HUC-JIR's Decision to Mandate a Year of Study in Israel for Rabbinical Students

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Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) was the first U.S. rabbinical seminary to mandate that its students spend a year of their studies in Israel. The decision to institute the year in Israel program (henceforth, YII) was a landmark in the Reform movement's relationship with Zionism and Israel. In 1885, Reform leaders had adopted the Pittsburgh Platform, which rejected both the aspiration to return to Zion and the idea that Jews collectively were anything more than a religious community. True, the 1937 Columbus Platform softened Reform's position on Zionism, resolving to support the development of a Jewish homeland in Palestine that would serve as a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life. But many Reform rabbis and the Reform movement's rabbinical seminary, Hebrew Union College (HUC), remained ambivalent about Jewish statehood. After the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, the Reform movement's commitment to Zionism increased, and some Reform institutions embraced the new state. However, it was the social and cultural upheavals of the 1960s in America, and the dramatic events of the Six-Day War, that led to the decision to mandate a year of study in Israel for incoming HUC-JIR rabbinical students. This decision would make Israel a significant presence in the Reform movement for decades to come. Many YII participants went on to hold rabbinical and educational positions across North America and played a pivotal role in the Reform movement's deeper engagement with Israel. In less than a century, the movement evolved from opposing a Jewish state to affirming its centrality in Jewish life, a shift that reflected cultural trends in the American Jewish

community as a whole. This article explores the decision to mandate the YII, and the execution of that decision, against this background of social-cultural and historical change.

As we will see, the turbulent 1960s had a profound impact on liberal Judaism in general and the Reform movement in particular. HUC[1] was called on by the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) to make significant curriculum changes in response to the new social-cultural ethos. We will also consider the impact of the Six-Day War on the CCAR and HUC-JIR. The College's agenda at this time was determined largely by its commanding president, Nelson Glueck, an archaeologist who had come to be an avid supporter of Israel after the 1948 War of Independence. His experiences in Israel in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, and awareness that many in the CCAR had also become more favorably inclined toward Israel, led him to promote the YII mandate and work toward its adoption. He was able to implement this plan despite the lukewarm attitude of much of HUC-JIR's faculty. This article examines the logistical and curricular considerations that influenced the structure of the YII program; the composition of its inaugural class; its members' experiences during the program; and its impact on students' rabbinical studies and careers.[2]

To date, there has been little research on the YII mandate, which has been noted chiefly in the context of histories of HUC-JIR and

1 Now known as HUC-JIR. In 1950, HUC amalgamated with the Jewish Institute of Religion, a liberal, nondenominational rabbinical seminary founded in 1922 in New York by Stephen S. Wise. Pro-Zionist and committed to social activism, it also sought Jewish intellectual and spiritual rejuvenation and strived to serve America's growing population of Eastern European Jewish immigrants.

2 The paper is based on archival materials; interviews, conducted from 2020 to 2022, of some of the inaugural YII's administrators and attendees; and secondary sources. I am grateful to the staff at the American Jewish Archives, particularly Dana Herman and a former research assistant, Julianna Witt, for their assistance. I conducted most of the nonarchival interviews; a few were conducted by Yair Walton. Unless otherwise stated, archival references are to materials in the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (hereafter, AJA). Other abbreviations used include: BoG (Board of Governors, HUC-JIR); CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis); UAHC (Union of American Hebrew Congregations); HUC-JIR Library, Jerusalem.

biographies of Glueck.[3] This article seeks to fill that gap, focusing on the factors that led to the mandate, and on how it reflected a key shift in the Reform movement's relationship with Zionism—a shift from universalism to particularism.

Impact of the 1960s Ethos on Reform Judaism in the United States

The 1960s are frequently described as turbulent, in contrast to the previous decade of seeming stability and security. The decade saw both turmoil and constructive social and political change: the civil rights movement, assassinations of American leaders, opposition to the war in Vietnam, the struggle for women's equality, the Black Power movement, and the counterculture. Mainstream Christian denominations, as well as other religious groups, struggled to find suitable responses. Church attendance fell dramatically, and synagogues fared no better.[4] Given the high percentage of Jews who went to university, relative to the population as a whole,[5] and the correlation between university education and a decline in religious commitment,[6] synagogue attendance and religious life declined significantly. Indeed, university education, which encouraged critical thought and was generally neutral on matters of religion, led to liberalization of attitudes to sexual mores, divorce, the status of women, censorship of literature, and so on.[7] The non-

3 Michael A. Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875–1975* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976, rev. 1992); Jonathan Brown and Laurence Kutler, *Nelson Glueck: Biblical Archaeologist and President of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2005).

4 Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), ch. 1; Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 69–72.

5 "By the end of the decade [1960s] three quarters of American Jews of college age were attending universities … the non-Jewish American population had … attendance of 34 per cent," Samuel C. Heilman, *Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 80.

6 David Caplovitz and Fred Sherrow, *The Religious Drop-Outs: Apostasy among College Graduates* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977).

7 George Gallup, Jr. *Religion in America* (Princeton: Princeton Religion Research Center, 1982).

Orthodox streams were particularly hard hit. Parameters that measured their robustness—such as the number of new synagogues, synagogue membership rates, religious school enrollment, and synagogue mergers due to decline in affiliation—attested to a crisis in organized religious life.[8] Jewish Federations, with their focus on Israel, philanthropy, and advocacy at home and abroad, fared much better.[9]

Whereas the Conservative and Reform movements were somewhat stymied by this decline in, and alienation from, synagogal Judaism—particularly among younger generations—three new institutional developments emerged within American Jewish life in response to the crisis. One was the Chavurah movement, which saw synagogue-based Judaism as spiritless, formalistic, materialistic, top-down, clergy-dependent. Invoking the 1960's ideals of informality, egalitarianism, intimacy, community, and group decision-making, the Chavurah movement experimented with innovations such as meditation, chanting, sitting in a circle, informal dress, an] "sometimes illegal substances."[10] The first Chavurah was founded in Somerville, Massachusetts, in 1968. Initially an alternative seminary, it quickly became an experimental community without an official rabbinical leader. Shortly thereafter, a New York Chavurah was established, followed by communities in Washington, DC, Philadelphia. "Havurah-style worship spread through Jewish communities across the land."[11]

A second response was engagement with Jewish spirituality and mysticism. This response was exemplified by Rabbi Zalman Schachter (later, Schachter-Shalomi), one of the founders of the Somerville Chavurah, and considered the founder of the Jewish Renewal movement, and

8 Jack Wertheimer, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 48–51.

9 Jonathan S. Woocher, *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), vii, 162–163.

10 Eli Lederhendler, *American Jewry: A New History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 281. On the early Havurah movement, see Riv-Ellen Prell, *Prayer and Community: The Havurah in American Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989).

11 Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism*, *A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 321; Wertheimer, *A People*, 67–72.

by Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, a.k.a. "the Singing Rabbi." Both were European-born and, as teens, had fled the Nazis; both were drawn to Chabad (Lubavitch) Hasidism and served as outreach emissaries early in their careers, but broke with Chabad and forged new paths to Jewish spirituality.

The scion of an eminent rabbinical family, Carlebach had a traditional yeshivah education (Telshe, in Lithuania [1938], Mesivta Torah Vodaas in Brooklyn [1939–1943], Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, N.J. [1943–1949]). Ordained in 1954, he soon began studying guitar, taking courses in philosophy and psychology at Columbia University and the New School for Social Research, and recording liturgical verses set to music. Carlebach's engagement with hasidic and kabbalistic traditions, and his musical values of spirituality, intimacy, and ecstasy were in line with ideals of the 1960s; his concerts and services departed from the formally structured norms of Orthodox synagogue life. He challenged strictures prohibiting men from hearing women sing, encouraged mixed-gender dancing, and embraced the ethos of counterculture circles.[12] Carlebach's music had an enormous religious influence on Jewish teens and young adults, many of whom embraced rituals they had never practiced or had abandoned, and some of whom became devoutly Orthodox.[13]

Schachter likewise had a yeshivah background, but after working in outreach, he pursued academic studies in pastoral counseling and prayer, earning a Doctor of Hebrew Letters (DHL) degree from HUC-JIR. Schachter's interest in religion was not just academic, and he strove to break new ground in the practice of Judaism. He was drawn to environmentalism and ideas from Asian and Native American religions, and he integrated them into his work. Schachter founded the *B'nai Or* (Sons of Light) Religious Fellowship, which later adopted the gender-neutral name *P'nai Or* (Faces of Light) and ultimately evolved into ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal. Schachter was also a prolific writer and

12 Posthumously, Carlebach was accused of sexual harassment by several women; see Sarna, *American Judaism*, 348.

13 Sarna, *American Judaism*, 346; Heilman, *Portrait*, 90; Natan Ophir (Offenbacher), *Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach: Life, Mission, and Legacy* (Jerusalem: Urim, 2014).

teacher. To underscore the primacy of peace in his outlook, Schachter added "Shalomi" to his own name. Schachter-Shalomi's eclectic, ecumenical, and progressive reworkings of traditional practices appealed to many who had been alienated from conventional prayer services and synagogue life.[14]

The third institutional response was the expansion of the Reconstructionist movement, which, up to this point, had been centered on the movement's founder, Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, and a group of committed followers. After the opening of a rabbinical seminary in 1968, the number of Reconstructionist communities grew, as congregations were established around the country. Reconstructionism's share of overall U.S. synagogue membership was minimal, but from 1968, its then-radical approach to defining membership in the Jewish people—namely, accepting patrilineal descent, provided the parents reared their child as a Jew—and its acceptance of women as rabbinical students, made it a trailblazer in the broader Jewish community.[15] This challenged the Reform movement, which had perceived itself as the beacon of change within American Jewry.

In addition to organized Judaism's responses to the changed zeitgeist, another, broader response was involvement in social activism.[16] Many of the young Jews who were distancing themselves from synagogues and Jewish observance had been exposed to the counterculture and peace movements on college campuses. Their commitment to social justice was not rooted in Jewish texts or works of Jewish philosophy, but in the writings of thinkers such as Karl Marx, Herbert Marcuse, and Rosa Luxemburg.[17] Jewish students played a disproportionate role in the New Left groups that sprang up on American campuses.[18] Committed to

14 See Sarna, *American Judaism*, 349–350.

15 Wertheimer, *A People Divided*, 160–169.

16 Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter, *Roots of Radicalism: Jews, Christians and the New Left* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 80.

17 Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd rev. ed., 1988), 169.

18 Mordecai Chertoff, ed., *The New Left and the Jews* (New York: Pitman, 1971), 121–124, 153.

ending the war in Vietnam, democratizing university structures, and supporting Third World causes, many felt alienated from Israel and Zionism.[19]

HUC-JIR in the mid-1960s: An Overview

These changes within American Jewry created a sense of deep professional and communal crisis among Reform rabbis.[20] In October 1967, Rabbi Levi Olan, incoming president of the CCAR, set up a Committee on Rabbinic Training, choosing Rabbi David Polish, subsequently a president of the CCAR himself, as its head. Six months later, the CCAR unanimously accepted the committee's report, which made two key recommendations: (1) It called for "a scientific and far-reaching study of the entire conditioning out of which the Rabbinate functions," and (2) it recommended that rabbinical students spend their third year of studies at the HUC-JIR campus in Jerusalem.[21]

HUC-JIR and the CCAR did not enjoy the best of relationships, despite their shared goal of serving Reform Jewry. For example, during the early years of Glueck's presidency, he sought to maintain the Cincinnati campus's dominance by undermining the New York campus's role in training rabbis. Without consulting the CCAR, he mandated that all New York rabbinical students had to transfer to Cincinnati after their second year, a decision that triggered heated protests and was ultimately overturned. During a meeting of a joint CCAR and HUC-JIR committee, Polish acknowledged that "differences and tensions over College policy have emerged from time to time."[22] Historian Michael Meyer's history of HUC-JIR was more forthright. "The President's [i.e., Glueck's] relations with the alumni of the school had never been very good.… When he did make appearances [at CCAR conventions], he would

19 Ibid., 127, 159; Glazer, *American Judaism*, 169.

20 David Polish, preliminary draft for CCAR Committee on Rabbinic Training, 1968, MS-34, box 25, folder 1, AJA.

21 Report of CCAR Committee on Rabbinic Training, March 1968, MS-34, box 25, folder 1, AJA.

22 Statement by Polish to members of Joint Committee of BoG and Faculty and CCAR Committee on Rabbinic Training, 26 December 1968, MS-34, box 25, folder 1, AJA.

keep aloof … often choosing the privacy of his hotel room rather than mingling." Meyer asserts that the CCAR saw Glueck as "autocratic."[23]

The question of training future Reform rabbis was a legitimate CCAR concern, and its members had, in various publications, criticized HUC-JIR's outdated curriculum. In September 1967, for instance, Edgar Siskin wrote that many HUC-JIR courses had "little bearing on the contemporary rabbinate. They are in the main academic pursuits which may stimulate the mind and lift the spirit, but which do not touch the marrow of rabbinic life. From the perspective of the rabbi's workaday world, they remain largely in the rarefied reaches of some remote ivory tower."[24] Two senior members of the CCAR, Bernard Bamberger and Leon Feuer, joined the fray, claiming that "many rabbis feel inadequately prepared," "frustrated," and "uncertain about the goals and values they should strive for." At meetings with CCAR members, Bamberger and Feuer encountered complacency on the part of the HUC-JIR faculty and administration, who adduced accreditation by authorized agencies as confirmation of the curriculum's academic adequacy.[25]

Such critique provoked a defensive response from Glueck. He saw HUC-JIR as an autonomous institution and was unreceptive to the CCAR's efforts to intervene in what he deemed his domain, not theirs.[26] Polish, CCAR's then-president-elect, called for cooperation between the institutions, citing "the mounting crisis of Jewish existence." As he put it, "Suddenly Judaism as a religion is becoming irrelevant to many and the verdict of irrelevance and alienation is being pronounced from within our very own institutions. The one place where this can most effectively be arrested is our College-Institute."[27]

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23 Meyer, *Centennial History*, 233; see also Brown and Kutler, *Nelson Glueck*, 134.

