Rec.* 14817–18 (12 September 1950).

5 "Herbert Lehman, 85, Dies; Ex-Governor and Senator," *New York Times* (6 December 1963): 1, 29.



Mayer Lehman, 1866.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

who made up what Stephen Birmingham later called "Our Crowd," had become members of Temple Emanu-El, a Reform congregation in Manhattan where the services were originally conducted in German and then later in English. According to Herbert, his father was "devout, took great pride in his faith, and was very loyal to it…. He spoke and read Hebrew fluently." Herbert remembered the annual family Passover seder that his father conducted in Hebrew, even though "none of us youngsters knew Hebrew at all." The youngest three sons, including Herbert, "used to break out into fits of laughter, [and] invariably would be sent from the table for breaking up the seriousness of the occasion." Herbert's mother Babette "observed the religious holidays very well and went to the Temple regularly on Saturdays, and sometimes on Friday nights, and she insisted that her children observe the Holy Days." According to Herbert, he "went rather regularly to the Temple," more often on Friday nights "because there was a very pretty girl sitting in the pew across the way from me and I wanted to have a look at her." Herbert graduated from Sunday school and, as was common in the Reform movement at the time, was confirmed rather than becoming a bar mitzvah.[6]

Even though he did not practice many of its traditional observances and rituals, Herbert Lehman valued his Jewish heritage. He was not a theologian or a scholar; he did not spend hours pondering the relationship between God and humankind. On more than one occasion, he asked his brother Irving for help in preparing Rosh Hashanah messages or formal talks on Jewish themes. As an adult, he rarely attended services, his letters make no mention of Jewish holidays or festivals, and his family had a Christmas tree and exchanged gifts on New Year's Day rather than on Hanukkah. Herbert and Edith Lehman's three children's religious education was limited to Bible classes at a Jewish Center.[7]

6 Herbert Lehman Oral History Transcript, 8–12, 28, Columbia University Oral History Collection, New York, New York (hereafter CUOHC); Stephen Birmingham, "*Our Crowd": The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Kenneth Libo, ed., *Lots of Lehmans: The Family of Mayer Lehman of Lehman Brothers, Remembered by His Descendants* (New York: Center for Jewish History, 2007).

7 Herbert Lehman Oral History Transcript, 10; Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum Oral History Transcript, Herbert Lehman Project, 35, CUOHC; Herbert Lehman to Irving

When asked what type of Jew he was—Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox—Lehman preferred to emphasize the noun, that he was a Jew, rather than the adjectives that so often divided Jews. He was concerned that factionalism and rivalry were hurting Jewish interests, and he sought to promote Jewish unity instead. He remained a member of Temple Emanu-El all his life, but he took great pride in having "worked almost as much in the Conservative and Orthodox branches" as he had in the Reform. He served for many years as a member and even as chair of the Board of Overseers of the Jewish Theological Seminary, which trains Conservative rabbis. The house where he was born on Fifth Avenue later became the site of the Fifth Avenue Synagogue, an Orthodox shul, which Lehman helped support for many years. Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, who came to know Lehman through their work together on the Synagogue Council of America, believed that Lehman "in a sense transcended the particular and the denominational character" of the different branches of Judaism.[8]

Being Jewish for Lehman meant practicing the *mitzvot* of *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam*—good works to help others and to make the world a better place. He publicly identified with and took leadership roles in numerous Jewish and other organizations established to help the less fortunate. In 1900, shortly after Lehman graduated from Williams College, he readily agreed when Lillian Wald asked him to start a boys club for

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Lehman, 15 November 1936 and 2 August 1938, Herbert Lehman Papers, Special Correspondence Files, Irving Lehman; June Bingham Birge to author, 27 January 2006; H. Jaffe, "Who is the Wife of Lieutenant Governor Lehman?" n.d., Herbert Lehman Papers, Special Correspondence Files, Edith Lehman, document 0531-0003. The Special Correspondence Files of the Herbert Lehman Papers (hereafter cited as LP, SF) at Columbia University have been digitized and are available at http://lehman.cul.columbia.edu/. Since these files are arranged by correspondent and date, most documents in them can be found quite easily; therefore, digital document numbers will be provided only for documents that might otherwise be difficult to find.

8 Herbert Lehman Oral History Transcript, 152; Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum Oral History Transcript, 5–6, 32–33, On Tanenbaum, see "Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, 66, Is Dead," *New York Times* (4 July 1992): 10; and the Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, MS-603, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter AJA).

twelve- to fourteen-year-olds at the Henry Street Settlement House on the Lower East Side. Lehman remained in contact with many of the boys through the years, helping a number of them get an education or get started in business, and at least one of the boys later named his son after Herbert Lehman. In 1917, Lehman formally joined the Board of Directors of Henry Street, and Herbert and Edith Lehman continued their close connection with the Settlement House for the rest of their lives. After their son Peter was killed in World War II, the Lehmans donated the money for a new building, called Pete's House, which allowed Henry Street to expand its activities.[9]

Lehman was one of the founders of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), an organization founded in 1914 and funded mostly by American Jews of German descent to unify efforts to help European Jews displaced by World War I. Lehman was one of the younger members of the JDC, which was led by Jacob Schiff and then Felix Warburg. After the war, the JDC shifted its focus from relief to rehabilitation, and Lehman served as chair of its Reconstruction Committee, which allocated millions of dollars for various projects in Eastern Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Lehman later recalled that his experience with the Reconstruction Committee was "great training" for his subsequent work in UNRRA.[10]

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9 Marc Tanenbaum Oral History Transcript, 35; Morrie Golden to Herbert Lehman, 29 March 1938, and attached "Extracts from Letters by Some of Your Patriot Boys"; and Caroline Flexner to Basil O'Connor, 20 January 1956, LP, SF, Herbert H. Lehman Biographical Data, documents 0530_0289, 0530_0290, and 0530_0375; "Herbert L. Abrons, 92, Lawyer, Businessman and Philanthropist," *New York Times* (22 January 2005): B–6; Lehman to Lillian Wald, 21 April 1917, LP, SF, Lillian Wald; Helen Hall, *Unfinished Business in Neighborhood and Nation* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 64, 89; "Lehmans Dedicate a Youth Center as Memorial to Son Killed in War," *New York Times* (29 November 1948): 25.

10 Herbert Lehman Oral History Transcript, 146–147, 152–158; Carolin Flexner Oral History Transcript, Herbert Lehman Oral History Project, 2, 7–8, CUOHC; Oscar Handlin, *A Continuing Task: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1914–1964* (New York: Random House, 1964); Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1929–1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974).

Lehman was not the first Jewish governor or senator in the United States. Five Jewish governors preceded him, most of them from western states:

Michael Hahn, Louisiana, 1864–1865

Moses Alexander, Idaho, 1915–1919

Simon Bamberger, Utah, 1917–1921

Arthur Seligman, New Mexico, 1931–1933

Julius Meier, Oregon, 1931–1935

And there were six U.S. senators of Jewish descent before Lehman:

David Levy Yulee, Florida, 1845–1851, 1855–1861

Judah Philip Benjamin, Louisiana, 1853–1861

Benjamin Franklin Jonas, Louisiana, 1879–1885

Joseph Simon, Oregon, 1897–1903

Isidor Rayner, Maryland, 1905–1912

Simon Guggenheim, Colorado, 1907–1913.[11]

Lehman was not even the first Jewish candidate for governor of New York. Religion became a major issue in the 1928 elections when Democrats nominated New York Governor Al Smith, a Catholic, as their presidential candidate. New York Republicans chose state Attorney General Albert Ottinger, a Jew, as their candidate for governor in 1928, and Democrats countered by selecting Franklin Roosevelt, a Protestant, for governor, and Lehman for lieutenant governor. Democratic leaders feared that Ottinger would attract support from Jews who normally voted Democratic, and even though people voted separately for governor and lieutenant governor in those days, party leaders hoped that Lehman's presence on the ballot would minimize defections in the gubernatorial race. Samuel Untermyer, a prominent New York attorney who was active

11 Stephen Isaacs, *Jews and American Politics* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 235.

in the Jewish community, noted Ottinger's lack of involvement "with any important Jewish movement, either in the city, state, or nation, or with the Jewish cause itself, except around election times and as a vote-getting bait." He contrasted Ottinger's history with Lehman's participation in "all the great Jewish local, national and international movements" and Lehman's record of "giving constantly and generously of his valuable time and of his money to all these movements throughout the world." Rabbi Stephen S. Wise of the Free Synagogue congratulated Lehman on his nomination and jokingly proposed the following campaign slogan: "Better a first class Jew in the second place in the state than a second class Jew in the first place in the state." Lehman and Roosevelt both won narrow victories in 1928 despite Herbert Hoover's winning the state over Al Smith in the presidential election. [12]

## Lehman, Roosevelt, and the Jews

Starting in 1933, when Lehman was governor and Roosevelt was president, Lehman tried to use his influence with Roosevelt to help German Jews suffering under Hitler and the Nazi regime's persecution. When the Nazis first began to ostracize Jewish businesses in 1933, Lehman unsuccessfully urged Roosevelt to lodge an official protest with the German government on behalf of American Jews. In 1935, at the suggestion of James G. McDonald, League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Jewish and Others) Coming from Germany, and Felix Warburg, Lehman sought to enlist Roosevelt's help in liberalizing State Department policies, procedures, and interpretations that had limited the annual number of immigrants from Germany to approximately 2,500, 10 percent of the 25,000-quota set by American immigration laws. Lehman emphasized in a letter to the president that the people trying to flee from Germany were "men and women of the highest character," people who were very similar to Lehman's father, Mayer Lehman, and to Carl Schurz, "and other Germans who came over here in the days

12 "Untermyer Assails Ottinger On Power," *New York Times* (24 October 1928): 18; Wise to Lehman, 4 October 1928, LP, SF, Stephen S. Wise; Richard Breitman and Allan Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 31–34.

of 1848 and who later were among our best citizens." Lehman hoped that Roosevelt "would ask the Secretary of State to make certain that our diplomatic and consular representatives show sympathetic interest in permitting immigration of German Jews into this country, providing, of course, they fulfill the immigration requirements in every particular."[13]

Roosevelt told Lehman that it was his "earnest desire that all consideration and justice shall continue to be shown to the type of immigrants in whom you are interested," but when there was no change in American policy, Lehman raised the issue again in June 1936. In a response drafted by the State Department, Roosevelt promised that additional personnel would be assigned to clear up the backlog that had developed in processing visa applications in Stuttgart, but he warned that consular officials would continue to grant visas only "when the preponderance of evidence supports a conclusion that the person promising the applicant's support will be likely to take steps to prevent the applicant from becoming a public charge." Lehman discussed the matter with the president when they met a few weeks later, after which Lehman reported to Warburg that Roosevelt "feels great sympathetic concern in the situation and will do everything within his power to be helpful." Lehman was overly optimistic about Roosevelt's concern, but the governor's efforts eventually bore fruit. As Richard Breitman and Alan Kraut note in their study of American refugee policy in this period, "there is no evidence that Roosevelt issued any instructions to the State Department about immigration to the United States, but careful observers could see which

13 Jay Pierrepont Moffat to George Gordon, 4 April 1933, Moffat Papers, Am 1407, vol. 3, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: Launching the New Deal* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 390–398; "Drive To Aid Jews Opened By Lehman," *New York Times* (15 June 1933): 9; Breitman and Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews*, 60–63, 67–72; James G. McDonald to Felix Warburg, 10 October 1935, in Richard Breitman, Barbara McDonald Stewart, and Severin Hochberg, eds., *Refugees and Rescue: The Diaries and Papers of James G. McDonald, 1935–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 44–45; McDonald to Warburg, 29 October 1935, and Lehman to Roosevelt, 15 November 1935, both in LP, SF, Franklin Roosevelt; Lehman to Roosevelt, 1 November 1935, in Edgar Nixon, ed., *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs, Vol. III: September 1935–January 1937* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 50–51.

way he was leaning." By the end of 1936, "shifting currents within the State Department" resulted in a more liberal interpretation of the "likely to become a public charge" clause and "a substantial increase in the immigration of German Jews to the United States." In 1938, the number of immigrants from Germany reached the limit set by the immigration law for the first time. On a more personal level, the Lehman family established the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund to which Herbert and Edith Lehman contributed generously, and Herbert signed affidavits guaranteeing financial support for dozens of relatives and other Jews trapped in Germany.[14]

As the Nazis stepped up their persecution of Jews and America's doors remained mostly closed, Lehman became more concerned that Palestine remain open for those Jews who were able to get out of Germany. In an interview in 1957, he recalled that he had "always been very much interested, from way back, in the aspirations of Jews in countries where they were suffering from persecution and disabilities to find a refuge and a haven in Palestine" and that his "sympathy and concern greatly increased" after "Hitler came into power and started to exterminate, persecute and harass the Jews." Nonetheless, Lehman insisted in that same 1957 interview that he "never was a Zionist, never was a member of the Zionist organization." To Lehman and many successful American Jews, Zionism meant very specifically and very narrowly the establishment

14 Roosevelt to Lehman, 13 November 1935; Lehman to Roosevelt, 15 June 1936; and Roosevelt to Lehman, 2 July 1936, in Nixon, ed., *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs*, III: 64–66, 323, 341–343; Warburg to Lehman, 5 June 1936; and Herbert Samuel to Warburg, 27 May 1936, both in LP, SF, Franklin Roosevelt; Lehman to Warburg, 15 June 1936, Lehman to Warburg, 14 July 1936, and Warburg to Lehman, 17 July 1936, LP, SF, Warburg; Richard Breitman and Alan Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 38, 48–50; Breitman and Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews*, 123. On the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, see Lehman to Elinor Morgenthau, 19 May 1939 and 21 June 1939; Morgenthau to Lehman, 15 July 1939; Lehman to Morgenthau, 9 September 1939; Morgenthau to Lehman, 17 September 1939; and Lehman to Morgenthau, 26 September 1939, all in LP, SF, Morgenthau, Henry Jr. and Mrs. Elinor; Roland Flade, *The Lehmans: From Rimpar to the New World—A Family History* (Wurzburg: Konigshausen & Neumann, 1999), 95–97.

of a Jewish state or nation in Palestine, and while they supported the availability of Palestine as a refuge for Jews, they did not support the creation of a Jewish *state* at that time. Lehman supported the Jewish National Fund's reforestation projects in Palestine, contributed large sums of money to the Palestine Economic Corporation's ventures in the Holy Land, and often hosted Chaim Weizmann, the head of the Jewish Agency and leader of the Zionist movement, when Weizmann visited the United States. But Lehman and most members of the American Jewish elite feared that the establishment of a Jewish state would raise questions concerning the loyalty of American Jews. Therefore, they sought in the 1930s and 1940s to keep Palestine open as "a refuge for their persecuted fellow Jews," but they resisted and took pride, as Warburg bragged in a letter to Lehman in September 1937, "in retarding, if not stopping the rush toward a Jewish state" in Palestine.[15]

In October 1938, Lehman wrote to Roosevelt to express his concern over reports that the British government was "planning to abandon its pledge to facilitate the establishment of the Jewish National Home" by halting "Jewish immigration into Palestine." Lehman emphasized that although he was "not a member of a Zionist Organization," he believed that it was essential that Palestine "continue to offer a haven of refuge for the tens of thousands of Jews whom hatred and intolerance have made homeless." Lehman begged the president to use his "influence to prevent any decision by the British Government that would add to the suffering of the Jewish people at this time." Roosevelt expressed his "sympathy … [for] establishing a [Jewish] National Home in Palestine," but he explained that the United States could not prevent changes in the British Mandate in Palestine; it could only deny the applicability of any changes to American interests there. The president promised that

15 Herbert Lehman Oral History Transcript, 165–168, 172, 175–180; Warburg to Lehman, 22 September 1937, LP, SF, Felix Warburg. On the dual loyalty issue, see Joseph Proskauer, *A Segment of My Times* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1950), 198–204; and Samuel Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961), 122–127. On support for Jewish immigration and development in Palestine but opposition to the creation of a Jewish state, see Thomas A. Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 18–35.

the United States would "leave no stone unturned" in its efforts "to persuade the British Government to adopt a liberal policy with regard to the refugees," but his efforts to influence British policy in Palestine were of no avail. In May 1939, the British government issued a white paper limiting Jewish immigration into Palestine.[16]

Lehman's being a Jew was a key factor in his appointment in 1942 to head the State Department's Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations (OFRRO), which was created to coordinate relief and rehabilitation activities for nations that were liberated from the Axis Powers. According to presidential speechwriter and advisor Samuel Rosenman, Roosevelt believed that "after all that Hitler has done to the Jews of Germany and of every nation he has conquered … it would be wonderful, poetic justice if we could get a Jew to head the agency which is going to feed and clothe and shelter the millions whom Hitler has robbed and starved and tortured—a member of the group Hitler first selected for extermination." In Roosevelt's opinion, "it would be a fine object lesson in tolerance and human brotherhood to have a Jew head up this operation," and he thought that Lehman would be perfect for this position.[17]

After a difficult year stuck in the muck and mire of the State Department bureaucracy, Lehman was unanimously elected in November 1943 as director general of the new United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which took over the tasks originally assigned to OFRRO. However, Lehman's religion posed a problem for Democratic Senator Tom Connally of Texas, who chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that would have to authorize U.S. participation in and funding for UNRRA. According to Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Connally had complained

16 Lehman to Roosevelt, 10 October 1938, and Roosevelt to Lehman, 13 October 1938, both in LP, SF, Franklin Roosevelt; "Washington Silent on the White Paper," *New York Times* (18 May 1939): 3; Breitman and Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews*, 119, 238–241; David B. Woolner, *The Last 100 Days: FDR at War and at Peace* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 145–146.

