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The perspective of journalist Isidor Lewi, born in Albany, New York, in 1850, opens a twenty-first-century window onto the events of his day, notably with regard to the evolution of Judaism in the United States. Lewi was a protégé of the newly arrived Albany rabbi, Isaac Mayer Wise, who would establish a foothold for Reform Judaism in the New York capital and then move to Cincinnati, where he began publishing *The American Israelite* and was instrumental in the founding of Hebrew Union College. Lewi, who maintained lifelong ties with the Wise family, began his journalism career in Albany and after a brief detour in the business world, became a reporter and then editorial writer for the *New York Tribune*. In the ensuing years, Lewi became a faithful advocate of the legacy of Wise, including his anti-Zionist views, while continuing to report his own personal encounters with history-making people and events that bridged two centuries, from president-elect Abraham Lincoln’s visit to Albany to the outbreak of World War I.

“From Lithuania to Lorain, Ohio: Remembering my Grandfather, ‘The Sabbath-Observant Jew . . . Whose Name Is Memorialized in a Catholic Hospital’”

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In Lorain, Ohio, a blue-collar steel town on the shores of Lake Erie, an immigrant Ashkenazic community took root and thrived from the

1890s through the 1960s, at which time second- and third-generation offspring left for larger population centers. Amid Lorain's ethnic diversity, Jews were viewed as yet one more minority group with distinct foods, holidays, religious customs, and languages. The presence of Jews reinforced the chamber of commerce's boast that their town was an "international city." This surprised a freelance writer for *Der Tog* who penned a tribute in Yiddish when a grocer from Lorain, a longtime subscriber, died in 1950. The grocer's success and his strict observance of Jewish ritual reinforces historian Lee Shai Weissbach's thesis that small-town Jews in the United States often reached a level of acceptance and integration unknown to them in their countries of origin.

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These Truths We Hold: Judaism in an Age of Truthiness

Edited by Joshua Garroway and Wendy Zierler

Our nation's founding document, the Declaration of Independence, confidently declares, "These truths we hold to be self-evident." And yet, America today seems mired in a truth crisis. Many Americans, Jews among them, are understandably concerned for the future of truth as we once knew it. With this book, *These Truths We Hold: Judaism in an Age of Truthiness*, the editors and HUC-JIR have demonstrated a commitment to full engagement in the contemporary moment as well as to our Jewish heritage as a repository of complex and deep truths. These essays address the subject of truth in Jewish tradition and in contemporary Jewish life from several important perspectives: biblical, talmudic, liturgical, scientific, philosophical, satirical, pluralistic, and poetic. The articles are meant to shore up faith and to

serve as a bank of resources to orient readers to Judaism's rich, multi-faceted and morally edifying teachings about truth.

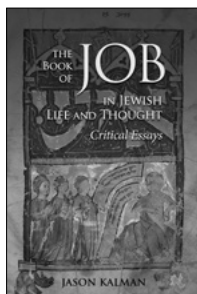
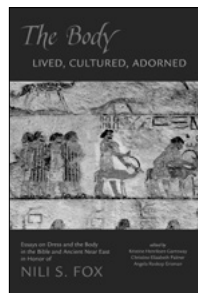
Paperback (October 2022) \$25.95 ISBN 9780878201983

The Body – Lived, Cultured, Adorned: Essays on Dress and the Body in the Bible and Ancient Near East in Honor of Nili S. Fox

Edited by Kristine Henriksen Garroway, Christine Elizabeth Palmer, and Angela Roskop Erisman

The clothed and adorned body has been at the forefront of Nili S. Fox's scholarship. In her hallmark approach, she draws on theoretical models from anthropology and archaeology, and locates the text within its native cultural environment in conversation with ancient Near Eastern literary and iconographic sources. This volume is a tribute to her, a collection of essays on dress and the body with original research by Fox's students. With the field of dress now garnering the attention of biblical and Ancient Near Eastern scholars alike, this book adds to the growing literature on the topic, demonstrating ways in which both dress and the body communicate cultural and religious beliefs and practices. The body's lived experience is the topic of section one, the body lived. The body and the social construction of identity is discussed in section two, the body cultured, while section three, the body adorned, analyzes the performative nature of dress in the biblical text.

Hardcover (October 2022) \$59.95 ISBN 9780878206087



The Book of Job in Jewish Life and Thought

by Jason Kalman

Despite its general absence from the Jewish liturgical cycle and its limited place in Jewish practice, the Book of Job has permeated Jewish culture over the last 2,000 years. Job has not only had to endure the suffering described in the biblical book, but the efforts of countless commentators, interpreters, and creative rewriters whose explanations more often than not challenged the protagonist's righteousness in order to preserve Divine justice. Beginning with five critical essays on the specific efforts of ancient, medieval, and modern Jewish writers to make sense of the biblical book, this volume concludes with a detailed survey of the place of Job in the Talmud and Midrashic corpus, in medieval biblical commentary, in ethical, mystical, and philosophical tracts, as well as in poetry and creative writing in a wide variety of Jewish languages from around the world from the second to sixteenth centuries.

Hardback (December 2021) \$55.95 ISBN 9780878202270

TO OUR READERS . . .

Jacob Rader Marcus (1896–1995), the founder of the American Jewish Archives and founding editor of this journal, extolled the significant role that facts play in the historical enterprise. He unabashedly declared: “I have an almost unholy respect for the ‘facts,’ and it is with a jaundiced eye that I look on historians who are long on generalizations and short on data.”¹ Marcus’s commitment to the pursuit of historical facts is embodied in one of his best-known admonitions to those who strive to reconstruct the past:

One must fanatically detest falsehood; one must search his soul every time he writes a sentence. The fact scrubbed clean is more eternal than perfumed and rugged words. The historian’s desk is an altar on which he must sacrifice his most cherished prejudices; one must be dedicated to the truth.²

Despite his insistence that the historian must assemble empirical data that aims the researcher squarely at the unvarnished truth, Marcus simultaneously admitted that identifying the “scrubbed clean facts” is oftentimes an elusive quest. Reflecting on the nature of his own research that culminated in the publication of his encyclopedic three-volume history of Jews during the colonial period, Marcus confessed that he “had to hew out a path for [himself] through a jungle of fact, half-fact, and ethnocentric schmoose.”³ Finding historical truths, he conceded, is not a simple process.

Marcus believed that the entire historical enterprise is moored in the arduous process of researching primary source documents, but laborious study goes hand-in-hand with a dispassionate analysis of the facts. Interpretive skills are vitally important in historical study because some documents are inevitably more reliable than others. The study of

1 Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew, 1492–1776* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), xxvii.

2 Herbert C. Zafren and Abraham J. Peck (comps.), *The Writings of Jacob Rader Marcus: A Bibliographic Record* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1978), front matter.

3 Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, xxvi.

primary source materials provides researchers with a wide range of data, including the aforementioned facts, half-facts, and schmoose. The skilled historian recognizes the importance of critical study. As Marcus put it, every historian must “hew out a path,” and this requires a confluence of serious study, impartial discernment, and extensive experience. In the final analysis, historians must aim carefully and sincerely for the truth. “There is no establishment of even the simplest of facts without analysis,” Marcus asserted, “an analysis based in turn on intensive study. Generalizations are always desirable when a trend is obvious.”⁴

Marcus not only pioneered the use of primary source documents in the study of the American Jewish experience, but he also made use of source documents that many of his predecessors had previously disregarded. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many historians advocated the importance of studying public or communal documents (e.g., “compacts, charters, constitutions, or pronouncements of national significance”). It was Marcus, however, who recognized that there was much historical value to be found in *realia*—source materials that document everyday life, such as diaries, correspondences, transcriptions of conversations, oral interviews, autobiographical writings, and memoirs. Remarkably, he collected “sources of personal origin”⁵ from both men *and* women at a time when most of his peers could not imagine how a woman’s diary or common personal correspondences could shed light on the historical enterprise.

Marcus believed that history constitutes the record of day-to-day life. He repeatedly rejected Thomas Carlyle’s famous assertion that “the world’s history is nothing more than a collection of biographies belonging to great men.”⁶ Personal documents are rich in historical content, which makes these personal sources grist for the historian’s mill. The past is reconstructed with the help of public and governmental documents

4 Ibid., xxvii.

5 On this technical term, see Violeta Davoliūtė and Tomas Balkelis, *Narratives of Exile and Identity: Soviet Deportation Memoirs from the Baltic States* (New York: Central European University Press, 2017), 96.

6 Thomas Carlyle and Henry Duff Traill, *Thomas Carlyle on Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904), 29.

but, as Marcus asserted, history can be enriched by the study of personal and mutable source materials that document the everyday experiences of regular members of the community.

Long before the noted American historian, Jesse Lemisch (1936–2018), inspired a generation of scholars to write history “from the bottom up,” Marcus was making use of sources of personal origin that shed light on “day-to-day living.”⁷ Yet one must be cautious when studying autobiographies, diaries, memoirs, etc., so as to avoid mistaking fiction for fact. As one historian put it: “There is no autobiographer’s commitment to objectivity, rather the contrary.”⁸ Or as the much-admired American author, William Maxwell (1908–2000), famously observed: “In talking about the past, we lie with every breath we draw.”⁹

To ensure that these personal source documents enrich our understanding of the past, the historian must be committed to the process of critical analysis. The only way that facts can be truly established is through a process of diligent, critical historical analysis, “analysis based on intensive study.”¹⁰

All three of the articles in this issue of our journal illuminate the many ways that primary documentary sources of personal origin enhance our understanding of the American Jewish past. Lawrence Freund’s fine opening article sheds light on the life of Isidor Lewi, whom he calls a “chronicler of history.” Readers will note how Freund employs many of Lewi’s published reminiscences to enhance our understanding of the development of Reform Judaism in America. Lewi was an eyewitness whose keen written records to various social events would provide sources for future historians. He also provided first-person accounts of significant personalities who Lewi believed were making an indelible contribution to the American Jewry.

7 Jacob Rader Marcus, *American Jewry: Documents, Eighteenth Century* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1959), viii.

8 Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Writing History/Writing about Yourself: What’s the Difference?” in *Clio’s Lives: Biographies and Autobiographies of Historians*, ed. Doug Munro and John G. Reid (Acton, Australia: ANU Press, 2017), 17.

9 William Maxwell, *So Long, See You Tomorrow* (New York: Knopf, 1980), 28–29.

10 Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, xxvii.

Freund demonstrates how Lewi's newspaper columns and personal publications constituted records of his personal reminiscences. For example, Lewi describes how New Yorkers marked the beginnings of transatlantic communication once the first transatlantic cable had been put in place. He also recorded his personal eyewitness recollection of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Yet the core of this article focuses on copious reminiscences of his "godfather," Isaac Mayer Wise, the founder of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Lewi's father, Joseph, hailed from the same city in Bohemia as Wise. Both men ended up living in Albany at the same time after they had immigrated to the United States. The Wise and Lewi families became intimate friends, and in Albany the two families lived under the same roof for a time. Lewi's attentive eye, conjoined with his certainty that Wise was a man who belonged to the ages, prompted him to publish memoirs and recollections that sharpen our understanding of Wise's life and career.

Hollace Ava Weiner makes use of this very same approach in her essay on the life of her immigrant grandfather, Shraga Feivel Goldberg. Like millions of Eastern European Jews who immigrated to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Goldberg and his family fled political, economic, and social oppression. Most of the millions of Eastern European newcomers settled in large urban communities, but Goldberg and his family took a less traveled path. They moved directly to Lorain, Ohio, in Northeast Ohio on Lake Erie, about twenty-five miles west of Cleveland, where Goldberg's wife's two sisters and their husbands had settled. Weiner skillfully reconstructs her family's saga with the help of her family's private "archive"—an array of sources of personal origin. These oral histories and family correspondences furnish her with historical evidence that persuasively demonstrates that her grandparents' story constitutes "an American immigrant tale in microcosm."

Weiner's family history serves as a case study for an understudied and underappreciated segment of American Jewry: the thousands upon thousands of Eastern European Jews who knew not Hester Street. Weiner reminds us that other Eastern European Jewish immigrants, just like the Goldbergs, settled in small towns across the middle expanse of America, between the Alleghenies and the Rockies and down through

the Mississippi basin. Contrary to popular misperceptions that still persist, Lorain, Ohio, was—as “Zalman Shazar, the journalist and diplomat who became the third president of Israel” correctly noted—“typical of many small American cities where Jewish life pulsate[d].” Weiner’s essay reminds readers, once again, that *American Jewish history is not New York Jewish history writ large*.

Robert Tabak rounds off this issue with a pathbreaking study titled “American Jewish Students in Israel, 1967–1973: A Memoir and Exploration.” The afterglow of Israel’s astonishing victory during the Six Day War of 1967 sparked a dramatic increase in tourism to the Jewish state. Tabak points out that between 1967 and 1973, “the number of American Jewish students in Israel significantly increased.” Tabak was one of those students; he enrolled in the One Year Program at Hebrew University and studied there from 1970 to 1971. More than a half century later, the author reflects on that year with the recognition that it “had a long-term impact on me personally, Jewishly, and politically.” Yet Tabak’s personal reflections on his formative year in Israel take on genuine historical significance because, remarkably, he kept a written journal during that year wherein he documented in real time his thoughts, activities, and emotions. This essay, therefore, is a fascinating excursion into the world of a Jewish collegian who experienced Israel as an overseas student during that heady period. Remarkably and unusually, the writer of the memoir turns out to be our historical tour guide!

In addition to his journal, Tabak also preserved correspondences with relatives and friends. He recently decided to donate these sources to the American Jewish Archives so that future historians can use his journal and memorabilia to reconstruct this history of the developing relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community during the last half of the twentieth century.

• • • • •

As a young man, Jacob Rader Marcus conscientiously kept a detailed diary that recorded his activities, thoughts, and emotions during the years he spent as a Doughboy in the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I. He remained a faithful diarist for several years after the war, when he began his distinguished career as a member of the faculty

at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. At some point, however, he lost interest in his daily journal, and his days as a diarist came to an end.

One cannot help but wonder whether a thirty-year-old Marcus—as a neophyte Jewish historian and diarist—ever considered the possibility that, one day, his own personal journal might appear in print, making public the private ruminations and personal uncertainties of his youth.¹¹ There can be no doubt, however, that later in life Marcus recognized the rich historical value one can draw from these sources of personal origin. Marcus surely would have agreed with a reflection that one rabbinic scholar recently noted: “Today’s current events will be tomorrow’s history, and while history at times is better understood and appreciated from the perspective of distance, oftentimes it is clearer when conveyed by eyewitnesses who remember it as current events.”¹² As a result of his remarkable vision and leadership, the AJA’s holdings contain a rich array of documentary realia, which Marcus resolved to promulgate widely through his many publications.

Seventy-five years after its founding, the American Jewish Archives is determined to remain faithful to the intuitive vision of Jacob Rader Marcus. Our collection will continue to preserve a rich and diverse collection of primary sources of personal origin and, as the articles in this issue of our journal undeniably illustrate, we will continue to use those fascinating materials to sharpen our vision of the American Jewish past.

G.P.Z.

Cincinnati, Ohio.

11 See Gary Phillip Zola, “‘It’s a Great Life if You Don’t Weaken’: Jacob Rader Marcus’s World War I Diary” in *“An Equal Share of Freedom”: American Jews, Zionism, and World War I*, ed. Mark A. Raider, Gary Phillip Zola and Zohar Segev (Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati Press, forthcoming).

12 Ari Z. Zivotofsky, review of Rabbi Sholom Gold’s memoirs in *The Jerusalem Post* (11 June 2015), accessed on 14 July 2023 at <https://www.jpost.com/magazine/books-touching-history-the-memoirs-405755>.

NEW PERSPECTIVES IN **American** **Jewish** HISTORY

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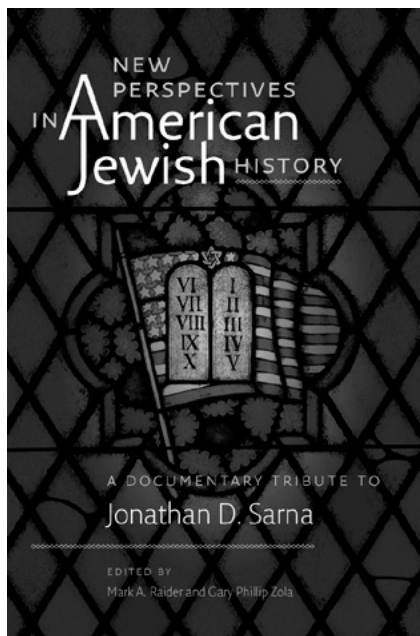
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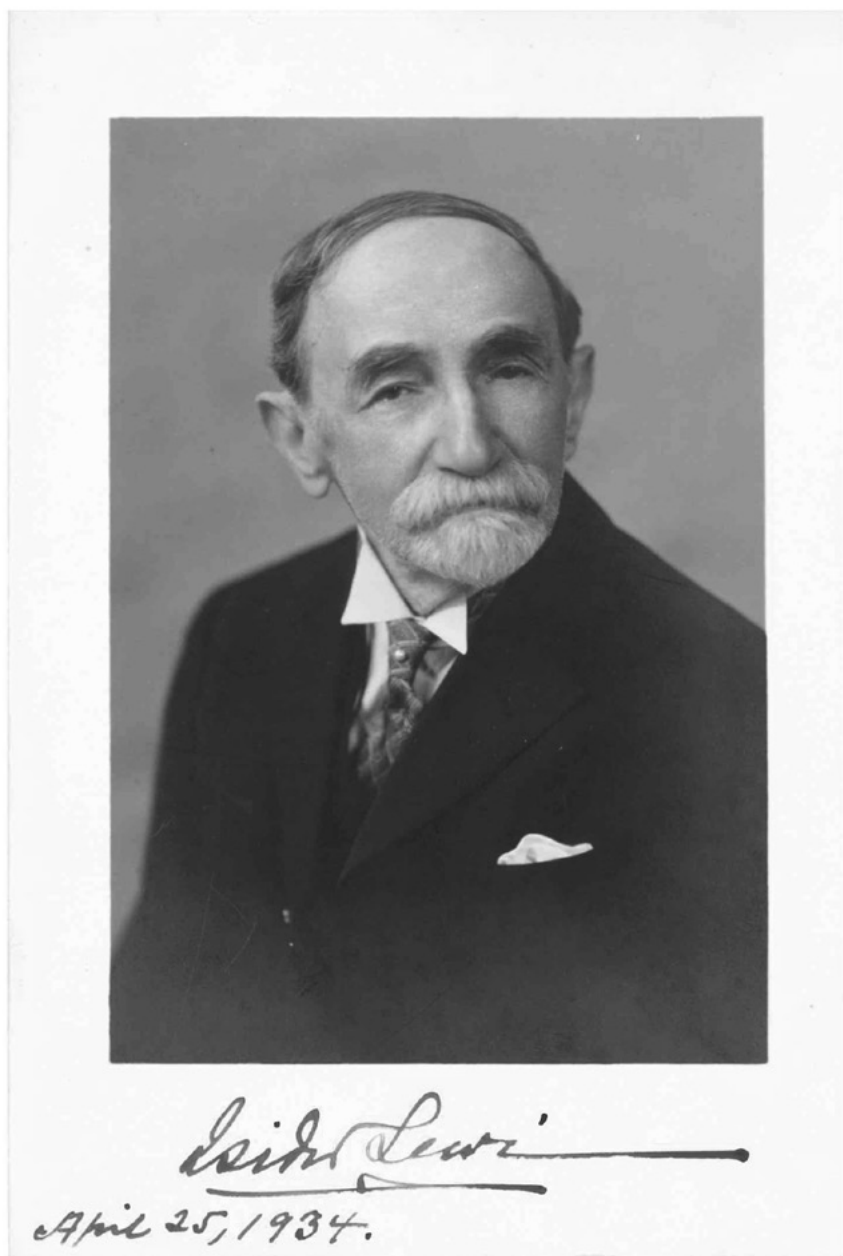


New Perspectives in American Jewish History was compiled by Sarna's former students and presents previously unpublished, neglected, or rarely seen historical documents and images that illuminate the breadth, diversity, and dynamism of the American Jewish experience.

Gary Phillip Zola is the executive director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives and the Edward M. Ackerman Family Distinguished Professor of the American Jewish Experience and Reform Jewish History at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio. **Mark A. Raider** is professor of modern Jewish history in the Department of History and director of the Center for Studies in Jewish Education and Culture at the University of Cincinnati.

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Isidor Lewi

(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society, from Schwarz-Lewi papers)

Isidor Lewi: Chronicler of History

LAWRENCE S. FREUND

When Isidor Lewi (1850–1939) died at the age of eighty-eight, it was not just the end of a long life; it was also the end of a long career in journalism—one that stretched across two centuries and extended even into his own retirement. While his own life merits remembrance, it is his role as a witness to and documentarian of history that stands out. Ever since childhood, Lewi had placed himself amid the central events and personalities of his era, which gave him a unique perspective that he shared with his close associates as well as with the general public. Today, his perspective—much of which is preserved in his articles, correspondence, and published history of Isaac M. Wise and Temple Emanu-El—opens a twenty-first-century window onto the events of his day, especially with regard to the evolution of Judaism in the United States.

Lewi was born in Albany, New York, on 9 May 1850. His parents were Joseph Lewi, a physician born in 1820 in the town of Radnitz [now Radnice], Bohemia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Bertha Schwarz, born in 1828 in Kassel, Germany, the daughter of Josef Emmanuel Schwarz, cantor of that city's synagogue. The couple were married in New York City and soon moved to Albany.¹

The transfer to the New York State capital was not a chance event. Its roots led back to Radnitz, Joseph Lewi's birthplace, where, in 1843, Isaac Mayer Weis [later changed to Wise] was a young rabbi who had secured an appointment as the spiritual leader of the Radnitz synagogue. At that time, Joseph Lewi was studying medicine at the University of Prague and the University of Vienna. But after his graduation, Lewi returned to Radnitz to practice medicine. His first patient was Emily

1 Isidor Lewi, "Notable Jews—No. XIV. Dr. Joseph Lewi," *Frank Leslie's Weekly* (6 July 1893): 7; "Gave Largely to Charity," *Canajoharie Courier* (24 February 1914): 1.

Weis, the one-year-old daughter of the town's rabbi. This meeting would be the beginning of a friendship between the rabbi and the physician that would last for decades and would follow them from Radnitz to Albany and beyond.

The Wise and Lewi Family Ties

"Shortly after his assumption of office in Radnitz," wrote Rabbi David Philipson, a close associate of Wise, "he came into friction with the government because of his democratic and radical expressions."² Several other collisions with established authorities—what Philipson described as "all this unpleasantness"—led Wise to leave Bohemia. "His ideas were radical," Philipson wrote. "He felt, too, that he would be hampered in teaching and preaching Judaism as he conceived it."³ Wise arrived in New York City with his wife Therese and his daughter Emily on 23 July 1846, "animated by high ideals and aspirations."⁴ But at the time of Wise's arrival, Philipson explained, "Jewish religious life in America was not such as to fill the breast of the new-comer with high hopes. When he entered the synagogue there was the same indecorum with which he had been but too familiar abroad."⁵

In October 1846, after excursions to New Haven, Syracuse, and Albany, Wise accepted the invitation of Albany's Congregation Beth-El to become its rabbi. "My position in Albany was not brilliant financially," Wise would write. "My salary was two hundred fifty dollars a year, and nine dollars for each pupil in my school. Albany was poor."⁶ As Wise and his family settled into Albany, Europe was in turmoil, culminating in what became known as the revolutions of March 1848, challenging the established rulers, including those of the Austrian Empire. From the Empire's outpost in Radnitz, Bohemia, the prospects for a successful outcome seemed dim to twenty-eight-year-old physician Joseph Lewi.

2 David Philipson and Louis Grossman, eds., *Selected Writings of Isaac M. Wise with a Biography* (Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company, 1900), 11.

3 *Ibid.*, 14.

4 *Ibid.*, 16.

5 *Ibid.*, 21.

6 Isaac M. Wise, *Reminiscences* (Cincinnati: Leo Wise and Co., 1901), 46–47.

“[A]t the outbreak of the ‘March Revolution,’” wrote his son Isidor, “knowing that the efforts of the revolutionists must end in disaster, he decided to go to America, leaving with his confrères a letter in which he prophesied the collapse of the Democratic movement, with which he was heartily in sympathy.”⁷ Joseph Lewi, following the pattern of his friend Wise, settled at first in New York City, where, on 13 May 1849, he married Bertha Schwarz.⁸ Just weeks earlier, Wise had written from Albany to the future bride, explaining that he was unable to appear at her wedding. “I wish to move you not to exclude me from the day of your wedding,” Wise wrote. “I was told that you precisely wish to celebrate your wedding day in New York,” he continued, explaining that he would not be able to attend because of a commitment to perform the marriage ceremony for another couple in Albany that same day. “I therefore hope you will do, as it is generally the fashion here and come up to us to Albany and we will rejoice here as friends do,” Wise added.⁹

Wise and Lewi had been in contact soon after Lewi’s arrival in New York. Wise would recall:

7 Lewi, “Notable Jews,” 7. The family surname in Bohemia was most likely “Lowy.” There is a record of a “Joseph Loy,” a 26-year-old physician, arriving in New York on 31 May 1848 from Bremen aboard the *Amazone*. See Registers of Vessels Arriving at the Port of New York from Foreign Ports, 1789–1919, Microfilm Publication M237, rolls 1–95. National Archives at Washington, DC.

8 Compiled Marriage Index, *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* (New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 1932).

9 Letter from Isaac M. Wise to Bertha Schwarz, “By the especial permission of my friend Dr. Lewi,” 27 April 1849, Isaac Mayer Wise Digital Archive, <http://americanjewisharchives.org/collections/wise/view.php?id=2495> (accessed 13 January 2021). According to an obituary for Bertha Schwarz Lewi, she and Joseph Lewi were married by Rabbi Leo Merzbacher at the relatively new Temple Emanuel-El, then on Chrystie Street in Lower Manhattan. “Death of Mrs. Lewi,” *The American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger* (27 February 1914): 512. Merzbacher was the Bavarian-born first rabbi of Temple Emanuel. Max B. May, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise’s grandson and biographer, described Merzbacher, who died in 1856, as “one of the few learned and progressive rabbis in the country, and a friend and supporter of Dr. Wise.” See Max B. May, *Isaac Mayer Wise: The Founder of American Judaism, A Biography* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1916), 265. Wise himself said Merzbacher was “known as a true hearted and staunch reformer.” See “The Rev. Dr. Lilienthal,” *The Israelite* (11 August 1854): 37.

In the early summer of 1848 many immigrants came to these shores from France and Germany, and among them was Dr. Joseph Lewi from Bohemia. As soon as I heard of this, I commissioned a friend to bid the doctor come to me at once to Albany. He brought me the comical answer that Dr. Lewi was of the opinion that he would be a burden to me for some time, and that since all friendship ceases in America, each one had to look out for himself. Thereupon I wrote the following brief epistle, "Dr. Lewi, if you do not come to me at once to Albany, never call me friend again." Dr. Lewi made his appearance two days later at 77 Ferry Street, and I was heartily glad to have a house friend. We agreed very well with one another, and have remained friends.¹⁰

The newlyweds, Joseph and Bertha Lewi, chose Albany as their new home and, as their first-born child, Isidor, born in the spring of 1850, later recalled: "The Wise and Lewi families occupied the same house and the best room in that house was at times Dr. Lewi's consultation chamber and at other times Dr. Wise's study."¹¹ Lewi's first summer in Albany would not be easy, for, as Wise would write, "cholera broke out and spread fear and dread. There were scarcely any cases of cholera among the Jews. Only one member of our congregation was stricken, but he recovered."¹² However, in August 1849, cholera attacked the Wises' two-year-old second child, Laura. Isidor Lewi recounted the tragedy years later, in 1926:

Dr. Wise recalled the fact that when my father returned to his native town (from the University of Vienna), his first patient there was Wise's daughter Emily ... and as the child recovered speedily, so he said would little Laura. But it was not to be, and when the child fell into sleep eternal its parents and mine were the only ones present. It was a Sabbath morning and Dr. Wise, though bowed with grief, went to the Synagogue to conduct services, saying to those who would have restrained him "Ernst kommt die Pflicht" [duty must be taken seriously]. No one in the congregation knew of his bereavement until the service was over.¹³

10 Wise, *Reminiscences*, 100.

11 Isidor Lewi, "Dr. Isaac M. Wise in Albany," *American Israelite* (25 March 1926): 4.

12 Wise, *Reminiscences*, 124.

13 Lewi, "Wise in Albany," 4.

“The grief at the loss of the dear little angel dazed me at first,” Wise wrote, “and when I was myself again, I was as ill, exhausted, and downcast as I had been the year before.”¹⁴ However, despite the tragedy, the months ahead would be a crucial period for both Lewi and Wise, as well as for Reform Judaism in Albany and the United States. Isidor Lewi recalled the “simple, harmonious” dual household of the Wise and Lewi families, where, as he put it, “the foundation was laid” for Albany’s Reform congregation, one of the first in the United States. “As children,” he wrote, “we often heard the story of those day[s] which Wise spoke of as the era of Storm and Drang [*sic*] [turmoil], of the effort on the part of the ultra orthodox in opposition to the young idealist who was breaking the way to American reform Judaism, with emphasis on the ‘American.’”¹⁵

As Wise’s biographer, Sefton Temkin, explains, when the rabbi arrived at Congregation Beth El in 1846, the synagogue was essentially a traditional shul with a traditional liturgy. But early in Wise’s ministry, Temkin notes, “he took measures to improve the service, in particular by modernizing the music and instituting a choir. It was not plain sailing.”¹⁶ In fact, liturgical and theological tempests continued to batter Beth El, culminating in a shattering crisis in September 1850, when a synagogue faction opposing Wise’s liberalizing practices attempted to bar him from officiating at Rosh Hashanah services. The group was headed by synagogue president Louis Spanier. Wise remembered:

I step before the ark in order to take out the scrolls of the law as usual, and to offer prayer. Spanier steps in my way, and, without saying a word, smites me with his fist so that my cap falls from my head. This was the terrible signal for an uproar the like of which I have never experienced. The people acted like furies.¹⁷

14 Wise, *Reminiscences*, 124. In his memoir, Wise wrote that during the previous summer “I had a presentiment of approaching death... this condition set a limit to my plans to improve the world. I saw everything through a glass darkly, and was sadly depressed.” (See *Reminiscences*, 97).

15 Lewi, “Wise in Albany,” 4.

16 Sefton Temkin, “Isaac Mayer Wise: A Biographical Sketch,” in *A Guide to the Writings of Isaac Mayer Wise*, ed. Doris C. Sturzenberger (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1981), 19.

17 Wise, *Reminiscences*, 165.

The next day, supporters of Wise—including, notably, Joseph Lewi—adjourned to his home to conclude the holiday services. “The two rooms were crowded,” wrote Wise. “We had a number of members who were able to read the prayers. The service was conducted in an excellent manner. I preached comfort and consolation, and bade the worshippers confide in the holy cause of Israel. There was not one dry eye.”¹⁸ Beth-El’s angry split led to the founding of a new synagogue in Albany, Anshe Emeth, with Wise as its spiritual leader. At the time, Isidor Lewi was four months old, yet those events were to form a cornerstone of his spiritual inheritance. Eighty years later, he shared recollections of his godfather, Isaac Mayer Wise:

From the time when he started his little Albany flock with a plea for family pews, English in the ritual, uncovered heads for men in the Synagogue¹⁹ and a choir, he never faltered, never relaxed in his efforts to reach the chosen goal. Driven from his pulpit, beset by violent fanatics, he gathered about him a few friends who recognized in him a champion for progress and righteousness, and in an improvised synagogue, at a tiny table as a reading desk, he conducted his first reform service. Thus, in the camp of the enemies, he began the work which brought him finally to acknowledged leadership and made him the outstanding figure in the Judaism which he named AMERICAN.²⁰

18 Ibid., 166–167.

19 Available evidence indicates that the elimination of head covering for men was first introduced by Temple Emanu-El in New York in 1864 and was not adopted until ten years later by Isaac Mayer Wise’s congregation in Cincinnati. See Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 89; Leon A. Jick, “Response: Comments on Washington Hebrew Congregation Article,” *American Jewish History* 84, no. 2 (June 1996): 101.

20 Isidor Lewi, *Isaac Mayer Wise and Emanu-El* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1930), 1. In an earlier profile of Wise, Lewi wrote, “During his residence in Albany [Wise] gave the Jewish reform movement its first impetus, and in this work he was obliged to face not only obloquy, but even personal violence, from the members of his congregation, a majority of whom differed from him in opinion, and who succeeded, [in] spite of the efforts of his loyal friends, in driving him from his position. His prosecutors were ignorant people, who looked upon any deviation from the narrow religious customs to which they were accustomed in their rural German homes as a menace to Judaism.” Isidor Lewi, “Isaac M. Wise,” *Frank Leslie’s Weekly* (15 December 1892): 431.

Wise remained in Albany until 1854, when he moved to Cincinnati to accept the position of rabbi of B'nai Yeshurun synagogue (now Isaac M. Wise Temple). He nevertheless remained in close touch with his friends and associates in Albany, especially the Lewi family.

Early Experiences on the Stage of History



Lewi Family, composite photograph, 1884. Isidor is bearded man standing next to fireplace.
(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)

Over the next years, Joseph Lewi became one of Albany's leading physicians, an active supporter of the nascent Republican Party and a devoted parent to Isidor, the eldest of his and Bertha's fourteen children.²¹ Isidor recalled being dazzled as an eight-year-old in Albany by the city's candlelit celebration in 1858 of the completion of the Transatlantic Cable, allowing telegraphic communications between Britain and the United

21 Wise fathered an equal number of children—ten with his first wife, Therese Bloch, and another four with his second wife, Selma Bondi. "A Finding Aid to the Isaac Mayer Wise Papers, 1838–1931," MS-436, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH (hereafter AJA).

States. Soon after, Joseph and Isidor boarded a train in Albany for a first-hand look at history in the making.

I went with my father to New York and with him to the [USS] Niagara, the ship which had played the American part in the laying of the cable. I saw the great coil of reserve cable in the hold, stood by and listened to the story of how the Agamemnon and the Niagara met in midocean, spliced the cable, and then both raced, paying it out to their respective ports. On leaving the ship my father bought from one of the sailors, who had them for sale, a four-inch piece of the cable, a souvenir of the great accomplishment. I still have the piece of twisted wire, with its tiny copper threads embedded in gutta-percha, and the scrapbook memorandum.²²

Two years later, in 1860, Isidor was again a witness to history as he rallied in Albany on behalf of the Republican Party's presidential candidate, Abraham Lincoln. In later life, he told a reporter that he took to the streets with the pro-Lincoln group known as the Wide Awakes (in contrast to the Little Giants favoring the Democratic Party's candidate, Stephen A. Douglas):

All carried torches consisting of swinging lamps on four-foot sticks for the privates and vari-colored lanterns for the officers. These clubs served to escort the speakers to and from the meeting places, and also paraded independently almost every night. Never once was there any fighting between the groups in Albany. I have seen parades of opposing factions meet and pass each other quietly on opposite sides of the street. I was a member of a boys' Wide-awake club, and it was my duty to march as a guard next to the bearers of the transparencies, which were muslin-covered frames of wood on which were painted the names of the candidates and the campaign slogans.²³

The next year, on 11 February 1861, Lincoln, following his election in 1860, began a circuitous train trip to Washington from his home in

22 Isidor Lewi, "Atlantic Cable Memories," *New York Herald Tribune* (6 August 1932): 8.

23 "Reporter Recalls Lincoln Campaign," *New York Evening Post* (12 February 1932): 2.

Springfield, Illinois, arriving in Albany on 18 February. He was greeted there at a makeshift stop by a large, rambunctious crowd. A reporter at the scene described the president-elect:

Tired, sunburnt, adorned with huge whiskers, looks so unlike the pale, smooth shaven, red cheeked individual, who is represented upon the popular prints and dubbed the ‘rail splitter,’ that it is no wonder the people did not recognize him. Only his extreme height distinguished him.²⁴

Lincoln was greeted by Albany Mayor George Thacher. Also in the crowd was ten-year-old Isidor Lewi. He later wrote of the experience:

When fires, ratification meetings, torchlight processions and speeches were over when ‘Old Abe’ was elected, it was my good fortune to be in the crowd at the railroad station in Albany when the “Rail-Splitter” President-elect stepped from the train to rest in Albany on his way to his first inauguration. I saw him enter a carriage with Mayor Thatcher [*sic*], Senator [William] Ferry and Assemblyman Hall [Levi Chandler Ball], and later that day I went with my father to the Capitol, there to shake hands with the President-elect.²⁵

Strongly influenced by his father’s pro-Union, abolitionist sentiments—though too young to enlist in the Union Army—Isidor joined a unit of what he described as “Boy Zouaves,” youngsters in colorful uniforms modeled after French colonial military attire. “I remember marching as a member of one of these regiments to a camp of instruction on the outskirts of my home town,” he wrote, “where the 44th New York Infantry was making ready to leave for the front. The regiment bore the name at that time, ‘Ellsworth Avengers.’”²⁶ Another memory

24 “The Arrival and Reception at the State Capital,” *New York Herald* (19 February 1861): 1.

25 Isidor Lewi, “Abra-Hamlin-Coln,” *New York Herald Tribune* (13 February 1938): A11.

26 Isidor Lewi, “‘Elmer’ Achieved Popularity in Civil War,” *New York Herald Tribune* (27 January 1935): A8. Elmer Ellsworth, a close friend of Lincoln and commanding officer of the 11th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment (a Zouave unit), was killed on 24 May 1861 while removing a Confederate flag from the roof of an inn in Union-occupied

was the image of Union General Ambrose Burnside, chosen in 1862 to replace the demoted General George McClellan. Burnside was notable for his side whiskers if not his military leadership. "In my boyhood scrapbook," Isidor wrote, "I had some of the cartoons in which Burnside and sideburns were the vehicle for alleged humor. After the defeat of the Army of the Potomac at Fredericksburg [11–15 December 1862], Burnside was transferred, and the sideburns jokes again came to the fore."²⁷ When news reached Albany of the surrender of General Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia on 9 April 1865, what one newspaper described as an "impromptu celebration" erupted in the city—as elsewhere in the North—with citizens bearing banners parading in the streets. "[I]n the evening," according to the journal, "Chinese lanterns were suspended across streets and avenues. Stores and private residences were brilliantly illuminated."²⁸ Just a few days later, on 15 April, Albany learned of the death of President Lincoln after he was shot by John Wilkes Booth the previous evening. "The streets were still gay with bunting celebrating the victories of Grant and others," Isidor told a reporter many years later. "Then came the death of Lincoln and for a day everyone was busy taking down the gay bunting of red, white and blue and replacing it with the sober hue of mourning. It was as if a loved one had been stricken in every home."²⁹ On 26 April, just short of his fifteenth birthday, Isidor and Joseph returned to the New York State Capitol building where they had met Lincoln four years earlier, now to view the president's body on its route back to Illinois. Isidor wrote:

The flags with which nearly every house had been decorated in celebration of the victories at the front had been bordered with black; every house was one of mourning—Lincoln dead. Party lines were obliterated and brotherhood made itself manifest in common sorrow. I was of the

Alexandria, Virginia, becoming the first Union officer to die in the Civil War. The 44th New York Infantry (Ellsworth Avengers) left Albany in October 1861 and fought in many key battles of the Civil War, including Gettysburg.

27 Isidor Lewi, "Burnside and Sideburns," *New York Herald Tribune* (31 July 1931): 14.

28 "The Impromptu Celebration," *Atlas and Argus* (Albany, NY) (11 April 1865): 1.

29 "Reporter Recalls Lincoln Tragedy," *New York Times* (15 April 1936): 19.

silent crowd that moved slowly through the dimly lighted chamber where I had seen and heard the voice of Lincoln before he was the Emancipator, and there I looked again upon Lincoln in his coffin, his earthly mission accomplished—on his way back to Springfield.³⁰

Isidor Lewi's two encounters with Lincoln would feature prominently in his recollections over the next decades, as he continued to witness and befriend the movers and shakers of his time. The following year, 1866, again escorted by his father, Isidor witnessed a speech in Albany by Lincoln's first vice president, Hannibal Hamlin, arguing on behalf of the proposed Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution that, along with guaranteeing all citizens equal protection of the laws, exempted the federal government and the states from paying debts incurred by the Confederate states—Hamlin's main concern. Isidor recalled:

Leaflets on which the text of the amendment was printed were distributed in the hall, and some of these were kept as souvenirs of the occasion. After the meeting, when many of the audience advanced to the platform to greet the speaker, I had the pleasure, led by my father, of shaking hands with Mr. Hamlin.³¹

In March 1868, the British author Charles Dickens arrived in Albany for the second of his two visits to the New York State capital. Tickets to his two readings at Tweddle Hall were quickly sold out, but Joseph Lewi was able to secure a ticket for himself next to the seat reserved for his friend, Albany attorney Nathan Swartz. Soon after Swartz arrived at the Lewi household to accompany his friend to the Dickens reading, a second man arrived at the door urgently requesting the services of Dr. Lewi. As a result, Isidor inherited his father's ticket and was present to hear Dickens read from his famous novel *David Copperfield* and his new novella *Doctor Marigold*.

The picture of the tall, bearded man in conventional dress, with a gold watch chain stretched across his vest, starting to read and throwing down

30 "Abra-Hamlin-Coln," *New York Herald Tribune* (13 February 1938): A11.

31 Isidor Lewi, "The Repudiated Debts," *New York Times* (1 August 1932): 14.

the book and “reading” without its aid, are still vivid in my memory, as is also the regret experienced at that time, despite my pleasure, because of my father’s absence; that he could not be in Tweddle Hall, listening to Dickens.³²

During these formative years, Isidor was a student at The Albany Academy, a prestigious college preparatory school established in 1813. While Joseph may have intended for Isidor to continue his academic training, Isidor moved in two other directions—one commercial, the other journalistic, the latter influenced by Isaac Mayer Wise. By 1854 Wise had established himself in Cincinnati as both rabbi of B’nai Yeshurun and founder of the nationally circulated newspaper *The Israelite*, which became *The American Israelite* in 1874. In September 1868, Wise traveled from Cincinnati to New York City, where he had been invited to speak at the dedication ceremony of the lavish new building of Temple Emanuel, an ambitious Moorish-style structure at 5th Avenue and 43rd Street in Manhattan. On his way to New York, Wise stopped at the Lewi home in Albany to try to persuade Joseph and Bertha to join him at the ceremony and, as Isidor put it, to “share with him the joy of witnessing in the dedication ceremonies the fruitful result to his constructive work in the cause of Reform.”³³ Joseph declined the invitation because he couldn’t leave his medical practice. “Let the boy come,” Wise responded, indicating Isidor, and so the eighteen-year-old witnessed the dedicatory ceremony on 11 September 1868.³⁴ About two years later, according to historian Bertram W. Korn, Isidor’s father sent him to Cincinnati “as an apprentice to Wise in the editorship of the *Israelite*.”³⁵ Isidor recalled that his first journalistic efforts appeared in Wise’s *Israelite* in 1871,³⁶ although he also noted that his first “service” to the publication was driving the rabbi in his horse-drawn carriage from his home, known as the Farm, to his office.

32 Isidor Lewi, “A Dickens Reading,” *New York Herald Tribune* (16 April 1931): 20.

33 Lewi, *Wise and Emanuel*, 3–4.

34 “Last Service Held in Temple Emanuel,” *Reform Advocate* (30 July 1927): 15.

35 Bertram W. Korn, “Jewish 48’ers in America,” *American Jewish Archives* (June 1949): 16.

36 Isidor Lewi, “Letters from People—Isidor Lewi, New York; Old Friend and Contributor, Sends Congratulations,” *American Israelite* (8 July 1926): 5.

We were well underway and Dr. Wise was reading copy which he had prepared the night before at the Farm. There was no writing machine at the Farm in those days and every word had been written in the ancient, orthodox style and a sheaf of copy represented considerable manual exertion. Regardless of that fact a gust of wind caught the manuscript and scattered it broadcast over the muddy road. The horse was halted in its more or less mad career and seemed perfectly willing to stand still while I gathered the sheets of copy, which, when our journey's modest destination was reached—the modest Israelite office in Walnut street—Edward Bloch helped me to re-assemble and re-write. That was in 1872 when the Editorial Staff of the *Israelite* and the [German-language periodical] *Deborah* consisted chiefly of Dr. Wise.³⁷

After his training in Cincinnati, Isidor returned to Albany, where he worked for the Albany *Morning Express* and later the Albany *Argus*.³⁸ But his association with Wise—as a boy in the same household and as a young apprentice in journalism—proved to be foundational in his religious self-concept. Lewi was a committed Jew with a strong anti-Zionist resolve, which he had undoubtedly learned from Wise. It was an inheritance of discipleship not uncommon among the first-generation successors to Wise.

As early as 1848, Wise had pressed for an association of Jewish congregations in the United States “under whose auspices American rabbis would be trained, an American prayer book produced, and needful reforms authorized.”³⁹ But the organization, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations [UAHC], was not formally created until 1873, a quarter century later, and even then it did not include major synagogues in the East until a meeting of its council in Milwaukee, called five years later to approve crucial changes. As described by historian Sefton D. Temkin,

37 Isidor Lewi, “Three-Score Years and Ten”—“From A Valued Half Century Contributor,” *American Israelite* (4 September 1924): 4. Edward Bloch, Wise's brother-in-law, was founder of the Bloch Publishing Company and publisher of *The Israelite* and the German-language periodical *Die Deborah*.

