

The
**American Jewish
Archives**
Journal

HEBREW
UNION
COLLEGE

150
1875-2025

VOLUME LXXVII • 2025 • NUMBER II

VOLUME LXXVII • 2025 • NUMBER II



The
American Jewish
Archives
Journal

*A Journal Devoted to the Preservation and Study
of the American Jewish Experience*

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Published by

THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

LOCATED ON THE CINCINNATI CAMPUS OF THE
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
CINCINNATI • NEW YORK • LOS ANGELES • JERUSALEM

Publication of this journal is made possible,
in part, by gifts from

**Congregation Emanu-El of the
City of New York**

and by the

**Dolores and Walter Neustadt
American Jewish Archives Journal
Endowment Fund**

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the
American Jewish Archives

Located on the Cincinnati campus of the
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Cincinnati • New York • Los Angeles • Jerusalem

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On the cover:

Julius Lewy teaching at Hebrew Union College,
Cincinnati, undated. (Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

The *American Jewish Archives Journal* is indexed in the *Index to Jewish Periodicals*, *Current Contents*, *American Historical Review*, *United States Political Science Documents*, and the *Journal of American History*.

Information for Contributors:

The American Jewish Archives Journal generally follows *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th Edition) but issues its own style sheet, which may be accessed by visiting the American Jewish Archives website at: AmericanJewishArchives.org

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ISSN 002-905X

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TO OUR READERS . . .

When Isaac Mayer Wise founded the Hebrew Union College in 1875, it was his intent to create a native-born rabbinate that would serve the growing American Jewish community. In the early years, the men that he employed were so fully engaged as teachers for rabbinical students that there was little time left for pursuing a second goal: the advancement of Jewish scholarship. Although Wise was a prolific writer, he did not possess the status conferred by a university doctorate. Concerned with the broad acceptability of his rabbinical graduates and his own need for a solid textual foundation for Jewish belief, he refused to allow critical study of the Pentateuch in Hebrew Union College classrooms.

However, the modern Jewish seminaries in Germany prided themselves on the scholarship of their faculty members, who believed that it was their function not only to create rabbis but also to contribute to the growing critical literature on Jews and Judaism that had originated with the extraordinarily erudite Leopold Zunz during the second decade of the nineteenth century. Each institution produced a scholarly publication. The Conservative *Jüdisch-Theologisches Seminar* in Breslau prided itself on the *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* while the Liberal Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums and the modern Orthodox Rabbinerseminar in Berlin were no less proud that serious articles appeared in their *Annual Reports*.

With the ascent to the Hebrew Union College presidency of Kaufmann Kohler, a university-trained and highly productive scholar, the question was bound to arise: Should not the Hebrew Union College add to its reputation of producing effective rabbis by seeking a prominent place in the world of Jewish scholarship? Today, as the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion marks the completion of a 150-year history, it seems appropriate within one of the scholarly publications it has produced, this journal of the American Jewish Archives, to recall the history of the various vessels of Jewish scholarship that have constituted no less a fulfillment of its mission than its production of rabbis, teachers, cantors, and Jewish community workers.

* * *

Although in the early days of the College a proper library—the essential tool of serious scholarship—was still lacking, faculty members could publish scholarly articles, using resources available in private libraries, in journals whose editorship lay elsewhere. In 1910, the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, founded in London, had begun to publish a new series in Philadelphia. Articles by HUC faculty members, especially the historian Jacob Mann, appeared in its issues. But the Hebrew Union College had no strictly scholarly venue of its own. There was only the *HUC Journal*, a student publication founded in 1896, whose purpose was not critical scholarship but the admirable intention of maintaining “a lofty standard of ministerial preparation” as well as “articles expressive of religious thought and representative of true Judaism.”

It was the professor of Jewish philosophy, David Neumark, who sought to fill the gap. In 1919, he launched the *Journal of Jewish Lore and Philosophy*, which, in its initial issue, featured articles by both his HUC colleagues and scholars from outside the school, including Louis Ginzberg and Solomon Zeitlin. The journal was “to serve no specific religious, political, or cultural party in Judaism” but Jewry as a whole. It was intended to become “a medium of communication between scholar and scholar, and between scholar and lay-reader.” Neumark concluded the description of his aims with the hope that a “higher Jewish learning in the modern sense of the term may still ennoble the life of the modern Jew as the old spirit of reverence for the Torah ennobled the life of the Jew in by-gone days.” However, the College was not yet ready to support Neumark’s noble project. It died after four issues had appeared.

Only five years later did the Board of Governors agree to support such a strictly scholarly endeavor, although as an annual rather than a quarterly. This time the project was immensely successful. The *Hebrew Union College Annual*, begun in 1924, continues down to the present day. Its initial board of editors, headed by David Philipson, paid tribute to the universality of Jewish learning. “Here all divisions of opinion and party merge in the friendly fellowship of true scholarly endeavor, and all geographical and national lines are obliterated.” Through this new journal, the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, with its growing faculty and library, would become known not alone as a school for rabbis, but also as a contributor to the international project of advancing Jewish scholarship.

HUCA (as it came to be known) was eventually joined by the Hebrew Union College Press. At a time when commercial and university presses gave little attention to Jewish scholarship, especially to narrowly focused works, the need became apparent to provide a vehicle for HUC faculty members to bring their book-length work to the public. Initially, the press published works only by HUC faculty and only those that could not find a commercial publisher. However, its purview eventually expanded until it became a press that published Israeli as well as American and Christian as well as Jewish scholars. Although most of its publications reached only a narrow readership, a few, especially Jacob Rader Marcus's *The Jew in the Medieval World*, became—at least by standards of Jewish publication—a kind of bestseller. The Press continues to publish a select list of new scholarly works and, along with the *Annual*, can advance the College's reputation as an institutionally productive contributor to Jewish scholarship.

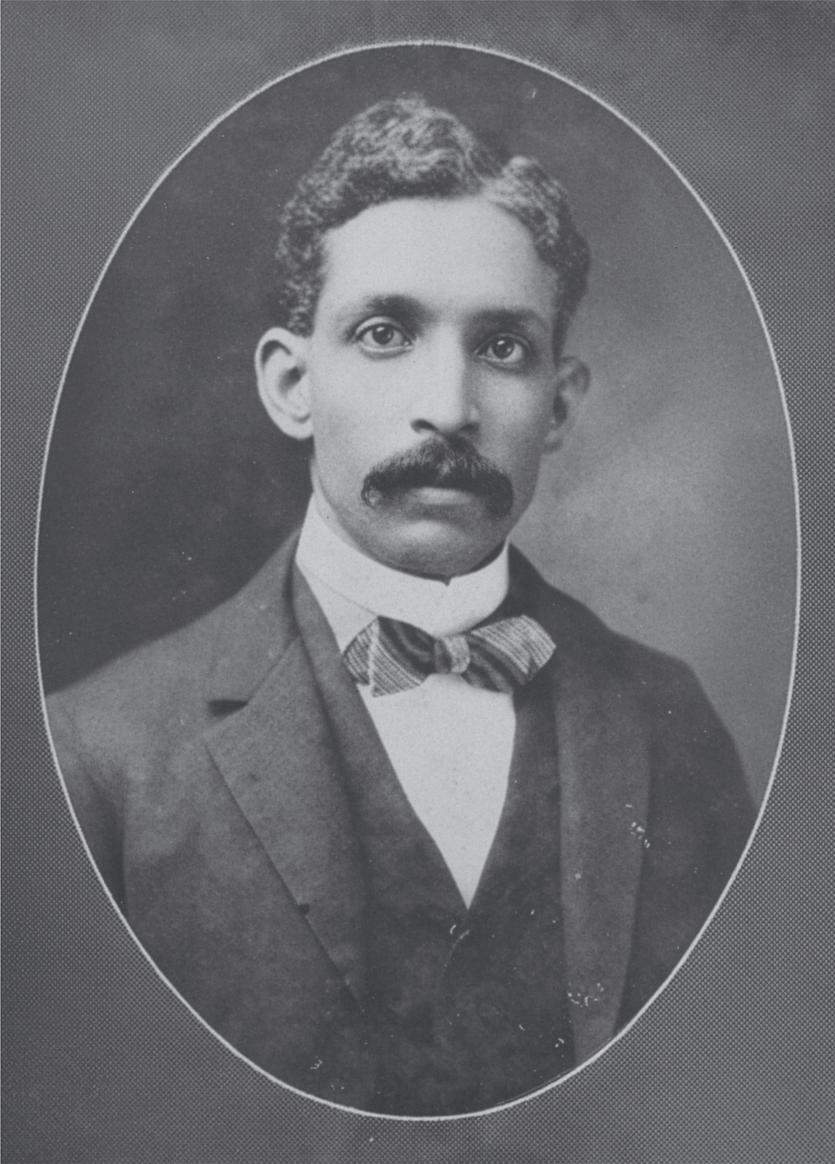
The picture would be incomplete without mention of two specific areas of publication in which the College has played a unique role. One of the two was the brainchild of Herbert Zafren, for many years the HUC-JIR chief librarian. Himself a scholar of early Judaica printing, Zafren decided to establish a journal devoted to the history of the Hebrew book. In 1953, he created the periodical *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, as well as the series of volumes titled "Bibliographica Judaica." Zafren believed that "the book is a real historical entity" and hence worthy of study on its own account. Although the journal has ceased to exist, Zafren's pioneering work in this area has resulted in unprecedented scholarly attention to the history of the Hebrew book.

The other area in which the College-Institute has furthered Jewish scholarship—and the one of most immediate interest to the readers—is American Jewish history. It was Marcus who, in 1947, created the American Jewish Archives and this journal one year later. To be sure, it was not the first in its field. In 1893, the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) had begun to publish its *Publications*. Its purpose was to enrich American history with the history of America's Jews. To this end, it would focus on the contributions, both material and spiritual, that Jews had made to their country. It was not focused upon the specifically Jewish. As stated in its first issue: "The objects for which this Society was organized are not sectarian but American."

Marcus had different goals. Unlike the AJHS, he wanted to spread the scholarly net well beyond the New York area, which had been its focal point. He also possessed a motivation that had not existed earlier: He wanted to provide historical knowledge for a Jewish community that, following the Holocaust, had become demographically dominant in the Jewish world. It was not only Jewish communities whose greatness had passed into history that deserved study, he believed, but “still young, virile and growing” ones like the Jewish community of America. Unlike the AJHS, he was interested less in the contributions of individual Jews and more in the nature of the American Jewish community, which, he believed, existed in a situation of symbiosis with its American environment. The study of American Jewish history would help it retain and enhance its Jewish identity. Yet, for Marcus, the applied purpose of American Jewish historiography was not to crowd out more critical study. His journal would be strictly fact-based. Its commitment to the Jewish *Wissenschaft*, which he had absorbed during his studies in Berlin, would be reflected in the journal: Each issue was to contain “at least one article of scientific calibre.”

Looking back over a century and a half, it is apparent that the College and this journal have been committed to the creation of Jewish religious leadership together with expanding the knowledge of Jews and Judaism beyond its walls. The three articles in this issue of the *American Jewish Archives Journal* testify to that mission. They reflect the significance of Hebrew Union College in the lives of individuals, whether as an influence at an early stage in their development or as the channel for their scholarship. The first examines the life of David Joseph Solomon, an extraordinary rabbinical student who came to Cincinnati from the Bene Israel community in India to study at HUC and who brought something of its religious orientation back home with him. The second examines the student career of Irving Reichert, who would become a controversial leading American Reform rabbi. And the third focuses on Julius and Hildegard Lewy, both noted Assyriologists who escaped Nazi Germany and who represent the commitment to serious scholarship that has developed increasingly during the College’s 150 years.

Michael A. Meyer
Cincinnati, Ohio



David Joseph Solomon.
(*The Cincinnati* [1901]: 87.)

A South-Asian Jew in Cincinnati 1896–1902: Notes Toward a Biography of David Joseph Solomon

JASON KALMAN

From the middle of 1959 and continuing into 1960, newspapers around the United States, for both Jewish and general readership, announced the arrival of student Saul Joel at the Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, Ohio. The eighteen-year-old was hailed by the *American Israelite* as “the first Indian in the 85-year college history.”¹ With the support of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, Joel began the preparatory program in the 1958–1959 school year, stating that he hoped “to return to India after ordination and join Bombay’s Reform congregation—if they will have me as their rabbi.”² His arrival was noteworthy and his time at HUC relatively short, but the coverage highlights the significant growth of American-style Reform Judaism around the world. Sadly, though, the reporting makes clear that, by the time of his arrival, the story of the actual “first Indian” in the history of the College was already lost. In an age before air travel or instant communication, that earlier student’s journey was remarkable. His travel from colonial India to Cincinnati in 1896 reveals the extraordinary interconnectedness of the Jewish world in the late nineteenth century.

*In memory of my teacher and friend David Ellenson *z”l*.

1 “Bombay Youth at HUC Hopes for Pulpit in India,” *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 7 May 1959, 11; “Well Experienced,” *Kennebec Journal* (Maine), 1 March 1960, 5. In the period after World War II various Jewish denominations actively sought connections with India’s Jewish communities. I am grateful to Benjamin Steiner for sharing his manuscript of an article on American Orthodox and Conservative efforts; see “The Postwar Battle for the Souls of Indian Jews,” *Modern Judaism* (forthcoming).

2 “Bombay Lad Seeking Semicha at HUC-JIR,” *Detroit Jewish News*, 1 May 1959, 12.

Building Global Jewish Networks: American Jews' Interest in the Bene Israel of India

Already a hundred years before Joel's arrival, the *Israelite*, edited by Isaac Mayer Wise in Cincinnati, had begun reprinting material from London's *Jewish Chronicle* that introduced its readers to the Bene Israel communities of India.³ This early example demonstrates how Jewish periodicals served as vital conduits for transnational consciousness in the nineteenth century.⁴ Fascination with these "exotic" Jews so very far away endured as some twenty articles about the community and its activities were published in the *Israelite* (after 1874, the *American Israelite*) during Wise's tenure. For more than two decades, the *American Israelite* had fostered interest in the Jewish communities of India, particularly the Bene Israel community in Bombay (now Mumbai).⁵ Beyond the specifics of religious practices, there was significant interest in the size of the population—an editorial note in October 1885 described a population of twelve thousand Jews in India, mostly in Bombay—and articles regularly described the civilizing efforts of the Anglo-Jewish Association. Once the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) was formed in 1873, the idea of civilizing local Jews in the United States led to sympathy for similar projects abroad. The UAHC had officially

3 "Religious Festivals of the Beni-Israel of Bombay, Hindostan," *Israelite* (Cincinnati), 5 September 1856, 69 and 12 September 1856, 77.

4 For a comparable story, see Philip E. Keisman, "Publishing the Pan-Jewish: The First Hebrew Newspaper and its Modernities" (PhD diss., CUNY Graduate Center, 2023).

5 See, e.g., "Israelites in Bombay," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 5 March 1875, 1; A. Tourist, "A Glance at Bombay," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 3 September 1875, 2, continued 10 Sept 1875, 6; 17 September 1875, 1; 24 September 1875, 1; 1 October 1875, 1; "The Beni Israel," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 11 August 1872, 2; *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 12 April 1878, 2; *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 15 August 1879, 8; "Foreign Record," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 29 August 1878, 8; "Foreign Record," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 19 August 1878, 6; Samuel Kehimer Haem, "The Beni Israel," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 19 October 1888, 4. It was in this same period that the Anglo-Jewish Association began providing detailed reports on the community of Bene Israel in India. See, e.g., the letters from members of the community in *The Fifth Annual Report of the Anglo-Jewish Association* (London: Officers of the Anglo-Jewish Association, 1876), 12, 43–51.

supported the Anglo-Jewish Association as early as 1880, noting that “it may be assumed for all practical purposes affecting the emancipation and elevation of Hebrews in the Orient that the relations of American Israelites with these organizations are those of reciprocal good will and hearty cooperation.”⁶

Reverse Currents: Indian Jews’ Interest in the Israelites of America

American Jews’ interest in their Indian coreligionists was matched by Indian Jews’ interest in American Jewish communities. This bidirectional flow of ideas and information illustrates how Jewish communities across the British Empire and beyond maintained active intellectual connections despite vast geographical distances. As early as 1892, Wise received a letter from Solomon Samson (Penkar, 1867–1948):

I am a Bene-Israel of Bombay with a sincere desire to see any brethren following in the footsteps of the American and the English Jews and thus enjoy the benefits and comforts which education and civilization have favoured them with.

We Bene-Israel here have been doing our utmost in this attempt and with the feeling of self-duty, I intend to read a paper in Marathi (a language generally spoken on this side of British India), on “the Present Condition of the Bene-Israel as compared with that of Foreign Jews.”⁷

Samson would go on to explain that he had collected a good deal of information about Jews in Europe. He hoped that Wise could provide “[a] brief sketch of the History of American Jews, their date of Immigration, their Educational, Civil, Military and Religious Positions, with short lives of Eminent Men who have distinguished themselves in these lines, with their Photos, and Sketches of Some Important Institutions.” Wise would send him such information and encouraged others to do so, as Samson wrote in December 1896 to Henry S.

6 *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*, Volume 2 (1879–1885), 900.

7 “A Petition of a Literary Member of the Bene Israel in Bombay,” *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 10 November 1892, 4.

Morais (1860–1935), soon to be the acting clergy at Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia and formerly the managing editor of the *Jewish Exponent*, explaining that he had received positive replies from

B. Bettman and Rev Dr. I. M. Wise of Cincinnati, Rabbis Hahn of Cleveland, L. Grossman of Detroit, H. P. Mendes & Gotheil [*sic*] of New York, Misses F. D. Moeatta, C. G. Montefiore, Rev. Dr. Prof. D. W. Marks & Lady Magnus, of London, the Chief Rabbi of France, Dr. Friedman of Vienna & Prof. Lazarus of Germany.

All of these individuals shared copies of sermons and lectures with him. He lamented that his work had to be done in support of the Bene Israel community absent any Indian “theological institutions or societies.”⁸ In March 1896, the HUC Board of Governors moved to help Samson again. The men had Wise and the HUC librarian Sigmund Mannheimer assemble a small collection of books, mostly works by Wise and his colleagues, which they shipped to Bombay.⁹

During this same period, HUC Professor Gotthard Deutsch was in active correspondence with Ezekiel Joseph (Kurulker), who served as secretary of the Bene Israel Culture Society and Library and helped him to acquire books and pamphlets about Judaism.¹⁰ Very little of the correspondence is preserved. It appears that Deutsch had, in fact, reached out to Kurulker for information about the Bene Israel community, perhaps as part of his own scholarly efforts to accumulate and organize data about world Jewry.¹¹ In October 1894, responding to an earlier

8 “Letter from Samson, Solomon to Morais, Henry S. Bombay, India; Dec 1896,” Sabato Morais Digital Repository, <https://www.judaicadhpenn.org/legacyprojects/s/morais/item/89766>.

9 *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*, Volume 4 (1892–1896), 3598–3599.

10 Kurulker to Deutsch, 26 October 1894, MS-123, Gotthard Deutsch, Box 2/14, K, General, American Jewish Archives (hereafter AJA), Cincinnati, Ohio. For Kurulker’s role, see Joseph Jacobs, ed., *The Jewish Yearbook: An Annual Record of Matters Jewish 5659: 17th September, 1898–4th September, 1899* (London: Greenberg, 1898), 127; David Joseph Solomon, “The Influence of Judaism on the Bene-Israel Community of India,” *H.U.C. Journal* 1, no. 8 (April 1897): 167–171, here 169.

11 It is clear from Deutsch’s correspondence that he reached out to the Baghdadi Jewish

query from Deutsch, Kurulker would report that many American Jewish newspapers were unavailable in India, and that he would appreciate any efforts the professor could make to arrange for gratis subscriptions from the various publishers. Kurulker especially hoped that Deutsch would encourage Wise to send copies of his own writings.¹²

The Society and Library, established in 1889, were already known to Wise. Although many American Jewish periodicals were unavailable in Bombay, the *American Israelite* was known to Kurulker and other members of the Bene Israel community, who would send news of the society's activities for publication in the Cincinnati Jewish newspaper.¹³ Wise already reported in 1893 that

The ISRAELITE has quite a number of readers among the Beni Israel, the native Jews of India. They take a great interest in the progress of Judaism, not only in their own country, British India, but in America as well. We have received and placed a number of book orders for them, and they write to us frequently...¹⁴

Wise was almost certainly exaggerating, but the letters from Ezekiel Joseph Kurulker and Solomon Samson testify that at least some readers were found among the Bene Israel.¹⁵

philanthropist David Sassoon in Bombay and others for such information. At the same time Haeem Samuel, the head of the Israelite School (see notes 37 and 38 below), offered him historical information and sent materials. See Samuel to Deutsch, 17 April 1894, which reports that Samuel was following up on a communication from Deutsch to Sassoon, MS-123, Gotthard Deutsch, Box 3/13, SA-Sc, General, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio. On Deutsch's efforts to attain and organize this kind of information, see Jason Lustig, "Mere Chips from His Workshop': Gotthard Deutsch's Monumental Card Index of Jewish History," *History of the Human Sciences* 32, no. 3 (2019): 49–75. Deutsch maintained his correspondence with Joseph over several years, and in 1897 he agreed to write an article on the Bene Israel for the encyclopedia of Jewish theology that Deutsch had begun editing; see MS-123, Gotthard Deutsch, Box 1/26, E, General, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio. On the encyclopedia and its fate, see Shuly Rubin Schwartz, *The Emergence of Jewish Scholarship* (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1991), 31–33. 12 Kurulker to Deutsch, 26 October 1894, MS-123, Gotthard Deutsch, Box 2/14, K, General, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

13 "Jottings," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 26 January 1893, 7.

14 "Jottings," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 26 January 1893, 7.