17 Samuel I. Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 399; H.G. Nicholas, ed., *Washington Despatches, 1941–1945: Weekly Political Reports from the British Embassy* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981), 123.

that Lehman had "appointed an unfair proportion of Jews to important positions" in UNRRA, and Connally also worried that Lehman would show preference to his fellow Jews "in furnishing relief." Barely able to contain his anger, Lehman declared in a letter to Connally that "any fair analysis would disclose that both charges are entirely untrue and unfounded." Of the twenty key appointments he had made, Lehman pointed out, "just two are filled by Jews." Lehman was proud that "many members of my Faith have sought to take part in what they, along with all right-thinking people, conceive to be a great human enterprise," but he emphasized that he had "not permitted, nor do I intend to permit, religious or racial origin to affect employment in UNRRA."[18]

Lehman took even greater umbrage at the suggestion "that among the millions of needy and starving the world over, I would single out, for primary consideration, those of my own Faith." He believed that his long record of public service "would have given the lie to any such ugly thought," and he stressed his "utter revulsion at the thought that the success of UNRRA might be hampered by such insidious and totally unfounded 'whisperings.'" He hoped that Connally would do everything he could "to refute such suspicions," and that he would contact Lehman directly "with any questions that may arise in connection with my work."[19]

David Wyman, one of the leading scholars of America's response to the Holocaust, has charged that "Jews who were close to the President," including Lehman, "did very little to encourage rescue action" to save European Jews during the war. Connally's baseless accusations and Lehman's vehement response help us understand why Lehman did not do more while at OFRRO and UNRRA. As Breitman and Kraut have noted, "Jews in Congress as well as those who were close to the President walked a tightrope on issues of concern to Jews, lest they be vulnerable to the charge of using their positions to advance Jewish causes at the expense of the national interest." Not that Lehman needed one, but Connally's accusations served as a grim reminder that any actions

18 "War Relief Body Headed By Lehman," *New York Times* (12 November 1943): 1, 13; Lehman to Tom Connally, 29 February 1944, LP, SF, Tom Connally.
19 Ibid.

Lehman took to help Jews could be misinterpreted and cause irreparable harm to UNRRA, so he bent over backward as director general to ensure that there would be no truth to any such allegations.[20]

## Israel

After World War II and the murder of six million Jews, American Jews worried about the fate of those European Jews who had survived the Holocaust. The United States certainly wanted no part of them, so Palestine seemed the logical answer. But the British, who still exercised authority in Palestine under the Mandate, sought to placate the Arabs by limiting Jewish immigration into Palestine, enraging the Zionists who believed that Hitler's gas chambers had demonstrated the need for a Jewish state. As the situation in Palestine deteriorated, British authorities and the United Nations began to consider partition as the only solution.[21]

Despite his reservations about political Zionism and the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, Lehman played a crucial role in America's recognition of Israel in May 1948. Lehman met with President Harry Truman on 4 May 1948, just a few days before the British were scheduled to leave Palestine. At his meeting with the president, Lehman hand-delivered a memorandum that Charles Fahy of the Jewish Agency had prepared for Under Secretary of State Robert Lovett. Jewish groups feared that the memorandum would be buried in the State Department and wanted to ensure that it reached Truman, and Lehman agreed to serve as the courier for this crucial message. Fahy explained in the memo that a Jewish state was going to be proclaimed in mid-May and urged the United States not "to oppose such a State" and not to take any action that "would encourage the Arab States to seek to overthrow it."

20 David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 315–316; Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy*, 87.

21 Herbert Lehman Oral History Transcript, 164; Leonard Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust: The Evolution of a United States Displaced Persons Policy, 1945–1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Melvin I. Urofsky, *We Are One: American Jewry and Israel* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1978), 131–135.

The United States, Fahy emphasized, "should guard against committing itself to any new plan which is inconsistent with the actual existence of a Jewish state on May 16th." In a note a few days later, Truman specifically thanked Lehman for giving him a copy of Fahy's memorandum.[22]

A week later, on 13 May 1948, Lehman endorsed the establishment of the State of Israel, urging Truman to "recognize as promptly as possible the provisional government which will be proclaimed in Palestine on the termination of the mandate." He now supported recognition, Lehman explained, "as a matter of simple justice" and to ensure that the American recognition of Israel came before the Soviet Union's. Once the State of Israel was proclaimed and Truman immediately recognized the new nation, Lehman extended to Truman his "sincerest congratulations and heartfelt thanks" on the president's "wise and just action" and assured him "that the great mass of American people regardless of religious faith will approve your course."[23]

Israel remained one of Lehman's primary concerns for the rest of his life. Herbert and Edith Lehman visited Israel in 1949 and were "tremendously impressed by the achievements which are almost miraculous." But Lehman also realized "the tremendous number of problems and difficulties that lie ahead," which he thought could be solved, but only with "a great deal of help from the outside." Lehman continued to advocate on Israel's behalf and contributed generously to the United Jewish Appeal and other fundraising efforts to help Israel absorb the refugees who were pouring in from Europe and from Arab countries. When the Lehmans toured Israel again in 1959, a water desalinization laboratory in Beersheba and a village in Northern Galilee were named after Lehman, who was "deeply impressed by the almost incredible progress and growth that has come to our little sister Republic since our last visit ten years ago." Lehman congratulated Israeli Prime Minister David

22 Herbert Lehman, memorandum, 7 May 1948, LP, SF, Truman; "Lehman Advocates Holy City Trustee," *New York Times* (5 May 1948): 14; "Palestine," memorandum submitted by Mr. Fahy to Mr. Lovett, 4 May 1948, and Truman to Lehman, 10 May 1948, both in LP, SF, Truman; Zvi Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945–1948* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 182.

23 Lehman to Truman, 13 May 1948 and 15 May 1948, both in LP, SF, Truman.

Ben Gurion, noting that "the desert has really been made to bloom and some of your institutions are as fine as any I have seen in the older countries."[24]

Despite his growing attachment to the State of Israel, Lehman resented the World Zionist Organization's assertion in 1961 that it had the right to tell American Jews what their attitudes and opinions should be on the Jewish state. When Dr. Nahum Goldmann, the Zionist group's president, claimed that his organization could define the proper relationship between American Jews and Israel, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), which Lehman had been associated with for decades, quickly challenged Goldmann's assertion. The AJC had always been sensitive to the issue of "dual loyalty"—the charge that American Jews' interest in Israel compromised their loyalty to the United States—and Lehman now joined in a statement issued by the AJC denying that the World Zionist Organization, or anyone else, had the authority to act as a spokesperson for American Jews. The AJC emphasized that "Jews of the United States are not a monolithic entity within American society," and that for American Jews, "their outlook toward Israel, like their attitudes toward all other interests—religious, social, civic, or cultural—are determined by each person for himself and find expression in a variety of organizations."[25] (The "dual loyalty" issue came to the fore again in 2019 when Democratic Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota asserted that Israel's American supporters advocated "allegiance to a foreign country." Despite division within the Democratic caucus, the House of Representatives responded by passing a compromise resolution declaring that "bigotry, discrimination, oppression, racism, and

24 Lehman to Edward Weinfeld, 4 June 1949, LP, SF, Weinfeld; "Lehman Honored in Israel," *New York Times* (22 April 1959): 66; "Informal Meeting in Israel," *New York Times* (30 April 1959): 5; Lehman to Ogden Reid, 9 June 1959, LP, SF, Reid; Lehman to David Ben Gurion, 6 May 1959, LP, SF, Ben Gurion.

25 "Non-Zionist Unit Chides Goldmann," *New York Times* (9 May 1961): 17. On the AJC's concern about "dual loyalties," see Proskauer, *A Segment of My Times*, 196–215, 229–261; Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: A History of the American Jewish Committee, 1906–1966* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972), 305–306, 312–315.

imputations of dual loyalty threaten American democracy and have no place in American political discourse," and rejecting "the pernicious myth of dual loyalty and foreign allegiance, especially in the context of support for the United States–Israel alliance."[26])

During the 1960 presidential election campaign, Democratic candidate John Kennedy, in a letter to Lehman which was immediately made public, reasserted his support for Israel. But once Kennedy was in the White House, Lehman and the leaders of the AJC tried without much success to ensure that the president did not ignore issues that were of concern to American Jews. Lehman and the AJC urged Kennedy to act against Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations that did not allow American Jews into their countries, whether as tourists, employees of American businesses, or even as American soldiers. Kennedy listened sympathetically when Lehman and a delegation from the AJC discussed the issue with him in April 1962 but maintaining good relations with Saudi Arabia and preventing Communist expansion in the Middle East were more important to Kennedy than placating Lehman and the AJC. The president noted that he had recently raised this issue with the King of Saudi Arabia, but he refused to condition foreign aid on countries promising to end such discriminatory practices. Lehman and the leaders of the AJC were no more successful in their efforts to dissuade Kennedy and his advisors from cozying up to Egyptian leader Gamal Nasser, and their suggestion that the United States sell Israel advanced weapons to counter the "ultra-modern" planes that Egypt had recently received from the Soviet bloc fell on deaf ears.[27]

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26 See "Ilahn Omar's Latest Remarks on Israel Draw Criticism," *New York Times* (1 March 2019), https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/01/us/politics/ilhan-omar-israel.html?module=inline (accessed 21 March 2019); "House Votes to Condemn All Hate as Anti-Semitism Debate Overshadows Congress," *New York Times* (7 March 2019), https://nytimes.com/2019/03/07/us/politics/ilhan-omar-anti-semitism-vote.html (accessed 21 March 2019); H. Res 183, 116th Cong., 1sr sess., 7 March 2019, https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/183/text (accessed 21 March 2019).

27 "Just Suez Solution Urged by Kennedy," *New York Times* (3 November 1960): 27; S [John Slawson] to Lehman, Blaustein, Engel, and Caplan, 11 May 1962, and attached "Meeting with President John F. Kennedy," 30 April 1962; and Lehman to President Kennedy, 2 May 1962, all in LP, SF, Kennedy; Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli*

## Antisemitism

In an interview in 1957, Herbert Lehman denied that antisemitism had played a significant role in any of his campaigns for public office, but the record suggests otherwise. Lehman recalled that when he was running for lieutenant governor of New York in 1928, a cross was burned shortly after he spoke upstate in Binghamton, a hotbed of Ku Klux Klan activities at the time. In 1934, Republicans nominated New York City and State Parks Commissioner Robert Moses to oppose Lehman's bid for reelection as governor. Since there were few issues on which Moses could criticize Lehman's record as governor, Moses resorted instead to personal attacks on Lehman's character, charging that Lehman was "weak," "stupid," "feeble," "a liar," "an ultra-conservative banker with no great gift of imagination" who was locked in the "terrible grip" of Tammany Hall, "a miserable, sniveling type of man." Although his own ancestors were Jewish, Moses raised antisemitic stereotypes by describing Lehman as a "money lender." Despite Moses's bitter attacks, Lehman was reelected by a margin of more than 800,000 votes, even outpolling Moses in heavily Republican upstate New York. After the election, Lehman magnanimously retained Moses as state parks commissioner.[28]

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*Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 94; Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the U.S.-Israel Alliance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 56, 64–185; John Kennedy to A.M. Sonnabend, 14 May 1963, Lehman to President Kennedy, 7 June 1963, and attached "Statement on the Middle East," 19 May 1963, all in John F. Kennedy Papers, White House Name File, Lehman, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA.

28 Herbert Lehman Oral History Transcript, 235–236; "'Old Guard' Picks Moses to Run for Governorship," *New York Times* (17 September 1934): 1, 4; "Republicans Name Moses for Governor on 3d Ballot," *New York Times* (29 September 1934): 1, 7; "Moses Declares Alger Report Aims to Shield Lehman," *New York Times* (9 October 1934): 1, 12; "Moses Says Rival is Tammany Ally," *New York Times* (10 October 1934): 2; "Moses Ridicules Rival on Utilities," *New York Times* (16 October 1934): 4; "Moses Charges Lehman 'Lied' on Milk Problems," *New York Times* (24 October 1934): 1, 9; "Lehman, Angered, Replies to 'Lie,'" *New York Times* (25 October 1934): 1, 9; "Moses Links Rival to Utility Finance," *New York Times* (2 November 1934): 1, 12; "Moses Sees Need For a New Party," *New York Times* (6 November 1934): 21; "Moses Is Defeated in His Own District," *New York Times* (7 November 1934): 3; "President Phones Lehman," *New York*

In 1949, Republicans tried to use antisemitism to defeat Lehman's bid for a seat in the U.S. Senate. Lehman had angered many Catholic voters that summer when he had publicly supported Eleanor Roosevelt in a dispute with Cardinal Spellman of New York over federal aid to parochial schools. During the campaign that fall, when Republican Governor Thomas Dewey called for "a holy crusade" to elect John Foster Dulles over Lehman, Lehman's campaign manager, Edward Maguire, noted that "the term 'holy crusade' for hundreds of years has had a specific connotation," and he denounced Dewey's "shocking and un-American" attempt to appeal for Catholic votes. A few days later, while campaigning upstate, Dulles declared:

> If you could see the kind of people in New York City making up this bloc that is voting for my opponent, if you could see it with your own eyes, I know that you would be out, every last man and woman of you, on election day.

Dulles later insisted that the New York City bloc he was referring to was Communists, but Lehman and his supporters pointed out that Communists—unlike Orthodox Jews and Blacks—could not be identified by their physical appearance or clothing. Lehman charged that Dewey and Dulles were "appealing to all the latent forces of bigotry and prejudices in America." A majority of New York voters rallied around Lehman's candidacy, and he defeated Dulles by almost 200,000 votes.[29]

Lehman was among the first to stand up against Senator Joe

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*Times* (8 November 1934): 3; Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 402–425. On the strength of the Ku Klux Klan in upstate New York, see "Roosevelt Assails Campaign Bigotry," *New York Times* (18 October 1928), 3; and Shawn Lay, *Hooded Knights on the Niagara: The Ku Klux Klan in Buffalo, New York* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

29 Herbert Lehman Oral History Transcript, 773–775; "Dewey Acts 'Shock' Lehman Manager," *New York Times* (5 October 1949): 24; "Czech Church Curb an Omen to Dulles," *New York Times* (6 October 1949): 26; "Lehman Accuses Rivals of Bigotry," *New York Times* (7 October 1949): 21; "Dulles Sees Bias Incited by Lehman," *New York Times* (11 October 1949): 37; "Lehman Repeats Charge of Bigotry," *New York Times* (18 October 1949): 32; "Dulles Says Rival 'Stirs Evil Forces,'" *New York Times* (20 October 1949): 33; "Dulles Concedes," *New York Times* (9 November 1949): 1, 14.