24 Edgar E. Siskin, "Rabbinate and Curriculum," *CCAR Journal* (October 1967): 2.

25 Bernard Bamberger and Leon Feuer, "The Conference and the College," *CCAR Journal* 2 (September 1968): 2–6.

26 Meyer, *Centennial History*, 235.

27 Memorandum for joint meeting of BoG and CCAR Committee on Rabbinic Training, 24 February 1969, MS-34, box 25, folder 1, AJA. The text had also been circulated internally to the members of the CCAR Committee on 26 December 1968, MS-34, box 25, folder 1, AJA.

In its deliberations, the Committee on Rabbinic Training noted the work being done by Protestant and Catholic seminaries to respond to the parallel crises in their communities. In addition, committee members felt that the College-Institute needed to reexamine its curriculum in the face of competition from the recently established Reconstructionist Rabbinical School and the Boston Chavurah, which were adopting innovative rabbinical training strategies.[28] The CCAR estimated that the proposed study of the role of the future rabbinate, which might have important implications for both institutions, would cost between $50,000 and $100,000.[29]

At this time, HUC-JIR was planning a major building project on its New York campus, as well as expansion of its activities in Southern California.[30] In October 1968, to induce HUC-JIR to act collaboratively, the CCAR Executive Board took the unusual step of calling on HUC-JIR to defer its building projects until a joint committee (HUC-JIR and CCAR) met to determine priorities. As HUC-JIR's deficit was escalating, and a major source of its income—approximately half the dues of Reform movement synagogues—was controlled by the CCAR, Glueck had little choice but to cooperate.[31] However, he spoke in two voices: one to the leadership of the CCAR, and another to the chair of HUC-JIR's Board of Governors, to whom he wrote that the proposed CCAR study on the role of the rabbi was "a waste of time and money."[32] Indeed, the CCAR found it difficult to raise funds for research on the rabbi's role in the evolving American sociocultural context.[33]

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28 CCAR Proposal to HUC-JIR, distributed to Cincinnati faculty by Kenneth Roseman, dean of Cincinnati campus, 22 November 1968, MS-20, box J13, folder 7, AJA. See also Report of CCAR Committee on Rabbinic Training, February 1969, MS-34, box 25, folder 7, AJA.

29 Letter, Daniel Jeremy Silver to Polish, November 13, 1968, MS-34, box 25, folder 1, AJA.

30 Memorandum, April 1968, R. Scheuer to Executive Committee of BoG, MS-34, box 25, folder 1, AJA.

31 Meyer, *Centennial History*, 236. See also letter, Olan to L. Silberman, 12 November 1968, MS-34, box 25, folder 1, AJA, where Olan states that Glueck "enthusiastically supported the idea of a study."

32 Letter, Glueck to S. Kopald Jr, 31 July 1969, MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.

33 See correspondence between CCAR President Gittelsohn and Olan, 16 December 1969, MS-181, box 5, folder 2, AJA.

The Reform movement was hardly alone in facing this crisis; the Conservative movement had similar problems.[34] To its credit, the Reform movement invested considerable energy and resources in trying to address these issues. Through comprehensive research and extensive deliberations at retreats and conferences, the CCAR sought to identify the factors responsible for the lessened status of its rabbis, the weakening of synagogue life, and the alienation of adults and youth. The proposed study was carried out, and a report of its findings was published in 1972.[35] Various changes to HUC-JIR's rabbinical training were recommended, including that it strengthen its professional—as opposed to academic—focus; integrate popular features into its prayer services; diversify its faculty; and hire as instructors alumni who had proven track records in congregational work. The report also called for continuing education of alumni and changes in recruitment policies.

Not surprisingly, Glueck saw these proposals as a threat to HUC-JIR's autonomy. Although most of the faculty sought to deflect the CCAR's critique, arguing that HUC-JIR was, under the circumstances, doing an admirable job, voices from within the seminary expressed concern about its lack of success in teaching Hebrew. Incoming students were not required to have even basic knowledge of Hebrew, and most had poor skills in both classical and modern Hebrew.[36] To address this problem, in 1954 the College had established an intensive eight-week summer program for entering students—the Towanda program, held in Towanda, Pennsylvania.[37] HUC-JIR faculty visited and lectured at the site, and at the end of the summer a "Readiness Exam" was held. Those who failed it were dropped from enrollment. This mechanism for filtering out those

34 Wertheimer, *A People Divided*, 34–36.

35 The report's principal author was Theodore Lenn; see Theodore Lenn et al., *Rabbi and Synagogue in Reform Judaism* (New York: CCAR, 1972). A contemporaneous study undertaken by the Union of Reform Congregations (UAHC) reached similar conclusions; see Leonard Fein et al., *Reform is a Verb: Notes on Reform and Reforming Jews* (New York: UAHC, 1972).

36 Michael A. Meyer, "Institutions of Higher Learning: Hebrew Union College," *Ariel: A Quarterly Review of Arts and Letters in Israel* 35 (1974).

37 Brown and Kutler, *Nelson Glueck*, 167.

who would likely have difficulty with Hebrew course materials was highly stressful for students; the program soon gained a bad reputation. Rabbi James L. Apple, who attended Towanda in the summer of 1960, summarized the experience as "nine weeks of torture."[38]

In 1961, upon completion of a new dormitory on the Cincinnati campus, the Towanda program moved there, retaining both its name and its reputation. The introduction of expensive language laboratories did little to improve the situation.[39] A survey conducted by two participants in the summer of 1968 revealed that an atmosphere of frustration prevailed, with considerable tension between students and faculty.[40] There were numerous complaints about the studies, especially the three-hour test at the end of each week, which, students claimed, conveyed the message that grades were more important than learning. The intellectual environment was described as "cold, sterile, and unnecessarily unpleasant." There was much dissatisfaction with the choice of teachers, which students felt was based on academic standing and not pedagogical skill. Overall, the survey found the Towanda experience "a negative and perhaps an actively detrimental introduction to rabbinic studies."[41] Indeed, when Glueck rallied support for the YII program, he frequently invoked the claim that Towanda had been traumatic: "This [first year of rabbinical school] is the year when they need training in Hebrew the most. There is a really traumatic effect upon most of our students entering Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion because of the fact that they are in their twenties and for the most part know not a word of Hebrew. The learning of Hebrew … is greatly facilitated naturally in Israel."[42]

Although the criticisms raised in the student survey of the Towanda program reflected broader complaints about university teaching in

38 James L. Apple, *What Kind of Job Is this for a Nice Jewish Boy?* (Xlibris, 2005), 29.

39 Meyer, *Centennial History*, 222.

40 Towanda 1968–A Student Evaluation, MS-34, box 25, folder 1, AJA.

41 Ibid.

42 Letter, Glueck to Petschek, 3 November 1969, MS-20, box A1a 172, folder 2, AJA. Similar comments are made in a letter from Glueck to Rabbi R. Kahn of Temple Emanuel of Houston, 20 January 1970, MS-20, box A1a 172, folder 2, AJA.

America, the program had been subject to criticism since its inception, and Dr. Werner Weinberg, HUC-JIR's leading Hebrew expert, had long bemoaned its meager achievements. He had also been, he asserted, the lone faculty voice proposing a year-long program in Israel. In a memorandum from early 1967, Weinberg admonished the College for not encouraging students to spend their third year in Israel, or arranging studies and lodging for them, despite having a suitable campus in Jerusalem.[43] Students who undertook to study in Israel, often in order to improve their Hebrew, had to fend for themselves—contacting institutions such as the Greenberg Institute, kibbutz programs, the Hebrew University, and Ulpan Etzion, on their own. Weinberg outlined the evolution of HUC-JIR student study in Jerusalem and a possible curriculum for an official year-long program. In the memorandum, Weinberg recommended setting up a Hebrew ulpan—i.e., an immersive, intensive Hebrew course—to meet the specific needs of HUC-JIR rabbinic students; this was achieved in 1968. He also recommended that students supplement their studies by taking Hebrew University courses. And he raised questions that would dominate much of the discussion around the YII program, such as whether it should precede or replace the first year, and whether it should be "tolerated, encouraged or perhaps … required."[44]

Weinberg returned to these matters in a second memorandum, this time addressed to the members of the HUC-JIR Academic Council.[45] In this memo, which assumed that students would attend during their third year, Weinberg suggested that the program's focus be modern Hebrew language and literature. He recommended that it start with an ulpan, from the beginning of July until after the High Holidays, and that students take courses at HUC-JIR's Biblical and Archaeological School (BAS) on the Jerusalem campus, along with appropriate field trips.

Weinberg's critique of HUC-JIR's Hebrew language training was corroborated by the independent findings of Charles Liebman, a leading

43 Memorandum, Weinberg to Provost, 17 February 1967, MS-668, box 21, folder 1, AJA.

44 Ibid.

45 Memorandum, Weinberg to Academic Council, 18 April 1967, MS-668, box 21, folder 1, AJA.

sociologist of American Jewry. In a study of rabbinical training in the United States, he confirmed not only that students entering HUC-JIR had poor Hebrew language skills, but also that their studies did little to improve those skills: "The largest, most tedious obstacle is mastery of the Hebrew language, an obstacle which many students never overcome. Although the students generally know biblical Hebrew and most of them can sight-read passages from the Bible by the time of ordination, they are far from having facility in rabbinical Hebrew or, for that matter, in modern Hebrew."[46]

Among the stateside faculty, Weinberg—who proved to be prescient but had little influence at the College—had been the lone voice calling for Hebrew skills to be imparted in Jerusalem. The rest of the faculty maintained that the Hebrew needed for studying biblical and rabbinic texts could be acquired in Cincinnati. To overcome faculty opposition to the idea of a year of study in Israel, it would take someone of higher standing than Weinberg to promote it. Glueck, who had become a steadfast advocate of the idea, was that person.