38 “Lewi Funeral is Tomorrow,” *Knickerbocker News* (Albany, NY) (4 January 1939): 14A.

39 Sefton D. Temkin, “A Century of Reform Judaism in America,” *American Jewish Yearbook* (1973): 12.

The Eastern congregations did not join immediately. When the council met in Milwaukee in 1878, its president reported that, despite the efforts of the Board of Delegates, the requisite number had not been attained. However, while the council was in session, delegates from Emanu-El and Beth El of New York arrived and presented credentials, and an announcement was made that the requisite quota of Eastern congregations had been filled.⁴⁰

The dramatic arrival of the New York delegates was yet another consequence of the close friendship between Isaac Mayer Wise and Joseph Lewi.

As recounted by Isidor, Wise had once again traveled to New York City for a speaking engagement and on his return to Cincinnati stopped in Albany for what was intended to be a brief visit but was persuaded by his friend Joseph Lewi to spend the day in nearby Saratoga. There, “by the merest of chance, without any prearrangement,” Isidor wrote, Wise met several “influential members” of Temple Emanu-El, “the men whose co-operation Wise had been unable to win, who had the power to give the campaign of the Union the impetus essential to its success, and, seeing the opportunity to make a plea under most favorable auspices, Dr. Wise was quick to embrace it.”⁴¹ Wise’s plea to the New Yorkers bore fruit, Isidor added, and “the last barrier in the path of the Union’s success had been razed.”⁴²

From Merchant to Journalist

In the 1880s, Isidor Lewi set aside journalism and went to work for the Zylonite Comb and Brush Company, a firm near North Adams, Massachusetts, that manufactured many household items from a wood pulp-based product similar to celluloid. In 1885, some four hundred employees of the firm worked under the superintendency of Lewi;⁴³

40 Ibid., 34.

41 Isidor Lewi, “The Surrender at Saratoga—Not of Cornwallis,” *American Israelite* (27 March 1919):16.

42 Ibid.

43 Bernard A. Drew, “Zylonite Collars Have Day in Court,” *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, MA) (15 March 2014). The article refers to Isidor Lewi’s surname as “Lewis,” a not uncommon error in reporting about him.

two years later, the North Adams newspaper announced Lewi's promotion to superintendent of the consolidated company, noting that he had "been a resident of North Adams but a few years, and has taken a prominent place in society and business circles quite unusual in so short a time."⁴⁴ That same year, Lewi attended a reading in North Adams by Lew Wallace of his novel *Ben-Hur*, an event that he told Wallace "was so rich in pleasure that it made a lasting impression on my mind." Lewi was far from alone in his appreciation of the book. "Despite its 1880 publication date," writes Emily Clair Lord-Kambitsch in her doctoral dissertation on *Ben-Hur*, "Wallace's novel was the second best-selling book after the Bible, and the number one best-selling work of fiction in the United States of the nineteenth century."⁴⁵ The novel tells the story of Jesus—its full title is *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*—along with that of a Jewish prince, Judah Ben-Hur, who hopes for a Jewish king to defeat Rome and ultimately converts to Christianity. Lord-Kambitsch writes:

Nineteenth-century American Protestants' fond identification with the people of Israel in their historical struggle for religious and political freedom is channeled through the character of Judah Ben-Hur. Wallace's direction of American sympathies to his protagonist is otherwise frequently underscored by the characterization of Ben-Hur as steeped in prominent American value systems, such as patriotism, personal ambition, and familial affection and loyalty.⁴⁶

Lewi followed up his praise for Wallace and his novel by asking the author to autograph his copy of the book "as a souvenir of the evening when as Ben Hur's co-religionist (and your only Jewish auditor at North Adams) [I was] charmingly entertained by Ben Hur's gifted biographer."⁴⁷

44 *Argus* (Albany, NY), (3 April 1887): 8 (copied from *North Adams Transcript*).

45 Emily Clair Lord-Kambitsch, "Emotions in Ben-Hur: Dynamics of Emotion in Texts, Reception Contexts, and Audience Responses in the United States (1880–1931)," doctoral diss. (University College London, 2016), 19. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/> (accessed 24 August 2021).

46 *Ibid.*, 52.

47 Letter from Isidor Lewi to Lew Wallace, 9 February 1887, Lew and Susan Wallace

In January 1890 Lewi embarked on a European trip to pursue both his business and personal interests. Arriving in Budapest in March, he found the city “in a fever of excitement” because of the expected resignation the next day of the Hungarian prime minister, Kálmán Tisza. Anxious to witness the event, Lewi presented himself to a functionary as an American reporter. Asked to identify his publication, the businessman thought “something had to be done, and done without hesitation, or I was lost.”

Half a dozen well-known newspaper names flashed through my mind in that instant, but the realization that the use of any of them might involve exposure and disgrace prompted me to my second inspiration of the day, and without the slightest show of perturbation, I calmly and rather loftily announced:

The North Adams Transcript.

And with another low bow, he handed me the coveted card.

Well, it was a gorgeous spectacle; and I saw and heard it all, although, not being familiar with the language, I hadn't the slightest idea what the Premier's impassioned oration was all about. And when I got back to the hotel that evening my conscience smote me. So I sat down and wrote a long—and I flatter myself not uninteresting—account of the day's impressions from an American viewpoint, headed it “From Our Special Correspondent,” and dispatched it to the Transcript forthwith.⁴⁸

In the same month that Lewi visited Budapest, he also traveled to his father's birthplace, Radnitz, Bohemia, the town in which Wise first served as rabbi. In a note to Wise, Lewi wrote, “Dear Doctor: -- On my way to service at the house of worship where you once served, I stop to send you greetings. Your friend, I.L.” Writing briefly in his newspaper, Wise commented, “Thanks to our good friend, who remembers us in distant Bohemia. He is probably the only person in that city of Radnitz who still remembers us, for it was on the last day of *Pesach*, 1848, when

Multi-Institution Microfilm Project, Indiana Historical Society. Judah Ben-Hur, the fictional title character of Wallace's best seller, was a Jewish nobleman.

48 “‘Our Reporter at Budapest’ Here,” *North Adams Transcript* (22 June 1933): 11.

we preached there the last time, closing a three years' engagement to leave for America."⁴⁹ The same issue of *The American Israelite* reported from Albany that Isidor, the son of Joseph Lewi, was on a tour through Europe and had "visited Radnitz (Bohemia), the Doctor's birth-place, and met with a hearty reception there. He also has been to Cassel, where his mother was born."⁵⁰ The news item by the Albany correspondent of *The American Israelite* was evidently prompted by a separate note from Isidor to his father.

In January 1891, Lewi's employer, the Zylonite company, folded under the combined weight of a million-dollar-plus patent-infringement judgment and a bank failure that severely damaged the financial holdings of one of the firm's founders.⁵¹ Whether by necessity, chance, or design, Lewi changed his vocation at about that time from merchant to journalist, joining the reporting staff of the *New York Tribune*, a daily founded by Horace Greeley and then edited and owned by Whitelaw Reid. Relying on his apprenticeship at *The American Israelite* and his training at Albany newspapers, Lewi was now singularly focused on the journalism career that would last the rest of his working life. Other Jews, in numbers disproportionately greater than their percentage in the nation's population, took the same path. "[J]ournalism," writes Brandeis University scholar Stephen J. Whitfield, "has been conspicuously attractive for talented Jews, whose role merits analysis and explanation."⁵² Whitfield turns to *Jews and American Politics* by journalist Stephen D. Isaacs for his analysis:

Isaacs argues that the intellectual and verbal resourcefulness that Jews have cherished historically is rewarded in the mass media.⁵³ ... Isaacs

49 Isaac M. Wise, *American Israelite* (3 April 1890): 4.

50 Nemo, "Albany, N.Y.," *American Israelite* (3 April 1890): 4. ("Nemo" was a pseudonym, likely for Theodore J. Lewi, an Albany, N.Y., pharmacist and a younger brother of Isidor Lewi.)

51 "The American Zylonite Company." <http://www.mernick.org.uk/zylonite/index.htm> (accessed 23 January 2021).

52 Stephen J. Whitfield, "The Jewish Contribution to American Journalism," *American Journalism* 3, no. 2 (1986): 101.

53 *Ibid.*, 105.

also notes the Jewish representation in a field which, “like all forms of mass education, prizes the non-ethnicity of universalism” and especially the ideal of objectivity. Those opting for journalism as a career might therefore hope to be judged by their merit, not their religious or national origin.⁵⁴

Whitfield adds the suggestion of his Brandeis University colleague, Jonathan D. Sarna, that “Jews had the kind of cosmopolitan outlook which journalism demands.”⁵⁵ But in the end, Whitfield concludes, “Too little curiosity has been piqued by this explanation of what has attracted Jews so disproportionately to journalism.”⁵⁶ Beyond all that, for Lewi, once his company folded, journalism presented the attraction of a paycheck. At about the time he began working as a reporter at the *Tribune*, journalists in New York City reportedly were earning from \$15 to \$60 a week (the highest rate in the country), averaging \$2.93 to \$4.53 a day, with long hours; in comparison, a plumber’s daily wage averaged \$3.19.⁵⁷ Edwin L. Shulman, a veteran journalist reflecting at that time on his profession, explained: “Newspaper writing, in the essential qualifications required, is a learned profession; but in its exactions and its comparative insecurity of employment it more nearly resembles a trade.”⁵⁸

To extend his writing horizon beyond the *Tribune* and also likely to extend his modest wages, in December 1892 Lewi began publishing in the popular illustrated periodical, *Frank Leslie’s Weekly*. His contribution was a series of more than twenty profiles of what were called “Notable Jews,” beginning—not surprisingly—with Wise and including Lewi’s father, Joseph. Other subjects included Adolph S. Ochs (a son-in-law of Wise and soon-to-be owner of *The New York Times*), Simon Rosendale

⁵⁴ Ibid., 106.

⁵⁵ Jonathan D. Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah* (New York, 1981), 6.

⁵⁶ Whitfield, “Jewish Contribution,” 109.

⁵⁷ Ted Curtis Smythe, “The Reporter: Working Conditions and Their Influence on the News,” *Journalism History* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 2.

⁵⁸ Edwin L. Shulman, *Practical Journalism; A Complete Manual of the Best Newspaper Methods* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1903), 25.

(New York State's attorney general and another Albany native), and Rabbi Henry Pereira Mendes of New York City's Congregation Shearith Israel. *The American Israelite* advised its readers:

The subjects of the sketches are selected with great discrimination as might be expected from the fact that Mr. Isidor Lewi is their author. Mr. Lewi, in addition to fine literary capacity, has an extensive personal acquaintance with the leading Jews of the whole country, and more than ordinary knowledge of Jewish affairs.⁵⁹

In yet another effort to stretch his journalistic muscles and expand his income, Lewi reached out to Ochs, whom he had known for years, although the formality of their written communications questions the closeness of their bond.⁶⁰ Their association would be, paradoxically, both supportive and problematic in the decades to come. In 1878, at twenty years of age, Ochs had purchased full control of *The Chattanooga Times*. By 1882, according to biographer Doris Faber, he

began to think about finding a wife. Within a few months when he was calling on a business acquaintance in Cincinnati, he found her. The business friend was Leo Wise, son of Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, founder and president of Hebrew Union College, a man widely known for his scholarship and his wit.... Besides his son, he had a pretty daughter, Iphigene. Waiting in the parlor for Leo, Adolph was startled by a slim, bright-eyed young woman who walked in and blithely announced: "I'm Effie Miriam Wise. Who are you?"⁶¹

59 Nickerdown, "Notes and Comments," *American Israelite* (25 May 1893): 1.

"Nickerdown" was the pen name of Dr. Julius Wise, a Chicago physician who was a son of Isaac M. Wise and a writer for *The American Israelite*, among other publications. See *New York Times* (20 April 1902): 7. Lewi's profile of Rabbi Wise, published on 15 December 1892 in *Frank Leslie's Weekly* (p. 431), did not appear under the "Notable Jews" rubric, although the second profile in the series, of financier Jesse Seligman, published 5 January 1893 (p. 7), is headed "Notable Jews—II," and the rest follow in sequence.

60 Letters between the two men consistently began with the formal salutations "Dear Mr. Ochs," "Dear Mr. Lewi." (See fn 62 for source.)

61 Doris Faber, *Printer's Devil to Publisher: Adolph S. Ochs of The New York Times* (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1963), 52–53.

The couple was married on 28 February 1883. Ochs was now within the Wise family circle, which often broadened to include Isidor Lewi. Ten years later, in 1893, Lewi reached out to Ochs to offer a weekly letter from New York for *The Chattanooga Times*. Ochs responded that the “letter is excellent and I wish I were situated so as to arrange with you to serve us regularly with it, but I have already contracted for more special service for our Sunday edition than we can well handle.”⁶²

That same year, another of Lewi’s articles appeared in *Frank Leslie’s Weekly*, this one focused on the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a massive fair marking the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s arrival in the New World. On 1 May 1893, the public first entered the gates of the exposition, whose most popular attractions were on what was called the Midway Plaisance, a narrow stretch of parkland that, in addition to the original Ferris wheel, included what were conceived as educational attractions, from an “Algerian and Tunisian Village and Theater” to a “Workingman’s Home.” Among those displays was a “Turkish Village and Theater” with appropriate architecture, decor, and costumed inhabitants. What was designed as a Turkish mosque, however, spontaneously became a Jewish house of worship on 19–20 September—Yom Kippur. Lewi was on the scene taking notes. Four out of five of the inhabitants of the Turkish village, he reported, were Jews.

Merchants, clerks, actors, servants, musicians, and even the dancing-girls, are of the Mosaic faith, though their looks and garb would lead one to believe them Mohammedans. That their Judaism is not of the passive character was demonstrated by the closed booths, shops, and curio places, by the silence in the otherwise noisy theatres and the general Sabbath-day air which pervaded the “Streets of Constantinople” on Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement. A more unique observance of the day never occurred in this country, and to the few Americans who

62 Letter from Adolph S. Ochs to Isidor Lewi, 4 January 1893, Box 20, 20–21, New York Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations (hereafter NYPL).

had the good fortune to be present it presented a picture of rare beauty and solemnity.

The “Oriental Jews,” Lewi continued, “assembled on Tuesday evening and read the *Kol Nidra* service,” and the following day, “a great bazaar, in which rugs and tapestries were on exhibition, was converted into a synagogue.”⁶³ Lewi’s report chronicling this stunning sight would become his most-quoted writing in the decades that followed.

On 29 August 1897, Theodor Herzl convened what became known as the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, at which some two hundred delegates approved a program calling for the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine. Lewi’s newspaper, the *New York Tribune*, greeted the development with some enthusiasm, editorializing, “The return of the Jews to Palestine is no longer to be regarded as an empty dream. Dream it was, through weary centuries of persecution and outlawry.” The *Tribune* concluded that the new state “may never be formed. But the Jewish people throughout the world appear to be determined to establish it, and if it be established there will be little room to doubt its success.”⁶⁴ With both his own anti-Zionist commitment and that of his mentor, Wise, in mind, Lewi quickly sent Wise a telegram asking him to write a response for the *Tribune*. In a letter to “My dear friend Isidor,” Wise advised the reporter that his request had been pre-empted by Ochs, Wise’s son-in-law and the new owner of *The New York Times*. Wise explained:

Gladly would I have written the article you want for the Tribune, if I had not been handicapped by my son in law Adolph Ochs, who came a day or two before you with the same order like yours, and I had written and sent the MS to him, when your telegram came to hand, which was Monday morning. I am sorry to say, that I could not well write the same matter for two journals in the same city.... With love to all of our dear ones, Your Gevatter [godfather] Isaac M. Wise.⁶⁵

63 Isidor Lewi, “Yom Kippur on the Midway,” *Frank Leslie’s Weekly* (12 October 1893): 243.

64 “The Zionist Movement,” *New York Tribune* (29 August 1897): 6.

65 Letter from Isaac M. Wise to Isidor Lewi, 7 September 1897, Isaac Mayer Wise

A few days later, Wise's letter to the editor appeared in the *Times*, a lengthy and severe rejection of the Basel conference, Zionism, and the concept of a Jewish state in Palestine. The facts prove, Wise wrote, "that the Jews do not wish to and will not go back to Palestine." It was the message Lewi had hoped would appear in the *Tribune*.

Most of them, being citizens of this and other countries of advanced civilization approaching the ideals of Moses want no Jewish State; would join none if the establishment of such a State were possible. They will not separate themselves from the powerful organizations of the great nations of the world to set up a miniature statelet, a feeble dwarf of a Government of their own in Palestine or in any other country.... The Jewish Congress in the City of Basel was, in fact, a Congress of Russian emigrants in the various countries, with a few "Lovers of Zion" from Germany and Austria, who wish to colonize Palestine with Jewish agriculturists. The leaders of that body are two Hungarian gentlemen of literary renown.... Everything is possible in dreamland or in Utopia. That Congress in Basel was a novelty, a gathering of visionary and impractical dreamers who conceived and acted a romantic drama, and applauded it, all by themselves.⁶⁶

Wise's letter was a clear statement of his long-held vision of Judaism—which Lewi shared—that, as rabbi and historian Melvin Weinman has written, rejected any nationalistic view of the Jewish people. "He considered it un-Jewish to pray for, or work toward the restoration of a

Digital Archive, <http://americanjewisharchives.org/collections/wise/view.php?id=2431> (accessed 25 January 2021). Considering Ochs's own anti-Zionist commitment, it is not surprising that he quickly turned to his father-in-law for a commentary on the Zionist Congress. As Jerold S. Auerbach, author of *Print to Fit: The New York Times, Zionism and Israel (1896–2016)*, has written: "For Ochs, a proud Reform Jew, Judaism was a religion not a national identity. Fearful lest the loyalty of American Jews to the United States would be compromised by adherence even to the idea of Jewish statehood, Ochs pledged his loyalty to the United States by resolutely opposing Jewish nationalism." See Jerold S. Auerbach, "The Appalling New York Times Cartoon," *Times of Israel* blog (1 May 2019), <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-appalling-new-york-times-cartoon/> (accessed 26 January 2021).

66 Isaac M. Wise, "A Jewish State Impossible," *New York Times* (10 September 1897): 6.

Jewish state. He considered it unnecessary, too, for he believed that in his own lifetime, constitutional liberties for Jews, patterned after those of the United States, would be established everywhere.”⁶⁷

Wise maintained that attitude until the end of his life three years later, in 1900, and his torch would be carried for another four decades by Lewi, his protégé and godson. In 1908, on the eighth anniversary of Wise’s death, Lewi wrote of the battles Wise had fought in what he regarded as the interest of Reform Judaism. “He won his fight,” Lewi declared. “He saw an American spirit infused into the ancient faith without jeopardizing its vitality. He saw Orientalism discarded and ancient usages modified to meet the demand of the age.” At the same time, Lewi warned:

The vacant place where once his gigantic figure stood is more conspicuous at this time because of the conditions which have arisen since he laid down his burden. A reactionary movement has set in; nationalism and Orientalism, organized and powerful, spurred by enthusiasm and encouraged by the support of men of high attainments, and of undoubted honesty of purpose, are undoing the work which Isaac M. Wise and his friends and followers accomplished.⁶⁸

In his analysis of “Converts to Zionism,” Sarna has drawn attention to some of the likely “men of high attainments”—Reform rabbinical leaders such as Bernhard Felsenthal, Gustav Gottheil and Max Heller—who had once argued against political Zionism but later adopted the cause.⁶⁹ Also, as Sarna points out, “not all Reform Zionists underwent conversion.... Reform Jews of this kind had been Zionists (or proto-Zionists) all along, in some cases even before they were Reform Jews. Stephen Wise, for one, imbibed love of Zion from his parents and

67 Melvin Weinman, “The Attitude of Isaac Mayer Wise Toward Zionism and Palestine,” *American Jewish Archives* 3, no. 2 (January 1951): 21.

68 Isidor Lewi, “Isaac M. Wise,” *American Israelite* (19 March 1908): 4.

69 Jonathan D. Sarna, “Converts to Zionism in the American Reform Movement,” in *Zionism and Religion*, ed. Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 188.

grandparents.”⁷⁰ The Zionist publication *The Maccabaeon*, in a 1907 editorial Sarna cited, asserted enthusiastically that “The Zionistic infection of Hebrew Union College seems to be spreading” and then, focusing on Isaac Mayer Wise’s *American Israelite*, commented, “Is it not absurd to think that a dozen men, aided by a defunct journal which still speaks through its worthy father’s old hat, should attempt to fix the first principles of liberal Jewish thought in religion on the basis of obsolete notions?”⁷¹

Lewi was possibly among the anti-Zionist “dozen men” attacked by *The Maccabaeon*, but there were many others—some of whom were sustained, like Lewi, by their close ties to the late “worthy father,” Wise. In several instances, Wise was very literally the “worthy father” or, in the case of Lewi, godfather. In fact, Lewi chose to define himself as “a disciple of Wise,”⁷² a description suitable for others as well.

Leo Wise, the eldest of Wise’s sons and one of his disciples, was born in Albany in 1849, a contemporary of Isidor Lewi. The two, Leo and Isidor, continued a close relationship throughout their lives. Leo, “as a lad,” according to one biographical sketch, “ran away from home and enlisted on a gunboat on the Mississippi River during the Civil War.”⁷³ Later, “he traveled as able seaman on the Seven Seas. The gold and diamond mines of South Africa knew him. He made his home with bushmen in Australia.”⁷⁴ In her recounting of the life of Rabbi Edward Benjamin Morris (“Alphabet”) Browne—a protégé of Isaac Wise and a near-contemporary of Leo—Janice Rothschild Blumberg writes of Leo’s absconding with his father’s funds, landing in a ship’s brig, and pleading for funds to provide medication for a friend’s abortion.⁷⁵ But eventually,

70 Ibid., 68.

71 “Reform Converts,” *The Maccabaeon* 12, no. 4 (April 1907): 158.

72 Letter from Isidor Lewi to Adolph S. Ochs, 1 May 1922, Box 20, 20–21, New York Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

73 “Leo Wise Dies at 84; Cincinnati Editor,” *New York Times* (8 January 1933): 13.

74 “Leo Wise,” *American Israelite* (2 February 1993): 4.

75 Janice Rothschild Blumberg, *Prophet in a Time of Priests* (Baltimore: Apprentice House, 2012), 61–63.

Leo settled down in Cincinnati as an assistant and then successor to his father at *The American Israelite*. And while his early rebelliousness might have suggested otherwise, he consistently supported his father's anti-Zionism. In late 1901/early 1902, Rabbi Max Heller, one of the converts to Zionism that Sarna described, publicly announced his conversion and then asked to amplify his thoughts in *The American Israelite*, to which he was a contributor. As Gary P. Zola writes, Leo Wise, now publisher of the newspaper, slammed the door. "Wise bluntly told Heller that he would not permit the columns of the *Israelite* to denigrate and libel that which his beloved father taught for nearly 60 years."⁷⁶ Twenty years later, Leo maintained that position. "The Jews," he wrote, "are not a nation and the large majority of them want no 'national home.' All they ask is equal rights with their fellow nationals of other faiths the world over, Palestine included."⁷⁷

Isaac Wise's next-born son, Julius, born in 1851, was a respected physician and a prolific writer, contributing to *The American Israelite* among other publications under the pen name "Nickerdown." "He was bold, vigorous, sarcastic, honest, a hater of shams, and yet with it all a God-fearing, religious man," noted *The New York Times* in his obituary.⁷⁸ Like his brother, Leo, Julius was also an anti-Zionist. "No Jew objects to colonies," he wrote in 1897. "But many, if not the majority, of those whose co-operation is worth having, do object to the wild dream of renationalization, which is a stultification of everything for which rational Judaism stands."⁷⁹ Two years later, he described Zionism as "that wild political phantasy."⁸⁰ Isidor Wise, born in 1856 after his father moved to Cincinnati, became an associate editor of *The American Israelite*. In the pages of that newspaper he accepted that "Zionism is a solution offered in all seriousness and sincerity," but then added, "To the extent that Zionism spends itself in perpetuating a puny

76 Gary P. Zola, "Reform Judaism's Pioneer Zionist: Maximilian Heller," *American Jewish History* 73, no. 4 (June 1984): 382.

77 Leo Wise, "More Opinions on Zionism," *American Hebrew* (12 May 1922): 724.

78 "Dr. Julius Wise Dead," *New York Times* (20 April 1902): 7.

79 Nickerdown, "Notes and Comments," *American Israelite* (28 October 1897): 4.

80 Nickerdown, "Notes and Comments," *American Israelite* (7 December 1899): 7.

nationalism, it defeats its own purpose. To consider the establishment of a tenth rate principality in Palestine as a consummation of Israel's heroic fight of 2000 years is a travesty on history."⁸¹ Jonah Wise, born in 1881, adopted the rabbinical career of his father as well as his father's anti-Zionist attitude—at least at first. In 1923, while rabbi of Temple Beth Israel in Portland, Oregon, Jonah Wise addressed a convention of the UAHC and rejected the traditional concept of "Goluth," that is, exile. "American Judaism has discarded this 'Goluth' idea," Wise declared. "It is for that reason, perhaps, that many American Jewish thinkers could not accept the proposition of theoretical Zionism.... That the 'Goluth' exile idea ... is essential to Judaism cannot be accepted by American Israel."⁸² Seven years later, now speaking at New York's Central Synagogue, Wise rejected what he called "nationalist Zionism," argued that a "Jewish national State in Palestine is not a major issue in American Jewish life", and added that "it does not now and never can achieve the place the Zionist nationalists demand for it."⁸³ However, in later years, in the face of the Holocaust, Wise would moderate his anti-Zionist views—as Central Synagogue recalled—"even as he maintained his reservations about that Movement's ideological base. His deeply nuanced approach separated him from many Classical Reform colleagues, but it brought him and the synagogue closer to the direction in which the Reform Movement was moving."⁸⁴

Also among the close disciples of Isaac Wise was Ochs, who had married Wise's daughter Effie. As writer Louis Rich noted at the time of Ochs's death in 1935:

As soon as he had the power to help and promote its progress, Mr. Ochs enlisted in the cause which his great father-in-law, Isaac M. Wise, was advancing, and contributed materially toward making it an active force

81 Isidor Wise, "Proposed 'Roads to Salvation,'" *American Israelite* (13 January 1927): 4.

82 "Ask Jews to Drop Yiddish and Wine," *New York Times* (25 January 1923): 10.

83 "Rabbi Jonah B. Wise on 'Zionism,'" *Jewish Exponent* (3 October 1930): 6.

84 Jeffrey S. Gurock, *The Wide World of Central Synagogue* (Central Synagogue: New York, 2014), 5, https://www.centralsynagogue.org/assets/downloads/CenSyn_The-Wide-World-of-Central-Synagogue.pdf (accessed 18 August 2021).

in the life of the Jews in this country.... His strong conviction that the Jews owe allegiance only to the country whose citizens they are made him an opponent of Zionism.⁸⁵

In early 1922, Ochs traveled to Palestine for a first-hand look at the Zionists' projected homeland. In an interview at the end of his trip, he told a reporter in Tel Aviv:

I am not a Zionist. What I have seen in Palestine has not made me an avowed Zionist. But I can no longer be the anti-Zionist I was before I visited Palestine, although even now I do not believe it is necessary or even possible to create a Jewish state in Palestine. I believe, however, and I am convinced that those who do believe in the necessity and the possibility of creating a Jewish state in Palestine deserve no criticism and, far less, condemnation.⁸⁶

About a week later in Paris, shortly before his departure for home, Ochs repeated his admiration for the Zionist settlers in Palestine. But, as a reporter for *The American Israelite* noted,

He believes their cause is hopeless and he shudders at the danger to which he thinks they are exposed. The whole Arab population and all Islam is a unit against what they believe to be the aspirations of the Zionists, viz., dominance and political control of Palestine; and that feeling is growing more intense every day.... Mr. Ochs says he has always been unsympathetic with Zionism, as he understands it, because the Jewish religion is secondary.⁸⁷

Soon after his return to New York, Ochs apparently returned to his non-Zionist attitude, eliciting from Lewi the admiring comment,

As a disciple of Isaac M. Wise whose messages are as potent for good today as they were before he went to his reward; as one who sees daily the need of a champion of his caliber, his courage and his vision, I want to tell you how much your talk on the Dangers of Political Zionism pleased me.⁸⁸

85 Louis Rich, "Adolph S. Ochs," *American Jewish Year Book* (1935): 50–51.

86 "Adolph Ochs Lauds Zionists' Idealism," *Detroit Jewish Cornicle* (21 April 1922): 3.

87 "The Truth About Palestine," *American Israelite* (27 April 1922): 4.

88 Letter from Isidor Lewi to Adolph S. Ochs, 1 May 1922, Box 20, 20–21, New York

Upon Ochs's death in 1935, his son-in-law, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, succeeded him at the helm of *The New York Times* and continued the family's anti-Zionist tradition even as the tide in Reform Judaism began to turn. Laurel Leff writes:

The rise of Hitler in the 1930s posed the most serious challenge to the optimism of Reform Judaism. It set the stage for the decisive battles to save European Jewry and to establish a Jewish state in the 1940s. In this fight for the soul of Judaism Adolph Ochs initially and then more crucially his son-in-law, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, remained devoted disciples among an ever-shrinking band of followers of classical Reform Judaism.⁸⁹

Professional and Personal Changes

Meanwhile, Lewi had continued to report for the *New York Tribune* with varied assignments such as a multipage spread on the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis⁹⁰ and, in the spring of 1898, coverage for more than a month of the U.S. Army buildup for the Spanish-American War at its Georgia training camp.⁹¹ While still writing for the *Tribune*,

Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

89 Laurel Leff, "A Tragic 'Fight in the Family': *The New York Times*, Reform Judaism and the Holocaust," *American Jewish History* 88, no. 1 (March 2000): 12.

90 Isidor Lewi, "Training for the Navy," *New York Tribune* (27 February 1898): B1–B3. As was common at that time, Lewi's article does not carry his byline, but his authorship is confirmed by a brief item from Annapolis that appeared in print shortly before the *Tribune* article: "Mr. Isidor Lewi, an attaché of the New York 'Tribune,' was here this week, gathering material for an article on the Naval Academy. He received many courtesies from the officers of the Institution." See "The Naval Academy," *Army and Navy Journal* (26 February 1898): 477.

91 Isidor Lewi's first article from Camp Thomas, the Army's training camp at Chickamauga Park (the Civil War battlefield), appeared in the *New York Tribune* on 21 April 1898; his final article from the camp appeared on 28 May 1898. Again, the articles do not carry his byline (typically "By Telegraph to the Tribune" or "From a Staff Correspondent of the Tribune"). Confirmation of his authorship is in a brief item carried by an Albany newspaper published immediately before Lewi filed his first story from Chickamauga: "Isidor Lewi passed through Albany yesterday on his way to Chickamauga

Lewi affiliated himself with a new entry in New York City journalism, a Yiddish-language daily called *Di Yidishe Velt* (*The Jewish World*), which published its first issue on 27 June 1902. The newspaper was largely organized and partly financed by Louis Marshall, an influential lawyer active in Jewish community affairs. Shareholders of the newspaper included a number of “Uptown” Jewish bankers and businessmen, while its intended readership were the “Downtown” Yiddish speakers. According to historian Lucy Dawidowicz, the newspaper “was intended to be an Americanizing and stabilizing force, intellectually, morally, religiously, and politically, among the east-European Jewish immigrants who crowded the East Side.”⁹² Eight men were appointed to the newspaper’s board: three from Downtown and a controlling five from Uptown, including Lewi, clearly chosen for his journalistic credentials but also likely for his “Americanizing” attitude inherited from Wise. Lewi shared Marshall’s attitude toward Judaism, “essentially that of the American Jew of German origin who thought of himself as an American of Jewish faith.”⁹³ However, Marshall’s attitude evolved into that of a non-Zionist, “using his mediation skills to close the gap between the ideologies of the non-Zionist and the political philosophies of the Zionist.”⁹⁴ *The Jewish World* folded at the end of 1904. As historian Jacob Rader Marcus explained, “the East Side throngs distrusted almost everything that was controlled by the ‘German’ elite.”⁹⁵ Or, as Lucy Dawidowicz put it, “The *Jewish World* failed because it could not encompass the worlds of uptown and downtown. Jews in America were

[sic], Tenn., where he will act as special correspondent of the New York Tribune.” See “Personal Mention,” *Argus* (Albany, NY) (18 April 1898): 5. Also see “Lewi Funeral is Tomorrow,” *Knickerbocker News* (Albany) (4 January 1939): 14A: “At the outbreak of the Spanish American War in 1898, Mr. Lewi was sent as correspondent to report military preparations.”

92 Lucy S. Dawidowicz, “Louis Marshall’s Yiddish Newspaper, ‘The Jewish World’: A Study in Contrasts,” *Jewish Social Studies* 25, no. 2 (April 1963): 102.

93 Ibid., 113.

94 Ronald B. Sobel, “A History of New York’s Temple Emanu-El: The Second Half Century,” doctoral dissertation (New York University, 1980), 182.

95 Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1965*, vol. 4 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 417.

divided not merely by the boundaries of the East Side, but by the walls of two cultures and two classes.”⁹⁶

Even as Lewi served on the board of the short-lived Yiddish-language daily newspaper, in October 1903 he assumed the roles of publisher and editor of a distinguished monthly journal, the *New Era Jewish Magazine*, which was founded and edited in Boston by Rabbi Raphael Lasker. Lasker, who had served in synagogues in Ohio and New York before becoming spiritual leader of Temple Ohabei Shalom in Boston, returned to New York shortly before his death in 1904 after being in “poor health for several years.”⁹⁷ Once transferred to Lewi and New York,⁹⁸ the magazine’s name was changed, slightly but significantly, to *New Era Illustrated Magazine*; despite the alteration, its focus was decidedly on Jewish affairs and matters of interest to Jewish readers across the broader cultural spectrum. Lewi’s intentions were made clear in a letter sent to the Hungarian scholar Ignac Goldziher, explaining that “The magazine has been under new management ... and we are, naturally, anxious to know whether our efforts in the direction of making it a good, wholesome periodical, of interest to Jewish readers, have been successful.”⁹⁹ Despite Lewi’s efforts to sustain the monthly, it, too, folded, evidently in 1905.

In the first decade of the 1900s, Lewi’s role at the *Tribune* evolved from reporter to editorialist, one of the crew of writers who contributed the unsigned opinion articles appearing on its editorial page. Throughout those years, the newspaper published a series of anti-Zionist essays identically matching Lewi’s views, so his authorship can be assumed. In 1903, a *Tribune* editorial lauding Wise argued that the growth of the Zionist movement “has always been regarded by many Jews as

96 Dawidowicz, “Marshall’s Yiddish Newspaper,” 124.

97 “The Rev. Dr. Raphael Lasker Dead,” *New York Tribune* (14 September 1904): 8. The detail of Lasker’s obituary in Lewi’s *New York Tribune* suggests his hand in its preparation.

98 Offices of the *New Era Illustrated Magazine* were at 38 Park Row, a short walk from Lewi’s office at the Tribune Building on what was known then as Newspaper Row.

99 Letter signed “The New Era Illustrated Magazine” to Dr. Ignatz Goldziher, 24 February 1904, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, <http://real-ms.mtak.hu/9625/> (accessed 30 January 2021).

based on sentimentality and illogical theories.”¹⁰⁰ In 1910, under the headline “Decadent Zionism,” an editorial observed that “The American Jew who looks upon this country as his Zion has no sympathy with the men who preach Jewish nationalism and who would go beyond the United States for a home.”¹⁰¹

In 1905 Lewi was on assignment in Washington for the *Tribune* and, with time to spare, decided to call on William Loeb, the secretary to President Theodore Roosevelt. Loeb, like Lewi, was born and raised in Albany, although a generation later; Lewi described him as “my townsman and friend.” After waiting for the president to complete his formal appointments, the pair joined Roosevelt in what Lewi called “his sanctum.”

I knew Mr. Roosevelt when he was Police Commissioner [1894], and over my desk in the old city room there hung for a long time a piece of the fake bomb which he gave me, as souvenir of the excitement caused by its discovery. I knew him in the early days of the Spanish War when I was sent by the *Tribune* to see the stage set and the curtain rise on that opera bouffe episode. And when he was Governor we made the trip to Albany in company on many Sunday mornings, he to return to his duties and I to visit my mother.¹⁰²

During the White House meeting, Roosevelt—unaware of Loeb’s friendship with Lewi—asked his secretary whether he knew “Lewi of the *Tribune*,” and was told that indeed, he, Loeb, knew the entire Lewi family and had attended school “with at least half a dozen of the Lewi children.”

“Why,” said Roosevelt, turning to me, “how many are you?” “Well, Mr. President,” said I, “I have eight sisters and they each have six brothers.” Roosevelt arose halfway out of his chair and said: “The hell you say,” and then laughed as he put his fingers together and made fourteen.

100 “After Fifty Years,” *New York Tribune* (27 September 1903): 8.

101 “Decadent Zionism,” *New York Tribune* (3 July 1910): 6.

102 Isidor Lewi, “A T.R. Recollection,” *New York Herald Tribune* (29 October 1933): A11.

Theodore Roosevelt had nothing particularly to do at that time, except to be President of the United States, but he found time a few days later to send, through Loeb, a portrait of himself to my mother, which he inscribed:

To Mrs. Joseph Lewi

With Congratulations to Her as the Mother of Fourteen Children¹⁰³

As Lewi's professional life continued to advance, his personal life, too, would undergo change. Back in 1880, on 26 March, *The New York Times* had reported what it described as "A Brilliant Jewish Wedding"¹⁰⁴ between Lewis May, a fifty-six-year-old widower, wealthy financier, and president of Temple Emanu-El, to Emita Wolff, the twenty-seven-year-old Venezuelan-born daughter of a West Indian merchant who brought his family to New York when Emita was two "in order that his children might enjoy the benefit of the better school" in the city.¹⁰⁵ Officiating at the marriage ceremony had been Rabbi Gustav Gottheil of Temple Emanu-El. When May died seventeen years later, on 22 July 1897, he left behind a trust for Emita, with the capital to be distributed at her death to his surviving children, but providing a base distribution to her of \$18,000 a year (the equivalent of about \$600,000 in today's dollars).¹⁰⁶ Over the next few years, there began a quiet courtship between Emita and Lewi. On 21 November 1902, Emita gathered with her lawyers to complete a trust deed distributing the capital of her trust

103 Ibid. According to birth records collected by Lewi, these are the fourteen children of Joseph and Bertha Lewi: Isidor Lewi (9 May 1850); Wilhelmine Lewi (16 September 1851); Eduard (15 March 1853); Jeanette Lewi (10 October 1854); Auguste Anna Lewi (22 February 1856); Moritz (Maurice) Lewi (1 December 1857); Martha Washington Lewi (4 July 1859); Louise Lewi (4 November 1860); Theodor Lewi (4 February 1862); Franklin Louis Lewi (27 October 1863); Anna Sophie Lewi (2 September 1865); Laura N. Lewi (2 May 1867); Alice Lewi (4 October 1868); Wilhelm Grant Lewi (23 March 1870). Isidor Lewi Correspondence, SC-7156, AJA.

104 "A Brilliant Jewish Wedding," *New York Times* (26 March 1880): 8.

105 "Mrs. Emita May Lewi Dies in Her 80th Year," *New York Times* (24 January 1931): 14.

106 Record of Wills, 1665–1916; Index to Wills, 1662–1923 (New York County); New York. Surrogate's Court (New York County); New York, NY.

inheritance to her three surviving children,¹⁰⁷ and five days later, on 26 November, she married Lewi at the Madison Avenue residence of Gottheil—now Temple Emanu-El's rabbi emeritus—who officiated at the ceremony. *The New York Times*, describing the couple as “well-known in Jewish society circles of the city,” reported that many of their close friends were surprised to learn of the wedding, adding that there were several intimate acquaintances of Emita's family at her residential hotel, but none of them had heard of the wedding until several hours after it was solemnized.¹⁰⁸ According to the *Tribune*, “The couple started at once for Albany,” where Lewi's widowed mother, Bertha, still resided.¹⁰⁹ There, the Lewi family presented Emita with several presents, including a “silver pitcher and tray, fruit dish, decanter and small bonbon dish.”¹¹⁰

On 20 June 1914, Lewi, Emita, and her maid sailed for Europe.¹¹¹ On what would have been roughly their day of arrival, 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife Sophie were assassinated in Sarajevo, raising the curtain on World War I. On 29 July 1914, the *New York Tribune* carried a front-page story from Vienna, un-bylined but very likely written by Lewi, reporting a war manifesto proclaimed by Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph. “The city is absolutely without news to-night of the movements of the troops, which the papers are naturally forbidden to print,” according to the article. “A sharp censorship has been established over the press and all means of communication. A great, quiet crowd which constantly increased in numbers, assembled before the War Ministry, and cheers greeted the appearance of military officers and officials of the Ministry.”¹¹² Lewi remained in Europe

107 Last Will and Testament of Emita May Lewi, 1 March 1923; New York. Surrogate's Court (New York County); New York, NY.

108 “Mrs. Lewis May Married,” *New York Times* (27 November 1902): 9. At the time of their marriage, bachelor Isidor Lewi was 52, widow Emita May was 51.

109 “Weddings Past and to Come,” *New York Tribune* (27 November 1902) 9. Bertha Lewi died in Albany 15 February 1914.

110 Last Will and Testament of Emita May Lewi.

111 Emergency Passport Application, Volume 169: Germany, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC (hereafter NARA).

112 “Francis Joseph Issues Manifesto; Addresses His People on Reasons Why He Has Grasped the Sword,” *New York Tribune* (29 July 1914): 1.



Emita Lewi
(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)

as war approached, and on 1 August, the day Germany declared war against Russia, he formally applied for a U.S. passport at the American Consulate in Frankfurt, Germany. The consul general noted that Lewi, described on the application as an assistant editor at the *Tribune*, had fully identified himself. That same day, Germany began the mobilization of its army, which advanced into Luxembourg.¹¹³ On 3 August—the day Germany declared war against France—Lewi was granted his passport.¹¹⁴

Lewi remained in Frankfurt during these events, chronicling them for a full-page *Tribune* article that appeared in late September. “When the mobilization orders were posted in Germany and men in all walks of life left their various spheres of activity to answer the call,” he wrote, “there were in the city of Frankfurt and in the summer resorts and cure places in its vicinity about 900 Americans, all anxious to get away.”¹¹⁵ Frankfurt streets became quiet, Lewi continued, with reduced automobile traffic.

The comparative quiet was broken many times every day by squads of recruits marching, dangling their uniform bundles, to the various headquarters where clerks, porters, physicians, actors, lawyers and men of all trades and professions were transformed into members of the great fighting force, where they lost their identity and became numbers. But they marched with a light step, responded to the cheers with which they were greeted and sang the national anthem with a vim born of enthusiasm.¹¹⁶

Years later, Lewi recalled the days in Frankfurt when he volunteered to assist the American consul general, Heaton W. Harris, with the “multitude of Americans marooned” in the German city at the outbreak of war:

One day, when the crowd of Americans seeking passports and information as to where letters of credit on England might be honored had dwindled, Harris and I went to a nearby restaurant, where I ordered

113 David Fromkin, *Europe's Last Summer* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 238.

114 Emergency Passport Application, NARA.

115 Isidor Lewi, “When Mobilization Orders reached Frankfurt-on-Main,” *New York Tribune* (27 September 1914): D2.

116 Ibid.

“Frankfurter-Wuerstel” [sausage]. The waiter corrected my order, saying that I evidently wanted “wiener-wuerstel.” With our coffee came brown Straeusel-Kuchen [crumb cake]. Calling into action my very best German, I asked the waiter where one could find even better cake than that which he had served. To speak English at that time and place was to take a great risk, so in answering, the waiter leaned low over and whispered, in perfect English, “The best place I know is on Third Avenue near Fifty-eighth street.”¹¹⁷

An Active Retirement

Now in formal but active retirement, Lewi maintained close ties with both journalism and the two publications to which he had devoted decades of journalistic work: *The American Israelite* and the *New York Tribune*. In 1920 he took advantage of his links to both newspapers with a *Tribune* editorial he wrote¹¹⁸ in observance of Temple Emanu-El’s seventy-fifth anniversary.¹¹⁹ Turning to a familiar theme, he noted that the synagogue was “one of the first to Americanize” and its leaders had upheld the notion “that no man can be a good Jew who is not a good citizen and the advocates of Jewish nationalism found little support in the Temple Emanu-El.” Once more turning to the words of Wise, Lewi wrote:

“[W]hen the wave of Jewish nationalism was high, Rabbi Wise said the reform Jew represented the “sentiment of American Judaism,” with none of the “idiosyncrasies of the late immigrants,” and declared: “America is our Zion. Here, in the home of religious liberty we have aided in founding this new Zion, the fruition of the beginning laid

117 Isidor Lewi, “The Hot Dog Mystery,” *New York Tribune* (4 June 1931): 26.

118 In 1930, in a letter to the editor of *The American Israelite*, Lewi acknowledged that he had written the *Tribune* editorial that was later reprinted in the *Israelite*. See Isidor Lewi, “Ten Years Ago,” *American Israelite* (21 March 1930): 5.