McCarthy's accusations that the Democrats and the U.S. government were riddled with Communists, and Lehman's opposition to McCarthy and McCarthyism did not go unnoticed by the demagogue's supporters, some of whom also injected antisemitism into the mix. On 29 May 1950, the *Chicago Tribune* published an antisemitic diatribe written by Walter Trohan, head of its Washington bureau, which charged that Lehman, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, and former Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. constituted "the secret government of the United States." Allegedly, "a person with highest State Department connections" had identified Frankfurter "as the most powerful man in the government," Lehman "as a powerful Wall Street force," and Morgenthau "as the spokesman of the powerful Zionist group." Although Trohan conceded in the article that "none of the three has been named as a fellow traveler or has ever fallen under any suspicion of taint of Communism," he accused all three men of being "woven into the case of Alger Hiss, convicted perjurer-spy." Trohan pointed out that "Lehman's niece, Mrs. Helen Lehman Buttenwieser … is a firm supporter of Hiss" and that Hiss and his family had lived in Mrs. Buttenwieser's home for several months after his trial. Trohan also noted that Lehman "played a major role in opposing Senator McCarthy in the latter's efforts to expose Communism in the government, particularly in the State Department," and that "Lehman has defended the State Department thruout [*sic*] the investigation." When Morgenthau raised the possibility of filing a lawsuit in response to the article, Lehman doubted "the wisdom of anyone answering this libelous article," noting that he was "far too busy to engage in a controversy regarding a story which is palpably untrue and biased."[30]

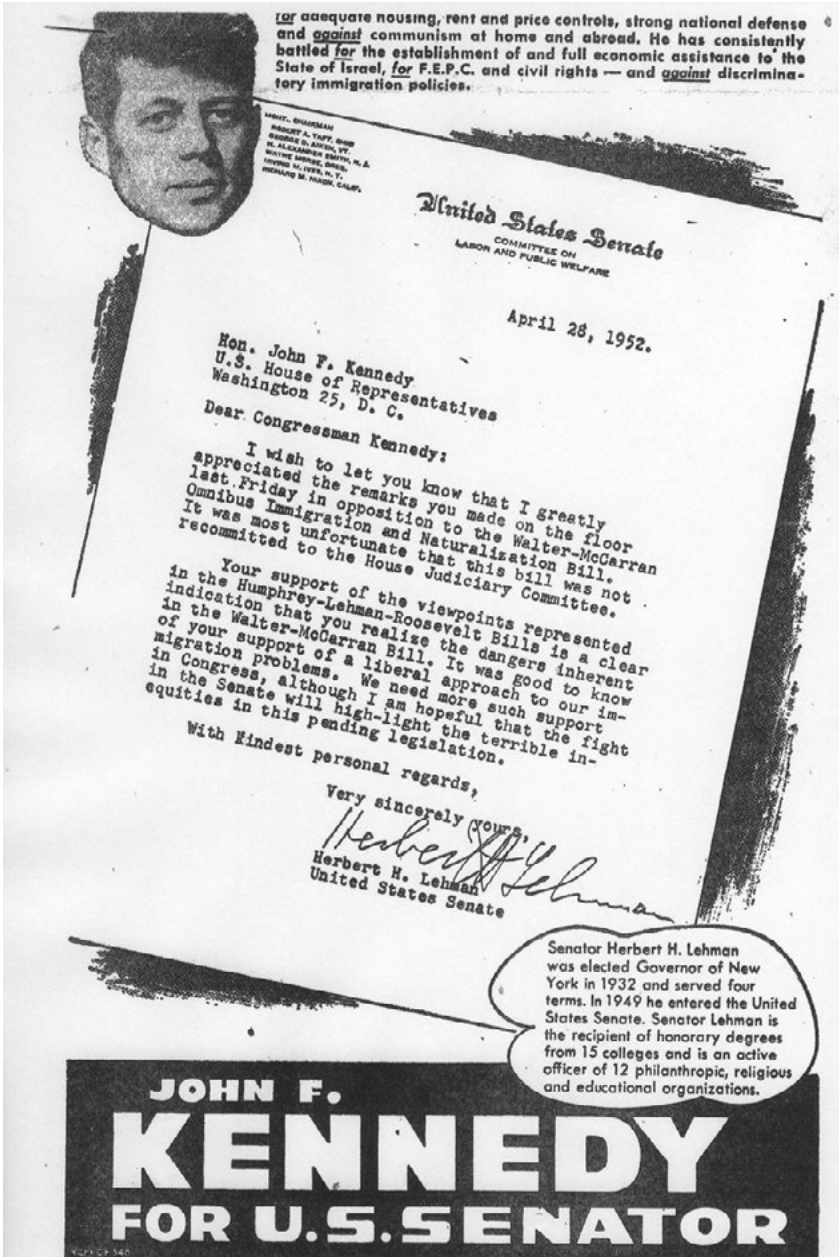
30 Walter Trohan, "3 Men Called a Government in Themselves," *Chicago Tribune* (29 May 1950): 1; Lehman to Henry Morgenthau Jr., 3 June 1950, LP, SF, Morgenthau, Henry Jr. and Mrs. Marcelle. Trohan claimed in his memoirs that he had been ordered to write this article by Colonel Robert McCormick, owner and publisher of the *Tribune*, and that he had purposely exaggerated the story so that it would be killed by the editors. See Trohan, *Political Animals: Memoirs of a Sentimental Cynic* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 5–6, 99; and Walter Trohan Oral History Transcript, 51–53, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO.

## A Jewish Patron Saint

Virtually every Jewish organization in the 1950s sought to associate itself with Herbert Lehman in some way or other; they knew that his name on their letterhead provided instant credibility. According to Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, "a letter from Senator Lehman, to the most prominent Jews of America, inviting them to identify themselves with this national advisory board or become identified with some other project that he was associated with … inevitably elicited a very genuine and a very widespread response…. If Senator Lehman was associated with it, it was a noble, worthy public cause." During the 1950s, Lehman served as honorary chair of the United Jewish Appeal, the Joint Distribution Committee, and the Jewish Child Care Association; honorary president of the American Association for Jewish Education and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture; honorary vice president of the American Jewish Committee; chair of the Board of Overseers of the Jewish Theological Seminary; trustee of Brandeis University; and a member of the Board of Directors of the Henry Street Settlement, to name just a few of his activities. When John Kennedy ran for the Senate in Massachusetts in 1952, his campaign ran ads in the Jewish and Yiddish press featuring a letter from Lehman praising Kennedy's opposition to the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Naturalization bill, which retained the immigration quotas severely limiting entrance to the United States for people from Southern and Eastern Europe. As Kennedy aide Ralph Dungan later noted, "it was always good" to be "identified with Lehman" on such issues.[31]

Tanenbaum captured the religious essence of Lehman when he described Lehman as "a kind of Jewish equivalent of a patron saint." Tanenbaum asserted that Lehman was "a kind of rebbe, in the sense that a rebbe has disciples, people who come and listen to the inspired

31 Edward Warburg to Carolin Flexner, 2 January 1948, LP, SF, Edward Warburg; Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum Oral History Transcript, 2, 6–7; Carolin Flexner to Basil O'Connor, 20 January 1956, LP, SF, Herbert H. Lehman Biographical Data, document 0530_0375; and "Partial List of the Activities of Former Governor Lehman Since His Retirement from the U.S. Senate," 1 August 1963, LP, SF, Herbert H. Lehman Biographical Data, document 0530_0441; Ralph Dungan Oral History Transcript, 28, John F. Kennedy Library.




Herbert Lehman letter used in an advertisement for Senate candidate John F. Kennedy, 23 October 1952, *The Jewish Advocate.*

words of a rebbe, the wisdom of a rebbe that he has distilled over years of study and devotion and prayer." According to Tanenbaum, there was "something specifically Jewish" in Lehman's "way of approaching philanthropy, his way of approaching public affairs," and he believed that Lehman's "democratic values, democratic ethos" were connected "with the prophetic insistence on social justice." In Tanenbaum's opinion, Lehman's "emphasis on the individual dignity of the human personality" was "a reflection of the Biblical conception of man being created in the image of the Divine." The Jewish values Lehman had absorbed as a child had a major influence on him, and his wealth and position gave him the opportunity to put those values into action. Lehman was highly respected and revered by American Jews because he devoted so much of his own life to philanthropy, to government service, to helping others, to making the world a better place, to *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam*.[32]

When Dr. Julius Mark, senior rabbi of Temple Emanu-El, presided over Lehman's funeral service in December 1963, he began his tribute by reciting Psalm 15, which asks: "O Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy holy tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Thy holy mountain?" The answer, composed thousands of years earlier, sounded as if it were written with Lehman in mind:

> He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,
> And speaketh truth in his heart;
> He that hath no slander upon his tongue,
> Nor doeth evil to his fellow,
> Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor;…
> He that doest these things shall never, never be moved.

The rabbi then read Lehman's favorite prayer, a prayer for peace, God's "most precious gift."[33]

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32 Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum Oral History Transcript, *passim*.

33 "Johnson at Lehman Rites; 2,000 Guard Him on Visit; Service Is at Emanu-El," *New York Times* (9 December 1963): 1, 30; "Funeral Service for Hon. Herbert H. Lehman," 8 December 1963 (Stamford, CT: Overbrook Press, 1964), 1–2, copy in Special Collections, Lehman College Library, Bronx, NY. A manuscript copy of the funeral service, with a different pagination, is in LP, SF, Herbert Lehman, document 0530_0012.

Mark quoted from a letter Lehman had written three years earlier to a young Jewish boy who had asked whether being Jewish had assisted or handicapped Lehman in his political career. Lehman explained that he was "a Jew both by birth and conviction," that Judaism satisfied his "spiritual needs," and that he had "a strong faith in its teachings." He believed that being a Jew had not "helped or harmed" him in his public life, asserting that "generally speaking, the American people choose their public officials by their impression of the man or woman." He conceded that "bias and prejudice still exist to some degree in this country," but in his opinion, "it is far less than it was 30 or 40 years ago." To his "fellow Jews who may want some day to become publicly known and feel that Judaism may hold them back because of either discrimination or prejudice," Lehman stressed that "any man who is seeking public office and allows his ambition to affect his religious affiliation is not worthy of the confidence of his fellow citizens." Lehman's final advice to the boy encapsulated the principles Lehman had tried to follow in his public life: "Never be ashamed of being a Jew. Never try to hide it. Never try to compromise with your convictions because they may not agree with those of the group in which you find yourself."[34]

Edith Lehman had asked her husband's good friend Judge Edward Weinfeld to deliver the eulogy at the funeral. Weinfeld emphasized that "Herbert Lehman had no doubt of the answer to the taunting biblical inquiry: Am I my brother's keeper?" Lehman's life, Weinfeld asserted, "was a decisive and an affirmative response" that "man does have a responsibility to his fellow man." For Lehman, "the cause of social justice and the betterment of all mankind was without limit" and was "deeply

34 "Johnson at Lehman Rites," *New York Times* (9 December 1963): 1, 30; "Don't Hide Faith, Lehman Told Boy," *New York Times* (9 December 1963): 30; "Funeral Service for Hon. Herbert H. Lehman," 2–3, Lehman College Library. Lehman had offered similar advice to Abraham Ribicoff when Ribicoff had wondered whether being Jewish would hurt him if he ran for governor of Connecticut, a state with a Jewish population of only 4 percent. As Ribicoff later recalled, Lehman had told him: "I have never found that my religion hurt me or helped me. People take you for what you are." See Drew Pearson, "The Lehman Legacy: Religion and Politics Mix Just Fine," *Washington Post* (15 December 1963): E7.

rooted in his belief in the worth of each individual." Lehman "knew no distinction of race, color, or creed," Weinfeld stressed, and his career of "service to the city, the state, the nation, and the world" was "without parallel in our times for its duration, its dedication and devotion, and for its impact upon millions of people here and throughout the entire world." As Weinfeld aptly noted in his conclusion, Herbert Lehman "was a man of matchless courage and rare integrity … who left the world a better place than when he entered it."[35]

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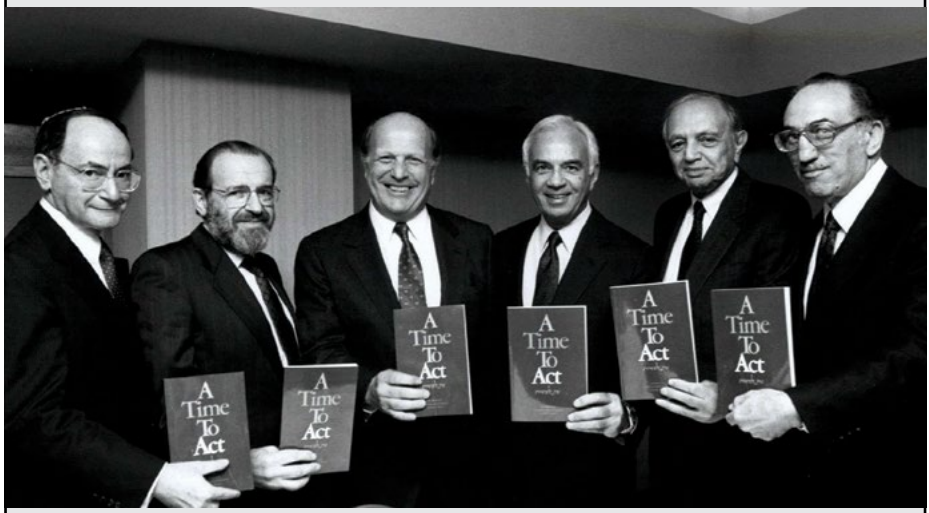
35 "Johnson at Lehman Rites," *New York Times* (9 December 1963): 1, 30; "Funeral Service for Hon. Herbert H. Lehman," 4–6, Lehman College Library; William Nelson, *In Pursuit of Right and Justice: Edward Weinfeld as Lawyer and Judge* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 210.

# The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation Records Now Available on AJA's Website




From left: Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor, Jewish Theological Seminary; Rabbi Norman Lamm, President, Yeshiva University; Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk, President, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion; Morton L. Mandel, Chairman of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America; Mandell L. Berman, President, Council of Jewish Federations; and Bennett Yanowitz, President of JESNA. ©Photograph by Robert A. Cumins

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) is pleased to announce that its Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation Records have been digitized and are available online. The collection documents the work of the Foundation through two of its innovative initiatives launched during the 1980s: The Commission on Jewish Education in North America and the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education. This project was made possible by a generous grant from the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation.

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Israel I. Porath.
(Courtesy Yoel Porath)

# *"The Second Destruction of Cleveland Orthodox Synagogues": Rabbi Israel Porath and Cleveland Jewry at the Crossroads, 1945*

Ira Robinson

In late March 1945, as World War II in Europe was nearing its end, an Orthodox rabbi in Cleveland, Ohio, wrote an article for the local Yiddish newspaper, *Di Yiddishe Velt* [Jewish World], which encompassed a remarkably clear analysis of the situation of Cleveland's Orthodox Jewry at that time[1] and a prescient vision of its suburban future.[2]

1 On the situation of North American Orthodox Jewry in the immediate postwar period, see Zev Eleff, "From Teacher to Scholar to Pastor: The Evolving Postwar Modern Orthodox Rabbinate," *American Jewish History* 98 (October 2014): 289–313; Lawrence Grossman, "American Orthodoxy in the 1950s: The Lean Years," in *Rav Chesed: Essays in Honor of Rabbi Dr. Haskel Lookstein*, ed. Rafael Medoff (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 2009), 251–69; Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," *Tradition* 28 (Summer 1994): 64–130. More generally, see Jeffrey Gurock, *From Fluidity to Rigidity: The Religious Worlds of Conservative and Orthodox Jews in Twentieth Century America* (Ann Arbor: Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, University of Michigan, 1998); Zev Eleff, ed., *Modern Orthodox Judaism: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2016).

2 For a discussion of North American postwar suburbanization, see Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), chapter 3; Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820–2000* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003). On the suburbanization of Orthodox Jews, see Etan Diamond, *And I Will Dwell in their Midst: Orthodox Jews in Suburbia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); *idem*., "The kosher lifestyle: Religious consumerism and suburban Orthodox Jews," *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 4 (2002): 488–505; Albert I. Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 85–127.

The rabbi's name was Israel Porath (1886–1974).[3] Born in Jerusalem, Porath, who was a student of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, came to the United States in 1923 and first served as rabbi in Plainfield, New Jersey. In 1925 he moved to Cleveland, having been offered a rabbinical position by Cleveland's Congregation Ohab Zedek.[4] Beyond his considerable erudition, Porath brought to Cleveland an ability to articulate his ideas in nearly flawless English.[5] He devoted his scholarly work to the writing and publication of *Mavo' ha-Talmud* (seven volumes), a guide making Talmud study easier both for young students who had never studied Gemara and for adults who had studied in their youth but had forgotten their learning.[6]

By 1927, Porath was taking a leading role in Cleveland's Orthodox rabbinate,[7] aiming to solve the contentious issues related to the city's

3 On Rabbi Porath, see Israel Porath, *Mishkaotekha Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Porath, 2017), introduction. For a wealth of documentary material on Porath, see http://www.cleveland-jewishhistory.net/people/porath.htm (accessed 15 February 2015). The major account of the history of the Cleveland Jewish community to the mid-twentieth century remains Lloyd Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland* (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society [hereafter WRHS] and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978). On Cleveland's Orthodox community, see my two articles: "A Link in the Great American Chain": The Evolution of an Orthodox Jewish Community in Cleveland, Ohio, to 1940," forthcoming in *Cleveland Jews and the Making of a Midwestern Community*, ed. Sean Martin (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020); and "The Evolution of the Orthodox Jewish Community in Cleveland, Ohio, 1940 to the Present," *Studies in Judaism, Humanities and the Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2019): 105–119.

4 Sally H. Wertheim and Alan D. Bennett, eds., *Remembering: Cleveland's Jewish Voices* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2011), 203.

5 Many of Porath's English-language sermons, including his inaugural sermon from 1925, are preserved in the Rabbi Israel Porath Papers, MS-4753, container 2, folder 7, WRHS.