It was Nelson Glueck—rabbi, archaeologist, and HUC-JIR president from 1947–1971—who engineered the decision to mandate a year of studies in Israel. Glueck was born in Cincinnati to parents of Lithuanian descent. After receiving rabbinical ordination at HUC in 1923, he earned a doctorate at the University of Jena in Germany in 1926. Glueck traveled to Palestine, where he worked with and was influenced by the renowned biblical archaeologist William Albright. He returned to the United States in 1928, joining the faculty of HUC. Glueck spent much of his time, particularly summers, in Palestine, where he was director of the American School of Oriental Research in eastern Jerusalem at various periods (1932–1933, 1936–1940, 1942–1947). Glueck led several archaeological surveys and excavations, and authored numerous works, both scholarly and popular; he also did mapping/logistics work for the American OSS (Office of Strategic Services). He became a close friend of Judah Magnes, the first chancellor and president of the Hebrew

46 Charles S. Liebman, "The Training of American Rabbis," *American Jewish Yearbook* 69 (1968): 59.

University. Magnes, too, had been ordained at HUC (1900), and was a central figure in the Brit Shalom organization, which advocated a binational solution to the incipient Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[47]

In 1946, the College was seeking a new president to succeed Julian Morgenstern, who had served from 1921–1947, and Glueck was their choice. His credentials were impressive; being a Cincinnati native endeared him to the Board of Governors, most of whom hailed from that city; and his charm and "imposing appearance" made him an outstanding candidate.[48] The board was also satisfied with Glueck's position on Zionism, which was in line with the then-prevailing non-Zionist view. Before the establishment of the State of Israel, and during its War of Independence, Glueck had spoken out against partition and in support of continuing the British Mandate or its replacement with some form of trusteeship. Glueck was appointed HUC President in 1947.

Shortly after the war, however, Glueck's opinions changed considerably, and he adopted a passionately Zionist stance.[49] It has been claimed that a combination of factors led to his becoming a "mystical political Zionist." These included the 1948 war; Glueck's disappointment at the American School of Oriental Research's having distanced him due to his Judaism; and the Hebrew University's shabby treatment of his friend Magnes.[50]

The shift in Glueck's views became apparent around 1952, when he first raised the idea of establishing a campus for HUC-JIR in Jerusalem. His plans included a "library, chapel and a small lecture hall" to function as the College's headquarters for students and faculty in Israel.[51] But he also envisaged a Department of Archaeology that would advance his professional pursuits and create a base for cooperation with American universities; it would parallel the American School of Oriental Research.

47 Brown and Kutler, *Nelson Glueck*, 115.

48 Meyer, *Centennial History*, 177.

49 Brown and Kutler, *Nelson Glueck*, 95.

50 Brooke Sherrard, "American Biblical Archaeology and Jewish Nationalism: Rabbi Nelson Glueck, the American Schools of Oriental Research and the Israeli State," *Holy Land Studies* 11 (2012): 151–174.

51 Meyer, *Centennial History*, 208.

Jerusalem campus of HUC-JIR, ca. 1970s.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

It would also, he hoped, provide a base for American and European "Holy Land" archaeologists, luring them back to Israel from Jordan.

During his summer sojourns in Israel, Glueck—for whom work at sites east of the Jordan River was no longer feasible—undertook a major survey of the Negev desert. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) supplied military escorts, and Glueck selected the soldiers based on their interest in archaeology.[52] In 1955, following the Baghdad Pact—a defense treaty signed between the United States, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan—the Americans and the British discussed a new peace initiative. Dubbed "Operation Alpha," it was premised on Israel's making major concessions to Jordan and Egypt in the Negev.[53] Glueck responded that "to give back any of the Negev would be to cut off a piece of land God had promised to the Jews" and "peace in the

52 Brown and Kutler, *Nelson Glueck*, 146.

53 Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012), 278.

Middle East cannot be bought at the expense of Israel's birthright to the Land."[54] Such comments were not in keeping with the Reform movement's position, but they—along with Glueck's archaeological research, which Israelis viewed as helping corroborate the Jewish people's historic claim to the land—won him many friends among Israel's political and academic elite. Glueck was hardly alone in mobilizing archaeology in support of the Zionist program, but his international acclaim made his work particularly valuable.[55]

Within the College there was little opposition to Glueck's pursuit of his professional interests; the Board of Governors rarely challenged his projects. His esteem reached a new high in 1963, when he appeared on the front cover of *Time* Magazine, wearing Bedouin headgear against a desert background. The faculty, like the Board, did not challenge Glueck's Jerusalem School of Archaeology. Had he tried to transfer curricular responsibilities from the stateside campuses to Jerusalem, it is likely that the faculty would have objected, but they did not perceive the project as competing with their interests.

Glueck was not deterred by the knowledge that a "chapel" at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem would draw fire from Israel's ultra-Orthodox communities, which feared that a Reform toehold would facilitate a competing form of Jewish religious identity.[56] Despite the various obstacles, the Jerusalem campus was established. With the assistance of political contacts, Glueck had secured a tract of land on King David Street, close to the border between West and East Jerusalem, between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.[57] The HUC Biblical and Archaeological

54 Sherrard, "American Biblical Archaeology," 165. See also Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959).

55 See Amos Elon, "Politics and Archaeology," in *The Archaeology of Israel, Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Future,* ed. Neil Asher Silberman and David Small (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 34–47. On the role of archaeology in the construction of the Israeli collective identity, see Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

56 Meyer, *Centennial History*, 209–210.

57 C. Ariel Stone, "Ayn Zo Aggadah: A History of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem, 1954–1993," rabbinic thesis (HUC-JIR, 1990).

School officially opened in 1963.[58] That year, when a new consortium of U.S. universities permitted students to attend the program, the first archaeological summer school session was held.[59]

From mid-1965 onward, Glueck repeatedly spoke to HUC-JIR's Board of Governors about the idea of a year of study in Israel. In June 1965 he declared: "It has always been my hope that somehow or other one entire class of our Rabbinic students would spend an entire year in Israel, and particularly in Jerusalem under the careful supervision of one or more members of our faculty."[60] The following year he reiterated this commitment: "One of the main purposes of our Jerusalem School, but not the sole one, is to serve as headquarters for our HUC-JIR students studying in Israel, with the hope frequently expressed in my Board reports that the day would come when it would help translate into reality my dream that every class of our Rabbinic candidates would spend one year, preferably the third year, studying in Israel."[61]

Impact of the Six-Day War and American Jewry's Heightened Sense of Ethnic Identity

HUC-JIR's decision to mandate that its rabbinical students spend the first year of their studies in Israel, while influenced by the Six-Day War, should, I contend, be seen as ensuing primarily from the heightened sense of ethnic identity that emerged, against the backdrop of sociocultural shifts, within American Jewry in the 1960s.

In the spring of 1967, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran to shipping bound for the Israeli port of Eilat. This was not the first time that the Egyptian president had closed the

58 In a report to the BoG, which marked the occasion by meeting for the first time outside of the United States, in Jerusalem, Glueck hinted that the academic activities on the Jerusalem campus might well be expanded: "Our academic program will be limited for the present, to biblical and archaeological research." President's Report, 29 March 1963, MS-72, box A4, folder 1, AJA.

59 Brown and Kutler, *Nelson Glueck*, ch. 13.

60 President's Report to BoG (Cincinnati), 3 June 1965, p. 9, MS-20, box B1b-5, folder 1, AJA.

61 President's Report to BoG (Cincinnati), 3 November 1966, p. 12, MS-20, box B1b-5, folder 2, AJA.

international waterway. In October 1956 such a closure had led to war and Israeli military occupation of the Sinai desert. Months later, following an ultimatum from the Soviet Union and the United States, Israel withdrew from the territory, securing an understanding that a repeat of Egypt's action would be a *casus belli*, and Israel would use military force to reopen the straits. On 5 June 1967, after weeks of international diplomacy, the war began. Egypt announced that its army would "drive the Jews into the sea." Israel feared that the Jewish state faced an existential threat. Mass graves were dug in Ramat Gan.[62]

American Jewry mobilized for Israel: Jews flocked to synagogues to offer prayers of support and engaged in intensive fundraising efforts.[63] Within a short time, the United Jewish Appeal's annual targets were reached and surpassed.[64] American Jews volunteered to replace Israeli workers who had been called up for military service.[65] The war triggered immense interest in "making *aliyah*," i.e., immigration to Israel. And these developments were, for the most part, sustained for several years. Jews who had been only peripherally involved in Jewish life now rallied to Israel's cause. While some of the identification with Israel's fate did wane—the number of immigrants from the United States trailed off by 1972, and some post-1967 immigrants returned to America[66]—Israel was now at the center of the American Jewish agenda. Moreover, as Jews in the Soviet Union internalized the events of June 1967, many appealed to world Jewry to help pressure the Kremlin to permit them to emigrate to Israel. To that end, American Jewry spearheaded a "Let My People Go" campaign.[67]

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62 Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

63 Wertheimer, *A People Divided*, 30–31; Melvin I. Urofsky, *We Are One!: American Jewry and Israel* (New York: Anchor Press, 1978), 345–368.

64 Joshua Michael Zeitz, "'If I Am Not for Myself...': The American Jewish Establishment in the Aftermath of the Six Day War," *American Jewish History* 88, no. 2 (2000): 253–286.

65 Urofsky, *We Are One*, 352–353; Zeitz, "If I Am Not," 260.

66 Haim Avni and Jeffrey Mandl, "The Six-Day War and Communal Dynamics in the Diaspora; An Annotated Bibliography," in *The Six-Day War and World Jewry*, ed. Eli Lederhendler (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2000).

67 Pauline Peretz, *Let My People Go: The Transnational Politics of Soviet Jewish Emigration*

This dramatic shift in the agenda of American Jewry—its mobilization on behalf of Israel and Soviet Jewry—must be understood within the broader context of the domestic American scene. During the 1960s, especially the second half of that decade, ethnic diversity and ethnic pride—spearheaded by the Black Power/Black Pride movement—gained increasing acceptance.[68] Among Jews this trend was expressed in solidarity with Israel and global Jewry. To be sure, a strong ethnic identity—the sense of shared origins, affinity with fellow Jews, and demographic concentration in particular neighborhoods—had been a feature of Jewish life before the social changes of the 1960s. But mainstream Jewry, committed to American values and culture, and to social integration, tended to downplay its ethnic and religious identity.[69] Younger and more progressive Jews, who saw their Jewish identity as peripheral, had, since the early 1960s, generally supported the civil rights movement.[70] Beginning in the mid-1960s, however, various socio-cultural developments led to greater identification with Jewish ethnicity.

In the wake of the growing Black Power movement and the social unrest ensuing from the summer riots of 1968, some Jews expressed concern that the civil rights struggle was causing animosity to be directed toward them. It must be remembered that quite a few Jews had small shops, and lived in neighborhoods impacted by the riots. Tensions also emerged over parent-teacher relations in inner city New York, when Black parents wanted more control of the curriculum, and teachers, many of whom were Jewish, resisted.[71] "The Black Panther," a leading newspaper of the Black Power movement, published articles attacking Israel and expressing support for the PLO. Israel was increasingly

during the Cold War, trans. Ethan Rundell (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 2015).

68 John R. Greene, *America in the Sixties* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010), ch. 6.

69 Heilman, *Portrait*, 49–52. Will Herberg's seminal *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955, rev. ed. 1960) developed the thesis that ethnic identities were sublimated into religious identities in 1950s America, but reemerged in the late 1960s.

70 Heilman, *Portrait*, 75–77.

71 Jonathan Kaufman, *Broken Alliance: The Turbulent Times between Blacks and Jews in America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 121–156.

identified by the New Left and various "progressive" movements as an "arm of imperialism."[72]

American Jews were disappointed that groups and communities they had perceived as allies had become antagonistic toward them. There was a sense that the Jews had been abandoned by former allies during and after the Six-Day War, and in particular, by the Protestant and Catholic churches and various Christian organizations that had remained silent during Israel's perceived existential crisis.[73] It is ironic that when American Jewry, after having successfully presented itself to the mainstream religions as a parallel religious group, asserted strong ethnic, national ties to the Jewish State, its leaders were taken aback by the churches' disinclination to recognize those ties. Some Jews engaged in restorative efforts, but many others internalized the assertiveness of the various ethnic pride movements and applied it to their own self-identity.[74]

Furthermore, during the 1960s, Jewish ethnic identity had been stirred by the growing awareness of the Holocaust, in large part through books such as the works of Eli Wiesel and scholarly studies such as Raul Hilberg's *Destruction of the European Jews*.[75] The capture of Adolf Eichmann and his trial in Jerusalem, followed by publication of Hannah Arendt's provocative *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), contributed to this heightened Holocaust awareness.[76] And Arthur D. Morse's 1967 *While Six Million*

72 Glazer, *American Judaism*, 173; Tal Elmaliach, ed., *Jewish Radicals: Zionism Confronts The New Left, 1967–1973* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, forthcoming); Peretz, *Let My People Go*, 138.