119 Isidor Lewi became affiliated with Temple Emanu-El in 1903 and in 1906 joined the synagogue’s religious school committee, associating in the following years with members of Emanu-El’s lay and religious leadership (including Adolph Ochs, who joined the board of trustees in 1916).

in the old. The mission of Judaism is spiritual, not political; its aim is not to establish a state but to spread truths of religion and humanity throughout the world.”¹²⁰

A few days after Lewi’s editorial appeared in the *Tribune*, it was reprinted in full in *The American Israelite*.¹²¹

In 1927 Lewi was present for yet another of Temple Emanu-El’s milestones when it held its final service at its Moorish-style synagogue at 43rd Street and Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. Louis Marshall, Lewi’s former associate at *Di Yidishe Velt* and now president of Emanu-El, had explained in 1925, “Sentiment will not enlarge our auditorium, will not fill our pews, will not render our services immune to the ever-growing distractions due to surrounding physical conditions which it is impossible to control.”¹²² The final service in the building was held on 23 July, with a sermon delivered by Emanu-El’s rabbi, Hyman Enelow. “Little groups of members of the congregation stood in the lobby yesterday as though hesitant to leave for the last time,” *The New York Times* reported. “Among them were men and women who had been attendants at the temple a score of years or more, and one man, Isidor Lewi, had been there when the building was dedicated on Sept. 11, 1868.”¹²³ In his published history of Temple Emanu-El and Wise, Lewi very briefly paraphrased the *Times* report, which noted that his “presence at the final service provided the connecting link with the dedication of the abandoned temple.”¹²⁴

Lewi’s thoughts on the link between Wise and Temple Emanu-El continued with his reflections on the design of the congregation’s new synagogue on Fifth Avenue and 65th Street. He began with a question:

120 Isidor Lewi, “The Emanu-El Celebration,” *New York Tribune* (16 April 1920): 12.

121 “Temple Emanu-El’s Diamond Jubilee,” *American Israelite* (22 April 1920): 1.

122 Lewi, *Wise and Emanu-El*, 81.

123 “Last Service Held in Temple Emanu-El,” *New York Times* (24 July, 1927): 18.

124 Ibid. In his book, Lewi wrote: “In its account of the last service in the Temple the *New York Times* said: ‘The presence of the Rev. Dr. Jonah B. Wise, whose father preached the dedication sermon September 11th 1868, and of Isidor Lewi, who was present on that occasion, were the connecting links with the dedication and the abandonment of the Temple.’” See Lewi, *Wise and Emanu-El*, 83–84.

“Who worships in this magnificent Temple?”

In his consecration sermon Isaac M. Wise visualized a stranger in the metropolis, standing at Fifth Avenue and 43rd Street, looking at the beautiful and unusual Moorish structure, the latest addition to the imposing houses of worship in New York. Wise answered the imaginary though pertinent query by saying: “A congregation of Israelites. God has brought them to praise and to fame among all the peoples of the city.” He who looks upon the architectural trinity which constitutes the new Temple Emanu-El will not ask “Who worships in that magnificent building?” because on both of its fronts Hebrew characters deeply cut into the stone answer: “This is a Jewish house of worship and those who have called it into being are proud of having it known as such.”¹²⁵

The ceremonial laying of Emanu-El’s cornerstone on 4 May 1928 was carried out by the synagogue’s president, Marshall, who, as quoted by Lewi, said the building would “symbolize Monotheism and the deathless story of Israel.”¹²⁶ Marshall died the following year; his funeral at Temple Emanu-El on 24 September 1929 was the first service held in the building, in advance of the planned opening service on Rosh Hashanah, 4 October 1929. “Here,” proclaimed Rabbi Nathan Krass, “we do not shun the new knowledge, but strive to blend the old faith with the modern culture.”¹²⁷ Among a small group of children participating in the formal dedication ceremony of Temple Emanu-El on 10 January 1930 was Marian Effie Sulzberger, one of Wise’s great-granddaughters.¹²⁸

Even as Temple Emanu-El’s congregation settled into its new Fifth Avenue building, it began to develop plans for a new hall honoring Wise—plans led and supported by his son-in-law, Ochs.¹²⁹ Dedication ceremonies were set for 29 March 1930, marking the 111th anniversary

125 Lewi, *Wise and Emanu-El*, 90–91.

126 *Ibid.*, 92.

127 “Temple Emanu-El Dedicated to Faith,” *New York Times* (5 October 1929): 24.

128 “2,500 at Dedication of Temple Emanu-El,” *New York Times* (11 January 1930): 23. Marian Effie Sulzberger married the future *Times* publisher Orvil Dryfoos in 1941 and became a director of the *Times* in 1963.

129 Rich, “Adolph S. Ochs,” 51.

of the rabbi's birth. In advance of that date, Ochs agreed with Lewi to finance a publication recording the historic links between Emanu-El and Wise. Lewi accepted the assignment enthusiastically; he saw it as an opportunity to review Wise's relationship with the synagogue, to record the life story of the rabbi, and also to call attention to Wise's first wife, Therese, whom Lewi believed had been ignored in the annals of the Wise family.¹³⁰ But in November 1929, Ochs, believing that Lewi's ambitious biographical plans had gone far beyond anything the publisher had anticipated, commented, "I should prefer that all the family feature of it and the biographical part be omitted, except perhaps a brief sketch of Dr. Wise."¹³¹ By February, as the dedication of the Wise Memorial Hall approached, Ochs determined to wash his hands of the entire project. "I have decided," he explained to Lewi, "that it is too voluminous and would entail a needless expenditure of money—though I appreciate the fact that a great deal of time and money have already been spent on it."¹³² "Lewi responded angrily to Ochs, "[Y]ou have made a scrap of my work," adding, "what you gave me to believe would develop into a thing worthwhile, a bit of sunshine as the snow of age which surrounds me, was only a dream from which you have awakened me, a sadder and a less hopeful man."¹³³ In the end, Lewi bound and distributed fifteen galleys of his book, *Isaac Mayer Wise and Emanu-El*, to a short list of libraries and individuals (with three copies assigned to Ochs).¹³⁴

130 Letter from Isidor Lewi to Adolph S. Ochs, 10 November 1929, Box 20, 20–21, New York Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

131 Letter from Adolph Ochs to Isidor Lewi, 11 November 1929, Box 20, 20–21, New York Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

132 Letter from Adolph Ochs to Isidor Lewi, 7 February 1930, Box 20, 20–21, New York Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

133 Letter from Isidor Lewi to Adolph Ochs, 30 February 1930, Box 20, 20–21, New York Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

134 The copy donated to the New York Public Library enclosed a card bearing the photograph and signature of Isidor Lewi (in his distinctive green ink), along with the following

At the same time as Lewi was writing his memorial volume in late 1929, he was tending to his ailing wife, Emita. "My every spare hour," he wrote to Ochs, "is spent at home because of Mrs. Lewi's illness." Emita died on 23 January 1931; the funeral service was conducted at Temple Emanu-El by its rabbi, Nathan Krass, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, whose brother, Joseph H. Wise, was married to one of Emita's daughters. Wise read to the mourners instructions written by Emita shortly before her death: "I want no eulogy delivered. If my life cannot speak for me, I do not desire any praise."¹³⁵ In her will, Emita left her wedding ring and household possessions to Lewi, but the wealth she inherited from her first husband, Lewis May, was transferred to her surviving children. She did set aside a bank account for Lewi's benefit, but the informal bequest was successfully challenged by Emita's legal heirs.¹³⁶ As a result, Lewi was left impoverished and forced to plead with Ochs for "a job of any kind."¹³⁷ In August 1933 he received an eviction notice from the Upper East Side hotel where he had lived for years with Emita,¹³⁸ and he wrote to Ochs for support, noting that he was moving to a less-expensive boarding house.¹³⁹ Ochs quickly replied that he had

statement: "Blessed with the companionship of a noble wife, good health, friends of the real type—ideals, love for the beautiful and appreciation of all that makes for the betterment of the world unshattered—with abiding faith in my fellow-men and in the triumph of righteousness, I look back upon four-score yesteryears, grateful to a beneficent [*sic*] God, contented with the present and hopeful of the future." In his history of Temple Emanu-El, Rabbi Ronald Sobel noted, "Lewi's book is rare and, consequently, difficult to obtain." See Ronald B. Sobel, *A History of New York's Temple Emanu-El: The Second Half Century*, 21.

135 "Many at Funeral of Mrs. Isidor Lewi," *New York Times* (26 January 1931): 15.

136 Letter from Isidor Lewi to Adolph Ochs, 28 August 1933, Box 20, 20–21, New York Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

137 Note from Isidor Lewi to Adolph S. Ochs, n.d., Box 20, 20–21, New York Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

138 Hotel Croydon Inter-Office Correspondence, 8 August 1933, Box 20, 20–21, New York Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

139 Letter from Isidor Lewi to Adolph S. Ochs, 16 August 1933, Box 20, 20–21, New York Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

thought the May family was paying Lewi's rent and providing him with an allowance, and outlined plans to contact Lewi's friends and family to establish a pension fund, adding "It is no disgrace, and need not be humiliating, that, having reached the age of eighty-four, having no means of support, and unable to secure employment, you allow your friends and those interested in your well-being to aid in creating such a fund."¹⁴⁰ Lewi declined the offer, concerned that it would suggest that Emita had failed to provide for him. Eventually a monthly pension was established for Lewi with modest contributions from Emita's daughters, Lewi's family, his lifelong Albany friend Simon Rosendale, and Ochs. The amount was sufficient to allow him to return to his longtime residence on East 86th Street.

Lewi, now in his ninth decade, continued his work, persistently describing himself as a "newspaperman" or, in one biographical sketch, "editorial writer (emeritus)."¹⁴¹ In early February 1932, a visiting journalist had described him as "a newspaper man, who at eighty-two, declares that he is 'still in the game and expects to furnish copy until he feels old.'"¹⁴²

Lewi's friend and Isaac Mayer Wise's eldest son, Leo Wise, had been editor and publisher of *The American Israelite* for thirty years before retiring in 1928. He, too, seemed compelled to continue chronicling stories in his retirement. Three years before Wise died, he and Lewi were vacationing together when Wise, who had been ill, took a turn for the worse:

For two days his life was despaired of, and when signs of improvement came, when the hand of death had not yet relaxed its hold, he sat in his bed and told me and his faithful valet the story of a man who, in an ocean liner, had once asked him whether all Americans advertise their

140 Letter from Adolph Ochs to Isidor Lewi, 18 August 1933, Box 20, 20–21, New York Times Company records, Adolph S. Ochs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

141 John Simons, ed., *Who's Who in American Jewry 1938–1939* (New York: National News Association, 1 January 1939), 648.

142 "Reporter Recalls Lincoln Campaign," *New York Evening Post* (12 February 1932): 2.

religious faith on their visiting cards, because Leo Wise's card bore the words "American Israelite" in the lower left corner.¹⁴³

Leo Wise died in Cincinnati on 27 January 1933. In 1933 Lewi penned a wistful epitaph for "his oldest friend," just seven months older than Lewi:

Born in the same house in Albany, at about the same time, of parents whose close friendship antedated our coming by many years, we were companions in youth, shared joys and sorrows, and through the many years that followed were so closely bound that we could, and did, disagree at many times without impairing the relationship.¹⁴⁴

The Final Years

Isidor Lewi had witnessed firsthand wars and conflicts from his earliest years, and now, as the 1930s advanced, he began to detect the grim signs in Germany that would lead to World War II. In May 1933, the Nazi Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick, at a conference of German state government ministers, had spoken of the nation's language, "whose purity," he declared, "is not always cared for as much as possible. Even government offices employ superfluous Fremdwörter [foreign words]," he continued, "which plainly endanger the comprehension of language among wide sections of the people."¹⁴⁵ The *New York*

143 Ibid.

144 Isidor Lewi, "A Tribute to Leo Wise. A Lifetime Friend Recalls the Editor's Personality," *New York Times* (30 January 1933): 12. In a letter to Leo's brother, Isidor Wise, four years earlier, Lewi wrote much the same after being advised of Leo's illness: "Sorry, beyond power of expression to hear about Leo—Be sure and remember me to him and say that—it seems strange not to consult him at a time when Israelite copy is required. Of course, I know that no one could do better than you, but I want Leo to know that I am thinking of him. And why should I not? He is my oldest friend and our friendship has been of a nature so real that we remain friends though each has told the other, many times truths which would have destroyed superficial friendship." Letter from Isidor Lewi to Isidor Wise, 27 September 1929, Isidor Lewi Correspondence, SC-7156, AJA. Wise, writer and associate editor of *The American Israelite*, died on 15 November 1929, less than two months after receiving Lewi's note.

145 Thomas Y. Levin, "Nationalities of Language: Adorno's Fremdwörter; An Introduction to 'On the Question: What is German?'" *New German Critique* 36 (1985): 118–119, fn12.

Tribune's successor newspaper, the *New York Herald Tribune*, to which Lewi remained closely attuned, commented, "It is not surprising to learn that the Nazis have finally got around to the 'purification' of the German language. Aggressive nationalism is always resentful of the fluid and ever-changing character of human speech."¹⁴⁶ Lewi quickly replied in a letter:

The Herald Tribune's editorial "The German Language Undefined," correctly forecasts the futility of the Hitler plan to ban all un-German from the German language. The various edicts, laws and strongarm methods aimed by Hitler toward the creation of a 100 per cent German Germany have been novelties, but expunging from its lexicon words not strictly German was a fantastic experiment many years ago under the leadership of men of high standing in the German literary world. The pulpit, press, schools and army were enlisted in the fight against Fremdwort, but to no appreciable effect.¹⁴⁷

A few weeks later, in another letter to the *Herald Tribune*, Lewi returned to the Nazis' language policy, but now with a broader concern: the burning of books.

When the works of Auerbach, Lessing, Heine, Kompert, Mendelssohn, Mosenthal, Hartmann, Einstein and others were burned amid jeers and the singing of hymns of hate, the German in them was not questioned, but the writers were of the people whence came the Decalogue and the Psalms, who preach peace on earth, whose goal is human brotherhood.¹⁴⁸

On 11 April 1936, in a dispatch from its correspondent in Berlin, the *Herald Tribune* reported that the German poet and playwright Goethe

is ruled out completely from a new reader for elementary schools which is to be made a compulsory textbook in Germany after Easter, but positions of distinction in it have been accorded to Chancellor Adolf Hitler,

146 "The German Language Undefined," *New York Herald Tribune* (1 July 1933): 8.

147 Isidor Lewi, "Tenacious Fremdwort," *New York Herald Tribune* (4 July 1933): 8.

148 Isidor Lewi, "'Pure German' Language," *New York Herald Tribune* (6 August 1933): A6.

Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, and General Hermann Wilhelm Goering, Prussian Premier and German Minister for Air.¹⁴⁹

Immediately taking pen to hand, Lewi sent a letter to the newspaper, asking, "But why the Goethe ban? He was not a Jew—as yet he has not been openly denounced as one."¹⁵⁰ Months later, the same newspaper reported the Nazis' destruction of a statue of composer Felix Mendelssohn that had stood in front of Leipzig's Gewandhaus concert hall, where Mendelssohn had once served as the orchestra's music director.¹⁵¹ The *Herald Tribune* commented editorially that the destruction of the statue "is one of the most pitifully small-minded things that the Hitler regime has done to make 'aryanism' contemptible in the sight of the civilized world,"¹⁵² to which Lewi responded:

When the works of Moritz Hartmann, Leopold Kompert, Mendelssohn, Mosenthal, Einstein and others, with Lessing and Heine thrown in for good measure, were taken from the public library and from off the shelves in private residences and burned publicly in Munich, amid jeers and songs of hate, the civilized world witnessed an act of vandalism the recollection of which makes the destruction of the Mendelssohn monument a natural sequence. And one wonders what next.¹⁵³

Lewi had lived his days acutely aware of his cultural and religious heritage, and was committed to the ideals and principles he had inherited and had learned as a child. In 1937, his friend, Albany native, lawyer, and politician Simon Rosendale, died at the age of 94. He was, Lewi wrote, "above all a Jew. If the chronicle of his earthly journey were to

149 Ralph W. Barnes, "Reader Drops Goethe Poems," *New York Herald Tribune* (11 April 1936): 1.

150 Isidor Lewi, "Goethe Banned at Easter," *New York Herald Tribune* (19 April 1936) A7.

151 "Raze Mendelssohn's Statue Because He Was a Jew," *New York Herald Tribune* (15 November 1936): 1.

152 "Where Laughter is Treason," *New York Herald Tribune* (16 November 1936): 14.

153 Isidor Lewi, "The Mendelssohn Statue," *New York Herald Tribune* (22 November 1936): A15.

be preserved, it would have been his wish—those [who] knew him best think—that his name be counted among those who, by precept and example, added lust[er] to American Judaism.”¹⁵⁴ The same might have been said of Lewi. Deeply influenced by Isaac M. Wise, he maintained throughout his life a commitment to an “Americanized” Judaism and opposition to a Jewish homeland. At the same time, he appeared at least on good terms with one of the leading Reform Zionists of his time, Gustav Gottheil, the rabbi of Temple Emanu-El who volunteered his Upper East Side home for Lewi’s secretive marriage to Emita in May 1902.¹⁵⁵

Months after Lewi questioned “what next?” in his troubled letter to the *Herald Tribune* and as Hitler’s grip on Germany and elsewhere continued to tighten, American Reform rabbis met in Columbus, Ohio, and produced a new statement of principles on 27 May 1937.¹⁵⁶ Among other things, The Columbus Platform, as it became known, reversed the anti-Zionist posture long held by Reform Judaism, by

154 Isidor Lewi, “Simon W. Rosendale,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, 35 (1939): 321. In a 1929 letter to Isidor Wise, Lewi provided further details of his close ties to Rosendale: “Simon Rosendale is my dear friend. He was dear to my parents and when my sister Minna and brother [-in-law Herman Bendell] celebrated their Golden wedding, Simon who was present when your father tied the matrimonial knot, was the only person present who was not a member of the Lewi family. Twelve of the fourteen Lewi children sat at the board and Simon spoke feelingly of the unique gathering and of his unbroken friendship through four generations.” Isidor Lewi Correspondence, SC-7156, AJA.

155 Rabbi Gottheil also presided over Emita’s 1880 wedding to Lewis May, so Lewi’s relationship with Gottheil may well have been based on Emita’s decades-old links with the rabbi. In 1893, Lewi included Gottheil among the “Notable Jews” he profiled, writing, “From the time of his coming to America till the present day Dr. Gottheil, by virtue of the high standing of his congregation, and because of his liberality and his acknowledged scholarship has occupied a high position in New York.” Isidor Lewi, “Notable Jews—IV. Dr. Gustav Gottheil,” *Frank Leslie’s Weekly* (9 February 1893): 87. As historian Jonathan D. Sarna notes, Gottheil outlined a clearly anti-Zionist position in a speech the same year Lewi published his profile, 1893, but changed his mind four years later “and became vice-president of the Federation of American Zionists as well as a staunch supporter of Theodor Herzl.” See Sarna, “Converts to Zionism,” 188.

156 “Rabbis in Conference Back ‘Labor’s Rights,’” *New York Times* (28 May 1937): 13.

Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, and by his close disciples. The Columbus Platform declared:

In the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes, we behold the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.¹⁵⁷

As historian Jonathan D. Sarna notes, a group of Reform rabbis and laymen organized a “hugely controversial” anti-Zionist organization, the American Council for Judaism, in 1942. But by then, Sarna adds, “Reform Judaism had successfully reinvented itself, accommodating Zionism, a commitment to Jewish peoplehood, and many traditional customs and ceremonies as well.”¹⁵⁸

In the final days of 1938 and of what would be his life, Lewi received a note from Islay F. McCormick, the headmaster of the Albany Academy from which Lewi had graduated decades earlier. “Are you having a pleasant winter?” asked McCormick, to which the eighty-eight-year-old answered in the affirmative. “When one reaches my age, which is the deep Winter of Life,” he wrote, “the sunshine, the devotion of friends, the faith in God’s inscrutable wisdom; having ideals, love of the beautiful and belief in the triumph of righteousness unshattered—make the journey to the setting sun pleasant.”¹⁵⁹ In the last week of December 1938, Lewi set out for home after a visit with friends. A bitter wind swept the city, ushering in frigid weather after hours of seasonally mild temperatures. As Lewi struggled toward his home in the Hotel Croydon on East 86th Street he lost his footing, fell, and fractured his femur. He was taken to the Hospital for Joint Diseases [originally the Jewish Hospital for Deformities and Joint

157 “The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism, ‘The Columbus Platform—1937,’” Central Conference of Reform Judaism, <https://www.ccarnet.org/rabbinic-voice/platforms/article-guiding-principles-reform-judaism/> (accessed 8 February 2021).

158 Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 254.

159 “Lewi’s Last Letter,” *Albany Times Union* (26 February 1939): A11.

Diseases] on Madison Avenue in nearby Harlem. He remained there for two days and, according to reports, was “sufficiently improved” to return home to see in the new year. Despite his quick recovery, pneumonia set in, and just after midnight on 3 January 1939, Lewi died. The *Herald Tribune* marked his passing with a lengthy obituary, noting that following his reporting from Frankfurt at the outbreak of World War I, Lewi, in his late sixties, “then decided to come home himself, and retired from active newspaper work. He continued to contribute to the paper, though his articles became more and more infrequent. He never severed his connection with the staff nor gave up his mailbox in the editorial rooms.”¹⁶⁰ At the funeral service, Rabbi Samuel H. Goldenson of Temple Emanuel-El commented that Lewi “presented a kind of paradox. He was frail of body, short of stature and yet one could not be with him five minutes without realizing that there was a robust spirit dwelling within him and a majesty of soul. He had courage and strength and never yielded to the temptations of inactivity and despondency.”¹⁶¹ In his handwritten will, Lewi had requested the “funeral to be simple as possible. Burial, next to my wife.” He left his possessions to Emita’s daughters, Fanny Schafer and Josephine Wise, citing their “daughterly and never-failing devotion.”¹⁶² His estate consisted of \$162 in cash and possessions valued at \$93.¹⁶³

Lewi’s death was the closing scene for a man who was both on the stage of history as a player and in the audience as a witness to the events and personalities that shaped nearly nine decades and spanned two centuries. According to one account, he “saw” all the U.S. presidents from Lincoln to Franklin D. Roosevelt, with the exception

160 “Isidor Lewi, 88, Dies, Veteran of Tribune Staff; Reporter, Correspondent, Editorial Writer Active on Paper Many Years,” *New York Herald Tribune* (3 January 1939): 12.

161 “Services for Isidor Lewi, Veteran Journalist, Held,” *New York Herald Tribune* (6 January 1939): 14.

162 Last Will and Testament of Isidor Lewi, 7 October 1938; New York. Surrogate’s Court (New York County); New York, New York.

163 Ibid.

of Warren G. Harding.¹⁶⁴ Yet the essential focus of his life was the Judaism of his ancestors and of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, particularly Wise's intense support of an American Judaism and his intense opposition to the creation of a Jewish state. The attitude of Reform Judaism toward Zionism evolved during Lewi's lifetime, from the stern opposition typified in Wise's reaction to the declaration of the First Zionist Congress in 1897 to the Columbus Platform of 1937. However, among Wise's closest disciples, Lewi was not among the converts to Zionism, as they became known, and his attitude, like that of Wise, remained unchanged to the end, even as he worriedly assessed the antisemitic eruptions of Hitler's Germany. While never among the "Uptown" Jewish elite of German heritage, Lewi was closely associated with many of them, from banker Lewis May, the long-time president of Temple Emanu-El (whose widow Lewi married) to attorney Louis Marshall, who also served as president of Temple Emanu-El and came to see Zionism as a movement "of tremendous importance, worthy of serious, patient and sympathetic study and investigation."¹⁶⁵ Unmoved by such changing attitudes, Lewi's contribution lay otherwise: In Albany, Cincinnati, New York City, and many other locales, he had chronicled his first-hand observations of history and especially the history of Reform Judaism in the making. They remain a legacy of continuing worth.

164 "Isidor Lewi Dead; Long A Journalist," *New York Times* (3 January 1939): 17. Other widely published obituary claims ("wrote press notices for Mark Twain and for General Lew Wallace") are unproven. Lewi's only available link to Wallace is his 1887 letter to the author [see fn 47]; his only available link to Twain is a scrap of paper signed by Twain on 6 March 1906, inscribed to Isidor Lewi along with an aphorism from Twain's 1897 travelogue, *Following the Equator*: "Truth is the most valuable thing we have. Let us economise it." "SLC to Isidor Lewis [*sic*]," 6 March 1906, New York, NY, *Union Catalog of Clemens Letters*, ed. Paul Machlis (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 11645.

165 Louis Marshall, "Letters from People," *American Israelite* (5 September 1907): 7.

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Family photo taken before leaving Lithuania in 1921. Clockwise, Riva Goldberg; Marvin, 2; Meyer, 9; Annette, 7; Bill, 4; and David, 10.
(Courtesy Hollace Ava Weiner)

From Lithuania to Lorain, Ohio: Remembering my Grandfather, “The Sabbath- Observant Jew... Whose Name is Memorialized in a Catholic Hospital”

HOLLACE AVA WEINER

Zalman Shazar, the journalist and diplomat who became the third president of Israel, marveled that my immigrant grandfather, Shraga Feivel Goldberg, maintained an Orthodox way of life in Lorain, Ohio, a steel town thirty miles west of Cleveland on the shores of Lake Erie.

Every Shabbos, he closed his grocery at sundown and reopened twenty-four hours later, advertising “Sat. Nite Specials” of eggs (twenty-one cents a dozen) and bread (six cents a loaf).¹ Since arriving in the Midwest in 1921, Goldberg, whom I affectionately called Zayde, had subscribed for twenty-nine years to *Der Tog*, the New York Yiddish daily that billed itself as the “newspaper for the Jewish Intelligentsia,” the tabloid that he, his wife, and six children avidly read. When Goldberg died in 1950 at age sixty-three, his eldest son visited *Der Tog*’s office on the Lower East Side to inform them of his father’s death and to renew the subscription in his own name. Shazar, then a freelance writer and Israeli Knesset member, happened to be staffing the editorial desk that

1 This article is drawn from oral histories, research, and correspondence in a privately printed family history by Hollace Ava Weiner, *From Lithuania to Lorain: A Jewish Journey. The First Generation of Goldbergs in America* (Fort Worth, TX: Gold Press, 2020). The spark leading to that book was a family tree researched in the 1970s by two cousins, Budd Margolis in London and Zalman Gordon in Haifa. “Sat. Nite Specials,” *Lorain Journal* (4 April 1941). “Specials for Sat. Nite,” *Lorain Journal* (18 April 1941).

afternoon. Fascinated to learn about the *shomer* Shabbos grocer in the Rust Belt, he penned a thousand-word column about this longtime subscriber, a Litvak from a small Great Lakes town that barely registered in the *American Jewish Year Book's* annual Statistics of the Jews. "It's very difficult to be a Jew ... and a businessman," Shazar wrote. "You are enticed and pressured by society to mimic everyone around you."²

Remarkably, my zayde, who anglicized his name from Feivel to Philip, did not alter his religious priorities. Rather, the multicultural mix he encountered in Lorain normalized the Jewish experience. Jews were but one among a dozen immigrant ethnic groups, each with a specific language or dialect, holiday rituals, foods, and seasonings.³ Lorain's

2 Zalman Shazar, "A Jew from Lorain Ohio: The Sabbath-Observant Jew Whose Name is Memorialized in a Catholic Hospital Room," *Der Tog* (18 June 1950): 8. Translated by Rabbi Sidney Zimelman, Fort Worth TX. Shazar, whose given name was Shneur Zalman Rubashov, served as Israel's third president from 1963 to 1973. Born in 1889 in Mir, near Minsk in today's Belarus, he grew up in a Hasidic home, immigrated to British Mandate Palestine in 1924, and was editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Davar* from 1944 to 1949. Elected to the first Knesset in 1949, he was often in New York, camped out at an empty desk at *Der Tog*, using the phone and filing freelance stories about the UN and diplomatic matters pertaining to Israel. He adopted the surname Shazar, an acronym of his birth initials and a Hebrew word that means "standard bearer." He died in 1974 and is buried in Jerusalem on Mount Herzl.

3 Another woman raised in Lorain, Nobel laureate Toni Morrison (1931–2019), was also the daughter of ethnic migrants—from segregated Cartersville, Georgia, and Greenville, Alabama. Her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, published in 1970, is set in Lorain. Reminiscing about the town, the African American novelist recalled living on a block with Italians, Hispanics, and Blacks. She attended racially integrated schools and worked at the public library (which has a reading room named in her honor). "Lorain was neither plantation nor ghetto," she told interviewers. She experienced discrimination when ushered to a separate section at the movies. At the ice cream parlor, her family stood at the counter, never at a table, while devouring double-scoop cones. Yet when she enrolled at historically Black Howard University, she was disappointed, especially when invited to pledge a sorority for light-skinned women. The campus environment did not have the diversity she was accustomed to, nor the sociological complexities through which she had learned to navigate. Tara L. Conley, "In Toni Morrison's Hometown, the Familiar Has Become Foreign," City Lab, 14 August 2019. <https://www.citylab.com/perspective/2019/08/toni-morrison-home-born-lorain-ohio-elyria/596020/> (accessed 7 November 2019). The Nobel laureate's full name was Chloe Anthony Wofford Morrison.

“pluralistic American religious landscape made a place for Jews,” along with Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Hungarian Catholics, African Methodist Episcopal, and Mexican American Catholics.⁴ Pluralism led employees and vendors of the Goldberg Grocery markets to host a wedding shower for Zayde’s daughter at Saint Stanislaus Catholic Church. Although the marriage ceremony and reception were at the synagogue, the dinner for 175 guests was prepared nearby at Saints Peter & Paul Eastern Orthodox Slovak church, where a Cleveland *mashgiach* kashered the kitchen and the bride’s brothers plucked the chickens. “The feathers were flying,” one brother recalled.⁵

This experience illustrates how small-town Jews, with their Yiddish cultural identity intact, “often witnessed cooperation across liturgical and social lines,” reaching a level of acceptance and integration unknown to them in Europe, according to Lee Shai Weissbach, the leading scholar of small-town American Jewish communities. In his seminal 2005 book, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History*, Weissbach takes a macro

4 Noam Pianko, review of Hasia R. Diner’s *How America Met the Jews* in *American Jewish History* 103, no. 3 (July 2019): 378. For discussions of small-town multiculturalism see also Deborah Weiner, *Coalfield Jews: An Appalachian History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Sander L. Gilman and Milton Shain, eds. *Jewries at the Frontier* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Leonard Rogoff, *Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001); Hal Rothman, “‘Same Horse, New Wagon’: Tradition and Assimilation among the Jews of Wichita, 1865–1930,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 15 (Spring 1995): 83–104; Hollace Ava Weiner, “Tied and Tethered (*Geknippt und Gebinden*): Jews in Early Fort Worth,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 106, no. 3 (Jan. 2004): 389–414; Hollace Ava Weiner and Lauraine Miller, “Little Synagogues Across Texas,” 180–205, and Kenneth D. Roseman, “Six-Tenths of a Percent of Texas,” 206–211, in *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, ed. Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press and Texas Jewish Historical Society, 2007); Deborah Y. Bachrach, “Home on the Mesabi Iron Range: Minnesota’s Jewish Cowboys, an Underexplored Niche in Immigration History,” *Western States Jewish History* 51, no. 2 (Spring 2021): 81–107.

5 Bill Goldberg, oral history with the author, his daughter Hollace Weiner, 26 Nov. 1982. The *mashgiach* was Rabbi Sheftel Kramer, a Lithuanian Talmudic scholar on the faculty of the Rabbinical Seminary and College of Talmud in Cleveland. He was among three rabbis who officiated at the wedding. “Miss Goldberg Bride in Colorful Nuptial; Weds Chicago Man in Agudath B’nai Israel Temple,” *Lorain Journal* (17 March 1941): “Society,” 6.

look at Jewish communities off the beaten path. He draws into his sample 490 towns with “triple-digit” Jewish populations, meaning 100 to 999 Jews. That demographic proved large enough to support “robust” Jewish communal life yet too small for Jews to segregate among themselves. As Weissbach looks for patterns, he discerns the “role that Jews played in the economic and civic culture of smaller urban centers.” He describes and defines a “classic era” of small-town American Jewry that extended from the 1890s to 1950, decades of major immigration that overlapped the years that my grandfather and his extended family made new lives in Lorain.⁶

While Weissbach’s research analyzes small-town American Jewry statistically, from a macro vantage point, the journalist Shazar uses a micro lens when he zeroes in on my grandfather and eulogizes the death of a longtime subscriber. Shazar’s column, published 18 June 1950 and headlined “A Jew from Lorain, Ohio,” amplifies Weissbach’s analytical conclusions and underscores Lorain’s significance.

In Lorain, for example, whenever Jews were hospitalized, the nuns at St. Joseph’s Hospital recited vespers at their bedside. The earliest Goldberg in the hospital’s care was a child with an emergency appendectomy. Recovery took weeks. Zayde, then a peddler with a horse and wagon, could not pay the bill. With a dose of Talmudic reasoning, he settled up by painting the hospital interior. Decades later, when St. Joseph’s expanded and the Goldbergs had six mom-and-pop markets, the family donated \$3,000 toward a new hospital wing. The board of directors had a bronze tablet inscribed, “Out of gratitude to Philip Goldberg and his noble wife, this room is dedicated.”⁷ Shazar, in recounting this,

6 Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 1–10, 61, 212, 236, 312–313, 345. The writer is indebted to Weissbach (1947–2022) for his groundbreaking work that provided a framework for this article. Weissbach, a gentle man and generous scholar, died 29 September 2022.

7 “Contributes \$3,000 in Hospital Drive to Show ‘Appreciation’; Goldberg Family Cited by Son,” *Lorain Journal* (24 February 1947). St. Joseph’s Hospital closed in 1997. The building reopened for several years as a community center but was ultimately abandoned and then demolished in 2015. No one among the Goldberg descendants thought to salvage the plaque with the family name. “The Abandoned St. Joseph Hospital of Lorain Ohio,” *Architectural Afterlife*, <https://architecturalafterlife.com/2019/02/abandoned-st-joseph-hospital-ohio/> (accessed 4 January 2022).

highlights the donation's distinctiveness: "The Sabbath-observant Jew ... is memorialized in a Catholic hospital room."⁸

The multicultural interactions in Lorain are but one theme running through both Shazar's contemporaneous eulogy to the Great Lakes grocer and Weissbach's comprehensive historical analysis. Another theme is the overlooked significance of small-town American Jewish life. Immigrants with family and kinship networks created tight-knit Jewish enclaves in whistle-stop towns. Though largely "invisible" in survey literature of American Jewry, Weissbach statistically charts these backroad towns that "dotted the American landscape." They gave small-town Jews a sense of place in America, "a strong sense of rootedness and intimacy," a livelihood, and secular schools for their offspring. These thriving ethnic communities highlight the "often-ignored diversity of small-town society," Weissbach writes. Jewish families such as the Goldbergs of Lorain provide a "window on the history of small-town America in general."⁹ As Shazar writes: "With rare exception, Lorain is typical of many small American cities where Jewish life pulsates."¹⁰

My zayde's Jewish journey from Lithuania to Lorain began during World War I, when Czar Nicholas II expelled 200,000 Jews from northern Lithuania.¹¹ Zayde, with his wife Riva, my bubbe, and their three youngsters trekked from the Baltics to the Black Sea port of Rostov-on-Don, where two more children were born. While Zayde davened daily with other refugees in a neighborhood dubbed Har Zion, his wife and his sister, Chaya Shapiro, supported their combined household by

8 Shazar, "Jew from Lorain, Ohio."

9 Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 1–10, 312–13.

10 Shazar, "Jew from Lorain, Ohio."

11 Sources documenting the czar's decree include "RUSSIA'S EXPULSION OF JEWS; Horrors Wrought by a Decree That Forced 200,000 People at Short Notice to Leave War Zone," *New York Times* (15 August 1915): 58; Anatolij Chayesh, "Expulsion of the Jews from Lithuania in the Spring of 1915," LitvakSIG, Feb. 2000, litvaksig.org/information-and-tools/online-journal/expulsion-of-the-jews-from-lithuania-in-the-spring-of-1915-the (accessed 15 Feb. 2019). Jews in villages closer to the Polish border were not part of the expulsion order. For descriptions of the thousands of Jews fleeing after the expulsion, see Adam Hochschild, *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914–1918* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 156–157.



Riva Goldberg, Lithuania, ca. 1910.
(Courtesy Hollace Ava Weiner)

smuggling Turkish tobacco from the countryside in burlap bags dusted with flour.

Postwar, the families optimistically traveled by train and horse-drawn wagon a thousand miles back to Lithuania and their hometown province of Panevezys. The Goldbergs found their farmhouse occupied by squatters. They ousted the squatters but weeks later endured a home invasion when Cossacks on horseback galloped into the farmhouse. The intruders threw a crying baby on the floor, pulled my bubbe's wedding band off her finger, and emptied sacks of flour, sugar, and grain as they searched in vain for valuables.¹² That night of terror, in January 1921, was the impetus for the family to leave Lithuania for America—four months before newly inaugurated President Warren G. Harding signed the Immigration Restriction Act that established the nation's first foreign-entry quotas. The Goldbergs could still have entered the United States under family-reunification provisions in the new law, but that would have entailed further delays, fees, red tape, and a visa from the American consulate in Kaunas. They arrived at Ellis Island just under the wire.¹³

12 David Goldberg, Meyer Goldberg, Hyman Goldberg, and Annette Goldberg Sohn Hirsch, videotaped oral history with Adrienne Goldberg, Lorain, OH, 5 April 1999. Recording and transcript in possession of author. (Hereafter, Goldberg Siblings Oral History.)

13 President Woodrow Wilson had refused to sign similar restrictive immigration bills. Warren G. Harding called Congress into session specifically to enact the Immigration Restriction Act of 1921, which set immigration quotas at 3 percent of the number of residents from each nation living in the United States in 1910. This restricted the number of new-immigrant visas per year to 350,000. Jared Dangelmayr, "The Immigration Act of 1921," https://prezi.com/-bueoqjlhb_c/immigration-act-of-1921/ (accessed 13 April 2023). Three years later, the more draconian National Origins Immigration Act "imposed country-by-country quotas set at 2 percent of each nation's contribution to the 1890 population of the United States.... Over the next decade (1925–34), an average of only 8,270 Jews were annually admitted ... less than 7 percent of those welcomed when Jewish immigration stood at its peak.... Even parents, siblings and grown children were compelled to await a scarce quota number." Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 215–216. See also, "The Immigration Act of 1924 (Johnson-Reed Act)," Milestones: 1921–1936 - Office of the Historian (state.gov) (accessed 9 November 2021).

The family's destination was Lorain, an industrial port where the Black River empties into Lake Erie, the home of 37,295 people—32 percent of whom were foreign born.¹⁴ Lorain's most distinctive feature was the string of U.S. Steel mills that stretched three miles along the lake's southern shore. The mills produced orange smoke and blue-collar jobs and spawned industries that manufactured everything from toys to ships. Besides industrial jobs, there were ancillary opportunities for fruit peddlers, grocers, clothiers, bookkeepers, and proprietors to service the burgeoning number of industrial, hourly-wage earners.¹⁵ Unlike in America's overcrowded big cities, the Jewish pattern was to become entrepreneurs, not factory or sweat-shop workers.¹⁶

The magnet pulling the Goldberg family to Lorain was chain migration, which makes their story an American immigrant tale in microcosm. Already in Lorain were Bubbe's two married sisters, whom she had not seen in decades; her husband's cousin, who owned property; and a brother-in-law, whose sisters had married men in Lorain and whose brother was a charter member of the city's oldest synagogue. These families were intertwined by blood, marriage, and ties to Panevezys. Who was the first among them to settle in tiny Lorain (rather than more cosmopolitan Cleveland)? As Jacob Rader Marcus has written, "No Jew is ever the first Jew anywhere. There is always one before him."¹⁷ And many more who follow. Weissbach observes that "the link between economic opportunity and Jewish migration was perhaps most readily apparent" among contingents of related families in small towns.¹⁸

14 Lorain Public Library System, "History of Lorain, Ohio: Chronology/Index, Lorain Ohio Sesquicentennial, 1934–1984," Lorain County Memory <https://loraincountymemory.org/items/show/969> (accessed 13 April 2023). By 1929 Lorain's population had grown to 46,580, with foreign-born residents 37.5 percent of the total. The city's proud slogan was "Where Coal and Iron Meet." *Lorain City Directory*, 1929.

15 Black River Historical Society, *Lorain Ohio (Images of America)* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 1999): 2, 7–8,

16 Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 95.

17 Jacob Rader Marcus, "Why Study American Jewish History," in *United States Jewry, 1776–1985* (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1986), 21.

18 Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 60, 127.

When the Goldbergs arrived in Lorain, the city had a Jewish population of three hundred, and by most reckonings these Jews had East European roots. The city had a Jewish cemetery, a Zionist club, three kosher butchers, and two shuls—Agudath Achim for Russian and Polish Jews and Beth Israel for Hungarian Jews.¹⁹ In the aftermath of a 1924 tornado that demolished the downtown and killed seventy-two people, including three Jewish girls, Lorain Jewry pulled together.²⁰ In 1925, the city's two synagogues merged with a third group, a nascent B'nai B'rith Temple in nearby Elyria.²¹ The unified congregation adopted the name Agudath B'nai Israel (ABI). With the merger came the decision to forsake Orthodoxy and adopt Conservative Jewish practices, including mixed seating for men and women and sermons in English, not Yiddish. My zayde and bubbe, whose most precious legacy from Europe was a twenty-volume set of the Gemara printed in Hebrew and Aramaic, could not sanction the shift toward Conservative Judaism.²² Instead, they splintered off with other secessionists who

19 Shazar, *Der Tog*. The first Jew settled in Lorain in 1884; the first *minyan* of Lorain men gathered in 1901. Congregation Agudath Achim's first synagogue was constructed in central Lorain in 1905 on 15th Street between Broadway and Reid. Congregation Beth Israel, the Hungarian shul, was constructed in South Lorain in 1914. "Laying the Foundation: Being a History of the Local Jewish Community from Its Beginning to the Present Time," in *Agudath B'nai Israel Temple Dedication Book* (Lorain, Ohio: Agudath B'nai Israel, 1932), 17–22, at Lorain Historical Society.

20 Betsy D'Annibale, *The 1924 Tornado in Lorain & Sandusky: Deadliest in Ohio History* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014). Annette Goldberg's classmate, who was attending a children's matinee at the State Theatre, died that day when the building collapsed. Annette had planned to be at the movies with her friend but did not join her because she had to put her brother down for an afternoon nap. Weiner, "The Twister of '24," in *From Lithuania to Lorain*, 32–37.

21 Ibid. The merger combined the names of the three existing congregations to establish Agudath B'nai Israel. Per Arthur Goodman in Lorain, telephone conversations with the author, 2016–2018.