6 Israel Porath, *Mavo' ha-Talmud* vol. 1 *Gittin* (St. Louis, 1942), introduction, unpaginated. http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=38100&st=&pgnum=2 (accessed 2 February 2015). It is noteworthy that Cleveland Reform Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver donated five hundred dollars toward the publication of one of Rabbi Porath's books. Abba Hillel Silver to Israel Porath, 17 November 1954, Rabbi Israel Porath Papers, folder 2, WRHS 1.

7 "Visiting Orthodox Rabbis of Three States Welcomed Here," *Jewish Independent* (Cleveland), 29 July 1927. Clipping in Rabbi Israel Porath Papers, MS-4753, folder 4, WRHS.

kosher meat industry.[8] Cleveland's kashrut was an issue that, as he stated, "embittered our communal life for decades and that constantly brought with it so much desecration [*hillul ha-shem* ] and distress [*agmat nefesh*] that it seemed that kosher meat and conflict were like Siamese twins that cannot be separated."[9] It would not be until 1940 that a new rabbinic organization under Porath's leadership, the Orthodox Rabbinical Council (*Merkaz ha-Rabbonim*), managed to achieve the unity that had eluded Cleveland Orthodoxy until then and was able, in cooperation with Cleveland's Jewish Federation, to create a stable kashrut supervision in Cleveland that lasted for decades.[10]

In the 1940s the Cleveland Jewish community stood at a crossroads.[11] When Porath had arrived in Cleveland in the 1920s, the center of the Eastern European immigrant community and its synagogues had been the "Central" neighborhood.[12] Over the ensuing years, Porath had witnessed the influx of African Americans and the exodus of Jews from that neighborhood. Cleveland Jews then moved to two new neighborhoods: one, Glenville, coalesced around East 105th Street; the other encompassed the Kinsman Road district. By 1945, however, Cleveland Jewry found itself under pressure to move once again.

As his article shows, Porath saw the Cleveland Jewish situation both as a crisis and as an opportunity. He felt that there was an urgent need for Cleveland's Orthodox Jewry to take stock of itself in this transitional period. In particular, Porath urged synagogue leaders not to repeat their previous mistake of rebuilding existing synagogues separately in new

8 In the *American Jewish Year Book* 29 (1927–1928): 210, the group is called "The Orthodox United Rabbinate of Cleveland" and claims to have eight members, with Porath as chair.

9 "*Vi azoi hot der merkaz ha-rabbonim bahandelt di kashrus frage letstn yor*?" *Jewish World*, 6–7 October 1940. Rabbi Israel Porath papers, MS-4753, folder 8, WRHS.

10 Sidney Z. Vincent and Judah Rubenstein, *Merging Traditions—Jewish Life in Cleveland: A Contemporary Narrative, 1945–1975; A Pictorial Record, 1839–1975* (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society and the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, 1978), 57.

11 For an account of the similar developments in the Jewish community of Detroit in this era, see Lila Corwin Berman, *Metropolitan Jews: Politics, Race, and Religion in Postwar Detroit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

12 "Central Neighborhood," *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* https://case.edu/ech/articles/c/central-neighborhood/ (accessed 7 March 2018).

neighborhoods. Synagogues should rather try to combine forces and establish an Orthodox bloc to influence the Jewish Community Council.

And indeed, in the spirit of Porath's vision, the Jewish Community Council and Federation did meet with the Orthodox synagogues to help them plan their eventual move to the Cleveland Heights area.[13] There was a push to effect synagogue mergers so as to establish large conglomerate Orthodox congregations with high membership bases, such as the Taylor Road Synagogue, the Heights Jewish Center, and the Warrensville Center Synagogue. Thus, for example, the Warrensville Center Synagogue, dedicated in April 1959, combined three congregations—the Tetiever Ahavas Achim Anshe Sfard, Bnai Jacob Kol Israel (Kinsman Jewish Center), and Neve Zedek—with a combined membership of over one thousand families.[14] As Porath stated at the new synagogue's dedication: "The shifting of population from the city to the suburbs has changed the whole structure of our local Orthodox Jewry. Old and long-established congregations which had existed for many scores of years in the old neighborhoods had to be reshaped through mergers."[15] As a result of this planning process, in the 1950s Taylor Road in Cleveland Heights became a street central to the Orthodox community; it comprised the Hebrew Academy day school, several synagogues, kosher bakeries, and food stores.[16]

13 Sidney Z. Vincent, *Personal and Professional: Memoirs of a Life in Community Service* (Cleveland: Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, 1982), 180. On the development of the suburb of Cleveland Heights, see Marian Morton, "The suburban ideal and suburban realities: Cleveland Heights, Ohio, 1860–2001," *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 6 (2002): 671–698.

14 "Three Cleveland Orthodox Congregations Announce Merger," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 22 April 1959, http://www.jta.org/1959/04/22/archive/three-cleveland-orthodox-congregations-announce-merger (accessed 26 January 2015).

15 Rabbi Israel Porath Papers, MS-4753, folder 8, WRHS.

16 Sidney Z. Vincent and Judah Rubenstein, *Merging Traditions—Jewish Life in Cleveland: A Contemporary Narrative, 1945–1975; A Pictorial Record, 1839–1975*, 20.

## *Der Tzveyter Ḥurbn fun Klivlander Orthodoksishe Shuln* [The Second Destruction of Cleveland Orthodox Synagogues][17]

*by Rabbi Israel Porath*

Twenty-five years ago in Cleveland there was a flourishing Jewish settlement on Cedar and Central Avenues and their vicinity. There existed large, magnificent synagogues with beautiful study houses that were packed with Jews who prayed in several minyanim[18] each day and which housed tables and benches where Torah scholars and those who had acquired [Torah] learning would study daily sessions in *Talmud*, *Mishna*, *Eyn Ya'akov*,[19] etc. These were Jews from the old country and synagogues in the old style.

After a while there came prosperity and the Jews began to run from their homes. In a short time the entire Jewish settlement there was destroyed. Many synagogues were sold as churches; the rest were left empty and abandoned and a significant Jewish resource was lost.

In those years the banks gave mortgages for community buildings. The [congregations] bought and built large new synagogues in the two new Jewish settlements around 105th Street and around Kinsman Road. In these synagogues the study sessions were smaller and fewer, but people still prayed. Many synagogues had three *minyanim* and others two, but it became a more compact Jewish community.

The community built a community *mikveh*[20] with modern and hygienic fixtures which cost tens of thousands of dollars. There were also magnificent institutions like the Old Age Home,[21] the Orphanage,[22] and

17 *Di Yiddishe Velt* [*The Jewish World*], 28 March 1945, p. 2. Translated from the Yiddish by Ira Robinson.

18 In this context, *minyan* means a Jewish prayer service.

19 A compendium of the non-halakhic content of the Talmud, edited in the sixteenth century by Rabbi Jacob ibn Habib.

20 Ritual pool.

21 Founded in 1906 and in 1945 situated on Lakeview Avenue.

22 Chartered in May 1919 and opened in August 1920 as the Orthodox Jewish Orphan Asylum.

later the *Hakhnosos Orkhim*.[23] As well, the Yeshiva Adas [Bnei Yisroel][24] and the Talmud Torahs placed their central institutions and their branches in the new Jewish neighborhood and a great Jewish community was formed anew that pulsated with life and activity. A traditional Jewish community was established with the old attributes.

As was mentioned all the synagogues were mortgaged by the banks. However, five years ago there began a movement to pay off the mortgages. The Neve Zedek Shul was the first to publicize its joy at burning the mortgage and after it other synagogues, one after the other, were freed from debt and became a Jewish community possession in the full sense of the term.

After a while there was once again a tumult. Jews began to flee from their beautiful middle-class homes. At the beginning this flight was sporadic and intermittent; later it was at a quicker pace and in masses. The prosperity coming from the bloody war has once more made everyone drunk. We see once again how Jewish neighborhoods are becoming abandoned and emptied. It is now a normal experience to see great Houses of Study looking for a tenth man for a *minyan*. If this goes on we will once more see the old spectacle which we now experience regarding the old Jewish neighborhoods. Parents will travel downtown with their children and show them the churches where Sammy became bar mitzvah, where Eddy graduated, and where Charlie and Penny were married.

Yes, this appears to be the situation. The synagogues that have just been freed from their mortgages are simultaneously becoming abandoned by their members and supporters. The Conservative element has more or less adjusted to the new surroundings and has already been consolidated with local schools and activities. However, the Orthodox element, which always sees itself as coming too little too late goes about in the new areas like wandering sheep. There has suddenly come a crisis in their long-established way of life and they feel that they have somehow lost their footing.

23 A traditional institution giving shelter to itinerant Jews.

24 Founded in 1915. Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland*, 287.

I want to point out that this misfortune would not be so great if our communal life was not so concentrated around the synagogues. In a city with a *Kultus-Gemeinde*,[25] when [Jews] move from one neighborhood to another, [the *Kultus-Gemeinde*] takes with it all the communal institutions which will continue functioning on the same basis as previously. In the Land of Israel or in Diaspora countries from which the local Jewish population came synagogues constitute a part of the general communal property, like the Talmud Torah, Kosher meat, Old Age Home, Orphanage, Mikveh, etc. However, in American Jewish life, synagogues function as separate communities. Each synagogue constitutes an institution by itself, with its own membership and functions. There is a mutual influence and feeling of loyalty between the synagogue and its members, the sisterhoods and men's clubs and with the children's schools. Each synagogue justifies its own existence according to its own vision and ability. And when a sudden crisis erupts it is brought to a serious state of affairs.

Simultaneously with the decline of the synagogues, the Orthodox Jewry of Cleveland has also experienced in the past three years great losses. The entire traditional way of life has been shattered. The hygienic *mikveh* that was purchased with communal money has become the private property of individuals. These individuals have found that from a financial standpoint they can do without continuing the hygienic regime of cleanliness and exactness. As soon as it becomes a private business, no one else's opinion counts and no one can demand that they go to the extra expense.

Three years ago, there existed a rabbinic supervision over kosher meat that was satisfactory and effective. Lately the question of supervision of kashrut has completely disappeared from current concern. Today there is no supervision at all, neither over kosher meat nor delicatessen. As well, the supervision in the slaughterhouses has become significantly weakened. A slaughterhouse that once had four rabbinical supervisors has, bit by bit, gotten rid of three and the one who remains is on sufferance.

25 A city-wide communal organization that took care of all the needs of the Jewish community. This sort of community organization characterized European Jewry but not American Jewry.

The foundation of traditional Jewish family life has begun to crack and the entire edifice is teetering. Jewish divorces according to the Law of Moses and Israel have been reduced to a minimum. This is already an old trouble. However now we are also threatened by a wave of mixed marriages. This plague which until not long ago was felt only in the smaller cities in which only a few Jewish families lived, has begun to appear and spread also in larger communities, and Cleveland has found itself strongly affected by the assault. This is a growing phenomenon in which the Conservative element needs to be interested as well.

Among our defeats we need to consider that of our local newspaper, the *Jewish World*, which has had to stop publication as a daily paper. It is only thanks to the devotion of the employees that is was possible to continue its publication as a weekly.[26]

* * *

It is self-evident that the above-mentioned problems are not just Cleveland problems. All of them are shared by many. In all cities there are Jewish neighborhoods that are decaying. Family purity is a vexed issue that we do not speak of. Kosher meat is an old, talked out issue. Mixed marriages have become a nationwide disease. Yiddish newspapers in Philadelphia and Chicago have gone under.

Certainly, Cleveland is but a link in the great American chain. However, that does not mean that we can ignore our local problems because other Jewish communities suffer from the same troubles. When there is an outbreak of plague each locality must undertake its own measures to protect and save itself from destruction.

I think that now, when Cleveland's Orthodox Jewry is packing to move to a new neighborhood, is the right time to evaluate our circumstances and weakness. Now is the right time for many in the remaining remnant of synagogues to not make the same mistake of moving all

26 The newspaper was founded in 1907 and ceased publication in 1952. "Cleveland Yiddish Newspaper Ceases Publication, Existed Since 1907," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 6 March 1952, https://www.jta.org/1952/03/06/archive/cleveland-yiddish-newspaper-ceases-publication-existed-since-1907 (accessed 7 March 2018).

existing synagogues but on a smaller scale. A way must be found that several synagogues can combine forces so that it will be possible to found two or three larger synagogues in different parts of the Heights. (I do not want to advise that we should contemplate a synagogue that is too large and powerful because the experience of the [Cleveland] Jewish Center demonstrated that Orthodoxy is not strong enough to protect its interests in time of crisis. There must remain some reserves to protect the balance between the aspirations for modernity and the nostalgia for authentic tradition).[27]

The coming together of the new settlement in the Heights is in certain respects different from the settlement that happened 25 years ago. Then the different elements could be divided into three. The neighborhood between Superior and St. Clair was mostly settled by businessmen and the middle class. The Kinsman neighborhood was taken by the working classes and the Heights was occupied by the professional classes. Now the new settlement will be made up of all three classes together: professionals, businessmen and workers. This fact will certainly have an influence on the establishment of the religious and cultural life of the area. I think that now is the best time for the presidents and directors of the Lithuanian, Polish, Galician, Grodner, Tetiever Synagogues, etc., to come together to discuss the problem and decide to adopt measures for a united plan on how to save the synagogues from total disappearance. There are a few synagogues here that deal now only with a cemetery, and a number of others are destined for the same fate.

The time has also come that Orthodox elements must group together in a strong block in the [Jewish] Community Council. The Council is a democratic institution that has existed for a good number of years. Nearly all the synagogues are represented, however until now they have not shown their strength. A strong block with a rational plan and policies would have a great influence on the entire thought process of the Council. For example, it would not be any sin to exert pressure through

27 On the conflictual conversion of the Cleveland Jewish Center from Orthodoxy to Conservatism in the 1920s, see Ira Robinson, "A 'Jewish Monkey Trial': the Cleveland Jewish Center and the Emerging Borderline between Orthodox and Conservative Judaism in 1920s North America," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 68, no. 2 (2016): 90–118.

the Council on the Welfare Federation which makes a campaign for over one million dollars a year that it should allocate a few thousand dollars to make order in the kashrut question in order to be rid of the constant scandals and desecrations which were only caused by monetary issues. It is my impression that now is the optimum time for a satisfactory solution to these incessant problems to be made without substantial opposition. The overwhelming majority of the local rabbis is ready to cooperate in such an undertaking. There must, however, be a legal and well-appointed committee that will understand how to handle the problem in a practical manner.

The proper organization that could give itself to the solution of all the above mentioned and similar problems should be the Mizrachi Council of Cleveland. To the Council belong many synagogues which understand more or less the importance of organization in community life. The Council must not limit its influence only to gather money for the Mizrachi [movement]. It must deepen and enlarge its activities in the area of strengthening the Torah and Judaism, especially in the area of Jewish education, on a purely traditional basis.

For this purpose, it would be necessary to utilize our old-new weekly the *Jewish World* to illuminate all these questions and to shape public opinion that should not be focussed on scathing criticism and strife, but only on earnest constructive work to be done with reason and persistence.

And if not now, when?[28]

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28 Mishna Avot 1, 14.

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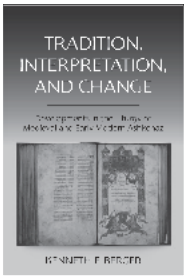


## Tradition, Interpretation, and Change

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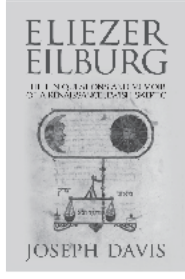


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# *Book Reviews*

**Marc Dollinger, *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018), 242 pp.**

Marc Dollinger's first book, *The Quest for Inclusion* (2000), focused on Jewish liberalism, seeking to explain its hold on American Jews as a matter of their self-interest. Focusing on the period from 1930s to the mid-1970s, he showed how they believed that they would benefit from the creation of a more tolerant society in which race, as well as religion, did not determine civic privileges and liabilities. That book essentially emphasized how Jews twinned their political agendas with liberalism, cosmopolitanism, and civil rights.

In his new book, *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s,* Dollinger revisits familiar turf, but with a difference. This study looks primarily at the latter part of the 1960s and the legacy of those transformative years. In focusing on this period, Dollinger asks a different question: How, he poses, did the rise of African American militancy in the latter part of the 1960s, which he repeatedly calls "Black Power," leave its mark upon the political and cultural outlook of the nation's Jews? How did the calls and actions of African Americans in the years immediately after the triumph of the civil rights legislative agenda—for self-determination, race-conscious social policies, and communal pride—transfer to and transform the Jews of the United States? How, Dollinger contemplates, did the political upheavals of the late 1960s, inspired by African American activists, change the ways in which American Jews behaved politically, both with the larger society and within the Jewish communal infrastructure?