73 See, e.g., remarks delivered at the 1967 CCAR Conference in Los Angeles by Balfour Brickner, published as "A Time for Candor in Interreligious Relationships," *CCAR Yearbook* (1968): 117. Samuel Sandmel, professor at HUC Cincinnati, expressed "dismay" at the lack of support from Christian organizations with which he had cooperated on interfaith work; see Urofsky, *We Are One*, 364.

74 Glazer, *American Judaism*, 174. On the impact of the Black Power movement on the Jewish community, see Marc Dollinger, *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018).

75 Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Avon, 1960); Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961).

76 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking, 1963).

Died: *A Chronicle of American Apathy* drew attention to the disturbing fact that the Roosevelt administration had obstructed efforts to save Jews.[77]

Also influential in deepening American Jews' ethnic identification were the best-selling historical novel *Exodus* by Leon Uris, published in 1958 and followed in 1960 by a film of the same name, and the 1964 stage musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, an adaption of Sholom Aleichem's "Tevye the Dairyman," which was made into a tremendously successful film in 1971. Glamorizing the founding of Israel, *Exodus* had an enormously uplifting impact on American Jews' self-perception, while *Fiddler* romanticized the shtetl experience of the parents and grandparents of many American Jews.

The combined effect of these disparate developments—ethnic consciousness and assertiveness, the waning of previous alliances, Holocaust awareness, pride in Israel's military capability, and romanticization of the shtetl—led to a growing sense within American Jewry of identification with the Jewish people and with Israel. Israel, Soviet Jewry, and the future of American Jewry now dominated the community's agenda. "Federation Judaism" that fostered "sacred survival" had, it has been argued, become the "civil religion" of American Jewry.[78]

In the aftermath of the Six-Day War, American Jewry's sense of connectedness to Israel—a sentiment now shared by the HUC-JIR Board of Governors, the CCAR, and the wider Reform movement—gave Glueck confidence that the YII program could be implemented. In 1967, days after the conclusion of the Six-Day War, Glueck arrived in Israel for a lengthy visit. He kept a diary, later published as *Dateline: Jerusalem,* in which he recorded the thrill of being in Israel at such a dramatic time. He described his impressions of the country enthusiastically, occasionally in quasi-messianic terms, repeatedly using the word "miraculous" to explain Israel's military victory.[79] Ezra Spicehandler, director of Jewish studies at the HUC-JIR campus in Jerusalem, accompanied Glueck on many

77 Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1967).

78 Woocher, *Sacred Survival*, vii.

79 Nelson Glueck, *Dateline: Jerusalem; a Diary* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1968), 8, 21, 32.

excursions during those months. He recalls how Glueck "walked the streets of the Old City, which he had known so well as a young scholar, intoxicated not with victory but with a certainty of prophetic fulfillment. When he touched the soil, he underwent a spiritual transformation which invested geography and pottery with mystical import."[80] At a gathering at the residence of Israel's President, Zalman Shazar, Glueck enthusiastically explained that the borders of Israel now matched those of the biblical period of Solomon.[81] Glueck expressed support for Israel's decision to annex East Jerusalem and seconded the call for the United States and other countries to move their embassies to Jerusalem.[82]

Glueck's diary reveals that he shared the fears of many American Jews regarding the jeopardy in which the Six-Day War had placed Israel and the Jewish people. "There is no question but that if the Egyptian and Arab forces had prevailed, there would have been a most fearful slaughter of the two and a half million Israelis in the country. This had been announced over the Arab radio stations repeatedly."[83] The war had shown, he declared, that:

> Gone is the day when Jews will be lulled or frightened into accepting with a sort of fatalistic belief that "it can't possibly be true" the publicized demonic attempts of Nazis or Russians or Arabs to expunge their kind from off the face of the earth, while the rest of the civilized world sits by mouthing pitiful and pitiless platitudes of prayers for peace or saying nothing at all. Never again will Jews stand supinely by and permit themselves and their brothers to be tricked or frightened into being slaughtered like weak and senseless sheep.[84]

80 Ezra Spicehandler, "An Appreciation [of Nelson Glueck]," *Jerusalem Post*, 14 February 1971, HUC/205, HUC library, Jerusalem.

81 Glueck, *Dateline*, 17.

82 Ibid., 87. Glueck's comments reflect the mood that gripped Israel in the aftermath of the war. Although to contemporary ears they might sound like West Bank settlers' messianic rhetoric, this language was also used by many in the Labor-led government. See Gershom Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of Settlements, 1967–1977* (New York: Times Books, 2006).

83 Glueck, *Dateline*, 119.

84 Ibid., 122. Entries such as these expressed views on Jewish-Arab relations very different

The many day trips Glueck took into the territories captured by Israel, often to sites he had surveyed prior to Israel's independence, and the many interactions he had with the Israeli political and academic elite, spurred him to further his project of a YII program for HUC-JIR's rabbinical students. He wanted students to share his experiences.[85] Israeli leaders such as President Zalman Shazar, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, Foreign Minister Abba Eban, and future Prime Minister Golda Meir granted Glueck special privileges, grateful that his archaeological writings linked biblical accounts of the land to contemporary findings, thereby legitimizing, in their eyes, the return of Israel to its ancient homeland.[86] In 1968, Glueck rewrote his popular book *The River Jordan*, originally published in 1946. According to Brooke Sherrard, the new edition bore little resemblance to its first appearance: "The alterations Glueck made shifted it from a celebration of diversity and coexistence to a defense of political Zionism."[87]

Dateline: Jerusalem, Glueck's diary, abounds with references to HUC-JIR's Biblical and Archaeological School and its summer school, which offered students lectures, tours, and excavations at Tel Gezer. Shortly after returning to the United States in September 1967, Glueck took practical steps to implement the YII program. His awareness of American Jewry's, and the Reform movement's, changed attitude to Israel impelled him to move forward on making the YII a reality.

As we saw, in October 1967, shortly after the Six-Day War, the CCAR's Committee on Rabbinic Training came out with a report recommending that rabbinical students spend an academic year in Israel; the report was approved by the CCAR Executive Board in March 1968. In commissioning the report, the CCAR's motivation had been to

from those Glueck held during his sojourns in Mandatory Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s.

85 "They [the students] have gone to the Negev, and will, I am sure, return starry-eyed." Glueck diary entry, 14 October 1970, 13, HU/34, Dedication, HUC library, Jerusalem.

86 Prime Minister Levi Eshkol arranged for Glueck to take a helicopter flight over Jerusalem, the Judean Desert, and the Sinai Peninsula. Spicehandler recalls how Glueck sat on the helicopter floor "like an enthusiastic schoolboy, tracing our flight on maps which he had spread around him" (Spicehandler, "An Appreciation").

87 Sherrard, "American Biblical Archaeology," 166.

mitigate American Jewry's declining religious identity and affiliation. The anticipated causal link between achieving this goal and sending students to study in Israel was not explained in the report. It is, however, clear that the Six-Day War took the Reform movement by storm. As an example, consider the agenda of the CCAR Executive Board meeting in November 1967, which included the following items: establishment by the UAHC of a Committee on Israel, discussion of an annual seminar in Israel for CCAR members, a CCAR-UAHC conference on expanding Reform's presence in Israel, and youth programs in Israel. There was also a call for HUC-JIR to adopt the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew prevalent in Israel,[88] and, most symbolically, there was discussion about holding the first-ever CCAR conference in Israel.[89]

The CCAR's first conference in Israel, in March 1970, further underscored its embrace of this new Israel-centric agenda. It added Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel Independence Day) to the Reform calendar as an official holiday, expressed commitment to the unity of Jerusalem, pledged to initiate youth and student trips to Israel, and entered into negotiations with the kibbutz movement to establish a Reform kibbutz.[90] And when the time came to raise funds for the YII, members of the CCAR, both personally and as leaders of their congregations, pledged funds for the program. Given the ascendency of the ethnic pride ethos, the Israel connection could, it was hoped, counter the decline in synagogue-centered Judaism in America.[91]

Student interest in studying in Israel for an academic year also increased dramatically after the Six-Day War. Between 1962 and 1967, the number of HUC-JIR students studying in Jerusalem at their own

88 In December 1967 the chapel on the Cincinnati campus began a gradual transition to Sephardic pronunciation; see Meyer, *Centennial History*, 228.

89 Minutes, meeting of CCAR Executive Board, 7–8 November 1967, MS-34, box 54, folder 13, AJA.

90 Polish, cited in report to BoG, 3 June 1971, MS-20, box B1b 9, folder 1, AJA.

91 Leonard Fein, "Failing God: American Jews and the Six Day War," in *The Impact of the Six-Day War: A Twenty-Year Assessment*, ed. Stephen J. Roth (London: Macmillan, 1988), 274–275; Marshall Sklare, "Lakeville and Israel: The Six-Day War and Its Aftermath," in *American Jews: A Reader*, ed. Marshall Sklare (New York: Behrman House, 1983), 413–439.

initiative was between seven and twelve annually, but following the Six-Day War the number rose to twenty-four, and during the 1968–1969 academic year increased to thirty-five or thirty-seven.[92] Students were voting with their feet, as this was a voluntary year for which HUC-JIR did not even transfer credit for courses taken at the Hebrew University. Moreover, study in Israel, while effective at improving Hebrew language skills and facilitating textual study, delayed ordination by a year.[93]

Evidence of student motivation to study in Israel following the Six-Day War also emerges from records of a May 1969 faculty–student liaison committee meeting. Three student recommendations, later shared with the Committee on Rabbinic Training, concerned Israel-related matters. One called for the replacement of the Towanda program with a five-month ulpan–"preferably in Israel." Students recommended that it emphasize acquisition of "fluent … Hebrew so that courses could be conducted in Hebrew." This would, they claimed, eliminate "frustration on the part of so many students during their first 2 or 3 years of study." Another recommendation called for a year of study in Israel, to be made "*compulsory with credit … immediately*." Anticipating faculty objections, the students rejected the claim that the expense would be prohibitive. They also argued that the YII should not add a year to their rabbinic training, as that would deter students from applying.[94]

Seymour Gitin, who interviewed the rabbinical program's applicants in the winter of 1969–1970, recalls that they were very excited about the possibility that their first-year studies would take place in Jerusalem. According to Gitin, several faculty members pleaded with him not to share this information with Glueck, to avoid stoking his enthusiasm about the YII.

92 Minutes, meeting of Board of Trustees of the UAHC, 18–19 May 1969, MS-20, box K6 2, folder 1, AJA. In July 1968, the Hebrew University's program for overseas students had an enrollment of more than nine hundred; see *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 31 July 1968. The university's School for Overseas Students was launched in 1971.

93 Interview, Seymour Gitin, Jerusalem, 28 November 2021. Gitin studied at the Hebrew University in 1959–1960, despite HUC-JIR Cincinnati's attempts to discourage him and other classmates from doing so. This added a year to their studies, as they received no credit for courses taken there.

94 Untitled Memorandum, Student Liaison Committees in New York and Cincinnati to the Committee on Rabbinic Training, MS-34, box 25, folder 7, AJA.

There seem to be multiple reasons why students, in contrast to faculty, were enthusiastic about the program. Several had studied in Israel as undergraduates. And many of the students had participated in Reform movement Israel programming, such as the youth pilgrimages to Israel, the Eisendrath International Exchange (EIE) semester in Israel, and the Israel component of summer camp activities. They had also read about Israel in the UAHC's current events magazine for teenagers, *Keeping Posted*. Given the Reform movement's historic ambivalence toward Zionism, these educational tools had a significant impact on young Reform Jews.[95] They had also been influenced by the broader Jewish community's embrace of Israel and by the 1960s ethos of ethnic pride.

Overcoming Hurdles: Instituting the YII Program

Energized by his sojourn in Israel and American Jewry's heightened engagement with Israel, in February 1968 Glueck committed to holding a summer ulpan in Jerusalem for third-year rabbinical students who were in Israel voluntarily. He arranged for these students to receive a modest stipend, about $450, from an Israeli governmental agency to help defray their expenses.[96] Glueck's focus now shifted from ideological rhetoric to the logistical and financial challenges of implementing the program. "The time has now come for further intensification of the academic program at our Jerusalem School.… I have spent a considerable amount of time in the last couple of years going over in detail all of the possible aspects of a possible recommendation that one complete year of the five years of our rabbinic training program be spent in Jerusalem and that attendance be compulsory for all the members of whatever class it is finally decided by faculty and administration is best for the program."[97]

Glueck worked closely with Ezra Spicehandler, who was director of Jewish studies at the Jerusalem campus and shortly to become its

95 Emily Alice Katz, "Pen Pals, Pilgrims, and Pioneers: Reform Youth and Israel, 1948–1967," *American Jewish History* 95 (2009): 249–276.