22 The family's Gemara, a twenty-volume set referred to in Yiddish as a *shas*, was printed by Romm Publishing House of Vilna in 1884 and incorporates the Vilna and Zhitomir editions of 1863. The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, "Romm Family," https://yivo-encyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Romm_Family (accessed 4 Jan. 2022). The set was a wedding gift from Riva Goldberg's parents and is inscribed with the Hebrew date of her marriage, the 23rd of Av 5669. On the Western calendar, the date was 20 Aug. 1908. A great-grandson who studied at yeshivot in Israel and the United States has the *shas* in his personal collection.

formed a minyan house at the home of Latvian immigrant Abraham Milner. As membership grew, they rented a two-story brick house at 222 Thirteenth Street. They named their immigrant shul Zichrain Chaim Yankov Congregation, in memory of a college student who had died.²³ It was not unusual in small towns for shuls to splinter along ethnic lines and ritual practices (then to merge in later years due to attrition, acculturation, and economics).²⁴ The breakaway congregation grew to around one hundred men, women, and children. Optimistic of continued growth, in 1927 the members recruited a rabbi, Jacob Richman, a recent Russian immigrant whose family moved into the dwelling's ground floor. Upstairs, the second floor housed a daily minyan, Shabbos services, and a religious school. Because my zayde, a graduate of Slabodka's Knesseth Israel Yeshiva, was on a scholarly par with the rabbi, he led discourses on Torah and Talmud—in Yiddish, of course. Because of the cream-colored mare that pulled his peddler's cart, the rabbi dubbed him the *Meshiekh af a vays ferd*—the Messiah on a white horse.²⁵

“He knew how to understand a page of Talmud,” Shazar writes. “He had also read literature of the Enlightenment.... His own example guaranteed that [his children] would ... daven the Jewish prayers, that they would learn Jewish history and be proud that they were Jews and would accept responsibility for other people.”²⁶

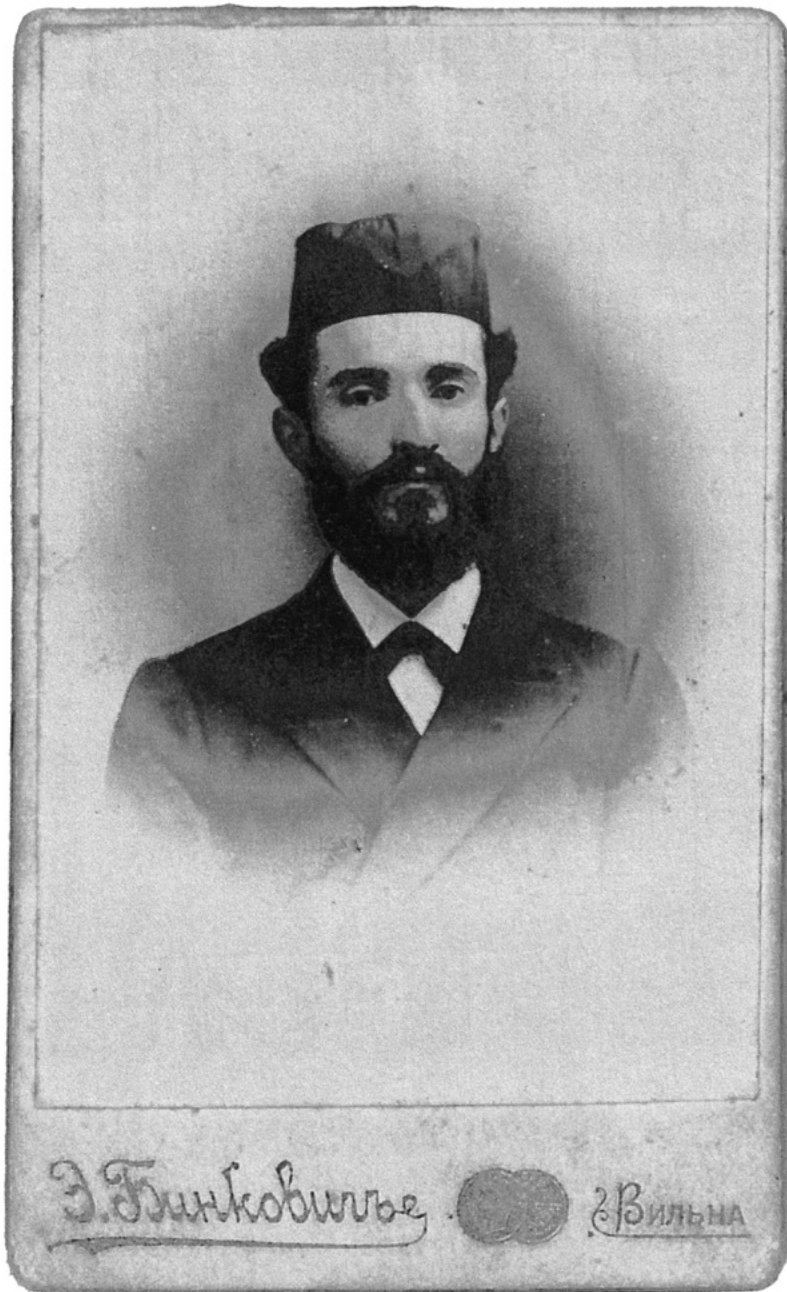
At the little immigrant shul, the Goldberg children, fluent in Yiddish

23 Goldberg Siblings Oral History, 1999. The Yiddish shul's name, which means “a memorial to Chayim Yankov,” was spelled several ways when transliterated into English. On the congregation's invoices, it is printed “Zichrain Chaim Yankov.” On a 1941 bar mitzvah invitation, it is spelled “Zichrain Hiam Youkav.” In city directories from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, the name variously appears as “Zichras Achin Yankov” and “Zichran Chaim Yankov.” The Hebrew translation is Zichron Chayim Ya'akov.

24 Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 178–197.

25 Frances Richman Lubens, Palm Desert, CA, telephone interview with author, 6 January 2015. After seven years in Lorain, Rabbi Jacob Richman (1889–1962) moved to pulpits elsewhere, officiating in Dayton, Ohio; Bellingham, Washington; and Ottumwa and Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He is buried at Eben Israel Cemetery in Cedar Rapids alongside his wife, Sonia (Barishansky) Richman (1900–1961).

26 Shazar, *Der Tog*.



Shraga Feivel Goldberg as yeshiva student in Lithuania.
(David Goldberg Papers)

and English, were among the officers: twelve-year-old Annette was appointed secretary because of her fine English spelling and penmanship; David, fifteen and adept at tallying grocery bills in his head, was the permanent treasurer.²⁷ Although Zichrain Chaim Yankov Congregation was never listed in the *American Jewish Year Book's* roster of local Jewish institutions, the receipts, donation slips, and bar mitzvah invitations in David's family archive verify the shul's existence through World War II, as do Lorain directories from the 1920s into the early 1940s.²⁸ The fledgling congregation couldn't pay much of a salary to its rabbi, so the Goldbergs helped Richman patch together a livelihood by recommending him as a *shochet*. Many of Lorain's Conservative Jews raised chickens in backyard coops. They were delighted to bring their fowl to the *shochet*. On Fridays, housewives and children lined up in Richman's backyard holding squawking birds. Typically, the *shochet* was paid ten cents for slaughtering a chicken and twenty-five cents for slaughtering a turkey or a goose.²⁹

Sacramental wine, dispensed during Prohibition from 1921 to 1933, was another source of income for the rabbi. The Volstead Act, which delineated regulations enforcing Prohibition, permitted clergy to receive a quota of wine to distribute to church and synagogue goers. With guidance from the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, the Internal Revenue Service issued regulations allowing rabbis to allot five to ten gallons of sacramental wine per year to each Jewish adult within their worship community. The law barred clergy from making direct sales of alcohol, for each man of the cloth was deemed an "intermediary," not a dispensary. Recipients, however, were encouraged to make monetary donations to a religious institution in lieu of payment for wine. And they did. Demonstrating

27 Goldberg Siblings Oral History.

28 Donation receipts and a bar mitzvah invitation with the name of the immigrant shul are in the David Goldberg Papers, privately held by the family. For recollections of the shul, see Goldberg Siblings Oral History, 1999. Also, Oral History [Hy and Fran Goldberg]: 7 Dec. 2009, Lorain County Sacred Landmarks Initiative. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w53CxPzvVKU&t=41s> (accessed 9 Feb. 2023). See also, Oran Zweiter, "Turning a Church into a Synagogue," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 71, no. 1 (2019): 10–17.

29 Goldberg Siblings Oral History.

“social connectedness,” the Goldberg siblings drew up a list of Lorain Jews who qualified for wine and included every post-bar-mitzvah boy.³⁰ Meanwhile, at Lorain’s Congregation Agudath B’nai Israel, the rabbi was not as interested in fermented products. The Conservative branch of Judaism had issued a responsa endorsing the substitution of grape juice for wine, a stand the Orthodox rabbinate rejected. Therefore, scores of Conservative families from ABI eagerly added their names to Richman’s temperance quota—supplementing the rabbi’s income.³¹

Securely anchored in Lorain, comfortable at a shul where the family davened in Hebrew and discoursed in Yiddish, Zayde and Bubbe’s next quest for their children was higher education, a theme common among first-generation immigrants. Weissbach writes about the ongoing tension between sending the next generation to college or insisting they remain at home to run the family business.³² Because the Goldbergs lived above the grocery, they paid their expenses out of the cash register. To save for tuition, they opened additional neighborhood markets—one-aisle stores stocked with fresh produce, canned goods, and, during Prohibition, ingredients for home brew, such as the private-label Goldberg’s Malt Syrup. Each sibling managed a store while the family together saved for college for the next in line. In 1930, two years after his graduation from Lorain High, David, the eldest son, enrolled at Western Reserve University in Cleveland, where he boarded with an aunt. Two years later

30 Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 24.

31 Hannah Sprecher, “‘Let Them Drink and Forget Our Poverty’: Orthodox Rabbis React to Prohibition,” *American Jewish Archives* 43, no. 2 (1991):135–179. Yaacov S. Weinstein, “Grape Juice: The Solution to Prohibition,” *Tradition* 48, no. 1 (2015): 19–32. The quota of wine per person is unclear, depending on the source. The ten-gallon annual quota was mentioned in a National Public Radio interview in May 2010 with Daniel Okrent, author of *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (Scribner), 2010. npr.org/2011/06/10/137077599/prohibition-speakeasies-loopholes-and-politics (accessed 10 Feb. 2023). See also David Golinkin, *Responsa of Professor Louis Ginzberg* (Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1996), 111–133 [English Section].

32 “Because economic circumstances were sometimes precarious and because so many small-town Jewish businesses were family affairs, there was ... a certain tension between sending the children to college and taking advantage of their labor.” Weissbach, *Jewish Lives*, 138.

Meyer matriculated. The next three boys—Bill, Marvin, and Hy—in like succession enrolled at The Ohio State University. On weekends, they alternated taking the train from Columbus to Lorain to help their father in the store and to bring home their soiled laundry. (Dutifully, their mother returned the laundry by mail with a chub of salami tucked among the boys' starched and folded shirts.)

Zayde welcomed his sons' help, for he was especially busy Saturday nights and Sundays, when other groceries were shuttered. As Shazar writes in *Der Tog*, "His customers would wait until the stars began to shine on Saturday night, until after he made the evening Havdalah prayers.... Operating a successful business [was compatible] with the delight of the Sabbath.... The few hours that he opened on Saturday night brought more than enough profit to compensate for the day that was lost.... The prosperity he realized from his business was way beyond his expectations."³³

Annette, the only Goldberg daughter, graduated *cum laude* from Lorain High in 1932. Cleveland's *Jewish Independent* wrote up her accomplishments: participation in fifteen clubs, top grades, and special assistant to both the librarian and the principal.³⁴ Yet Annette attended college for only one semester, commuting by bus to Cleveland College. Gender expectations dissuaded her from continuing toward a degree or living with relatives out of town. Annette's role model was her own mother, my bubbe, the omnipresent face of the grocery store who stationed herself at the cash register of the family's flagship market. Bubbe knew all the customers—whether they worked at the steel mill, the shipyards, or the Ford assembly plant—and when they got paid. She greeted them in broken English or in Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, or Yiddish. She was fluent in all four "and could count to twenty in Italian." She gave ginger snaps, vanilla wafers, or fig bars to the kids. One little girl called her "Mrs. Cookieberg."³⁵ Although census lists

33 Shazar, *Der Tog*.

34 "Wins Honors in Lorain High," *Jewish [Cleveland] Independent* (5 February 1932): 3.

35 "At Christmas time the front windows of the store were sprayed with fake snow and adorned with a 'Season's Greetings' sign.... Even though we were Jewish, the customers sent us Christmas cards.... Some of the cards showed Jesus and crosses which made me feel

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Meats**

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Mr. R. Goldberg Announces the Opening of a Modern Kosher Jewish Meat Market at 1246 Broadway. We Carry a Complete Line of Quality Meats as Veal, Beef, Lamb, Lunch meats, Corned Beef, etc. at Reasonable Prices. A Trial Will Convince You.

Specials For All Week	September 19 to 25
<p>KOSHER LEAN BOILING BEEF OR SHORT RIB: Soup Meat 18[¢]_{lb} <small>MIRACLE WHIP—Qt. 37c</small></p> <p>KOSHER LEAN AND TENDER Rib Steak 28[¢]_{lb} <small>CRISCO or SPRY—3-lb. can 51c</small></p> <p>KOSHER GENUINE SPRING LAMB CHOPS 29[¢]_{lb} <small>WHEATIES—Pkg. 10c</small></p> <p>KOSHER—FINE FOR STEWING OR ROASTING VEAL BREAST 18[¢]_{lb} <small>KOSHER—MILK FED—NOT MUCH BONE</small></p> <p>Veal Chops 28[¢]_{lb}</p>	<p>Fairmount's Sweet—93 Score—Round Half Pounds Butter 32[¢]_{lb} <small>RINSO or OXYDOL—2 Lg. Pkgs. 39c</small></p> <p>GOLD MEDAL KITCHEN TESTED 24½-lb. bag FLOUR 77[¢] <small>MAXWELL HOUSE COFFEE—lb 25c</small></p> <p>SUGAR Pure Cane 5 lbs 23[¢] <small>JELLO—All Flavors—3 pkgs. 14c</small></p> <p>PURE ARGO QUART CAN MAZOLA OIL qt. 40[¢] <small>MAZOLA OIL—Per Gal. \$1.15</small></p> <p>DEL MONTE WHITE CREAM STYLE No. 2 CAN CORN Reg. 17[¢] Seller 10[¢] <small>WE REDEEM ALL P. & G. COUPONS</small></p>

Goldberg's Food Store circular, 1938.
 (Courtesy Howard Goldberg)

often classified wives and single daughters as unemployed homemakers, Weissbach notes that “many small-town Jewish businesses were quite literally ‘mom and pop’ operations. Families worked as teams, and wives were partners.... Businesses were family affairs.”³⁶

Despite the heterogeneous landscape in Lorain, or perhaps because of it, all six Goldberg offspring married under the *chuppah*. Without traditional matchmakers to arrange their marriages, the Goldberg kids, as well as their first and second cousins, gravitated to new social networks such as B’nai B’rith’s AZA youth group for boys, Junior Hadassah for girls, Hillel on college campuses, and Alpha Zeta Omega, the Jewish pharmacy fraternity at Western Reserve. Two of the Goldberg boys met their life partners at Camp Anisfield, an overnight camp in Vermilion, Ohio, which held week-long sessions for working Jewish singles.³⁷ By the fall of 1941, two of the Goldberg siblings were married and two more were courting future mates, thanks to camp, college, and AZA connections.

The pattern of their lives changed abruptly on 7 December 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II. Of the five Goldberg sons, three served in the armed forces; a fourth worked for the federal government in Washington, DC; the fifth son received a draft-board exemption to remain in Lorain to mind the store. Sister Annette, a recent bride living in Chicago, volunteered with Hadassah, demonstrating the Zionist ideals her family had long embraced. Participation in the war effort, Weissbach writes, reinforced each Jewish family’s sense of American identity, while concern

funny and reminded me that the Jews might have killed him.” Sharon Goldberg, “Grandma’s Grocery Store,” *Under the Sun* 14, no. 1 (Summer 2008): 221–231.

36 Weissbach, *Jewish Lives*, 134, 148.

37 Camp Anisfield was named for philanthropist John Anisfield (1860–1929), an Austrian immigrant and Cleveland clothing manufacturer, real estate executive, and civic leader. Officially named the Jewish Boys and Girls Vacation Club, the camp was for young, working Jewish adults. Each weeklong session cost participants around \$12. “Anisfield, John,” *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, Case Western Reserve University, case.edu/ech/articles/a/anisfield-john (accessed 4 November 2018). Both Marvin and Bill Goldberg met their future wives, Helen Greenberg and Dora Labson, respectively, at the camp. Both women, daughters of poor émigrés, were from Cleveland. Two of Dora’s sisters met their future husbands at Camp Anisfield.

for relatives left in Europe “reinforced their identification with the fate of the Jewish people everywhere.”³⁸

The youngest Goldberg brother, Hy, born in Lorain in 1921, was a private with the Army’s 318th Signal Service Battalion. He served state-side at Fort Benjamin Harrison near Indianapolis and in Hawaii with a mobile field battery near Hilo. Often the only Jew in his unit, Hy volunteered to work on Christmas and Easter. In a letter home he described how he avoided non-kosher meat—which “wasn’t easy”—yet put on muscle and gained eight pounds during his first year in uniform. He also served as Jewish lay leader—a comfortable role, for he lived with the rhythm of the Jewish calendar. At Hanukkah, he lit candles alongside his bunk bed. As Passover approached, he wrote home asking for a book with the “Exodus story” and a “partially-aged” salami, because it would ship better than a fresh one. On Purim he wrote his parents, “Let’s hope and pray that the next Purim holiday will find us all at home together in a world at peace, observing not only the destruction of the Haman of old, but also the final annihilation of the modern Hamans of today namely Hitler and Tojo.”³⁹

Another letter home described a gentile sergeant who confessed that he “had a very low opinion of Jewish people” until working with Hy. The sergeant told him, “In my lifetime I have heard bad things about Jewish people. I’d never met them. You’re the first Jew that I’ve met.... I think you are a wonderful person!”⁴⁰ Raised in multicultural Lorain, Hy was familiar with the canard that the Jews killed Jesus, and he understood the need to set an upstanding example to dispel antisemitism.

Wherever he was stationed, Hy looked for Jewish life off post. At

38 Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 155.

39 Letter from Hy Goldberg in Hilo, Hawaii, to “Mom, Dad, and [brother] David” in Lorain, 27 February 1945. The collection consists of twenty-seven handwritten and type-written letters from Private Hy Goldberg. Thirteen letters were written in 1945 to “Dear Mom, Dad, and David” and addressed to his home in Lorain; fourteen letters from 1942 and 1943 are to his brother and sister-in-law, Bill and Dora Goldberg, in Washington, DC. The collection is held by the soldier’s daughter, Sharon Goldberg, in Seattle. When Hy was stationed in the continental United States, he telephoned his parents in Lorain once a week.

40 Letter from Hy Goldberg at Fort Harrison, Indiana, to Bill and Dora Goldberg, 14 January 1943.

Fort Harrison, he took the bus to Indianapolis's Kirschbaum Jewish Center, which served soldiers a kosher Sunday supper and gave out tickets to football games, hockey matches, Sonja Henie's Ice Review, and a performance of the Indianapolis Symphony—Hy's first classical music concert.⁴¹ The small-town Jew realized that he was part of a large Jewish hospitality network.

One Sunday on the bus, Hy spotted his Lorain AZA debate-team partner, George Jacoby. They exchanged letters during the rest of the war. Hy also corresponded with his second cousin, Private Joshua Merves, a medic on the European front with General George Patton's Third Army, 21st Armored Division. Tragically, German sniper fire killed Merves on 29 April 1945, eight days before the war in Europe ended. At his funeral, the flag that draped his coffin was presented to his bride of two years, a young woman from Canton, Ohio, whom he had met at an AZA dance.⁴² When Hy learned of his cousin's death, he was in the Pacific. Subsequently, when the Jewish Welfare Board in Honolulu hosted an AZA reunion, he shared the mournful news. Merves is among seven casualties of World War II buried in Lorain's Salem Jewish Cemetery; another was distantly related to the Goldbergs by marriage. A granite memorial inscribed with each soldier's name has a line from the World War I poem "For the Fallen." It reads: "At the going down of the sun and in the morning/we shall remember them."⁴³ The names still resonate,

41 Ibid., 23 November 1943.

42 "German Bullet Kills Lorain Man Helping Wounded: Medical Corpsman Shot; Two Others Reported Wounded," *Lorain Journal* (24 May 1945): 2. "Killed: Pfc. Joshua Merves," *Canton Repository* (24 May 1945): 3. "On Mercy Mission, Killed by Sniper," *The Shofar* (Sept. 1945): 3. *The Shofar*, the national BBYO monthly, reported that Joshua Merves of Lorain's AZA Chapter 267 served as *aleph sopher*, *aleph kohen godol*, *aleph masker*, and twice as *aleph godol*. He was chair and associate chair of two Eastern Ohio Council tournaments and served as a *sopher*, *masker*, and *godol* of the Eastern Ohio Council. He was elected chapter delegate to two district and two national conventions and held the Shield of David award for leadership and activity. His widow, Miriam Spector (1925–2008), married a veteran in 1947 and moved to the West Coast. In addition, the local USO brought in comedian Bob Hope and vocalist Frances Langford. Letter from Hy Goldberg at Fort Harrison, Indiana, to Dora and Bill Goldberg, Washington, DC, 23 November 1943.

43 "For the Fallen," Robert Laurence Binyon, 1914. Sergeant Frank Rogowin, one of

for in a cohesive, small-town Jewish community, most every family is acquainted if not related.⁴⁴

By January 1946, when Hy was discharged and returned home to Lorain, it was evident that Zayde had advancing Parkinson's disease, which led to his death in 1950. However, the immediate postwar focus was the fate of relatives lost in the Holocaust. Previously, during the interwar years, many aunts, uncles, and cousins from Lithuania had sent greetings twice a year, at the High Holidays and at Passover. After Hitler marched into the Sudetenland in 1938, the holiday letters grew somber and further apart. The last piece of correspondence from Lithuania, dated 30 January 1941, was a desperate postcard from Great-Uncle Abraham Druskovitz, a former dean at the Volozhin Yeshiva.⁴⁵ He had sent a shipment of his latest books to relatives in New York and beseeched everyone to buy copies to underwrite his family's journey out of Europe. In the years between 1930 and 1937, he had traveled back and forth from the Baltics to Brooklyn, marketing his scholarly books and raising money for his yeshiva. During the years when he might have easily emigrated, he had disparaged the United States as a *treif* country. By the time his last piece of correspondence arrived in Lorain, he was trapped in the Kovno ghetto. He had missed the chance to exit alive.⁴⁶

Lorain's World War II casualties, was the brother of Gertrude Rogowin Merowitz, who had married a Goldberg cousin.

44 Given the "intense interconnectedness" among Lorain Jewry, these "tragic war deaths ... were felt throughout the entire community.... Everyone was likely to be known to everyone else." Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 155.

45 Postcard from Rabbi A. Druskovitz in Slobodka, LSSR, to Mr. F. Goldberg in Lorain, 30 January 1931. Weiner, *From Lithuania to Lorain*, 188, 208–209. The collection of Yiddish correspondence, translated by Rabbi Sidney Zimelman of Fort Worth, includes eighteen letters and one postcard from Lithuania and fourteen letters from Latvia mailed between 1933 and 1941. Enclosed in these envelopes were four engraved wedding invitations and one Rosh Hashanah card. In addition, Druskovitz wrote two letters from the Bronx, New York. Some correspondence begins with an opening paragraph in Hebrew. The collection is translated and annotated in Weiner, *From Lithuania to Lorain*, 190–230. The Yiddish letters are among the David Goldberg Papers, held by family members. Lithuania's Volozhin Yeshiva, dubbed the Harvard of Yeshivas, trained generations of scholars and leaders. See https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Volozhin_Yeshiva_of (accessed 4 January 2022).

46 Ephraim Oshry, *The Annihilation of Lithuanian Jewry [Churbn Lita]*, translated by Y.



Goldberg family photo, Lorain, 1946.
(Courtesy Hollace Ava Weiner)

My grandfather, unlike his esteemed great uncle, had been confident about practicing Judaism in America and passing the ancient traditions to his offspring. In Panevezys, he had maintained a scholarly Jewish life and worked as a grain merchant. As an immigrant in a small Midwest town, he subscribed for decades to *Der Tog*, which kept him abreast of news and opinion in his new country and connected him with the larger

Leiman (Brooklyn: Judaica Press, 1995), 2. A reference to Abraham Druskovitz, transliterated in the book, reads: "Rav Avrohom Drushkovich, an elderly man and former *mashgiach* of the Voloshin Yeshiva, one of the greatest Lithuanian yeshivos, came in to join us. From what he told us he had seen happening on the streets of Slobodka and had heard what was going on in Kovno, it became clear that the Germans and Lithuanians seemed intent on killing all the Jews. What were we to do? Could we devise some sort of plan? That was the issue that wearied us that night while Jews were dying in the streets of Slobodka." Rabbi Abraham Druskovitz perished in the Kovno Ghetto in 1944.



Shraga and Riva Goldberg at her father's tombstone, Minsk, 1920.
(Courtesy Howard Goldberg)

Jewish world.⁴⁷ Small-town Lorain proved compatible enough with my zayde's upbringing. Lorain's Jews had Eastern European (rather than German) roots and were familiar with traditional Ashkenazic Jewish practices. Regardless of how observant they were, they had an attachment to Zionism and a sense of ethnic solidarity. Yiddish was their *lingua franca*.⁴⁸

It was not to remain quite that way. As Weissbach observes, "With the ascendancy of a younger leadership ... Orthodoxy fades."⁴⁹ By the close of World War II, Lorain's little immigrant congregation had disappeared. Its founders had aged, and their children, even as teenagers, had spent more time worshipping and socializing at ABI, Lorain's burgeoning Conservative congregation. In 1957 membership at ABI grew to a peak of 350 families—close to a thousand Jews. The vibrancy of Lorain's Jewish community mirrored the growth and energy of the city at large. The steel mills, shipyards, and Ford Motor Plant were operating at full throttle. The 1970 census reported that the city's population had reached a high of 78,000. Then, with changes in manufacturing, international trade, and technology, Lorain experienced gradual decline, deindustrialization, and urban decay. When the Goldberg grandchildren left for college, only one returned to raise a family in Lorain. Then he retired to Arizona.

Today only one of Shraga Feivel Goldberg's descendants lives in Lorain, a grandson and namesake who spent his career in Nashville and moved home to care for his century-old mother. After she died in 2018, he took over her longtime role writing a column for the *ABI Jewish Community News*. He is the last Goldberg in Lorain, but not the last Jew.

Agudath B'nai Israel has thirty-five to forty-five congregants, mostly widows and widowers. On the staff is a lay leader—a retired educator and former shul president, who leads services, conducts funerals and unveilings, visits shut-ins, and is licensed to perform Ohio weddings. He leads a Saturday morning minyan that attracts between twelve and

47 Shazar, *Der Tog*.

48 East Europeans "set the tone" in most triple-digit Jewish communities. Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 244–248.

49 *Ibid.*, 178.

sixteen worshippers, some remotely via Zoom. The synagogue kitchen, which was glatt kosher until 2013, has become “kosher style,” because no one supervises the separation of utensils for milk and meat. “Things started getting mixed up,” said ABI’s longtime office manager, Sheila Evenchik. Furthermore, a nonsectarian school that rents the synagogue’s ten classrooms brings in nonkosher chicken and ground beef. Although there is occasional talk of ABI merging with a synagogue in Elyria or another in West Cleveland, consolidation is doubtful, because both of those congregations are Reform. ABI’s financial health is relatively strong; out-of-town donations arrive every week from former congregants. In 2010, the ABI cemetery board oversaw construction of a memorial chapel on the grounds of Salem Hebrew Cemetery for funerals and “unveiling luncheons,” Evenchik said. Annually on Holocaust Remembrance Day, congregants speak in local schools and hold a public memorial.⁵⁰

The congregation president is Arnold Milner, a retired podiatrist. Fittingly, it was his immigrant grandfather, Abraham Milner, who in 1925 turned his home into the minyan house that grew into Zichrain Chaim Yankov, the erstwhile Orthodox shul. Milner’s current leadership reinforces memories of the vibrant community that welcomed his grandparents to Lorain more than a century ago. That celebrated era of small-town Jewish life has become the stuff of nostalgia. As Weissbach writes, “This classic era ended soon after World War II when the immigrant experience ceased to have a pervasive influence on American Jewry and when the nature of small-town life changed dramatically.” The slow downward trajectory continues.

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50 Sheila Evenchik telephone interview from Lorain with the author, 7 November 2021. “Agudath B’nai Israel Synagogue,” www.abitemplelorain.com (accessed 7 November 2021).



Tabak (left) and Steven Schiffer (1951–2000) at the Shikunei Elef dormitories, Givat Ram Campus of Hebrew University, 1970–1971.
(Courtesy Robert P. Tabak)

American Jewish Students in Israel, 1967–1973: A Memoir and Exploration

ROBERT P. TABAK*

Not all that is pertinent to American Jewish history has occurred within American geographical space. A focus on the Jewish historical experience *in* the United States does not mean limiting discussion *to* the United States.¹

I was born and raised in the small Jewish community of Dubuque, Iowa. Some of my most significant Jewish encounters were through Reform Jewish summer camp and youth groups. My Jewish experiences deepened during my education at the University of Wisconsin in Madison beginning in 1968, and especially through my participation from 1970 to 1971 in the One Year program for overseas students at the Hebrew University (HU) in Jerusalem.

My year in Israel had a long-term impact on me personally, Jewishly, and politically. However, this is not only an individual memoir. My story was part of a larger picture. Following the Six Day War in 1967,

* This article is dedicated to the memories of Michael Masch (1950–2021) whom I met in Israel, and of my nephew Zach Tabak (1992–2018). Research was made possible by a 2017–2018 research fellowship from the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter AJA). I am grateful for the assistance and support of the AJA staff, especially Dr. Gary Zola, former archivist Kevin Proffitt, and Dr. Dana Herman. I also thank Rabbi Alan LaPayover of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College's Kaplan Library, the staff of the Steven Spielberg Film Archives at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and the staff of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison. I appreciate the comments and questions from participants in presentations at the AJA (2018); at the American Jewish Historical Society scholar's conference (2020); and in a virtual presentation I organized for friends and colleagues (2020). I also appreciate the comments and suggestions of the anonymous readers of this article. I benefited from editorial suggestions from Perri Schenker.

1 Eli Lederhendler, *American Jewry: A New History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), xiii (emphasis in original).

thousands of American college-age young people went to Israel for extended stays. Most returned to the United States, where their experiences influenced American Jewish life. This study uses historical data and personal stories to illustrate a period of transformation for Israel and American Jews.

Background

Small numbers of Americans attended programs in Palestine even before 1948 and in the early years of Israel's statehood. The published letters of Zipporah Porath, an American student at HU in 1947–1948, offer important insights, from a woman's perspective, into a year that included the United Nations vote to partition Palestine and the increase in violence between Jews and Arabs as the British prepared to withdraw in 1948. By spring of that year, she estimated that of five hundred American students at HU and the Technion in Haifa, "most of them have already left."²

Prior to 1967, Israel programs for post-high-school young people ("students" in my shorthand, whether or not they were in a formal academic program) included small numbers in Zionist youth group gap-year programs, work-study programs, and academic year programs for Americans in Israel, typically for the junior year of college.³ HU's pamphlet recruiting American students for the 1964–1965 One Year program reported that in the program's tenth year, it had enrolled "since the program's inception over 200 students from almost 100 colleges and universities."⁴ There were some tours and summer

2 Zipporah Porath, *Letters from Jerusalem 1947–1948* (Scranton, PA: Temple Israel, 1998), 115. Porath stayed, joined the Haganah and was part of Israel's War of Independence. She married an Israeli and moved there permanently.

3 Tel Aviv University also had a smaller One Year program. Some U.S. colleges ran their own programs—in Brandeis' case in conjunction with the Jacob Hiatt Institute, 1961–1983. These typically had a few dozen students. A small American College in Jerusalem opened in 1968; most students were American, but there were some Arab and international students. "American College Begins Second Year in Jerusalem," *Detroit Jewish News* (17 October 1969): 6. The article reported 140 students. I am grateful to Dana Herman for this citation.

4 "Program for American Students at Hebrew University," (n.p.), American Friends of Hebrew University, Nearprint Collection, Box 1, AJA.

programs aimed at American college-age students, but these were quite small. In 1966, the national B'nai B'rith Hillel organization struggled to put together a single group of twenty college students for an almost seven-week summer visit to Israel. After experiencing the difficulties of leading this mostly female group, Yale Hillel director Rabbi Richard J. Israel concluded, "I find almost no reason for me to be here." He doubted whether Hillel should even sponsor such a program again.⁵ Israel did not appear central to most American Jewish students, nor to Hillel.⁶

In May 1967 war between Israel and its Arab neighbors looked imminent. According to *Haaretz*, "The return of Egyptian forces to Sinai is a demonstration of force and pressure on Israel." On 18 May, the *New York Times* reported Israeli reserves were being mobilized. For American students at HU, it was a crisis. The eighty-three students on the 1966–1967 American One Year program in Jerusalem were gathered together, facing a decision about whether to leave in view of the impending war. Despite pleas from parents, all of them stayed.⁷ Most surprising to later students is not the meeting itself but that all the Americans could easily fit into one auditorium.

5 "Israel Travels," Richard J. Israel papers, MS-722, box 20, folder 1/19, AJA. 12 July 1966 report from Richard Israel to Hillel international staff member Alfred Jospe. There were tensions between young adults seeing themselves as independent and expectations of being in an organized program. Eighteen out of 20 participants were women. Note comment on difficulties visiting (Orthodox) synagogues, "the surfeit of women is a problem."

6 Other young American Jews participated in kibbutz ulpan, Sherut La'am, World Union of Jewish Students institute in Arad, and Zionist youth programs such as Young Judea, Bnei Akiva, and Habonim year programs. Many of these expanded significantly following the 1967 Six Day War. In 1966, 1,072 young adults from all countries participated in Jewish Agency long-term programs in Israel, which excluded universities and yeshivot. This number almost tripled to 3,022 the following year before declining to a number significantly higher than pre-1967. David Mittelberg, *The Israel Connection and American Jews* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 1999), 139. Sherut La'am, a volunteer service year program, was one of the larger groups, including five hundred Americans from 1965–1967. See Naomi W. Cohen, *American Jews and the Zionist Idea* (New York: Ktav, 1975), 122.

7 *Haaretz* (17 May 1967): 1 ("Israelis Indicate Partial Call-Up," *New York Times* (9 May 1967):1. Simon Herman, *American Students in Israel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 28ff.

In the wake of Israel's victory, American Jewish student experiences in Israel grew in popularity.⁸ By the summer of 1970 approximately seven hundred students, almost all from North America, joined the One Year program at HU.⁹ A slightly larger number of Americans were enrolled in other HU programs, such as graduate studies, *mechina* (preparatory studies), or as regular students—a total of more than 1,500 North Americans out of some 3,000 overseas students in a university with 16,000 regular students.¹⁰ That same year, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) initiated a new requirement: a first year in Jerusalem.¹¹ Most of these rabbinic students were only two years older than the typical students there. Extended stays gave thousands of young Americans opportunities to develop more complex and nuanced relationships with Israel; a wider exposure to varieties of Jewish experience; and new perspectives on America and American Judaism.

8 American Friends of Hebrew University pamphlet for 1969–1970 One Year program (compiled during the 1968–1969 year) reported 2000 overseas students, of whom approximately 1,000 were Americans (7). The 1971–1972 pamphlet reported 4,000 overseas students, with approximate 1,800 Americans (8). Pamphlets for 1972–1973 (8) and 1973–1974 (8) report 4,000 overseas students, about 2,000 of them Americans. Not all were enrolled in the One Year program. Pamphlets in Nearprint Collection, AJA.

9 A random selection of one hundred names from the 1970–1971 One Year roster showed ninety-six American addresses, two Canadian, and two from other countries. An Israeli film covering the same summer, *Late Summer Blues* (1987), shows a group of Tel Aviv high school graduates as they await being drafted during the Egyptian-Israeli War of Attrition.

10 On enrollment, see 1970–1971 “Program for American Students at Hebrew University,” American Friends of Hebrew University, 9, Nearprint Collection, AJA. HU reported the number of North American (U.S. and Canadian) students as one group. Correspondence, Israel 1970–1971, Robert Tabak papers, MS-846, box 3, L-S, AJA (hereafter RT papers). Papers include over 70 letters to family members, and dozens of letters to high school and college friends, rabbis, and youth leaders. I am grateful to my mother Phyllis Tabak z”l of Dubuque and San Diego and to my college friend Marlene Chertok of Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Cincinnati, who saved letters for decades. A small number of items, including papers related to draft counseling, are at the Wisconsin Historical Society, Robert Tabak papers, M86-086 (hereafter RT papers, WHS).

11 At the end of the year, Rabbi Ezra Spicehandler, dean of HUC Jerusalem, called the new program a “qualified success.” Spicehandler interview transcript, 1971, 8, SC-11842, box 1, folder 12. AJA. Also, Yair Walton, “The Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion’s Year-in-Israel program at 50: toward a retrospective historical analysis,” rabbinical thesis, HUC-JIR, 2021.

Prior to 1973, few American men and women were involved in Orthodox yeshiva study in Israel. The first institutions aimed at “returnees” (*ba’alei teshuvah*) to Orthodox Judaism, such as the Diaspora Yeshiva on Mt. Zion near the Old City of Jerusalem, opened in this period. However, they were relatively small and marginal. Similarly, a few programs aimed at American Orthodox students opened. For example, Machon Gold in Jerusalem was founded in 1957, and by 1970 it was a study center for women. The flourishing of these programs, typically as a post-high-school gap year, often under haredi (“ultra-Orthodox”) leadership, took place only after 1973.¹²

Jewish Student Experience in Israel, 1967–1973

Following the 1967 Six-Day War, the number of American Jewish students in Israel significantly increased. HU grew to an annual count of

12 See <https://www.jpost.com/in-jerusalem/fabled-diaspora-yeshiva-celebrates-milestone-459376/>. *Jerusalem Post*, 19 February 2019 (accessed 9 February 2022) on this yeshiva, founded in 1967, sometimes identified as a “hippie yeshiva.” Few *ba’alei teshuvah* programs existed before 1973. From 1978 to 1982 “the number of regular yeshivot that claimed to have *ba’al t’shuva* programs in Israel jumped from four to forty.” M. Herbert Danziger, *Returning to Tradition: The Contemporary Revival of Orthodox Judaism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 338. For Machon Gold, see 336, n.81. Steven Bayme states that “since 1967” an Israeli gap year for Orthodox young people became normative: see “The Looming Orthodox Ascendancy: Policy Implications,” *American Jewish Year Book* (2016): 33. However, Heilman reports that only a few American Orthodox Jews joined Israeli yeshivas in the 1950s, and not many before the Six Day War. Samuel Heilman, *Sliding to the Right: The Contest for the Future of American Orthodoxy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 112–113. A 1971 report shows enrollment at Gold College for Jewish Teachers (women) growing from sixty to ninety from 1970–1971, but most were not from the United States. Jerusalem Torah College saw a small uptick of Orthodox men from 1969–1971, mostly from the United States. The number of year-long study programs at Israeli yeshivot grew from 130 in 1970 to 200 in 1971, mostly for students from the United States. *Report of Actions December 1969–March 1971* (World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency, 1971), 76–77. <https://www.bjpa.org/bjpa/search-results?Publication+Date=1970&search=Report+on+Activities> (accessed 13 July 2017). In following years special programs for American Orthodox students grew. A pluralistic co-educational program for college and post-college young people, Pardes Institute for Jewish Studies, opened in Jerusalem in 1972. Pardes prospectus, 1972, Michael Strassfeld papers, MS 1218, box 6, folder 40, University of Pennsylvania Library, Philadelphia, PA.

some three thousand to four thousand overseas students, around half of them American. These students interacted with Israeli students and society. Many had Israeli roommates. But they also operated in a circle of overseas students, mostly English-speaking. Most experienced Israel in the company of other Americans.¹³

A number of factors influenced and characterized these experiences. First, almost all of the students had been affected by the rise of American student activist movements, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and a growing counterculture. A great many were on the left and often for the first time in contact with significant numbers of like-minded students who were not ambivalent about being Jewish. Discussions questioning American Jewish affluence and the deficiencies of American Jewish life opened many to the possibility that life in Israel might be more meaningful or authentic.¹⁴

Second, an increased interest in travel, including extended programs in Israel, coincided with expansions of air travel with lower-cost options. In 1965, approximately eighty American students heading to HU bonded during their journey by ship from New York. Only a few years later, sea journeys sounded quaint. By 1970, many arrived on student charter flights, others on scheduled airlines. While this was an

13 Ira Jay Sheier concluded, based on surnames, that of Americans on the One Year program at HU in 1970–1971, “nearly 100 percent of the students were Jewish.” Sheier, “Academic Problems of United States Students at Hebrew University,” doctoral diss. (Indiana University, 1973), 73. There were some exceptions. After a group ulpan experience, WUJS and Sherut La’am placed many participants in work positions in towns where there were few other English speakers. See, for example, *JTA Bulletin* (16 July 1969) on the departure of ninety-five college graduates in this program. <https://www.jta.org/archive/sherut-laam-program-sends-additional-group-of-95-youths-to-israel-for-years-service>, accessed 9 May 2023). At that date, 1,100 people had participated in the program since 1965. I am echoing Marsha Rozenblit’s comment about Jews in Vienna in the late 19th century, “Jews experienced assimilation in the company of other Jews.” *The Jews of Vienna: 1867–1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983), 3.

14 For example, Rachel Kranson, “‘To Be a Jew on America’s Terms is Not to Be a Jew at All’: The Jewish Counterculture’s Critique of Middle-Class Affluence,” *Journal of Jewish Identities* 8, no. 2 (July 2015). Kranson discusses those making *aliyah* (70) but does not mention those who returned.

international phenomenon, there was a massive increase in air travel to Israel, with passengers doubling from 1970 to 1971.¹⁵

Third, in this pre-Internet, pre-cell phone era, students were relatively isolated from direct American influences and experiences. Phone calls home were inconvenient, rare, and expensive.¹⁶ News about the United States came from the Israeli press, including the English-language *Jerusalem Post*; Hebrew publications; Israeli and international radio broadcasts; and occasional issues of publications such as the *International Herald-Tribune*, the international editions of *Time* or *Newsweek*, or European newspapers. Mail or clippings from home would take at least a week to arrive.

Fourth, Israel offered new Jewish experiences. For example, the HU program was centered around intensive Hebrew immersion, beginning with a summer ulpan. English was less ubiquitous in Israel than it is today. Students encountered varieties of Jews—among international students and among Israelis—whom they had not met before. Rabbi Ezra Spicehandler, dean of HUC-JIR in Jerusalem, reflected,

Of course a city like Jerusalem is a living museum of Jewish life. It is true that boys who come from Brooklyn, maybe Chicago [have met] Hassidim[,] have perhaps met Jews from Arabic speaking countries,

15 I am grateful to Pamela Nadell for pointing out this international phenomenon. On Israel's increase in air passengers between 1970 and 1971—485,000 to 1,057,400—see <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=IS.AIR.PSGR&country=>, accessed 3 February 2021. Other countries experienced smaller travel increases, and Israeli air travel increased after 1971 at a much more modest rate. On direct flights from New York that began in 1971, see Anshel Pfeffer, “Bye Bye, Queen of the Sky: How El Al’s 747 connected Israel and the Jewish world,” *Haaretz* (12 May 2019), <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-boeing-747-queen-of-the-sky-el-al-jumbo-connected-israel-new-york-city-and-jewish-world-1.7187923> (accessed 30 November 2020). On journey by ship, see Herman, *American Students*, 26–28.

16 A phone call home at Thanksgiving 1970 involved making a trip to the central post office in downtown Jerusalem, scheduling a call, and paying \$23 for a roughly half-hour call—an amount equivalent to a week and half’s expenses for food and equal to about \$161 in 2021 dollars. Robert Tabak (hereafter “RT”) to family # 45, 4 December 1970, Correspondence 1970–71, MS-846, box 3, RT papers, AJA. All letters from RT are to his family unless an individual name is specified.

but the average American Jewish young man, the average student in college has had no such opportunity. Here there are all the various communities.... He lives a Jewish experience at Shabbat and the Jewish holidays. He is able to be impressed, for example, with the significant work that has been done at the university and at other places in Israel in the area of Jewish culture. The degree of exposure varies with the student.¹⁷

Many students also met Palestinians in a period before tensions had fully developed.

Before 1967, long-term programs in Israel were a peripheral phenomenon. Extended visits to Israel became a mass experience after the Six Day War. Each year between 1967 (and beyond) thousands of American post-high-school young people traveled to and returned from Israel.¹⁸ Ten-day whirlwind trips did not exist; most came as tourists or on summer programs or other shorter visits, but many came on long-term programs, usually nine to twelve months in length.¹⁹

Israeli university programs (and even more so, the various yeshiva, kibbutz, and work/study programs organized by Israeli organizations) differed from general overseas study programs. In addition to the academic program, there were goals specific to the Jewish and Zionist orientation of the programs. Hyman Kublin, chair of HU's study abroad program, wrote that a primary goal for 1970–1971 participants was “to deepen their Jewish knowledge ... [and] to strengthen the identification

17 Ezra Spicehandler interview transcript, 1971, 8, SC-11842, box 1, folder 12, AJA.

18 “Hebrew Univ, 70–71,” One Year roster, box 4, RT papers, AJA. The roster runs over 10 large pages with more than 650 names listed. American students were enrolled in other university programs, including preparatory year, regular undergraduate students, and as graduate students. See also *Hebrew University of Jerusalem, General Information, 1972–73*, “School for Overseas Students,” 278.

19 Rabbi Samuel Z. Fishman of national Hillel estimated a peak of 50,000 American students visiting Israel in the summer of 1971, two-thirds of them not part of any organized program. He does not cite a source. Fishman, “Changing Student Attitudes Towards Israel,” in *The Test of Time: A Commemoration and Celebration of Hillel's Fiftieth Anniversary*, ed. Alfred Jospe (Washington, DC: B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1974).

of Jewish students with Jewish life and culture.”²⁰ The assumption (and apparent reality) was that the vast majority of Israel program participants were Jewish. Overseas students were required to take at least one course in Hebrew and one in Jewish or Israeli studies per semester. Most took considerably more.²¹ An additional layer of informal education, including trips around the country and weekend seminars, encouraged participants to learn about Israeli geography and society. An implicit hope was that participants would consider *aliyah*, living permanently in Israel. These would not have been the aims of a program for American students in London, Athens, or Tokyo.²²

Longer-term programs created continuing encounters with a new society: from riding Egged busses to shopping at Jerusalem’s Machane Yehuda or other open-air markets, to exasperating bureaucracy; experiencing the Jewish calendar (Shabbat and holidays) as part of the national calendar; encountering a variety of Jews (Israeli and from many parts of the world) and non-Jews. Almost all the longer-term programs included significant Hebrew language study. Student (and kibbutz and volunteer) programs gave participants an experience being “not a tourist.”²³

20 From “1970–71 Program for American Students at Hebrew University,” (n.p.) American Friends of Hebrew University, Nearprint Collection, box 1, AJA. Kublin was professor of history at Brooklyn College and a former dean at CUNY.

21 “Program for American Students at Hebrew University,” (n.p.), American Friends of Hebrew University, Nearprint Collection, box 1, AJA. Sheier, “Academic Problems,” 37, says most American students “majored” in Jewish studies at HU.