15 Access by the Bene Israel community in India to Jewish publications from Cincinnati

Knowledge of American Jewry, particularly of the liberal sort, came to the Bene Israel by other channels as well. After his return from the United States to attend the parliament of religions at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, B. B. (Balwant Bhau) Nagarkar (sometimes Nagarker), spoke at the Bene Israel Library in Bombay on 22 September 1895 on the subject of "The American Jews; their Religion and Social Condition."¹⁶ At the same library in Bombay in November 1895, the Reverend Jabez T. Sunderland of Ann Arbor, Michigan spoke on "'The Mission of Israel' as illustrated by liberal Judaism in America."¹⁷ These lectures demonstrate how international religious conferences like the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions served as catalysts for global religious exchange, with ideas and connections formed in Chicago reverberating in Bombay lecture halls. Who were these men, and on what authority did they speak of liberal Judaism in America? Nagarkar was a promoter of Brahmo Samaj, a montheistic Hindu reformist movement that had begun in Kolkata (then Calcutta) in 1828. He had been in the United States to speak at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September 1893.¹⁸ Sunderland was a Baptist turned Unitarian minister. At the conference, he became much enamored with Brahmo Samaj. He helped arrange speaking opportunities for Nagarkar around the United States and then travelled to India himself in 1896 to tour and speak, with the situation flipped.¹⁹ In later decades, Sunderland would align himself with the International (American and European) Council of Religious Liberals and become an outspoken advocate for Indian independence.²⁰ Both Nagarkar and Sunderland had the opportunity to interact with Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch of Chicago at the conference, and there was a significant discussion of American Judaism at the exhibition.

and Chicago is noted in E. M. Ezekiel, "Inde Anglaises," *Archives israélites* 56 (1895): 356.

16 "Foreign," *American Hebrew* (Cincinnati), 1 November 1895, 661.

17 "Foreign," *Jewish Messenger* (New York), 10 January 1896, 5.

18 Balwant Bhau Nagarkar, *The Message of the Brahmo Samaj: Text of the Speech Delivered at the World Parliament of Religions* (Bombay: Navavidhan Chittabindoni Trust, 1976).

19 Paul E. Teed, "Interfaith Encounter and Religious Pluralism: J. T. Sunderland's Mission to Brahmo Samajes of India, 1895–1896," *American Studies* 50, nos. 1–2 (2009): 51–69.

20 "Dr. Jabez T. Sunderland, Noted Pastor, Dies At 94," *Ann Arbor News*, 14 August 1936, 3.

In fact, eleven speakers addressed Jewish matters, including Wise, Gustav Gottheil, Moses Mielziner, Gotthard Deutsch, and Louis Grossman, all who in various ways had played or would come to play significant roles in Hebrew Union College and American liberal Judaism.²¹ It was this shared commitment to promoting a liberal religious culture that saw both Nagarkar and Sunderland promoting liberal Jewish values to the Bene Israel of Bombay. Sunderland's lecture in Bombay was reported in some detail by the *American Israelite*:

The lecturer addressed the meeting for more than an hour dealing with the subject in its different aspects.

He alluded briefly to the progress made by the American Jews and gave the names of some of the famous rabbis of New York, Cincinnati and Chicago among others Drs. Gottheil, I. M. Wise and E. G. Hirsch who have been doing such noble work among their brethren and countrymen. The subject was very interesting, the lecturer reminded his hearers of their glorious past, and of the still more glorious future which lay before them if they were prepared to accept the great responsibilities of the high mission entrusted by the Almighty to Israel. His remarks were specially addressed to the young men in whose hands, as he said, the future of the community rests. His remarks were frequently interrupted by loud claps and he sat down amidst loud applause.²²

Sunderland used the trip as an opportunity to study the religious diversity of the Indian population. In part, he was studying ways for Christian missionizing to plant a stronger foothold. As he reflected on what he had seen on his trip, he imagined that Christian expansion was possible among the general population of lower-caste Hindus. While he made no specific comment about the Jews of India, some sense of his approach can be seen in his thoughts about missionizing to upper-caste Hindus, Muslims, Jains, and Persians:

21 *Judaism at the World's Parliament of Religions: Comprising the Papers on Judaism Read at the Parliament, at the Jewish Denominational Congress, and the Jewish Presentation* (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Robert Clarke, 1894).

22 "The Bene Israel Culture Society of Bombay, India," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 9 January 1896, 6.

Can Christianity, no matter with how high a civilization it may be allied, conquer strong, proud, highly organized, historic religions? Toward the answer to this crucial question it must be confessed the history of India thus far furnishes very little data. The only thing that seems clear is that, if Christianity ever does gain any considerable acceptance among leading native minds, Mohammedan, Hindu, Parsee, Buddhist or Jain, it must be a form of Christianity less theological, less peculiarly "Western," more sympathetic towards other faiths, and in every way broader and more liberal than that which has been generally preached in India up to this time.²³

Sunderland, like Pandita Ramabai, who will be discussed below, was influenced by the Oxford scholar Max Müller's "Fulfillment Theology" with its "willingness to accept, on a limited basis, the truth of non-Christian religions."²⁴ This approach, which is the one Sunderland himself appears to have adopted, made missionaries like him, who were devoted to the promotion of liberalism and ethical culture, a useful resource for the Bene Israel.²⁵ By 1898, the Society and Library were using whatever networks they could establish to acquire these liberal Jewish materials, including having American Christian missionaries who had visited India petition Jewish newspapers like the *Reform Advocate* of Chicago.²⁶ The competing efforts of Samson, apparently acting on his own, and Kurulker, acting for the Society, eventually caused some conflict with Kurulker's successor, who eventually suggested to HUC in early 1897 that Samson may have been misrepresenting himself. It was recommended to the Board of Governors that they speak to "Mr. David Joseph Solomon, a member of this society, at present a student in the Hebrew Union College who, if necessary will satisfy you on this subject."²⁷

23 Jabez T. Sunderland, "Christian Missions in India: Will India Become Christian?," *New World* 7, no. 5 (1898): 53.

24 Teed, "Interfaith Encounter," 54. On Ramabai and Müller, see his account in *Auld Lang Syne, Second Series: My Indian Friends* (London: Longmans, Green, 1899), 121–134.

25 For Sunderland's understanding of the role of liberal Christian clergymen, see J. T. Sunderland, *The Liberal Christian Ministry* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1889).

26 "A Voice From India," *Reform Advocate* (Chicago), 21 March 1896, 102–103; "Resolution of Thanks," *Reform Advocate* (Chicago), 30 May 1896, 305.

27 Reuben to Bloom, 19 March 1897, MS-5, E-1/1, Correspondence, 1895–1899, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Educational Migration in the Age of Empire: Bene Israel Applicants to Hebrew Union College

In hindsight, it might appear remarkable that a country that received little more than the *American Israelite* until the late 1890s so quickly inspired a student to attend HUC from abroad. Solomon's journey, however, reflects broader patterns of educational migration that characterized the colonial period at the beginning of the twentieth century. Ambitious young people from across the British Empire sought advanced training in Europe, the United Kingdom, and America.²⁸ In fact, already in 1878 the College received an application from M. J. Cohn, a young man in Kolkata (then Calcutta) who desired "passage" to the United States and "to be admitted as a student to the Hebrew Union College."²⁹ The editor of the *American Israelite*, perhaps sensing that passage to America was the primary concern, suggested that the letter be shared with "Her Majesty, the Empress of India, and Lord Beaconsfield."³⁰ The Board chose to file the application without further action.³¹ It is unknown whether Cohn was native-born Indian or a member of the Syrian or Baghdadi community, or from a family from elsewhere.

The applications from the 1890s, however, were distinctly from native-born Indian Jews. The *Beni-Israelite*, a Bombay-based Jewish newspaper, reported in April 1896 that its editors were aware of at least ten young men from the Bene Israel communities in Bombay, Karachi, Poona (now Pune), and Deesa who had considered travelling for a rabbinic education.³² Two applied to HUC for the 1896–1897 school year. One, a student with the Bene Israel equivalent of *yichus* from Bombay,

28 Sara Legrandjacques, "Colonial Students in Europe," *Encyclopédie d'histoire numérique de l'Europe*, 18 April 2022, <https://ehne.fr/en/encyclopedia/themes/migrations-in-europe/migration-elites/colonial-students-in-europe> and Sumita Mukerjee, *Nationalism, Education and Migrant Identities: The England-Returned* (London: Routledge, 2010), 1–29.

29 *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*, Volume 1 (1873–1879), 625.

30 "A Hindoo Customer," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 8 November 1878, 4.

31 *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*, Volume 1 (1873–1879), 625.

32 *Bene Israelite* (Bombay), 1 April 1896, 2.

was accepted but did not attend. The other was David Joseph Solomon (Kurulkar), the younger brother of Ezekiel Joseph (Kurulker) and the secretary of the Bene Israel Cultural Society, and he would eventually arrive in the Queen City of the West.³³

The application of Joseph Hyams (Joseph Haem Samuel Kehimkar, 1873–1957) was brought to the attention of the HUC Board of Governors at the first meeting of the men in January 1896.³⁴ Hyams's application came as a surprise to the Bene Israel community, who learned about it through coverage in the *American Israelite*.³⁵ It also made international news, as he was "the first Bene-Israel to venture a trip to the new world."³⁶ In contrast to many of the young Indian men considering the rabbinate, Hyams had stature as the son of Haem Samuel Kehimkar (1831–1908), a historian of the Bene Israel community who founded the Bene Israel Benevolent Society (1853), the Israelite School (elementary grades 1875, high school 1881), and the Etz Haem Prayer Hall (1888).³⁷ He was also somewhat known to the American Jewish community by way of several articles about the history and practices of the Bene Israel community carried in the *American Israelite* and other Jewish newspapers.³⁸ Reports suggested that Hyams had the capacity to

33 Most frequently he used Solomon as his family name: David Joseph Solomon or D. J. Solomon. Sometimes he is referenced as "Kurulkar"; unlike his brother, he used "Kurulker."

34 *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*, Volume 4 (1892–1896), 3589. See Benei Israel Heritage Family Tree, MyHeritage, <https://www.myheritage.com/site-family-tree-74099411/benei-israel-heritage>.

35 *Bene Israelite* (Bombay), 1 April 1896, 2.

36 "India," *Jewish Chronicle* (London), 3 April 1896, 17; "From India," *Australasian Hebrew* (Sydney), 17 April 1896, 366.

37 Haem Samuel Kehimkar, *History of the Bene Israel of India* (Tel Aviv: Dayag, 1937), iii–viii; Shirley Berry Isenberg, *India's Bene Israel: A Comprehensive Inquiry and Sourcebook* (Berkeley: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1988), ix–x. On the role of Kehimkar's articles as a defense of the essential Judaism of the Bene Israel community in colonial terms, see Mitch Numark, "Constructing a Jewish Nation in Colonial India: History, Narratives of *Discent*, and the Vocabulary of Modernity," *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 2 (2001): 89–113.

38 See, e.g., "The Beni Israel of India," *Jewish Messenger* (New York), 4 August 1876, 5; Haem Samuel Kehimker, "The Beni-Israel," *Jewish Messenger* (New York), 21 September 1888, 5; 28 September 1888, 4; 5 October 1888, 4; 12 October 1888, 5; Kehimker, "The Beni Israel," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 19 October 1888, 4.

travel to the United States to study because there was family wealth from several deceased aunts and uncles to support him.³⁹ The editors of the *Bene Israelite* had much criticism of both father and son, so the reporting must be taken with a grain of salt. By the estimate of the editors, Hyams was unfit for HUC and, based on his academic record, would not be able to pass the entrance examinations.⁴⁰ As quickly as he had applied and the news became known among the Bene Israel community, his father stepped in and found him a role at the Israelite School.⁴¹ By October, the *Bene Israelite* would complain again about the leadership of the Israelite School. By their estimation, Kehimkar created “a vacancy of a clerk of Rs. 40 per month for his own son, failing to secure any appointment outside.”⁴²

Since Solomon’s acceptance and departure were not covered with any of the same specificity in the Jewish press, there is a suggestion that some communal politics were at play, and some caution must be maintained regarding these explanations for Hyams’s absence from Cincinnati. It is certainly possible that, watching what unfolded with Hyams, Solomon chose a quieter route to the rabbinate. The acceptance of these students raised some questions for overseas correspondents but suggested some sympathy with Wise’s reforming project elsewhere in the Anglo-Jewish world:

From India to Ohio: according to our American exchanges there is a desire among the native Jews of India to go and study theology in the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati. The leading scholar of the Poonah College is soon to undertake this task.⁴³ Our American contemporaries

39 *Bene Israelite* (Bombay), 1 April 1896, 2.

40 *Bene Israelite* (Bombay), 1 April 1896, 3.

41 *Bene Israelite* (Bombay), 1 April 1896, 3.

42 *Bene Israelite* (Bombay), 8 October 1896, 3.

43 Without the original letter it is difficult to ascertain if or where Solomon attended school; he does not mention it in his extant writings. Since the Ramabai’s school was for young women, it is possible that the editor here blended the fact that Ramabai was a school director with her endorsement of Kurulker. Fergusson College was founded at Pune in 1885 by the Deccan Education Society. I have not been able to locate evidence that Solomon attended. The term “Poonah College” could also have referred to Deccan College, which had

cannot tell how in the world the reputation of the H. U. C. reached distant India, when almost all British and Australian Jewish papers steadily ignore it or condemn it as a hothouse of heresy! *The Hebrew* may claim exemption from this reproach as it has already given due prominence to the splendid results produced by the Union College, and being regularly dispatched to Poonah, as well as to all the large cities of India, may have been the medium for conveying to that country the fame of the Cincinnati institute.⁴⁴

Both young Indian men, it seems, had been warned by contemporaries in India that they would be better served by attending more traditional schools of rabbinic learning in London, Paris, New York, or just about anywhere other than Hebrew Union College. Yet both insisted that HUC was the right place for them.⁴⁵ Such advice may help explain why Hyams's father, already facing pressure in the community for his overly close relationship with the Anglo-Jewish Society, might have prevented, or at least intervened, in his son's attendance. Solomon would move forward and head to Cincinnati but the advice, sadly, would prove prescient.

Solomon's application was received in late August or early September 1895.⁴⁶ At his arrival a year later, it was reported that "He is one of the B'ne Israel, who settled in India many centuries ago, or were perhaps native converts. He is the first of them to come to this country."⁴⁷ Despite the influx of Eastern European Jews to the shores of the United States, a student anecdote about Solomon from the early twentieth century suggests that HUC's model of a Jew still highlighted German roots.

It must have been around 1905 that Professor Deutsch told us of a young student from India who came to enroll in the Hebrew Union College. He belonged to the Beni Israel community, and in his native

been established as Hindoo College in 1821, changed its name to Poona College in 1842, and to Deccan College in 1864. Again, I have yet to confirm that Solomon attended.

44 *Australasian Hebrew* (Sydney), 7 August 1896, 189.

45 *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 2 January 1896, 4.

46 "From India," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 8 September 1895, 4.

47 "Domestic Notes," *Menorah* 21, no. 4 (New York), October 1896, 253.

dress he was quite picturesque. Dr. Deutsch wanted Mr. Julius Freiberg, the then president of the Board of Governor's, to meet this oriental Jew.

Mr. Freiberg was both interested and somewhat suspicious. He asked Dr. Deutsch, "Ist der Mann ein Yehudi?" The answer was in the affirmative. Not content with the professorial assurances, he said, "I'll find out for myself!" Turning to the young man, he asked, "Sprechen Sie Deutsch?"

The student looked puzzled. Mr. Freiberg was only a little less so. The young Indian's inability to speak German simply confirmed his doubts: What Jew could not speak German?⁴⁸

Following Solomon's arrival at HUC in Cincinnati, notice of the novel situation was finally covered by the press. The voice of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the *Archives Israelites*, reported from their India correspondent that there was a curious matter worthy of note when David Joseph Solomon took up his studies in Cincinnati, marking the first real encounter between Indian and liberal American Jews, and highlighted it as precedent setting.⁴⁹ Solomon spent five years studying at HUC while he completed high school and a bachelor's degree at the University of Cincinnati.⁵⁰

David Joseph Solomon: At Home

Solomon grew up in Poona with his widowed mother, Sipporah, and brother, Ezekiel Joseph.⁵¹ His father, Joseph Solomon Kurulker (1840–1875) died when David Joseph Solomon was about six years old.⁵² Jewish practice was a part of his youth, and he recalled trudging to the

48 Reported by Rabbi Jacob Singer in Stanley R. Brav, *Telling Tales Out of School* (Cincinnati: Alumni Association of HUC-JIR, 1965), 10.

49 E. M. Ezekiel, "Indes-Orientales, 16 October 1896," *Archives Israelites* 57 (1896): 372.

50 *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 23 January 1902, 6.

51 "Interesting Sermons," *Fort Wayne Sentinel* (Indiana), 2 January 1897, 8.

52 See the biographical information collected online in the Benei Israel Heritage Family Tree, MyHeritage, <https://www.myheritage.com/profile-74099411-5011542/joseph-solomon-kurulkar#>.

Sassoon synagogue in Poona.⁵³ The “Ohel David Synagogue” had been built by the Baghdadi Jewish philanthropist David Sassoon beginning in 1863 and was completed in 1867, a few years before Solomon’s birth. Sassoon had established himself in Bombay sometime before 1832 and set up a summer home in Poona. The difficulty was that this synagogue promoted the rites familiar to Sassoon, practices that were more halakhically rigorous than those of the Bene Israel community.⁵⁴ While the synagogue could educate and inform the Bene Israel who travelled there, the hierarchy was explicit. The Succath Shelomo Synagogue of the Bene Israel in Poona was not dedicated until 1921. Solomon eventually moved from Poona by the 1890s and was living in Kalyan, about thirty miles outside Bombay, with his mother.⁵⁵

Solomon’s upbringing exemplifies how colonial social hierarchies shaped individual ambitions. Young Bene Israel men looked to education and imperial service as pathways to advancement within the constraints of British rule. What is clear is that in his youth and young adulthood Solomon was much influenced by both men and women who had gained upward mobility through advancement in the British military, something Bene Israel men appear to have been able to do in a way that other Indians could not. Advanced university education abroad either in England or the United States or closer to home after the establishment of the university at Bombay also provided such mobility.⁵⁶ He was taught to admire men like his future father-in-law, Abraham Samuel Nagawkar (1843–1919, Bombay University 1871), the first Bene Israel to graduate from university.⁵⁷ “How he loomed large in our young days,

53 David Joseph Solomon, “Presidential Address,” in *Report of the Seventh Bene-Israel Conference Held in December 1923 at Bombay* (Bombay, 1924), 61.

54 Shalva Weil, “The Legacy of David Sassoon,” *Asian Jewish Life* 14 (2014): 4–6.

55 Solomon, “Influence,” 168. In 1882, Kalyan and the surrounding towns were home to 775 Bene Israel (Isenberg, *India’s Bene Israel*, 173).

56 On military advancement, see Mitch Numark, “Perspectives from the Periphery: The East India Company’s Jewish Sepoys, Anglo-Jewry, and the Image of ‘the Jew,’” in *On the Word of a Jew: Religion, Reliability, and the Dynamics of Trust*, ed. Nina Caputo and Mitchell B. Hart (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019), 247–275.

57 On Nagawkar (also Nagavkar, Nagaonkar), see Nina Haems, ed., *Rebecca Reuben* (Mumbai: Vacha Trust, 2000), 42–50.

and served as a beacon cannot be adequately described in appropriate words. As a pioneer he deserves our admiration; for with him started the intellectual movement of which we are now reaping the fruit.”⁵⁸

At the time of his application to HUC, Solomon was working as a clerk and supporting his aged mother.⁵⁹ Solomon’s ambitions with regard to education and liberal Judaism need be understood against the backdrop of British colonialism in India. The British created a hierarchy of peoples in which Muslims and Hindus were at the lowest rank. Indian Jews, Christians, Parsis, and Anglo-Indians were thought more reliable and gained access to work and resources not available to others.⁶⁰ At the same time, American liberal Judaism, with its own efforts to Americanize Jews, offered a model for accessing greater social mobility in British India. It was evidently working for Baghdadi Jews. They, however, discriminated against the Bene Israel. Perhaps, in Solomon’s eyes, gaining standing through association and adoption of liberal Judaism offered a way to work around his Baghdadi brethren.

Despite the warnings received about coming to study at a liberal seminary in Cincinnati, Solomon found great appeal in the movement he read about in the *American Israelite*. Additionally, he heard about the development of American Jewry in Nagarkar’s lectures at the Bene Israel Culture Society in Bombay where he was a member of both its managing committee and of its temperance society.⁶¹ The adoption of English opened up a world to Solomon that would not have been possible otherwise, and he would maintain that acquiring English was absolutely necessary for the community’s advancement thirty years later when he was in a position of leadership.⁶² His brother’s role as secretary of the

58 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 38.

59 “Interesting Sermons,” *Fort Wayne Sentinel* (Indiana), 2 January 1897, 8.

60 Joan G. Roland, “Indian-Jewish Identity of the Bene Israel during the British Raj,” in *Studies of Indian Jewish Identity*, ed. Nathan Katz (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), 126–127.

61 Solomon, “Influence,” 169. For his membership roles see *The Beni-Israel Culture Society. Reading Room and Library, and General Transactions of the Society for the Period Dating From November 1888, to Dec 1892* (Bombay: The English and Vernacular Printing Press, 1893), 2, 11.

62 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 62–63.

Bene Israel Culture Society was only one part of Solomon's circle of Jewish reformers in India. His brother actively worked in Bombay while he was applying to study at HUC, and in his hometown of Poona, his uncle, Moses Samson, worked to build a Jewish Chautauqua Circle.⁶³ On 3 November 1895, the "Association for the Study of the Jewish Religion" enrolled as a member of the Jewish Chautauqua Organization with twenty-one members. Moses Samson, who served as secretary, was then the head assistant at the commissariat department in Poona.⁶⁴ His work in Poona was lauded by the Bene Israel of Bombay as well. Writing of Samson's accomplishments, the *Bene Israelite* proclaimed, "The Jews in India who are far ignorant of their ancestral Faith, require 'no preachers,' but actual workers in the cause of Judaism."⁶⁵

At around the same time, Moses Samson had also corresponded with Simon Wolf of the International Order of B'nai B'rith about establishing a chapter in British India.⁶⁶ In early 1897, Solomon attested to the American Jewish audience the good work his uncle was doing:

Of Mr. Samson, he says, that there is not a man in the whole community who is truly in a position to be the guide of the reform movement on account of his enlightenment and education, and that he is truly awakened to the higher call of his duty to his fellow beings.⁶⁷

The editors of the *Jewish Review of Cleveland*, where the summary of the letter initially appeared, would go on to laud Samson's work under difficult conditions without access to the necessary books as an inspiration. If such good work could be done so far away, certainly greater efforts could be made to expand the educational program in the United States.⁶⁸ Toward the end of 1897, Moses Samson was appointed to a place on the

63 That he was Solomon's maternal uncle seems most likely. Available biographical information for his father suggests that he had no siblings. His mother's family name is unknown, and biographical information for her and Moses Samson is lacking.