96 *Mercaz Letfutsot* (Center for the Diaspora), later renamed *Minhal Hastudentim* (Student Authority). The first YII students received the same amount in 1970. See Letter from Gitin (director of admissions) to Entering Students, 12 March 1970, MS-20, box K6 2, folder 1, AJA.

97 Minutes, BoG meeting (New York), 8 February 1968, MS-20, box B1b 6, folder 5, AJA.

dean, a role he fulfilled until 1980. Spicehandler was ordained at the Cincinnati campus in 1945, and taught first at the Cincinnati, and later at the New York campus of the College-Institute. He was well connected in Israel due to his involvement with the Labor Zionist movement and his military service, during which he fought in Israel's War of Independence. Directly and through Spicehandler, Glueck negotiated with Louis Pincus, chair and treasurer of the Jewish Agency. Glueck's project was received sympathetically despite being opposed by Orthodox organizations—both Israeli and American—on the one hand, and representatives of the Conservative movement, on the other. An initial request that the Agency allocate $100,000 over three years met with a more generous promise of $69,000 annually for three years.[98]

When Glueck discussed the project with the Board of Governors in February 1968, it upheld the tradition of focusing on the College's solvency, not its educational programs. "Lay members generally considered it their primary function to be concerned with the financial situation of the school and its relationship to the outside world. They regarded educational policy as the domain of the president."[99] At the time, HUC-JIR was under severe financial pressure due to its growing student body and faculty, the California campus's new School of Education and Jewish Studies, and plans for expanding the New York campus. Under the circumstances, Glueck found it impossible to recommend instituting a mandatory year in Israel beginning in the summer of 1969.[100] Instead, he proposed a more modest measure: moving the Towanda program to Israel.[101] His plan was that incoming students would spend their first eight to nine weeks acquiring Hebrew skills at the HUC-JIR campus in Jerusalem. With Spicehandler's help, he calculated that the cost of this program would be $40,000, which could be covered by raising the tuition and securing support from the Jewish Agency. But given the limited accommodations available on the Jerusalem campus, and the

98 Letter, Spicehandler to Glueck, 18 May 1969, HUC/88, HUC library, Jerusalem.

99 Meyer, *Centennial History*, 216.

100 Ibid.

101 Minutes, BoG meeting (New York), 8 February 1968, MS-20, box B1b 6, folder 5, AJA.

large incoming class, Glueck was forced to consider holding the ulpan in Netanya or Givatayim. In view of this problem, and the already-strained HUC-JIR budget, Glueck dropped his plans for the summer ulpan. "In all of the two decades of my presidency of the College, we have never been as burdened with financial problems as we are now."[102]

Glueck was subsequently convinced by the argument that it was far better for students to spend a year in Israel than two months.[103] Aside from the pedagogic advantages, such as experiencing the spectrum of Jewish life in Israel and living according to the Hebrew calendar, the financial logic was also persuasive. Once the initial cost of the airfare had been covered, the ground expenses, particularly those pertaining to the teaching staff, were approximately one-third of what they would be in the United States. The idea of a stand-alone summer ulpan was dropped, and Glueck returned to his original plan for a full year in Israel. He was encouraged by the CCAR Executive Board's confidence that fundraising could be undertaken for this purpose.[104]

In mid-April 1969, Glueck updated the Cincinnati faculty on the progress of a building project on the Jerusalem campus, and his plans for the YII program. He reiterated his opposition to making the program compulsory "at this time."[105] Yet shortly thereafter he changed his mind again, writing to Spicehandler of his resolve that from the summer of 1970, it would be "compulsory for all [rabbinical] students … to go to Jerusalem for a year, commencing in the summer … [and] their passing that year in Jerusalem will be the prerequisite for entrance into the Hebrew Union College in America."[106] Glueck's indecisiveness attests to concern that the financial situation could thwart an overly ambitious plan. Nevertheless, two weeks later he reaffirmed the decision to proceed, informing the faculty in Cincinnati that the project would

102 Letter, Glueck to Spicehandler, 10 December 1968, MS-20, box K6 2, folder 1, AJA.
103 Minutes, BoG meeting (Cincinnati), 7 June 1968, MS-20, box B1b 6, folder 5, AJA.
104 Memorandum, Polish to CCAR Executive Board, subsequently sent to BoG, MS-20, box J1-3, folder 7, AJA.
105 Minutes, Faculty meeting (Cincinnati), 15 April 1969, MS-20, box J1-3, folder 7, AJA.
106 Letter, Glueck to Spicehandler, 6 May 1969, HUC/88, HUC library, Jerusalem.

be presented to the Board of Governors later that year.[107] Spicehandler returned to the Jewish Agency to confirm that the promised financial support for students would materialize, and that, apart from the requirement that they be issued a certificate of immigration (*teudat oleh*), students would not have to meet additional conditions. The *teudat oleh* was just a procedural matter and did not, the Jewish Agency assured Spicehandler, commit the holder to moving to Israel permanently.[108]

Glueck now prepared for the Board of Governors meeting at which the matter would be formally decided. It was a momentous occasion for him, as evident from a letter he wrote to Mr. S. Kopald Jr., chair of the Board of Governors,

> I regard this step of compelling all our first-year students to spend the first year in Israel, as perhaps the most important single step I have undertaken at the Hebrew Union College during my period of administration.… It is absolutely necessary in the spirit and thrust of modern Jewish developments of our own time. It is definitely not enough to say we have been producing rabbis for 93 years without their having spent a year in Israel. That period is over if I know or sense anything about the meaning of modern Jewish life.
>
> …We have been in the vanguard of developments in modern Judaism.… We must remain in that vanguard.… The increased knowledge of Hebrew is infinitely important but even more important to my way of thinking is the sense of unity with Israel, with the totality of Israel, and with the spiritual rooting that I am convinced can be enhanced only by contact with its sacred soil.[109]

Anticipating the Board's fiscal concerns, Glueck prepared a memo on the cost of the YII. While he emphasized the need to raise funds in conversations with potential donors, in communicating with the Board

107 Minutes, Faculty meeting (Cincinnati), 15 April 1969; 20 May 1969, MS-20, box J1-3, folder, 7, AJA.

108 Letter, Spicehandler to Glueck, 18 May 1969, reporting on meeting with D. Zimand, Jewish Agency official, HUC/88, HUC library, Jerusalem.

109 Letter, Glueck to Kopald, 31 July 1969, MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.

of Governors, he downplayed the financial challenge.[110] At the meeting, Board members expressed concern not only about the program's costs, but also its implications for recruitment and admissions.[111] There was trepidation lest the YII lengthen the existing five-year course of rabbinical training. Board members, who ordinarily did not involve themselves in educational matters, feared that this would adversely affect enrollment, since both the Reconstructionist movement and the Somerville Chavurah had opened seminaries, and their five-year ordination programs were seen as competing with HUC-JIR's. Glueck assured the Board that he would do everything in his power to maintain the five-year course of studies. Another issue raised was whether it would be better if students went to Jerusalem for their third year of study. Glueck gave two arguments as to why an entry-year program was preferable. One was that rabbinical studies required knowledge of Hebrew, and beginning in Israel would better prepare students for the remaining four years, and make learning Hebrew a more positive experience. A second argument was that many students were married by their third year, making a third-year YII program prohibitively expensive.

Glueck reiterated that the YII's rationale was not only to facilitate Hebrew skills, but more importantly, to engender "close involvement" of HUC-JIR and the Reform movement with "the ideas and ideals of Israel; its religion, people, land, and promise." Glueck invoked the themes of the Jews' historical destiny and "new reality."[112]

Duly convinced, the Board passed the resolution unanimously,[113] making HUC-JIR the first rabbinical seminary in America to mandate a year of study in Israel for its rabbinical students. It was a landmark decision in the Reform movement's relationship with Zionism and Israel, which had shifted from opposing a Jewish state to affirming Israel's centrality in the training of Reform rabbis. Henceforth, no candidate

110 Memorandum to BoG from Office of President Glueck, 10 October 1969, MS-20, box A1a-172, folder 2, AJA.

111 Minutes, BoG meeting (Cincinnati), 23 October 1969, MS-20, box B1b, folder 1, AJA.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

for the Reform rabbinate could be ordained without a first year of study in Israel, though exemptions were granted if warranted by special circumstances.

Many faculty members were unenthusiastic about the YII, but their objections were not recorded in the minutes of various HUC-JIR forums. Perhaps, as former HUC-JIR Dean Kenneth Roseman recalls, they were "frightened of the president" and unwilling to challenge his authority, preferring to speak of their opposition behind closed doors.[114] According to HUC-JIR historian Michael A. Meyer, such behavior reflected the fact that "the faculty seldom asserted itself against the president."[115] Glueck, Meyer recalled, was an "authoritarian" and could influence faculty appointments and withdraw privileges.[116] Gitin recalls that Glueck ran faculty meetings with "an iron fist."[117]

The records show that the faculty, while not opposing the YII per se, expressed concern that it would not improve the students' Hebrew skills significantly. Jakob Petuchowski, a senior faculty member, rejected the claim that studying modern Hebrew would help students with biblical and rabbinic texts. He argued that contemporary Hebrew used a "decreasing amount" of classical Hebrew grammar and was "approaching the pattern of modern European languages." It was not, he claimed, "the language of the Bible." He maintained that Israelis themselves found rabbinic texts difficult to understand.[118] Most faculty members were adamant that students learn classical Hebrew, not modern Hebrew,[119] a language many were unable to speak themselves. They doubted, despite assurances to the contrary, that the Israeli ulpan teachers could teach the skills required.[120] They therefore preferred that the YII students go

114 Interview, Kenneth Roseman, 2 March 2020.

115 Meyer, *Centennial History*, 218.

116 Email with Dr. Meyer, 15 March 2022.

117 Seymour Gitin, *The Road Taken: An Archaeologist's Journey to the Land of the Bible* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2021), 42.

118 Jacob J. Petuchowski, *Zion Reconsidered* (New York: Twayne, 1966), 128.

119 Minutes, Faculty meeting (Cincinnati), 31 March 1970, MS-20, box J1-3, folder 7, AJA.

120 Letter, Roseman to Gottschalk, Steinberg, and Spicehandler, 27 October 1969, L 1 28, MS-20, A1a-172, folder 2, AJA.

to Israel in their third year of studies, after having gained knowledge of classical Hebrew and commenced study of the biblical and rabbinic literature stateside. The sojourn in Israel would, on this view, enable students to take courses at the Hebrew University alongside their studies at HUC-JIR Jerusalem. Spicehandler was aware of these faculty concerns. To address them, he proposed that during the YII, students study modern Hebrew four hours a day in the fall semester, and in the spring semester, study two hours a day of modern Hebrew and two hours a day of classical Hebrew.[121]

In the fall of 1969, Glueck called a meeting of the HUC-JIR deans to settle the argument over whether the Israel program would be the first or third year of rabbinical studies.[122] In attendance were Roseman from the Cincinnati campus, Paul Steinberg from New York, and Alfred Gottschalk from Los Angeles. Together with Seymour Gitin, head of admissions and recruitment, they thrashed out the issue. Gitin recalls that Gottschalk and Steinberg were concerned about not having an incoming class on campus, so they supported holding the YII in the third year. Gottschalk, whose L.A. campus was still in its infancy, felt particularly threatened: he suspected that Glueck might be maneuvering to close the L.A. campus so as to strengthen Cincinnati as HUC-JIR's primary campus. Roseman and Gitin concurred with Glueck's argument that a first year in Israel would provide incoming students with a solid basis for their rabbinical studies. As noted above, Gitin had conducted admissions interviews, and many candidates were enthusiastic about their first year of studies being in Israel.[123] Glueck's stance prevailed.

Cognizant of the faculty's concerns, Glueck and Roseman implored Spicehandler to ensure that the Hebrew program in Jerusalem would succeed.[124] They complained that the academic calendar Spicehandler proposed had too many vacation days. Spicehandler maintained that

121 Letter, Spicehandler to Roseman, cc'd to Glueck, 15 October 1969, MS-20, box A1a-172, folder 2, AJA.

122 I found no archival record of the meeting; this account was provided by Gitin, email correspondence with the author, 26 December 2021.