22 Daisy Verduzco Reyes, *Learning to Be Latino: How Colleges Shape Identity Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018) highlights these informal experiences. Reviewer Nilda Flores-Gonzales comments, “Reyes points to the hidden curricula—those lessons that are not part of the academic training of students—as the main factors having an effect on ethnic, racial, and political identities.” “Latino Students on Campus,” *Academe* (Spring 2019): 59.

23 The opening section of Daniel P. Reynolds’s *Postcards from Auschwitz: Holocaust Tourism and the Meaning of Remembrance* (New York: New York University Press, 2018) reviews issues of tourism vs. other types of visits in recent literature. Hundreds of thousands of volunteers, many non-Jews, from around the world came to Israeli kibbutzim. There is anecdotal evidence that the smaller number enrolled in the work-study kibbutz ulpan programs were more likely to be Jewish. See the film *Apples and Oranges* by Yoav Brill (2021) on kibbutz volunteers.

Long-term students might share geographical and social space with short-term tourists and Israeli residents, but young Americans living in Israel were certainly not Israelis. They had not served in the army, and their Hebrew skills varied. However, as long-term visitors they occupied an interstitial space between tourists and residents. They were more likely to be interacting with shopkeepers, roommates, or neighbors in Hebrew on a weekly basis.

Quantifying American Students in Israel

Books that discuss American Jewry in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as those that look at relations between American Jews and Israel, typically omit the experiences of tens of thousands of young North American Jews who studied and lived in Israel from 1967 onward. As Shaul Kelner has noted, the period between 1948 and 1990 has not “received more than limited attention.” For all age groups, from 1971 to 1990 the percentage of American Jews who had visited Israel rose from 15 percent to 25 percent, an increase of more than 500,000 visitors.²⁴ The few books and articles that touch on this period have focused on an unrepresentative group: the small percentage of those who stayed in Israel or made *aliyah*.²⁵ Only a minority of American Jewish young adults visited Israel (though it was a significant minority). However, by 1980, many of those American Jews under thirty-five who *had* visited Israel had lived there for between five and twelve months. The percentage of younger adults in Jewish leadership roles who had long-term Israel experiences was significantly higher than the general Jewish population.²⁶

24 Shaul Kelner, “Historical Perspectives on Diaspora Homeland Tourism: ‘Israel Experience’ Education in the 1950s and 60s,” *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* 7, no. 2 (2013): 99–113; Kelner focuses on high school programs of fewer than eight weeks, 100. Visit statistics cited by Lederhendler, *American Jewry*, 298.

25 David Mittelberg, *The Israel Connection and American Jews* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), is an exception, focusing on the impact of Israel visits on American Jews, but the data is from the 1990s. Although many writers—including Caryn Aviv and David Shneer, Ava Kahn, Sara Yael Hirschhorn, and Jonathan D. Sarna—have addressed various aspects of American Jews spending periods of time in Israel or immigrating there, none focus on young adults who studied and lived in Israel and returned to the U.S. from 1967 onward.

26 Several U.S. Jewish population surveys ask *how many trips* one has made to Israel

Exact numbers for American students in programs in Israel can only be estimated. Some people stayed in Israel for more than one year. Others arrived informally yet stayed for a year on a kibbutz or in another setting.²⁷ In addition, not all programs may be included in available statistics.

Two studies—a dissertation about American students at HU and an Israeli government-sponsored longitudinal study—confirm that most North American students returned home. The latter noted, “The percentage of those who remained in Israel ... is relatively low among students from North America.”²⁸ My preliminary estimate is that between 25,000 and 35,000 young American Jews participated in Israel long-term programs from 1967–1973, with approximately 21,000–28,000 returning to the United States.²⁹ It is difficult to determine the number making *aliyah*, but it is relatively low.

(perhaps as a stand-in for depth of connection) but the question of *how much time* one has spent in Israel is seldom asked.

27 For example, in a later period, Shaul Kelner, who had been on a year of university study, stayed for an additional year of volunteer work. Kelner, *Ties that Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), xxiv. Some American students were in multiyear degree programs or did two years of graduate study in Israel.

28 Sheier, “Academic Problems,” 26, found that at the end of the 1971–1972 academic year—one year after their program—16 out of 163 HU respondents were still in Israel. “Survey on Absorption of Students from Abroad who began studies in 1969/70, Third Interview” (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1974), quotation from p. xi. See also “Survey on Absorption of Students from Abroad 1972/73, Students who began studies in 1967/70 (Fourth interview) and in 1970/71 (Third interview),” (Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem, 1975).

29 Counting students is further complicated by the frequent references to “North American” students (including the US and Canada). The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption studies put North American, South African, and Australian students in one statistical group, though the numbers from the latter countries appear small. South African Jews were less likely to return home than Americans. Hebrew University figures (from annual “Program for American Students at Hebrew University” brochures for 1967–1973) report 11,000 American students total over this time. Zvi Schiffirin, Dean of Overseas Students, reported that the University “absorbs more than 40%” of those studying in Israel, including yeshivot (*Scopus* [Autumn 1970]: 4).

While there are numerous references to American Jews' growing interest in and attachment to Israel after the Six Day War, studies of personal encounters with Israel and Israelis are not prominent. Though American Jewish tourism increased, young people staying for most of a year or longer stand out. Eli Lederhendler wrote: "But personal visits to Israel, for example, were not widely popular: only small percentages of American Jews undertook such ethno-tourism."³⁰

One of the few large studies to ask a question on length of time that American Jews spent in Israel included the contemporaries of young people who are the focus of this study. In a 1986 study, a group aged twenty-five to fifty were asked about visits to Israel. In this cohort (which would include those who had been aged eighteen to twenty-four in 1967–1973) 28 percent had visited Israel. Of those who had visited, 18 percent had spent "over three months" there.³¹ This is just over 5 percent of all Jewish adults in the sample.

Little has been written or filmed about American students and other young adults in Israel from 1967–1973. *American Students in Israel* by Simon N. Herman (1970) is a sociological study largely based on data gathered before the 1967 war, after which both the numbers of Americans and the societal setting changed significantly.³² A short

30 Lederhendler, *American Jewry*, 298.

31 Steven M. Cohen, "Jewish Travel to Israel: Incentives and Inhibitions Among U.S. and Canadian Teenagers and Young Adults" (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency, 1986), 14, 78, 85. Cohen holds a troubled position as a social science researcher because of accusations in 2018 by women colleagues of sexual harassment and assault. Cohen apologized for the behavior but did not dispute the allegations. Not all survey participants who stayed "more than three months" stayed for six to twelve months, but it was a significant proportion of all people in that age cohort. Few if any programs were longer than three months but shorter than five or six months. This sample had more than eight hundred respondents, about 10 percent of whom were Orthodox. A smaller Canadian sample reported much higher numbers: 68 percent of adults had been to Israel; of these 31 percent had lived in Israel over three months; see 98, 105.

32 As this article was being edited, I learned of Rachel and David Biale's book, *Aerograms Across the Ocean: A Love Story in Letters, 1970–1972* (Wildcat Press, 2021). David Biale was an American student volunteering at a kibbutz; Rachel Biale was Israeli. See also Sheier, n. 14, which covered students at HU in 1970–1971.

Israeli film, *Milk and Honey Experience*, shows Americans during their 1970–1971 year at HU. The film uses fictionalized American Jewish characters (and a real visit to former prime minister David Ben-Gurion at his home in the Negev) as a framework for discussing the conflicts and “pulls” of Israel and America.³³ Academic articles are significantly more recent, often focusing on specialized groups such as medical or yeshiva students. There are a handful of articles looking at undergraduates in later decades.³⁴

This current study ends with the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, which disrupted what had become a somewhat predictable pattern of students coming to study. Some American students returned home, while others arrived to volunteer. Programs were cancelled or started late, as young Americans served in various roles, from delivering bread to working in agriculture to entertaining Israeli troops. In addition, the shock of the war, including the initial Israeli defeats and significant casualties, left a changed Israeli mood from the previous years of optimism.³⁵

33 *Milk and Honey Experience* (34 min, directed by Yehuda Judd Ne’eman, 1971). I was present at its premiere in 1971 at a Hebrew University dormitory social hall. Personal communication, Judd Ne’eman, 15 March 2021. Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archives at Hebrew University, <https://youtu.be/Hm2uDkR6qrk> accessed 6 April 2021. The filmmaker later chaired the film program at Tel Aviv University and received an Israel Prize for film. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-prize-winner-for-film-judd-ne-eman-dies-at-84-1.10244302> (accessed 27 November 2021).

34 For example, Jacob Halpern, “Adjustment Difficulties Experienced by American Students in Israel,” *Journal of Jewish Education*, 61, no. 1 (1994): 1, 30–34; Jacob I. Halpern, “Adjustment Difficulties Experienced by American Students in Israel,” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* (1 January 1993): 15–25. Erik Cohen, “Tourism and Religion: A Case Study, Visiting Students at Israeli Universities,” *Journal of Travel Research*, 42, no.1 (August 2003). Michal Muszkat-Barkan and Lisa D. Grant, “‘Like a Distant Cousin’: Bi-Cultural Negotiation as Key Perspective in Understanding the Evolving Relationship of Future Reform Rabbis with Israel and the Jewish People,” *Journal of Jewish Education* 81, no. 1 (January–March 2015): 35–63. All focus on a later period.

35 Programs starting late 1973: “The start of the academic year, scheduled for November 4, 1973, did mark the beginning of classes at the School for Overseas Students.... We have already been impressed and moved by the spirit of volunteerism.” Avraham Harman, Hebrew University president. Assistant Dean of the One Year Program Yaron Singer wrote that the war had increased “the natural barrier between the Overseas student and the Israeli society.”

Jewish Life on an American Campus

Student life at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, a center of left-ist political activism in the 1960s and early 1970s, has been extensively studied.³⁶ Most general sources make only brief references to Jewish experiences.³⁷ Few studies have focused on specifically Jewish aspects of student life in Madison.³⁸

Hillel at UW had a tradition of Jewish social activism under the leadership of Rabbi Richard Winograd. For example, the Black studies strike early in 1969 was endorsed by Hillel.³⁹ During some of the student demonstrations, including clashes with police and national guard troops, Hillel served as a first aid center and coordinated volunteer medics.⁴⁰ Hillel sponsored a bus to the 1969 antiwar March on Washington

He follows with examples of student volunteer activity during and after the war. *Hapisga, Ktav eit tohmit had-shanait* 5734/1974, Hebrew University School for Overseas Students, n.p. (copy at National Library of Israel).

36 The University of Wisconsin is used as a case study because that was the author's college.

37 One exception is Paul Breines, an undergraduate and graduate student at UW from 1959–1972, who wrote, “The yeast in the whole [leftist] scene had been the New York Jewish students in Madison who, for example, had provided me as a young, suburban, assimilated, and sometimes self-hating Jew, with a new sense of place, belonging, identity.” Breines was also a Freedom Rider in the South. Paul Breines, “The Mosse Mileu,” in *History and the New Left: Madison Wisconsin, 1950–1970*, ed. Paul Buhle (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 250.

38 Sources include the documentary *Kibbutz Langdon, USA* (ABC Directions, 1974), about a kosher Jewish co-op *bayit* in Madison in a former fraternity house, Jonathan Z.S. Pollack’s “‘Where Have All the Cohens Gone?': Jewish Radicals, Restrictions, and Renewal at the University of Wisconsin, 1964–1972,” *Journal of Jewish Identities* 8, no. 2 (July 2015), and Jonathan Z.S. Pollack, *Wisconsin, The New Home of the Jew: 150 Years of Jewish Life at the University of Wisconsin–Madison* (2019), available at <https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/A746I6CNBBR4RC8D>.

39 Winograd was an activist young Conservative rabbi (d.1974). He had marched in Birmingham for civil rights. “Bearing witness: A controversial 1963 trip to Birmingham by 19 rabbis,” *Southern Jewish Life* (2013), <https://sjlmag.com/2013/05/03/bearing-witness-a-controversial-1963-trip-to-birmingham-by-19-rabbis/> (accessed 5 April 2021). Hillel meeting resolution and vote (24 yes, 6 no, 5 abstain) to endorse Black studies strike, 13 February 1969. “Univ of Wis Hillel, 68–72,” box 5, RT papers, AJA.

40 “Medic” certificate issued by Hillel, May 1970, *ibid*; “Hillel ‘Hospital’ Is Kept Busy: Over 1,200 Treated at Center, Units,” *Wisconsin State Journal* (9 May 1970), MS2005-052, box 7, folder 7, Hillel papers, WHS.

(November Moratorium), leaving earlier than other buses from Madison so participants would not travel on Shabbat.⁴¹ It also sponsored a variety of voices from Israel, some critical of the government, including kibbutz educator Muki Tsur and left-wing journalist Amos Kenan.⁴² Additionally it was, of course, involved with concerns more specific to Jews. In February 1969 following the execution of Iraqi Jews accused of being “Zionist spies,” Hillel organized a mass protest.⁴³

The Jewish population at UW also experienced its share of problematic incidents. In April 1969 several UW Jewish students were listening to a late-night news report from the CBC. The Canadian broadcast was interrupted by an “announcement” that Israel had been attacked by Arab countries using nuclear weapons. In the middle of the night, dozens of panicked students gathered at Hillel. After multiple overseas calls to Israel during the night, it was confirmed that this was a hoax perpetrated by UW students. But the depth of pain indicated the significant connection many felt with Israel.⁴⁴ Also in the spring of 1969, under pressure from state legislators, the university board of regents cut out-of-state enrollment from 25 percent to 15 percent of undergraduate admissions—a serious blow to the UW Jewish community. This policy exposed anti-semitism, including from state legislators who blamed “New York Jews”

41 Hillel Council, unanimous endorsement of October (1969) Vietnam moratorium, *ibid.*

42 Hillel in Madison continued its activism in 1969–1970 under the leadership of interim director Rabbi Moshe Adler. Adler was an Orthodox rabbi and social activist in his first Hillel post. Hillel reports, Muki Tsur, 21 November 1969, Amos Kenan, 21 February 1970, MS-2005-052, box 9:10, WHS.

43 One of the moving speeches at this protest was by student activist and city alderman Paul Soglin, who did not usually talk about his Jewish identity. Soglin was later mayor of Madison three times. “Iraqi Protest,” MS 2005-05, box 4:73, B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundation papers, WHS.

44 The news “report” said that Tel Aviv had been destroyed by tactical nuclear weapons, Arab forces were advancing, and that the United States had imposed a news embargo on all American media. Additional “CBC updates” provided more details. Hillel subsequently identified the student “broadcasters” who had faked the story, met with them, and tried to get them to apologize rather than be reported to the Federal Communications Commission. The offending students apparently saw this as a harmless prank. Hillel reports, MS 2005-05, box 2, folders 48 and 50, B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundation papers, WHS. So far as I can determine, this incident has never been reported before.

as outside agitators. Supported by Winograd, the student-led Coalition for Open Enrollment organized protests against this reduction.⁴⁵

In contrast to the tradition of social activism at UW's Hillel, some Hillels were politically conservative, focusing on religious services, holidays, and sometimes kosher food while avoiding or even being hostile to political and social developments. For example, at the University of California-Berkeley, also a center of political dissent with some 4,500 Jewish students, Hillel was not activist. Student activists, including Zionists, formed the Union of Jewish Students at Berkeley. "UJS was founded almost explicitly as a sworn enemy of Hillel and designed to function as a separate alternative to Hillel from the start."⁴⁶

In addition to Hillel and grassroots student activity, there were other sources of support for Israel and an expanded role of Jewish life and learning among young American Jews; these were often tied to a progressive political approach. The work of the American Zionist Youth Foundation—funded by the Youth and Hechalutz Department of the World Zionist Organization in Israel—in financing and supporting a growing Jewish counterculture was significant. Programs such as Jewish Free Universities, Jewish student newspapers, coffee houses, and other activities—often bypassing Hillel—were supported by a network of employed representatives.⁴⁷

45 Coalition for Open Enrollment obtained a hearing with the university's board of regents, though the policy was not changed. See Pollack, "Cohens." Pollack errs in describing COE as a faculty effort; it was student led. See also Coalition for Open Enrollment papers, M86-086, RT papers, WHS. Jewish enrollment at UW declined from about 4,000 in 1967 to 1,300 in 1970. Pollack, *Wisconsin: New Home*, 109.

46 Matthew Maibaum, "The Berkeley Hillel and the Union of Jewish Students: The History and Functions of an Intergroup Conflict," SC-2361, 20, 22. AJA. Maibaum says that most UJS members were "progressive leftists" concerned about human rights. "Jewish crises" were not a priority for SJU (24). Funding and support came from the "World Zionist Youth Foundation" (17), an apparent error by the author. For another critical perspective, see Joanne Jacobson and Jeanne Malter, "What's the matter with Hillel?" *Kadima* no. 2 (February 1971). *Kadima* was a Jewish student newspaper at the University of Illinois, where Jacobson was a student. Malter was a student at Indiana University in Bloomington. They called for a Hillel less focused on being "religious" and more committed to "sending as many Jewish students to Israel as possible."

47 For example, an American Zionist Youth Foundation report for 1971–1972 cites: "Activities among the Jewish student body are conducted by 43 student representatives

Only a few years after the Six Day War, American and other Jewish students began questioning the impact of Israel's victory. Some Jewish student activists developed an insistence on rights for Palestinians. For example, at the World Union of Jewish Students conference in Arad, Israel, in the summer of 1970 a resolution on Zionism was passed that said:

I. Zionism is the national and also by virtue of its territorialistic aspect the social liberation and emancipation movement of the Jewish people: it is to be realized in Israel.

II. This goal can only be realized if the national rights of the Palestinian Arabs are considered so that they be recognized to be a consequence of Zionist ideology.⁴⁸

My Beginnings in Israel

Use of an individual's experiences runs risks. My approach is to use well-documented personal experiences to illustrate larger themes about the interactions of young American Jews in and with Israel following the Six Day War. I try to be critical of my own perspective, both what I saw, and what I failed to notice. I have relied heavily on contemporary writings, including the draft of a pamphlet I wrote in Israel for American Jews facing conscription in the United States. In addition, in 2018 I conducted a qualitative survey of American Jews who had spent an

on the various campuses as well as by liaison officers with volunteer groups on about 200 campuses." The report references new courses in Hebrew and Jewish studies; new Jewish Free Universities; "underground" student newspapers; Israeli-type coffee houses; and "Zionist Houses," whose members live together and that function as meeting grounds for Jewish students." *Report on Activities from October 1971 to September 1972* (World Zionist Organization, 1973), 30. "The Free University of Judaic Studies at Boston University: The First Year: A Descriptive Analysis [1970–71]," Nearprint Collection, AJA. See also <https://www.mbar-on.net> (accessed 22 February 2021). The role of the AZYF and especially Mordechai (Morele) Bar-On in building this network on U.S. campuses designed to bypass Hillels needs more study. I am indebted to Michael Masch z"l for this insight.

48 *Network* 2, no. 1 (14 October 1970): 3. The vote was 69 for, 13 against, 18 abstentions, 9 not voting. While not using the words "Palestinian statehood," this was an early and significant statement. I am not certain that I heard of it while I was in Israel.

extended stay in Israel during this postwar period. While emphasizing contemporary documents, I have added from memory some additional points on chronology, geography, or the identity of speakers.

My experience as an American Jewish student in Israel is both illustrative and unrepresentative. I was born in 1950 and raised in the small city of Dubuque, Iowa, with a population of about 50,000. There were perhaps sixty Jewish families and a single small synagogue.

When I was twelve, my younger brother Larry and I went for a few weeks to the Reform movement's summer camp (later Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute) in Oconomowoc, WI. It was a formative experience, and I went back every summer through 1966 and worked at the camp for two summers after graduating high school in 1968. My camp encounters with peers, rabbis, Israeli counselors, and visiting speakers enhanced my Jewish awareness.⁴⁹ I also became active in the regional Reform youth group, the Northern Federation of Temple Youth (NoFTY). In the summer of 1967, I participated in the National Federation of Temple Youth's Chicago Mitzvah Corps, a learning and service project encountering urban poverty and injustice. I served as NoFTY regional president my senior year of high school, 1967–1968.

When I entered UW in the fall of 1968, Hillel became a center of my life. I spent most Friday nights and Shabbat mornings there. When UW reduced out-of-state student enrollment, I helped organize opposition as a member of the steering committee of the Coalition for Open Enrollment. In 1969–1970 I frequently had Shabbat lunch along with other students at the home of interim Hillel Rabbi Moshe Adler and Rachel Adler (then married). This was my first regular involvement with combined traditional Shabbat observance and social activism.

UW-Madison did not have a Jewish studies program then, but it did have a large Hebrew department.⁵⁰ I took first-year Hebrew during my

49 Dubuque had one synagogue, perhaps 60 Jewish families, and no more than 15 Jewish students who were in college at any point between 1967 and 1973. I was the only Jewish student in my high school class of about 750. The congregation was served by student rabbis from Hebrew Union College who visited biweekly.

50 In the fall of 1969, the UW Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies reported 450 undergraduates and 70 graduates enrolled in Hebrew language courses. That year, UW was

sophomore year. I also took George Mosse's Modern European History course, which explored the rise of Nazism. From Mosse I took an awareness of and skepticism about the power of "myths and symbols."⁵¹

I made plans to attend Hebrew University's One Year program.⁵² As with many American students, my 1970 trip to Israel began with a stop in Europe, including Holocaust landmarks. I visited Dachau, followed by a stop in Czechoslovakia, two years after the Soviet invasion had crushed the "Prague spring." I visited Jewish sites as well as Terezin concentration camp. I met an international group of young Jews. Peter, a Czech Jewish medical student, invited me to spend time with him and his parents, both Holocaust survivors.⁵³

I arrived in Israel in July 1970 with a Hebrew vocabulary that let me count to ten but not to twenty. I was bussed with about 120 other students to Ohalo, a teachers' seminar on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. We began intensive Hebrew study (ulpan) at this subtropical center, up to six hours a day, plus field trips and informal activities. By August I understood more spoken Hebrew and was working on written sources and news broadcasts.⁵⁴

in "second place in the United States, after Brandeis," in the number of students spending a junior year in Israel. University of Wisconsin, Facts and Figures, M2005-02, Box 6:31, Hillel papers, WHS. For the 1971–1972 year, for example, the American universities with the most students at HU were Brandeis (111 students), Stern College for Women (88), and Brooklyn College and UW, which tied at 84 students. Pamphlet for 1971–1972, box 1, American Friends of Hebrew University, Nearprint Collection, AJA. Two UW courses, one in American Jewish literature and one in modern Jewish history, were offered around 1970 and 1971, each drawing hundreds of registrants. Richard Winograd, "Hillel Program Report, 1971–2," MS 2005-052, box 5, folder 21, WHS.

51 Coalition for Open Enrollment files, RT papers, WHS. Also, Hillel papers, "UW Out of State Enrollment Quota," MS 2005-52, box 6:53, WHS. RT correspondence to Rabbi Stanley Davids, Milwaukee, and Jonathan Weinberg, NoFTY social action chair, Correspondence, U Wis 68–70, box 3, RT papers AJA.

52 My preparation included a meeting with Mark Solomon, a University of Iowa student from Dubuque who had attended Hebrew University in 1968–1969. It is noteworthy that a tiny Jewish community sent two college students to Israel in this short time span.

53 Letter #6,13 July 1970 (en route to Geneva), box 3, RT papers, AJA.

54 Other American students studied that summer at Sde Boker or started their studies in Jerusalem. Most students at Ohalo were North American; a few were from the UK, Australia,

I wrote to my family about my class routine, the climate, field trips, my first outing to nearby Tiberias. I commented on the lack of news: the *Jerusalem Post* was “weak on news outside Israel,” plus we heard “scanty news headlines” three times a day in English on the radio. *Time* and *Newsweek*, which had international editions, didn’t always arrive at the canteen. “We’re beginning to work on the news (radio) in Hebrew in my class, but it’s difficult.”⁵⁵ Later in the summer ulpan I wrote, “I’m finding that I can understand a good deal of spoken Hebrew though I am very non-fluent when speaking myself and the news on radio and the newspaper are still too hard for me.”⁵⁶

In July, we made our first trip to Jerusalem, visiting HU, the Old City, and the Western Wall. I was very conscious of our bus route through the West Bank. En route to Jerusalem I noted “poor, rugged country ... rocks in both Israel and occupied Jordan mark fields and are piled in corners, fences, and other places. The bus to Jerusalem [went] from Tiberias to Afula [then] through the occupied territories—Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah which is the shortest route there. There is only a police roadblock marking the border but the Israelis are very security conscious.” Of the city as a whole, I wrote, “I went to the Western Wall, too—the wall of the Temple of 19 centuries ago.... I know now why the city is called ‘Jerusalem of gold’—almost all the buildings from the newest to the oldest are made from light brown stone.... The Old City is full of small markets, noise, and narrow, crowded, and somewhat dirty.”⁵⁷

During that summer I went for Shabbat to Safed with one of my American roommates, where we stayed at a youth hostel and attended a Sephardi/Mizrachi synagogue.⁵⁸ I acquired my first set of tefillin, from an English Jewish student who had an extra set. I encountered new foods, as I wrote in August 1970 explaining falafel to my thirteen-year-old

South Africa, or Latin America. Letter #17, 6 Aug 1970, Correspondence, Box 3, RT papers, AJA.

55 Letter #11, 19 July 1970, RT papers, AJA.

56 Letter #21 to family, 19 August 1970, RT papers, AJA.

57 Letter #14, 28 July 1970, RT papers, AJA.

58 Letter #17, 6 Aug 1970, RT papers, AJA.

brother David.⁵⁹ At the end of the summer, many of the uplan students spent a few days on a left-wing kibbutz, Bar Am, near the Lebanese border. This was my only extensive kibbutz visit, despite its central role in the mythology of Israel. Besides picking apples, I met several times with a “host family.” Before leaving the United States, I had resolved to keep kosher in Israel. When we arrived at the kibbutz, we were asked “How many *dati'im* are there?” in Hebrew. It was an anxious moment for me. I knew “*dati*” was literally “religious,” but in modern Hebrew it meant “Orthodox.” I was religious, but definitely not Orthodox, so I did not raise my hand. I was surprised at the nonkosher food on the kibbutz (what looked like ham to me), but I ate vegetarian food and fish. While most of the American students were not Orthodox, I wrote that a “surprising number of the kids who are here” did keep kosher.⁶⁰

Not everyone experienced Israel in the same way. One of the ulpan students was an American of Lebanese Christian background. He spoke Arabic, and when he visited Arab communities in Israel, he learned about the “prejudice of Israeli Jews.”⁶¹

Jerusalem, Jewish Diversity, and Reassessing Jewish Denominationalism

We moved from Ohalo to Jerusalem in September, joining students who had been in other locations. I began exploring the religious diversity of Jerusalem. I was struck by the special Shabbat atmosphere of the city.⁶² On my first Shabbat in Jerusalem, I went to services at the nearby Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) campus but it was closed, so I walked to HUC instead. The next week, I walked to Har-El, a Reform synagogue in the Rehavia neighborhood.⁶³

59 Letter #20 to David Tabak, 17 Aug 1970, RT papers, AJA.

60 The “*dati*” question is from memory. Kibbutz visit, letter #23, 26 Aug 1970, RT papers, AJA.

61 letter to Larry Tabak, #19, 16 Aug 1970, RT papers, AJA. While students with an Arab American background were rare, there were some non-Jewish American students on the One Year program.

62 Letter #27, 6 Sept 1970, RT papers, AJA.

63 Unnumbered letter, 13 Sept 1970, RT papers, AJA. I visited all the non-Orthodox

On Rosh Hashanah, I went to the Orthodox campus synagogue and to HUC.⁶⁴ For Yom Kippur, the overseas student office arranged for me and another American student to have dinner with a local family. The adults did not attend their nearby Orthodox congregation, but I went to Kol Nidre with their young son. A few days later, I wrote:

Yom Kippur is the one day the whole city (Jewish part) is totally enveloped in the holyday and its holiness—even the Israel Broadcasting Service which doesn't stop on Shabbat goes off the air at 2:00 PM the day before. The buses stop then and while there is little traffic on Shabbat there was so little that a single car moving was out of place. After services (which we had to stand up for—everyone who only comes once a year comes on Kol Nidre—even many non-religious people fast) we returned to their house [the host family] and had a long talk (in Hebrew) about Israel peace, student protest in the US, etc—very nice and good practice for my Hebrew. Went to services on campus YK morning and at 3:00 PM walked to the [Western] wall for mincha and Ne'ilah (ended about 6 PM) but buses didn't start running until 7:30 PM.⁶⁵

I occasionally explored Jerusalem's Jewish landscape. In September I wrote, "Last week (Sat) went to services the very small but beautiful and ornate Italian synagogue—a kid had his bar mitzvah and they gave me an aliyah."⁶⁶ Soon I discovered the independent non-Orthodox congregation that became my main "home." I wrote in October, "I again went to the Conservative-Reconstructionist congregation Mevakshei Derekh ("Seekers of the way") on Sat. They asked me if I wanted to join—it costs only 5 pounds for students—I think maybe I will as I really like the

congregations in Jerusalem, which numbered around five including HUC and JTS. The two Conservative affiliates (JTS and Emet veEmunah) had separate seating for men and women. Har-El is the oldest Reform congregation in Israel.

64 Letter #31, 4 Oct 1970, RT papers, AJA.

65 "HU arranged for me and another American student to eat with a family in Jerusalem on Erev Yom Kippur. The husband and wife, originally from Germany, did not go to synagogue, but their little boy went [with] us to a synagogue near their house." Letter #34, 12 October 1970, RT papers, AJA.

66 Letter #41, 10 Nov 1970, RT papers, AJA.

congregation and their services, though I still want to visit various synagogues in Jerusalem”⁶⁷ Jack Cohen, Hillel director and Reconstructionist rabbi, was among the founders of this Hebrew-speaking congregation. Mordecai Kaplan, then living in Jerusalem, attended regularly.

Distance from America provided space for reassessment, including my ties to Reform Judaism. In April 1971 I wrote an extended letter to Paul Kent, a social worker in Minneapolis and advisor to my former region in NFTY. I was becoming critical of what I saw as the limited engagement of Reform Judaism with Israel. The letter detailed some of my observations and feelings about NFTY, Israel, and “other matters that I may bring to mind (and heart)”:

An observation, here at Hebrew U I think I know from 75–100 American and Canadian students well enough to know where they are from and their congregational background. (Some of this has come up



Anna Cohn (1950–2019) at Hebrew University, Mt. Scopus, 1971.
(Courtesy Morris Faienstein)

67 Letter# 44, 21 Nov 1970, RT papers, AJA. The congregation, unaffiliated in this period, would probably not have chosen the terminology “Conservative-Reconstructionist” to describe its service. Five Israeli pounds (liras) was less than US \$2.00.

in some of my classes). Of these I can only identify nine (9) who come from Reform backgrounds.... None of the people I know come from Reform backgrounds in Chicago or Minneapolis⁶⁸ or Boston or NY or LA. A few of my friends think this percentage of my acquaintances may be too low; but in any case, everyone agrees that the percentage of kids with Reform backgrounds among the 3,000 [*sic*] North American students here is far below its relative numbers in the US.... But to me it shows the following failures in the Reform movement....

Failure to instill identity with the land of Israel.

Failure to teach Hebrew adequately EVEN AS COMPARED TO THE ONLY LIMITED SUCCESSES of the other religious movements.⁶⁹

Failure to teach Aliyah as one of a number of viable Jewish lifestyles... (80% of the one year students from US, Can. are at least thinking about it; 15%-20% will probably stay or soon return permanently).⁷⁰

Failure to deal with the concept of Galut (exile).... The need to confront the possibility that life/Jewish life in America may be un-whole or even un-viable.⁷¹

This letter reflected my process of looking more widely at varieties of Judaism that had started at UW and continued in Israel. I was wrestling with the possibilities of living in Israel contrasted with the possibilities of an active Jewish life in America.

I became more deeply interested in Reconstructionist Judaism at Hillel in Jerusalem and at Congregation Mevakshei Derech. "I was just

68 An error, since my friend from NoFTY and fellow HU student Anna Cohn (1950–2019) was from Minneapolis.

69 Emphasis in original.

70 These percentages were personal impressions.

71 Letter to Paul Kent, 17 April 1971, Correspondence, box 3, RT papers, AJA. Copy also sent to Rabbi Stanley Davids in Milwaukee, NoFTY rabbinic advisor. There are brief response letters from both. RT's letter errs as there were about 3,000 *foreign* students at Hebrew University, and about half of these were from North America. An impetus for the letter was meeting three younger friends from NoFTY then college freshmen or finishing high school, while they were visiting Jerusalem.

at Hillel this evening for a seminar on Reconstructionism. Jack Cohen gave me this form for the [late summer 1971] Hillel Seminar [a national gathering at a camp in Starlight, Pennsylvania] and ask[ed] me to refer it to you with his express recommendation.”⁷²

Israel did not start my gradual disenchantment with Reform Judaism, but my distancing grew there. I was searching for a path that offered more openness to both tradition and Israel in an egalitarian framework.

Israel also offered other opportunities to meet Jews of varied backgrounds. In March I wrote, “This last weekend I was at a Hillel-sponsored seminar (in J’lem) on Soviet Jewry—It was a small group, about 30–35 Americans and we met with some new immigrants from Russia—the re-unification or at least re-meeting of the various segments of the Jewish people—with Hebrew spoken in Israel was very moving. We also talked with some non-college H.S. graduates (Israelis) who were also holding a separate seminar in the same place.”⁷³

Most of the HU students and the educated elite that I met were Ashkenazi Jews, but the majority of Israel’s population was Mizrachi, most of whom I encountered were in service roles, such as storekeepers, maintenance, and cafeteria staff. I recall little discussion of non-Ashkenazi Jews beyond hearing disparaging remarks about “pushtakim” (roughly, “hoodlums”), Mizrachi young men who seemed to hang around downtown Jerusalem. The English-language *Lillit* examined the Ashkenazi-Sephardi “clash of two cultures.”⁷⁴ Some American students got involved with the Black Panthers, an Israeli protest group founded largely by Moroccan Jewish immigrants in Jerusalem, which first attracted attention in 1971.⁷⁵

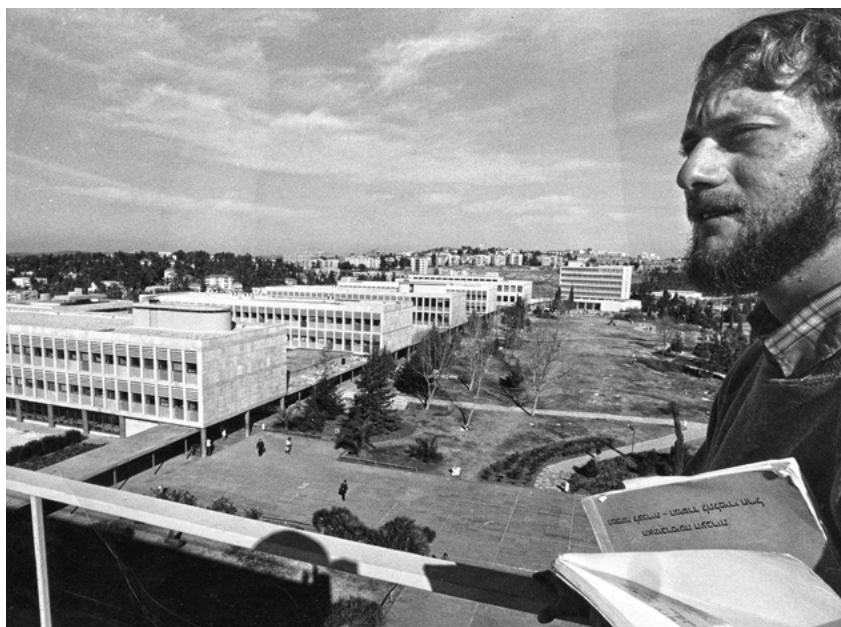
72 Letter to Richard Winograd, UW Hillel director, 13 May 1971, Correspondence, box 3, Israel 70–71, “U-Z,” RT papers, AJA.

73 Letter #63 to family, 9 March 1971, RT papers, AJA.

74 Norman Tollinsky, “Cultural Imperialism,” *Lillit* 1, no. 5 (July 1971): 6. This Hebrew University student publication was not related to the American Jewish feminist publication *Lilith* (founded 1976).

75 While the name was chosen because of the Black American organization, there was no connection. One of my American classmates advised the group organizing demonstrations in Jerusalem that if they wanted international attention they needed signs in English as well as Hebrew. *Lillit* 1, no. 4 (May 1971) includes a four-part section on “Israel’s Black

Israeli University Life



Tabak atop the University Library building on the Givat Ram campus, January 1971.
Image originally appeared in the Dubuque *Telegraph Herald*.
(Reprinted with permission from the *Telegraph Herald*)

Hebrew University sponsored trips and activities to familiarize students with the country. In October I went to Ein Gedi, near the Dead Sea, and the Negev with an HU group. I was both excited by the experience and simultaneously aware of the nationalistic imagery. “The first day we went to Masada (after waking up at 5 AM) an ancient fortress height above the Dead Sea where Jewish defenders committed suicide rather than surrender to the Romans. The place was excavated in 1964–5 ... and is an important part of the Israeli nationalistic myth: ‘Masada shall not fall again.’”⁷⁶

Panthers” (3–7), including a statement and a Haggadah excerpt from the Panthers. The July 1971, 1, no. 5 issue includes Gila Berkowitz, “Anatomy of a Riot,” on the demonstrations that spring.

⁷⁶ Letter #40, 8 November 1970, RT papers, AJA. Flyer (Hebrew) announcing spring programs including trips to Wadi Kelt (West Bank, near Jericho) and multiday trip to the Sinai, unprocessed, RT papers, AJA.

Israeli institutions reached out to engage the thousands of American students. There was a curiosity about their often-leftist views, as well as an effort to provide them with more varied information on Israel and the Middle East.⁷⁷ I wrote after one weekend seminar that about seventy-five English-speaking students

got to hear the official view point, and also where some people disagreed.... Some of it was bulls---especially most of the government propaganda leaflets handed out ... for example, all foreign office officials recognized privately that the Palestinians exist and have to play a major role in the Middle East settlement that will hopefully come some day... but publicly the most the Israeli government says is something like 'their interests can be considered' at a peace conference.⁷⁸

In February 1971 seminars were offered on the Middle East and on Israeli society for the nominal sum of 10 liras. *Lillit*, an HU English-language magazine reported, "At a recent weekend seminar near Jerusalem, some of the most interesting discussions centered on the upsurge in Jewish and Arab nationalism in the last century."⁷⁹ Many students responded positively to presentations with a range of opinions, though I remained critical. "Also participated in seminars on Israel and the ME [Middle East] sponsored by Student Union and Foreign Ministry (I think I was one of a handful who refused to become a campus propagandist)."⁸⁰

77 Groups reaching out included the Youth and Hehalutz Section of the Jewish Agency, the Foreign Ministry, and the Histadrut labor federation. In 1971 these three institutions supported the establishment of an Israel Bureau of the Jewish Student Press Service to create a credible but friendly source of information for Jewish student newspapers in North America. I am indebted to comments by Gerald Serotta about these programs (personal communications, 15–16 March 2021).

78 Letter #48A to Larry Tabak, 21 December 1970; letter #59, 10 February 1971, both in RT papers, AJA.

79 Ads for seminars with speakers, *Lillit*, February 1971, #2, 24; report, *Lillit*, March/April 1971, #3, 15, editor's note. This magazine was published by the Students' Union of Hebrew University, 1971–1973.

80 Letter to Richard Winograd, UW Hillel, 29 April 1970, Correspondence, box 3, Israel 70–71, U-Z, Box 3, RT papers, AJA.

After living in a dorm temporarily in Jerusalem, I thought I would have to find an apartment to share. But in November, I moved into the uninviting Shikunei Elef dorms on the Givat Ram campus, which lacked amenities such as mirrors and heat.⁸¹ The university administration was glad to announce the arrival of a small supermarket and three commercial washing machines on that campus.⁸² I also acquired an Israeli roommate, which helped me to work on my Hebrew skills. "I have a roommate now—he's in math and physics. His name is Yisrael [Fomberg]—he's friendly and easy to get along with. He teaches one day a week in a high school." "I get to practice my Hebrew because he doesn't know very much English at all."⁸³ I had informal contact in Hebrew with Israeli students in the dorm and cafeteria, but no close friendships.

Since the dorms (and many Israelis) did not have phones, dropping by or sending letters was the way to set up an appointment.⁸⁴ There were various lectures, films, shared meals, and conversations available. One issue of *Lillit* included invitations for students to share a Passover seder with an Israeli family; a "4 day spring tour to Gush Etzion and Mt Hebron" (on the West Bank); a lecture on ecology action to "save Jerusalem;" and a volunteer program to join the "many students who are working already in the underdeveloped areas of Jerusalem."⁸⁵ I attended a few meetings of political groups—left-wing Mapam and Siah (the New Israeli Left). While I was curious about these Hebrew-speaking groups, I did not join or attend regularly. I also participated in wider events,

81 Letter #41, 10 November 1970, RT papers, AJA.

82 The prefab dorms housed 1,300. Markets and washing machines were added earlier in 1970. "Aiding the Students," *Scopus* (Autumn 1970): 25.

83 Letter #46, 7 December 1970, letter #47, 12 December 1970, both to David Tabak, RT papers, AJA. My roommate and I also acquired a university-issued kerosene space heater for the winter. To avoid asphyxiation, we had to run it with a window open.

84 Michael Weinberg postcard replying to RT postcard planning a time to meet, March 1971, Correspondence 1970–1971, T–Z, RT papers, AJA. Weinberg was in a program at Kibbutz Ramat Rachel on the edge of Jerusalem. There were occasional pay telephones on campus, but no individual phone service.

85 *Lillit*, #3, March/April 1971, 31–35.

such as one of the first large-scale Israeli protests for Soviet Jews held in Modi'in on Hanukkah 1970.⁸⁶

Almost all students in Israel on university and other programs studied Hebrew. I continued with six hours a week of Hebrew instruction throughout the year. In December I wrote, "I'm beginning to be able to read articles in newspapers—editorials and columns are still pretty hard. Radio news is also a little easier."⁸⁷ Another important part of the Israel experience was an intense Jewish studies academic experience. American Jewish studies courses were expanding, but aside from a few colleges such as Brandeis, full programs were rare.⁸⁸ At the One Year program, students were enrolled in as many as nine courses. It was my first opportunity to engage with Jewish studies on a sustained academic basis.⁸⁹ All but two of my courses were in Jewish topics, including the Joseph story with rabbinic commentary taught in Hebrew by Nechama Leibowitz; Mishnah taught in Hebrew by Isaiah Gafni; modern Jewish history with visiting professor Lloyd Gartner; Jewish philosophy with Rivka Horowitz; and Middle Eastern history. These were my first serious encounters with rabbinic texts, and I was very engaged. The modern Jewish history course influenced me toward an eventual doctorate in American Jewish history. I cited one of the books assigned in this course, by historian Simon Dubnow, in my applications to rabbinical school. In philosophy I engaged difficult texts by Martin Buber

86 I acquired a poster from the Mapam students reading "The right of self-determination is indivisible" in Hebrew and "For Every Man a Homeland" in multiple languages, promoting rights for various groups including Palestinians, Soviet Jews, and students in Franco's Spain. See Hillel Gruenberg, "*Yesh Smol Ba-Kampus*: The Triumph and Tribulations of Two Left-Wing Student Union Factions in 1970s Israel," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 8, no. 2 (2015): 33–58, esp. 38–39. I deliberately avoided meetings of the farther left anti-Zionist group Matzpen. Soviet Jewry demonstration at Hanukkah, letter #48A to Larry Tabak, 21 December 1970 and letter #49 to parents, 23 December 1970, RT papers, AJA.

87 Letter #51, 31 December 1970, RT papers, AJA.

88 Leon A. Jick and Judith Baskin, "Jewish Studies," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., vol. 11 (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2007), 317–318.

89 I was enrolled in eight courses plus Hebrew, and informally audited another course on Marxism. RT Transcript, box 4, "Hebrew University, 1970–1971," RT papers, AJA. Several of my academic papers are in this same location.

and Franz Rosenzweig. In my Jewish education class taught by Joseph Lukinsky—which included both Israelis and Americans—we studied two tragic massacres: My Lai in Vietnam (1968) and Kfar Kassem in central Israel (1956), where Israeli border police killed dozens of Arab civilians. We examined questions such as how to teach in a Jewish context about illegal orders and the claim that “I was only following orders.”⁹⁰

Surprisingly, I did not visit Tel Aviv, the “first Hebrew city” and the country’s cultural center, until February 1971, more than six months after I arrived in Israel. I went to the Tel Aviv University campus and interviewed Simha Flapan, editor of the joint Arab-Jewish magazine *New Outlook*, and to visit with a Christian professor and his family from my hometown who were visiting Israel. I was unimpressed by the city. I described downtown Tel Aviv as “big, noisy, ugly, functional, traffic, no atmosphere—very much like many large Midwestern cities, but not as bad as New York which many Americans compare it to.”⁹¹

Americans Come to Visit

Eleven months away from their child provided the impetus for some American parents to visit Israel for the first time. My parents, Sol and Phyllis Tabak, made their first visit in the spring of 1971. While they took some guided day trips, such as to Masada, I was their guide for most of their stay. Besides seeing Jerusalem, the Galilee, and Tel Aviv, one of the things that made the biggest impression on them was “to go to a restaurant Fri. eve where each group says kiddush before they eat.”⁹² On the return flight they met the parents of one of my friends,

90 On Joseph Lukinsky and social justice activism, see Riv-Ellen Prell, “Jewish Summer Camping and Civil Rights: How Summer Camps Launched a Transformation in American Jewish Culture,” University of Michigan Beilin lecture, 2006, n.p., <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/belin/13469761.0013.001?view=text;rgn=main> (accessed 11 February 2021). Lukinsky’s course was “Education for Jewish Values in American Jewish Summer Camps.” Rabbinical school applications to HUC-JIR and RRC, January 1972, in box 3, Correspondence 1971–1972, RT papers, AJA.