This book provides an important intervention in American Jewish history, a field that for the most part makes Jews the authors of their destiny, in which their ideas, sensibilities, reactions, and concerns for the most part explain everything. Indeed, in the robust literature on the

history of Jewish-black interactions, Jews act and blacks receive—whether money, advice, or access to Americans with real power. Jews, in that broad interpretive trope, gave, and African Americans, by necessity, took.

In *Black Power, Jewish Politics,* Dollinger upends this familiar and deeply planted way of thinking. He treats Jews as the takers and not the givers. Jews, particularly although not exclusively the younger rising generation born in the post–World War II era and very much participants in the assertive politics of the 1960s, learned from African Americans and created a new political culture that in turn shook up Jewish life in America.

Unlike, according to Dollinger, the generations that had preceded them, these Jews, deeply influenced by Black Power, did not hesitate to publicly assert Jewish interests, doing so directly in their own name. Whether considering domestic political developments, institutional policies, matters of global affairs, or cultural practices within their own communities, the Jews of the late 1960s volubly asserted that Jews, as Jews, had their specific stake in outcomes. Unlike those who came before them, these Jews, sometimes labeled the "new Jews," eschewed vague statements about universalism and did not make disingenuous claims to be acting in the interests of the common good. Instead, Dollinger's subjects demanded to know how Jews would benefit and what Jews would get out of it, whatever the matter at hand might have been.

Ironically, Dollinger shows, while the tenor of Jewish politics in the period under study owed much to Black Power, the quest for self-interest lead to a rupture in the real, although always fraught, political partnership between blacks and Jews that had evolved in mid-twentieth century. Jewish action based on avowedly self-interested decision-making and calls for Jews to act politically in the name of their particularistic Jewish agenda seemingly could not coexist with the kind of cooperation that had existed earlier. But that cooperation had been built on an asymmetrical distribution of power, and Dollinger points out that the politics of the late 1960s resulted in a new and, as he saw it, improved relationship of equals.

*Black Power, Jewish Politics* has much to say about the Jewish and African American disillusionment with postwar liberalism. At the heart of the liberalism, rejected by both Black Power advocates and the new

Jews, lay a commitment to gradual integration based though on the reality that had Jews benefitted from their whiteness. They had no desire to see any diminution of it. The author, through careful analysis of internal memos and correspondence of Jewish communal organizations—including the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Congress, and the American Jewish Committee—shows that the men behind these bodies understood how much they had been part of the world of white privilege and how their own economic and political ascent had been aided by their phenotype.

Dollinger also points out that, despite Black Power's formative influence, many of the strategies that Jewish leaders adopted in the 1960s ended up exacerbating the nation's shameful and persistent patterns of racial disparity, working to the disadvantage of African Americans. He, for example, tackles the issue of the rise of Jewish day schools. With a few exceptions, most such schools came into being in the 1960s based on the ostensible desire of Jews to educate their children in all-Jewish environments. Advocates for such schools claimed that separate Jewish education would foster Jewish pride and group continuity, a claim that reflected much of the rhetoric of Black Power. But by exiting public schools—a necessary part of creating segregated Jewish schools—Jews played their part in the larger and, most observers would agree, tragic phenomenon of the era, which saw white people abandoning integrated education as a reality and a *desideratum.* Even when individuals involved in Jewish communal decision-making recognized that this would happen, they still placed Jewish self-interest, Jewish power, ahead of anything else.

The honesty of this book, the willingness of the author to tackle a number of subjects, uncomfortable even decades later, makes it an important contribution. It offers a well-researched set of chapters, cogently structured and based on a deep immersion in the primary sources. The fact that the title *Black Power, Jewish Politics* puts African Americans first, making them the pivotal players and African American ideology the dominant force in shaping Jewish action, deserves credit as well.

A few problems, though, haunt *Black Power, Jewish Politics.* Dollinger tends to flatten the political and cultural practices of Jewish communal elites before the late 1960s. They did not always behave as cagily or duplicitously as he suggests; rather, since the late nineteenth century, they

were frequently open in their declarations that Jews followed their group-specific agendas and took self-interested stands in the political arena. In ignoring this, Dollinger has set up something of an analytic straw man.

So, too, by using the always-capitalized phrase "Black Power," Dollinger misses all of the complex political turmoil within African American organizations, institutions, and, more broadly, among the rank-and-file. We never really learn, aside from quotes from a number of the most visible and vocal advocates of Black Power, about the diversity of opinions and strategies that constituted African American politics in these years. Who constituted the advocates of Black Power? Did they receive no resistance or argument from other African Americans who may not have, either partially or entirely, subscribed to the messages of Stokely Carmichael, Eldridge Cleaver, or Jesse Jackson? These are issues Dollinger declines to explore and, as such, the politics of black America comes out here as flat as the politics of Jewish America.

Additionally, the treatment of gender is a problem here. The fact that Dollinger, in the index, can encapsulate everything he has to say about Jewish women into citations of less than a dozen pages, points to something missing. It seems, from reading this book, that Jewish men did all of the work of adopting the ethos and message of Black Power as they challenged the Jewish liberal status quo. Other than in the few pages devoted to the impact of the women's movement on Jewish women, no Jewish women play a role here. Jewish women acted only vis-à-vis internal Jewish communal issues. If that represented the reality of the Jewish politics of the era, then it behooved the author to say so and to fold a gendered analysis into the book. He needed to have considered the Jewish politics of this era as a manifestation of a new kind of ethnic masculinity or women deserved to be players beyond purely women's issues.

Dollinger ought, it seems, to have given a nod to the fact that Black Power, broadly defined, transformed more than Jewish politics. He ought to have at least acknowledged the global impact of Black Power. Dollinger would then have shown how the new thinking and action of American Jews followed a broad, almost universal trajectory. After all, Black Power inspired activists in a wide variety of other ethnic communities in the United States, shaping the political and cultural energies of

the descendants of other European immigrants and unleashing political militancy among young Native Americans, Asian Americans, and so many others. And its message revolutionized the politics of no fewer places than Jamaica, South Africa, Northern Ireland, and Palestine.

This then leads to a final way in which *Black Power, Jewish Politics* falls a bit short. The degree to which Israel, from the June 1967 war and beyond, functioned as the dividing wedge between Jews and African Americans cannot be overstated. But Dollinger actually *understates* the significance that Black Power advocates placed on this issue. They saw the expansion of colonialism in the Middle East, ensuing as it did from Israel's military activities following the 1967 War, its emerging settlement policy, and the process by which it formally annexed lands with large Arab populations. To the advocates of Black Power, individuals whose ideas and fervor so profoundly inspired American Jews, the developments in the Occupied Territories mattered. Conversely, American Jews at that same time moved Israel, and support of it, to near the top of their agenda.

This subject, while certainly addressed in *Black Power, Jewish Politics*, does not get the central analytic attention it deserved. Yet Marc Dollinger provides a very important antidote to much of the historiography as well as to popular Jewish recollection about this pivotal era.

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**Rebecca Erbelding, *Rescue Board: The Untold Story of America's Efforts to Save the Jews of Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 2018), 384 pp.**

In mid-January 1944, John Pehle, a young assistant to the secretary of the Treasury Department in the United States government, stomped the snow off his shoes and entered the White House, preparing for the most important meeting of his professional life. Over a year and

a half later, tens of thousands of European lives were saved as a result of this meeting. In her new book, *Rescue Board: The Untold Story of America's Efforts to Save the Jews of Europe*, Rebecca Erbelding, an archivist, curator, and historian at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, draws from a rich source of archival materials to present the first history of the War Refugee Board, an agency authorized through executive order by then-President Franklin D. Roosevelt after the meeting with Pehle.

In her research, Erbelding offers an amendment to the traditional narrative of American responses to the extermination of European Jewry—the story of a country that lent too little aid and gave too little attention, until the Holocaust had already gone too far. Erbelding succinctly covers this well-documented territory from the outset, discussing the difficulties European Jewish refugees faced in their efforts to escape to the United States from Nazi Europe: from the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 through to the turning back of the MS *St. Louis* in 1939. But rather than repeating this narrative of inaction, Erbelding focuses on ways an admittedly small group of governmental officials did attempt to provide aid to European Jews. These officials spent the final year and half of World War II working with Jewish organizations, officials from neutral countries, and resistance groups in their attempts to rescue Jews from the web of Nazism: orchestrating covert rescue missions and prisoner exchanges, bartering supplies for Jewish lives, and distributing care packages. Their actions were not limited to Europe, however. In the summer of 1944, the War Refugee Board opened a refugee camp in upstate New York, outside of Oswego, that housed nearly one thousand refugees. Through her research, Erbelding offers a more nuanced understanding of American responses to the Holocaust.

This is not to say, however, that the history of the War Refugee Board offers a redemptive history for the United States. Nor does Erbelding attempt to situate it as "the one bright spot" (286). The backdrop of years of American indifference to events taking place in Europe remains hauntingly present throughout the book. Indeed, as Erbelding demonstrates, it took months of meetings and negotiations to convince Roosevelt of the need for action—action that did not occur until 1944,

after Nazi Germany's military war and genocidal war had been waging for years and millions of lives had been lost. Yet the War Refugee Board's ability to provide aid in the face of these obstacles, which Erbelding meticulously documents, only serves to highlight the importance of their actions.

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**Daniel Judson, *Pennies for Heaven: The History of American Synagogues and Money* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018), 256 pp.**

Daniel Judson's well-researched, marvelously original, and surprisingly entertaining study of how American synagogue finance evolved from colonial times to the present—along with his analysis of contemporary trends and how financing might change in the near future—is a must-read for anyone concerned with funding synagogues after the 2007–2008 economic recession, the widespread availability of free religious knowledge online, the dissolution or blurring of denominational lines, falling membership, and the apparent disinclination of the current generation of young people to pay for synagogue services. Historically, he writes, American synagogues have thrived on a broad-based paradigm of what he calls "democratic pragmatism" where, rather than a few wealthy donors, each member is expected to pay his or her share toward the bottom line; today, observers wonder if that paradigm is sustainable.

The author correctly asserts that examining synagogue life through an economic lens, rather than the more common intellectual or spiritual one, brings into view many issues that might otherwise remain hidden and sharpens the focus on worshippers' actual values and culture. Placing his story firmly within the context of broader changes in American history and politics, and providing enlightening comparison with the way Christian churches have financed their buildings and paid their clergy, Judson covers a comprehensive range of topics: the primacy of the

principles of competition and the marketplace in the completely voluntary realm of American religious life; the origins and implications of the "Free Synagogue" or voluntary dues movement; the synagogue center movement of the 1920s (the proverbial "shuls with a school and a pool," which often meant enormous debt); the debate over who should fund religious schools; and the huge controversy in the mid-twentieth century over using lucrative bingo games to fund synagogue operations—an embroilment that resulted in the Conservative movement's expelling sixteen congregations from its umbrella organization for violating its ban on bingo. Especially illuminating is his account of the "*hazzan* craze" starting in the late-nineteenth century, when Orthodox synagogues in New York outbid each other in paying ever-more-extravagant salaries for superstar cantors, a phenomenon reminiscent of the Dutch "tulip mania" of the 1630s. He also discusses the steady professionalization of the American rabbinate during the twentieth century and the current weakening of the traditional rabbinical hiring system, along with the current challenges posed by the alternative Chabad model of synagogue finance, as congregations in other movements seek to either imitate or compete with Chabad's success.

One of the first surprises in reading *Pennies for Heaven* is learning that the practice of financing synagogues mainly by charging dues—which, as the author remarks, most might assume was handed down at Mt. Sinai—is in fact not ancient at all but a twentieth-century innovation that did not become widespread until well after World War I. Until then the main source of revenue for synagogues was the selling of seats and matching annual assessments on terms not unlike that of buying tickets to a Broadway show. Only the purchasing member could sit in a particular seat, and prices and assessments were based on proximity to the Ark, comfort, and quality of view, with at least three and as many as five different classes of seats sold. The result was visible distinctions based on wealth within the congregation, with clear "rich" and "poor" sections. The system fell out of favor during the Progressive Era and World War I, when rhetoric about the value of democracy and egalitarianism was widespread and prominent rabbis demanded, as we are told, that "In God's house, all must be equal!" Under the dues system, congregants paid a fee and then took whatever seat happened to be

free when they walked in. Another advantage of that model was that it enabled synagogues to sell virtually unlimited memberships, beyond the number of seats in the sanctuary. Most synagogues maintained the practice of selling seats only for the High Holidays, using the promise of a guaranteed seat to incentivize members to pay their financial obligations for the rest of the year.

It was also in response to the charge that synagogues had become the province of only the rich and the demand for democratization that Rabbi Stephen Wise during the same period pioneered the idea of the Free Synagogue, where there were neither fees for seats nor mandatory dues. *Pennies for Heaven* provides valuable biographical information about Wise's vision, leadership, and remarkable organizing and fundraising skills, as well as an account of the scores of synagogues that have successfully brought back this model in our own day.

Similarly, for those in New York who could not come or who balked at paying high fees for the rest of the year, numerous worship services sprang up just for the High Holidays. These came to be known as "mushroom synagogues"; they were held in venues such as Yiddish theaters, movie theaters, dance halls, or meeting rooms connected to saloons. The services depended on extravagant, circus-like, and sometimes vulgar advertising, promising star cantors and choirs but often led by quick profit seekers of dubious credentials. By 1917 a reported 150,000 worshippers attended such services. "Do you want to get pleasure for your money this year?" read one such advertisement. "Then come to the beautiful airy People's Theater Synagogue. You will hear good singing, beautiful davening, Jewish and sweet. The management guarantees good service." Established synagogues of all denominations, which saw the "mushrooms" as sacrilegious economic competition, began a campaign to eradicate them through calls for boycotts, alternative services, and the distribution of free synagogue tickets to the poor. When those efforts failed, they used their combined political power to outlaw such services through a 1934 bill in the New York State Legislature criminalizing anyone presenting "fraudulent religious services."

The final chapter may make some readers feel wistful. It looks at the synagogue building boom of the 1950s—a time when rapid suburbanization gave rise to Conservative and Reform synagogues across

the United States overflowing with congregants, and religious school classrooms could not be built quickly enough to keep up with demand. In this chapter, Judson turns to the question of evolving methods to maintain these buildings today, including mergers, renting out space, adopting the "community synagogue" model, and other ways to promote greater efficiency. He also examines alternate trends in traditional synagogue financing that have in part been made necessary and possible by the weakening of ideological commitment to Jewish denominations and to the ability of congregations to hire rabbis from outside the mainstream seminaries. Independent *minyanim*, for example, are nondenominational, do not own buildings, and have no paid clergy. In Chabad, budgets are leaner because the rabbis are paid considerably less than those in other Jewish denominations; a few wealthy donors are sought so that for most, services are virtually free; and each rabbi rules unto himself and does not answer to a board of directors, allowing for more risk taking and entrepreneurship.

Despite its enumeration of the many challenges facing the contemporary American synagogue, *Pennies for Heaven* ends on a note of optimism, suggesting that just as American synagogues have successfully evolved to meet new conditions over the past three hundred years, the synagogues of the future will likewise find ways to survive and thrive.

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**Eric Lidji, *The Seventeenth Generation: The Lifework of Rabbi Walter Jacob* (Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Congregation, 2018), 294 pp.**

*The Seventeenth Generation: The Lifework of Rabbi Walter Jacob* is a biography prepared by Eric Lidji, director of the Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives at the Senator John Heinz History Center. This book adds to a growing number of publications on American rabbis

born in Germany who fled the country of their birth under the Nazi regime. Their fate and their biographies are now well documented by the new, open-access digital humanities database MIRA (http://mira.geschichte.lmu.de/). Many of these men relocated to the United States, where some had significant impact on American Judaism in the postwar era. Their decision to migrate to the United States was connected to a spectacular rescue organized by the American rabbinical colleges on behalf of their colleagues in the German rabbinate, scholars of modern Jewish "Wissenschaft," or those studying for the rabbinate. At least 250 individuals continued their lives and careers in the United States.

Lidji tells the story of Walter Jacob, born in 1930, who joined his parents, Ernst and Annette Jacob, and his brother, Herbert, when the family fled his hometown of Augsburg in south Germany after the so-called *Kristallnacht*, or "Night of Broken Glass." While the emigration of rabbis had begun earlier, this pogrom entailed a massive physical attack on German-Jewish synagogues and communities and especially targeted the rabbinate, who were systematically arrested and taken to concentration camps or Gestapo prisons, where they were tortured, humiliated, and, after several weeks, given the option to either leave the country immediately or continue to be held under even worse circumstances. Walter's father, Ernst, senior rabbi of Augsburg, was swept up in this action, as was Walter's grandfather, Benno Jacob, a notable rabbi and biblical scholar in Hamburg. Early in 1939 both Ernst and Benno obtained a temporary visa from the British chief rabbi, which allowed them to flee to the United Kingdom. They were joined a few weeks later by Annette and the boys. The British chief rabbi's initiative was coordinated with the emergency rescue by the American rabbinical colleges, which provided support and mediated positions for rabbis, rabbinical students, and scholars of Wissenschaft des Judentums.