64 "The Jewish Chautauqua," *Jewish Voice* (St. Louis), 10 January 1896, 8.

65 In fact, the Bene Israelite had called for establishing a Jewish Chautauqua in India already in mid-1895; see *Bene Israelite* (Bombay), 3 July 1896, 1.

66 "I.O.B.B.," *Jewish Voice* (St. Louis), 13 September 1895, 6.

67 "Jewish Chautauqua," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 25 February 1897, 6.

68 "Jewish Chautauqua," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 25 February 1897, 6.

Jewish Chautauqua Society executive board as a non-resident member.⁶⁹ Samson, like his nephew, was an advocate for women's education and created a women's study group:

Ladies' meeting is an innovation among the Bene Israel and, as might be expected, there was a considerable heart-burning on that score. This has unfortunately been taken advantage of by the reactionaries to prejudice the people against education and the reform movement... Though I am somewhat dampened in spirit, yet I am not going to give way under such hostile circumstances. I will or rather hope to renew my efforts again before long and to set matters right.⁷⁰

By the middle of November 1897, Ezekiel Joseph Kurulker would report a new Jewish Chautauqua Circle in Bombay sponsored by the Bene Israel Culture Society. At its first lecture, twelve young men, including university students, enrolled.⁷¹ By 1901 there were four active circles in India.⁷² The multiplication may not have been a sign a growth, as the Bombay *Bene Israelite* explained it:

Our young men are rather prone to form societies and institute organizations with high-flown titles, and show the people living abroad that they are at the helm of such good-in-name societies. Not being satisfied with the existing societies, each one, wishing to be president or treasurer, institutes a new one with a result well known to everyone.⁷³

That the *Bene Israelite* took issue with what was being taught is clear from the remainder of the article. However, the description of the development of Jewish organizations in India may explain why Solomon needed to write in support of his uncle. These educational networks

69 "Jewish Chautauqua Notes," *American Hebrew* (New York), 7 January 1898, 308.

70 "Chautauqua Notes," *Emanu-El* (San Francisco), 5 February 1897, 13.

71 "Jewish Chautauqua Notes," *American Hebrew* (New York), 7 January 1898, 308.

72 Henry Berkowitz, "The Secret of Israel's Youthfulness," *Jewish American* (Detroit), 20 December 1901, 1–2. Moses Samson's Association for the Study of Jewish Religion continued to be active, as evidenced by its membership in the Jewish Publication Society in Philadelphia in 1902–1903; see "Report of the Fourteenth Year of the Jewish Publication Society," *American Jewish Year Book* (1902–1903): 283.

73 Cited in "A Moral from Bombay," *Jewish Messenger* (New York), 4 May 1900, 4.

spanning from Ohio to Maharashtra demonstrate how reformist Jewish movements created transnational communities of learning that transcended imperial boundaries. They also show the remarkable speed at which the Jewish press could encourage cultural transfer. The Jewish Chautauqua Society, founded in Philadelphia in 1893, was barely two years old when Moses Samson found an audience for it in Poona.⁷⁴ These collective efforts suggest that, at the moment David Joseph Solomon Kurulkar decided to make the trip to the United States, he was part of a small but active movement that appeared to be making headway in educating and liberalizing the Bene Israel community.

A Pioneer's Journey: Arrival in Cincinnati

Although Solomon's reminiscences of his travels en route to the United States are not recorded, contemporary accounts suggest that the journey took about three weeks. Sunderland described a similar travel time from his home in Ann Arbor to India in 1895–1896.⁷⁵ In an era when transcontinental communication took weeks and international travel required careful planning across multiple steamship and railway connections, Solomon's journey took personal courage and highlights globalizing forces that made such educational migration possible. The trip would have involved trains and steamships travelling via Southampton and New York. Solomon arrived in New York on 4 September 1896 aboard the S. S. St. Paul.⁷⁶ By his own account, he was only the fourth

74 On the history of the society, see Peggy K. Pearlstein, "Understanding through Education: One Hundred Years of the Jewish Chautauqua Society, 1893–1993," (PhD diss., George Washington University, 1993); Pearlstein, "Assemblies by the Sea: The Jewish Chautauqua Society in Atlantic City, 1897–1907," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 10, nos. 1–2 (1998): 5–17; Pearlstein, "From Self-Culture to College Lecture: A Century of Programs and Publications of the Jewish Chautauqua Society: 1893–1993," *Journal of Religious and Theological Information* 3, no. 2 (2000): 89–118.

75 Jabez T. Sunderland, *India in Bondage: Her Right to Freedom and a Place Among the Great Nations* (New York: Lewis Copeland, 1929), xiv–xv.

76 See the passenger list online in New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820–1957, Ancestry.com, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/4018314053:7488?tid=&pid=&queryid=49ba9171-da3e-4efe-82c3-ef5841899dd5&_phsrc=Ihx63&_phstart=successSource. More basic data can

member of the Bene Israel community to travel abroad for education. The first three had gone to England, and he was the first to travel to the United States.⁷⁷ He was, however, acquainted with two women who had made the trip to the United States, Ramabai and Anandi Joshi.⁷⁸ Anandibai Joshi (1865–1887), a cousin of Pandita Ramabai, had successfully earned her MD at the University of Pennsylvania in 1886.⁷⁹

According to reports, Solomon was approximately twenty-seven years old when he arrived in Cincinnati.⁸⁰ The US arrivals list and the US Census identify his birthdate as April 1869.⁸¹ It likely would have been 6 September before he could arrive in Cincinnati via train, and the new semester began almost immediately for the preparatory program at HUC. When it opened on 10 September 1896, it was reported that he was one of forty students enrolled, but only his physical form is described: “His skin is dark and hair raven black. He is one of the collection of Hebrews known as the B’nai Israel, whose tradition leads them to believe they are descendants of the lost tribes of Israel.”⁸² His skin tone was a regular subject of reporting:

One of the new students at the Hebrew Union College is a swa[r]thy member of the Beni Israel of India. He has come all the way to learn his profession in America. That he did not go to England is surely remarkable. But, then, England begins to admit that even Rabbis can come out of America.⁸³

be searched at The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, Inc, heritage.statueofliberty.org.

77 David Joseph Solomon, “The Bene-Israel Community of Bombay,” *H.U.C. Journal* 1, no. 2 (November 1896): 46.

78 Solomon, “Influence,” 168. Ramabai is discussed at length below.

79 On Joshi, see Hareesha Rishab Bharadwaj, Priyal Dalal, Joecelyn Kirani Tan, Trishtha Agarwal, and Mahnoor Javed, “Journey across the World to Study Medicine: The Anandi Joshi Story,” *Journal of Medical Biography* 32 no. 4 (2024): 372–379.

80 “From India,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 8 September 1895, 4.

81 See the sources in note 76 above and the 1900 US Census, Ohio, Hamilton, Cincinnati Ward 26, District 0221, Ancestry.com, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/40388676:7602?tid=&pid=&queryid=a769f845-54b3-47c3-911b-16396facd395&_phsrc=Ihx66&_phstart=successSource.

82 “Auspicious,” *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 11 September 1896, 10.

83 “Russo-Jewish News,” *Emanu-El* (San Francisco), 6 November 1896, 13.

That Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger took the opportunity to note this is significant. The arrival of a foreign student was a feather in the cap for HUC. In this period, some liberal congregations like Sinai in Chicago still insisted that an American-born boy could be hired only if he had received his education in Europe.⁸⁴

The fascination with Solomon as the exotic foreigner is a theme repeated in correspondence and reporting. His precise housing situation is unclear, but, for at least part of his time in Cincinnati, he was a boarder in the home of Maurice Goldberg (Hungary 1845–Cincinnati 1927) and Fannie Morgenroth Goldberg (Bellefontaine, Ohio 1855–Cincinnati, Ohio 1933).⁸⁵ Goldberg founded an insurance business in 1896 after the dissolution of his hat business and kept working into his 80s.⁸⁶ Goldberg's business was new when Solomon arrived, which might explain their need for a boarder.

Navigating American Academia: Studying at Hebrew Union College

Initially it was reported that Solomon's expenses at HUC would be paid for "by a wealthy woman of Bombay."⁸⁷ However, the actual source of his support was rather different. Solomon was supported in part by the social reformer and Christian missionary Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati (1858–1922), who relied on American philanthropy to support her projects. The culturing agenda Solomon saw in Reform Judaism aligned with Ramabai's commitment to education as key to social reform and social mobility.⁸⁸ According to Solomon, after Ramabai travelled in the United States from 1882 to 1886, she returned to India. Establishing herself in his home town of Poona, she provided the Bene Israel community accounts of the advances made by

84 Tobias Brinkmann, *Sunday's at Sinai* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 115–116.

85 See the census data in note 81 above and "Goldberg," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 5 August 1927, 20, and "Goldberg," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1 June 1933, 21.

86 "Young at 80," *Cincinnati Post*, 29 August 1925, 3.

87 "From India," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 8 September 1895, 4.

88 Isenberg, *India's Bene Israel*, 242.

Jews in America with the hope of encouraging similar efforts in India. In fact, by the early 1890s Ramabai was both a donor and honorary member of the Bene Israel Culture Society.⁸⁹ He would later describe her as an acquaintance who had been to the United States and had done “praiseworthy” work for women in India.⁹⁰ Given Ramabai’s reliance on American philanthropy to support her school, the fact that she imagined Solomon as an ambassador of sorts to reach potential non-Christian but religiously liberal donors may explain some of her support of his studies in Cincinnati. She had already encountered liberal Jewish communities on her earlier visit.

Christian missionaries played a complex role in the Bene Israel community. Solomon would note that, for many Bene Israel, their knowledge of the Bible had come through Christian missionizing. “The Bible may be said to have been given to the Bene-Israel of Bombay by the Christian missionaries, as Moses and the later prophets gave it to the Jews and the world.”⁹¹ No doubt, Christian missionaries were both ally and enemy. As in the United States, their efforts brought knowledge of the Bible and Hebrew to Jewish audiences who were not producing educational resources in their own communities. At the same time, the education had as its goal the conversion of these same Jews to Christianity.⁹²

89 Solomon, “Influence,” 169. Solomon’s reporting was not quite accurate, as Ramabai was in the United States from 1886 until 1888. On her connection to the Society see *The Beni-Israel Culture Society. Reading Room and Library, and General Transactions of the Society for the Period Dating From November 1888, to Dec 1892* (Bombay: The English and Vernacular Printing Press, 1893), 2, 8.

90 Solomon, “Influence,” 168.

91 Solomon, “Bene-Israel Community,” 45–46. On the role of education by Christian missionaries in scaffolding the Jewish identity of the Bene Israel community, see Mitch Numark, “Hebrew School in Nineteenth-Century Bombay: Protestant Missionaries, Cochinites, and the Hebraization of India’s Bene Israel Community,” *Modern Asian Studies* 46, no. 6 (2012): 1764–1808.

92 Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Impact of Nineteenth-Century Christian Missions on American Jews,” in *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, ed. Todd M. Endelman (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987), 232–254. On the contribution of Christian missionaries to the education of the Bene Israel, see Isenberg, *India’s Bene Israel*, 65–90.

Ramabai, however, was cut from different missionary cloth. She had written to HUC on Solomon's behalf in support of his application.

Among the young men of the Bene Israel, as the native Jews of East India call themselves, the desire seems to be roused, to go to Cincinnati and study theology in the Hebrew Union College. No inducements of any kind were held out to those enthusiastic aspirants. Still the Principal of the Poona school, Madame Ramabas [*sic*], informs the president of the H. U. C., that her special favorite, Mr. David Joseph Kuralkar [*sic*], is to come some of these days all the way from Bombay to Cincinnati, to study theology in the H. U. C... The young Bene Israel coming to us to learn, will be welcomed, we think, to all the college has to offer, especially if the good men and women of Bombay will provide for him a fair livelihood and his character be as good as Madame Ramabas [*sic*] maintains. There is no color line in this college.⁹³

At around the same time, Ramabai was sending another student abroad for advanced education in England, her daughter Mano. The correspondence related to that effort is valuable for highlighting that, in the few years before this, Ramabai had employed a Jewish woman as head teacher in her school, Mary (Miriam) Samuel. She appears to have been the daughter of Samuel Peri, a Persian-Jewish merchant who settled in India.⁹⁴ Samuel had been educated in Poona at the school run by the Community of St. Mary the Virgin and then served as teacher there. During this time, she taught Mano, and Mano continued to study with her when Samuel moved to Ramabai's employ. Samuel held tightly to her Jewish identity and, although Ramabai's circle hoped that she might convert, she does not appear to have been pressed to do so.⁹⁵ Until

93 *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 28 May 1896, 4, reprinted in "Social Column," *Emanuel* (San Francisco), 5 June 1896, 15.

94 "Indian," *Der Israelit* (Mainz), 30 January 1888, 146; "A Persian Jewess Bachelor of Arts," *Pall Mall Gazette* (London), 11 February 1889, 2; "In Foreign Realms: India," *Jewish Times* (San Francisco), 8 March 1889, 1.

95 Pandita Ramabai, *The Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, ed. A. B. Shah (Bombay: Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, 1977), 163–175; Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present* (New York: Oxford

the late 1890s, Ramabai rejected any proactive form of proselytizing, although she hoped her own practice and devotion might inspire others to the Christian faith.⁹⁶ The school did no active proselytizing of its students.⁹⁷ That being said, by the late 1890s, Ramabai's conversion to Christianity and her mission would make other Indians and some members of the Bene Israel hesitate before affiliating with her institutions, even as they admired what she had accomplished.⁹⁸

The challenge of cross-cultural integration is evident in contemporary reactions to Solomon's presence. The question of racism raised in the account of Ramabai's support of Solomon's education highlights both the admissions policy of HUC and the welcoming nature of Cincinnati more broadly. A local reporter seemingly reminded his fellow Cincinnatians of their obligations: "No doubt [Solomon] will be cordially welcomed in a social way and made to feel thoroughly at

University Press, 2008), 404–406. Samuel studied for her BA degree in the late 1880s. The sources are consistent on this fact but not on the school she attended, in part due to a lack of distinction between the city of Bombay and the Bombay Presidency (i.e., the administrative jurisdiction): "Miss Mary Samuel, a Jewess, of Poona, has passed the B.A. Examination. This is the first instance of a Jewish young lady reaching the B.A. standard in India" (*Allen's Indian Mail*, 27 December 1887, 1240). She may not have been only the first Jewish woman, but the first Jew at all in India to study at this level. "This is the first instance of a young lady of her race reaching the B. A. standard, and it redounds greatly to her credit, especially as none of their boys have as yet been successful" ("Record of Women," *Godey's Lady's Book*, March 1888, 290). It is most likely that she attended Poona College (the Deccan College); see "Education among Jews in India," *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (Sydney), 16 September 1898, 9; Ramabai, *Letters and Correspondence*, 163. In the United States, the success of "Miriam Samuel" at "the College at Puna" only highlighted the failings of the American higher education system: "It is just about the time that Columbia College, in the City of New York, in the United States of America, determined upon conferring the same degree upon such women who should pass a satisfactory examination" ("Away Off in the Far East," *American Hebrew* [New York], 17 February 1888, 1). It seems that, at least briefly, she considered studying medicine in London in order to return to practice in India. See the sources in the previous note.

96 Frykenberg, *Christianity*, 403.

97 David W. Kling, *A History of Christian Conversion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 542.

98 Rebecca Solomon, "Condition of the Bene-Israel Woman in India," *Reform Advocate*, 30 October 1897, 603.

home, to do which well Cincinnatians of all people possess the knack.”⁹⁹ All evidence suggests that, although he was looked upon as exotic and became the token Indian when insight on India was needed, he was welcomed among HUC and University of Cincinnati students and faculty, as well as the extended community. Despite a complex history with race, the University of Cincinnati had admitted small numbers of African American students as early as the 1870s and certainly into the 1890s.¹⁰⁰ During his time in Cincinnati, he was also supported by the HUC Fund, the Chicago Sinai Congregation Stipendiary Fund, and a group of local Cincinnati business people.¹⁰¹

To understand both Solomon’s exotic status and his isolation, consider that according to the 1900 US Census, there were only 2,069 people of Indian origin living in the entire United States, mostly concentrated on the West Coast.¹⁰² A brief anecdote clarifies his situation. In July 1901, an Indian man from Lahore (then British India) who had emigrated to Detroit in early 1900 met with Solomon on a visit to Cincinnati. It was reported that it had been more than a year since the man had met another Indian person.¹⁰³ Additionally, at his arrival, Solomon was on average a decade older than the other students in the preparatory program. A review of census data on his “Grade C” classmates in 1896–1897 shows that they were born between 1878 and 1882.¹⁰⁴ According to reports, he completed the Cincinnati High School

99 “Looked Upon as Great Wrong,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 18 October 1896, 9.

100 See, e.g., Wendell P. Dabney, *Cincinnati’s Colored Citizens: Historical, Sociological and Biographical* (Cincinnati: Dabney, 1926), 108–109, 419.

101 “Chicago Sinai Congregation,” *Reform Advocate* (Chicago), 9 April 1898, 129.

102 See the mapped data at Henry Gannett, “Map of the Foreign-Born Population of the United States, 1900,” Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/map-foreign-born-population-united-states-1900>. On South Asian immigration to North America in this period, see Joan M. Jensen, *Passage from India: Asian Indian Immigrants in North America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 1–42.

103 “Hindus Had to Converse in English: Two Men from India Meet in Cincinnati,” *Cincinnati Post*, 11 July 1901, 3.

104 See the class list in *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*, Volume 5 (1897–1902), 3836.

and then began at the University of Cincinnati, where his classmates were still younger but less so.¹⁰⁵

As a “man of good education and address” during his time in Cincinnati, he became the local expert on any matter related to India.¹⁰⁶ Already in October 1896 he was approached for his opinion on the impact of demonetization of silver in India. He assured the Cincinnati audience that he saw no immediate impact on the price of wheat, although technically the value of the rupee had dropped. More importantly, though, he described the demonetization as an error made by the ruling British, who decided on a policy that would help the banking class immediately and harm the locals severely over time.¹⁰⁷ This theme of appreciating the modernization and upward mobility available to the Bene Israel under British rule as something he admired is well-represented in his writings, but he would continue to maintain that the problems of India could be solved only by proper British investment in India.¹⁰⁸ At the time, the reporter characterized Solomon as “a young man of alert intelligence, quick observation and logical mind, but modest about intruding his views upon strangers, and a trifle too unyielding under the reporter’s pump, but this latter point will be overcome if he remains for a fair amount of time in the United States.”¹⁰⁹ The following week, Solomon lectured to seventy-five men and women in an evening salon on the status of women in India and Indian marriage practices. What is in evidence is that he was already concerned about the low status of women in Indian society and saw it as something to be remedied.¹¹⁰ Solomon was clearly influenced by Ramabai’s efforts at social reform, and he paid tribute that evening to her school for Indian widows in Poona, which was noted as being supported entirely by Americans. In this context, it is noteworthy that the reporter assumed “the famous

105 *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 23 January 1902, 6.

106 “A Native of Bombay,” *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, 19 October 1896, 5.

107 “Looked Upon as a Great Wrong,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 18 October 1896, 9.

108 See, e.g., his depiction of the British investment in the education of Indians in Solomon, “Influence,” 167–168.

109 “Looked Upon as a Great Wrong,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 18 October 1896, 9.

110 “Women of India,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 22 October 1896, 6.

Ramabai” was known to the audience, given that her public talks during her time in the United States from 1886 until 1888 had been well covered in the national press.¹¹¹ Solomon’s role as cultural interpreter reflects the broader dynamics of how international students served as bridges between distant worlds, educating American audiences about global realities while navigating their own processes of cultural adaptation.

Academic Life at HUC

Only some of the record of Solomon’s coursework at HUC is preserved. In 1897–1898, he studied the Psalms with Moses Buttenwieser (1862–1939), Bible and Hebrew grammar with Caspar Levias (1864–1939), Mishnah and Talmud with Sigmund Mannheimer (1835–1909), and Second Temple history with Charles S. Levi (1868–1939). In 1898–1899, he studied Bible, Talmud, and Leviticus with commentaries with Mannheimer, Bible and the biblical accents with Buttenwieser, and Mishnah and Talmud with Ephraim Feldman (1860–1910). In 1899–1900, he studied Bible with Mannheimer, History with Gotthard Deutsch (1859–1921), and Talmud and philosophy with Feldman.¹¹² Solomon developed a close relationship with Deutsch, perhaps because Deutsch had already been a correspondent with his older brother. In 1897 he travelled with Deutsch to speak in Fort Wayne, Indiana about the Bene Israel community. He was introduced by the local press as the first “Hindoo Israelite” to visit the United States.¹¹³ By his own recollection, only three members of the community had ever left to study abroad, all in England.¹¹⁴ In his address, Solomon compared himself to Jacob’s family, forced to travel from a distant land. He explained that he had learned from American newspapers about the success of Judaism in the United States and wished to accomplish the same for his people in India. He had previously supported his aged mother as a clerk in India, and he aspired to return home to support her again and, in his free time,

111 “Women of India,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 22 October 1896, 6. On her American reception, see Frykenberg, *Christianity*, 393–394.

112 See the grades recorded in MS-5, B-1, Folder 3, Gradebook, 1895–1900, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

113 “Interesting Sermons,” *Fort Wayne Sentinel* (Indiana), 2 January 1897, 8.