91 Letter #58, 7 February 1971, RT papers, AJA. Tel Aviv is about 65 km (40 miles) from Jerusalem.

92 Postcard from Phyllis Tabak to Betty and Harvey Zuckerman in Dubuque, Iowa, from Jerusalem, 27 March 1971. Author’s collection. The senior Tabaks’ visit, including dinner at

Dale Kundin of New Jersey, who were also on their first trip to Israel. Students spending the year in Israel and speaking Hebrew were a bridge between Israel and visitors. My mother wrote, “Dad said after talking to them he is glad we weren’t on a tour. [My father] said, ‘You are a great guide.... Thanks for all your help and planning. We think we got to see part of the “real” Israel.’”⁹³

Although I adopted some traditional approaches, I mostly followed a model of liberal Jewish observance. As stated previously, I had decided to keep kosher before I arrived in Israel.⁹⁴ I also stopped using vehicles on Shabbat. But while I acquired tefillin, I certainly did not use them daily or wear a kippah every day. Though I felt no dramatic transformation, my Jewish observance caused tensions with my parents. In spring 1971 my father suggested that if I did not get a job working in a Jewish summer camp that I consider traveling during the summer, as I would not be comfortable at home in Iowa. Presumably, my parents thought they would be uncomfortable with more than a brief stay by a son newly committed to kashrut and Shabbat observance.⁹⁵

Not all visitors to Israel were Jewish. A Christian friend from UW, Paul Spalding, who was studying in Germany visited Israel in March. He accompanied me to Purim services at Mevakshei Derech and to visit ultra-Orthodox Mea Shearim. I went with Paul to visit the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on the West Bank.⁹⁶ The opportunities to show my college friend and my parents around Israel, using my Hebrew,

Sova restaurant in Jerusalem, is described in a letter from RT to Marlene Chertok, Pesach, April 1971, Correspondence 1970–1971, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

93 Phyllis Tabak to RT, 5 April 1971, Correspondence 1970–1971, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

94 Letter August 1970 from Rachel Adler and Rabbi Moshe Adler to RT discussing practical kashrut questions. Unprocessed RT papers, AJA.

95 Some students met non-Orthodox Jews for the first time. Others became more observant without becoming Orthodox. A student in Jerusalem in the 1980s reported: “I never wanted to alienate myself from my parents.... I knew what I wanted to do, but I had few role models for how to do this; no one in my extended family was observant and all of these [traditional] practices were foreign to my family.” Laura Levitt, *American Jewish Loss After the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), xxiii.

96 Letter #64 to family, 14 March 1971, RT papers, AJA. Describing Bethlehem, I said, the “town is very commercial.”

marked a changed relationship. I was a young adult with skills and experiences visitors did not have.

In December 1970 my hometown newspaper sent Robert Woodward Jr., its vice president (and son of the publisher), to the Middle East. He followed a Christian seminary professor visiting Qumran and other historical sites, spent parts of several days with me and some friends, and visited a high school classmate studying at the American University in Beirut. He wrote a story about me that covered more than half a page, plus photos. I thought the article overall was fair and captured both connection to and ambivalence toward Israel. He quotes me as saying, “Here in Israel we cannot escape our strong nationalistic feeling, our constant awareness of cultural ties to the past, our heritage which is here.... Spiritually and culturally we belong” and “Most Israelis don’t hate the Arabs—but a small minority do and act like conquerors.” He also quotes me—the “personable, tousle-haired scholar”—as saying, “It’s nice to be in a place that is mostly Jewish”; it is an accurate quote but perhaps an odd one to choose for the headline in a paper that serves a town where only a fraction of one percent is Jewish. I recommended two books, *The Seventh Day* and *A Beggar in Jerusalem*. The accompanying photos included an exoticizing one of me wearing tallit and tefillin, which I rarely wore, at the Western Wall. Woodward also noted this comment from another American Jewish student: “Let’s face it, Israel is basically a racist state.”⁹⁷ I was surprised to see this classmate’s comment in print. I felt uncomfortable about this partly true statement, and also with my friend’s readiness to say it to a reporter.

97 Robert Woodward, Jr. “It’s nice to be in a place that’s mostly Jewish,” *Dubuque Telegraph-Herald* (31 January 1971): 44. Avraham Shapira, ed. *The Seventh Day: Soldiers’ Talk about the Six-Day War* (New York: Scribner’s, 1970) (translated excerpts of *Siah Lohamim*). Elie Wiesel, *A Beggar in Jerusalem* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970). Recent reports show that *Siah Lohamim* was censored, documented in a 2015 film “Censored Voices.” See Gili Izikovich, “The ‘Seventh Day’: Censored Voices From the 1967 War,” *Haaretz* (7 June 2015), <https://www.haaretz.com/the-seventh-day-censored-voices-from-1967-war-1.5369889> (accessed 24 February 2021). The student sharing the “racist society” comment was Steven Schiffer (1951–2000), who attended UW before his year in Israel.

Political and Social Complexities

I had been an active participant in the American antiwar movement; in Israel I was one of the most knowledgeable about U.S. draft policies.⁹⁸ I was in touch with the Jewish Peace Fellowship in the United States, and I served as a local draft counselor to several Americans. During the year I worked on a pamphlet for Americans considering making *aliyah* as a way to avoid the Vietnam War draft. (As citizens, they would be subject to the Israeli draft.) Although never published, it was to provide an overview of Israeli society and the newcomer experience, as well as information about legal immigration to Israel; similar pamphlets existed for immigrating to Canada.⁹⁹ The section on life in Israel, which was completed, was based “primarily on the observations, feelings, loves, and criticisms of American students, in order to give a realistic, though I think not pessimistic view.”¹⁰⁰

Since high school I was drawn toward pacifism. Israel challenged that in some important ways. I saw Israel as dependent on its military. After Yom Hashoah 1971 I wrote, “Here is a country that lives by the blood of its youth, and if they did not have an army I cannot say the Arabs would love us. They’d probably slaughter us. But that doesn’t mean I can kill, or train myself to.” In the United States, I saw military force as often “a) politically ineffective or stupid and b) immoral.” In Israel, however, I felt that “the only basis for opposition is the latter—that to kill another person is immoral. It’s very difficult ground to stand on and I doubt most Israelis would understand. But they need to hear and

98 I had submitted a conscientious objector application to my U.S. draft board in 1968 when I turned eighteen, to initial dismay but ultimate support from my parents. I communicated while in Israel with others in Israeli programs about my U.S. draft concerns. Letters, Peace and Draft, Correspondence, Israel 1970–1971, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

99 “Some Thoughts on Israel and the U.S. Draft,” January 1971, “Correspondence, 1970–1971,” MS-846, box 3, RT papers, AJA. A copy is also in Collection M86-086, RT papers, WHS. Israel had no procedure for recognizing conscientious objectors to military service. Parallel publications included Byron Wall and Mark Ivor Satin, *Manual for Draft-age Immigrants to Canada* (Toronto: Anti-Draft Programme, 1968, 1970) and *Immigration to Canada and its Relation to the Draft* (Montreal: Council to Aid War Resisters, 1970).

100 RT to Jewish Peace Fellowship, 24 January 1971, 1, “Correspondence, 1970–1971,” MS-846, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

remember ‘not by might and not by spirit but by my word says the Lord God of hosts.’”¹⁰¹ I wrote to Rabbi Richard Winograd at University of Wisconsin Hillel that I was torn about *aliyah*, particularly by my opposition to military service.¹⁰²

While Israeli and Middle Eastern issues were prominent, I did not forget the ongoing war in Vietnam. The four students killed at Kent State University in Ohio profoundly affected me and other students, as the National Guard had also been called to the UW campus. There were nationwide strikes and student protests, and shortly thereafter two other students were killed at Jackson State University in Mississippi. As the first anniversary of this painful event approached, some of us thought we needed to mark it. With little advance planning, we hand-made posters calling for an antiwar protest at the American embassy in Tel Aviv and posted them around the Jerusalem campus. Someone thought of contacting American students at Tel Aviv University to join in. Since no one had telephones, a messenger traveled from Jerusalem to the Tel Aviv dorms to involve those students a day or two before the event. We did not bother to seek a police permit, usually required for demonstrations in Israel.

Although American students had demonstrated at the embassy on Jewish issues, it was not common to demonstrate against American policy.¹⁰³ Several dozen students showed up, and we lit six *yahrzeit* candles, said kaddish for those killed, and read their names, a ritual influenced by a Holocaust remembrance organized by Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf. We also delivered an antiwar letter addressed to Ambassador Walworth Barbour. The organizers were relatively successful in alerting the Israeli

101 Letter, 30 April 1971, RT to Marlene Chertok, Correspondence, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

102 Letter, 29 April 1971, RT to R. Richard Winograd, Correspondence, Israel 1970–1971, U–Z, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

103 A photo shows American students demonstrating at the U.S. Embassy [n.d., ca. 1969] calling for American support for Syrian Jews. Yosi Rot, photographer. Image in Dan Hadrani’s archive, 05028, at the National Library of Israel (NLI). In the fictional film *Milk and Honey Experience* (1971) an American student sits outside the U.S. Embassy calling for U.S. support of Soviet Jews.

press, as four daily newspapers carried stories.¹⁰⁴ A major impact for me was creating a Jewish mode for protesting the war in Vietnam.

In addition to antiwar concerns, our proximity to Palestinians (a term just coming into wider use) was ever present. Like most American Jews in Israel, I had very little interaction with Palestinians. In October 1970 I visited Haifa with another American student. We made a side trip by bus to an Israeli Arab village, original home of a Palestinian-American high school teacher of my brother Larry. But I realized once we arrived that I had no plan and felt out of place. I did not know the teacher's maiden name and had no contacts. We looked around for a few minutes, chatted with a shopkeeper, bought a snack, and left. I wrote briefly to my family, "Among other places we visited was Sharfaram, the village where Mrs. Allen used to live—it's not that small a place, about 10,000 people."¹⁰⁵

I went shopping for bedding, towels, and the few basic dishes I needed in a dorm in the Arab shuk of the Old City. But my interactions with Palestinians were mostly commercial until I met a Palestinian student in my Hebrew class. I wrote to my parents:

Thurs nite I went and visited Nabil, the guy from East Jerusalem who was in my ulpan class. He was glad to see me. He's very hospitable. I'll [sic] to invite him over sometime soon. He's going to the other (Mt. Scopus) campus of the university studying math—it is very hard for him

104 The demonstration was held on 5 May 1971. "Anti-Vietnam rally at U.S. Embassy," *Jerusalem Post* (6 May 1971); "Studentim amerikanim amru 'kaddish' mul hashagrirut" [American students said kaddish at the [U.S.] embassy], *Al Hamishmar* (6 May 1971), the longest and most detailed story; "Studentim amerikanim hifginu b'T.A. neged milhemet Vietnam" [American students demonstrated in Tel Aviv against the Vietnam war], *Lamerhav* (6 May 1971); *Yedioth Ahronot* (6 May 1971), photo of male and female students with candles and caption "Students from the United States, studying at Tel Aviv University demonstrated yesterday next to the American embassy" [translations by RT]. *Yedioth Ahronot* reported 30 "long-haired" student demonstrators, the *Jerusalem Post* 30 to 40 students, and *Al Hamishmar* and *Lamerhav* reported 60 students. In my correspondence, I reported 50 as part of a ten-page letter to Marlene Chertok, 7 May 1971, Correspondence, Israel A–L, 1970–1971, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

105 Letter #36, 28 Oct 1970, RT papers, AJA.

since his Hebrew isn't all that much better than mine and all his [classes] are in Hebrew.... [He] is from Jerusalem, but he is not an Israeli, he's a Palestinian. That's why he was in my ulpan class.... He's now going to Hebrew U to get a degree—he's taking all his classes in Hebrew and it is hard for him.¹⁰⁶

I visited Nabil's home in East Jerusalem twice, and was warmly welcomed. After a change in our schedules we did not stay in touch throughout the year.

I came with a questioning attitude about the occupied territories and Palestinians, probably more so than many American Jews. I arrived with the American Friends Service Committee's booklet *Search for Peace in the Middle East*, including both Israeli and Arab narratives.¹⁰⁷ I was interested in the history of Israel and the conflicts in the Middle East. I spent time looking at old maps at university libraries trying to track parts of the former Israeli-Jordanian border dividing Jerusalem until 1967. "Today went exploring in Jerusalem—saw some of the former border points, visited the windmill (yes, there is one) and the new Jordanian downtown (not in the walls of the Old City.)"¹⁰⁸ On another walk, not far from the Jaffa Gate, I saw a monument made of melted weapons with the words from Isaiah, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation."¹⁰⁹ In January I wrote that I was working on a paper on "Israel and the Palestinian Question" that would include "some discussion of the range of opinions here and the possible positive options open."¹¹⁰

In the spring I participated in the three-day march to Jerusalem, the *tza'adah*, coordinated by the Israeli army.

106 Letter #44, 21 Nov 1970 and Letter #46, 7 Dec 1970, RT papers, AJA.

107 www.afsc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Search_for_Peace_in_the_Middle_East.pdf (accessed 28 April 2023). As I recall, the profiling of parallel Israeli and Palestinian "dual narratives" in this book was more significant to me than the specific details.

108 Letter #49, 23 December 1970, RT papers, AJA.

109 Letter #50, 26 December 1970, RT papers, AJA. The statue by Yigal Tumarkin was erected in 1966.

110 RT to Jewish Peace Fellowship, 24 January 1971, 1, "Correspondence, 1970–1971," MS-846, box 3, RT papers, AJA. I have no record of completing this paper.

At the time I was looking at it more as an endurance contest (which on the last day I almost quit) but I also see ... the militaristic elements—many well-organized units and military units. All of it until we got to Jerusalem on the last day was in the occupied territories. How would you like to have 23,000 foreigners walking past your door? Also political—lots of marchers wore little signs saying ‘*anu tzoadim b’artzeinu*’ [‘We are marching in our land’]. I don’t think it is ‘our land.’¹¹¹

Another issue that became apparent only in retrospect was sexism. A significant majority of American students in the HU One Year program were women,¹¹² and they faced many of the same biases that they faced back home. In the opening scene of the film *Milk and Honey Experience*, an American woman at HU recounts her harassment on the street by Israeli men, particularly soldiers.¹¹³ Tellingly, her female classmates agree, but her male American classmates make light of her experiences. Unfortunately, that fictional scene looked very much like reality. I had women friends in Israel from classes and the ulpan, and their experiences differed from mine and those of other men because of their gender.

Two American male students of HUC wrote an informal guide for their fellow rabbinical students (overwhelmingly male) who would arrive for the 1970–1971 year in Jerusalem. Along with practical tips about the city, the authors included a section on “how to meet girls,” which advised that meeting Israeli women was difficult. They told readers not to cancel their subscription to *Playboy* magazine and advised that hitchhiking was easier if you were with a “girl wearing a short skirt.”¹¹⁴ A 1971

111 Letter to Marlene Chertok, 30 April 1971, RT papers, AJA.

112 Sheier, “Academic Problems,” Table 1, 26, has 57.2 percent women, 42.8 percent men in his original sample of 250 students, about one-third of the total in the One Year program. The author found virtually identical figures in a random sample of 100 names from the One Year program for 1970–1971.

113 The screenplay (1971) is by an Israeli, Rachel Ne’eman, sister of the director. She had close American student friends. (Personal communication, Judd Ne’eman, 15 March 2021). An exception to the lack of women’s stories is the novel by Cheryl Magun, *Circling Eden: A Novel of Israel* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1995). The novel focuses on an American woman at Hebrew University, concluding with the 1973 Yom Kippur war.

114 Guide by Leslie Freund and Alan Levine, HUC-JIR papers, ACA 172, file 2, AJA.

article in a student magazine written by a man claimed that “a survey conducted by *Lillit* reveals that most American women on the Hebrew University campus prefer Israeli men to American men.” The author continued: “Whatever the faults of Israelis, Israeli women concur that there is no room for Women’s Lib in Israel. In a society where sexual equality has always been an established fact, there is no need for a reaction formation to a phenomenon which never existed.”¹¹⁵ Of course, sexism was deeply imbedded in Israeli society, as in many other societies.

Some American women in Israel began examining tensions between feminist ideals and traditional Judaism. In a paper titled “The Lonely Woman in Confrontation with the ‘Lonely Man of Faith,’” Ellen Konar, who identified as modern Orthodox, wrote a paper in which she said, “I find it difficult to accept a separate (different) but equal status in religion, what has been rejected in the modern world.... I regret not being able to find a means to reconcile my own perceptions with those I find appreciated in the tradition I love.”¹¹⁶

Other Students’ Perspectives: Survey Responses

To compare the many experiences I and others who spent extended time in Israel had, I initiated in 2018 a survey of Americans who had been there between 1967 and 1973. There were 150 responses (142 received within a few weeks of posting).¹¹⁷ This is a nonscientific sample;

There was also a more conventional guide prepared by the administration, “Your Year in Israel,” folder 172/5, AJA.

115 J.J. Gross, “The Eve of Revolution” in *Lillit* (March/April 1971): 20–22. There is no information on this reported survey. *Lillit*, July 1971, 39, had a partial reply from Sylvia Berger of Tel Aviv, seemingly accepting much of the premise of Gross’s article but noting that half of Israel’s population was “oriental” and “not veterans of Degania or a random sample of women at Hebrew University.”

116 *Hapisa*, 5734/1974, op. cit. This issue includes articles written during the 1972–1973 academic year, including Konar’s.

117 Full results will be deposited at the American Jewish Archives. A small number reported on experiences either slightly outside the target date or demographic. For technical reasons, it was not possible to exclude these responses, but the small number does not affect the larger picture. Many participants had multiple Israel experiences, or stays that extended beyond the 1973 date, particularly during and after the Yom Kippur War. From the comments, it appears that all respondents were Jewish.

responses were solicited on H-Judaic (the academic Jewish studies listserv), the listserv of the National Havurah Committee, a number of rabbinic and minyan lists, and a list of American alumni of HU. In addition, readers forwarded the survey to friends and colleagues. There are three limitations of this study to keep in mind: (1) responses over-represent people in Jewish professions; (2) of the one-third of respondents who gave their address, approximately one-third (17 out of 57) lived in Israel, which is almost certainly a far higher percentage than among a random sample of Americans who had studied in Israel;¹¹⁸ and (3) there are inherent limits in asking people to reflect on experiences that are forty-five or fifty years old.

In this sample group, the largest number arrived in Israel in 1971. Of the remainder, about half arrived earlier and half later.¹¹⁹ Just over half were college students. About a quarter were recent high school graduates; smaller percentages were college graduates not in graduate school; or were in graduate or rabbinical school. Half attended an Israeli university program, primarily Hebrew University; smaller numbers were on a kibbutz or kibbutz ulpan. Only a small number were part of a yeshiva or religious program. Many of the 23 respondents who answered “other” were in gap-year programs, such as Bnei Akiva, or in other university-level programs, some organized by American colleges. Only a handful were in a work/study program, such as World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS) or Sherut La’am.

The vast majority of these respondents were in Israel for more than nine months: half for 9–12 months and a quarter of the respondents, more than twelve months. Almost all learned or improved Hebrew.

118 That is, only 17 out of 150 reported addresses in Israel. While some reported making *aliyah* following their Israel study or program, others moved to Israel five, ten, or twenty years later. Others had lived in Israel for an extended period but returned to North America. Five years after a 1970–1971 survey only 25 percent of North American university students (combined with South Africans and Australians) were still in Israel, a percentage that declined each year. “Survey on Absorption,” 1975.

119 Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers. Responses such as “other” have generally been omitted in this brief summary, so that reported numbers do not add up to 100 percent.

Ulpan was part of the experience of well over half with smaller numbers learning Hebrew in other settings in Israel. A small minority were “fluent or advanced in Hebrew before they arrived.” Only two people reported that they did not learn much or any Hebrew. It is worth noting that in this period, English was much less pervasive in Israel than it is today.

Time abroad can have a significant effect on personal development. A program advisor for American students in Paris recently said, “Every student [abroad] goes through an identity change.”¹²⁰ The survey offered a number of opportunities for open-ended responses about major impacts of being in Israel. Those in Israel during the Six Day War or Yom Kippur War found those to be key experiences. Many respondents mentioned (1) academic experiences, including learning Hebrew; (2) traveling the country (and the West Bank and Sinai, then under Israeli control); and (3) living in Israeli society. One person remembered all three categories: “Studying Bible in an academic setting with world-class faculty such as Nechama Leibowitz, Moshe Greenberg, Lee Levine. Traveling and experiencing the nature and history of the land. Living daily life as an apartment dweller in Jerusalem.” Another commented on the Jewish diversity encountered: “For the first time in my academic life my Jewish and secular studies were integrated. I met American Reconstructionist, feminist, and other progressive Jews and found new ways to connect to Judaism that were aligned with my values and experiences.” Many respondents had the experience of “meeting family members I didn’t know.” A number met their future spouses. Several reported still being close to Israeli roommates, even after many decades. A few spoke of encounters with both Jews and Arabs: “Positive engagement with Israeli Jews.

120 Mehammed Mack, Smith College program director, is quoted as saying, “As a college student, Jacqueline Bouvier spent a year in the city, and it became one of the great influences on her life.” Ann Mah, “After She Had Seen Paris,” *New York Times* (30 June 2019): 5T. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/23/travel/paris-jacqueline-bouvier-kennedy-onassis-college.html> (accessed 6 Sept 2019). On the impact of foreign study and independent student travel, see George Gmelch, “Crossing Cultures: Student Travel and Personal Development,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 21, no. 4 (1997): 475–490. This article focuses on American university students in a summer program in Austria in the 1990s.

Positive engagement with Israeli and non-Israeli Arabs in Jerusalem.”

Many respondents reported their Israel experience greatly affected their Jewish identities. A number made *aliyah*, some became more committed to religious observance, and one or two commented that the experience led them to encourage their children to study in Israel. For example: “Strengthened my connections to Israel and Jewish People; cemented the seed that I would make Israel my home and future”; “On return, I became much more observant (thanks in part to being exposed to more religious people ...) and my Jewish knowledge increased”; “It helped to cement my Jewish identity, sense of community, Jewish history, and deepened my Jewish knowledge. I have been to Israel dozens of times since then”; and, “I have always felt, since that year, connected to Israel, and have traveled back several times. I encouraged my daughter to do a similar program.”

Most responded to the question about memorable experiences. One woman, who had been in the same program at the same time as I, wrote a lengthy response:

Politically: When we arrived at [in] Ohalo we were taken up to a roof and shown where Jordan, Syria and Lebanon lay and told not to go down the road alone at night.... When the ceasefire was announced¹²¹ we danced in the dining room and continued outside.... All year I had a sense that not only was I living on a daily basis with the tangible evidences of history, but that I was in a place and at a time when history was being made....

Socially: lived with Israelis and Turkish women on HaGivah HaTsarfait [sic], have been friends ever since then with two of them.... I remember goats & shepherds at the bus stop, which overlooked the Old City. There were no phones, Israel was still a poor country.... People dropped in on each other all the time,... there was no other way to get together. Participated in Tzahal’s Three Day March around Jerusalem,¹²² very weird marching through occupied territory and being a “part” of the

121 This refers to the Israel-Egypt War of Attrition at the Suez Canal, August 1970.

122 Spring 1971.

army for that time.... Was able to move around the country so easily.... I saw whole families hitching. It was a golden time, between the wars, the Arabs were still in shock so we could and did go everywhere... We had no fear about being in the Old City or anywhere else in Jerusalem or the country at large....

I remember feeling like the Israeli students were adults and we Americans were still kids. This really was the case, they'd been through the army, were several years older and most were married. We were "freaks," smoked dope and often played more than we studied. The Israelis were fond of Nixon and didn't understand why we were against him. I left ... for Israel about a month after ... [the murders at] Kent State University—this really affected us deeply—and I was a bit torn about abandoning the anti-war effort for a year. I felt at once strongly attached to my American life ... and my Zionism and strong feelings for Israel.¹²³

When asked, "Was anything missing or overlooked in your Israel program/experience?" most respondents said no. A typical response was, "No. Was the best year of my life." However, a few mentioned personal issues—"I was very lonely most of the time and there were few resources to turn to"—and some mentioned gaps in their Hebrew studies, or in the wider connections to Israeli society: "I wish I had continued with formal Hebrew language study" and, "Looking back, I would have liked to have integrated more with Israelis." A few commented that there was a lack of follow-up after returning to the United States, and several found that experiences of Sephardi/Mizrachi Jews and of Palestinian Arabs were lacking: "I met with members of the Israeli Sephardic community on my own ... & otherwise my courses did not address issues such as poverty in Israel"; "Our tour, like Israelis in general, turned a blind eye to the situation of the Palestinians"; "Obliteration of Palestinian experience. Social religious and class issues."¹²⁴

123 This 2018 response was submitted anonymously and has been only lightly edited. Personal names have been removed.

124 Survey responses, op.cit.

Major Effects of Israel Experiences

Those [young adult] subjects who experienced Israel directly and developed significant personal connections to Israeli Jews during their middle to late adolescence and very early adulthood usually deepened their engagement with Israel to the point that the engagement became independent of their parents' religious and social lives. That is the point at which the subjects crossed the line into what I have been calling 'Diaspora Zionism.'¹²⁵

There is no doubt that living in Israel temporarily strengthens young Jews' ties to Israel. But these experiences could also challenge preconceptions as Americans encountered an imperfect society. In looking at both my own and others' experiences in Israel, several trends and reactions revealed themselves. Among them:

(1) *People emerged with more complex views of Jewish life and people*—Israel broadened perspectives on Jewish life. I had encounters with Jews from the Middle East, the Soviet Union, Latin America, and Europe, as well as those raised in Israel. Late in my year I wrote, "I'm not very convinced of Judaism being a religion any more, having become much more aware of its cultural-ethnic-national-side.... And I'm wary of over-universalism (the Jews for everyone's rights but their own, etc.)"¹²⁶

(2) *Some felt ambivalence toward Israel*—Israel was enchanting, inspiring, and disappointing. I wrote, "No Jew ever comes to Jerusalem for the first time. He rather returns."¹²⁷ Near the end of my year in Israel I wrote, "I'm really discouraged by Jewish chauvinists" and "Judaism in Israel is not a moral force."¹²⁸ Coming from a Jewish tradition emphasizing social justice, I found this connection lacking in most of the Israeli public sphere.

125 David L. Graizbord, *The New Zionists: Young American Jews, Jewish National Identity, and Israel* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020), 68. The author's research cohort are the children or grandchildren of the baby boomer generation that is the focus of this article.

126 Letter to Marlene Chertok, 8 May 1971, "Correspondence," Israel 1970–1971, A–D, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

127 Letter to Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf, 11 February 1971, "Correspondence," Israel 1970–1971, U–Z, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

128 Letter to Rachel Adler and Rabbi Moshe Adler, 30 May 1971, 3, "Correspondence," Israel 1970–1971, A–D, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

In 1974, Rabbi Samuel Fishman wrote a report for national Hillel on "Changing Attitudes Toward Israel." Citing the large numbers of American students going to Israel, he wrote, "Student encounters with Israel, whether in the summer or over a year, have not always been effective and rewarding experiences.... Sometimes, however, the disappointments are rooted in the real and existential situation, and are not at all the consequences of misinformation or erroneous expectations." He quoted an unnamed Wisconsin student (me) who had studied at HU:¹²⁹

Though I was very excited about going to Israel, I do not think my expectations were too high. I did not expect Utopia or the messianic kingdom. I was intensely aware of the tragedy of a war by two peoples who called the land "home." I knew that not all Israelis cared about the things I find important.... And in some ways I was surprised; the stark rockiness of the land; the golden nature of Jerusalem at sunset which grew on me; the green eked out by Jews and by Arabs from an inhospitable soil; the growing confidence of daily use of Hebrew reborn; the constant contrasts of old and new, East and West, peace and war; and the joys and exasperations of day-to-day living.... And yet I was also disappointed, in some sense profoundly, for I did not leave with the feeling ... that I was wanted in Israel.¹³⁰

I also wrote of experiencing "history and holiness and of being in the center of the world," which I believe captured the spirit of many in my generation. Near the end of my year, my view of the overall HU program was less positive than earlier. I thought that, while individual courses were good, the university as a whole was a disappointment, as was the

129 Fishman, former UCLA Hillel director, came to Washington in 1969 to head Hillel's new national Department of Israel Affairs. See Benjamin M. Kahn, "History of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations," particularly ch. 4, "Arabs on the Campus," unpublished manuscript, SC-14900, AJA. Fishman, "Changing Student Attitudes," 28–29.

130 Fishman, "Changing Student Attitudes," 29. Fishman directly quotes, with a few minor editorial changes, from RT's "Turning and Returning: Notes of a Displaced Person" (November 1971), "Correspondence" 1970–1971, box 3, RT papers, AJA. This article, written five months after my return from Israel, was unpublished but circulated to friends. The text as quoted is with Fishman's edits. The original text is in Appendix A.

fact that almost all classes and social contacts were with Americans and other foreign students. I wrote of being torn about *aliyah* and my opposition to military service. I found myself “between two lands, with too much critical insight into both of them to be at ease. I’ve thought of the question: is the status of Wandering Jew as much an internal psychological state as an external reality?”¹³¹

I was not the only American student who felt ambivalent. In 1969, Dennis Ross (not the future U.S. diplomat) wrote, “I have a genuine relationship with this country. I love it/I hate it.” Moshe Waldocks (later a Hillel director and rabbi) wrote that “The development of a strong attachment to Israel has been difficult.... Rather than say that Israel has absorbed us I believe that many of us have absorbed Israel.” Student Jacqueline Hoffman wrote a short poem about threats of violence, titled “Planted in Holy Soil”:

They grow proud and straight and blossom
Sprout their leaves—
And are cut down.¹³²

131 RT to Richard Winograd, UW Hillel director, 29 April 1971, “Correspondence,” Israel 1970–1971, E–K, box 3, RT papers, AJA. These thoughts, and some of the words, appear in RT, “Turning and Returning.” I spent the seder with my Israeli roommate and family at his home in Zichron Yaakov. The intensity of attachment could also seem extreme. Marlene Chertok wrote me, “By the way, I’m happy to hear that you’re aware you’re fanatic at times. I’ve noticed religious fanaticism in some letters but as long as you’re aware of it I’m not worried.” Letter to RT, 7 May 1971, “Correspondence,” Israel 1970–1971, A–L, box 3, RT papers, AJA. My experience of Israeli society—with perhaps unrealistic expectations of making more Israeli friends—was not unique. Commenting on first-year HUC students that same year, Rabbi Ezra Spicehandler said: “The desire of students to have an ‘Israeli experience’ is limited by the Israeli experience itself.... Therefore the encounter has to be a limited one, with the students being somewhat disappointed.... Obviously the Israeli young people are not going to actively seek out an American student, it’s the American student that has to actively seek out the contact with the Israelis.” Ezra Spicehandler interview transcript (with Stanley Chyet, professor of American Jewish history at HUC and director of the American Jewish Archives), 8 June 1971, AJA, SC-11842, Box 1, Folder 12, 2.

132 Carole Hirsh, Helen Goldring, Gloria Srebro, eds., *Reflections on American One Year Study Program at Hebrew University-Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, 1969), 3, 14, 15, 19. Copy at National Library of Israel. I have quoted the entire text of Hoffman’s poem.



From left: Yisrael Fomberg, Tabak, and Moshe Faierstein on Hebrew University's Mt. Scopus campus, 1971. (Courtesy Morris Faierstein)

An unexpected finding from a study in 1986 stated that “Travel to Israel apparently induces some negative images of Israelis and Israeli society, even as it heightens Zionist commitment.”¹³³

(3) *Students' perspectives on American Judaism changed*—For some Americans, the Israel experience led to changes in their own Jewish lives.¹³⁴ My affiliation with Reconstructionist Judaism grew out of my junior year in Israel. As I wrote in my application letter to attend the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, “While in Israel and Prague last year I became increasingly aware of the ties that bind all Jews together, whether Hasidic or Sephardic, whether progressive or traditional. I was exposed to Rabbi Jack Cohen and Kehilat Mevakshei Derekh ...in Jerusalem, which I attended regularly.”¹³⁵

133 Cohen, “Jewish Travel,” 14.

134 I attended my first Orthodox synagogues in Prague and in Safed, on my way to and shortly after arriving in Israel. One of my American ulpan roommates, Morris Faierstein, raised in an Orthodox community in Brooklyn, attended his first Reform congregation, Har-El, in Jerusalem. (Personal communication, January 2016.)

135 Reconstructionist Rabbinical College application, January 1972. Application to HUC, with similar language, January 1972. I was admitted to both and chose the “road less

Some young Americans found that their involvement with Israeli society, including its problems, strengthened their commitments to issues they would face back home. Gerry Serotta wrote of a demonstration “opposite Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan.” The “committee, he wrote, “began as group of visiting foreign students, who, capitalizing on increasing consciousness of ecological issues abroad, hoped to attract large numbers of other foreign students.”¹³⁶

Though a minority did decide to make *aliyah*, a far larger group returned to North America. Ezra Spicehandler wrote, “The Hebrew University is approaching, I think the last I heard, about 800 [American] students. When one sees these students, one immediately knows that many of them are going to be key figures in American Jewish life. Most of them do not settle in Israel. They return home, they keep deep Jewish commitments.”¹³⁷

In June 1971, shortly after my twenty-first birthday, I left Jerusalem and returned to the United States. After a brief visit with my parents, I spent the summer on the staff of the Conservative movement’s Camp Ramah in Wisconsin. At the end of the summer, I participated in a national conference of Hillel students in Pennsylvania, then returned to Madison for my senior year including studying fourth year Hebrew (Hebrew literature.) My year in Israel was over, but its impact continued.¹³⁸

travelled.” Letter to Uri Herscher, director of admissions at HUC spring 1972, on weaknesses of Reform movement. “Correspondence” 1971–1972, box 3, RT papers, AJA. I declined an invitation from a JTS faculty member to apply to their rabbinical program because they did not admit women.

136 “Jerry Serotta” [*sic*, Gerry Serotta], “Birth of a student movement,” *Lillit* 5 (July 1971): 6. He reported that many Israelis found the issue-oriented protest, not tied to any political party, to be novel. (Personal communications, 15–16 March 2021.)

137 Ezra Spicehandler interview, 1971, SC-11842, box 1, folder 12. AJA. Transcript of taped interview regarding the first-year program of HUC-JIR in Israel, June 1971. The figure is approximately correct for students in the HU One Year program. There were about as many American students in other university programs, including graduate and undergraduate students.

138 On my twenty-first birthday in Jerusalem, see final letter from Israel to parents, unnumbered, 2 June 1971, RT papers, AJA. My summer at the more traditional Camp Ramah (which strove to have a Hebrew-speaking atmosphere) as a cabin counselor and tutor was not particularly successful.

Although their individual experiences differed, young American Jews who had lived in Israel played a key role in new developments in American Jewish life. For me, this became part of a generational perspective—personal Israel connections—that differed from that of my parents or grandparents. New manifestations of a more intensive Jewish life and an awareness of Israel as a real, complex society were generational markers.¹³⁹ For tens of thousands of American Jews after 1967, Israel was a lifetime influence.

Implications and Future Research

As we have seen, after 1967 thousands of young American Jews lived in Israel and returned to the United States after lengthy stays. This experience had major influences on individual life stories and on American Jewish life. By 1973, tens of thousands of young American Jews had spent extended periods living in Israel.¹⁴⁰ These numbers expanded in subsequent years. Most experienced an attraction and deep connection with Israel and Israelis. Many developed an awareness of Israel's tensions and failings. For some, this went along with a sense of being torn between this land and their American Jewish experience. However, historians and sociologists of American Jewry whose work covered the years immediately after 1967 have not closely examined the implications of these shared experiences—living in a majority-Jewish society,

139 In 1971–1972 I organized a Hillel course, “The Woman in Judaism,” only part of which took place. “Univ of Wis, 1968–1972,” box 5, RT papers, AJA. Also during that academic year I ate meals at the kosher co-op Kibbutz Langdon, and made plans to attend the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Temple University. I lived two years in a co-op kosher bayit (house) in Philadelphia, was an early member of Breira, and became active in the havurah movement. In 1980 I served on the organizing committee for the founding conference of New Jewish Agenda, a Jewish progressive organization. My career included serving as a congregational rabbi in Rochester, New York, Lansing, Michigan, and Spokane, Washington, while completing a doctorate in American Jewish history at Temple University in 1990. I was associate director of the Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia and a staff chaplain at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania for thirteen years. I serve as editor of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association's newsletter, *RRA Connection*.

140 Of course, many thousands more had been to Israel on shorter programs, including summer school, tours, and personal visits.

learning Hebrew, meeting Jews with origins in many parts of the world, and for some, meeting Palestinians sharing the same land. This lacuna is significant and needs, in this author's opinion, a biographical focus of Israel experiences. This type of approach has been a fruitful tool for various other areas of study, including American Jewish feminism.¹⁴¹

Many American Jews who spent a year in Israel returned there for extended study or visits.¹⁴² We do not know how many Americans, after a year of study or volunteering, considered making or tried to make *aliyah*—another piece of the puzzle that is missing. American Jewish families, including parents and future children, were likely affected in their Jewish journeys by those who had lived in Israel.¹⁴³

Shared experiences can be a critical aspect of creating new directions. For example, Jewish summer camps, particularly Camp Ramah, were part of the background of many founders of the independent havurah movement of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁴⁴ At a time when even having

141 Dina Pinsky, *Jewish Feminists: Complex Identities and Activist Lives* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), references a number of women's Israel experiences. Joyce Antler, *Jewish Radical Feminism: Voices from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 6, mentions Israel experiences as one factor influencing the identities of the women she studies.

142 While in rabbinical school, I returned to Israel in 1975–1976 for a year at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, taking most of my courses in Hebrew.

143 Seventy-five percent of American students in Israel in the 1990s had visited Israel earlier and 86 percent had one or both parents who had been to Israel. It is likely that only a small minority of parents of earlier American students (1967–1973) had previously visited Israel. Cohen, "Tourism and Religion," 40. On parental influence, see for example Sarah Glidden's autobiographical graphic novel, *How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less* (New York: DC Comics, 2010), 20, based on her Birthright Israel trip. Initially reluctant to go, she references her mother's 1972 stay at a kibbutz. Sheryl Liberman from Queens, who had been on the 1970–1971 One Year program, wrote after returning to the United States, "I would like to go to Israel this summer—just have to get the money (of course!). The more I stay here, the more attractive *aliyah* [in Hebrew letters] begins to look." Letter to RT, 19 October 1971, "Correspondence" 1971–1972, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

144 See, for example, Riv-Ellen Prell, *Prayer and Community: The Havurah in American Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1989); Jeffrey Salkin, "How American Jews Became Camp-passionate," *Religious News Service* 31, July 2019, <https://religionnews.com/2019/07/31/judaism-camps-reform/> (accessed 29 August 2019). Also, Daniel Elazar,

visited Israel was relatively uncommon, the presence of a significant minority of young American Jews who had lived there was influential.¹⁴⁵ Many leaders and participants in key American Jewish events in the 1970s and 1980s (and beyond) shared an extended period of study or work in Israel.¹⁴⁶ While few were in major leadership roles of established Jewish organizations, by this time there were new American organizations, publications, and movements that included many young Jews: the emerging Jewish feminist movement; Breira; the *Jewish Catalogs*; the National Havurah Committee; New Jewish Agenda; the Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education.¹⁴⁷ We need to examine how the experi-

“The Changing Realities of the North American Jewish Community,” 1986 (unpaginated), <https://www.jcpa.org/dje/articles2/ramah40.htm> (accessed 30 November 2020).

145 Correlation does not prove causation. Students going to Israel were a self-selected group.

146 Among my cohort at HU were Steven Zipperstein, future Jewish historian; Tirzah Meacham, future Talmudist; Morris (Moshe) Faierstein, future U.S. Air Force chaplain and scholar of Hasidism; Anna Cohn, future curator of the “Precious Legacy” exhibit on Czech Jews; Lee Paskind, future Conservative rabbi and social justice activist; Lynn Gottlieb, feminist and future rabbi; Gerald Serotta, future Reform rabbi, Hillel director, and social activist; Shira Milgrom, future Reform rabbi and liturgist; Ilene Schneider, future Reconstructionist rabbi and novelist; Gail Twersky, future feminist scholar and founder of the Jewish Women’s Archive; and myself, future Reconstructionist rabbi, American Jewish historian, and chaplain. All returned to North America. The large majority of American students who were in Israel did not enter specifically Jewish professions. It is likely that by 1980 a cumulative number of 70,000–90,000 American Jews, almost all under 35, had been on a long-term Israel program.

147 Ezrat Nashim, a feminist advocacy group, began in 1971. There were large national American Jewish feminist conferences in 1973 and 1974. *The First Jewish Catalog* was published in 1973. Breira: A Project of Concern in Diaspora-Israel Relations (1973–1979) was a group favoring an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, a position then to the left of most established Jewish organizations. The Coalition on Alternatives in Jewish Education formed in 1976. The National Havurah Committee had its first annual summer conference in 1979. The New Jewish Agenda, a progressive organization, held its founding conference in December, 1980. Decades later, Steven M. Cohen reported that more than half of young Jewish leaders (56 percent) were alumni of long-term Israel programs, compared with just over 30 percent of older Jewish leaders who had spent four months or longer in Israel. Young leaders were also twice as likely as older leaders (48 percent to 21 percent) to say that their facility with Hebrew was “excellent” or “good.” “From Jewish People to Jewish Purpose:

ences of young adults who had lived in Israel influenced these groups, as well as synagogues, the rabbinate, Hillel, American Jewish language, Jewish summer camps, and the Soviet Jewry movement. Speaking anecdotally and from my own experience, I believe the influence in all of these arenas was very great indeed.

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APPENDIX A

Nov 1971

Turning and Returning: Notes of a Displaced Person¹⁴⁸

by Robert Tabak

This summer I left Jerusalem after studying (more or less) in Israel for a year. Now I am back in Madison. And at present while both these statements are true I am uncertain of what I have left and to what I have returned: I feel the isolation of standing between two places, neither quite home, nor quite in exile.

The importance—in perhaps different ways—of Israel in Jewish identity in America, both in the general (adult) community, and among youth,

Establishment Leaders and their Non-establishment Successors” in *The New Jewish Leaders: Reshaping the American Jewish Landscape*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011), as cited in Theodore Sasson, *The New American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 107.

148 This text is as written except for minor corrections. It is the full text quoted by Rabbi Samuel Fishman in 1974. “Correspondence,” 1970–1971, MS-846, box 3, RT papers, AJA.

particularly as a factor among those leading to the rise of the Jewish student activist movement has been evident in recent years. More and more young Jews from North America have had extended exposures to Israel (six months or more), among them many who have studied at Israeli universities. While I speak here only for myself, I know that at least some of my feelings are shared by others who studied at Hebrew University and elsewhere in Israel, many of them the most morally sensitive and politically aware (both countries) young people I met while in Israel.

The Homeland

Though I was very excited about going to Israel, I don't think my expectations were too high. I didn't expect Utopia or the messianic kingdom. I was intensely aware of the tragedy of a war by two peoples who called the land "home." I knew that not all Israelis cared about the things I find important (any more than do all Americans). And in some ways I was surprised; the stark rockiness of the land; the literally golden nature of Jerusalem at sunset which grew on me; the green eked out by Jews and by Arabs from an inhospitable soil; the growing confidence of daily use of Hebrew reborn; the constant contrasts of old and new, East and West, peace and war; and the joys and exasperations of day to day living. And yet I was also disappointed, in some sense profoundly, for I did not leave with the feeling that for all Israel's love of *aliyah*, that I was wanted in Israel, that those who would demand a true socialism or question violations of civil liberties that would not pass in the US or would refuse military service for conscience' sake would be ignored or shunted aside or despised or perhaps accused of "galut mentality." Not by all Israelis of course, but enough I felt—probably most—to be truly cut off. And when I wasn't looking, I was an American while I was in Israel.

Home?

And on return to the States similar and different sorts of isolation cut in on me. I am outside the "mainstream" of America in many of my ideas too though in some ways the legal forms of dissent are more strongly protected here (due process, no house arrest) which are in fact usually more or less observed in Israel, but not always. There is a community of support for radical and dissenting ideas in the US—one that I can

find more easily than one in Israel. But there are elements of hopelessness and despair in the struggle to make America humane. The physical quality of life in America now seems more on the verge of collapse in the foreseeable future. And the fact remains that in another way I am outside even most leftist and counterculture groups: I am consciously and actively Jewish.

Is America then my home?

Galut: Eternal or Internal?

The thought arose in my love-hate thoughts about Israel that perhaps the state of Galut (exileness) was in fact more than a separation from the homeland; that it was a kind of mental state, or perhaps existential condition. We are in Galut and the existence of the State of Israel does not remove the dual feelings of being both cut off and of being unavoidably tied together.