123 Gitin, email correspondence with the author, 26 December 2021.

124 Letter, Glueck to Spicehandler, 9 February 1970, MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.

students would use this time to become acquainted with the land and its people, but Glueck ordered that the free time be reduced.[125] Roseman wrote to Michael Klein, Spicehandler's assistant, of the need to foster a studious atmosphere: "I hope you will understand that it is partly your responsibility to see that the extra-curricular activities are sandwiched in where they will do least damage to the formal instructional program." He ended his letter with a demand that wouldn't be well received today: "There must be pressure, pressure, pressure on them [i.e., the students] from the moment they arrive in Jerusalem. The faculty in the United States are considerably anxious concerning the product of the year; if anything less than success is the outcome, there will be a faculty revolt."[126] Spicehandler dutifully obliged, and the winter and Passover breaks were shortened.[127]

The debate about whether the program should be designed for first- or third-year students was not simply about how best to facilitate the students' rabbinical studies. It also reflected a profound ideological question, namely, the purpose of Hebrew studies. Most of the Cincinnati faculty saw Hebrew as a tool for studying Judaism's sacred texts, whereas those who advocated studying spoken Hebrew in Israel were also interested in facilitating deeper bonds between Jews in Israel, America, and the rest of the Diaspora. Not only was Hebrew spoken by Israel's rapidly growing population, but increasing numbers of Diaspora Jews—including those in Australia, Mexico, and Central and South America—were learning modern Hebrew. The debate demonstrated that although HUC-JIR and the Reform movement had dropped their historic opposition to political Zionism, their Zionist ethos, as represented by a commitment to Hebrew, was not yet deeply rooted.

Aside from Hebrew, the faculty agreed that while in Israel, students should learn Reform Judaism's history, thought, and liturgy. Most incoming students had very limited knowledge of these subjects. Given their expected interaction with Israeli society, they would be tantamount to ambassadors for the Reform movement and as such, had to be able

125 Letter, Glueck to Spicehandler, 25 March 1970, MS-20, A1a-172, folder 2, AJA.
126 Letter, Roseman to Klein, 14 April 1970, MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.
127 Revised academic calendar, 18 May 1970, MS-20, A1a-172, folder 1, AJA.

Nelson Glueck and Ezra Spicehandler welcoming Gold Meir to Jerusalem campus, 1970.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

to explain and defend Reform Judaism. As the HUC-JIR leadership realized, the YII would not only enable students to learn from living in Israel, it would enable Israelis to learn from the students.

In his curriculum proposal, Spicehandler recommended a weekly lecture on Israeli society, culture, and politics. He also budgeted for field trips that would acquaint the students with different regions of the country, as well as a tour of the Sinai desert, then under Israel's control.[128] These field trips, led by Michael Klein, an expert tour guide, had a profound impact on the students.

Spicehandler, too, would have preferred that students study in Jerusalem during their third year, but his reasons differed from those of his stateside counterparts. In light of his experience with third-year students who had come to study in Jerusalem voluntarily, he felt that third-year students, being more mature and resilient, would be easier to work with. Spicehandler anticipated that it would be challenging to

128 Letter, Spicehandler to Glueck, 15 July 1969, HUC/88, HUC library, Jerusalem.

oversee first-year students, many of whom had never been away from home for an extended period, and who would be thrown into an unfamiliar culture and more spartan living conditions than they were used to. Moreover, they would be products of the notorious American campus scene.[129] Spicehandler pleaded with the administration and faculty stateside to take this into consideration, and at the very least, provide for an on-call psychiatrist.[130]

Following approval of the YII decision by the Board of Governors, and buoyed by the enthusiasm of HUC-JIR alumni and the CCAR, a fundraising campaign was launched.[131] In a letter to alumni, Glueck outlined the program and its cost, expressing the hope that about $250,000 could be raised to meet the shortfall between the anticipated expenditure and monies available from the Jewish Agency and grant-in-aid funds. He appealed to the potential donors' social conscience: "You would not want me to accept only the affluent students and change our policy that no worthwhile student be prevented from studying for the rabbinate for lack of financial means."[132] Similarly, the outgoing president of the CCAR, Roland Gittelsohn, and the head of the HUC-JIR Alumni Association, Leon Kronish, wrote a joint letter asking their members to donate. Referencing the applause that had greeted Glueck's announcement of the YII program at a recent CCAR conference, they remonstrated, "the only applause that really counts is our making available sufficient scholarship subsidies for those entering rabbinic students who will require them.… We owe it to Dr. Glueck, our Alma Mater and to the future of the rabbinate to help as generously as possible."[133] The appeals were successful: according to a late February 1970 update, the

129 Letter, Spicehandler to Glueck, 26 May 1969, HUC/88, HUC library, Jerusalem.

130 Letter, Spicehandler to Roseman, cc'ed to Glueck, 15 October 1969, MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA. Spicehandler's concern was well founded, as reflected in the student survey conducted at the end of the academic year, discussed below.

131 President's Report to BoG, 5 February 1970, MS-20, box B1b-8, folder 1, AJA.

132 Glueck, draft letter to Jacob Marcus, 25 November 1969, MS-160, box 1, folder 11, AJA.

133 Fundraising letter, Gittelsohn and Kronish, 12 May 1970, MS-20, box A1a-157, folder 8, AJA.

College had raised some $25,923; five weeks later the sum had reached $60,269.[134] Glueck died in February 1971, and in October of that year Chaim Friend of the HUC-JIR Office of Development reported to the incoming president, Alfred Gottschalk, that almost $234,000 had been raised for the program.[135] Before his death, Glueck received many letters congratulating him on establishing the YII, and just a few expressing reservations.[136] Glueck had also reached out to wealthy Cincinnati-area donors to Israeli causes, inviting them to a brunch where he described the program. Invoking the support he had received from Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and Avraham Harman, Hebrew University president, he argued that upon returning from the YII, each student would "serve as a forceful and passionate advocate of our common cause."[137] Glueck had succeeded in raising the hoped-for sum of $250,000.

In the spring of 1969, anticipating that the Board of Governors would approve the program, Glueck and Spicehandler conducted negotiations with Harman to secure dormitory facilities for the incoming class. Harman, who had earlier served as an Israeli diplomat, was cooperative. Following these negotiations, he informed the director of the American Friends of Hebrew University of the arrangement that had been reached. In return for an $800 registration fee payable to the American Friends, students would receive dormitory space, a discounted flight, library privileges, use of the University's recreational facilities, including the pool, and access to the University's health plan.[138] Harman was willing to extend the arrangement to HUC-JIR faculty on sabbatical

134 "Summary of Funds Available for First YII Program," March 31, 1970, MS-20, box A1a172-1, folder 3, AJA.

135 Letter, Chaim Friend to Gottschalk, 13 October 1971, MS-20, box A1a172, folder 5, AJA.

136 See, e.g., letter of 19 January 1970, from Rabbi M. Cohen of Temple Emanu-El of San Diego, MS-20, box A1a-172, folder 1, AJA. Cohen describes the program as "the greatest step forward by the College-Institute in decades."

137 Letters, Glueck to potential funders "who are not necessarily Reform but are key supporters of Israel," 2 March 1970, MS-20, box A1a157, folder 3; and MS-20, box A1a157, folder 1, AJA.

138 Letter, Harman to Harold Manson (director, American Friends of HUJI, New York), 17 April 1969, HUC/88, HUC library, Jerusalem.

in Israel as well.[139] He also suggested to Spicehandler that the HUC-JIR students participate in the University's summer ulpan, but that idea was rejected.[140] Discussions ensued regarding space for HUC-JIR students at the new dorms on Mount Scopus, but ultimately, Hebrew University dorm space was found near the Rehavia district, much closer to the HUC-JIR campus.[141]

The Inaugural YII: Challenges and Successes

Of the 1970–1971 incoming class of seventy-seven students, sixty-six would participate in the first YII program.[142] No women were in that class, though HUC-JIR had accepted its first woman rabbinical student, Sally Priesand, in 1967. Thirteen of the incoming class were married. All had undergraduate degrees, a requirement for acceptance into the rabbinical program; most had graduated that year. Almost all of the students were born in North America, attended public school, and received supplementary Jewish education.[143] A significant number had attended NFTY and UAHC camps. Those who hailed from the New York area and Canada tended to have a more intensive Jewish background, and not all were from Reform homes.[144] A few had been to Israel before, but for most it was their first time in Israel, and for many, their first trip overseas.

The 1970–1971 incoming class was one of the largest ever.[145] A

139 Letter dated 14 July 1969, summarizing meeting between Glueck, Spicehandler, and Harman, HUC/88, HUC library, Jerusalem.

140 Letter, Spicehandler to Glueck, 18 April 1969, HUC/88, HUC library, Jerusalem.

141 Dorm space could only be found for single students; married students had to find their own rental accommodations.

142 See list, "Entering First Year in Israel," 1970–1971, giving students' names, hometown, undergraduate university, major and minor studies, and marital status. A separate page lists eleven students who remained in the United States "for personal reasons," MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.

143 According to Liebman, 67 percent of HUC students at the Cincinnati and New York campuses received their Jewish education at Sunday schools; see Liebman, "Training of American Rabbis," 16.

144 Samuel E. Karff, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976), 225.

145 The entering class would have been larger, but financial and logistical constraints

contributing—and arguably critical—factor in this increased enrollment was the fear of being drafted for military service to Vietnam. The clause of the Military Selective Service Act under which students attending a master's program qualified for deferment from the draft was eliminated in 1967, but there remained the 4-D category (minister of religion or divinity student), which gave deferment to those attending a theological seminary. According to Gitin, between 1968 and 1970, approximately 1,800 students expressed interest in the rabbinical school program, of whom 600 were interviewed; Gitin was certain that this unusually high interest had everything to do with the draft. He recalled several requests from the FBI to view the files of rabbinical school applicants, which he politely but firmly rebuffed as against the law.[146] Roseman, who sat on multiple admissions panels, recalled that "many applicants at this time were not accepted because it was clear that their major motivation was not to serve the Jewish people, but rather, avoid the draft."[147] Among the class in Israel there was much talk about who had joined the program to circumvent the draft. One participant claimed that as many as half the class had that "ulterior motive.… I was one of them. I honestly don't feel ashamed to share that reality, nor do I feel particularly proud of it."[148] But several of his classmates considered this estimate exaggerated.[149]

HUC-JIR took the position, at least publicly, that it did not view such behavior sympathetically. In a 1969 statement to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Glueck asserted: "There is no feeling among the faculties … that our students have come to escape the draft."[150] And

compelled Glueck, in the spring of 1970, to tell his admissions department to stop accepting students. President's Report to BoG, 4 June 1970, MS-20, box B1b-8, folder 1, AJA.

146 Gitin, *The Road Taken*, 43; email, 26 December 2021.

147 Interview, 5 March 2020.

148 Rabbi Josh Goldstein, "The Class of 1975," *Jewish Journal of Ocean County NJ*, April 2018. https://issuu.com/the-jewish-journal/docs/april_edition_2018_epub (accessed 3 October 2023).

149 Steven Garten (interview, 6 April 2020) stated that "between fifteen and eighteen participants were in the program as a way of circumventing the draft." Jack Luxemburg (interview, 23 April 2020) recalls that "in total there were some ten students who joined the program as a way of circumventing the draft."

150 *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 12 June 1969. On the attitude of HUC-JIR's administration,

to the Board of Governors, Glueck denied that students were flocking to the school to avoid the draft, arguing that the YII program partially accounted for the increase.[151] Twenty students did not continue their studies upon returning home, but it is difficult to infer the scope of draft evasion from this fact, as the reasons for their not advancing to the rabbinical program's second year varied or could not be identified. Some failed the Readiness Examination, some were removed from the program due to problematic behavior, some stayed in Israel and became *olim* (immigrants), and some decided to pursue other careers.[152] We lack data on the dropout ratio in the preceding and following years.