114 Solomon, “Bene-Israel Community,” 46.

to provide his people with desperately needed religious instruction. He also aspired to unify the Bene Israel as they, at the time, were divided among several synagogue communities. Deutsch hoped that through his work in India, Solomon would one day fulfill the prophecy “I will make her that halteth a remnant and her that was cast off a strong nation” (Micah 4:7).¹¹⁵

Studying at the University of Cincinnati

At the same time, Solomon advanced in his collegiate classes at the University of Cincinnati. His records are not preserved, but his studies with the historian Philip van Ness Myers (1846–1937), professor of economics and history, stood out in his own recollections. Myers’s teachings on the nature of revolution and reformation in Europe particularly informed his own understanding of what the Bene Israel community would need to do in order to advance.¹¹⁶ Myers also had some familiarity with India, having travelled there on a scientific mission in the early 1870s.¹¹⁷ Solomon would also report that English professor Edward Miles Brown (1854–1908) was “a man who took personal interest in his students; and, somehow, had a soft spot in his heart for me.”¹¹⁸

Solomon wrote for the student publication *McMicken Review*, recounting his travels in India before coming to the United States. Writing about the Taj Mahal in Agra, some 750 miles from Bombay, he recalled:

The material of which it is made is pure white marble. The complexity of its design and the delicate intricacy of the workmanship baffled description. The mausoleum stands on a raised platform of marble, at the corners of which rises a tall and slender minaret, resembling the Indian palm tree, of graceful proportion and exquisite beauty...in regard to the color and design the interior of the Taj Mahal may rank first in the world for purely decorative workmanship.¹¹⁹

115 “Interesting Sermons,” *Fort Wayne Sentinel* (Indiana), 2 January 1897, 8.

116 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 42.

117 “Historian Taken by Death,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 21 September 1937, 1.

118 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 74. On Brown, see Bryant Venable with Caroline Neff Maxwell and John Miller Burnam, *Memorabilia of Edward Miles Brown* (Cincinnati: Alumna Association of the University of Cincinnati, 1909).

119 David Joseph Solomon, “From India,” *McMicken Review* 13, no. 5 (February 1899): 99–101, here 100.

About Bombay he would write in poetic terms:

Bombay, as seen from the reservoir on the top of the Malabar Hill, just before sunset, during a break in the monsoon rains, when the atmosphere is at its clearest, presents a spectacle of such striking beauty, that the sight is justly regarded as one of the half dozen finest sights in the world.¹²⁰

In addition to writing, Solomon lectured during the summer of 1898 in a technical school for boys run by Mannheimer's wife, Louise Herschman Mannheimer (1845–1920) and sponsored by the United Hebrew Charities.¹²¹ During his free time, he also became active in local community events. Having been “reckoned one of the best players in the country,” Solomon captained the pickup team for several cricket tournaments.¹²² Although his team lost both series in August 1900, he was instrumental in the return of cricket to Cincinnati after a three-decade hiatus and, in all fairness, the other team had a ringer in a recent arrival who had previously played on a renowned Scottish team.¹²³

A Plan to Return Home

By the beginning of the school year in 1899, Solomon had decided that he would not remain in Cincinnati to complete rabbinical studies. Writing to the Board of Governors, he would explain:

It is my intention to return to my native country after two years when I expect to graduate from the university. This will not permit me to take the collegiate course of the college at all, I wish, therefore, to complete the preparatory department only before I leave here. I shall be very much thankful to your honourable body if you will allow me to extend

120 Solomon, “From India,” 100–101.

121 “Boys’ School,” *Cincinnati Post*, 14 July 1898, 5.

122 “Cricketers Play Today,” *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, 11 August 1900, 8; “Cricketers,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 8 August 1900, 4. For a game the following month in which the Cincinnati team was defeated by another from Newport, Kentucky, see “Defeated,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 4 September 1900, 4.

123 “Success,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12 August 1900, 10; “Cricket,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 26 August 1900, 14.

my A grade studies to two years that I may devote some time to my university work.¹²⁴

The gradebooks make clear that the plan was approved by the faculty. In truth, Solomon was passing his HUC courses but performed exceptionally only in his history class with Deutsch.¹²⁵ This may have influenced his choice, but there were pressures from home as well. Solomon's decision reflected the competing demands of family obligation and community responsibility, intensified by the plague epidemic that made his distant homeland feel urgently present. The bubonic plague epidemic that tore through the west of India beginning in the summer of 1896 took members of his family.¹²⁶ Solomon became the intermediary to help his classmates, and Americans more broadly, understand the destruction overseas, as he spoke to the press. Based on a letter from his mother, he could offer the following report:

My home, at Poonah, is right in the heart of the plague district.¹²⁷ This terrible scourge is raging throughout the west of India. My mother tells me that all the towns there are quarantined against each other. So strict is the watch kept that it was some weeks before she learned of the death of my aunt at Bombay, only a little more than 100 miles away.

My aunt did not die of the plague, but some of my relatives have fallen victim. Forty deaths daily is the average at Bombay, and 80 is the rate at Poonah. Victims die between one and three days after they have been stricken.... Stricken ones rarely recovery though cure is not impossible. I left home last August, just one month before the plague broke out.¹²⁸

Through these years and those that followed, famine would add to the difficulties faced by Indians generally, and the Bene Israel community

124 Samson to the Faculty, 11 September 1899, MS-5, B-6, Folder 1, Correspondence, tests, and invitations to examinations, 1883–1903, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

125 See the records of his work in MS-5, B-1, Folder 3, Gradebook, 1895–1900, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

126 On the plague in Bombay, see Myron Echenberg, *Plague Ports: The Global Urban Impact of Bubonic Plague, 1894–1901* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 47–78.

127 He had previously resided at Kalyan. See note 55 above.

128 "Plague in India Described by Cincinnati Student," *Cincinnati Post*, 20 January 1898, 2.

in particular. The *American Israelite* throughout this period actively encouraged American Jews to contribute to the care of the starving Jews of India.¹²⁹ In fact, the work of the *American Israelite* was recognized by the *Bene Israelite*, which noted,

It is a matter of perfect gratification for one to learn that our American Jewish contemporaries have made suggestions to gather subscriptions for Jews suffering either from plague or famine in India. Our esteemed contemporary, the *Israelite*, of Cincinnati, has gone a step further and opened a fund in its columns. So far as we are aware, the present is the first opportunity when our American coreligionists have come forward to help us.¹³⁰

The degree to which Solomon's presence in Cincinnati strengthened local resolve to help suffering Indians in Bombay and elsewhere is not identifiable, but it is clear that it did play a role. The reporting reveals that, in addition to letters and publications from India, Wise relied on discussion with Solomon to help support his efforts to raise money for his suffering coreligionists in South Asia: "The Bene Israel, we are told by their representative at Hebrew Union College, being very poor occupy the most unhealthy quarters of Bombay and are generally poorly fed and still more poorly housed."¹³¹ Fellow students at the University of Cincinnati were also concerned and sympathetic and, in discussion with a somewhat reluctant Solomon, wanted to raise money to help.¹³² Solomon seemed to distinguish between the good that American Jewry could do for Indian Jews and the unlikelihood that a group of college students could have any impact on the millions of starving people in India. When approached by a sympathetic female student at UC, he "asked what we could really collect for such an enormous number. I told her that our feeble attempt would do nothing and I proposed that we

129 See, inter alia, "Plague and Famine in India," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 28 January 1897, 4; "India Famine Fund," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 18 February 1897, 6; "Editorial," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 9 August 1900, 4.

130 *Bene Israelite* (Bombay), 10 March 1897, 1.

131 *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 21 January 1897, 4.

132 Solomon, "Presidential Address," 74.

should do nothing.”¹³³ To Solomon, the size of the problem required government-level intervention. He differentiated between feeling like one was contributing and actually bringing about a benefit. Moreso, perhaps, the overwhelming nature of the problem likely prevented Solomon from encouraging action. His UC Professor, Edward M. Brown, explained it to the two students as a distinction between a western attitude and an eastern attitude, with westerners needing to feel like they were contributing to the effort.¹³⁴ However Solomon framed it, the story highlights that he was welcomed as a member of the university community, and that his presence encouraged the kind of global outlook and concern that higher education was supposed to promote. All this having been said, Solomon was studying in Cincinnati while a heartbreaking disaster continued at home, and this turn may have shaped his desire to return home sooner than originally planned.

In addition to his comments to the Jewish and general press, Solomon sought to inform his classmates and American Jewry about the Bene Israel community with a series of articles in the *H.U.C. Journal*. The three pieces offer an assessment of life for the Bene Israel community by an individual who knew the community from the inside but also had a solid understanding of his audience and was thus able to translate Jewish life in South Asia into American Jewish terms. They provide a first-hand perspective of a particular moment in history. In them, Solomon was quick to highlight the work that needed to be done among the Bene Israel to counteract the fact that the community was “unprogressive.” In order for reform to succeed, a plan was needed to end bigamy; elevate women to higher status in the home; cultivate English language learning such that members of the community could access literature and engage with modern thinking, which could encourage individuals to feel a genuine bond with other Jews; and encourage the community to invest in building educational institutions instead of focusing on arranging prayer times.¹³⁵

133 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 74.

134 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 74.

135 David Solomon Joseph, “The Bene-Israel Congregations of India,” *H.U.C. Journal* 5, nos. 5–6 (January 1901): 125–127.

Graduation

At his graduation from the University of Cincinnati, the local paper noted the distinctive features of members of the class: "David Joseph Solomon wears a 'fez' on all state occasions, for he comes from Bombay, India, and still preserves some of the traditions. He is something of a linguist, and expects to teach English in his native Country."¹³⁶ Noteworthy is that when he graduated the University of Cincinnati in 1901, the class included nineteen women, eighteen men, and an additional ten men who were also pursuing studies at HUC, including Julian Morgenstern, Henry Englander, and Solomon Foster. After his years of study at HUC, he graduated with his BHL, conferred by Mielziner on 15 June 1901 at Mound Street Temple.¹³⁷ That it was Mielziner who officiated is an important reminder that Solomon had the opportunity to know Wise, whose writings so influenced him. Solomon witnessed the outpouring of grief by thousands when Wise died in 1900, necessitating Mielziner officiating graduation.

While his University of Cincinnati graduation was announced that June, he and several other HUC students completed their remaining university coursework over the summer and received their University of Cincinnati degrees at the December 1901 convocation.¹³⁸ The students of the University of Cincinnati would record that

India has sent us an excellent representative in our friend Mr. Solomon. Unconsciously, he has given us a glimpse into the noblest side of the Indian character by his presence among us. During his stay at McMicken Mr. Solomon has won the hearts of all who were fortunate enough to know him, and carries with him for his work the best wishes of his many friends."¹³⁹

136 "University of Cincinnati Graduating Class, 1901," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 7 Jan. 1901, 3.

137 "Hebrew Union College Commencement," *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 13 June 1901, 6.

138 A mosaic of the photos of the graduating class is included with "Entire Graduating Class of University of Cincinnati for the Year 1901," *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, 9 June 1901, 23; "Convocation at the University," *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, 22 December 1901, 16.

139 *The Cincinnati 1901* (Cincinnati: Senior and Junior Class, 1901), 87.

Within HUC and the Jewish community it was noted that Solomon would leave “behind many friends” who would “watch his future career with deepest interest.” The locals who had helped fund his five years in Cincinnati felt “that the money given to Mr. Solomon has been well spent and are sanguine that as a teacher and leader among his people in India he will do much good work that they feel that they never used money to better purpose.”¹⁴⁰

Returning Home

In January 1902, Solomon made his way to New York en route to Bombay via London.¹⁴¹ He left Cincinnati on 7 January with plans on his way home to “visit the places and cities of interest in this country [i.e., the United States], as well as those of Europe.”¹⁴² Regarding Solomon’s arrival in New York on 15 January 1902, local correspondents suggested that he use the opportunity of time in the city to make arrangements “for some literary work” that was to appear in “*Review of Reviews*, and other leading magazines.”¹⁴³ However, the only material appearing in these journals are Solomon’s solutions to the chess puzzles offered in their pages a few years earlier.¹⁴⁴ As he departed, his actions were again held up as an inspirational model for American Jewry by a contributor who was likely Rabbi Clifton Harby Levi (1867–1962):

The fact that this young man should have left home and friends and come to the United States to study for five years in order to return to India and aid in the work of uplifting his coreligionists is a notable instance of the altruism which is still possible in this work-a-day twentieth century.

He continued, “I can sympathize with the ambitions of this young man.... May his work prosper as it deserves to.”¹⁴⁵

140 “Jottings,” *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 23 January 1902, 6.

141 “Jottings,” *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 23 January 1902, 6.

142 “Notes,” *H.U.C. Journal* 6, no. 4 (January 1902): 86.

143 “What New Yorkers are Doing,” *Reform Advocate* (Chicago), 18 January 1902, 523.

144 See, e.g., “Chess,” *Literary Digest* 19, no. 14 (30 September 1899): 420.

145 “What New Yorkers are Doing,” *Reform Advocate* (Chicago), 18 January 1902, 523.

Unfortunately, his return to the Jewish community in India was less than smooth. After leaving HUC, he maintained some institutional contact, ordering books from the CCAR, for example.¹⁴⁶ It appears, however, that his new Jewish learning did not translate into an immediate role in the life of the Bene Israel communities. In a rather harsh judgment, Shirley Berry Isenberg suggested that the outcome of Solomon's story "exemplifies Bene Israel ineptitude, in the failure to employ David J. Solomon at the Israelite School, not taking advantage of his academic Jewish education."¹⁴⁷ In 1902, the school was still under the supervision of Haeem Samuel Kehimkar and his family, the same man who had seemingly interfered to keep his own son from travelling to Cincinnati to study at HUC. The Israelite school had been and would remain Orthodox in its orientation even after more liberal leadership took the reins of the school in the 1920s (see more below). Solomon had to know that the return would not be as smooth as he had hoped. Through the years he resided in Cincinnati, the *Bene Israelite* newspaper had been available to him. Already in 1897, it had warned of the difficulties American-trained Jewish leadership would face in India, but also suggested the possibilities for a Marathi-speaking Indian Jew who was both fluent in English and had an advanced Jewish education.

Hearing that some American rabbis are willing to come to India and serve as ministers in the Jewish synagogues, a question is likely to arise as to the utility of their services. In India some of the Jews talk Marathi, while others speak Arabic. The Ashkenazi Jews in Bombay talked different languages, according to the countries they come from. An American rabbi will not be very successful so far as sermons are concerned. Secondly, the Israelite community in India are strictly orthodox, and consequently the welcome accorded to an American rabbi will be far cooled. For the present, taking into consideration the present circumstances of our people as well as their religious beliefs, an English or American rabbi from an orthodox college will be much liked.¹⁴⁸

146 "Exhibit F," *CCAR Yearbook* 17 (1907): 59.

147 Isenberg, *India's Bene Israel*, 242.

148 *Bene Israelite* (Bombay), 10 March 1897, 2–3.

Back at Home

By 1905, Solomon found himself living apart from the Bene Israel community altogether, as he would report to Deutsch:

I am very sorry, indeed, to say that there has been absolutely no change for the better in my affairs. I am finding out for myself how utterly worthless were my hopes to be of some use to the Bene-Israel Community. I am in such a confused state of mind that I feel I committed a great mistake in thinking of returning to this country in the very beginning. Some of the best years of my life are being wasted without any future or goal of amelioration. There is hardly an outlook for me under the present circumstances I am always on the lookout for some work which might bring a change in my fortune but the doors of prosperity seem to be closed for good against me. I am hoping apparently against hopes for something to turn up but nothing seems to avail.

Doctor [Louis] Grossman must have told you the purport of his letter to me which he wrote in February last. Unfortunately that letter remained unnoticed till a week before when it was found by mere accident. I have written to him and have told him that at present I could not decide as to what I am going to do.

I am waiting and hoping for the day when the people will wake up to do something for themselves. I am not so badly off but I am not satisfied with the people at Kedgaon.¹⁴⁹ I feel there that I am entirely out of place and that I should be among Jews, at any rate, within sight of the Bene-Israel Community.

What line of action must now be followed will be decided after some time. In the meanwhile I am doing my most to make my position better.

I shall close this letter with best regards to Mrs Deutsch and yourself and the children. Please do remember me to the Mielziners and those who may yet remember me at the College. How are the Malters and the Levias's?¹⁵⁰

149 About 160 miles east of Bombay/Mumbai and 34 miles from Pune. At the time it was about a 90-minute train ride from Pune to Kedgaon. See John Jackson, "A Day with Pandita Ramabai," *All Nations* 1, no. 8 (June 1901): 1.

150 Solomon to Deutsch, 26 August 1905, MS-123, Gotthard Deutsch Papers, Box 3, Folder 16, Se-So, General, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

The return address on the letter to Deutsch is Mukti Sadan, the institute established by Ramabai, which she moved from Poona to Kedgaon.¹⁵¹ In certain ways, Solomon was back where he started, now seemingly helping in the education of the widows and young children. Precisely what the conditions were like is difficult to say. A visit by foreign missionaries a few years earlier in the wake of the great plague provided a moving description:

Our first call was upon the Kindergarten School, in which eight classes, numbering upwards of 200 little waifs, from three to six years old, were receiving such instruction as their undeveloped minds are capable of absorbing.... In the next large building we found no fewer than 750 girls, also busy with their lessons.... In other schoolrooms hundreds more were at work, while about 150 were in Hospital with fever, and other mild and ordinary ailments.¹⁵²

Ramabai relied on a 150 young female volunteers, forty-five matrons each responsible for thirty children and a number of professionals. Among the widows were thirty-two mothers under the age of sixteen.¹⁵³ According to missionary reports, by 1905, some four hundred young women had converted to Christianity. During this period Ramabai issued circulars “[a]sking for names of (1) Indian Christians, and (2) members of the house of Israel to be sent to her for these praying women to lay daily before the Lord as they give themselves to the ministry of intercession. The names of missionaries, Rabbis, Jewish families, are asked for.”¹⁵⁴ The request suggests that Ramabai continued in her concern for the well-being of the Bene Israel community and broader Indian Jewish community, seeing their mission intertwined with hers, and was still avoiding active evangelizing. At the same time, “ministry

151 By the end of the 1890s, Ramabai had taken a rather more proactive stance as a Christian missionary, which partially explains the need to move her mission; see Kling, *History*, 543.

152 Jackson, “Day,” 1.

153 Jackson, “Day,” 2.

154 “The Labors of Others: Notes from All Missions and Workers,” *Trusting and Toiling on Israel’s Behalf* 10 (16 October 1905): 158.

of intercession” was a tactic that sought to encourage God to show the Jewish community the light.

In this context, Solomon’s role at the Mukti Sadan remains unclear. His distress at not finding a place in the Bene Israel community might be explained merely by his having been a man ahead of his time. In the years following Solomon’s return to India, ongoing intracommunal conflict would have made hiring Solomon difficult, connected as he was to a liberalizing camp. The greatest tensions in the community were between the wealthy Baghdadi Jews who had come and settled in Bombay earlier in the century and the native-born Bene Israel. Skin color and socioeconomic status were certainly a part of the dispute between the two communities—the Baghdadi Jews looking down on their native Indian brethren. The conflict also played out in the synagogues of the community where the practices of the Bene Israel community were seen as less stringent, improperly performed, and as an indication that they might not even be Jewish.¹⁵⁵ Given this tremendous push from the right, aligning with Solomon on the left may still have been a step too far for the Bene Israel community even if his ideology would have supported efforts to improve its quality of life.

Marriage and Family Life

By the following year, Solomon’s life circumstances improved when he married Leah Nagawkar. Leah was the daughter of Abraham Nagawkar, the first Bene Israel graduate of Bombay University. After their marriage, Leah would become the first female Bene Israel graduate of Bombay University, with a bachelors degree in French and math.¹⁵⁶ In his wife, Solomon found both a like-minded spouse and inclusion in a liberal-minded Jewish family. He would come to see in her a model for the potential of the Bene Israel’s young women:

A fair share of the credit of this intellectual awakening among our girls must be given the High School for Indian Girls, so ably conducted by

155 Joan G. Roland, *Jews in British India: Identity in a Colonial Era* (Hanover: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1989), 19–21.

156 Haeems, *Rebecca Reuben*, 44; *Bombay University: The Calendar for the Year 1908–1909 Volume I* (Bombay, 1908), i.

the Poona Deccan Educational Society with the active co-operation of the Bombay Government. The First Bene-Israel lady-graduate happened to be the daughter of the first graduate among us. Then came the examples of girls who set the whole people thinking of the intellectual potentialities lying dormant among us...¹⁵⁷

The marriage and schooling suggest that Solomon had returned to Bombay sometime soon after writing to Deutsch. However, his own activities in this period and through the war years are largely obscure. In 1910, they had a son, Benjamin David Solomon.¹⁵⁸ In the midst of World War I, it appears that Solomon was stationed aboard His Majesty's Hospital Ship Takada at Bombay. A letter to the editor written from the ship is consistent with Solomon's communal concerns, although it is difficult at this stage to confirm this is the same "D. J. Solomon." The letter shows continued concern for the well-being of the Bene Israel Community and engagement in Jewish affairs. Writing from the ship, he lamented that the Jewish teachers in the Bene Israel community still tended to be Baghdadi or Cochin Jews who looked down on their Bene Israel brethren. He was most vociferous in his encouragement that local Bene Israel men be educated for the rabbinate abroad.

My present position gave me the opportunity [*sic*] to meet and make friends with several young European Jews. I found they possessed a deeper knowledge of religion and a wider outlook on Judaism.

The only remedy in my opinion to banish the ignorance and superstitions in religious matters from our community is to send every year a Bene-Israel boy or two to the Jewish College in London or to any Rabbinical [*sic*] Seminary in Europe. They will return to us well-qualified and competent Ministers and teachers; only then will

157 Solomon, "Presidential Address," 41.

158 The date and name rely on Benei Israel Heritage Family Tree, MyHeritage, <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-74099411-5-1560/benjamin-david-solomon-kurulkar-in-myheritage-family-trees>. That the couple had only one son is confirmed by the announcement of Leah's death in 1924. See Resolution No. IV in *Report of the 8th Bene-Israel Conference 1924* (Bombay: Jacob Ezekiel, 1924).

religious and communal questions be treated and decided properly and authoritatively.¹⁵⁹

The exclusion of HUC from the list may have had more to do with the nature of travel in wartime than with any particular concern about his alma mater. The assertion of having met European Jews with “wider outlook” is attested by a letter to the editor on the previous page. A second letter to the editor published on the same page is signed G. Lewis of the Royal Army Medical Corps. His letter complains about the treatment of Bene Israel women who were excluded from the Shabbat dinner table, even as the Eshet Hayil was recited, a scene he had witnessed, having been invited home by members of the community he had met in Bombay.¹⁶⁰

Solomon’s signature on the letter provides the name of the ship and its location in Bombay. Unlike other writers, he has no military acronym or abbreviation with his name to suggest that he was a civilian worker or volunteer. Almost 900,000 men signed on to the war efforts as combatants and nearly 600,000 as noncombatant laborers.¹⁶¹ With their previous history of military service, Bene Israel men were quick to enlist.¹⁶² Hospital ships were often operated by merchant marine crews and carried civilian personnel. The H.M.H.S Takada supported the eastern front carrying wounded from Basra to Bombay.¹⁶³

Fights about the management of the Israelite School and the Gate of Mercy Synagogue in Bombay endured through the first two decades of the new century. Solomon described himself as “a passive onlooker” to

159 “Letter to the Editor,” *Israelite* (Bombay), June 1917, 114.