While Lidji frames Jacob's biography with information on his parents' flight and ultimate resettlement to St. Joseph, Missouri, he soon turns to the experience of young Walter in this massive cultural transformation. He highlights how this adolescent refugee grew up in America but was raised in a distinctly German-Jewish home, which highly identified with the modern German rabbinical tradition and a long lineage of male family members—fifteen generations before Walter—in the rabbinate.

Unsurprisingly, Walter decided to enter the rabbinate and followed the family tradition. Lidij details the worlds Walter straddled—educated in the United States yet committed to the ethos of a long lineage in the German rabbinate. These factors profoundly determined his personal and professional life.

In 1957 Walter Jacob was hired as assistant rabbi of Pittsburgh's congregation Rodef Sholom under Senior Rabbi Solomon Freehof. Jacob would later succeed Freehof at Rodef Sholom as senior rabbi, where he served for the rest of his life. He also ascended to the position of chair of the Reform movement's responsa committee, a role that's pivotal in the movement's decisions in Jewish law, or halakhah. This intellectual task, which has been bestowed on few, gave and still gives guidance to the movement's effort to calibrate modern Jewish identity with historic interpretation of Jewish law.

While the German-Jewish tradition had always had a special place in the life of Walter, it took until late in his life—in the mid-1970s—to return to the country of his birth. His travel to West Germany opened a new and unexpected window in Walter's life, as the rabbi began actively confronting his family's past and their persecution during the Nazi era. While this active encounter was not easy, it proved to be essential and turned into a chance to find some sort of closure, and build something new: Meaningful conversations generated close relationships with the Jewish community of Augsburg, with Jews and non-Jews in Germany, and even earned Walter an offer to take on the liberal rabbinate in Munich, which he turned down.

After the end of the Cold War there was once again a growing demand for liberal Judaism, after the Shoah had destroyed this uniquely German-Jewish modernity. This provided a rare opportunity to re-establish a liberal Jewish leadership in central Europe, where Jewish religious life had largely been shaped by East European Orthodoxy in the aftermath of the Shoah. Lidji highlights how Jacob became a natural bridge builder between the American Reform movement and the new grassroots liberal communities in Germany, and how he played a role in establishing a new liberal rabbinical seminary, the Abraham Geiger College, in Germany in 1999. The founding of the College did not only provide a liberal rabbinical seminary

on the continent, but also corrected the historical birth defect of rabbinical training in Germany. Unlike its historic precursors, the new seminary was not excluded from a theological faculty at a state university; rather, it was placed within a Jewish School of Theology at the University of Potsdam.[1] This renewed a heritage long believed to be lost for future generations, one that would successfully be taught to new generations of liberal rabbis from Germany.

Lidji's biography of Walter Jacob is an important contribution to a more recent chapter in transnational Jewish history, which intensely connects American and European Jewish history. It provides an in-depth example of the cultural transfers caused by flight and expulsion of the German Jewish rabbis and scholars, and it highlights the dramatic impact the migration had on American Judaism. These immigrant Jewish leaders shifted the center of modern Jewish identity from Europe to the United States, and the 250-plus German rabbis who continued their careers in the United States left a unique mark by providing a special mix of progressive outlook and traditional Jewish knowledge. While they did not question their identities as "American" rabbis, many of them built their careers on an Old-World ethos in the profession or on their experiences of Nazism, as Joachim Prinz and others did. A large number of the refugees returned to Germany in the post-war period to come to terms with the trauma, the experience of racism, and the shocking end of the German-Jewish experiment which also seemed to conclude their own history as the last of a special kind. What they discovered, however, was an unexpected victory: They were able to secure a "seventeenth generation," and a future for liberal Judaism in central Europe.

Lidji's biography is well researched and authentic, having grown out of a close relationship he built with Walter Jacob himself. In telling Jacob's story, the author made good use of multiple interviews and records in the Rodef Sholom Archives in Pittsburgh. Where he falls short, however, is in failing to frame this biography in the

1 "School of Jewish Theology," The University of Potsdam, https://www.juedischetheologie-unipotsdam.de/index.html.

larger transnational context of this important chapter of Jewish history. The use of scholarly literature and materials beyond the local scope could have helped this biography reach far beyond Pittsburgh. This leaves the study somewhat incomplete and disconnected from its international framework. Nevertheless, Lidji's work may inspire American Jewish historians to take a new look at the genre of biography, which has recently received greater attention within the historical profession.

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**Samira K. Mehta, *Beyond Chrismukkah: The Christian-Jewish Interfaith Family in the United States* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 268 pp.**

In 1966, in the midst of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the West and a hot conflict in Vietnam, the United States armed forces issued a pamphlet decrying a threat to the American way of life. It was not directed at the forces of international communism, or racial disharmony, but rather at that insidious menace to religion and the family: interfaith marriages. Three chaplains, representing Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and Judaism, presented the case that exogamous unions eroded the idea of a of a religiously united home and undermined the social benefits that flowed from strong American families.

In *Beyond Chrismukkah: The Christian-Jewish Interfaith Family in the United States*, Samira Mehta, herself the product of a religiously mixed marriage, notes that such partnerships are now a growing phenomenon in the United States. If one counts weddings across denominational lines within a major religion (such as between a Baptist and a Methodist), 50 percent of marriages in the 1990s began as interfaith. Of those unions, six in ten remained mixed, with the rest eventually settling on a single creed, usually through conversion of one of the parties. A 2016 a study showed that 20 percent of American adults grew up in interfaith homes, and in the twenty-first century Jews seem to marry across religious lines between 40 percent and 50 percent of the time. (This rate is equal to that of Catholics, though the small size of the American Jewish community makes it much more vulnerable to the loss of membership and thus the subject of anxiety on the part of its leadership.) "Interfaith family life," says Mehta, "is a major and formative piece of the American religious landscape."

Mehta's first chapter lightly sketches the historical background examining how the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Catholic Church, and the mainline Protestant denominations began in the 1970s to come to terms with the challenge of mixed marriages. Protestantism, dominant culturally and numerically, was much more sanguine about the problem, but it posed severe problems to Jewish and Catholic clergy, who put a number of barriers in front of the couples before they would sanction an interfaith union. Chapter Two, which is the weakest, looks at a few examples of the depiction of mixed marriage in popular culture, particularly the short-lived sitcom *Bridget Loves Bernie*, the Barbra Streisand/Robert Redford love story in *The Way We Were*, and a Jewish-Lutheran wedding on *Little House on the Prairie*.

By the 1980s Jewish Reform leaders realized that they could not stem the tide of mixed couples, and in Chapter Three Mehta examines the guidebooks written to create Jewish families out of interfaith marriages. Some were aimed at the married couple; others, such as *Mommy Never Went to Hebrew School* and *Nonna's Hanukkah Surprise,* illustrated ways children could keep their Jewish identity while still valuing links to their Christian relatives. These writers treated Christianity as a set of private beliefs, but Jewish identity was seen as an all-encompassing civilization,

found in both culture and beliefs. The non-Jewish spouse was then the one who should abandon her traditions, lest the family be disunited and the children confused. This ignored Christianity's non-creedal elements and attachments to symbols such as the Christmas tree and the fact that "new Jews"—especially those of patrilineal descent—were often made to feel unwelcome by their adopted coreligionists.

Mehta turns in Chapter Four to mixed marriages in which the non-Jewish partner is not white, creating a reversal of the usual scenario in which Jews are viewed as the minority partner. This, says the author, destabilizes "the majority/minority power dynamic, creating a situation in which the two cultures had to interact with each other on a more equal footing. Jewishness lost the deference that it often receives as the minority culture as it made room for another minority culture, albeit Christian."

Chrismukkah, the fictional holiday that first appeared in a 2003 episode of *The O.C.* and that spawned a brief commercial popularity, is used in Chapter Five as a springboard to examine families that chose to live with blended customs. Mehta then gives the reader a deeper look at four interfaith families that have chosen to adopt mixed practices. They are an interesting collection: a Christian-Jewish marriage in which ecological concerns predominate; an "interreligious" pair formed from the union of a Jew and a Unitarian Universalist; a Mormon-Jewish family; and a couple who tries to embrace Christianity and Judaism equally. Rather than being rootless or morally unanchored, these interfaith couples appear to have created their own unique traditions. Mehta explains this by observing the broader American religious scene—a scene where individual choice was the ethos that trumped communal ties and increasing multiculturalism allowed families a cafeteria of "practices and products available in order to shape an identity."

Mehta concludes by musing on her own Hindu-Unitarian background and wondering what the future holds for the children of interfaith families. "I cannot tell you what the children will do," she says, "but I can tell you that they are, by and large, all right."

*Beyond Chrismakkuh* offers some interesting conclusions about recent Reform Jewish attempts to deal with the problems posed by interfaith marriage. Its strength lies in the interviews with families that have met

the challenges, but we learn little about mixed marriages that have been unsuccessful (surely an important part of the story) or about families that chose to emphasize the Christian partner's religion. Strategies around a Chrismakkuh-like blending have a long history stretching back to nineteenth-century Germany, and Mehta would have benefited from considering a longer time frame. In structure, the book is too much like the dissertation from which it sprang, marred by contemporary academic jargon such as the necessity for the author to "locate," "unpack," "situate," and "historicize" events that are "reinscribed." The chapter on movie and television depictions mistakes a few mass media productions for "popular culture," and in it Mehta misses an opportunity to consider how their treatment of interfaith marriages fits in with Hollywood's longstanding distaste for adherents who take their religions too seriously. Overall, this is not a deep book, but it deserves a place on the shelves of scholars of contemporary Judaism.

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**Sharon B. Oster, *No Place in Time: The Hebraic Myth in Late-Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2018), 352 pp.**

Over the past fifteen years, American literary studies have undergone what Cindy Weinstein recently called a "temporal turn." This increasing scholarly attention to the place of time in both constructing and subverting ideas on Americanness is much indebted to Elizabeth Freeman's seminal *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010), Wai Chee Dimock's *Through Other Continents* (2006), and Dana Luciano's *Arranging Grief* (2007), as well as to Weinstein's own *Time, Tense, and American Literature* (2015) and her new edited volume *A Question of Time* (2018).

Sharon B. Oster's *No Place in Time: The Hebraic Myth in Late-Nineteenth-Century American Literature* is a remarkable contribution to this current critical moment. In her debut monograph, Oster provides fresh insight into the Protestant "Hebraic myth" that "rendered the Jew a figure *out of time*" (4) and into how this myth—which placed Jewishness in the ancient past and outside modernity—was reimagined in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American realism to place Jews *in* time "as guarantors of a promising American future" (4).

Oster's juxtaposition of Christian and Jewish authors generates a rich and nuanced argument. Whereas older studies focus mostly on the question of agency—on whether Jews were able to break free from an assimilationist Protestant mythology—Oster presents a more complex discussion of how ideas of Americanness and its relation to modern Jewishness were negotiated by both Christians and Jews through a particular language of time. In this regard, and although she claims not to entirely follow his call for a methodological revision in Jewish American studies, Oster's book is in line with Jonathan Freedman's *Klezmer America* (2008), in which he astutely shows that as both subjects and objects of representation, Jews "helped transform the ways in which Americans imagined Otherness itself" (6).

*No Place in Time*'s introduction traces the emergence of the Hebraic myth in the rhetoric of the Puritan era. It then moves on to explore the critical adaptation of this myth during the mass migration period, a time when debates on Jewish citizenship and assimilation saturated the American public. Each of the four ensuing chapters follows historical shifts in prevailing literary genres and the intersection of these aesthetic shifts with changes in discourse on the temporal location of the Jew.

The first chapter is dedicated to periodical culture in the late nineteenth century, specifically to the local color writing of Abraham Cahan. Cahan, Oster argues, finds a temporal way out of the binary impasse of assimilationist linear progression versus backward-looking nostalgia. His design of a literary cyclorama effect allows him to transform the sentimental, frozen-in-time image of the shtetl life into a dialectical, messianic, "world to come" anticipation of an uncertain—hence, nonteleological—future. The second chapter moves from the margins to the center of the American literary market. It discusses several works

in Henry James's major phase, with an emphasis on *The Golden Bowl* (1904). James's novel, Oster suggests, melds sacred and secular temporalities in its modernization of the "noble Hebrew" figure as a pawnbroker. Furthermore, James parallels his pawnbroker figure with the realist writer himself. Oster thus aptly complicates the limiting philosemitic/antisemitic dichotomy that characterizes debates on Jewishness in James, determining that James "links himself to the Jewish pawnbroker through their common function as negotiators of worth and mediators of time" (99).

In the third and fourth chapters, Oster turns her attention to representations of intermarriage. Chapter Three studies the failed intermarriage plot in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. Oster contends that Wharton's choice to have her protagonist Lily die rather than marry Simon Rosedale places "Rosedale's Jewish otherness at the nexus of two competing systems of value and corresponding orders of time: the inexorable linearity of naturalist decline, and the unpredictability of chance that disrupts it" (145). The failed marriage is thus not entirely somber, insofar as Rosedale interrupts the temporal determinism of the naturalist narrative of decline by introducing into it a liberating, speculative, "viable future that can be imagined, [even] if not realized" (153).

Chapter Four deepens the exploration of the temporal dimensions of Jewish-gentile intimacy through a discussion of works by Mary Antin and Anzia Yezierska. Oster contends that whereas Antin's *The Promised Land* (1912) endorses religious intermarriage as a means to temporally reconcile "Jewish traditions of the past with the modern, American future" (188), Yezierska's *Salome of the Tenements* (1923) places American self-fulfillment not in the "sexual literalization" of the melting pot metaphor (214) but in the fashioning of a Jewish artistic individual self. This disillusioned self undergoes an "aesthetic redemption" (215) and comes to merge "past and future" in her subject position (219).

The concluding coda goes back in time to look at Emma Lazarus's revision of the Hebraic myth. Lazarus's poetic work succeeds in "recasting Christianity as ancient and reclaiming Hebraic Jewishness as modern and central to the future in its own terms" (238). In this way, Lazarus prefigures the various literary efforts to place the Jew in the American present that Oster discusses.

*No Place in Time* is rife with insightful readings of key literary and historical texts. It is a valuable project for rethinking the poetics and politics of American realism through the lens of time. Oster's exploration of various authors who sought to disrupt "realism's own historicity" (16) by introducing various modes of "religious, sacred time" (27) invites us to transcend the binary between secular and sacred time and to acknowledge the modernist qualities that, to varying degrees, these works all possess. Overall, this is a thoughtful and impressive book, one that will be useful to scholars working in Jewish studies, American studies, and novel theory. It provides a foundational discussion of how Jewishness was *timed* during the mass migration era and beyond, and it traces the socio-aesthetic grammars that determined, to use Oster's language, how the story of the Jew in time can be told.

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## Eddy Portnoy, *Bad Rabbi and Other Strange but True Stories from the Yiddish Press* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 244 pp. + illus.

Eddy Portnoy's *Bad Rabbi and Other Strange but True Stories from the Yiddish Press* is both fascinating and frustrating: fascinating for the stories told, frustrating for its lack of analysis. Did Jews count among their ranks winners and losers? Both, but so what? *Bad Rabbi* is a strange book: not a history, not a sociological/anthropological study, and for the most part lacking contextualization. It is more an assemblage of separate journalistic happenings than anything else. Portnoy has a very light and breezy touch. His use of late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century slang in describing events occurring not later than the 1920s can be

somewhat disconcerting. He includes many photographs, drawings, and cartoons from the Yiddish press, all translated—a definite advantage to those challenged by Yiddish.

Of the eighteen chapters, fourteen originally appeared in the e-zine *Tablet* and were enlarged for the book. Both the first chapter, on a Jewish abortionist's trial in 1871, and the sixteenth chapter, on the professional wrestler Martin "the Blimp" Levy, came out of the English-language press; while interesting, the author does not really explain their placement in this book.

The vast majority of Portnoy's subject matter comes from the Yiddish press in Poland, particularly *Moment, Haynt, Unzer ekspres*, plus the Polish-language *Nasz Przeglad*. Other Yiddish publications from Poland cited (once each) include *Fraydenker*; *Der fraynd*; *Kapores*; *Der blofer*; *Literarishe bleter; Vokhnshrift far literatur, kunst un kultur; Idishe bilder; Film velt;* and *Dos yidishe folksblat.* The American Yiddish press is represented by a few stories from *Forverts, Morgn frayhayt, Di varhayt, Di yidishe tsaytung,* with single mentions of *Di yidishe gazetn* and *Morgn zhurnal.* Oddly enough, *Dos yidishes tageblatt*, the first Yiddish daily in the world, receives no mention. (Technically it was not a daily, since, being Orthodox/traditional, it did not appear on the Sabbath.) Nor is there any mention of New York's *Der tog*, which was considered the "*New York Times* of the Yiddish press."