This was a period, not only of draft evasion, but also of general student unrest. Given that the first-year students were recent college graduates, the impact of their campus experiences—which, it will be recalled, had worried Spicehandler—merits consideration. HUC-JIR's administration and faculty were mindful of this issue, seeking to avoid confrontations. Most members of the entering class had studied at large public universities, including the University of California, SUNY, and the University of Wisconsin.[153] Several had belonged to student organizations that called for radical change, participating in demonstrations, sit-ins, and other protests. In interviews of YII participants, one spoke of involvement in the Free Speech Movement at UC Berkeley, which challenged the administration's policy that there was to be no political debate on campus. Others spoke of involvement in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which called for participatory democracy, challenging the use of the *in loco parentis* clause that universities manipulated as a means of quelling protest.[154] Less radical activists sought

president, faculty, and students to the war in Vietnam, see Brown and Kutler, *Nelson Glueck*, 195–200.

151 President's Report to BoG, 4 June 1970, MS-20, box B1b-8, folder 1, AJA.

152 Letter, Kopald to Uri Herscher, 31 March 1972, cc'd to Gottschalk, MS-20, box A1a-172, folder 5, AJA. Lawrence Englander (interview, 2 April 2020) also mentioned that twenty students did not continue.

153 "Entering First Year-in-Israel 1970–71," MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.

154 Daniel Clawson, who left the rabbinical program and became a sociologist, "attended SDS meetings at Washington University though he did not join the organization." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dan_Clawson (accessed 14 August 2021); interview, Rabbi Alan

greater involvement in campus policies and activities. Even those YII students who had not been activists had witnessed violent demonstrations and conflict. For many, the Kent State massacre was a defining moment.[155] Moreover, exposure to the counterculture—the hippie ethos and critique of middle-class values and pursuits, with its relaxed sexual mores, attitude to mood-altering drugs, fashions, and music—had profoundly influenced the entering YII students. Many interviewees spoke of the impact of the counterculture on their university experience in the United States and, in turn, on their YII experience.

During the winter and spring of 1970, HUC-JIR sent out multiple letters and pamphlets to the incoming class. An initial letter described the program's goals as articulated by Glueck. As the departure day drew closer, the correspondence took on a more practical tone. Students were informed of the expected cost of their year in Israel. Single students should expect an outlay of $3,500, which would cover tuition, medical care, round trip flights, shipping, maintenance ("room, board, laundry, entertainment, tobacco, and barber"). Married students without children could expect to manage on $5,500; an additional $1,000 was suggested for each child.[156]

Incoming students also received "Your Year in Israel," a short document with information on such matters as what to bring to Israel; Israeli policies on importing electrical goods, vaccinations, bank accounts; and medications worth bringing to Israel—"for example your favorite headache tablets."[157] It warned students, vis-à-vis daily life, that Israel was unlike the United States, and it would be essential for them to cultivate the patience needed to navigate Israeli bureaucracy.[158]

Katz, 23 April 2020.

155 On HUC-JIR's response to the Kent State killings, see President's Report to BoG, 4 June 1970, MS-20, box B1b-8, folder 1, AJA.

156 *Guide for Pre-Rabbinic Students* (HUC-JIR Department of Admissions, 1970).

157 Newsletters, 1968–1971, MS-20, box K1-6, folder 1, AJA.

158 Some students found it challenging to adjust; see John Spitzer, "The First Rabbinic Year in Israel: A Study in Socialization and Professionalization," master's thesis, HUC-JIR Cincinnati, 1973. The thesis examines the 1972–1973 cohort of YII students. Chapter three, on adjustment to living in Israel, describes frustration at the inability to communicate well with locals, and difficulty adjusting to the local currency. HUC-JIR is perceived as insensitive to the students' needs.

At the end of August, a short orientation seminar was held in New York, after which the students flew to Israel. Registration at the Jerusalem campus took place at the beginning of September, followed by a second orientation and a walking tour of the Old City. After a trip to the Galilee, Hebrew studies began on 12 September 1970. Classes were divided into eight levels, since some students "barely knew the Hebrew alphabet" and others were able to take university courses in Hebrew.[159]

The atmosphere in Israel at this time was euphoric, as it had been since the Six-Day War. Relief over Israel's military victory and excitement about the possibility of touring sites that were previously off limits brought a wave of tourists. Granted, there was instability in countries bordering Israel: civil war in Jordan between forces loyal to King Hussein and Palestinian militants who sought to overthrow the regime led to Syrian tank support of the Palestinians, and Israeli air force intervention, at the request of the United States, to deter the Syrians.[160] A protracted "War of Attrition" was also going on at the Suez Canal during this period. But the Israeli public, and the YII students, were only marginally affected by these events. Similarly, internal developments such as the start of massive immigration from the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Black Panther movement protesting discrimination against Mizrachi Jews seemed, for the most part, to make little impression on the YII students.[161]

To familiarize the students with Israeli politics and society, the College arranged for speakers to address the class either on campus or at other venues. For example, a Jewish Agency weekend gathering (*shabbaton*) provided the opportunity for students to encounter the controversial but prophetic philosophy professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz and the IDF colonel who would become a historian and peace activist, Mordechai Bar-On.[162] One memorable such meeting took place when

159 Spicehandler, report on YII, late October 1970, distributed by Glueck to faculty on 5 November 1970.

160 See Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–2001* (New York: Vintage, 2001), 373–375.

161 See, e.g., Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews* (London: Routledge, 2010).

162 Report, Spicehandler, 1970–1971 academic year, MS-20, box K4-1, folder 12, AJA.

Prime Minister Golda Meir attended a building dedication on campus and received an honorary doctorate. In her acceptance speech, she praised HUC-JIR and its president for initiating the YII program: "I am just daring enough to presume to say in the name of the whole government that we are happy you are here."[163] This was a guarded reference to the expected displeasure of the National Religious Party, whose Knesset members supported Meir's coalition government but were incensed at her accepting an honorary degree from the Reform institution. Several interviewees recalled meeting the prime minister, but their memories focused on the anecdotal. One recalled "her skill at affixing the mezuzah with one hand while holding a cigarette in the other"; another noted that her Hebrew had a strong American accent.[164]

The first YII was characterized by tension between the administration and the students. As noted, the fraught mood on American campuses in the late 1960s had affected the students deeply, and their experiences accompanied them to the Jerusalem campus. Spicehandler's apprehensiveness about shepherding a large class that had experienced the counterculture proved well-founded: the comportment and attitudes of the YII students differed considerably from those of students Spicehandler had taught at HUC-JIR's Cincinnati and New York campuses in the 1950s. In an interview with Stanley Chyet of the Cincinnati campus, Spicehandler acknowledged the significant generational gap between himself and the students. Rejecting "the current trend of shared governance," he nostalgically recalled previous times: "There used to be rules. There was a professor, there was a student, and the professor was right.… I think the contemporary student no longer knows that, nor does the professor, and this is a source of a great deal of uneasiness and criticism on both sides."[165]

Friction arose over the administration's attitude to the student body and vice versa. Students complained that they were treated condescendingly and paternalistically, and that the administration was unfriendly.[166]

163 *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 15 October 1970.

164 Interview, Lawrence Englander, 2 April 2020; interview, Steven Garten, 6 April 2020.

165 Interview, 8 June 1971, SC-11842, AJA.

166 Student survey conducted at the end of 1970–1971 academic year, MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.

Spicehandler was convinced that several students had come to Jerusalem thirsty for confrontation, viewing the administration as "inconsiderate, impossible, old fogeys."[167] He tried to accommodate some of the student complaints, for example, by creating a student liaison committee and by making adjustments to the curriculum in the spring semester.[168] The tension affected students to varying degrees: for some it was a central and very frustrating aspect of the YII experience; for others, it was merely unpleasant.[169]

Some of the tension between the administration and students can be explained by the YII's newness: it was rather hastily put together; it was the first year of a major curricular innovation; and policy coordination and communication took place across four campuses, though Cincinnati was the head office, so to speak. Also pertinent is the fact that the Jerusalem campus, which had been a base for around thirty advanced students who came to Israel voluntarily and created individualized courses of study, was now delivering a compulsory program for sixty-six students just starting their rabbinical training, in addition to continuing to serve as a base for advanced students. But a major cause of the discontent seems to have been the end-of-year Readiness Exam, which determined whether students would remain in the rabbinical program.

The Readiness Exam had always generated tension at the end of the Towanda course. Responsibility for the exam now came under the aegis of the Jerusalem campus. As it approached, student unrest increased. The students drew up a petition calling for the exam to be canceled and replaced by an assessment of the student's performance during the academic year. They attempted to win support from the ulpan teachers, and their petition claimed that the director of Hebrew studies accepted their preference for assessment rather than a final exam. More than half of the class signed the petition, which was presented to the newly inducted president of HUC-JIR, Alfred Gottschalk, who had recently visited the

167 Interview, 8 June 1971, SC-11842, AJA.

168 Report, Spicehandler, MS-20. box K4-1, folder 12, AJA. Joe Klein, a member of the student liaison committee, recalled tension over the curriculum (email, 13 April 2020).

169 Student survey, MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.

Jerusalem campus and had seen first-hand that many students were disgruntled.[170] Fearing he had received a bad first impression, the students asserted in the petition that the year had been an overall success.[171] Gottschalk and Roseman, together with Spicehandler, agreed that it would be up to Jerusalem to determine the exam's fate. Spicehandler considered the exam valuable: "It gets the students to review what they have learned and puts a degree of fear into them that leads them to work harder."[172] The students, on the other hand, implored Gottschalk to annul the Readiness Exam, claiming it created "undue pressure and anxiety, like the Sword of Damocles."[173] To the students' chagrin, the exam went ahead as planned.[174]

At the end of the year, the students conducted a class survey; the response rate was 60 percent.[175] While results were somewhat lackluster regarding text-based Judaic studies as opposed to studies relating to Israel—the pervasive sentiment was that "things that can only be done in Israel should be done in Israel"[176]—56 percent of the students ranked their ulpan experience as "excellent," and an additional 36 percent said it was "good." The lower-level classes generated a greater degree of student satisfaction than the higher-level classes. Although Glueck had died shortly after the beginning of the second semester, the students' approbation of the Hebrew program would doubtless have pleased him. Almost all the students interviewed spoke of the strides they had made in

170 Letter from Gottschalk (appointed president following Glueck's death in February 1971) to Roseman, 30 March 1971, MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA. Jeffrey Elson (interview [Y. Walton], 9 February 2021) recalled that when Gottschalk met with the students in Jerusalem, "He got an earful. He was very unhappy about what he heard."

171 Petition**,** MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.

172 Interview, 8 June 1971, SC-11842, AJA.

173 Student survey, MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.

174 Spicehandler, Michael A. Meyer, and Herbert Brichto—who was on the HUC-JIR (Cincinnati) faculty and a visiting professor in Jerusalem 1970–1971—made the decision in consultation with the faculty; see letter from Gottschalk to Roseman, 30 March 1971, MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.

175 Ibid.

176 Student survey, MS-20, box K6-2, folder 1, AJA.

learning Hebrew.[177] One claimed that his Hebrew took "a quantum leap," and that when he compared his progress with that of the eleven students who, for personal reasons, had not been in Israel that year, the difference was considerable.[178] HUC-JIR's development department seized upon the enthusiasm, quoting student tributes to further YII fundraising.[179] Stateside faculty had to acknowledge the achievements in this area.[180]

Student Life Outside the Classroom

Although there was a chapel at the College campus in Jerusalem, attendance was not mandatory. The chapel had originally been envisaged as a place to introduce Israelis to the Reform way of prayer, and services were in Hebrew. After 1967, however, those attending the services were increasingly likely to be English-speakers, and in particular, tourists. Some students attended services at the chapel, but others preferred to encounter different prayer experiences. Several developed connections with the prayer traditions of the religious university students in their dorms. For others, Jerusalem provided a broad array of ethnic and religious diversity, and they took advantage of the varied prayer experiences. Though visits to Reform synagogues and communities in Tel-Aviv, Haifa, and Upper Nazareth had been organized for YII students, those I interviewed did not recall these experiences. Some students and faculty claimed that the YII had religious impact on participants, deepening their engagement with traditional practices—something that, at the time, was alien to classical Reform Judaism in America.[181]

177 Interview (Yair Walton), Martin Beifield, 9 February 2021.

178 Interview, Lawrence Englander, 2 April 2020.

179 "I think it was infinitely easier to learn Hebrew in Israel. It was an educational experience which far surpassed opportunities in the US"; "I am convinced of the importance of a knowledge of Hebrew as a living language"; "It has been an outstanding success!" HUC/125, HUC library, Jerusalem.