160 “Letter to the Editor,” *Israelite* (Bombay), June 1917, 114.

161 Radhika Singha, *The Coolie’s Great War: Indian Labour in a Global Conflict 1914–1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 3.

162 Ran Amitai, “Jewish Servicemen in the Indian Subcontinent,” in *Jewish Communities in Modern Asia: Their Rise, Demise and Resurgence*, ed. Rotem Kower (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 120.

163 Circa February 1917 the ship was caring for more than five hundred injured or wounded soldiers on board; see Jerry Murland, *Departed Warriors: The Story of a Family in War* (Leicester: Matador, 2008), 185.

these events.¹⁶⁴ The divisions that had become evident in fights about the synagogue, between religious conservatives and liberals, between those sympathetic to British rule and those sympathetic to Indian nationalism, and Zionists and anti-Zionists all became more pronounced as efforts to unite the Bene Israel community institutionally came to the fore at the end of the war and in the decade thereafter.

An Opportunity for Leadership: Solomon and the Bene Israel Conferences

Some eighteen years after Solomon had reported to Deutsch on his sad state, Solomon appeared as the president of the Seventh Bene Israel Conference in December 1923, which highlighted his continued efforts to unite the Bene Israel communities. The first conference had been held in Bombay in late December 1917. Although intended to bring together the community, some groups refused to participate.¹⁶⁵ A rival group established its own conference the following year, the All India Israelite League. The first conference had tended to attract “the educated communal leaders and a larger mass following.”¹⁶⁶ By the time of the second conference in 1918 Solomon was residing in Junagadh, some 495 miles from Bombay, and serving as headmaster of the Bahadur Khanji High School.¹⁶⁷ Solomon, along with his brother-in-law, Ezra Reuben (Nowgaonkar), a lawyer who had become the chief judicial

164 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 41. On the communal divisions and the battle over the management of the synagogue, see Joan G. Roland, “A Decade of Vitality,” in *Jews in India*, ed. Thomas A. Timberg (New York: Advent, 1986), 288–292, 303–307.

165 Roland, “Decade,” 295–298.

166 Roland, “Decade,” 302.

167 *Thacker’s Indian Directory 1918* (Calcutta: Thacker’s Directories, 1918), 241. Issues of the *Bene Israel Annual and Yearbook*, edited and published in Bombay by Rebecca Reuben for the years 1917–1920 all identify Solomon as the headmaster there; see 1 (1917–1918): 86; 2 (1918–1919): 86; 3 (1919–1920): 136. This last volume makes clear the limited direct contact Solomon had with the Bene Israelite community during and after World War I. The volume puts Ezra Reuben, Rebecca Reuben, David Joseph Solomon, and his wife, Leah, all in Junagadh. The previous year, the Bene Israel community also included Simeon Isaac, who was the station master; before that, only the Solomons and Ezra Reuben are listed in the community directory in the *Yearbook*.

officer in Junagadh, both sent letters of support for the second conference but were unable to attend. Reuben likewise sent an unrestricted donation.¹⁶⁸ Solomon and Reuben had each married one of Abraham Nagawkar's daughters. Reuben (1864–1950) and his wife, Sarah (1865–1917), would go on to have six children, all of whom were educated and prominent, but their eldest daughter, Rebecca Reuben (1889–1957) is noteworthy here for the role she played as headmistress of the Israelite School in Bombay from 1922 until 1950.¹⁶⁹

Ezra Reuben would become the president of the Third Bene Israel Conference, although, when he hesitated, Solomon was also considered.¹⁷⁰ As Solomon would later note of the situation, with Reuben at the helm, “No better man could do justice to the occasion and grace the chair.” In Solomon’s mind, the times required “the better of the two” men.¹⁷¹ Solomon did not attend but did send a telegram wishing the conference success.¹⁷² Solomon was asked again in 1920. He would explain: “I had most reluctantly to decline the offer on several grounds—the most prominent being my state of mind and the mood I was in. I should not have done any service to you nor justice to myself under those conditions.”¹⁷³ The specific conditions to which he referred are unclear. Finally, in 1923, the conference secured Solomon’s help.

168 *The 2nd Bene-Israel Conference. 1918* (Bombay: Solomon Moses, 1922), 5. Reuben was appointed in 1897; see *Bene Israelite* (Bombay), 7 January 1897, 1, and “India,” *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 18 February 1897, 7. He had been involved in efforts to improve the Jewish education of the Bene Israel as early as 1890 with his participation in the Bene Israel Balottjak Sabba (Society for the Encouragement and Training of Young Bene Israelites) in Bombay; see “India,” *American Israelite* (Cincinnati), 3 July 1890, 5.

169 On Reuben, see Haeems, *Rebecca Reuben*. The book is an anthology of writings by, about, and related to Reuben’s life and work. Joan G. Roland, “‘She Taught from the Heart’: The Life and Legacy of a Bene Israel Educator,” *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 6 (2003): 96–102 does a substantial job of synthesizing the material.

170 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 34.

171 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 34.

172 The section is unpaginated. See the first page marked “Proceedings of the 3rd Bene Israel Conference. 1919” in *The 3rd and 4th Bene Israel Conference, 1919 and 1920: Report* (Bombay: Solomon Moses, 1922).

173 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 34.

The honorary secretary of the reception committee described Solomon as follows:

Having been a keenly interested spectator for the past six years, and having a wide diversity of experiences in social work both in India and abroad, he is pre-eminently qualified to throw light on such problems as pinch us most. I have not a shadow of doubt that he has made the Conference a subject of his study and in consequence is in a position to throw new light on old problems, and present facts to us at their proper angle of vision.¹⁷⁴

Solomon's eventual leadership role demonstrates how his Cincinnati education, despite initial setbacks, ultimately positioned him to bridge different worlds of experience. This was particularly valuable as India navigated the tensions between tradition and modernity, imperial loyalty and emerging nationalism. Many of the themes and ideas he articulated in his articles for the *H.U.C. Journal* in the late 1890s were, sadly, still pressing. In a lengthy speech, he lamented that the financial situation of the community had deteriorated after World War I.¹⁷⁵ He continued to push for temperance and an end to polygamy. In the religious realm, he pushed for continued reforms, making Hebrew prayer less tedious, and he wondered whether the Bene Israel community "[h]ad really benefitted spiritually, morally or intellectually by the average synagogues among them."¹⁷⁶ Solomon lauded the success of educational efforts but wanted his coreligionists to excel. Communal improvement relied on giving up

174 *Report of the Seventh Bene-Israel Conference Held in December 1923 at Bombay* (Bombay, 1924).

175 The address also highlights the continued influence of Christian missionaries on him and the community. The presidential address is rich with references to the Bible and other Jewish sources. However, he concluded his talk with prayer. Uttering the statement "I therefore pray to God," he then recited, without noting source or author, John Henry Newman's 1833 hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light, Amid the Encircling Gloom." By the end of the nineteenth century, it had become among the best-known hymns and crossed denominational boundaries. It also penetrated deeply into popular Indian culture; see William Emilsen, "Gandhi and 'Lead, Kindly Light,'" *Pacifica* 10 no. 1 (1997): 84–92.

176 "The Bene Israel Conference," *Israelite* 8, nos. 1–2 (Bombay), January–February 1924, 17–19, here 18.

“the profession of clerks and unskilled labor and to become professional men and skilled artisans.”¹⁷⁷ All this would also improve the standards for women in the community who currently had to deal with husbands who were drunkards or were willing to replace them with a second wife.¹⁷⁸ Investments in the education of men and women, he argued, were necessary for the elevation of the community. Solomon’s efforts as president have been noted as aiming at practical actions for implementation. The earlier conferences had yielded little more than resolutions. This time the conference put in place committees to investigate cooperative housing to help bring affordable homes to the population. It took strides forward until a spike in the housing market made the project impossible.¹⁷⁹ Solomon encouraged study of Bene Israel history, particularly those who engaged in military service, as they provided role models for the young. He saw in American and Anglo-Jewry models of liberal Jewish practice that should be imitated, and he also encouraged the adoption of English. What he had seen at HUC permanently transformed his religious sensibilities:

To me the Library, the School and the College are a source of greater admiration and awe than all the sacred places I have seen built for the worship of the Gods. They are the most holy of all holy places and yet have you ever heard of the building of a library for the purpose of the worship of the Divine Being? The school and the library which form the conspicuous landmark in American life have left a deeper mark upon my life than all the places I have visited in the United States of America. I appeal to you to build a great library for the people instead of a Central Hall or magnificent edifices like synagogues. Let us allow light to come in to dispel darkness in the religious life of our people.¹⁸⁰

The view that a library was needed found support, but his views on religious reform and the adoption of English put him at odds with the

177 “The Bene Israel Conference,” *Israelite* 8, nos. 1–2 (Bombay), January–February 1924, 17–19, here 18.

178 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 66.

179 Roland, “Decade,” 325–326.

180 “Report from the Conference,” cited in Roland, “Decade,” 327.

religious traditionalists. Likewise, his sympathy for British ideals put him at odds with Indian nationalists in the Bene Israel camp, and his desire for the adoption of English put him at odds with those who felt greater fluency in Marathi would improve the standing of the Bene Israel among fellow Indians.¹⁸¹ These concerns were pressing as the rising Indian nationalist movements created concern for Indian Jews about their future in India. Baghdadi Jews, for example, saw their future in allying themselves with the British.¹⁸² As an aside, already in 1917, calls for a Jewish library appeared in the Bene Israel press. Among the examples to prove its possibility, the idea of building a library from scratch, was the Hebrew Union College collection.¹⁸³ The dream of a library went back to the early efforts in which HUC participated, sending books to Solomon Samson nearly three decades earlier. Sadly, the author notes, “owing mainly to the lack of funds these movements were not long lived.”¹⁸⁴

Given that he was a school headmaster, it is not surprising that Solomon’s primary focus was on educational initiatives, but he directed genuine scorn at the Israelite School and its management.

When a Bene-Israel talks or thinks of education he naturally turns his eyes towards the school which has for over forty years dragged on its existence and is not extinct. For nearly thirty years it was a special preserve of one man who devoted his time and life to its cause. As a school it has never attracted a better class of pupils among us; and I am afraid, as long as it remains what it is, there is no chance of it doing so. The results of this school have at no time attained a double figure and from what I read in the report it is not likely to do so in the near future. In connection with this school I must say that we must either mend it or end it. I say with all the force that a schoolmaster has a right to presume

181 Roland, “Decade,” 327–328.

182 Elizabeth E. Imber, “Jewish Political Lives in the British Empire: Zionism, Nationalism, and Imperialism in Palestine, India, and South Africa, 1917–1939” (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2018), 192–193.

183 Benjamin David Shahapurkar, “A Jewish Library among the Bene-Israelis of Bombay,” *Israelite* 1, no. 4 (Bombay), April 1917, 70–72.

184 Shahapurkar, “Jewish Library,” 72.

to say, that in the case of this school we do not want evolution to take its slow course but a revolution to begin a new career. In my estimation it is this school that leaves an impression on the mind of the visitors that the Bene-Israel community is a miserable community.... Let those who are generously inclined to build synagogues ponder over the problem of building a decent school to represent our advance in the scale of civilization. It is, I repeat, vanity that makes us build synagogues and not virtue, for I believe very strongly that virtue would not go so far if vanity did not keep her company.¹⁸⁵

As Isenberg noted, Solomon never had the opportunity to participate in the life of the Israelite school, and it is possible that some of his commentary came from anger. From its founding until 1908, the school was run by Kehimkar. In the midst of managerial and financial difficulties, the Anglo-Jewish Association stepped in to reorganize the school under the supervision of a committee, and the synagogues provided additional financial support. However, the budget was inadequate for the hiring of professional teachers, and the school was primarily run as a charitable organization to support poor children rather than as a school with the goal of advancing education.¹⁸⁶ By the early 1920s, critics of the school argued that investment in the school building and in the quality of the teachers could happen only if the school redirected its mission.¹⁸⁷ Clearly Solomon aligned with this camp, but his critique was also in service of his family. In 1922, his niece, Rebecca Reuben, after receiving advanced education in England and serving in Indian educational institutions, recommitted herself to service in the Bene Israel community and was appointed principal of the Israelite School. Her own assessment of the school can be heard in her uncle's address: "Altogether the whole atmosphere of the school was extremely depressing. The grounds, the garden, the playground, the building inside and out, the gloomy rooms, the bare walls, the senseless furniture, the spiritless staff, the spiritless

185 Solomon, "Presidential Address," 64.

186 Roland, "Decade," 319–321.

187 Roland, "Decade," 321.

children, everything in fact was depressing.”¹⁸⁸ Solomon’s presidential address should then be seen as an effort to rally support for the school. Concluding with a list of communal needs, he offered that “[t]he most important of these is the Israelite School. The School Committee’s report for 1922 is out and the aim and objects are well expressed in the report. The Committee appeals to the people for subscription.”¹⁸⁹ The conference also resolved to better support its educational fund, to which Solomon was also a contributor.¹⁹⁰ Over the next decades, Reuben’s efforts paid off and the school attained support from alumni and friends, grew the student body and achieved educational success, and built a new building with the support of Hong Kong financier Eleazer Kadoorie.¹⁹¹

Precisely how Solomon went about implementing his vision and the resolutions of the conference is unclear. As the year unfolded, his wife died, and he was left as a single parent to his teenage son.¹⁹² By the following year, one of his desires was fulfilled when Rachel Reuben and her cousin, Jerusha Jhirad (1891–1984), established a branch of the Jewish Liberal Union in Bombay, eventually joining with the World Union for Progressive Judaism.¹⁹³ Jhirad was also Solomon’s niece, the daughter of his wife’s sister Abigail Nagawker (1868–1922). Although the Bombay union branch drew the attention of no more than a few

188 Rebecca Reuben, “Israelite School: First Impressions? Or Depressions!,” reprinted in Haeems, *Rebecca Reuben*, 99–102, here 102.

189 Solomon, “Presidential Address,” 72.

190 “Appendix B” in *Report of the Seventh Bene-Israel Conference Held in December 1923 at Bombay* (Bombay, 1924).

191 Roland, “Decade,” 321.

192 See Resolution No. IV in *Report of the 8th Bene-Israel Conference 1924* (Bombay: Jacob Ezekiel, 1924).

193 Roland, “Decade,” 330. For a contemporary account, see “Liberal Judaism Gains Foothold in India,” *Jewish Daily Bulletin* 4, no. 874, 8 July 1928, 1, 4. Jhirad’s sister, Leah, was active in bringing the group into the World Union for Progressive Judaism; see “Romantic Tale of India: The Story of a Most Ancient Jewish Community, and How a Woman Brought Liberal Judaism to Bombay,” *American Hebrew*, 10 September 1926, 503, 545, 557. I thank my colleague and friend Michael A. Meyer for bringing this connection to my attention and for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this work.

dozen people and initially met in Reuben's home, it was a challenge to the Orthodox synagogues, which made little effort to try to attract young members of the Bene Israel community. By 1927, the women were attacked for leading a "revolution." The approach of the Bombay Jewish Liberal Union was still rather conservative, but its liberalism was highlighted by attacks from the outside, which show evidence of the difficulties faced by Solomon through his years after his return home. Various parties tried to reassure the critics that the union was very much traditional, "that the branch established in Bombay was not backed by the mother union in London, and that only one Bene-Israel (D. J. Solomon) had graduated from the Hebrew Union College and he was connected with the education department of an Indian State."¹⁹⁴ In other words, he was far away and could do little damage.

Conclusion: A Life Between Worlds

Sadly, neither personal records nor press coverage as yet allows any picture of the last decades of Solomon's life. His impact on Jewish and non-Jewish classmates, colleagues, and teachers in Cincinnati is clear, as is his impact on his extended family. His story illustrates how one individual's aspirations, imperial networks, religious reform movements, and educational institutions combined to create unprecedented opportunities for cross-cultural exchange, even as they exposed the limitations and contradictions of both colonial hierarchies and American democratic ideals. In navigating between multiple worlds—Indian and American, traditional and modern, colonial subject and global citizen—David Joseph Solomon embodied the challenges and possibilities of an interconnected yet unequal world. An assessment of his impact on the development of the Bene Israel community awaits the discovery of new records and further research.

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194 Roland, "Decade," 331.

the Free State, South Africa. His most recent publication is the introduction, translation, and annotation of the Commentary of Abraham ibn Ezra on the book of Job and he is completing a new manuscript on the early history of the Hebrew Union College Library.

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JACOB MANN: A CENTENNIAL REVIEW



Stefan C. Reif, Richard S. Sarason (Eds.)

JACOB MANN: A CENTENNIAL REVIEW

Papers delivered at a conference held at St John's College, Cambridge in July 2023

2025. VI, 248 pp.

HC RRP US\$ 120.99

ISBN 978-3-11-220579-2

eBook RRP US\$ 120.99

PDF ISBN 978-3-11-220587-7

ePUB ISBN 978-3-11-220611-9

Jacob Mann (1888–1940) was a major figure in Genizah studies in the early twentieth century. This volume, based on papers delivered at a conference at St. John's College, Cambridge, assesses his scholarly contributions in the light of more recent developments in the areas of medieval Jewish history, particularly Geonica; Jewish liturgy and homiletics; calendar studies; Jewish messianism; and Karaitica. It includes papers by Yosef Ofer, Moshe Lavee, Gila Wachman, Ruth Langer, Stefan Reif, Adiel Breuer, Sacha Stern, Jennifer Grayson, Menahem Ben-Sasson, Miriam Frankel, Yoram Erder, as well as an updated biography of Mann and bibliography of his scholarly writings by Richard Sarason. Together, they portray Mann as a scholar who was captivated by the riches of the Cairo Genizah and devoted his academic career to their exploration and publication.

Stefan C. Reif, St. John's College, University of Cambridge, U.K., and
Richard S. Sarason, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, USA.

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Irving Reichert, circa 1914. (Courtesy of the Author)

“A Good Workshop”

*“A Good Workshop”:
The Development of Irving
Frederick Reichert at
Hebrew Union College,
1913–1921*

AMIE THURBER

Irving Frederick Reichert served as the influential and controversial rabbi at Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco from 1930 to 1948. A driven civic leader and passionate advocate for justice, throughout his career Reichert opposed Japanese internment, supported striking workers, organized support for victims of Nazi oppression, and was a founding member of the American Council for Judaism (ACJ).¹ Through the ACJ, he sought to prevent the establishment of a Jewish nation-state and to advance safety for Jewish people worldwide through opening immigration and supporting democratic governments. While, in later years, Reichert organized in opposition to Zionist leaders such as James Heller and Abba Hillel Silver, his intellectual and fraternal engagement with these men began during their time together as students at Hebrew Union College (HUC).² Indeed, Reichert’s eight years at HUC set the stage for the rest of his career: the relationships seeded here would blossom (and some wither) over decades to come. Under the influence of (and at times in resistance to) HUC professors and visiting scholars, he developed a charismatic and compelling oratorical presence, honed a strong commitment to civic action, and forged his character as an ambitious and steadfast man willing to bet on himself.

1 Fred Rosenbaum, *Visions of Reform: Congregation Emanu-El and the Jews of San Francisco, 1849–1999* (Berkeley, CA: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 2000); Thomas A. Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942–1948* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990), 47, 94.

2 Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism*.

Drawing from the hundreds of letters Reichert wrote to his family between 1913 and 1921, as well as HUC's administrative records, this article provides insight into Irving's development and, more broadly, the student experience at HUC.³ Reichert's tenure corresponded with several significant firsts and lasts for the College. Entering in HUC's thirty-eighth year, Reichert was in the first class to begin study in the new Clifton Avenue location. He was among the last to study under faculty hired by HUC's founder and first president, Isaac Mayer Wise—among them David Philipson and Gotthard Deutsch.⁴ In 1921, Reichert's class would be the last to be ordained under HUC's second permanent president, Kaufmann Kohler.

Irving was the eldest son of Rabbi Isidor Reichert and Miriam Fishel Reichert. Born in Konin (in what is now Poland), Isidor studied at Rabbi Hildesheimer's seminary in Berlin before immigrating to the United States, where he and Miriam married and started their family. Irving was born in New York in 1895, the second of five children. Isidor was driven and restless; his rabbinic appointments carried the young family to several cities before returning to New York when Irving was fourteen.⁵ Restless himself, Irving Reichert left Townsend-Harris High School after three years to begin study at City College of New York (CCNY). At eighteen, he traveled to Cincinnati by train to begin rabbinical study, where he planned to simultaneously continue college at the University of Cincinnati.⁶ Reichert posted his father's parting words on his boarding room wall: "Irving, you know what I expect of you, don't disappoint me."⁷

3 Unless otherwise stated, archival references are to materials in the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (hereafter AJA). Between December 2023 and July 2024, I accessed the Victor Reichert Collection (hereafter VRC) while it was still being processed and before folder lists were finalized. I worked with AJA staff to update box and folder names retroactively.

4 David Philipson, *Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume, 1875–1925* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College, 1925), 24, 55.

5 Natalie R. Sprung, "The Unshaken," unpublished memoir, 1945, personal collection.

6 Letter, Irving to parents, 18 September 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

7 Letter, Irving to father, 26 February 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

Preparatory Years: Fall 1913–Spring 1917

Much of Reichert's first four years were fraught. His ambition often exceeded his achievement; his taste frequently exceeded his finances. Moreover, he faced repeated faculty question as to his character, which undermined his ability to secure much-needed financial support. Yet, by the end of the preparatory years, Reichert had built a solid cohort of peer relationships and begun to distinguish himself (at least to some audiences) as a person of influence.