Are we then to accept the Israeli myth of “galut mentality;” move there, and hope our children will be “good Israelis”? Are we to become aware of ourselves as Stalin’s Jews, as “rootless cosmopolitans”? Are [we] to accept valuing Israel as “a country like all other countries” for Jews and drop our doubts about its presumably ethical nature? (I find this idea fairly accurate in a descriptive sense but heartily reject it as a value/goal.) Are we then to seek some viable form of Jewish life in the diaspora?

In the end, perhaps I will make whatever decisions I need to, as an American friend in Israel said, “I know I don’t feel completely at home here nor in America. I have to live my life knowing that I’ll be unhappy in some respects wherever I am.” At the same conversation a visiting American rabbi¹⁴⁹ who was speaking with a small group of American students at a friend’s apartment in Jerusalem listened to us and said that he didn’t know what to tell us; we were perceptive and sensitive participants/observers of both societies. “Now, you know too much,” he said.

Having eaten from the fruit of the tree of knowledge, it cannot be returned to its previous place, whether we find it sweet or bitter. We

149 Arnold Jacob Wolf.

can only go out from the innocent garden with the hopes of a humane society into a terrifyingly real world.

APPENDIX B

Some Thoughts on Israel and the U.S. Draft

by Robert Tabak

Working Draft, January 1971 (selections):

*My viewpoint is a limited one: that of an American student in Israel for a year. I have been learning Hebrew since I came to this country in July 1970 but am still far short of real fluency. Therefore this cannot be any sense an authoritative view of all aspects of a society; it is much more impressionistic. The comments of a number of mostly American students on the general topic of living in Israel are included below, as otherwise unidentified statements in quotation marks.*¹⁵⁰

LIFE IN ISRAEL

What does Israel feel like?

"My existence here is much more active than anywhere else."

"You need good reasons---besides just being Jewish-- for coming here."

"Israel is an extremely vital country--a land that requires a great deal from its people, that drains them in many ways."

"There is a general feeling of peace here. People don't talk about the war except at news time."

"To live in Israel it's not necessary to be incredibly conscious of your Jewishness--but you do have to be able to be among Jews."

"In Israel, even with all its faults, I'm closer to transcending the sense I had in the US of being a Jew in Galut--in exile."

150 "Some Thoughts on Israel and the U.S. Draft," working draft, January 1971, "Correspondence," 1970-1971, MS-846, box 3, RT papers, AJA. The entire typescript is approximately twelve pages, double spaced. A copy is also in Collection M86-086, RT papers, WHS. Except for correcting typos and punctuation, the texts are as written. Material not in quotation marks is by RT.

*Israel is a very special place: a religious center, an historical homeland, a developing nation, a state with a number of socialist ideas and institutions, a nation that survives by military strength, an unexpected occupying power. It is a promise and a dream yet unfulfilled in so many aspects of its daily life.*¹⁵¹

The people

Israel is a new country. Only 40% of its citizens were born here; most Israeli university students have either immigrant parents or immigrated as children. 10% of the country's citizens are Druze and Arab. If the occupied territories are included, 40% of the total population is Arab. Some reactions to the Israelis:

"There is a greater willingness to help than in the states. There is more frankness and willingness to meet halfway."

"Israel is very exciting and open. There are so many people from different places, classes—it's a gathering of people."

*"As individuals, they aren't too bad—though they have [a] less critical frame of mind."*¹⁵²

Pace of life in Israel; standards of living

Good advice is given by one student:

*"Try and determine what your status would be here; what your full-time employment will be. Compare life here with the much higher standards in the US. You have to determine what your material values are."*¹⁵³

The land and the environment

The land of Israel is magnificently beautiful. The starkness of the Negev desert, the valleys and rock-strewn hillsides, the lush green of area around the Sea of Galilee (Kinneret), the hesitant greenness of land always on the verge of reverting to wasteland—add to make a place that can let one feel close to the earth and its history.

"Here, every tree, every drop of water is precious."

But there [are] critical aspects as well. One of Israel's long-term problems

151 Ibid., 1–2.

152 Ibid., 2.

153 Ibid., 2.

may be a water shortage. The attitude toward soil conservation and land reclamation is very positive; that towards air pollution is not. This is not yet a serious problem, and Israel may learn from the US on this point.

Perhaps due to the speed of the country's growth, there has been a greater emphasis on function than aesthetics.¹⁵⁴

The Universities

Higher education is much less widespread and more career-oriented than in the US. Two Israeli universities offer opportunities to learn Hebrew and live and study in Israel for extended periods. The Hebrew University in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University offer both sophomore and junior year One year programs (which include intensive Hebrew study for several months) and also a preparatory year for high school graduates who want to do their undergraduate work (prep year plus three years) at an Israeli university. (Grad studies are also possible here.) Though I have many criticisms of the university, my experience as a whole has been quite positive. You can learn quite a bit of Hebrew in 5 or 6 months, and if you've had background in the States (versus just learning to read without understanding), all the better. (I had one year of university Hebrew, but many kids who had no formal background are now at or above my level.)

But "if you want to isolate yourself in an American community at the university you can." For example, of Hebrew University's 16,000 students, some 3500 are Americans.¹⁵⁵

"Many of the American students were involved in the Movement. They're doing soul searching." And perhaps with some exaggeration, "This (Hebrew U.) is the largest gathering of American radicals outside the U.S."

Also, a surprising number of the American students here consider themselves religious.¹⁵⁶

The military and the reserves

Many Israelis are concerned about the psychological and moral effects over

154 Ibid., 3.

155 An incorrect figure. That was the total number of overseas students, of whom about 1,500 were Americans.

156 "Some Thoughts," 5. The draft pamphlet did not have a section on religious life.

the long run of a continuing semi-war stance and being an occupying power. Almost all Israelis want peace, even if many are unsure how to get it. Israel is not a militarized garrison state, though this is a potential danger to the country, especially if there is no peace or relaxation of tension.

Immigrants (Olim) and Immigration (Aliyah)

*"Israelis like aliyah but not olim."*¹⁵⁷

Most of the olim coming to Israel since 1967 (excluding a small trickle from the USSR and Eastern Europe) have been well educated people from Western countries coming here from choice rather than necessity.

From the pamphlet's conclusion:

*Some Americans come because they want to live in Israel; —others to escape (blacks, riots, crime, decadence.) If you're escaping, then I can't recommend Israel. Being an immigrant—or potential immigrant—to a strange land is not easy. Some will find the sacrifices and the difficulties too much. Israel is neither a decadent American colony nor the Messianic Kingdom nor the images of Leon Uris' Exodus. If you're looking for the "Hassidic homeland," a beautiful Shlomo Carlebach concert is more up your line than Israel. If you feel there's a reason to come here, then maybe there is. Even if you're not sure what it is, maybe you should think about coming. You don't have to make a decision for the rest of your life if you come and see what Israel is like. It usually isn't easy to leave home for a new home, unseen. But your grandparents probably did it, and so did more than half the Israelis.*¹⁵⁸

157 Translation: "Israelis like immigration, but not immigrants."

158 "Some Thoughts," 8. Other sections not excerpted here included "Bureaucracy and Government," "Politics," "Kibbutzim," "The Military and the Reserves," "COs [conscientious objectors] and Pacifists in Israel" (marked "To be revised"), all completed. There was an outlined but incomplete concluding section titled "Legal Aspects of Immigration to Israel."

Book Reviews

Catherine Collomp, *Rescue, Relief and Resistance: The Jewish Labor Committee's Anti-Nazi Operations, 1934–1945*, Translated by Susan Emanuel (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2021), 364 pp.

Catherine Collomp, emerita professor of American history at Université de Paris, has written an award-winning history of the New York-based Jewish Labor Committee (JLC) and its limited but successful effort to coordinate its networks to rescue Jewish and European labor activists, support anti-fascist resistance movements, settle refugees in the United States, and publicly protest Nazism. Her transnational history challenges the claim that Jews in the United States ignored the plight of European Jewry under fascist violence and makes a compelling case for the significance of the JLC in its rescue and relief work.

The JLC, formally formed in 1934 in response to German and Austrian attacks on social democrats and labor leaders, had its origins in the pre-World War I immigration of Yiddish-speaking, Central European Jews into the United States—immigration that was in response to state-supported violence. Most JLC leaders had been active in the Jewish Labor Bund, a socialist workers' movement active in the Pale of Settlement in the Russian Empire, before immigrating to the United States. Their membership in the United States drew from the largely Jewish and socialist membership active in the garment trade unions and from noncommunist and non-Zionist mutual aid and political organizations. Collomp argues that JLC leaders' transnational relationships and identities predisposed them to view Nazism as a threat to more than Jews and trade unionists; Nazism threatened democracy for all. The focus of JLC's activism changed over time in response to the unfolding crisis in Europe, but its commitment to fighting Nazism abroad and antisemitism in the United States remained constant.

In three chronological and three thematic chapters, Collomp identifies

two main phases to the JLC's efforts. The first, from its founding in 1934 through the early war years, focused on rescuing leading activists in socialist and socialist democratic political parties, trade union movements, anti-fascist militants, and Russian Mensheviks. Because most socialist leaders in Weimar Germany were Jewish, JLC activism demonstrates a uniquely Jewish expression of transnational anti-fascism committed to the survival of Jewish socialism and its institutions.

In a chapter full of revelations, "Trajectories of Exile, Rescue Operations," Collomp uncovers the connection between the JLC and American Frank Bohn and rescue work in France. Bohn worked closely with the Emergency Rescue Committee and Varian Fry in Marseille, France, to rescue anti-Nazi refugees. Collomp also documents the work of the JLC in rescue operations in France once Bohn left. This chapter of the JLC's story had been erased in Fry's account of his rescue activities and in later histories that drew upon Fry's perspective. Collomp's research is significant because it uncovers a key period between July 1940 and December 1941, when the JLC worked through the American Federation of Labor, the U.S. State Department, and European diplomats to get visitor visas processed for labor and socialist leaders and their families so they would be able to escape totalitarian regimes without needing individual financial affidavits. By 1942, the JLC took responsibility for rescuing 1,500 "labor leaders and men of letters" (123). A few of the JLC's lists are reprinted in the book's appendix.

The second main phase of JLC's activity emerged as World War II raged and fascism spread across Europe. Adding to its attempt to save European socialists and their institutions, JLC leaders worked to save Europe's Jewish people. Through their European contacts and connections, the JLC offered humanitarian assistance to Polish Jews who were forced to flee to the Soviet Union. They also sent money to underground organizations in Poland. Some of these resources found their way to the Warsaw Ghetto, allowing its resistance fighters to pay for weapons used in the uprising. The JLC also raised funds to support underground noncommunist French labor and socialist parties and movements and French Jewish organizations more generally. The JLC dealt in information, as well, transmitting underground information to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), teaching that agency the "value of union

networks in the subversion of political regimes” (238). After the war, the JLC committed its funds and efforts to rebuilding Jewish life in Europe, with a special focus on orphaned children.

Collomp’s study is an important contribution to our understanding of how this American organization used its Jewish, socialist, and labor ties to intervene on behalf of those who shared its political worldview throughout Nazi Europe. And while many of the acronyms, organizations, and politics of European socialist movements will be at times confusing to scholars of the United States, Collomp’s findings about the role of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and, later, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in support of the JLC are compelling. The JLC maintained a strong relationship with the AFL and CIO through its ties to the leadership of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union and the American Clothing Workers of America. Collomp challenges traditional labor narratives by documenting AFL leaders’ support for JLC efforts to rescue European socialist and social democratic leaders under Nazi assault when the United States was officially neutral. That the JLC did not support communists—and downplayed the Jewish identity of the socialist and trade unionists it sought to save—helped. As the war raged, the AFL and CIO Joint Committee coordinated with the JLC to find resources to support underground European labor movements. During the Cold War, some American JLC activists continued to work with the AFL against communism, but for Collomp, the postwar imperialist agenda of the AFL was quite different than the civic and political commitments of the JLC to reconstruct Jewish life in Europe and Palestine and to fight against all forms of totalitarianism.

Collomp’s multilingual skills allow her to follow Jewish and socialist networks across the United States and Europe’s many labor and socialist movements, political parties, and organizations. Her ability to trace activism as widely as she does reinforces the significance of the JLC as a rescue organization and is one of the book’s strengths. The dizzying number of organizations and individuals that move in and out of the story is a testament to the broad international network that formed to fight fascism and save lives, institutions, and cultures. The study, most useful to graduate students and scholars of Jewish and labor movements,

provides an excellent foundation and guide for future scholars to further develop the individuals, politics, and contexts in which this tragic crisis unfolded.

Randi Storch is a distinguished teaching professor at SUNY, Cortland, and a prior fellow at the American Jewish Archives.

Shirley Idelson, *We Shall Build Anew: Stephen S. Wise, the Jewish Institute of Religion, and the Reinvention of American Liberal Judaism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2022), 280 pp.

In little over two hundred pages, Shirley Idelson has turned biography, institutional history, and social and religious history into a fast-paced, exhilarating, and suspenseful story. And not just that—for her story doubles as a compelling argument that the subject of the biography, Stephen S. Wise, and the institution he founded, the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR), played a decisive role in “reinventing” American liberal Judaism.

Like all good history, Idelson’s story sharpens our awareness that things weren’t always as they are. Once upon a time, American Judaism of all stripes opposed Zionism. Once upon a time, Jewish studies was absent from universities in Europe and America. Once upon a time, “*tikkun olam*,” in name and substance, was remote from the agenda of Reform Judaism. Once upon a time, the population of Jews in America was growing rapidly, synagogue numbers were expanding, and Jewish religious movements were flourishing. Once upon a time, there were no women or LGBTQ+ rabbis. And once upon a time, rabbinical giants roamed the land.

Wise was unquestionably a rabbinical giant. While a competent scholar with *smicha* from Adolf Jellinek in Vienna and a doctoral degree from Richard Gottheil at Columbia, what truly set him apart were his gargantuan passion for social justice, his profound fellow-feeling for Jews no matter their credal or halakhic inclinations (and for non-Jews who shared his commitment to the “social gospel”),

his outsized oratorical gifts, and a combination of immense self-confidence and courage (evident when, as a young man, he refused the offer to become rabbi of New York's Temple Emanu-El because its board chair, Louis Marshall, rejected his condition that the pulpit be "free," i.e., one in which the rabbi had total control of the substance of his preaching). Unsurprisingly, these traits, along with his indefatigable energy, brought Wise to the forefront of virtually every major progressive social and political cause of the Progressive Era. They also led him to Zionism, founded on the preeminence of Jewish peoplehood, and to suspicion of Jewish denominationalism, whose pillars—halakhah for Conservative and Orthodox, and theological rationalism for Reform—he found spiritually constraining and at odds with the fundamental importance of Jewish peoplehood (*klal Yisrael*). Social justice, Zionism, and *klal Yisrael* became, according to Idelson, the cornerstones of Wise's liberal Judaism and, along with open scientific inquiry into Judaism, the cornerstones of JIR, through which Wise intended to "reinvent" liberal Judaism in America.

Idelson recounts in detail the huge, and highly uncertain, undertaking that creating a new rabbinical school represented. Among the highlights are her vivid accounts of Wise's tour of European rabbinical schools to recruit faculty, the repeated efforts of Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College (HUC) to undermine Wise's enterprise, the challenges of creating a curriculum that could meet the diverse academic needs of students and faculty while nurturing their religious passion for Judaism, and the unsuccessful efforts to put the school on a secure financial footing and to find a president who could, unlike Wise, devote himself fully to the job. (Mordecai Kaplan accepted the position more than once.) Despite all the ups and downs Idelson depicts, that JIR played a critical role in reinventing liberal Judaism—the CCAR adoption of the Columbus Platform in 1937 was a turning point—emerges as little short of a miracle, though a miracle we can understand thanks to Idelson's expert narrating.

For all its success, Wise and the JIR failed miserably when it came to ordaining women. Idelson has done a great service by focusing attention on this issue, revealing its history from the beginnings of the school (the faculty voted to admit women in 1923!), identifying the

women who attended the school but were repeatedly denied ordination, and locating Wise's reluctance to ordain women in part in his chauvinistic attitudes, which sadly persisted at HUC-JIR long after women were admitted to the rabbinate.

Idelson's account of Wise's reinvention of liberal Judaism highlights, as noted earlier, how different American liberal Judaism once was. It provides, as well, a useful historical perspective for contemplating and creating a liberal Judaism for the future, as Jewish institutions weaken and rabbinical school applications dwindle. And of course, it enables us to recognize history's ironies, not least that HUC-JIR's New York residential rabbinical campus is poised to outlive Cincinnati's, and that Wise's liberalism no longer sits comfortably with the regnant forms of Zionism in the State of Israel. Lastly, and reflecting a personal note, Idelson's book is a gift to those of us whose fathers were among Wise's "men." Thanks to her, we now understand our fathers even better.

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Sarah Imhoff, *The Lives of Jesse Sampter: Queer, Disabled, Zionist* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), 288 pp.

Although Sarah Imhoff's *The Lives of Jesse Sampter: Queer, Disabled, Zionist* is not a first-person accounting of a life, it nonetheless brings to mind the distinction critics often make between memoir and autobiography. While the term *autobiography* generally is attached to the personal narratives of the famous few (and usually male) protagonists of history—the Ben Franklins, the Malcolm Xs—we often associate *memoir* with the more personal and partial stories of the many. In *The Lives of Jesse Sampter*, Imhoff engages in an act of life-writing that exists at the intersection of the many and the few, the public and the provisional, the historical and the personal, biography and memory.

Imhoff describes *The Lives of Jesse Sampter* as “belonging to a slightly off-kilter genre: weird biography” (3). Sampter is resoundingly not a

representative figure. Despite being a respected early-twentieth-century writer and proponent of Zionism, she is neither famous within the annals of Zionism nor does her life mirror that of the majority of women born during the same period. Instead, Sampter's life is ideal for a "weird biography" because it becomes "a way for [Imhoff] to think about the relationship between an embodied life and a body of thought—and a way for [her] to quietly theorize how those two things are entwined in wonderful and complex ways" (2).

That Imhoff's title invokes the multiplicity of Sampter's "lives" is not accidental. Sampter was a study in contradictions. Born in 1883 to an upper-middle-class, secular humanist Jewish family, she became a committed Zionist and Jew during her adulthood. Disabled by polio during her adolescence and in a long-term relationship with a woman with whom she lived for years at a kibbutz, Sampter embraced Zionism even as she pushed back against some of its central assumptions surrounding the body and heteronormative reproduction. *The Lives of Jesse Sampter* is a deeply feminist act of life-writing that reconstructs Sampter's lives without paving over the discontinuities between her experiences and the ideas with which she framed them. Imhoff writes:

Sampter's story is a story about disability and embodiment. It's a story about the particular: as a "cripple," Sampter saw the world differently; she experienced the world differently; and these differences matter. It's also a story about the universal: it does not allow its audience to avert their eyes from Sampter's embodied experiences, which should remind us that we all have bodies and that they structure all our experiences (105).

The Lives of Jesse Sampter is an ode to embodiment, undergirded by Imhoff's assertion that "historians and other scholars should think more and better about embodiment, and one of the best ways to do this is through a single person. A single body" (3). Despite this emphasis on Sampter's "single"—and singular—body, Imhoff makes it clear that "even a single body implicates other bodies: familial bodies, social bodies, and the body politic all make significant appearances here" (3).

One of the most important interventions Imhoff makes in *The Lives of Jesse Sampter* is her insistence on life-writing as an embodied practice that needs to take account the emotions and sensory experiences of the

subject, as well as their ideas and the “facts” of their lives. This insistence on embodiment connects Imhoff’s work—and, by extension, Jewish studies—to a larger genealogy of feminist and disability studies. Jewish studies has long been divided between those who see textuality as central to Jewish life and those who place embodiment at the center of the Jewish experience. Imhoff offers a radical reinterpretation of this debate in which the mind-body split does not, and cannot, exist.

Imhoff organizes her chapters via the broad theoretical categories through which she understands Sampter’s identity and experiences. Her first chapter looks at Sampter via her complicated religious identifications. Imhoff argues that Sampter’s varied spiritual interests—from secular humanism to Hinduism, from Christianity to the occult—are part and parcel of what she terms “religious recombination” (28), a practice of drawing upon diverse religious sources and traditions to comprise one’s identity. Although we often associate this sort of dipping between and among religious traditions with post-1960s America, according to Imhoff, it was common during Sampter’s lifetime and suggests that the category of religious pluralism is too narrow to explain how religion—much less Judaism—works in the United States and elsewhere.

Readers are treated to a thorough analysis of disability in Sampter’s life in Chapter 2. Sampter contracted polio as an adolescent and presumably, later, post-polio syndrome. Throughout her life, she had difficulty moving her arms and was plagued with chronic pain related to her condition. In this chapter, Imhoff effectively shows both how Sampter’s experience of disability mediated her Zionism and queerness even as her commitment to Judaism affected her sense of her disability. After Sampter moved to Palestine, she quickly experienced a collision between her own embodiment and the Zionist commitment to a healthy and muscular Judaism that framed her life and led to her helping to build a convalescent home on the grounds of the kibbutz in which she lived.

In the third chapter of *The Lives of Jesse Sampter*, Imhoff deftly explores Sampter’s queerness. As she acknowledges, queerness as we know it did not exist as a category during Sampter’s lifetime. Women’s friendships during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were often characterized by physical touch and expressions of romantic sentiment. Nonetheless, it is clear that Sampter experienced strong romantic and

sexual feelings for various women and lived for many years in a committed relationship with another Zionist and kibbutznik, Leah Berlin. She also adopted and raised a child on her own. Most interesting in this chapter is Imhoff's exploration of how disability acted to delimit the horizons of Sampter's own romantic and affective attachments in a way that had both painful and generative consequences, as well as consequences for her form of Zionism. Reading Sampter's life through the lens of her "queer desire" and her commitment to "queer kinship," Imhoff suggests that Sampter "queers" Zionism in provocative and useful ways" (108).

The fourth chapter explores what Imhoff terms the "theological-political" implications of Sampter's life—largely in terms of her experience of Zionism. Sampter's embodied experience both challenged and undergirded her commitment to Zionism and acted as a prod to challenge some of the movement's central precepts. Imhoff asks: Is it possible to "queer" or "crip" Zionism or any nationalist project, or do the contradictions inherent in the Zionist movement make this impossible? Is there a way that Zionism can co-exist with democracy? The answers to these questions are not entirely clear.

Nonetheless, Imhoff never shies away from bucking accepted wisdom—whether it comes in the form of grappling with the absence of work on religion in disability studies or on embodiment in history. She is similarly nuanced in her appraisal of Sampter herself—particularly in Chapter 4. As Imhoff notes, Sampter was often ahead of her time, even as she embodied deeply problematic, if common, attitudes, such as racism or Orientalism. Sampter was fascinated by Sephardic and Yemenite Jews (the child that she adopted and raised was a Yemenite orphan named Tamar), as well as non-Jewish Arabs, even as she viewed these groups as culturally inferior to European and American Jews such as herself.

Along with her introduction, Chapter 5, Imhoff's coda on Sampter's "afterlives," is one of the most useful portions of the book for scholars looking for an entryway into doing the sort of boundary-pushing work Imhoff does. Here, Imhoff looks at the various ways in which Sampter was received and, sometimes, erased after her death. She relates:

Yet it is not my goal to find Jessie Sampter the national writer and make her into an icon. It is not my quest to have her memorialized like

Herzl, with a town named after him and a giant sketch of his head on its water tower. It is to tell a messier story of a complex human being—a human being whose life seems so particular and unusual and yet has lessons for a broader understanding of humans. It is also to suggest that a messier story, including attention to embodiment as a central part of that story, might be a new way to tell the stories of iconic thinkers and writers (221).

Like the work of brilliant writer and theorist Saidiya Hartman, whose concept of critical fabulation has revolutionized how African American history is written, Imhoff's work on Jesse Sampter offers a radical methodology for writing an embodied Jewish history that is attendant to the messier story of Jewish lives, iconic or not.

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Rafael Medoff, *America and the Holocaust: A Documentary History* (Lincoln: Jewish Publication Society, University of Nebraska Press, 2022), 352pp, 41 figures, 2 tables; Daniel Greene and Edward Phillips, eds., *Americans and the Holocaust: A Reader* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2022), 265pp., 48 color images.

For the past year, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) exhibition "Americans and the Holocaust," which opened in Washington, DC, in April 2018, has been shown in towns and cities across the United States.¹ In September 2022, Ken Burns's latest

1 The USHMM exhibition "Americans and the Holocaust" is also freely accessible as an online exhibition: <https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main>

documentary, *The U.S. and the Holocaust*, with a runtime of over six hours, was broadcast on PBS to widespread acclaim. Given these recent projects, one might assume that the topic of U.S. responses to the Holocaust and a more critical view of the United States' attitude in the face of this catastrophe is a novelty connected to our political moment. Amid geopolitical instability, economic and democratic crises, and the global climate emergency, it is tempting to turn to history for insight: How did America's and Americans' national narratives, proclaimed values, and self-image fare when confronted with such an extreme event as the mass murder of millions of innocent people by the Nazis? What did Americans know and do? What lessons can be learned?

In academia, however, and particularly among historians of Jewish history, this topic has been the source of a "historical storm" that has been "going on for half a century."² What we are now seeing, then, is merely the latest attempt to explore this topic's contested political implications for the present and the playing out of this debate for a wider audience. The two books under review here—two primary-source collections, both published in 2022—naturally contribute to the current public discussion. But they first and foremost constitute addenda to existing voices and interventions in the academic field and, interestingly, reflect two quite different scholarly stances and institutions. Rafael Medoff is a long-standing participant in the debate, a prolific writer on American responses to the Holocaust, and the founding director of the David Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies in Washington, which has made this topic its focus. Much of the material in his *America and the Holocaust*, therefore, are sources and copies of sources held by the Wyman Institute and used in previous research and publications. The other book, *Americans and the Holocaust*, includes a preface by USHMM's director Sara Bloomfield and was published by Rutgers University Press together with the museum. It was assembled and edited by Daniel Greene, curator of the abovementioned USHMM exhibition, and Edward Phillips, who directed exhibitions programs for

2 Miriam Sanua Dalin. Review of Medoff's *The Jews Should Keep Quiet: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and the Holocaust* in *American Jewish History* 105, no. 4 (2021): 582–584.

USHMM from 1994 to 2018. Subtitled *A Reader*, this book constitutes a scientific supplement to the exhibition, presenting the information in a less processed form.

At first glance, the two books appear to have much in common. Aside from some superficial differences such as the format and use (or non-use) of color, they have almost the same title, as well as similar content, length, and explicit aim. They each present approximately one hundred primary sources, contextualized and introduced as educational resources to be used in combination with existing respective institutional platforms and materials.³ They both have a chronological structure, emphasizing the importance of temporality in tracing reactions. Indeed, the question is not just *what* people knew, but what they knew *at different times*. Both books also highlight how various actors and groups responded, emphasizing the diversity of American responses and American society as a whole. They therefore tackle many of the same themes: responses to the rise of Nazism, refugees, and immigration; reactions to the 1936 Olympics, the *Anschluss*, and *Kristallnacht*; the noninterventionism of the U.S. government and President Roosevelt's and his administration's changing attitudes toward Jewish persecution as the war went on; and, finally, the consequences of emerging knowledge—or lack of knowledge—about the Holocaust. For this, the authors draw extensively on the media, published and archival documents, Gallup polls, and images. Inevitably, many of the documents are the same.

However, upon closer observation, it becomes clear that the two books showcase quite different approaches to the material. Medoff has selected exactly one hundred documents from the archives and allocated them across twenty thematic chapters, providing exactly five sources for every theme, each of which is accompanied by a short introduction. The book concludes with a historiographical essay titled “State of the Field,” which weaves the themes together. This structure makes it easy to see what the book covers and to find information on specific topics, such as “American Christian Responses,” “American Jewish Responses,” or “The

3 Rafael Medoff's book comes with a twenty-eight-page study guide for teachers with questions relating to each source: <https://jps.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Study-GuideAmerica-and-the-HolocaustMedoff.pdf>

War Refugee Board.” Moreover, each document is not only briefly introduced but also commented upon at some length afterward. Each chapter also includes suggestions for further reading. These sections add useful information and context and give the content more substance, especially when it comes to somewhat complex official documentation. But this does come at the expense of the documents themselves: Many official statements, presented as facsimiles and not transcribed, are truncated and difficult to decipher. In general, the primary sources are significantly edited and shortened, and the more independent-minded reader may yearn for more “source” and less “explanation.”

Greene and Phillips’s book offers less supporting text. The volume opens with a short preface, providing the rationale and a timeline; the balance includes just four main chapters as well as a prologue and postscript, each with a short introduction. Small clusters of documents (twenty-nine of them) have a few lines of introduction, but the documents—sometimes spreading over three or more pages—are largely allowed to speak for themselves. Roosevelt’s radio broadcasts, for example, are reproduced almost in full (102–104, 123–125); also included is a long passage from Jan Karski’s account of what he saw in Auschwitz, which draws the reader in with raw emotion (189–192). This collection includes a range of images, posters, and references to popular culture. Extracts from the media greatly outnumber other kinds of material, which gives more of a sense of what the average American might have known and, more generally, of how diverse the American population was. Relevant groups are not only (primarily) Jews, Christians, and public figures and officials, but also women, rural Americans, African Americans, and Japanese Americans; and the book investigates how the concerns of these groups diverged and perhaps even competed. For example, the U.S. Army remained segregated until 1948, and this was a—if not *the*—major issue for conscripted Black Americans.

The two books’ messages also differ. In Medoff’s volume, the argument is all too clear: The U.S. government and establishment did not do enough. Jewish actors and organizations were ignored, Medoff asserts, but many, such as Rabbi Stephen Wise, were also too afraid of antisemitism, of looking unpatriotic, and of jeopardizing their position (e.g., 171). Roosevelt is portrayed as a highly ambivalent figure—evasive and

lacking commitment. Many influential Americans displayed “eloquent pity,” but according to Medoff this was “accompanied by professed helplessness and resignation” and betrayed a deep fear of philosemitism (96). Medoff also highlights two political scandals: the obstruction of the State Department, especially Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long, on immigration and rescue (64–67, 221–229) and the refusal to bomb Auschwitz (264–278). He emphasizes that the administration established a connection between saving Jews and winning the war (“rescue through victory”) that implied that “rescue and victory” were incompatible (207). According to him, the shift of knowledge between 1943 and 1944 did not radically change the war’s trajectory. Roosevelt continued to avoid mentioning Jews explicitly in his statements and only showed real determination to organize rescue when it became politically expedient (250–257).

Greene and Phillips offer a much less severe assessment of the U.S. government. They repeatedly stress the difficulty of Roosevelt’s position. When describing the rise of Nazism, they emphasize that Roosevelt and Americans in general could not have known Hitler would later turn to murdering the Jews of Europe (8). They also underscore that Roosevelt followed closely opinion polls on immigration, isolationism, and neutrality, and openly explained his choices to the American public. In addition, they suggest that while he might have supported neutrality, he was not morally neutral (102). This book takes a more “panoramic look” and “foreground[s] context” (xvii), focusing less on the Holocaust as such and rather on American concerns during this period. In other words, the editors place the persecution of German and European Jews against the backdrop of many other issues of the time, however problematic or questionable these might seem in hindsight. Thus, they begin in 1918 and describe the various forms of nativism and racism in the United States, as well as long-standing fears of immigration and the importance given to national security, especially after the start of war.

The contrast between the two books is perhaps best captured by the cover images, which both show the Statue of Liberty. While Medoff’s is a caricature in which the statue holds up a sign telling refugees to keep out (an image also included in *Americans and the Holocaust*, 85), the Greene and Phillips cover is a hopeful photograph of children arriving

on a ship in New York City. The two books stand for two very different perspectives: While Medoff seeks to explain why Americans who had seen the threat were ignored, Greene and Phillips seek to explain why most Americans failed to perceive the extent of threat at all.

Well written and well argued, Medoff's indictment makes for a compelling read. In contrast, the cautiousness of Greene and Phillips can, at times, seem excessive. For example, on Breckinridge Long, they write: "Critics of Long accused him of intentionally blocking refugees, and many believed he held antisemitic views that influenced his decision making" (112). This leaves the reader wondering what the editors themselves might think. Concerning information about the Holocaust, they write, "from time to time, shocking facts about the cruel maltreatment and killing of Europe's Jews reached the American public—even though the Holocaust occurred well inside German-occupied territory, hidden from nearly all outside view" (142). Like Medoff, they note the lack of coverage of the Holocaust in the American media, but while Medoff intimates this was a deliberate decision, Greene and Phillips make it sound as though obtaining this information was quasi-impossible. As is often the case, the truth probably lies somewhere in the middle, and, in this sense, the complexity and messiness presented in Greene and Phillips's book is probably more realistic. But this is also why reading the two books together is an interesting exercise. It reminds us that even with a source collection, readers are called on to be critical and reflect on the fact that beneath the veneer of authenticity, source selections are always very much that—a selection.

Both books can be read with great benefit, whether for teaching, out of curiosity, or to glean ideas for what to investigate further. Last, but by no means least, discussing the Holocaust with primary sources in English brings this period in history and all the questions it raises closer to American readers in an unmediated and unprecedented manner. Mentions of the slogan "America First" and debates about whose suffering matters most resonate strongly in the present. Yet so do the stories of particularly selfless people who acted bravely or spoke out. Some of the journalistic insights constitute veritable highlights. A case in point is Dorothy Thompson, a reporter and commentator mentioned in both books, who as early as 1938 described "the invention of the Jew" in the

Nazi imagination, denounced the construction of race, and called for an international political—not merely philanthropic—response to the “refugee problem.” Her conclusion on the liberal democratic system quoted in Greene and Phillips’s book is worth citing: “We have got to face the reality that liberal democracy is the most demanding of all political faiths, and in the world today the most aristocratic. It is a political philosophy that makes painful demands. That is its price. That is also its glory” (60).

In the end, neither book leaves any doubt as to what and how much could be known well before meaningful action was undertaken. This is why Greene and Phillips warn in their preface of “the relatively wide gap between information and understanding” (xv). But the gap Medoff implicitly emphasizes between knowledge and action is also important. So, what can we learn? If nothing else, that our media and state systems are not best suited to addressing, tackling, and solving problems on a global scale. Unfortunately, this still rings very true today.

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Stanley Mirvis, *The Jews of Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: A Testamentary History of a Diaspora in Transition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), xv + 285 pp.

Until the last decade, scholarly works on Caribbean Jewish history have been sadly sparse. However, a recent renewal of interest by scholars such as Jane S. Gerber, Aviva Ben-Ur, and Stanley Mirvis have illuminated this corner of the Jewish Diaspora in revealing ways. Mirvis’s most recent contribution, *The Jews of Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: A Testamentary*

History of a Diaspora in Transition, focuses on the Portuguese Sephardim of the island nation and their influential connections around the Atlantic Jewish network. Mirvis, the Harold and Jean Grossman Chair in Jewish Studies at Arizona State University, is brave to tackle this topic because, by his own admission, nearly every Jewish document from this period has been destroyed by storms, earthquakes, or fires. However, Mirvis has found an exception safely stored in the Island Record Office: a cache of about 450 wills dating from 1673 to 1815. Using this collection, he presents a picture of Jamaican Jewish life that challenges old assumptions about this community and reasserts the importance of studying the periphery to understand a wider empire—in this case, imperial Britain.

Besides the introduction of new documentary evidence, perhaps the most important intervention Mirvis makes in the field is to reimagine Jamaica as the center of the Jewish Atlantic. Like Daniel K. Richter did for North America in *Facing East from Indian Country* (2003), Mirvis de-centers the imperial metropolises in favor of subalterns on the geographic and cultural periphery. In this case, Mirvis shifts focus away from Europe and toward Kingston and Port Royal. This simple shift changes the narrative about the Portuguese Sephardim as a community in “slow eclipse,” as Jonathan I. Israel previously claimed, to demonstrate how religiously, culturally, and financially influential the Jamaican branch of this community remained into the nineteenth century. This simple shift in perspective also allows Mirvis to write a localized story of the island nation, which in turn draws attention to significant “nodes” in the Jewish Atlantic network other than Amsterdam and London. For example, Mirvis convincingly illustrates these communities’ ongoing personal, financial, and religious connections to southern France, particularly Bayonne.

Mirvis’s challenge is to use these wills and testaments, notably formulaic documents in the eighteenth century, to reveal new insights about Portuguese Jews in the Caribbean. Mirvis acknowledges their limits, especially to disclose information about individual beliefs and experiences; however, by interrogating them as a group, he teases out statistics about charitable giving, the survival of traditional Iberian-style godparents, and even concubinage for the communities they represent. Scholars in fields other than Jewish studies—such as race, gender, and broader subaltern studies—will also find useful data and analysis in this

monograph. One of the advantages of these sources is that they are one of the few places where women, children, and people of color appear in the written record. Although testaments were left almost exclusively by men in the social elite, they also contained information about dependents and others often silenced in the historical record.

For example, while Sephardic Jews were already an ethnoreligious minority within the white minority of the industrial slave system, women comprised an even smaller segment of Jamaican society, outnumbered three to one by white men alone. Their small numbers, combined with the patriarchal Iberian culture, has led many scholars to believe Sephardic Jewish women were inactive in public life. Yet, Mirvis argues that they played more than a domestic role. “Wills in Jamaica show neither a liberated Jewish woman nor a silenced one,” he writes. Instead, they demonstrate possibilities for the public lives of women, although they almost always acted in the shadow of a male family member. A segment of the wills reveals husbands empowering their wives to take over their businesses after their deaths. Dr. Isaac Dacosta Alvarenga’s will, for example, empowered his wife Rebecca to continue his medical practice after he died in 1810. Likewise in 1709, merchant Jacob Brandon bequeathed his family business to his wife Rachel and left instructions in his will that his son would be “in all respects obedient and dutiful to her commands.” When it came time to make their own wills, Jewish women of means also proved to be important contributors to religious and public causes. Judith Baruh Alvares left money and religious objects in her 1723 will to the Port Royal Synagogue, the poor of her town, and the men who escorted her body to Hunt’s Bay Cemetery for burial.

Just as fascinating is Mirvis’s contribution to stories of mixed-race Jews and other people of color who comprised Sephardic households. Mirvis has written in other places about the phenomenon of concubinage and the challenges it posed for rabbinic authorities trying to maintain the boundaries of the Jewish nation.¹ By examining patterns

1 See, for example, his chapter “Sexuality and Sentiment: Concubinage and the Sephardi Family in Late Eighteenth-Century Jamaica,” in *Jews in the Caribbean*, ed. Jane S. Gerber (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), 222–240, specifically pages 224 and 239.

of patrimony, he sheds new light on the phenomenon of surrogacy, conversion, and (“imperfectly”) familial attachment between white Jewish men and their mixed-race families. Without these wills, it would be very unlikely to find documentary evidence of the lives and names of many of these people and is, therefore, one of the great strengths of Mirvis’s work.

Ultimately, Mirvis frames his new data by situating it inside the existing historical narrative for Jewish Jamaica. He uses the wills to put pressure on various points of accepted knowledge and to ask the reader to reimagine an Atlantic Diaspora with Jamaica at the center. While the narrative of the Sephardic community comes off with satisfying continuity and clarity, sometimes the wills themselves disappear inside the larger story. Nevertheless, the monograph works beautifully as a text to introduce the story of Jewish Jamaica to a new audience, or to reimagine a story a scholar thought she already knew.

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Brian Ogren, *Kabbalah and the Founding of America: The Early Influence of Jewish Thought in the New World* (New York: New York University Press, 2021), 313 pp.

How many Jews does it take before something becomes *Jewish*? This isn’t a borscht belt routine; it’s a real question for historians of colonial America. Everyone knows the number of Jews in the British colonies was vanishingly small, and that smallness has bred a corresponding disinterest among historians and Judaic scholars. There just weren’t enough Jews, so there couldn’t have been Jewish influence. Nothing to see here, move on to the nineteenth century!

Brian Ogren says no: a number of Puritan thinkers were keenly interested in Jewish thought—specifically kabbalistic thought and ideas about the end of history. His new book undertakes the first sustained study of this strain in American religious thought, and has determined that “Jewish ideas as kabbalistically framed were profoundly taken up by certain diverse sectors of the American Protestant world.” Jewish

mystical thought was “integral” to the New England Puritan outlook. Jews were not welcome in colonial Boston, but *Judaism* was present in this earliest expression of Anglo-American religious thought (191).

The evidence is mostly not hard to find. The kabbalistic debates between George Keith and Cotton Mather, the writings of Increase Mather on Jewish messianism and Sabbatai Tzevi, and the kabbalistic reading of Ezra Stiles have long been known. Ogren takes this evidence (once regarded as mere curiosity) and has examined it as a whole—Keith’s extended commentary on the mystical names of God, Cotton Mather’s counterpoints, Increase Mathers’s kabbalistically-tinged eschatology.

Of particular note is Judah Monis, the Jewish convert to Congregationalism who became Harvard’s first professor of Hebrew. Monis penned the first kabbalistic text in the New World in 1722, wherein he pointed to Jewish kabbalistic writings as evidence of the messianic status of Jesus Christ.

Monis’s conclusions are entirely Christian, and Ogren is careful in his analysis to remind readers that these kabbalistic flavors did not point the Puritans towards any kind of religious pluralism; Jewish kabbalah was important to these men because it explained Christian history and theology. But the point is not that Puritans saw Jews as equals (they didn’t) but that Jewish thought shaped Puritan belief and practice. “The influence may not have been widespread,” Ogren writes, “but given the stature of the individuals...who took up the topic,” it was significant (187). That in turn should bury the old canard in American Jewish studies—traceable to Jacob Rader Marcus himself—that Jews in America were “a people apart.” The notion that Jews could not have influenced American Protestantism in these formative years because Jews were too few is demonstrably false. By extension: scholars of American Judaism ought to pay less attention to Jewish numbers among the American public and more attention to Jewish thought in American writings. Ogren’s contribution is significant for this insight alone.

Ogren also warns readers not too overgeneralize his thesis; the Mathers weren’t blowing the shofar or attending bat mitzvahs (although Stiles apparently went to Purim services). The point is not that Puritans loved Jews, but that Jewish ideas were present from the very beginnings of Anglo-American Protestantism.

Indeed, the book's only serious drawback occurs when Ogren circumvents his own warning and tries to connect Jewish kabbalistic thought to various twenty-first century debates on "American exceptionalism." If kabbalah influenced how Puritans thought of history, then perhaps Judaism contributed to the forging of a "a prerevolutionary national narrative" (198)? Ogren notes that such concepts, as read in the present day, are "fraught," but "tacked on" feels more accurate (2). The Puritans were not forerunners of the American rebellion of 1776, nor did New England Congregationalism somehow comprise "the nation." What about enslaved Africans? Anglican colonies? The vast stretches of the continent beyond the reach of any *farkakteh* European power? There is a similarly tacked-on (and unconvincing) section in the introduction attempting to tie this colonial kabbalism to the American revolution. I get the feeling that somewhere an editor demanded that Ogren's smart, closely-argued thesis about Puritanism 1680–1760 had to be made "relevant" to the Trump era, and so various gestures to modern politics were grafted on to the introduction and conclusion.

That is a risk all scholars face, and it should not deter readers from enjoying the rich lessons of this book. Ogren takes no shortcuts when it comes to scholarly analysis of his texts and the endless complexities of kabbalistic thought. In the end, his book is about finding Judaism and Jewish thought precisely where it was not supposed to be, and then rethinking both Judaism and Protestantism in response.

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G. Kurt Piehler, *A Religious History of the American GI in World War II* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 393 pp.

In his study of religion and the American soldier in World War I, scholar Jonathan Ebel noted that "studies of America's wars tend to ignore

religion. Studies of American religion tend to ignore war.”¹ In his new book, *A Religious History of the American GI in World War II*, military historian G. Kurt Piehler joins Ebel (and others) in attempting to fill this lacuna in existing scholarship, and to bridge the gap between histories of war and our understanding of American religion.

Piehler has edited and published a number of works on the social and cultural history of World War II, including *Remembering the War the American Way*. In this, his most recent book, he builds on the central claims made by historian Deborah Dash Moore in *GI Jews: How World War II Reshaped a Generation*, a pathbreaking study of how shared military service transformed American ideas about tri-faith religious pluralism. Following Dash Moore, Piehler argues that both official policy and the lived experiences of soldiers combined to promote tri-faith religious pluralism as an American value and bolster claims about the equality of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism within American religious life. In keeping with studies such as Thomas Bruscino’s *How World War II Taught Americans to Get Along* and Ronit Stahl’s *Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion and State in Modern America*, Piehler focuses his attention on the experiences of soldiers, sailors, chaplains, and medical personnel from different backgrounds, and examines the many ways that religion shaped their understanding of the war and how the war, in turn, reshaped their engagement with religion.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Piehler’s volume lies in the impressive array of archival sources he brings together in order to explore the religious life of American service members. In chapters that examine everything from how religion structured American perceptions of the stakes of the war, to ideas about ethical combat, care of the wounded, burial of the dead, views of the enemy, and the experiences of prisoners of war, Piehler musters a wealth of evidence drawn from both official sources and the memoirs, letters, and oral histories of soldiers, sailors, and military chaplains. Readers will appreciate this book for its nuanced investigation of the many ways that service members expressed their religious

1 Jonathan H. Ebel, *Faith in the Fight: Religion and the American Soldier in the Great War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 3.

convictions and engaged in both formal and informal religious practices. Piehler describes the prayers offered by service members as they headed into battle, as well as the religious objects they carried as talismans against danger. He considers the ways that racism and segregation circumscribed the religious lives of soldiers, sailors, and chaplains of color. He also traces the impact of religious belief on official policies governing everything from medical and psychiatric care to the regulations shaping the lives of women serving in the Women's Army Corps (WACs), Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAACs), or Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES). In each of his chapters, and in the many anecdotes and accounts he presents, Piehler makes it abundantly clear that religion deserves a central position in military history.