180 In 1976, a questionnaire asked faculty to assess the achievements of the YII. The summary of the New York and Cincinnati faculty responses concluded that "Hebrew achievement is higher than before the Jerusalem program was instituted. Many commented on the lack of trauma which now accompanies the confrontation of a Hebrew text," MS-663, box 22, folder 22, AJA.

181 Interview, Roseman, 5 March 2020.

While the stateside faculty did not view getting to know the land of Israel—its geography, flora and fauna, and history—as a goal of the YII program, HUC-JIR Jerusalem organized a series of field trips (*tiyulim*) for the students. Most saw these excursions—particularly the trek to the Sinai desert—as the highlight of the year. Led by Michael Klein, who had extensive knowledge of the terrain and wildlife, the tours made a profound impression on the students.[182] The outings created significant moments for the class to crystallize, to come together as a cohesive cohort of future rabbis.[183]

About one-third of the class did volunteer work. Several students helped prepare twelfth graders at the Ben Shemen youth village for their matriculation exam in English.[184] An HUC-JIR student band gave free performances for students at the Hebrew University; it was spotted and signed up to perform every few weeks at army bases in the Jordan Valley, entertaining the troops. These gigs were an opportunity for the rabbinical students to engage with their Israeli peers directly.[185]

In their free time, many students frequented Rosie's, a restaurant (actually named *Misedet HaGalil*) in the Mamilla quarter near the campus.[186] It was owned by a family from Egypt whose matriarch, Rosie, became something of a substitute parent for several members of the class. Students attended the circumcision of Rosie's grandson at the restaurant, and many interviewees recalled going to Rosie's at the end of the year to bid the proprietors a bittersweet goodbye. Although nobody could have anticipated this, the students felt a special bond with the eatery; almost all of them fondly recalled the warmth with which they had been received there. Interestingly, few mentioned the food.

182 All my interviewees mentioned Klein's leading the *tiyulim* as a pivotal element of the YII. On campus, too, many saw him as the one to turn to when challenges arose. See, e.g., Joe Klein [no relation to Michael Klein], email, 13 April 2020.

183 Orit Ben-David, "*Tiyul* (Hike) as an Act of Consecration of Space," in Eyal Ben-Ari and Yoram Bilu, eds., *Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).

184 Interview, Lawrence Englander, 2 April 2020.

185 Interview, Jack Luxemburg, 23 April 2020; interview, Eli Herscher 21 and 29 April 2020.

186 Email, Peter Haas, 3 April 2020.

Nearly all interviewees spoke of YII as a crucial experience in terms of networking and bonding with colleagues. The shared moments inside and often outside the classroom created supportive connections that endured as they went on to rabbinical careers.[187] This outcome was not a stated goal of the program, but the impact of being together on a small campus in a new and challenging environment, with all its highs and lows, was, as several interviewees put it, "transformative."[188]

Although some participants did not continue their studies at HUC-JIR beyond the first year, the available information shows that thirty-seven students from the first YII class went on to be ordained by HUC-JIR, most in 1975.[189] Several later joined the Reconstructionist movement, and a few, the Conservative, but the majority remained within the Reform fold. As Reform rabbis, most were active in interfaith and social justice activities associated with the Reform outlook on "improving the world" (*tikkun olam*). But many were avid advocates for Zionist and Israeli causes. One was a founding member of ARZA (Association of Reform Zionists in America), the Reform Zionist faction within the World Zionist Organization, and several held leadership roles.[190] In keeping with the Reform movement's dovish stance on Israel, a fair number participated in groups such as Breira, Peace Now, Meretz-USA, J-Street, and the Labor Zionist Alliance. Some of the rabbis worked in academia and, faced with anti-Israel activism on campuses, became active in defending Israel. Peter Haas, for example, served as president of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East. And of course, many of the rabbis led congregational trips to Israel.[191]

Several graduates of the first YII program also became involved in activities pertaining to Hebrew literature. One wrote an article on Israeli

187 For example, Lawrence Englander (interview, 2 April 2020) and Martin Beifield (interview [Yair Walton], 9 February 2021) both mentioned this.

188 Interview, Steven Garten, 6 April 2020. Bradley Bleefeld (interview, 3 May 2020) called it his honeymoon year: "I was in Jerusalem, I'm in heaven, I fulfilled the dream of countless generations."

189 I am grateful to Josh Herman for assistance in gathering this information.

190 Jack Luxemburg was a founding member of ARZA, in which Joshua Goldstein and Paul Golomb were active. Lawrence Englander chaired Arzenu, the political voice of Reform, Progressive, and Liberal Religious Zionists within the World Zionist Organization; Luxemberg was an Arzenu vice-chair.

191 Interview, Steve Garten, 6 April 2020.

writer S.Y. Agnon,[192] another worked with Spicehandler on an anthology of Israeli writing.[193]

Conclusion

The impact on the Reform rabbinate that Glueck had sought, in mandating a year of study in Israel for incoming rabbinical students–the deepening of spiritual, religious, cultural, and political ties with the people and land of Israel—was largely achieved. Glueck's successor, Gottschalk, pledged to continue the mandatory year:

> I am convinced that the year was an irreplaceable experience for the students and of inestimable value in their development as candidates for the rabbinate. It has instilled in them a love for Judaism, the Jewish people, and Israel. It has inspired them with zeal for the Hebrew language and literature. The year in Israel project has proved worthy of continuation.[194]

The decision to make the YII mandatory ensured that future classes of rabbinical students would also forge these deepened connections, and in so doing, not only impart concrete content to the shift in the Reform movement's attitude to Israel, but also strengthen its sense of Jewish peoplehood.[195] By 1973 the YII policy was extended to include education students, and later, in 1986, cantorial students.

Mandating the YII for rabbinical students—less than a century after the U.S. Reform movement founded its rabbinical seminary—was a milestone in the Reform movement's relationship with Zionism and Israel.[196] This move, as we have seen, was undertaken in the context of

192 Laurence L. Edwards, "S.Y. Agnon, 'The Great Synagogue'; Translation and Commentary," *CCAR Journal* 63, no. 1 (2016): 123–130.

193 Ezra Spicehandler and Curtis Arnson, eds., *New Writing in Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1976).

194 Gottschalk, letter to colleagues [CCAR members], 14 May 1971, MS L-1 28 1, AJA. Gottschalk expressed similar sentiments in his President's Report to BoG, 3 June 1971, p. 18, MS-20, box B1b, folder 91, AJA.

195 According to interviewee Eric Wisnia, "It changed the Reform movement forever." Interview (Yair Walton), 23 April 2020. The positive impact was also noted by interviewees Bradley Bleefeld (3 May 2020) and Neal Borovitz (9 February 2021).

196 Polish called the decision to mandate the YII program "the most significant development" in relations between the rabbinate and HUC-JIR. See David Polish, "The Changing and the Constant in the Reform Rabbinate," *American Jewish Archives* 35 (1983): 285–286.

the turbulent 1960s, when mainstream religious affiliation was rapidly declining, and a heightened ethnic awareness emerged in American society. The civil rights movement, the feminist movement, the counterculture, and the war in Vietnam, all influenced American Jewry. The focus of the Jewish community's self-understanding shifted from religious identity to publicly expressed ethnic solidarity. This process was reinforced by emerging awareness of the Holocaust, and of the plight of Soviet Jewry. The events surrounding the outbreak of the Six-Day War, and the disappointing recognition that Israel was being abandoned by former allies in the United States and around the world, drove home this sense of Jewish peoplehood, of a shared Jewish identity. Reform Jewry's agenda shifted from religious services, interfaith work, and social justice activity to support for Israel, the struggle on behalf of Soviet Jewry, and a commitment to "sacred survival."

The CCAR was acutely aware of these developments, and responded to them by investigating the U.S. Reform rabbinate's evolving role, and the training of its rabbis. These studies called for urgent reform of rabbinical training, emphasizing that future rabbis had to acquire pastoral and executive leadership skills, rather than just the text-based and literary skills that had been the hallmark of HUC-JIR's rabbinical curriculum. A key recommendation was that rabbinical students should henceforth spend a year of their studies in Jerusalem. This proposal, though not grounded in research, reflected the CCAR's appreciation of Israel's newfound centrality to the agenda of American Jewry and within Reform circles.

Glueck's attachment to Israel had evolved through his writings on biblical archaeology, archaeological surveys, directorship of the American School of Oriental Research, and, after 1948, his expeditions in the Negev desert, undertaken with logistical assistance from the Israel Defense Forces. All of these had connected him to Israel's political and academic elites—connections that proved helpful when he set out to open an HUC-JIR campus in Jerusalem in 1963. It was, however, the impact of the Six-Day War on the Board of Governors, the CCAR, and the American Jewish community, that generated the institutional support within U.S. Reform Jewry that enabled Glueck to pursue the YII project. In Israel, he found allies in government, at Hebrew University, and at the Jewish Agency. These alliances, along with the efforts of Jewish studies director Spicehandler, facilitated inauguration of the program in 1970–1971.

Glueck's status and forceful persona were such that the faculty gave way to his plan to implement the YII program. However, some Cincinnati-based HUC-JIR faculty members, many nearing retirement, retained the indifference to the Jewish state that had characterized previous generations of Reform thinkers. They do not appear to have been significantly affected by either the changes in American society or the events of the Six-Day War. They rejected the CCAR's recommendations that major curricular reform be introduced, insisting that their efforts to train the next generation of rabbis were adequate. Some also continued to argue that the YII should take place in the third year of rabbinical studies, after students had acquired a grounding in biblical and rabbinic Hebrew. They maintained that there was a decisive difference between biblical and rabbinic Hebrew and contemporary Hebrew, and claimed that the ulpan method was suitable only for teaching the latter. These faculty members did not see the ability to engage with Israelis and Diaspora Jews in a shared language as an objective of rabbinical training. They also disregarded long-standing complaints about the existing Hebrew instruction program at HUC-JIR, the Towanda program, which left most students struggling with the textual studies that followed. As a compromise, Glueck and Spicehandler agreed that classical Hebrew be taught for two hours daily in the spring term. They also decided to curtail student vacation time that would have been used to tour Israel.

The difference of opinion regarding the goals of learning Hebrew was thus telling, reflecting different visions of the rabbinate, the relation between rabbis and the Jewish state, and, given that rabbis are role models, between Jews and the Jewish state. Glueck and Spicehandler viewed textual study and engaging with the Hebrew cultural revival in Israel and the Diaspora as complementary goals of Hebrew language acquisition. The first YII program achieved the goal of imparting Hebrew language skills and giving students confidence that they would be able to engage with sacred texts. Sooner or later, most of the faculty acknowledged this. But Glueck and Spicehandler conceived the YII's objectives as extending beyond learning Hebrew. The YII was also envisioned as a means of forging bonds between students and the land, people, and culture of Israel, as enabling the Reform movement's future rabbis to assist congregants and others to develop meaningful connections with Israel. As this paper has shown, this goal was also achieved. Most students returned to North

America eager to sustain these bonds, both personally and professionally. On this issue, Glueck and Spicehandler were more in touch with the wider community and student body than much of the faculty was.

For almost half a century, Reform Judaism saw Israel as a central element in the forging of Jewish identity, and the Jewish state was a beacon for emerging Reform leaders. The YII program continued to strengthen ties with Israel. More recently, however, shifting sociocultural currents in American society and the Reform movement, and the external and internal challenges that Israel faces, have engendered a more complex experience for YII participants. Some, albeit a minority, have become alienated from the Jewish state.[197]

The profound commitment to inclusivity and diversity embraced by the Reform movement since the turn of the twenty-first century has established new, more fluid understandings of Jewish identity. This development contrasts markedly with the persistence in Israeli society of well-demarcated ethnic groupings, and the growth of the right-wing, nationalist, and fervently religious sectors. The latter phenomena have contributed to a critical attitude on the part of many HUC-JIR students toward these aspects of Israeli society. This has been compounded by Israel's ongoing occupation of the West Bank, and to a lesser extent, its military operations against Hamas, which raise both security and ethical dilemmas. Many students wrestle with these dilemmas, and some distance themselves vocally from Israeli government policies. Generally, however, this does not undermine their empathy for Israel's people.

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197 See 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 (2015): 35–63; "Gates of Tears: Rabbinical and Cantorial Students stand for solidarity with the Palestinians," *Forward*, 13 May 2021; Marc Tracy, "Inside the Unravelling of American Zionism," *New York Times*, 2 November 2021.