Academic Ambition and Financial Precarity

Upon arriving in Cincinnati, Reichert walked from the train station to HUC, where staff pointed him to a nearby boarding house. After securing his lodgings, he proceeded to the University of Cincinnati to enroll. While he had earned nearly a year of college credits from CCNY, the university would not admit him without a high school diploma. The registrar directed him to Hughes High School to complete his secondary schooling, which threatened to extend the typical eight-year course of rabbinical and collegiate study to nine. He was despondent: "I am so brokenhearted I can scarcely write. I don't know why I should feel so badly, but I suppose it is because I expected—shall I say too much—and I feel terribly disappointed."⁸

This disappointment did not quell Reichert's academic ambition. He started HUC in the D grade in a class of twelve. Classmates included, among others, Julius Mark (who would later serve as senior rabbi of New York's Temple Emanu-El, the world's largest congregation), Henry Berkowitz (who would lead Temple Israel, the largest Jewish congregation in the Pacific Northwest), and Harvey Wessel (longtime rabbi at Beth El in Tyler, Texas and ardent Zionist).⁹ Reichert had two primary goals. First, he wanted to complete the course of study at an accelerated pace, and, second, he hoped to earn a coveted academic scholarship, which would affirm his aptitude and provide a much-needed source of income.¹⁰

8 Letter, Irving to father, 26 February 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

9 List of D grade graduates, MS-5, Box B-14, Folder, 1, AJA.

10 New rabbinical students were expected to complete four years in "Preparatory School," starting with "D" grade and progressing to "A," and then four years in "Collegiate," beginning

Reichert's academic ambition and financial precarity were intertwined; he needed both an education and the funds to cover his educational and living expenses. He arrived in Cincinnati with \$70 from his family and the goal of becoming self-supporting as soon as possible.¹¹ Before HUC classes began, he made the rounds to Cincinnati temples with letters of introduction from the esteemed leader of New York's Temple Emanu-El, Rabbi Dr. Joseph Silverman (also an HUC alumnus), with hopes of securing employment.¹² Concurrently, within his first week in Cincinnati, Reichert wrote of plans to complete his high school credits in the fall and resume varsity study at the University of Cincinnati that year. As he explained in a letter to his sister Natalie, "For after all, it's the man with the degree that amounts to anything here in America."¹³ Aided by his transfer college credits and the intention to skip a grade at HUC, he aimed to complete a graduate degree while in Cincinnati.

With these goals in mind, Reichert carried a heavy course load and provided his family frequent updates on his grades to assure them that he was making good use of his time and their resources.¹⁴ Less than four months after his arrival, Reichert announced to his father that he had completed his high-school credits:

Only too well do you know the story of how when coming to Cincinnati I was ignobly thrown from my unstable perch of a Freshman; how instead of being a sophomore at the University I was compelled to shamefacedly go back to high-school to complete entrance credits; and of my disappointment and discontent. This frame of mind—being essentially a man of action—I could not remain in long; so my discontent was soon fanned into flame; into action.¹⁵

with level I and progressing through IV. Sometime after their first year at HUC, rabbinical students were also expected to enroll in secular study at the University of Cincinnati.

11 Letter, Irving to father, 30 October 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

12 Letter, Irving to parents, 28 September 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA. HUC provided no scholarships or loans to first-year students at this time.

13 Letters, Irving to sister Natalie, 7 October 1913; Irving to sister Natalie, 27 October 1913, both MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

14 See correspondence, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

15 Letter, Irving to father, 12 January 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

Reichert immediately enrolled at the University of Cincinnati, then solicited tuition support from the HUC Board of Governors. The board, unmoved by Reichert's academic ambition, denied his request for tuition funds, noting, "he is only a D grade student, no pressing necessity existed for his entering the university."¹⁶ Reichert was in a pinch. Although his father sent a \$25 monthly allowance to cover room and board, and, by late October, he was earning an additional \$10 monthly to assist with Sunday school at Philipson's Rockdale Temple, he regularly incurred unexpected expenses—new glasses, repaired trousers, a winter coat—and kept up a steady stream of requests for work, loans, and scholarships.¹⁷ He was in no position to cover the tuition costs himself. Upon receipt of this rejection from HUC, and with notice in hand that he would be dropped from his university courses unless he paid his balance in full, he immediately sent letters to his father (who was unable to assist), the HUC Board of Governors (who maintained their position), and several Jewish philanthropists. Fortunately, one of these donors provided the needed funds, and within a week Reichert's university costs were covered.¹⁸ Although he was able to pursue university studies without HUC's support, Reichert needed the college's approval to complete his HUC preparatory work at an accelerated pace. HUC denied his request.

In pursuit of his second goal—securing a scholarship—Reichert strove for three years to perform at or above the requisite academic standards.¹⁹ The coursework was robust: a faculty study found that students in the preparatory grades spent between forty-nine and fifty-eight hours a week dedicated to their studies.²⁰ In letters home, Reichert consistently emphasized his dedication to his coursework and concerns about grades. In a letter to Natalie in his second year, he recounted, "I studied

16 In response to an increase in student requests of this manner, the board further adopted a new policy that required students to provide their own university fees. Committee on Salaries and Scholarships report to the BoG, 28 March 1914, MS-5, Box D-8, Folder 5, AJA.

17 Letter, Irving to parents, 30 October 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

18 Letter, Irving to father, 11 April 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

19 Letter, Irving to mother, 16 February 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

20 The committee concluded that "our students are by no means overworked." Faculty Minutes, 19 April 1916, MS-5, Box B-3, 185–186, AJA.

more for my college exams this semester than I ever studied in all my life! About twenty-two hours straight on Deuteronomy alone.... Here's hoping my marks show."²¹ Unfortunately, while his grades were high, in the first two years they were not high enough to earn a scholarship.

In the meantime, his desires often exceeded his income. Nearly every letter to his family included requests for money, stamps, or other items, even as he received news of financial troubles at home.²² In his second year, despite eventually earning a \$30 monthly stipend from the college, his financial problems persisted. He increasingly referenced taking loans from boys at school, and even from New York friends and acquaintances.²³

Despite his inability to live within his means, Reichert remained engaged in academic life. One particular letter evidenced the creativity and charisma that he brought to his studies. In Dr. Julian Morgenstern's class, he collaborated with another student to sing a memorized portion of Deuteronomy to the barber-shop tune of "When you wore a tulip and I wore a big, red rose." Their spontaneous performance was a hit: "Morgy simply rolled all over the floor—choking anew at each barber-shop chord.... He told the whole college about it, and we had to sing it for professors and students alike."²⁴

Through his preparatory education, Reichert refined his skills of reason, analysis, and argumentation. In response to a much-appreciated offer from Natalie to type up some of his school papers from the first years of study, Reichert remarked: "My philosophy of religion remains intrinsically the same...and the ideas expressed in both papers are exactly my views today. Only today I might not be so superficial in supporting them."²⁵ Faculty increasingly recognized his academic efforts, and, by spring of his third year, Reichert's marks were high enough to earn a monthly stipend. He proudly sent his final grades to his parents, writing:

21 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 2 February 1915, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

22 See correspondence, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

23 See correspondence, Irving to family, Box X-536, Folder 1. MS-903, AJA; letter, Irving to Board of Governors, 10 February 1915, MS-5, Box D-9, Folder 2, AJA.

24 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 17 March 1915, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

25 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 9 November 1915, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 5, AJA.

“If any glory, pride or honor be attached thereto, I beg of you to assume it all for yourself, for it is to you that it rightly belongs. You have made and are making an investment.”²⁶

Yet Reichert seemed increasingly resigned that it would take more than academic success to secure a scholarship: “You have absolutely no idea how great a place this Hebrew Union College is for favoritism and particularism. It’s ‘pull’ of one sort or another that gets you scholarships here....”²⁷ Despite these concerns, after three years of study, Reichert received the Louisville Sisterhood Scholarship: \$300 for the upcoming school year.²⁸

Professional Networking and Extracurricular Appetite

Reichert was equally driven to establish himself socially and professionally. In his early weeks in Cincinnati, he systematically attended services at the city’s temples, beginning at Bene Israel on Rockdale Avenue, pulpit of the esteemed rabbi and HUC professor Philipson. Before the term began, he and three other students visited the revered scholar and HUC professor Dr. Deutsch at his home, “as is the custom here.” He recounts: “I was awed at the man’s learning. Seated in his library smoking his cigar, he spoke to us cordially and welcomed us; and then delved into other topics.”²⁹ His efforts to engender positive relations with faculty served Reichert when he later sought assistance navigating financial or disciplinary matters.³⁰

While Reichert was eager to build his professional network at HUC, not all the HUC students and faculty earned Reichert’s respect. He frequently expressed shock at the lack of religious observance by many of his HUC peers. Within his boarding house, few said prayers or attended

26 Letter, Irving to father, 27 February 1916, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 5, AJA.

27 Letter, Irving to father, 5 February 1916, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 5, AJA.

28 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 3 October 1916, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 5, AJA.

29 Letter, Irving to parents, 14 October 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

30 Dr. Deutsch appears to have been a supporter of Irving’s, who helped advocate for financial assistance. See letter, Irving to parents, 11 October 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

temple, and several ate forbidden foods.³¹ Reichert disappointedly wrote to his father during Passover:

...even *some* of the professors at college eat bread and other prohibited foods. Dr. Morgenstern informs his class periodically of his eating ham and oysters. They claim and advance as refutation that these laws were meant to be obeyed in spirit, not in reality. Please don't write me an argument condemning them. I have exasperated my patience in argument with a number of them...my own convictions have a ring of a different nature, and I hope always shall.³²

Fortunately for Reichert, there were many Jewish leaders in and passing through Cincinnati that he found worthy of admiration.

A particular highlight of Reichert's first year was the opportunity to meet with a group of visiting rabbis at work on a new translation of the Bible: "I had the honor of meeting these great men. Dr. Enelow came right forward, shook hands with me, and inquired concerning my welfare. He then proceeded to introduce me to Dr. Margolis, Cyrus Adler, Heller, Schechter, and the others..."³³ Reichert relished any opportunity to expand his social network with influential Jewish leaders.

Under President Kohler, a fundamental role of HUC was to prepare students to be "zealous workers in the pulpit," a role that aligned with Reichert's own ambitions.³⁴ In his second year (1914), Reichert was struck by the oratorical abilities of the visiting Dr. J. Leonard Levy, rabbi at Rodef Shalom in Pittsburgh: "I came away completely enthused by the wonderful eloquence of the man, his supreme versatility and majestic self-possession. Keen of wit, he never allows the audience to relax

31 Letters, Irving to parents, 21 September 1914; 26 September 1913, 3 October 1913, both MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

32 Letter, Irving to father, 23 April 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

33 Letter, Irving to parents, 28 October 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA. See also letter, Irving to Natalie, 24 October 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA. For more on this translation of the Bible, see the preface to *The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation with the Aid of Previous Versions and with Constant Consultation of Jewish Authorities* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917).

34 Philipson, *Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume*, 43.

their attention for a moment...³⁵ Later that same year, Reichert had two opportunities to hear Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, the notable Reform rabbi and Zionist leader, first at Dr. Louis Grossman's pulpit and then on campus. Despite their divergent views on Zionism, Reichert was deeply impressed by both the content of Wise's speeches and his delivery. He described the sermon—which concerned the escalating World War—at length to his father:

He clearly emphasized the fact that the Israeli mission is a mission of service, self-appointed, if you will, for to put it in his inimitable epigrammatic style—"God did not choose Israel, but Israel chose God." [...] "At present," he said, "we should cease bothering about what the Kaiser or Czar or Emperor will do for the Jews after this war, the question is, what will we do for ourselves?" I might go on and repeat his entire sermon verbatim, for I drank it all in open-mouthed, but I have not the patience nor the ability to render him justice. He preached a marvelous sermon.³⁶

Reichert concluded that Wise was "even better than Levy, my heretofore ideal." He urged his father: "oh! but why do I tell you all this, for heaven's sake, you who live in New York—GO AND HEAR HIM!"³⁷ Reichert made a point to interact with Wise personally, as he did with other esteemed visitors to HUC. Over time, he successfully parlayed many of these initial introductions into long-term relationships.³⁸

Reichert's ambition also extended to his social and extracurricular life. Several of his roommates were upperclassmen, and he quickly became acquainted with other "HUC boys." He described palling around

35 Letter, Irving to parents, 27 October 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

36 Letter, Irving to father, 20 March 1915, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

37 Letter, Irving to father, 20 March 1915, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA. Solomon Freehof, Reichert's onetime housemate and fellow HUC student, and later his instructor, also recalled Wise's campus visit with excitement. See Joan S. Friedman, "The Making of a Reform Rabbi: Solomon B. Freehof from Childhood to HUC," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 58 (2006): 16.

38 Irving went on to study with Stephen Wise toward his doctorate at the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York and worked with Rabbi Hyman Enelow, Rabbi Cyrus Adler, and others over his career.

with Abba Hillel Silver (a future social welfare activist, leader of the Zionist Organization of America, and rabbi of Cleveland's Temple Tifereth Israel), who admired pictures of Reichert's sister Natalie.³⁹ Reichert was particularly taken with Morris Lazaron, a senior, with whom he would later work in the ACJ.⁴⁰ In Reichert's first year at HUC, he embedded himself in the social life of the school. He successfully navigated fall hazing, entertained the boarding house nightly with his violin, joined the HUC choir, and pitched for the HUC baseball team.⁴¹ He sought out leadership roles (his peers elected him representative of the D grade), was the only freshman participant in a city speech contest, and invested heavily in making connections with the city's elite Jewish families.⁴² Anticipating his father's criticism of his activities (and their costs), Reichert wrote:

You will, no doubt, think that I am neglecting my more important duties for the sake of those which may seem frivolous and unimportant. I shall not here stop to emphasize or contradict the necessity and import of the social functions which devolve upon a student of the Hebrew Union College... I believe that I am centsible [*sic*] enough to realize that every dollar I lay down has to bring its dollar's worth—and more—so I am pretty careful as to the disposition of my time.⁴³

Without Isidor's letters in response, it is unclear whether Reichert's father agreed with the "centsibility" of his son's various social and extracurricular pursuits. Regardless, Reichert was undeterred and remained active throughout his preparatory years (see Figure 1).⁴⁴

39 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 20 January 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

40 Irving wrote that Mr. Lazaron "spoke on the portion of the Torah for the week, and delivered a remarkable speech. He will be a great rabbi someday." Letter, Irving to father, 9 November 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA; Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism*, 66.

41 Correspondence, Irving to family, 28 September 1913, 23 October 1913, 25 November 1913, 10 April 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

42 Letter, Irving to parents, 21 October 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA; Letter, Irving to parents, 5 April 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

43 Letter, Irving to father, 25 November 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

44 Correspondence, letters from Irving to family, 25 November 1913, 10 April 1914, 21 October 1913, 5 April 1914, 24 October 1914, 18 February 1915, 2 April 1915, 18

D grade	C grade	B grade	A grade
<i>HUC choir</i>	<i>HUC choir</i>	<i>Business and</i>	<i>University</i>
<i>HUC</i>	<i>School play</i>	<i>advertising</i>	<i>of Cincinnati</i>
<i>baseball team</i>	<i>Quartet</i>	<i>manager of the</i>	<i>speech team</i>
<i>Elected student</i>	<i>HUC basketball</i>	<i>HUC Monthly</i>	<i>University of</i>
<i>representative of</i>	<i>team</i>	<i>Menorah Society</i>	<i>Cincinnati debate</i>
<i>the D grade</i>	<i>HUC varsity track</i>	<i>Track</i>	<i>team, captain</i>
<i>City speech</i>	<i>Menorah Society</i>	<i>Theater</i>	<i>Tau Kappa Alpha</i>
<i>contestant</i>	<i>UC debate team</i>		<i>honor society</i>
			<i>Sigma Alpha Mu</i>
			<i>fraternity</i>

Figure 1. Irving Reichert's extracurricular activities in preparatory school.

In his final year as a lower school student, speech and debate became a primary focus of Reichert's time and energy. Much of this year's letters focused on an oratorical contest in which he represented the University of Cincinnati. Preparations began in November, and he finalized his topic the following month: "My subject deals with immigration and the future of America—it is a plea for a realization of a Federated Ideal."⁴⁵ In February 1917, Reichert won the State Oratorical Contest in Ada, Ohio.⁴⁶ That same term, he competed for the University of Cincinnati in debate across the region, receiving recognition and awards—and occasionally prize money.⁴⁷ In addition, he participated in an Intercollegiate Temperance Association debate, first winning at regionals, then state, where he advanced to represent Ohio at the national competition.⁴⁸

December 1914, 14 January 1915, 10 April 1915, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA; correspondence, letters from Irving to family, 6 November 1915, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 5, AJA; correspondence, letters from Irving to family, 2 March 1916, 4 March 1916, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 6, AJA; correspondence, letters from Irving to family, 22 January 1917, 26 February 1917, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 7, AJA.

45 Letter, Irving to parents, 28 December 1916, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 6, AJA.

46 "Hebrew Union College," *American Israelite*, 15 February 1917, 6.

47 Correspondence, Irving to parents, 26 February 1917, 4 April 1917, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 7, AJA.

48 "Hebrew Union College," *American Israelite*, 26 April 1917, 6; "University Student Wins Debate Honors," *Cincinnati Commerce Tribune*, 1 April 1917, 9.

Reichert relished his success, writing his family in detail about the commendations he received from judges, opposing coaches, and the press. Following a debate at Purdue in which his team lost, he noted a passage in an article in the Purdue *Exponent*: “The Buckeye (Ohio) contenders had one man, Mr. Irving F. Reichert, who was the best orator on the floor.”⁴⁹ Indeed, success *outside* the classroom proved an irresistible flame for Reichert. When asked by his father if he would receive an HUC scholarship for the following year, he wrote: “I didn’t feel like working for it, and decided that honors such as I now have are worth incommensurably more than a scholarship, great as that honor.”⁵⁰ He followed this pronouncement with the request for additional funds from home.

It was likely unsurprising to Reichert and his father that the HUC board did not award him a scholarship for the following year. The scholarships committee wrote: “On hearing of your success in other directions the Board ventures to suggest to you that perhaps too much attention has been paid by you to extraneous literary exercises which have operated to the detriment of your work in the College.”⁵¹

A Community Divided by Zionism and a Country on the Verge of War

Reichert’s correspondence contains few references to the politics shaping the country and world, save for two subjects: Zionism and the threat of war. From Reichert’s earliest letters home, in which he recounts Dr. Philipson delivering “a good sermon against Zionism,” it is clear that he was raised in an anti-Zionist household and shared those beliefs.⁵² In this era, the belief that the nation-building project of political Zionism was incompatible with Jewish theology was foundational to Reform Judaism.⁵³ Although Reichert shared this perspective, he did not employ

49 Letter, Irving to parents, 22 January 1917, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 7, AJA.

50 Letter, Irving to father, 4 April 1917, Box 73, Folder 7, MS-903, AJA.

51 Letter, HUC Secretary to Irving, 2 July 1917, MS-5, Box D-10, Folder 16, AJA.

52 Letter from Irving to parents, 21 September 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

53 Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism*, 21–22, 29–35. As articulated in a resolution passed by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1893, “[t]he mission of Judaism is spiritual, not political. Its aim is not to establish a state, but to spread the truths of religion

ideological litmus tests in his relationships (as evidenced by his enthusiastic response to Stephen S. Wise).

Influential leaders of HUC—from Wise, its founder, to Kohler, then its president—strongly opposed Zionism, yet perspectives among faculty and students varied.⁵⁴ Reichert's tenure at HUC corresponded with a liberalization of HUC policy toward Zionist views, which was forced, in part, by a student sermon proposed by then junior James Heller. Despite their ideological differences, Reichert considered Heller a friend.⁵⁵

In a long letter home, Reichert provided his father with the backdrop. All upperclassmen were required to preach at the HUC chapel twice a year. The sermon's topic was subject to approval by President Kohler. The sermon Heller proposed “had for its subject the most radical form of Zionism, which doctrines young Heller has had, as you know, for breakfast, dinner and supper while under his parental influence.” According to Reichert, while “ninety-five percent of the students” and “most of the professors, curiously enough, are Zionists also... Zionism was held in horror by Kohler.” Accordingly, President Kohler exercised his power and forbade the sermon. In response,

Jimmie—as Heller is called by we who are intimate with him—did not let the matter drop there... he brought about a joint meeting of several of the rabbis of this country with the Board of Governors of the college, at which meeting Dr. Kohler was eventually compelled to sign a statement to the effect that he would tolerate Zionistic sermons of religious character, and that he would permit the students to invite speakers to discuss Zionism, providing such discussions were held outside the chapel, and conducted by men not antagonistic to the principles of the college.

and humanity throughout the world”; see *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* 5 (1898): 4002.

54 Michael A. Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History, 1875–1985*, rev. ed. (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992), 56, 69, 77. Yael Dadoun, “Zionism in the *Hebrew Union College Monthly*, 1896–1949” (rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 2020), 29–44.

55 Letter from Irving to father, 15 May 1915, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 5, AJA. Heller was the son of Dr. Maximilian Heller, an influential Reform rabbi who held prominent roles with HUC, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the Zionist Organization of America.

Subsequently, “James Heller preached the first Zionist sermon ever delivered within our chapel walls.” Afterward, the student body met to elect officers for the ensuing year. As described by Reichert, a great row unfolded, primarily along ideological lines, between those who wished to see Heller elected as president and those who did not. Reichert was impressed by the civility of the debate:

The nicest part about all this is that they could all shake hands after the meeting and admire each other for their principle and character in so openly coming forth with their convictions. There are no treacherous stabs here, no behind-your-back slander. We wash our dirty clothes out in the open, and when they are sufficiently dried, there’s an end to the matter.⁵⁶

Reichert carried an appreciation for strong and open argumentation throughout his career. Indeed, Heller and Reichert were later on opposing sides of vociferous and hard-fought debates about Zionism. Throughout these fraught years, Reichert stayed in touch with Heller and asked after his well-being.⁵⁷

While Reichert did not find ideological differences disqualifying, he claimed that some faculty members did. Despite the anti-Zionist orientation of the university’s president, Reichert reported that the College’s Zionist faculty frequently penalized students who did not sufficiently parrot their views. He enclosed a copy of one of his papers to Natalie, noting: “I received a 96 on this paper, not because it isn’t worth more, but because it is anti-Zionistic. The instructor...is an ardent Zionist. ‘Nuff ced.”⁵⁸ In Professor Morgenstern’s course, although Reichert earned 100 percent on the final, he claimed that with respect to daily work, students were marked based on “the number of his ideas that we

56 Letter from Irving to father, 15 May 1915, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 5, AJA. See also Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion*, 78.