Piehler's work also points to opportunities for future research on the ways that American ideas about what constituted "religion" developed and were buttressed or dismantled through military service. Chapter 8, "Patriarchy and the Religious Life of Military Women," for example, details the many ways that the military "reinforced patriarchal values that emphasized sexual chastity and limited occupational roles for women" (207). Piehler presents compelling evidence to back up this claim, citing, in particular, policies that made contraception available to male service members but not to female ones. It would be valuable, however, to dig deeper into issues like this one: Did experiences in the military service change male or female service members' attitudes toward "virtue," sex, and access to contraception? To what extent should we understand policies such as these as being about "religion" per se, as compared to their connection with economic and social concerns over the new roles that developed for women during wartime? Future studies might consider these as mutually constituted arenas of discourse, in which values labeled as "religious" determined military policies but were themselves defined, or redefined, by government propaganda and the pragmatic needs of intuitions such as the military.

How, moreover, were twentieth-century American religious practices affected by the experiences of World War II? Piehler's study chronicles the broad diversity of American GIs' engagement with religion—some found courage in prayer, others did not; some grew more committed to the rituals and beliefs that had defined their religious lives at home,

others grew disenchanted with them; some felt a sense of kinship with co-religionists abroad, even in enemy Japan, while for others, racism and nationality enmity proved to be unbridgeable divisions. Piehler's history gives readers an engaging sense of the multiplicity of ways that service members expressed their religious commitments. Future studies might explore how these wartime expressions impacted American religious traditions in the decades following World War II.

Piehler's book adds meaningfully to the growing field of scholarship seeking to dismantle the divide between military history and the study of American religion. For readers interested in the experiences of the men and women who served, *A Religious History of the American GI in World War II* offers a tremendous collection of revealing anecdotes, accounts, and analyses of how religion was lived and felt during the war; and for those interested in the many ways that war and religion have intersected throughout American history, Piehler's study will prove a valuable resource and a useful point of departure for future studies.

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Jonathan D. Sarna, *Coming to Terms with America: Essays on Jewish History, Religion, and Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021), xiv + 399 pp.

Coming to Terms with America: Essays on Jewish History, Religion, and Culture is the latest volume in the highly respected Distinguished Scholars Series of the Jewish Publication Society. As Jonathan D. Sarna has enjoyed what can only be described as an eminent career, it is fitting that his work be included in this series. Sarna himself is cognizant of the respect these works have commanded and, at the outset of his "Acknowledgements," he writes, "I am deeply proud to have been

included in the JPS Scholar of Distinction Series. I have had the privilege of knowing every single scholar [including his father, Nahum Sarna, the famed Brandeis University biblical scholar, which makes Jonathan Sarna, as he himself observes, “the first-ever ‘second generation’ scholar in this series”] previously selected for this prestigious series. What an honor to have been selected myself!”

Citing his father, Jonathan comments that most scholars in this series produced volumes of their “greatest hits.” As Nahum Sarna had written, “It is in the nature of the enterprise that a scholar’s life-work is mostly dispersed in learned journals and is, in the main, not accessible to the intelligent and interested non-scholar.” This series corrects this by disseminating these essays to scholar and learned lay reader alike.

Sarna confesses that he “expected to follow my father’s lead and bring the best of my articles together between the covers of [this] book.” However, he ultimately elected to go in a different and somewhat unique thematic direction. As he reread his articles, Sarna “discerned a connecting thread among them that provided the possibility of a more thematically interconnected volume.” *Coming to Terms with America* displays this theme by exploring how Judaism unevenly and complicatedly “came to terms” with the United States of America politically, culturally, socially, and religiously.

As with all his work, Sarna, in these essays, displays both a wide topical breadth and an extraordinary analytical depth. His mastery of Hebrew language and the classical sources of Jewish tradition, his complete control of every era of Jewish history, his skill and training as an American historian, and his attention to theory make these articles unparalleled in originality, richness, and insights. No wonder that his work is eagerly and routinely cited in the fields of Jewish history, sociology, religious thought, and rabbinical literature; by students in American history and religion; and in the popular press. His reach and influence in the academic and larger worlds are exceptional, and this book will only enhance and extend that reach and influence.

In assessing the significance of Sarna and the character and sources of *Coming to Terms with America*, it is worthwhile to first consider the trajectory of his career as illustrated in several of his more than three dozen books. Sarna first catapulted onto the academic scene with the revision

and publication of his Yale doctoral dissertation on Mordecai M. Noah. This book, *Jacksonian Jew*, displayed many of the scholarly hallmarks that would come to characterize his work—the meticulous mastery of primary sources written by Noah himself, the use of newspapers from the general American press to illuminate the writings and life of Noah, and the fascinating placement of Noah within the context of American as well as Jewish history, so that the larger theoretical concerns illuminated by Noah's life (e.g., the Jewish search for a homeland, the “double consciousness” that marks all minority groups as they seek to affirm and express their group identity against the backdrop of a larger world) were all present in this work. The book revealed his promise, and his subsequent career is testimony that he has fulfilled that promise and more.

The range of his scholarship and what marks Sarna as unusual among American Jewish historians was evidenced shortly thereafter in his work *People Walk on Their Heads*, his annotated translation and introduction to a Hebrew work written in 1888 by Eastern European Orthodox émigré Rabbi Moses Weinberger. This book not only provided a broader vantage point from which to understand the immigrant Jewish experience, it also garnered the attention of scholars who were interested in using modern Hebrew sources for the writing of American Jewish history. The control Sarna had over Hebrew as displayed in his skillful translation in conjunction with his ability to place this writing in the vast vista of Jewish and American history marked him as a rare figure in the academic world. Students in the fields of Jewish history, American history, American religion, immigration studies, rabbinical literature, and Hebrew all began to pay close attention to him. Sarna had begun garnering widespread attention and notice.

It was therefore small wonder that the Jewish Publication Society asked Sarna to write its centennial history (1888–1988), and his publication of *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture* became a landmark study in American Jewish cultural history and scholarship. He also was asked to write and edit a book (with Nancy H. Klein) on the history of the Jews of Cincinnati, and soon *Ethnic Diversity and Civic Identity: Patterns of Conflict and Cohesion in Cincinnati Since 1820*, co-edited with Henry D. Shapiro, appeared. In authoring this book, Sarna provided a model for how communal history could be written. Rather than a simple apologetic

work celebrating the glory of a given community, this book indicated that a serious historian could comb the archives and records of a community to provide more than a coherent and compelling account of the community—no matter how interesting the story. Instead, as the title of this book suggests, Sarna demonstrated that the history of a community could be illuminated, and the greater import of that history could be revealed by placing it within larger theoretical and intellectual frameworks. In his hands, the history of the Jews of Cincinnati became a compelling tale of larger intellectual significance—a story of the uneven process whereby minority groups (in this case, Central European Jews) acculturate and adapt to a larger culture. He pointed out how these German-speaking Jews were among the elite of the city and emphasized the role they played in helping to establish the cultural and economic contours of this Midwestern metropolis of the mid-nineteenth century. His later work on the Boston Jewish community showed how a demographically and culturally different group of American Jews—in this case, poorer Eastern European immigrants and their children—caught between their immigrant origins and Boston Protestant Brahmin culture displayed a similar sophistication in a radically dissimilar sociological context. Indeed, two of the essays in *Coming to Terms with America*, “The Lofty Visions of Cincinnati Jews” and “Reconciling Athens and Jerusalem: The Jews of Boston in Historical Perspective,” capture the disparate responses a heterogeneous Jewish polity composed in reacting to the reality of a diverse American nation. Such attention to specificity and the sophisticated tracing of the dialectics between fidelity to Jewish tradition and broader cultural adaptation in explicit American venues have been constant leitmotifs of his work, and his sensitivity to details and attention to broader themes allows him to capture consistently the multilayered responses American Jews have offered as they have labored to adapt Judaism to the United States.

In addition to these pathbreaking books, Sarna also authored countless books and articles on Jews and the Civil War, most notably *When General Grant Expelled the Jews*, *Jews and the Civil War*, and *Lincoln and the Jews: A History*. He also directed his attention to Jewish-Christian relations and the history of antisemitism in America. (At the moment, Sarna is turning his attention to a book on Mark Twain and the Jews.) His magisterial *American Judaism* justifiably won numerous awards, and

the National Jewish Book Council selected it for its prestigious Everett Prize as “Jewish Book of the Year” for 2004. There is simply no single volume comparable to this book. In it, Sarna displays his command of the primary sources of and secondary literature on every century of the American Jewish story, and he places them within the framework of American religious history. In so doing, he authored a work of compelling detail and interest to students of Judaism and American religion alike, and he managed to write for a scholarly as well as an intellectual lay audience. The book remains the “gold standard” in the field for a one-volume work on the subject. If this book alone were all that Sarna had written, it would have earned him a place among the leading scholars of American religious history; it has certainly marked him as the leading scholar of American Jewish history. *Coming to Terms with America* draws on this vast repertoire of scholarship to create a volume whose essays are indeed “thematically interconnected.”

The book’s structure is composed of fifteen essays, or chapters, divided into three sections. The first section, “Straddling Two Civilizations,” contains six chapters describing how American Jews created a distinctly American synthesis between Jewish tradition and American culture. The first two chapters, “The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture” and “The Democratization of American Judaism,” indicate how American Jews from the colonial and early Federalist eras sought to argue for the compatibility of American democratic values and the values of Judaism. Sarna surveys figures and iconography from Mordecai Noah to modern *ketubot* and *haggadot* to bolster this case, and he points to how Gershom Seixas had by 1805 worked out an American Jewish theology that was able to express American values of freedom, liberty, and democracy in Jewish form. In Chapter Three, “Jewish Prayers for the United States Government,” Sarna displays his deep Hebraic knowledge of rabbinics and his absolute familiarity with Jewish liturgical traditions. He demonstrates how classical Jewish prayers for kings and queens that celebrated the monarchy were transformed on American shores to prayers for a democratic republic and its leaders. In so doing, Sarna highlights the adaptations and consciousness that came to inform Jews as they acculturated to America. In the next two chapters, Sarna devotes his attention, as mentioned above, to the Jews of Cincinnati

and Boston. In the chapter on Cincinnati Jews, he indicates that these German American Jews not only strove for civic integration and equality but forged a new type of Judaism designed to harmonize with the larger American and Midwestern environment. The next chapter shows how Cincinnati's Eastern European brothers and sisters in Boston sought synthesis between the ethos of Jeffersonian democracy—as articulated by a Boston Protestant aristocracy—and the teachings and values of Judaism so as to make themselves feel welcome in New England. Chapter Six, "Subversive Jews and Early American Culture," stands in contrast to the other five chapters in this section. Rather than attempting to recast Jewish values to conform with American ones, Sarna here argues that a disproportionate percentage of a then-tiny Jewish population employed Judaism and its teachings as a vantage point to critique the American public square. Sarna examines largely unknown nineteenth-century figures and works—including Samuel Benjamin Herbert Judah in his *Gotham and the Gothamites* (1823), Isaac Gomez in his *God is One and His Name One*, Samuel Henry Jackson, Admiral Uriah Levy, Charles Cohen, and Ernestine Rose—to show how they issued sharp criticisms of slavery, Christian Trinitarianism and the New Testament, the failure of America to affirm genuine equality for women and Jews, and the hypocrisy of any number of public officials and cultural arrangements. These figures courageously and, one could argue, perhaps recklessly violated the cultural conventions of their days and stood in opposition to communal leaders such as Isaac Leeser, Mordecai Noah, and Isaac Mayer Wise, who respected the bounds of propriety America exacted as the price for full participation into the nation. By concluding this section of the book with this essay, Sarna highlights the range of responses American Jews forged in responding to the American scene.

The themes and tropes present in "Straddling Two Civilizations" are continued and approached in an overlapping yet distinct way in the second section, titled "The Shaping of American Jewish Culture." Here Sarna selects three essays illustrating how Jewish culture was shaped in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America in literary, academic, artistic, and religious venues. As the Jewish population in the United States expanded rapidly during the nineteenth century, Jewish women and men began to express a considerable degree of self-confidence as they

formulated their own Jewish cultural expressions. As Sarna argues, new historical conditions created new Jewish paradigms, and the chapters in this portion of the book demonstrate once again that there was no single formula for resolving the issue of being Jewish in an open society. However, the quests for spiritual renewal, the calls for Jewish education, the appearance of a Zionist national consciousness, and the demands for the advancement of Jewish women all appeared in different precincts of the American Jewish community. Sarna contends that together they revitalized the Jewish community in pluralistic Jewish forms, and he indicates that ideas to strengthen the community often flowed “from the bottom up” and were not the results of initiatives originated by communal elite.

Chapter Seven, “The Late Nineteenth-Century American Jewish Awakening,” questions the thesis put forth by scholars such as Nathan Glazer and Henry Feingold, who asserted that it was the arrival of Eastern European immigrants that was responsible for invigorating Jewish life at the turn of the twentieth century. Sarna counters this by arguing that efforts to promote the United States as an educational and cultural center of Jewish life were the products of American Jews who were here prior to the 1880s and 1890s. He names *The American Hebrew*, the YMHA, Gratz College, the Jewish Publication Society, the American Jewish Historical Society, and Chautauqua among the organizations that precipitated a “Jewish awakening” at the end of the nineteenth century. He also employs the writings of historians such as William McGloughlin, Timothy Smith, and Jon Butler to place Jewish events in the larger context of American religious history. Sarna pays careful attention to the role that a burgeoning social and cultural antisemitism played in stimulating the Jewish cultural renaissance of this period and notes that even Wise acknowledged the anti-Jewish expressions then present in America. Interestingly, Sarna observes that Philadelphia, with figures such as Mayer Sulzberger and Cyrus Adler, witnessed a significant Jewish cultural effervescence, and the birth of Dropsie College and Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), as well as the compilation of *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, emerged during these years. The place of women in this renaissance is particularly notable; Sarna touches on Rebecca Gratz; Emma Lazarus in her *Epistle to the Hebrews*; Ray Frank, the “girl rabbi” of Spokane; and the emergence of the National

Council of Jewish Women in 1893. He also emphasizes that Reform Judaism began to place a greater emphasis on Jewish peoplehood and traditional forms than it had previously. While the Eastern European immigration of those decades undoubtedly contributed to this direction, Sarna, in contrast to Feingold and Glazer, does not want to overemphasize its import; instead, he looks to other factors to explain these vectors in American Jewish life. Chapter Eight, "Jewish Publishing in the United States," identifies the vital role that the Jewish Publication Society, the Hebrew Publishing Company, and Bloch Publishing played in making academic, popular, and semi-popular Jewish books and publications available to Jews and non-Jews alike. The creation of major library holdings at both Hebrew Union College (HUC) and JTS were also marks of the cultural maturation of the American Jewish community, and the appearance of the *American Jewish Year Book* proffered evidence of the growing homogeneity and unity of the American Jewish community as the twentieth century evolved. Indeed, this unity was prominently displayed in the prayer book created by all three major streams of American Judaism and published by the National Jewish Welfare Board for Jewish soldiers during and after World War II. All of this heralded the greater integration of Jews into the mainstream of American life. Chapter Nine, "Timeless Texts or Timely Issues: Comparing Visions of Seminary Scholarship," examines how this integration took place by analyzing the scholarship produced by eminent professors at JTS. One school of scholarship, represented by the great student of rabbinic and Hellenistic literature, Saul Lieberman, leaned toward works that were esoteric and erudite. This group of scholars also followed in the path that Solomon Schechter pioneered by producing critical editions of classical rabbinic texts, proudly and self-consciously published in Hebrew. These publications earned JTS recognition as a center of Jewish academics in both the United States and Israel. At the same time, professors such as Chancellor Louis Finkelstein, Mordecai Kaplan, and Abraham Joshua Heschel, all experts in rabbinic literature, were of a more activist bent and were anxious to apply Jewish teachings to matters of practical concern and import to the community. Theirs, as Sarna points out, was an "applied" scholarship, as opposed to a scholarship that might be labelled "theoretical." These two traditions of study each had their champions at

JTS, and Sarna notes that Chancellor Gerson Cohen was a practitioner of both. Indeed, as a personal aside, I would note that it was Cohen and his writings, in which he used his textual and historical studies to shed light on issues and challenges that confronted the Jewish community both in Israel and the United States, that served as a model I sought to emulate when I served as president of HUC-JIR from 2001–2013.

In the third section of *Coming to Terms with America*, Sarna presents six chapters that explore how Jews and the American nation have responded to Jewish-Christian and church-state relations over more than two hundred years. In this section, titled “When Faiths Collide,” Sarna carefully traces how these relations and attitudes have evolved over the course of American history. In his introduction, Sarna frames this section by citing the foreword of *Sefer Nimukei Ridvaz*, the 1904 work of Rabbi Jacob David Willowski of Chicago. In it, Willowski expressed fear that successful Jewish acculturation and integration into the United States would be the solvent in which Jewish religious observance and identity would dissipate. Indeed, Willowski, borrowing a strategy he observed from his Catholic neighbors, urged Jews to create a system of “parochial” day schools, as Jewish education alone could provide a bulwark against collective dissolution. Yet, as Sarna shows in the following six chapters, while the communal and religious cohesion of the community were surely challenged by the blandishments of America, Judaism did not atrophy and die there. On the contrary, he outlines once more how Jews adapted to these tests and forged texts and organizations to ensure the vitality of the Jewish people in this changed setting.

In Chapter Ten, “The American Jewish Response to Nineteenth-Century Christian Missions,” Sarna indicates that conversion efforts directed toward Jews were not only unsuccessful, they actually had the opposite effect, for they strengthened Jewish resolve to maintain Jewish attachments in an overwhelmingly Christian milieu. Chapter Eleven, “The ‘Mythical Jew’ and the ‘Jew Next Door’ in Nineteenth-Century America,” points out that Christian America evidenced a two-pronged approach to Jews. On the one hand, Jews were seen as mythical “Christ-killers”; on the other, they were seen as “upstanding next-door neighbors.” Sarna indicates that American Jews, like German Jews in Europe, responded to this binary by placing an emphasis upon “prophetic Judaism,” a Judaism

that affirmed that one could be both “Jewish and moral.” Chapter Twelve, “Cultural Borrowing and Cultural Resistance in Two Nineteenth-Century American Jewish Sunday School Texts,” then discusses how Jews created educational materials that championed this position. Just as nineteenth-century German Jews had created pamphlets and catechisms based on Christian educational models to express a Judaism that was compatible with a culturally integrated German Jewish community, Sarna argues that American Jews followed the same pattern in Sunday school textbooks. These works both borrowed in form, and resisted in substance and content, the dominant Protestant culture. Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen, “Jewish-Christian Hostility in the United States” and “Christians and Non-Christians in the Marketplace of American Religion,” speak once more to Christian hopes that Jews would ultimately embrace Christianity. They indicate how Christians employed state power to gain advantages over Jewish and other non-Christian expressions of religion—even in an America where the Constitution seemingly granted Jews and other minorities protection of their rights. Sarna shows that while this was often true, such protections were not always the case; he indicates how Jews learned to use the courts for protection and to cultivate interfaith relationships and coalitions to reinforce American commitments to religious freedom and pluralism. However, he also emphasizes how attempts to balance majority rule and minority rights often proved problematic. The final chapter, “Church-State Dilemmas of American Jews,” is particularly topical and sheds light on the difference between how Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews approach church-state relations in America. Sarna describes how liberal Jews have consistently argued for total church-state separation, while Orthodox and other Jews have increasingly supported what Sarna terms “equal footing”—e.g., government vouchers for Jewish educational institutions and funding to provide the Jewish community with protection against antisemitism. Jewish responses regarding how to be Jewish and American thus remain multivocal and unresolved in an American Jewish community that Sarna demonstrates is multilayered and pluralistic.

As I conclude this review-essay and offer my assessment of this book in the context of Jonathan Sarna’s body of scholarship, I would be remiss if I did not confess that we are friends and that my career has overlapped with his in significant ways. In 1979, Sarna and I were both appointed to

the faculty of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion—he in Cincinnati, I in Los Angeles. While he went on a dozen years later to a career at Brandeis and I remained at HUC-JIR, I completed my academic career as his colleague at Brandeis. Indeed, I served there from 2015 to 2018 as director of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, and it was Sarna who succeeded me in that position. Our careers have overlapped and been entwined for more than four decades. It could perhaps be said that my assessment of his scholarship and *Coming to Terms with America* reflects a bias on my part. To such a charge, I would only say that Aristotle observed in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that there are reasons for friendship. The virtues I have praised in his academic corpus as well as in this particular book surely reflect those reasons. His vast knowledge, his judiciousness, his careful analysis of the sources, his mastery of Hebrew and classical Jewish textual traditions, and his knowledge of American and Jewish history and sociology combine to make him a premier scholar worthy of praise. As Sarna moves on through his eighth decade, I am confident that his ongoing creativity, wide-ranging interests, and love of scholarship will continue for years to come.

While I have spoken effusively of Sarna and his scholarship, I have not exaggerated his accomplishments or the quality and influence of his work. Colleagues hold him in unsurpassed esteem, demonstrated by his service as president of the Association for Jewish Studies and by the recent publication of *New Perspectives in American Jewish History: A Documentary Tribute to Jonathan D. Sarna*, a collection of fifty-five essays written by his doctoral students and co-edited by Mark A. Raider and Gary Phillip Zola. That he has achieved such distinction represents a staggering academic accomplishment, especially considering the demands placed upon him as a teacher and guide to so many; his numerous communal and professional activities, service, and commitments; and his devotion to his family. Jonathan Sarna stands at the pinnacle of Jewish studies, and *Coming to Terms with America* is a more than worthy volume to stand in this JPS Scholars of Distinction series. Readers will be immeasurably enriched by its contents.

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Julian E. Zelizer, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: A Life of Radical Amazement* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021), 328 pp.

Abraham Joshua Heschel: A Life of Radical Amazement is a well-rounded and illuminating biography of the life and thought of iconic—though controversial—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972) in the context of his tumultuous times. Heschel was, as described by his close student and friend Rabbi Samuel Dresner, “a *nasi*, a prince of his people and *shalem*, a whole person. He was, finally, a *zaddik*” (229). We are beholden to author Julian E. Zelizer, professor of history and public affairs at Princeton University, for tackling a challenging wealth of information and providing us with a book that does its heroic subject justice.

Heschel’s complex journey yielded, among other things, a fruitful harvest of literary outpouring that inspired and uplifted generations of both Jews and non-Jews, myself included. Among them are *The Earth Is the Lord’s* (1949), *The Sabbath* and *Man is Not Alone* (1951), *The Insecurity of Freedom* and *Man’s Quest for God* (1954), *God in Search of Man* (1955), *The Prophets* and *Torah Min HaShamayim* (1962), and *Israel: An Echo of Eternity* (1969). Heschel ultimately did not fit into a mold of a particular Jewish denominational stream, embracing elements from them all while transcending their boundaries and emerging as his own encompassing and quintessential Jewish presence.

This introduction to Heschel’s legacy proves timely, as we painfully face the confluence of events casting a shadow on the American enterprise, with its ever-vulnerable and -problematic Jewish component. Zelizer asserts that the lessons Heschel taught during the civil rights era can and should serve us well once again: “As people in the United States struggle to survive one of the worst public health disasters ever¹ and respond to the effects of institutional racism, all the while witnessing the growing strength of right-wing extremism in national politics, Heschel’s battles for social justice became more inspiring to this author than ever before. My hope is that this book

1 In a penned poem, addressing God and relevant to our own pandemic times, Heschel challenged, “You must tell every virus: ‘Thou shalt not kill!’” (31). Heschel’s poetry impressed no other than poet laureate Hayim Nachman Bialik.

can play a small role in promoting his ideas in the public conversation as we attempt to rebuild our broken society” (xiv).

The haunting question—with the author’s navigated responses—is, how did Heschel transform himself from his hasidic Polish roots to a modern theology scholar and international interfaith leader? His journey was one few could imagine: After barely escaping Nazi-threatened Europe, he moved from the Reform Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati to New York’s Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS); and while JTS proved a better fit for a traditionally minded Jew, he still faced some estrangement as a result of his poetic pathos. Eschewing dry scholarship, Heschel transitioned himself into an American civil rights and anti-Vietnam War activist, a fighter for Soviet Jewry, a defender of Israel, and a voice of faith and justice on the world stage. “Father Abraham,” as he became known in the civil rights movement of the 1960s—the same name bestowed on Abraham Lincoln by the Jews who successfully sought his intervention concerning the noxious Order #11—was born into hasidic dynasties that did not shelter him from the secular world. Indeed, in Warsaw’s lively and creative pre-Holocaust environment, he was encouraged to be involved with the Jewish Enlightenment of *Haskalah* and the growing Zionist movement. Yet, while Warsaw was a city teeming with rich Jewish life and culture, Heschel was exposed to the ugly reality of antisemitism at a young age, when he was called a “Christ killer.”

His remarkable acumen led Rabbi Menachem Zemba to ordain him at age sixteen, but he also embraced secular subjects in the arts and sciences. “His mother [Rivka] understood that her son’s passions rested in both worlds, remembering once seeing him kiss a history book after dropping it on the floor, the same way that a Jew would treat a sacred religious text” (18). Against his mother’s wishes he moved from the hasidic culture of Warsaw to the more secular one of Vilna, graduating from its Gymnasium in 1927, before moving on to Berlin, where he earned his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Berlin in 1935 after defending his dissertation, titled “The Prophetic Conscience.” Heschel also received a second ordination at the Liberal Academy for the Science of Judaism, where famed Rabbi Leo Baeck taught, and spent some time studying at Berlin’s Orthodox seminary.

Despite theological differences, Heschel and philosopher Martin Buber befriended each other, and at Buber's invitation, Heschel moved to Frankfurt in March 1937 to lead the renowned Adult Education Center that Franz Rosenzweig had led. The school's mission changed from supporting Jews surrounded by German culture to surviving under the Nazis. At Buber's urging, Julian Morgenstern, then-president of HUC, invited Heschel to be a research fellow at the college in 1939. Heschel was unable to obtain a visa, but with his family's help he went to London to teach Jewish refugees in the Institute for Jewish Learning, within the Zionist Theodore Herzl Society. At the opening ceremony Heschel reflected, "The vital sources of Jewish education are not the books but the people, the bearers of memory. The essence of Judaism is not in the letters but in those who engage with the Spirit and bear witness to it" (39).

Finally Heschel obtained a visa, arriving in New York on 21 March 1940, and was greeted by his cousin, hasidic Rabbi Mordechai Shlomo Friedman from the Lower East Side. On 10 April Heschel got off the train in Cincinnati, "clean shaven, short hair, black rimless glasses, and a plain black suit" (44). Soon enough he discovered that, although HUC saved his life, he felt alienated there: "I was an immigrant, refugee, no one listened to me" (51). The anti-Zionism of the Reform movement at the time and lack of traditional ritual were not to Heschel's sentiment, and he was frustrated with Rabbi Stephen Wise's—and Franklin D. Roosevelt's—stance on refugees. He did develop a close bond with the controversial Professor Abraham Cronbach of German descent, who was both a social justice idealist and a pacifist—traits with which Heschel was aligned in the former but not the latter, although he did oppose the Vietnam War.

Having lost four immediate family members in the Holocaust, Heschel participated in the 20,000-strong protest on 21 July 1942 at Madison Square Garden, and on 6 October 1943 joined the "rabbi's march" in Washington, DC, with FDR refusing to see the anguished traditional rabbis. Under the title "The Meaning of This War," Heschel wrote in the February 1943 *HUC Bulletin*, "Let fascism not serve as an alibi for our conscience. We have failed to fight for right, for justice, for goodness; as a result, we must fight against wrong, against injustice,

against evil. We have failed to offer sacrifices on the altar of peace; now we must offer sacrifices on the altar of war” (57–58).

Despite receiving a full-time position at HUC in 1943, Heschel moved in 1945 to New York’s JTS, having been recommended by faculty member Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan. With the end of World War II and in the wake of the Holocaust, Heschel expressed anger at the inaction of Jewish Americans and the U.S. government. In addition, “Germany, which was seen as a beacon of scientific inquiry and modern cosmopolitan culture, turned into a center of moral depravity and brutality. Heschel spent the rest of his life trying to make sense of this, wrestling with the question of whether and how Judaism—and all religion—could offer the key toward preventing this kind of mass injustice from rearing its head again” (64).

Heschel enshrined the pre-Holocaust Jewish world he had left behind in his 1949 book *The Earth Is the Lord’s: The Inner World of the Jew in Eastern Europe*—a significant literary endeavor, albeit one that encountered some criticism. He praised the impact of Jewish spirituality—with tradition and Yiddishkeit culture—on materially impoverished lives, believing it to bring light to the challenging circumstances of Eastern European Jews: “I feel justified in saying that it was the golden period in Jewish history, in the history of the Jewish soul,” he wrote (72). Heschel’s detractors, however, felt that he over-romanticized the effect of Jewish spirituality. David Hartman poignantly asserts, “Heschel was willing to sacrifice the intellectual rigor of formal theology for the intensity of religious narrative and he was less concerned with conceptual consistency than with making God a living reality for modern Jews embarrassed by religious language and culture” (73). It can be argued that Heschel’s attachment to his pre-Holocaust spiritual frame of reference did not match his transition away from that world. However, *The Earth Is the Lord’s* was written shortly after that world mostly vanished, bringing into focus Heschel’s grievous loss. When asked why he and his wife, Sylvia, chose not to relocate to hasidic Williamsburg, Heschel responded, “When I left my home in Poland, I became a modern Western man. I cannot reverse this” (86).

Israel’s birth following the Holocaust affected Heschel deeply: “We stand at a climax of Jewish history.... Like a branch plucked from the

fire, this generation has gone through the experience of disaster and has tasted the mystery of deliverance. Dark and dreadful would be our life today without the comfort and joy that radiate out of the land of Israel” (106–107). Zionism was embedded in Heschel’s Jewish identity; he regarded Israel as inseparable from the Jewish saga, a vital element that commanded a front seat in the story of Judaism. He also emphasized the biblical view that for the land itself to fulfill its inner meaning, it was essential that it go hand-in-hand with the spiritual dimension. His first visit to Israel with Sylvia and daughter Susannah—by then a scholar in her own right—was in 1957, and it was a celebratory experience. Heschel (who felt compelled to grow a beard for the occasion) and his family were warmly welcomed as dignitaries. President Zalman Shazar, Heschel’s childhood friend, received him, as did Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. However, Heschel was disappointed with the widespread lack of Jewish practice in Israel, and in 1959 he opposed a United Synagogue’s proposal—supported by Mordecai Kaplan—to join the World Zionist Organization, on the grounds that the synagogue as an institution should not be politicized. This was, without a doubt, a disappointment to Zionist leaders. However, Heschel vigorously stood behind Israel’s Six-Day War in 1967. In *Israel: An Echo of Eternity* (1969), he spoke of Israel’s serving an indispensable lifeline for the Diaspora: “The Jews go to Israel not only for physical security for themselves and their children; they go to Israel for renewal, for the experience of resurrection” (198). While many Christian peace activists rejected Heschel based on his support of Israel’s preemptive strikes and territorial gains, Martin Luther King Jr., with whom Heschel had a special bond, joined him on behalf of Soviet Jewry.

For Heschel, social and political activism were indelibly linked to the transforming influence of Israel’s prophets. His 1962 *The Prophets*, based on his doctoral dissertation and described by Zelizer as “Heschel’s most influential and enduring work,” shows this link clearly, and his own dedication to the prophetic voice must have made an impression on King, who, on the occasion of Heschel’s sixtieth birthday and only ten days before King was killed, referred to Heschel as “a truly great prophet” (206). Heschel viewed civil rights advocacy as a prophetic mandate, and in his 1955 *God in Search of Man* he addressed the modern

spiritual crisis, writing that it would be resolved when humanity joins God to restore human dignity and remove human oppression—and that this would free the oppressors as well. “Engagement in civil rights would not only rescue African Americans from their oppressors but also give its supporters a way out of their contemporary moral slumber” (126). In fall 1964 he attended a twenty-four-hour vigil at the Lincoln Memorial in support of the Civil Rights Act, and on 21 March 1965 he marched with King from Selma to Montgomery, the moment made iconic not only by the photo of the two men walking together but by Heschel’s often-quoted words from that day: “I felt my legs were praying.” Heschel became co-chair of the interfaith Operation Connection, part of the Poor People’s Campaign for economic equality, before King’s death.

In late 1965, Heschel became one of the organizers of Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV). Speaking at the National Convention of Religious Education Association, he evoked the Holocaust’s long shadow hovering over the Vietnam War, “ecumenical nightmare, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, dying together, killing one another. So soon after Auschwitz, so soon after Hitler” (175). He confronted Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon’s National Security Advisor: “How could you as a good Jew prosecute a war like this?” (210). King and Heschel’s friend Elie Wiesel² were powerful figures joining him in the antiwar movement, but they faced Jews who opposed their activism. Abraham Sachar, president of Brandeis University, feared that Heschel was turning it into a Jewish antiwar movement. Reform Jewish rabbinic leaders Jacob Weinstein, Maurice Eisendrath, and Balfour Brickner agreed with Heschel’s activism, with Brickner lamenting, “When a church starts to do its job, people dislike it” (181).

Heschel’s involvement in causes he deemed to be holy struggles was extended full force in the cause of Soviet Jewry, which he detailed in his 1966 *The Jews of Silence*. His disappointment at the inaction of his

2 The friendship between Wiesel and Heschel was close. Every Shabbat at 4:00 PM Wiesel visited Heschel’s New York home, and they went out together for a stroll. It was Heschel’s influence that led Wiesel to travel to Moscow and advocate for Soviet Jewry.

fellow Jews on behalf of Soviet Jewry was evident; he directed arrows at the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, demanding greater work on behalf of their Soviet brethren who faced a spiritual Holocaust; and at the May 1966 gathering of the Rabbinical Assembly, he castigated five hundred Conservative rabbis for their lackluster reaction to Soviet Jewry's plight. "Over and above the noise of our banquets and testimonial dinners I hear the cry of Russian Jews: 'The Jewish people forsakes us. The Jewish people has forgotten us'" (176).

Heschel also played a key role promoting Jewish-Catholic rapprochement. He met with Cardinal Augustin Bea—who represented Pope John XXIII in the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council, which continued under Pope Paul VI—in Boston on 27 March 1963, at which time he presented to the cardinal a copy of his 1951 classic *The Sabbath*. Six months later, on Yom Kippur eve, September 1964, Heschel met with the pope. Once again, Heschel's work in the name of justice encountered criticism, this time for his taking it upon himself to represent the Jewish people to the Vatican. But on 25 October 1965, the historic "Nostra Aetate," with Heschel's contributions, was adopted.

Heschel's life serves as a beacon for us all, and *Abraham Joshua Heschel: A Life of Radical Amazement* does it justice. The book is learned and riveting, a work of love and faith befitting and celebrating a spiritual giant who taught us, albeit with prophetic extremes, all that it means to be a rabbi, a Jew, a human being.

Like the Hebrew prophets, Heschel tried to answer the spiritual crisis facing the modern world. He saw politics in moral terms. The emptiness of our souls was directly connected to the violence all around us. Jews needed to open themselves up to the radical amazement of accepting the reality of the divine and living a life where every action was informed by religious values (236).

Rabbi Dr. Israel Zoberman is founder and spiritual leader of Temple Lev Tikvah and is honorary senior rabbi scholar at Eastern Shore Chapel Episcopal Church (est. 1689), both in Virginia Beach, Virginia. He is the son of Polish Holocaust survivors.

SELECT ACQUISITIONS 2021

Abel, Ernest

Collection of research material pertaining to Issachar Zacharie, compiled by Ernest Abel, 1863–2019.

Received from Ernest Abel, Bloomfield Hills, MI

Amendola, Joanna

Collection of oversized charcoal drawings of her grandfather, Bernie Dave, 2006.

Received from Joanna Amendola, Lakewood, OH

Aron, Melanie

Papers of Rabbi Melanie Aron, including newspaper clippings, writings, correspondence, and administrative files of Congregation Shir Hadash (Los Gatos, CA), 1987–2013.

Received from Melanie Aron, Los Gatos, CA

Beifield, Doris J. and Martin P.

Collection of correspondence between Doris J. and Martin P. Beifield during World War II, 1943–1945.

Received from Martin P. Beifield, Jr., Richmond, VA

Beifield, Martin P., Jr.

Papers of Martin P. Beifield, Jr., pertaining to HUC-JIR student life, the Year-in-Israel program, and the commission of an AIDS Memorial Quilt panel in memory of Rabbi Mark Goodman, 1973–1994.

Received from Martin P. Beifield, Jr., Richmond, VA

Berg, Peter

Material collected by Rabbi Peter Berg on the first *mezuzah* hanging at a U.S. Executive Residence, including ceremony program signed by Rabbi Berg, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff; photographs and press coverage; and reflection by Rabbi Berg, 2021.

Received from Peter Berg, Atlanta, GA

Block, Richard A.

Papers of Rabbi Richard Block, including sermons, correspondence, and eulogies, together with other professional papers, 1979–2018.

Received from Richard Block and The Temple Tifereth-Israel, Beachwood, OH

B'nai B'rith Women

Scrapbooks created by Reatha Gordon Resnik Kennedy of B'nai B'rith Women Chapter No. 466 and Bluebonnet Chapter No. 833, 1957–1968.

Received from Linda Resnik, Tyler, TX

Cohen, Philip T. and Helene

Collection of family papers including correspondence, certificates and awards, photographs, and family baby book, 1903–1994.

Received from Helene Cohen, Cincinnati, OH

Dworsky, Florence

Large scrapbook compiled by Florence Dworsky, including correspondence, photographs, and newspaper clippings. Correspondents include Thomas Mann and Albert Einstein, 1931–1978.

Received from Judith Farber, Los Angeles, CA

Eliasberg, Richard

Gold medal commemorating the 250th anniversary of Jewish settlement in the United States, presented to former President Grover Cleveland. Collection includes commemorative book, appraisal letter, and letter from Richard F. Cleveland presenting the medal to Louis E. Eliasberg, 1905, 1950.

Received from Richard Eliasberg, Jupiter, FL

Feldman, Marla J.

Papers of Rabbi Marla Feldman, including writings, correspondence, recorded interviews and sermons, and Jewish Community Relations Council records, 1985–2002.

Received from Marla J. Feldman, New York, NY

Freehling, Allen I.

Papers of Rabbi Allen Freehling including correspondence, research files, sermons, and other writing, 1971–2002.

Received from Wilshire Boulevard Temple, Los Angeles, CA

Glueck, Helen Iglauer and Nelson

Collection of material pertaining to Nelson Glueck and Helen Iglauer Glueck, including correspondence, photographs and photo albums, diplomas and certificates, and Bedouin garb belonging to Nelson Glueck, 1898–1972.

Received from Barbara Glueck, Cincinnati, OH

Goldman, Edward A.

Accrual to papers of Professor Edward Goldman, including correspondence, family records, HUC-JIR faculty bulletin and records, and additional HUC-JIR papers, 1929–2007.

Received from Edward A. Goldman, Cincinnati, OH

Goorian, Leonard Philip

Papers of Leonard Philip Goorian (1919–2020) including scrapbooks, newsclippings, and correspondence, 1939–2020.

Received from Viva Goorian, Blanchester, OH

Hillel International

Records of Hillel International including minutes, correspondence, publications, programming material, chapter records, photographs, and films, 1924–2011.

Received from Hillel International, Washington, DC

Hirsch, Richard G.

Accrual to papers of Rabbi Richard Hirsch, including correspondence, writings, photographs, and other audio-visual material, 1935–2021.

Received from Ammiel Hirsch, New York, NY

Kahn, Bruce

“Remember,” reflection by Rabbi Bruce Kahn on 11 September 2001 and his service as a U.S. Navy Reserve Chaplain, 2021.

Received from Bruce Kahn, Washington, DC

Karff, Samuel E.

Papers of Rabbi Samuel Karff (1932–2020), including correspondence, subject files, and sermons, 1971–2010.

Received from Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, TX

Mark, Julius

Papers of Rabbi Julius Mark, including correspondence, sermons and writings, and audio recordings, 1918–1977.

Received from Martin Heller, Madison, NJ

Marx, Robert J.

Papers of Rabbi Robert Marx including correspondence, scrapbooks, student papers and academic records, and Yale University dissertation, 1942–2021.

Received from Mark Glickman and Harriet Katz, Minneapolis, MN

Moskowitz, Nachama

Papers of Nachama Moskowitz, including correspondence, summer camp curricular material, and materials gathered from URJ Camp Swig, Greene Family Camp, and Temple Israel (Tulsa, OK), 1972–1989.

Received from Nachama Moskowitz, Cleveland Heights, OH

Northeast Federation of Temple Youth

Records of Northeast Federation of Temple Youth (NEFTY) including correspondence, curricular and institute materials, and other programming materials for youth groups and congregations, 1981–1993.

Received from Lesley Litman, Boston, MA

Posner, Philip

Papers of Rabbi Philip Posner including correspondence, lectures, sermons, and other writings, 1965–2022.

Received from Philip M. Posner, Jocotapec, Jalisco, Mexico

Priesand, Sally

Collection of records and artifacts including correspondence, news-clippings, plaques, photographs, and artwork pertaining to Rabbi Sally Priesand's rabbinic career and HUC-JIR ordination, 1962–2020.

Received from Sally J. Priesand, Ocean Township, NJ

Reichert Family

Correspondence and additional papers of Victor Reichert, Irving Reichert, and family, 1907–1987.

Received from Faye Menken Schneier, New York, NY

Ritterband, David Solis

Diary of David Solis Ritterband, written while he was studying at Columbia College School of Law, 1869–1871.

Received from B. Davis, Washington, DC

Rockdale Temple (Cincinnati, Ohio)

Records of Rockdale Temple including board minutes, committee files, correspondence, and administrative records, 1990–2016.

Received from Daniel Hoffheimer, Cincinnati, OH

Rosenfeld, Harry

Accrual to the papers of Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld, including correspondence, awards, photographs, and a collection of Temple Youth song-books, 1967–2021.

Received from Harry L. Rosenfeld, Albuquerque, NM

Sands, Melvin

Papers of Rabbi Melvin Sands including correspondence, tributes, sermons, 1936–1990.

Received from Camille Angel, San Francisco, CA

Schulman Family

Collection of letters between Hyman and Sandy Schulman, and their family and friends, written during World War II, 1942–1945.

Received from Marlon Schulman and Darren Schulman, Westfield, NJ

Schulman, Ruth

Dissertation by Ruth Schulman, “Empowerment and Ordination: A Study of the First Class of Women Admitted to Rabbinical Training at the Jewish Theological Seminary,” together with supporting material including research files, correspondence, and transcribed participant interviews, 1992.

Received from Ruth Schulman, Princeton, NJ

Sherman, Alan

Papers of Rabbi Alan Sherman including scrapbooks, correspondence, photographs, student records, and material related to his services as U.S. Army chaplain, 1969–2012.

Received from Alan Sherman, Wellington, FL

Stuhlbarg, Stanley

Papers of Stanley Stuhlbarg, including correspondence, U.S. Army service records, and photographs, 1943–1946.

Received from Maya Stuhlbarg, Cincinnati, OH

Syms, Sy

Papers of Syms Corporation founder Sy Syms including correspondence, business records, and clothing catalog photographs, 1944–2012.

Received from Marcy Syms, Bedford Hills, NY

University of Cincinnati Hillel

Records of the University of Cincinnati Hillel Jewish Student Center including correspondence, photographs, and programming material. Correspondence files include artists featured in Hillel Student Center art shows, 1980–1999.

Received from B'nai B'rith Hillel Federation Jewish Student Center, University of Cincinnati, OH

URJ Pacific Southwest Region

Records of the Pacific Southwest Region of the URJ including copies of sermons delivered by Regional Director Rabbi Janet Marder and material collected from member congregations, 1990–2006.

Received from Janet Offel, Los Angeles, CA

Wain, Max

Memoirs of Max Wain with additions by his son Jack Wain and granddaughter Raleigh Grossman Karatz, 1963, 2013.

Received from Raleigh Grossman Karatz, Golden Valley, MN

Yoken, Mel B.

Collection of correspondence between Dr. Mel Yoken and Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus, 1971–1995.

Received from Mel B. Yoken, New Bedford, MA

Zoberman, Israel

Reflections by Rabbi Israel Zoberman on the High Holy Days and Jewish prayers on Capitol Hill, read in the Congressional Record, 2021.

Received from Israel Zoberman, Virginia Beach, VA

2021–2022 FELLOWS

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives welcomes the following thirty scholars as 2021–2022 Fellows to the Barrow-Loebelson Family Reading Room located on the historic Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

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Steven Green

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Christianization of American Democracy***Susanne Heim, Ph.D.**

Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Berlin

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University of Indiana

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the Civil Rights Movement***Emma Kuby, Ph.D.**

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University of New South Wales, Australia

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Rabbi Bernard H. Mehlman

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