Each chapter focuses on a particular event; the book is not arranged thematically. Especially noteworthy are the chapters on Naftali Herz Imber, I.J. Singer, Urke Nachalnik, and Poland's 1929 Miss Judea contest. Certainly there is variety: A piece on a Jewish abortionist is followed by the story of a Jewish murderer. Other chapters deal with the 1906 riots over tonsillectomies for schoolchildren, Jewish fortune tellers in New York City, press wars in Warsaw, Jewish suicide stories in Warsaw, battles among the Hasidim at a *bris*, Warsaw divorces, the *shomer shabos* movement, the struggles over a *rebbetzin*'s marriage, and, finally, stories from the crime blotter of Warsaw Yiddish newspapers.

Material for the chapter dealing with the *shomer shabos* movement examined only one Yiddish publication, with photographs from the Polish-language *Nasz Przeglad*. This truly represents a lost opportunity,

since both the movement and resistance to it existed all over Europe and the United States.

Portnoy opines that Jewish newspaper readers were especially entranced by stories of failure, as they struggled to keep their collective heads above water. Yet these selfsame newspaper readers in America constituted the most socially mobile of all ethnic groups in the migration wave that started in 1870 and ended in 1924. Anyone who has spent significant time reading the advice column *Bintel brif* in the Yiddish *Jewish Daily Forward* will be in familiar territory. Unlike the romantic notion of that feature as presented in compilations, the majority of *Bintel brif* items were not centered on dilemmas of Americanization, Old World–New World adjustment, or questions about what Americanization means. Reading this column year in, year out—uncompiled, unedited, unannotated—is an exercise in melodramatic banality: love triangles, cheating spouses, and scandal marked the world of the *Bintel brif*. It's easy to see them as a forerunner to today's reality television.

Such is the character of many of Portnoy's stories. Naftali Herz Imber, remembered today for his poem "Hatikvah," earned his living as an occult prophet and mystic. Gimel Kuper, whose reportage from Poland appeared in the socialist *Forverts* was—to use twentieth-century slang—"outed" by the Communist *Morgn frayhayt* as being I.J. Singer, the older brother of another writer whose serialized novels first appeared in the *Forverts*, Isaac Bashevis Singer. I.J. paved the way for his brother to come to America.

Yitzhok Fabrerovitsh, better known under his nom de plume, Urke Nachalnik, began life as a yeshiva *bokher* turned Hebrew teacher. Finding a life of crime more lucrative, he ended up as a convict behind bars, where he took a writing course and changed the course of his own life by becoming a writer himself. Portnoy tells Nachalnik's story well; with the German occupation, he returned to his former comrades to organize weapons for the underground. He, along with other Jewish gangsters, attacked Polish collaborators who enjoyed beating up Jews. He continued to resist the Nazis, was caught, and on his way to execution, violently turned on his captors.

American Jews hailed the crowning of Bess Myerson as Miss America in 1945, but she was not the world's first Jewish beauty contest winner.

Portnoy chronicles the crowning of Warsaw's Zofia Oldak. In 1929, she became Poland's Miss Judea after a contest that lasted months. Portnoy begins by writing that "all told, 1929 was another bad year for the Jews." Considering that 1929 marked the beginning of the Great Depression, for whom was 1929 a good year? In that same year, according to a blogpost on Jewish beauty queens, the Hungarian Erzsebet Simon was crowned Miss Europa, Vienna's Elizabeth "Lisl" Goldarbeiter became Miss Austria, Sarah Gamze was named Miss Judea in Latvia, and three Jews were crowned in Palestine: Zmira Mani as Miss Jerusalem, Sarah Chelbi-Lazar as Miss Petah Tikva, and Chana Meyuchas-Polani as Miss Palestine.

Ultimately, despite the presence of the interesting chapters outlined above, this book looks down on the readers, writers and publishers of the Yiddish press, basically presenting them as fools, fanatics or rogues. The entire history of the Yiddish press was not an extended *Bintl brif*. *"Am yisrael chai!*—the people Israel lives!"—this line from the Haggadah could easily be adjusted for those to whom Portnoy gives voice: "*Am amkho chai*!—the common rabble live!" It is his focus on the *amkho* that provides the connective tissue to this body of work.

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**David Weinstein, *The Eddie Cantor Story: A Jewish Life in Performance and Politics* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018), 304 pp.**

Author and historian of early American broadcast media, David Weinstein has crafted a readable yet analytic biography of American entertainer and philanthropist Eddie Cantor. In *The Eddie Cantor Story*, Weinstein argues for a reconsideration of Cantor's centrality within narratives of American entertainment by contextualizing the comedian's responses to a complex web of political, social, and economic forces. The book frames Cantor's identity as an American Jew as deeply influential not only to his public performance—paving the way for the acceptance and ultimately popular success of Jewish comedians who would follow him—but also as the driving force behind Cantor's unceasing philanthropic efforts and liberal social attitudes.

Weinstein situates Cantor's career as a product of his childhood on the Lower East Side. Orphaned at a young age, Cantor grew up primarily under the care of his maternal grandmother, who, despite her best efforts, struggled to keep food on the table. Ultimately, Weinstein credits this hardscrabble childhood, during which Cantor worked a variety of jobs, with giving him the insight to continuously adapt his performance style to the ever-changing demands of the entertainment world that would serve him so well throughout the rest of his career. Building on successes in smaller comedy circuits, Cantor used his skill in understanding the inner workings of the socio-political systems that surrounded him to work his way up to increasingly more prominent stages in vaudeville before landing a long-term contract on *Ziegfeld's Follies,* an elaborate, long-running Broadway revue.

Throughout the book, Cantor is portrayed as having unlimited talent, with a keen understanding of the work and positioning necessary to ensure continued success and relevance. Other comedians of the time shed their Jewish identities, changing their names and styling routines around topics of mainstream interest. Born Edward Itkowitz, Cantor's name change was the result of a misunderstanding during his school days and scarcely concealed his Jewish heritage. Moreover, while his acts were accessible enough to garner great acclaim from largely non-Jewish

audiences, Weinstein argues that Cantor's performances contained coded references to Jewish expressions, jokes, and songs that added another level for those versed enough in Jewish culture to appreciate them (1). At times, however, Cantor's savvy positioning proved controversial, most notably in terms of the comedian's blackface routines that would be remembered as some of his trademark acts. Weinstein carefully situates Cantor's blackface within the norms of his day and recognizes ongoing conversations concerning the denigrating nature of the practice. Nonetheless, the efforts come off a bit like justification, as Weinstein argues that Cantor was under pressure to maintain the practice and contends Cantor's blackface characters challenged pervasive stereotypes. Despite these criticisms, Weinstein demonstrates Cantor's deft ability to adapt to changing trends as the comedian moved from stage to stage and through ever-developing broadcast media, crafting performances that took advantage of the affordances of each, further cementing himself at the pinnacle of American comedy.

Beyond subtle references in Cantor's formal performances, Weinstein argues that Cantor's Jewish identity served as a driving force in directing the comedian's interests and energies off stage. As Hitler's regime rose in Germany, Cantor used his spotlight to vehemently and publicly denounce the Nazi influence in the United States. Among other statements, Cantor called renown antisemites, including Father Charles Coughlin and Henry Ford, "the enemies not only of the Jews, but of all Americans" (145). Given the era's highly-charged political atmosphere, Cantor's overt condemnation startled sponsors who pulled their financial backing, concerned with maintaining broad appeal across demographics. The fallout from slowed Cantor's radio career through the end of the war. During this time, Cantor remained active in film and theatre and began to take advantage of the advancing popularity of television in order to retain his presence in the American entertainment landscape.

Throughout his career, Cantor used his platform to promote his political and charitable interests. In addition to Zionist and pro-Jewish appeals, Cantor worked closely with President Frankly D. Roosevelt to establish the March of Dimes and consistently supported union organizing within the entertainment industry, Moreover,

Cantor consistently levied his influence to promote equality for African American musicians and comedians. Despite the criticism Cantor received for his continued use of blackface, Weinstein argues that Cantor was known to insert commentary concerning anti-racist causes into his acts and used his programs to feature African American entertainers. Although Cantor was not a religiously observant Jew, Weinstein's work purports that his actions on and off the stage were informed by a deep-seated Jewish ethic that pushed him to work for justice across all arenas of life.

Weinstein's narrative is comfortably tidy. He carefully draws lines between the events that directed the course of Cantor's life, explicating the motives for each change of course. Dependent on publicly available sources and Cantor's own writings, which focus nearly exclusively on his public and professional life, however, Weinstein seems to give short shrift to influences within the private sphere. For instance, Weinstein only mentions in passing Cantor's wife and five daughters, and only in relation to the progress of Cantor's career. Weinstein notes that Cantor used them as an excuse to leave the theatre world to focus on telling "genuine bedtime stories" (82), while in fact he was positioning himself to move into the world of radio and television. Although *The Eddie Cantor Story* fulfills its promise to explain how Cantor used his influence within the realms of performance and politics, the wholly public-focused nature of the account leaves a noticeable gap in understanding who Cantor truly was.

In all, Weinstein's work presents a carefully researched narrative that attempts to resituate understandings of Cantor's influence on contemporary American comedy. For too long, Cantor was perceived to offer little past shallow humor and blackface sketches, and he was relegated to the footnotes of American comedy history. Weinstein, however, argues that for decades, Cantor provided a model for expressing Jewish identity in popular culture and crafted templates for the archetypes of Jewish comedians who would follow (232). *The Eddie Cantor Story* positions Cantor as a Jewish comedian who refused to dampen his Jewishness for a mainstream American audience, rising to stardom not despite this identity, but because of his ability to make his otherness feel so familiar.

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**Robert H. Mnookin, *The Jewish American Paradox: Embracing Choice in a Changing World* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2018), 308 pp.; Steven R. Weisman, *The Chosen Wars: How Judaism Became an American Religion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 328 pp.; Jack Wertheimer, *The New American Judaism: How Jews Practice Their Religion Today* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 379 pp.**

Robert H. Mnookin begins his book *The Jewish American Paradox* with a story about a conversation he had with his daughter Jennifer when he was on sabbatical in Oxford, England. English schools had a required course called Religious Education, and Jennifer's was taught by the headmistress at the Oxford High School for Girls. The headmistress asked if there were any students not of the Christian faith, so Jennifer raised her hand and told her that she was Jewish. The headmistress asked her if her parents would object if she were to read selections from the New Testament as part of the course. Jennifer assured the headmistress that her parents would not mind, even though they were from a different religious background.

Her father asked Jennifer, "How did all of this make you feel?" to which she responded, "When are we actually going to become Jewish?" (1). This was one of the interactions that began Mnookin thinking about what it might mean to be Jewish. Like many American Jews, Mnookin grew up with the idea that it was enough to simply say that he was Jewish. Being Jewish was a consequence of descent. His daughter challenged this view, arguing that if being Jewish is going to be more than a nominal, residual identity of no inherent value, then it should be a religious identity that needed to be studied and practiced. Mnookin and his wife had to figure out ways to respond to Jennifer's challenge, which he partially describes in this book.

What makes this work interesting is that Mnookin is in many ways a typical American Jew. He begins the book with a nominal ethnic identity and not much more and ends the book just as nonobservant as before but able to state that "being Jewish is a much more conscious and salient part of my identity because of choices I have made" (221). Yet Mnookin is also a professor of law at Harvard Law School; he is not only bright but also self-aware, especially of personal and religious choices that he and his family have made in the past and might make in the future, based on current ways of thinking. This results in an extremely thoughtful and readable book. It allows the reader to get an inside view of the thinking that many American Jews may share but from the pen of an astute and highly thoughtful individual who has extensive training in analyzing issues, policies, and approaches.

Mnookin argues that the America Jewish community today faces four critical challenges, each of which creates conflict within the community as a whole as well as, in many cases, within ourselves. These four challenges are: (1) that most American Jews do not practice the Jewish religion; (2) that American Jews are no longer being persecuted; (3) that Israel has become a source of conflict instead of unity; and (4) that a majority of American Jews intermarry. While much of this is well known and has been thoroughly discussed, Mnookin is at his best describing the conundrum of passing on Jewish identity in the absence of Jewish religious practice.

Mnookin opens his discussion of "the puzzling nature of Jewish identity" by telling the story of his participation in an informal faculty seminar conducted by Erik Homburger Erikson, the famous psychologist. After about six sessions, a book review titled "Erik Erikson, the Man Who Invented Himself" was published in which Erikson was accused of "bad faith" for hiding his Jewish background. The writer of the review argued that by denying his Jewish background, Erikson had lived his life in blatant contradiction with his own developmental theories that emphasized "wholeness," meaning that we need to accept our past and not repress our personal histories. Mnookin uses this encounter to launch his discussion of what he calls "the slippery nature of identity," and it works well in that regard. The story about Erikson is so good, however, that it would be a worthwhile read even if it didn't move the narrative along.

Near the end of *The Jewish American Paradox*, Mnookin comes to the conclusion that although it may sound logical to state that to be Jewish one must practice Judaism as a religion, this will not work for the American Jewish community. There is just too much diversity of beliefs to arrive at any consensus on what American Jews should believe, and there is no way to establish a standard for religious practice. So Mnookin leaves us with the quandary of how to perpetuate Judaism in the absence of "a clear path by which you can pass Judaism on to your children" (56).

Mnookin's thoughts on the paradox that American Jews face "embracing choice in a changing world" suggest that we might get a deeper perspective by looking back into the mist of history. However, Mnookin works to keep his book firmly focused on the future instead, referring only as needed to the development of Jewish law, the roots of antisemitism, the origins of the matriarchal principle, and the history of Zionism. Steven R. Weisman's *The Chosen Wars* provides a fuller historical background on American Jewish history in the nineteenth century, retelling the dramatic story of the personalities and controversies that contributed to "the transformation of Judaism into an American religion" (xxviii).

Weisman cites three main factors that molded Judaism into an American religion: (1) the practical exigencies of working and living in nineteenth-century America; (2) the Jewish determination to conform to American culture and society; and (3) secular intellectual influences, including "the evolving revolutionary concepts of science, citizenship, anthropology, history, and literary analysis in an egalitarian democracy" (xxx). While Weisman's book breaks no new scholarly ground, he nevertheless writes in an entertaining manner, bringing controversies well known to American Jewish historians to the attention of a broader audience. Weisman describes numerous dramatic episodes, such as the conflict over liturgical reform in Charleston, South Carolina, in the 1820s and 1830s; the "fist fight in Albany" involving Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise in the 1840s and early 1850s; the radical Reform positions of Rabbi David Einhorn in the 1860s and 1870s; Felix Adler's creation of the New York Society for Ethical Culture in 1876; the "emerging schism" that developed in the aftermath of the 1883 Trefa Banquet in Cincinnati; and many others.

In announcing his thesis for the book, Weisman writes that the Judaism of America today "bears witness to a spirit of dynamism and change similar to what had existed among the rabbis and Jewish scholars throughout Jewish history" (xxv). The impact of this spirit on American Judaism was distinctive, producing "a particularly *American* response [emphasis in original]" (xxv). American Judaism was forged as a consequence of the influence of the culture of a country that "disdained religious hierarchies while allowing and even encouraging citizens of all faiths to create institutions reflecting their own, distinctive understanding [of] God" (xxv). While this may seem obvious, the thesis that American Judaism is based on ideas that differ radically from the ideas that animate Judaism in other parts of the world (and particularly in the State of Israel) will give meaningful historical perspective to lay readers coming to nineteenth-century American Jewish history for the first time. What may be needed for the interested neophyte reader is a new rendition of twentieth-century American Jewish history as well, to connect the story that Weisman tells with the paradox of contemporary American Jewish life that Mnookin describes.

The most important book by far of the three under review is Jack Wertheimer's *The New American Judaism*. Wertheimer, who began his career as a Jewish historian writing about Eastern European Jews in Imperial Germany, has spent many years researching and writing about contemporary American Judaism. In 1993 he published *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America*, which focused heavily on the various American Jewish denominations. Now Wertheimer is revisiting the subject but with greater insight as to the internal thought processes that are at work in the social and personal decisions being made by most American non-Orthodox Jews. Wertheimer tries very hard to be nonjudgmental while seeking to explain the values systems that promote certain types of behavior, but it is fairly clear that he sees what is happening as a grievous misfortune, even a tragedy.

What becomes immediately apparent is that while Mnookin and Weisman are resolutely optimistic, Wertheimer is skeptical that American Jews have the determination to rebuild an American Judaism that can be sustainable into the future. He phrases this pessimistic appraisal cautiously, but it is nevertheless obvious. He concludes by writing, "In our

current age when hyper-individualism reigns and so many Jews imagine it necessary to recast their distinctive religion in 'universal' terms, the rebuilding of Judaism will require a renewed appreciation for Jewish memory, community, and particularistic content" (272).