57 Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism*, 64, 76, 87, 90; Letter, Irving to Victor, 4 July 1954, MS-903, Box 69, Folder 5, AJA. Although Reichert presumes that Heller came to HUC with strong Zionist beliefs, Heller describes crystalizing his beliefs while at HUC. See Joan S. Friedman, “The Pilgrim Rabbi: Reform Rabbis Behaving Badly in a Lost Satire,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 70 (2018): 71.

58 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 19 February 1916, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 6, AJA.

put in them. Had I wanted to expound his theory—he is a Zionist—I could have gotten 100%; but for the sake of a mark I'd rather be true to myself."⁵⁹

In contrast to Reichert's position toward Zionism, which appears consistent across his preparatory years, his orientation toward the emerging World War was less fixed. In a city speech contest during his first year, he offered a religious argument against war.⁶⁰ Yet that same month, he wrote home: "The general atmosphere here is heavy with war-talk... and the martial, patriotic spirit, so contagious, has even permeated into the high schools. Were I able to run a little faster, I might consider going to the war myself."⁶¹ In the spring of his second year, Reichert noted the war "fever" on campus and, although seminary students were exempt from conscription, he asked for his father's consent to join the militia.⁶² There is no subsequent mention of the militia, and by the time the United States entered the war in February of Reichert's last year of preparatory school, his position shifted yet again. In a letter home, Reichert asks about his brother Victor: "Will Vic have to go to war? I *won't*. I don't believe in killing a poor shepherd or factory boy who never did anything to me."⁶³

Questions of Character

The ninety-two letters home from Reichert's first four years at HUC reveal both admirable and questionable elements of his character. By his own account, Reichert was a determined, ambitious, and capable student. Yet there are also indications of poor judgment. For example, in a letter to Natalie, Reichert proudly described some ethically questionable

59 Letter, Irving to parents, 27 February 1916, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 6, AJA.

60 He did not place, but he reported that he had exceeded expectations and earned the respect of his colleagues. Letter, Irving to parents, 5 April 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

61 Letter, Irving to father, 23 April 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

62 Letter, Irving to father, undated, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA. For more on the American Jewish fervor in support of the war effort, see Friedman, "Making," 26–27.

63 Letter, Irving to parents, 29 March 1917, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 7, AJA. Victor Reichert later attended HUC, graduating in 1927 and served Cincinnati's Rockdale Temple for thirty-five years.



Reichert family at Washington Bath at Seagate Coney Island, Summer 1914.
(Courtesy of the author)

“diplomatic work.”⁶⁴ Upon arriving at his boarding house, he agreed to share his room with Sam Rosenberg, a fifteen-year-old HUC student. Yet he soon learned that an acquaintance from New York, Nathan Barasch, would also be attending HUC, and Reichert preferred to room with him. Upon learning that Barasch had arrived and was en route to the boarding house, Reichert rushed home to meet him, where, “it remained for very truly yours to solve the complex difficulty of the intricate situation in a manner admirably adapted to the purses and needs of all.” On the fly, he conjured a story for Rosenberg. He claimed that he and Barasch had just looked at some beautiful rooms at lower prices in a nearby neighborhood—enumerating their many superior qualities to his current lodging—and declared that he and Barasch were moving there the next day.

I then cautiously pointed out that if we moved, Mrs. Binheim would charge him \$30.00 a month for the room, and he would have it alone; and that she would put him out anyhow as she has now a party who would gladly give \$35.00 per month for it. I also told him that I would

64 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 7 October 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

give him \$2.00 if he would move, then Barasch and I would stay and all would be O.K., otherwise B and I would move and he would either have to pay \$30.00 per mo or move. There was but one alternative, as you can see if you figure it out, so Barasch gave him \$2.00 and today he moves out and Barasch moves in. How's that for diplomatic work?⁶⁵

This “diplomatic work” seems to have relied fully on lies and manipulation. Reichert provides no indication that he and Mr. Barasch actually looked at other rooms (indeed he writes that he rushed immediately to the boarding house to find Barasch), that such rooms existed, or that the boarding house proprietress had any other parties interested in his current room. Rather than having “admirably adapted to the purses and needs of all,” Reichert appears principally motivated to advance his own goals to the detriment of the younger Rosenberg, who ultimately moved upstairs to a more expensive room.

It is unclear what the HUC faculty knew about this incident. But, in three of his first four years, Reichert faced questions from HUC faculty regarding his character, all of which impacted his reputation and his ability to earn a much sought-after scholarship. When the faculty met at the end of Reichert's first year to endorse student scholarship applications, “Englander and Morgenstern record vote in negative” for Reichert.⁶⁶ And at the subsequent meeting of the Committee on Scholarships, the committee also declined Reichert's application. The committee records contained the following explanation: “Because of the fact that several members of the Faculty do not consider him to possess the proper qualifications for the ministry.”⁶⁷ The following fall, Reichert learned that the source of faculty concern was an allegation that he had visited a brothel. Reichert addressed the charge directly in a meeting with members of the Board of Trustees. “This, of course, was villainous infamy,” he explained to his father, claiming he had been “exonerated” by the board and was now “assured of my stipend.”⁶⁸ Although Reichert did indeed begin

65 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 7 October 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

66 Faculty minutes, 18 June 1914, MS-5, Box B-3, p. 89, AJA.

67 Committee on Scholarships minutes, 23 June 1914, MS-5, Box D-8, Folder 5, AJA.

68 Letter, Irving to father, 15 November 1914, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

receiving \$30 monthly, HUC's internal reports on this incident are more cautious in tone, noting that funds "will be withheld if the Board receives an unfavorable report as to Reichert in the course of the year."⁶⁹

Although Reichert believed he had redeemed his reputation in his second year, by year's end the school disciplinary committee was investigating him (along with two other students) for another indiscretion, for which he was subsequently reprimanded. As he had hoped to obtain permission to study ahead over the summer and to secure funding for the following year, the second stain on his character in as many years was damning. In his fourth year, months before graduating from HUC's lower school, Reichert once again faced a disciplinary investigation when a Mrs. Kalma Frank alleged that "Reichert had spoken in a derogatory manner about her daughter."⁷⁰ Although the Disciplinary Committee ultimately found this charge to be unfounded, the pattern of spring term disciplinary investigations seemed to take a toll.⁷¹

Each summer, Reichert returned to New York depleted, exhausted, and broke.⁷² Yet, as both his character and merit were questioned, he grew increasingly steadfast in his own beliefs. He displayed this resolve in a letter to Natalie during his third year, in response to some sisterly advice. While the subject of the letter is not explicit, Reichert's stance is clear: "I cannot, as you advise, act 'a part' in order to seek intimacy, to gain the approbation of the ruling powers... I have—I hope—my own personality, my own philosophy of life, and to act otherwise would be to play the hypocrite." He then quoted Polonius from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "This above all, to thine own self be true," and continued: "If by being true to myself, I can at the same time win the plaudits of the gallery, I am duly grateful, but I have no taste for house-play...and unless my character bespeak the man, I am contented to suffer at the hands of those who know me not."⁷³

69 Letter, Englander to Bloom, 20 November 1914, MS-5, Box D-8, Folder 4, AJA.

70 Faculty minutes, 26 March 1917, MS-5, Box B-3, p. 228, AJA.

71 Faculty minutes, 5 May 1917 MS-5, Box B-3, p. 237, AJA.

72 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 2 July 1915, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 5, AJA; Letter, Irving to father, 3 June 1916, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 6, AJA.

73 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 6 November 1915, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 6, AJA; William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 1, scene 3, line 564.

Given that controversy followed Reichert into his collegiate years, and he would later suffer character attacks from those who opposed him throughout his career, this early resolve reads as prophetic.⁷⁴

Collegiate Years: Fall 1917–Spring 1921

Compared to Reichert's preparatory years, his collegiate years are more thinly documented, with half as many letters from this period. Some themes from Reichert's first four years persist into the second: his ambition, appetite, and propensity to find himself on the receiving end of a disciplinary investigation. These years were impacted by a seven-month break to serve the Jewish Welfare Board and a shift in priorities from school to his post-HUC life as a husband and rabbi.

A Chance to Reset

In the fall of 1917, Reichert was among the seven-person HUC collegiate freshman class. The broader collegiate student body included several who would become lions in the Reform movement, including then-junior Jacob Rader Marcus.⁷⁵ Reichert quickly found his footing in college and believed he was on firmer ground with the faculty. In March, with his characteristic optimism, hubris, and ambition, he wrote to his sister that he was earning strong marks in classes and planned to apply to skip the next grade, a feat that apparently no student had attempted. He continued: "Incidentally, you may be glad to hear that my standing with the faculty is now A1. In fact I can almost say I have a pull. And the Board of Governors are very favorably inclined towards me. So at last it appears that I am on the high-road."⁷⁶ While he may have reset his reputation with the faculty, his intention to skip a grade did not come to pass, in part because of his leave for wartime welfare service.

74 Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism*, 104–5; Rosenbaum, *Visions*, 212–13.

75 Marcus, after whom the American Jewish Archives is named, would later be known as the dean of American Jewish historians. Faculty minutes, 20 October 1917, MS-5, Box B-3, pp. 17–18, AJA.

76 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 7 March 1918, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 8, AJA.

A Leave of Absence

In May 1918, the HUC faculty approved Reichert's request to take a leave of absence to join the Jewish Welfare Board.⁷⁷ No letters reveal his motivation for seeking this appointment, but he was certainly not alone in doing so.⁷⁸ Reichert was stationed at Camp Grant, a military garrison located on what is now the site of Chicago-Rockford International Airport. As a member of the Jewish Welfare Board, Reichert worked in concert with organizations such as the YMCA and Salvation Army to provide spiritual, recreational, and social support to the over forty-two thousand soldiers stationed there.⁷⁹

On 21 September 1918, just months after Reichert arrived, Camp Grant experienced the first case of influenza, the epidemic that took the lives of more than fifty million people worldwide, and more than one thousand servicemen at Camp Grant.⁸⁰ In a letter home, he described serving through—and also surviving—the epidemic:

I am gradually getting back my strength and health, and hope to be quite rested in a week or two. The main source of complaint is that this plague is giving me not the slightest chance to take things easy. I'm always on the go—administering last rights, conducting funeral services, comforting bereaved relatives, taking parents out to the hospital, writing reassuring letters or letters of condolence, and doing a thousand acts of personal service necessitated by this fearful scourge.⁸¹

The day after Reichert sent the above letter, the local paper reported that in the previous six days alone, the flu had claimed six hundred lives.⁸²

77 Faculty minutes, 6 May 1918, MS-5, Box B-3, p. 58, AJA.

78 Irving was among five HUC students who took leave in 1918 to enter Welfare Work; nine others, including Marcus, took leave for military service. Faculty minutes, 25 June 1918, MS-5, Box B-3, p. 58, AJA. See also Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion*, 80.

79 Thomas Powers, "Camp Grant and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic," *Nuggets of History* 46, no. 4 (2000): 1, 5.

80 Powers, "Camp Grant," 1, 8.

81 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 7 October 1918, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 8, AJA.

82 Powers, "Camp Grant," 4.

The epidemic burned through Camp Grant like a brushfire; within a month, it was essentially over.⁸³

As the war also came to a close, Reichert's work at the camp involved coordinating a robust program of daily activities to engage and entertain the fifty thousand men awaiting discharge and eager to return home, visiting the wounded in the hospital, and conducting services for those discharged.⁸⁴ During this time, he also began officiating at the Beth-El Congregation in Rockford, where he preached once a month and conducted religious school twice a week. Overall, this period away from college seemed highly impactful: "It's almost all over now. In another month I shall return to college rich in experience, rich in memories, rich in newly made friendships."⁸⁵ After seven months of service, Reichert returned to HUC mid-year, passed his prior-year exams, and rejoined his class.⁸⁶

Professional Ambition

After returning from service, Reichert increasingly focused on his future. He completed his Bachelor of Arts at the University of Cincinnati in June 1919, and, by the start of his junior year, he was pursuing a master's degree.⁸⁷ He remained involved in various extracurricular activities; both he and Marcus served as associate editors for the *Hebrew Union College Monthly*.⁸⁸ Although there was some "unrest and dissatisfaction within the student body" related to inequitable assignment to and payment for religious school instruction, students' increased cost of living, and board interference in student disciplinary matters, these concerns are not reflected in Reichert's letters from this period.⁸⁹ In a letter to his brother,

83 Powers, "Camp Grant," 8.

84 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 24 December 1918, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 6, AJA.

85 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 24 December 1918, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 6, AJA.

86 Faculty minutes, 18 January 1919; Faculty minutes, 28 January 1919, both MS-5, Box B-3, p. 101, AJA.

87 Letter, Irving to Victor, 17 October 1919, MS-903, Box 69, Folder 1, AJA.

88 As reflected on the letterhead of letter, Irving to family, 23 May 1920, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 10, AJA.

89 Letter, Kohler to BOG, 22 December 1919, MS-5, Box D-12, Folder 10, AJA.

he offered: "College is one snap now. The rough road is all behind me; I'm on easy street now."⁹⁰

Although the coursework was not particularly difficult, this time at HUC was not without challenges. Much of Reichert's junior year was impacted by the "Rockford Affair," an incident that underscores his charisma and ambition, as well as ongoing questions regarding his judgment. Two years before graduation, Reichert caught the attention of several area congregations, including Goldsboro, North Carolina and Rockford, Illinois, where he had officiated during his time with the Jewish Welfare Board.⁹¹ All upperclassmen were eligible to conduct bi-weekly services, through which rabbinical students gained experience, built their reputations, and earned supplemental income. Although students could correspond informally about potential opportunities, HUC faculty formally administered all service appointments. In the fall of 1919, Reichert wrote to his brother about his hope for an appointment: "At present I'm angling for Rockford, and judging from the correspondence that has passed between us, it looks as tho I stand a good chance of landing it."⁹² Just days before, however, the HUC faculty appointed the now-senior Marcus to the Rockford temple, despite his having made it clear that "he was loath to go there."⁹³

It was clear to the faculty that Rockford had interest in Reichert, that Reichert had advocated for the Rockford position, and that Marcus did not want the position. However, the faculty was concerned by the timing of Reichert's self-advocacy. In early January 1920, Dr. Henry Englander shared with the faculty a statement from HUC-affiliated Rabbi Jerome Rosen, who wrote that Reichert had asked Rosen to recommend him for Rockford. In response, Rosen reported that he had told Reichert "in very explicit words that the Faculty had already recommended a Senior." Upon reviewing this statement, the faculty summoned both Reichert and Rabbi Rosen to appear before their committee.

90 Letter, Irving to Victor, 17 October 1919, MS-903, Box 69, Folder 1, AJA.

91 Letter, Weil to HUC, 12 June 1919, MS-5, Box B-13, Folder 1, AJA; letter, Irving to Victor, 17 October 1919, MS-903, Box 69, Folder 1, AJA.

92 Letter, Irving to Victor, 17 October 1919, MS-903, Box 69, Folder 1, AJA.

93 Faculty minutes, 13 October 1919, MS-5, Box B-3, pp. 3-4, AJA.

In the subsequent hearing, “Reichert denied the statement of Rosen that he (Reichert) had called on Rosen at the office...and that he had spoken to him at any time” prior to the faculty’s action to fill the Rockford pulpit. Rosen also appeared at the hearing and “insisted upon the correctness” of his previous statement, noting that several students working near his office might verify that Reichert had been there. After questioning, none of the three student workers remembered if Reichert had met with Rosen.⁹⁴ It was Reichert’s word against the rabbi’s. Reichert described his take on the hearing in a letter to his brother:

The point at issue is whether I knew that the College had recommended a student at the time I went up there to officiate. If I did, I acted unethically in trying to cut someone else out. Rabbi Rosen, who officiated in Rockford for the holy days, insists that he told me that Marcus was being considered; I am positive that he never said any such thing. It’s a case for the faculty to determine which of us is lying or mistaken, and since the proof rests on Rosen to demonstrate that he did tell me, it seems as tho I have a clear case.⁹⁵

In the end, Rabbi Rosen rescinded his allegation: “Rabbi Rosen declared that in view of the insistence of Reichert not to have spoken with him in his office about Rockford, he (Rosen) withdraws his charges....”⁹⁶ Subsequently, the faculty soon approved Reichert’s appointment to the Rockford pulpit.⁹⁷ The resolution of this incident leaves some questions unanswered; either Reichert or Rabbi Rosen was untruthful in his testimony.⁹⁸ Was Reichert truly innocent of the charges, or was he simply more persuasive? This incident certainly serves as a testament to Reichert’s staunch determination in pursuit of his goals.

94 Faculty minutes, 7 January 1920, MS-5, Box B-3, pp. 25–26, 30, AJA.

95 Letter, Irving to Victor, 7 January 1920, MS-903, Box 69, Folder 1, AJA.

96 Faculty minutes, 12 September 1920, MS-5, Box B-3, 34, AJA. I believe this document was misdated; the correct date is 14 January 1920.

97 Letter, Kohler to BOG, 23 January 1920, MS-5, Box D-12, Folder 24, AJA.

98 Marcus seems to have concluded the latter. In his journal, he recorded: “Reichert beat me out on the Rockford [position]. I realize now that I was lucky but he was unethical about the whole affair.” Journal entry, 20 March 1921, MS-210, Box 70, Folder 3, AJA.

Reichert relished his rabbinic work at Rockford and seemed to excel in the role. He wrote a particularly effusive account of his first confirmation service, describing it as “not only the most beautiful and inspiring that I have ever attended in all my life, but it was the most impressive that I have ever conducted....”⁹⁹ He continued:

I begin to see compensations in the ministry that transcend all material rewards. From a straggling handful of occasional worshippers, the Rockford congregation has grown in the past year to a thriving, enthusiastic, fairly large group. People are joining the temple without our solicitation. People who never attended services are coming regularly, and are bringing their friends, Jewish and Christian alike.

Indeed, the Rockford placement set the stage for the rest of Reichert’s career.

Matters of the Heart

A desire for intimacy threads through Reichert’s HUC years. In letters home, he frequently expressed a yearning for more meaningful connections with his family of origin. In his later years at HUC, his disappointment in these relationships—particularly with his father—took on a bitter tone. As he reflected to Natalie: “My relations with father are pretty strained.... If he would only write a letter, even if it were a lecture, explaining his attitude, I might find some justification for his dogged silence.... Until he does, the rift between us will continue to widen.”¹⁰⁰ There is little evidence that he and his father bridged the gap between them, certainly not in these years. But Reichert took his yearning for intimacy elsewhere.

After his service with the Jewish Welfare Board, Reichert reignited correspondence with Madeleine Grace Neumann.¹⁰¹ By the end of the spring, they were strongly courting, and, by the late summer, Reichert was head over heels:

99 Letter, Irving to family, 23 May 1920, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 10, AJA.

100 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 7 March 1918, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 8, AJA.

101 The two met while summer camp counselors at Camp Wingdale in New York. Letter, Irving to Natalie, 25 February 1919, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 9, AJA.

I'm working as I never worked before, but then I'm loving as I never loved before. ...I am almost afraid that I sin against God in my idolatry of my wonderful sweetheart. My whole life, every fibre of my being, my every thought and deed and dream and vision—all my consciousness is so absorbed in her.¹⁰²

By then, the pair were secretly engaged.

Despite Reichert's claim to be "working as...never before," HUC records suggest otherwise. He was among a small group of students who took to regularly skipping a social service course. (In their defense, the course was not required for graduation, and an investigation triggered by student complaints found the course to be lacking in substance.)¹⁰³

He was simultaneously racking up unexcused absences in Rabbi Louis Grossmann's ethics course.¹⁰⁴ His disinvestment in school was exacerbated by a spring break visit to see Madeleine (and family) in New York. After returning to HUC, Reichert wrote to his brother:

It was little short of Hell to get back to college once more. The fact that I had to leave New York, where I have my heart, is itself sufficient cause for me to chafe under the restraint that attendance at college imposes, but when, in addition thereto, is added the undeniable circumstances



Reichert and Madeleine Neumann at Camp Wingdale, NY, 1920. (Privately held by Amy Reichert)

102 Letter, Irving to Natalie, 27 August 1919, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 9, AJA.

103 Faculty minutes, 21 January 1920, MS-5, Box B-3, p. 35; faculty minutes, 22 March 1920, Box B-3, pp. 60–63; faculty minutes, 29 March 1920, Box B-3, pp. 69–70, all AJA.

104 Faculty minutes, 18 February 1920, MS-5, Box B-3, p. 45, AJA.

that our classes here are absolutely profitless and decidedly boring, you can easily realize my grounds for discontent. The last two years at H.U.C. are absolutely wasted. They are a joke...¹⁰⁵

Reichert seems to have barely made it through his junior year. The faculty wrote him up for unsatisfactory or incomplete work in a theology course with President Kohler. After his exegesis instructor refused his request to take a final exam early, and he skipped town without taking the exam, the faculty again censured him.¹⁰⁶ They provided him one day to take the exam in the fall, warning that if he failed to appear, the faculty would remove him from the senior class.

Preparing to Launch

Luckily for Reichert, when he returned to Cincinnati for his senior year, it was alongside Madeleine who was now his wife. As such, his spirits, focus, and determination to complete his education were much improved.¹⁰⁷ He continued to officiate bi-weekly in Rockford and revelled in the life he and Madeleine were building.¹⁰⁸ The two coauthored a newspaper publication for their relatives entitled “The Squeeze and Snooze Gazette,” described in the third edition as: “An occasional journal exclusively dedicated to the amorous adventures of a monkey and a nut thru the mysterious mazes of marital meanderings. Published by the nut himself...”¹⁰⁹

Although Reichert’s friends were stirring up trouble at HUC—writing “exasperating” editorials in the student paper that reveal “a spirit of rebelliousness against the College, its authorities and its very principles”—Reichert stayed out of the fray.¹¹⁰ In retrospect, his earlier run-ins with the college leaders do not appear to have been more frequent

105 Letter, Irving to Victor, 18 April 1920, MS-903, Box 69, Folder 2, AJA.

106 Faculty minutes, 22 March 1920, MS-5, Box B-3, p. 56; faculty minutes, 11 June 1920, Box B-3, p. 99, both AJA.

107 Irving Frederick Reichert and Madeleine Grace Neumann were married 2 September 1920 in New York.

108 Letter, Irving to family, 13 November 1920, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 10, AJA.

109 Letter, Irving to family, 25 October 1920, MS-903, Box 73, Folder 10, AJA.

110 Letter, Kohler to BOG, 30 November 1920, MS-5, Box D-12, Folder 24, AJA.

or severe than those of his peers. Many faculty members understood disciplinary intervention in the lives of students as expected and developmental rather than rare and exceptional. This was perhaps most clearly articulated by Dr. Grossman in his argument against the expulsion of the students investigated for their “exasperating editorials”: “We have assumed responsibility about these boys on the first days we admitted them. We are sponsors for them by as much as we are their teachers.”¹¹¹ Grossman warned the faculty against overwielding a discipline of intimidation, noting that such practices generate among students a “fear to have opinions other than the prescribed,” which ran counter to the mission of the university. Grossman concluded: “Some pupils who are vigorous in thought and insistent on independence, and sometimes even insubordinate, turn out to be strong intellectually and morally.” The fingerprints of this philosophy are seen in the faculty’s engagement with Reichert over the course of his time at HUC.