Wertheimer begins his book by reminding readers that it is not just Judaism that has been struggling in recent years. His introduction opens with the dry understatement that "the twenty-first century, thus far, has not been an auspicious era for religion in America" (1). Many factors have contributed to the decline, and Wertheimer cites some specific events and trends that have made religion and those who advocate for it look stupid, venal, perverted, violent, and/or destructive. He mentions the many highly publicized scandals involving clerics and the revelations that religious institutional hierarchies have covered up wrongdoings, perhaps systematically, as well as the sustained religious violence in the United States and throughout the world, in particular the traumatic attacks on 11 September 2001. More broadly, he suggests that contemporary sensibilities place traditional religious teachings in an awkward position. Whereas the dominant ethos of the past strongly supported religious affiliation if not inner piety, today "the turn to postmodernism" with its "relativization of truth" and "insistence that all human endeavor is socially or subjectively constructed" has undermined claims that not only specific religions speak truth but that religion as a whole has important lessons of value.

Yet even in a depressed American religious environment, American Jews continue to distinguish themselves by their seeming apathy. Wertheimer writes, "Were we to rely solely on survey research … the major emphasis would be on how little they believe and observe" (25). Wertheimer sets his task as trying to understand the dynamics at play that create this situation. He wants to understand what most non-Orthodox (and, in separate chapters, the Orthodox as well) Jews think and feel and how these factors play out in Jewish religious practice. To do this, he interviewed approximately 160 rabbis, all of whom are listed in the acknowledgments at the beginning of the book. They include prominent spiritual leaders of what used to be the three dominant denominations—Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox—but one can see from the distinctions and subcategories just how much American Judaism

has changed since Wertheimer's 1993 book. What immediately struck me was that he cannot simply describe the Orthodox as 'Orthodox" but has to separate them into three separate groupings: Haredi (i.e. ultra-Orthodox), Orthodox Outreach (which includes Chabad), and Modern/Open/Centrist Orthodox (mainstream Orthodox who have to be described by no less than three adjectives to keep everyone happy). He also has a category of rabbis representing Sephardi Jews, as well as those leading "Religious groupings outside the mainstream."

Virtually every interview lasted for at least an hour and focused on two themes: (1) how each rabbi perceived of the religious lives of the Jews that they encounter and (2) what steps were being taken to address the religious needs of those Jews. Wertheimer writes that he aimed for a cross-section of rabbis from different regions of the country, serving in different types of settings, and of course in different denominations and nondenominational frameworks. He preferred rabbis who had at least a decade of experience but were more than a decade away from retirement. In addition, he spoke to many others who were "knowledgeable observers of the American Jewish religious scene" (13), some of whom were asked to address specific developments while others were questioned more generally about their impressions. Wertheimer also reports that he "personally attended several hundred synagogues over the years" (13) as a visitor or guest speaker, which gave him a chance to "speak with ordinary Jews in different types of settings" (13). He explains that he opted to conduct what he calls "on background" interviews, which would preserve the anonymity of his many sources. "I am asking readers to put a good deal of faith in my reliability in those sections of the book that draw upon unattributed statements" (13). He adds that while this a common research practice, what makes his approach "a bit unusual" (13) is that his sources describe the activities of others rather than of just themselves.

*The New American Judaism* is divided into three parts, each of which is interesting on different levels. The first part analyzes the reasons for the lack of content in the religious lives of "ordinary" American Jews. Wertheimer describes an altruistic Judaism that, in his view, has replaced a Judaism of norms and expectations. He describes how most non-Orthodox Jews practice "a Judaism for peak moments" (43) that

centers on child-centric rituals and connects to life cycle events. Part two revisits his 1993 book but emphasizes the decline of the various movements by titling the section, "The Leaky Vessels of Denominational Judaism." Wisely, Wertheimer the sociologist has emphasized the interaction between the religious movements and local congregations rather than movement-wide pronouncements. He spends part three discussing the innovative responses that various groups have undertaken to respond to various challenges.

I found the first part to be highly illuminating, especially Wertheimer's explanations for why so many Jews in the pews perceive Judaism in the way that they do. Why does there appear to be such a chasm between the normative structures of Judaism and the behavior of most congregants? Wertheimer argues that many of the non-Orthodox feel alienated by the Jewish religion's emphasis on God. One Silicon Valley rabbi he spoke with recounts a frequently heard statement, "I am a rational person and God does not make sense to me. Don't talk to me about that" (28–29). Partially as a result, most congregants have distanced themselves from regular attendance at services. In turn, this makes the public worship experience incomprehensible. The infrequent synagogue attender thus finds much of the services to make no sense.

Adding to their discomfort, the use of Hebrew further increases incomprehension. Wertheimer writes that the English translations "fail to mediate the dissonance between traditional Jewish theology and what the average synagogue-attender personally believes" (30). He suggests that many of the prayers have theological conceptions that are at odds with the therapeutic worldview that pervades every aspect of the congregants' lives. The problem, according to the author, is that the more effort that goes into eliminating dissonant concepts, "the more confusion people feel about the purpose of the enterprise" (30).

What most congregants *do* believe is that God is "there with us" when we behave in an altruistic manner. In Wertheimer's words, "they associated God with the capacity of humans to do good, to help the sick and needy, and to offer hope; these resonated as Godly attributes" (32). He effectively utilizes "The God Survey," a report on the state of Reform Jewish belief based on a survey that Rabbi Mark Dov Shapiro sent out to his congregants at Sinai Temple in Springfield, Massachusetts, right after

Yom Kippur in 2011. Shapiro reported that most of his congregants did not construe God as a celestial figure who acts in this world. God is not above us in heaven, they said, but rather beside us or within us. Most believed that God "acts" when human beings behave in a way consistent with divine attributes such as love, kindness, and justice.

Wertheimer concludes that American Jews have radically reconstructed their understanding of the Jewish religion, which he calls "Golden Rule" Judaism. Their fundamental religious imperative is to figure out how to be a good person, which they understand as a "subjective, self-invented, improvisational approach" (41). He contrasts this with the traditional Judaic concept in which people believed in divine commandments obligatory upon every Jew. Even in non-Orthodox circles, there was previously a sense that expectations or norms existed independently of how individual Jews might practice or not practice. Citing the influence of the late sociologist Charles Liebman, Wertheimer argues that most American Jews used to agree that there was an essence called "Judaism" by which individual Jews could be measured, to the extent that they conformed to or deviated from the norms established therein.

Wertheimer places a great deal of the blame for the lack of structure in contemporary Judaism on "religious leaders who invented a new commandment in the 1980s—the injunction to engage in *tikkun olam*, repairing the world" (41). The author quotes Leonard Fein, who had written that a commitment to social justice could "serve as our preeminent motive, the path through which our past is vindicated, our present warranted and our future affirmed" (42). Weisman, in his introduction to *The Chosen Wars*, provides the historical background showing how Reform Jews abandoned the idea of a personal Messiah while continuing to believe in a time of redemption for which humans must work. In a recent email to me, Weisman commented, "I don't think many Jews today appreciate that the centrality of social justice among Jews today has its origins in this evolution in the 19th century."

Wertheimer laments that "the promoters of this ideology have triumphed" (42). He has astutely analyzed and explained the dynamics that have transformed the religious expectations of the vast majority of non-Orthodox Jews. As a pulpit rabbi, I myself have seen the shifting norms of the nominal American Jew firsthand. I am not, however,

convinced that the current alienation from Judaism is a result of anything religious leaders have advocated. Societal trends are extraordinarily powerful, and it would seem much more reasonable to attribute the current state of Judaism to those broader forces. Advocates for *tikkun olam* attempt to formulate an impactful response to those forces that they hope will enthuse the huge numbers of alienated Jews described in Mnookin's work.

The question asked—either implicitly or explicitly in all three volumes—is how to respond to the current sociological reality. With widespread intermarriage, the decline of Jewish ethnicity, the perception that antisemitism is no longer a threat (although increasing numbers are arguing that the hatred of Jews is now resurgent), ideological and religious differences with the leadership in Israel, and all of the other contemporary issues, problems, and challenges that we have read about, what are we to do? In a postmodern world, there is no simple answer to that question.

*Dana Evan Kaplan is rabbi of Temple Beth Shalom of the West Valley in Sun City, Arizona. He was ordained as a rabbi by Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem and holds a doctorate in American Jewish history from Tel Aviv University. He has authored and edited multiple volumes, including* The New Reform Judaism; Contemporary American Judaism: Transformation and Renewal; and Contemporary Debates in American Reform Judaism.

## Select Acquisitions 2018

**Ballon, Sidney**

Papers of Rabbi Sidney Ballon, including student papers, chaplaincy records, sermons, speeches, and other writing, 1935–1975.

*Received from Yesh Ballon, Palo Alto, CA*

**Barton P. Cohen Kansas Collection**

Collection of biographical and historical research files on Kansas Jews and Jewish communities, 1892–2007.

*Received from Mary Davidson Cohen, Leawood, KS*

**Behrman House Publishing**

Records and photographic archive of Behrman House Publishing (Springfield, NJ), along with correspondence and photographs related to members of the Behrman family, c. 1920–2016.

*Received from David Behrman, Springfield, NY*

**Bettan and Goldstein family**

Papers of Israel Bettan and family, including correspondence, genealogical records, and photographs, 1889–1992.

*Received from Mindy Nemoff, Cincinnati, OH*

**B'nai Sholom Temple (Quincy, IL)**

Congregational records, including board meeting minutes, correspondence, service programs, life cycle records, Sisterhood records, and ledger books, 1935–2015.

*Received from B'nai Sholom Temple, Quincy, IL*

**Brin, Ruth Firestone**

Personal papers of Ruth Firestone Brin, including writings, correspondence, student work, and travel diaries, 1957–2004.

*Received from David Brin, Sonoma, CA*

**Bronstein, Herbert**

Papers of Rabbi Herbert Bronstein, including correspondence, sermons, and other writings; along with files on the Chicago Board of Rabbis and North Shore Congregation Israel, 1957–1988.

*Received from North Shore Congregation Israel, Glencoe, IL*

**Citrin, Paul J.**

Papers of Rabbi Paul J. Citrin, including student work, sermons, correspondence, and photographs, 1966–2018.

*Received from Paul Citrin, Albuquerque, NM*

**Congregation B'nai Emmunah (Tarpon Springs, FL)**

Congregational records, including board minutes, correspondence, service programs, school records, and administrative files, 1987–2012.

*Received from Congregation B'nai Emmunah, Tarpon Springs, FL*

**Congregation Kol Ami (West Hollywood, CA)**

Congregational records, including board meeting minutes, committee reports, service programs, bulletins, administrative records, and school files, 1994–2016.

*Received from Congregation Kol Ami, West Hollywood, CA*

**Congregation Sha'ar Zahav (San Francisco, CA)**

Congregational records, including board minutes, correspondence, bulletins, event programs, and congregants' conversion essays, 1978–2017.

*Received from Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, San Francisco, CA*

**Drake, James A.**

Collection of audio interviews conducted by Dr. James A. Drake concerning opera singer Richard Tucker, including his and his family's experiences as first-generation Jewish Americans, 1974.

*Received from James A. Drake, Merritt Island, FL*

**Dubin, Abraham**

Papers of Rabbi Abraham Dubin, including sermons and files pertaining to his chaplaincy in India during World War II; together with his U.S. Army tallit, 1935–1966.

*Received from Deborah Dobin, Lafayette, CA*

**Eger, Denise**

Papers of Rabbi Denise Eger, including correspondence, sermons and speeches, educational files, and wedding and funeral materials, 1984–2016.

*Received from Denise Eger, West Hollywood, CA*

**Feuerstein, Henry**

Papers of Rabbi Henry Feuerstein, including sermons, writings, and collected Hebrew publications, c. 1900–1955.

*Received from Nita Aines, Canton, MA*

**Gettler, Benjamin**

Personal papers of Benjamin Gettler and files pertaining to his philanthropic activity with the Jewish Hospital of Cincinnati; the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati; the Cincinnati Jewish Community Relations Council; AIPAC; and the Jewish Institute for National Security of America.

*Received from Dee Gettler, Cincinnati, OH*

**Gildesgame, Leon L.**

Personal and family papers of Leon L. Gildesgame, including correspondence, military service records, business files, and photographs, c. 1940–1970.

*Received from Mike Gildesgame, Arlington, MA*

**Haberman, Joshua O.**

Papers of Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman, including correspondence, family records, sermons and other writing, photographs, and audio/visual material, 1939–2017.

*Received from the Haberman family, Rockville, MD*

**Hallo, William W.**

Accrual to papers of Professor William W. Hallo, including writing, research files, teaching material, and records from his tenure as professor of Assyriology and Babylonian literature at Yale University, 1951–2014.

*Received from Ralph E. Hallo and Jacqueline Hallo, Hamden, CT*

**Hirsch, Richard G.**

Papers of Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch, including correspondence, memoirs and other writing, interview transcripts, 1988–2002; and papers related to the World Zionist Organization Congress elections, 1992.

*Received from Richard G. Hirsch, Boca Raton, FL*

**Hispanic-Jewish Women's Alliance**

Organizational records, including board minutes, retreat proceedings, correspondence, brochures, and photographs, 1998–2018.

*Received from Marsha Novak, Encino, CA*

**Jewish Home of Cincinnati, Inc.**

Administrative records, board minutes, and photographs, including material related to locations at Glen Manor, Cedar Village, and the Orthodox Jewish Home for the Aged, 1942–2018.

*Received from Jewish Home of Cincinnati, Inc., Cincinnati, OH*

**Klein, Gerald**

Correspondence of Rabbi Gerald Klein, 1954–2002.

*Received from Temple Emanu-El, Dallas, TX*

**Ma'ayan (Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute)**

Correspondence and programmatic material relating to the Ma'ayan intensive program of URJ Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute (OSRUI), 1974–1977.

*Received from Jerry Kaye, Deerfield, IL*

**The Mayerson Foundation (Cincinnati, OH)**

Collection of marketing and promotional material for the Mayerson Foundation's Jewish and interfaith programming, with programmatic material and newspaper articles relating to Mayerson Foundation projects and initiatives, 2004–2017.

*Received from Pamela Richardson Saeks, Cincinnati, OH*

**National Association of Temple Administrators**

Records, including correspondence, board minutes, conference material, examination/certification records, newsletters, and photographs, 1941–1989.

*Received from Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York, New York, NY*

**North American Jewish Day Schools**

Records of North American Jewish Day Schools, including administrative files, correspondence, brochures, and promotional material, 2001–2015.

*Received from Jane West Walsh, Baltimore, MD*

**Oppenheim, Claire**

Genealogical material collected by Claire Oppenheim, including family histories, correspondence, photographs, and genealogical records, 1949–2017.

*Received from David Oppenheim, Heriot Bay, BC, Canada*

**Roger, Janice**

Papers of Cantor Janice Roger and records of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, 1979–2017.

*Received from Janice Roger, Indianapolis, IN*

**Rudin, Jacob Philip**

Personal papers of Rabbi Jacob Philip Rudin, including correspondence, sermons, prayers, and other writing; scrapbooks and photographs; awards and memorials, 1920–1982.

*Received from Stephen Rudin, Manhasset, NY*

**Scult, Mel**

Papers of Mordecai Kaplan collected by Mel Scult, including sermons, notes, diaries, and correspondence; manuscript Torah commentaries; transcribed interviews; along with Samson Benderly papers, consisting of submissions to a writing contest on Jewish life. 1920–1980.

*Received from Mel Scult, New York, NY*

**Schulman, Avi**

Audio recordings of interviews conducted by Rabbi Avi Schulman about the life of Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, 1981–1983.

*Received from Avi Schulman, Fremont, CA*

**Stevens, Elliot**

Sermons and writings of Rabbi Elliot Stevens, along with files pertaining to his involvement with CCAR, 1980–2017.

*Received from Temple Beth Or, Montgomery, AL*

**Sobel, Samuel L. and Edith**

Personal and professional papers of Samuel L. and Edith Sobel, including correspondence, theses, lectures, and other writing, along with collected material pertaining to the Jewish community of Riverdale, Bronx, New York. 1963–2010.

*Received from Herschel J. Sobel, New York, NY*

**Temple Emanu-El (Dallas, TX)**

Administrative records and temple bulletins of Temple Emanu-El, along with correspondence of Rabbi Gerald J. Klein, 1920–2014.

*Received from Temple Emanu-El, Dallas, TX*

**Weiner, Herbert**

Papers of Rabbi Herbert Weiner, including sermons, writing, and research notes, 1959–1993.

*Received from Thomas Gutherz, Charlottesville, VA*

**Zoberman, Israel**

Remarks by Rabbi Israel Zoberman on the 70th anniversary Israel, included in the Congressional Record by Rep. Scott Taylor of Virginia, 2018.

*Received from Israel Zoberman, Virginia Beach, VA*

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