Interestingly, Reichert’s letters home from his collegiate years provide no reference to Zionism, although it was an ascendent geopolitical force. The Balfour Declaration, which provided British support for the creation of a Jewish nation in Palestine, was signed in the fall of 1917, during his freshman year. Reichert served on the editorial board of the *HUC Monthly*, which published both Zionist and anti-Zionist perspectives during his tenure.¹¹² At the end of his junior year, President Kohler implored the HUC Board of Governors to protest the development of a Jewish settler-nation in Palestine. Although he surely was aware of the developments in the world and on campus, his letters home focus solely on his personal life.

In his final years at HUC, Reichert continued to revel in his rabbinic work at Rockford and worked diligently on his thesis under the mentorship of Dr. Deutsch.¹¹³ From Reichert’s earliest days in Cincinnati, he revered Deutsch. Indeed, following his first class with the professor, Reichert declared: “Deutsch is the greatest scholar I have ever met.”¹¹⁴ Deutsch himself became a polarizing figure during World War I. Austrian-born

111 Faculty minutes, 10 December 1920, MS-5, Box B-3, pp. 39–40, AJA.

112 Dadoun, “Zionism,” 32–37.

113 Faculty minutes, 4 January 1921, MS-5, Box B-3, AJA.

114 Letter, Irving to parents, 14 October 1913, MS-903, Box X-536, Folder 1, AJA.

and -educated, Deutsch aligned with pacifist organizing during the war. In 1917, he publicly refused to answer the question, “Who do you want to win this war?,” which triggered a campaign for his removal from the college, an effort supported by some of his colleagues.¹¹⁵ Although none of Reichert’s letters address this episode, that he sought out Dr. Deutsch as a thesis advisor demonstrates his continued respect for the scholar.

Reichert’s thesis—a detailed accounting of the Dreyfus affair, in which the French courts wrongly convicted a Jewish officer in the French army of treason—offered a rich analysis of the dangers of contemporary antisemitism and a robust argument for the separation of church and state.¹¹⁶ Reichert concluded his thesis with the statement: “the only place where the Jew can find justice is in—the dictionary.”¹¹⁷ On 6 April 1921, the faculty approved Reichert’s completed thesis. He was ordained on 19 June 1921, among the last class to graduate under President Kohler.¹¹⁸

Soon after, Reichert accepted the pulpit at Temple Israel of Jamaica, New York, trading states of residence with his brother Victor, who that fall began his rabbinical education at HUC. Reichert was devastated by news of Dr. Deutsch’s death four months after his ordination. He mourned that his brother would not have the opportunity to study under his beloved mentor, writing to Victor: “How I regret that you have been denied the beautiful influence of Deutsch!”¹¹⁹

Indeed, although Reichert’s years at HUC were not without tumult, his assessment of the contributions of the school matured with distance. Writing to Victor as he navigated his first term, Reichert described the College as “a good workshop equipped with excellent tools and he who would work therein can find all the encouragement and material that he needs.” He continued:

There are undoubtedly, an infinite number of minor vexations and petty

115 Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion*, 78–81.

116 Irving Reichert, “The Dreyfus Affair” (rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1921).

117 Reichert, “Dreyfus Affair,” 145.

118 Faculty minutes, 6 April 1921, MS-5, Box B-3, p. 77, AJA.

119 Letter, Irving to Victor, 20 November 1921, MS-903, Box 69, Folder 2, AJA.

irritations that will bother you—for even a flea can vex an elephant—but try to make the best of the good and the least of the bad, and I feel sure that you will find happiness in your work.¹²⁰

Conclusion

Reichert's eight years at HUC indelibly shaped his craft, his civic sense, and his character. He relished exposure to the great Jewish scholars and orators of his time, both those employed by the College and those passing through as guests. Reichert used these years to develop his own oratorical style, one that would later earn him regular broadcasts on coast-to-coast radio.¹²¹ His education and welfare service shaped his orientation to social welfare, setting the stage for a robust commitment to service and engagement in the most pressing social issues of his time.¹²² And through the kind influence and stern discipline of HUC faculty, Reichert forged his character. He learned, at times, to moderate the more fervent aspects of his personality toward a more effective charisma, he gained a high tolerance for ideological debate and personal challenge, and he developed a personal code that was often unyielding in pursuit of his intended goals—traits that would at turns steel and hobble him over the course of an influential and controversial career.

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120 Letter, Irving to Victor, 20 November 1921, MS-903, Box 69, Folder 2, AJA.

121 Rosenbaum, *Visions*, 183.

122 Rosenbaum, *Visions*, 186–94.



Identity card issued by the Gießen police department to Julius Lewy and his wife Hildegard on the day of their marriage, 28 March 1928.
 (Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

The Assyriologists Julius and Hildegard Lewy: Intellectual Portraits of Two Refugee Scholars

PETER RAULWING

For Samuel and Lesha Greengus and Elizabeth Petuchowski

The Assyriologist Julius Lewy (1895–1963) and his wife, Hildegard, née Schlesinger (1903–1968), arrived at Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati in early 1936 as part of the HUC Refugee Program, which brought eleven scholars who had been persecuted by the Nazis to the College between 1935 and 1942.¹ The arrival of the Lewys at HUC marked the end of an odyssey through England, France, and the East Coast of the United States. At the same time, it meant a new life in a sheltered environment, to which they adapted quickly. While HUC

*Aliza Spicehandler, the AJA archivist who processed the Lewy papers, proved to be a meticulous and invaluable help. Dana Herman, Joe Weber, and the AJA team were tremendously accommodating when I was a fellow. Abigail Bacon and Jordan Finkin at the Klau Library kindly provided access to the Lewys' private library. Heidi Herr at Johns Hopkins University Sheridan Libraries and University Museums provided me with the correspondence of Paul Haupt covering the time between 1883 and 1884. Elizabeth Petuchowski graciously shared her reminiscences of the Lewys from her time in Cincinnati. Samuel Greengus made me aware of the Lewy papers at the AJA at the end of December 2022 and supported my research every step of the way; Professor Greengus and his wife, Lesha, not only made me feel at home during my stays in Cincinnati but made it possible for me to write this article.

1 Michael A. Meyer, "The Refugee Scholars Project of the Hebrew Union College," in *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, ed. Bertram W. Korn (Waltham, MA: American Jewish Society, 1976), 359, 360 on Lewy. For a different perspective, see Felix Steilen, "Berlin in Cincinnati—Scenes from the End of the 'Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums,'" *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 69, no. 1 (2024): 145–162 and Cornelia Wilhelm, *The Last Generation of the German Rabbinate: German Refugee Rabbis in the United States, 1933–2010* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2024), 48–49, 51, 56–57, 112, 115–116 on Julius Lewy.

offered Julius Lewy a most welcome continuation of his academic career, it gave his wife, who had earned a doctorate in natural sciences in 1926, the opportunity to advance her career change and become an expert in cuneiform studies under the aegis of her husband.²

Julius Lewy, professor of “Semitic Philology” and “Ancient Oriental History” at Gießen University, had been a recognized expert in his field since the 1920s.³ He was a historian of the ancient Near East and scholar of Old Testament who specialized in Old Assyrian cuneiform texts from Kültepe in central Anatolia dating to the first half of the second millennium BCE. In 1940, he was appointed full professor of semitic languages and biblical history at HUC.

Especially during her time in Cincinnati, Hildegard Lewy refined her Assyriological studies under her husband to such an extent that, in 1938, she felt comfortable enough to publish her first academic paper, a brief note on a measure of area listed in cuneiform texts from Nuzi (Yorghana Tepe in northern Iraq).⁴ Her scholarly output continued at a steady pace for the next thirty years, establishing her as a serious Assyriologist. Meanwhile, the number of studies, particularly text editions, published

2 For her doctorate, see Hildegard Schlesinger, “Über den Zerfall einiger Metallhalogenide im Licht” (PhD diss., Gießen University, 1926). The word “cuneiform,” first documented in the early eighteenth century, derives from the horizontal, vertical, and oblique-shaped wedges created by pressing a reed or wooden stylus with a triangular-shaped edge into the soft clay. After a text had been written on a clay tablet, it was dried in the sun or hardened by firing; see C. B. F. Walker, *Reading the Past: Ancient Writing from Cuneiform to the Alphabet* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press and British Museum, 1990).

3 Julius Lewy, curriculum vitae, typewritten, undated (ca. 1935), MS-278, box 20, folder 4, Julius and Hildegard Lewy Papers, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter AJA).

4 Hildegard Lewy, “La mesure de l’*imêru* dans les textes de Nuzi,” *Revue d’assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale* 35 (1938): 33–35. *Revue d’assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale* was edited by Jean-Vincent Scheil and François Thureau-Dangin starting with vol. 7 no. 2 (1910), colleagues whom the Lewys knew from Julius’s time in Paris editing cuneiform texts in the collection of the Louvre. On Scheil, Thureau-Dangin, and *Revue d’assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale* see Franz Heinrich Weißbach, “Jean-Vincent Scheil zum Gedächtnis,” *Archiv für Orientforschung* 13 (1939–1941): 353–356, here 354; Dominique Charpin, *En quête de Ninive. Des savants français à la découverte de la Mésopotamie (1842–1975)* (Paris: Les belles lettres, Collège de France, 2023), 17–20, 193–202, 207–211.

by her husband decreased from the 1940s on, given his administrative tasks and teaching obligations at HUC; these allowed him little time for the travel to Europe and Turkey that was necessary in order to edit Old Assyrian cuneiform texts in museum and institute collections.⁵ Together, the Lewys spent nearly three productive decades at HUC and published over two hundred academic studies throughout their careers.⁶

The purpose of this article is to introduce the refugee scholars Julius and Hildegard Lewy to an interdisciplinary audience, with an emphasis on biographical information based mostly on the newly discovered and processed Lewy archives housed at The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA).⁷ It further aims to fill the gap of relatively sparse information currently available about these two Assyriologists. It highlights biographical details regarding Julius Lewy's journey to becoming an Assyriologist, especially how he was influenced by the Assyriologists Paul Haupt and Friedrich Delitzsch.⁸ At the same time we learn about

5 The volumes of the *Catalogue of the Hebrew Union College* give an overview of the courses Julius Lewy taught over the years.

6 A combined bibliography of work by Julius and Hildegard Lewy will be published separately as part of a forthcoming study on Julius's route to becoming an Assyriologist, the influence of Paul Haupt, and his time studying with Friedrich Delitzsch, which will cover the period from 1910 to 1926.

7 The Julius and Hildegard Lewy Papers in the AJA contain more sources on Julius than on Hildegard Lewy, especially up to the 1920s, which helps explain the clear focus on her husband in some chapters.

8 Haupt was an Assyriologist, a scholar of Semitic languages, and Old Testament studies at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. He received his doctorate in 1878 under Delitzsch in Leipzig and was appointed Professor of Semitic Languages at Johns Hopkins University in 1884. See Peter Machinist, "Paul Haupt: Between Two Worlds," in *From Mari to Jerusalem and Back: Assyriological and Biblical Studies in Honor of Jack Murad Sasson*, ed. Annalisa Azzoni et al. (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020), 191–221 and bibliography cited there. Zimmern was an Assyriologist, Semitist, and Protestant theologian at Leipzig University. Michael P. Streck, "Geschichte der Altorientalistik an der Universität Leipzig," in *Geschichte der Universität Leipzig 1409–2009*, ed. Ulrich von Hehl, Uwe John und Manfred Rudersdorf, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2009), 4:345–366, here 4:349–353 and bibliography cited there. Delitzsch was the first German scholar holding a chair for Assyriology and a scholar of Semitic and Indo-European languages. Streck, "Geschichte," 345–349; Manfred Müller, "Die Keilschriftwissenschaften an der Leipziger Universität bis zur

the trained natural scientist Hildegard Schlesinger, since 1928 married to Julius Lewy, becoming a couple dedicating their lives to the study of cuneiform tablets. Their stories illustrate not only their individual achievements but also the broader experience of two Jewish intellectuals navigating the upheavals in the first half of the twentieth century in Europe.

Julius Lewy: Early Life

“I was born on the 16th of February 1895 at Berlin-Charlottenburg as the son of Dr. med. Benno Lewy; I am a Jew.”⁹ With these sentences, Julius Moritz Lewy introduced himself in a curriculum vitae circulated after his dismissal from Gießen University in the summer of 1933.¹⁰ He

Vertreibung Landsbergers im Jahre 1935,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig. Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe* 28 (1979): 67–86. Information on the biographies and bibliographies of these scholars has been kept to a minimum for reasons of space, but readers might consult the following works as a starting point: Johannes Renger, “Altorientalistik,” in *Kulturwissenschaften und Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Jürgen Elvert and Jürgen Nielsen-Sikora, *Historische Mitteilungen* 72 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2019), 469–502; Renger, “Die Geschichte der Altorientalistik und der vorderasiatischen Archäologie in Berlin von 1875–1945,” in *Berlin und die Antike. Architektur, Kunstgewerbe, Malerei, Skulptur, Theater und Wissenschaft, vom 16. Jahrhundert bis heute (...)*, ed. by Willmuth Arenhövel and Christa Schreiber (Berlin: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, 1979), 151–192; Renger, “German Assyriology: A Discipline in Troubled Waters,” in *The Betrayal of the Humanities: The University during the Third Reich*, ed. Bernard M. Levinson and Robert P. Erickson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 2022), 306–331; Ekkehard Ellinger, *Deutsche Orientalistik zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus 1933–1945* (Edingen-Neckarhausen: deux mondes, 2006), 461–542 (“Kurzbiographien der Orientalisten”).

9 Copy of the English translation of a 1933 curriculum vitae of Julius Lewy, ca. 1935, MS-278, box 2, folder 4, AJA. See also the certified copy of the birth certificate of Julius Moritz Lewy, dated 16 February 1895, issued by the registry office (*Standesamt*) in Berlin-Charlottenburg, 17 August 1933, MS-278, box 55, folder 2, AJA.

10 Biographical information on Julius Lewy can be found in a number of often scattered publications, most of which are incomplete and, except for those by Ernst Weidner and Karl Hecker, do not draw on primary sources. Jakob J. Petuchowski, “In memoriam Julius Lewy,” *Central Conference of the American Rabbis Journal* 11 no. 3 (October 1963): 4–5; Ernst Weidner, “Julius Lewy. (16. Februar 1895 bis 19. Juni 1963),” *Archiv für Orientforschung* 21 (1966): 262–263; “Dr. Julius Lewy,” *New York Times*, 21 June 1963, p. 29; *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933–1945 / International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Emigrés 1933–1945*, ed. Werner Röder and Herbert A.



Julius Lewy (top row, middle) with classmates at the Mommsen-Gymnasium, ca. 1912.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

was the only child of Benno Lewy, MD, and his wife Carola, née Schiff (†1947). His father was a well-established physician specializing in heart diseases, whose medical expertise and social standing provided Julius with educational opportunities that would shape his future scholarly career.¹¹

Strauss, 2 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983), 773; Ellinger, *Deutsche Orientalistik*, 505; Hanisch, *Ausgegrenzte Kompetenz*, 53, portrait on 52; Hanisch, *Die Nachfolger der Exegeten*, 196; Karl Hecker, “Julius Lewy,” *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 6: 608–609; Hecker, “Julius Lewy,” in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 28 vols. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1985), 14:419 (<https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd116977922.html#ndbcontent>); Hecker, “Julius Lewy (1895–1963) / Assyriologe,” in *Gießener Gelehrte in der 1. Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hans Georg Gundel, Peter Moraw, and Volker Press, 2 vols., Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Hessen in Verbindung mit der Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen 35 (Marburg: Elwert, 1982), 2:626–633; Utz Maas, “Lewy, Julius,” *Verfolgung und Auswanderung deutschsprachiger Sprachforscher, 1933–1945*, <https://www.zflprojekte.de/sprachforscher-im-exil/index.php/catalog/1/319-lewy-julius>. This website is based on Maas, *Dokumentation. Biobibliographische Daten A–Z*. Vol. 1 of *Verfolgung und Auswanderung deutschsprachiger Sprachforscher 1933–1945* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2010). Hayim Tadmor and S. David Sperling, “Lewy, Julius,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd edition, 22 vols. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), vol. 12, p. 771.

11 Julius Lewy, curriculum vitae, typewritten, undated (ca. 1935), MS-278, box 20, folder 4, AJA. On Benno Lewy’s medical background, see Benno Lewy, *Die Compensirung der Klappenfehler des Herzens. Versuch einer mathematischen Theorie* (Berlin: Springer, 1890) and

The family's comfortable Berlin life allowed Julius to attend the Mommsen-Gymnasium in Charlottenburg where he received an excellent education.¹² The main subjects taught were German, Latin, Greek, French, English, history, mathematics, and physics. A postcard from Haupt to Benno Lewy from 1 August 1910 testifies that Julius also learned Hebrew: "The days when I could converse in Hebrew are over; I have not had practice for more than 30 years; your son probably speaks better than I do."¹³ In fact, Julius had studied Hebrew not at school, but privately with Heinrich Eliakim Loewe, librarian of the Berlin University Library, orientalist, publicist, philosopher, and one of the pioneers of Zionism in Germany, who would later write a short newspaper article for the fiftieth anniversary of Benno and Carola Lewy's wedding.¹⁴ Annual reports for the respective school years provide fascinating insights into the curriculum of the humanistic Mommsen-Gymnasium, which also graded "behavior" (*Betragen*), "attention" (*Aufmerksamkeit*), "order" (*Ordnung*), "handwriting" (*Schrift*), and "gymnastics" (*Turnen*). After graduating from a humanistic Gymnasium, the students were well prepared to study at university.¹⁵

As this type of information does not usually survive in the form of written notes, especially not for time attending school, a draft of an essay

Lewy, "Die Regulierung der Blutbewegung im Gehirn," *Archiv für pathologische Anatomie* 123 (1891): 629–630. He is quoted as an authority almost two dozen times in Theodor von Jürgensen, Leopold von Schrötter, and Ludolf von Krehl, *Diseases of the Heart*, ed. George Dock, trans. Alfred Stengel (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1908).

12 See the annual report titled *Mommsen-Gymnasium der Stadt Charlottenburg. 3. Bericht über das Schuljahr 1903–1904* (Charlottenburg, 1904) and the update on the new building at Wormser Straße 11 (1). See also plates 3 und 4 with photographs of the main view of the building, the entrance hall, and the auditorium.

13 Postcard from Paul Haupt to Benno Lewy, 1 August 1910, MS-278, box 45, folder 1, AJA.

14 *Blumenthals Neuste Nachrichten*, Friday 4 July 1941, with a note by Loewe on the fiftieth anniversary of Benno and Carola Lewy's wedding; see also MS-278, box 7, folder 4, AJA. On Loewe's background, see the correspondence of Julius Lewy and Loewe, MS-278, box 4, folder 19, AJA.

15 See, for example, *Mommsen-Gymnasium der Stadt Charlottenburg. 10. Bericht über das Schuljahr 1910–1911* (Charlottenburg, 1911), emphasis added; abbreviated information in the original has also been adapted for context.

by Julius Lewy, dated 16 December 1912, is of crucial importance for his future life. Here the seventeen-year-old Lewy not only reflects on his broad education at the Mommsen-Gymnasium, but also sets down in writing—as it seems for the first time—his career aspiration: “After my graduation I am thinking of devoting myself to university, full of gratitude to the Mommsen Gymnasium, to which I owe so much, to study Assyriology.”¹⁶ This draft is also where he mentions for the first time outside of his family circle the influence Haupt had on his career, although he ultimately chose not to name Haupt in the version submitted to the classicist and expert on Xenophon, Alfred Przygode (*1862), at the time headmaster of the Mommsen-Gymnasium. The conclusion of the essay did eventually find its way into his graduation certificate from the Mommsen-Gymnasium, dated 17 February 1913: “The undersigned examination commission has therefore awarded him the certificate of maturity as he is now leaving the *Gymnasium* to study Assyriology and dismisses him with best wishes for his future well-being.”¹⁷

Paul Haupt’s Influence on Lewy Becoming an Assyriologist

When Julius Lewy graduated from the Mommsen-Gymnasium in February 1913, he—as seen above—had already developed a fascination with ancient Near Eastern Semitic languages, Arabic, and Assyriology. His interest led him to study Assyriology, a decision he made already before graduation. His curiosity in ancient Semitic languages went back to his father, who “originally studied Oriental Studies and was a college friend” of Haupt, who in 1883 became a professor of Semitic languages at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and served as director of the Oriental Seminary there from 1886 to 1926.¹⁸ Haupt and the elder Lewy remained life-long friends and saw each other when Haupt and his family spent the spring and summer months in Germany prior to World War I.

16 All translations from the German correspondence and documents are mine unless otherwise stated. MS-278, box 45, folder 2, AJA.

17 Excerpt from Julius Lewy’s graduation certification from the *Mommsen-Gymnasium*, 17 February 1912, MS-278, box 7, folder 3, AJA.

18 Newspaper clipping, *Papers of the Association of German and Austrian Immigrants* [Hebrew], no. 28, 11 July 1941, p. 6, MS-278, box 45, folder 4, AJA.

The Lewy papers in the AJA contain some of the correspondence between Haupt and Benno and Julius Lewy, only a little more than thirty letters, postcards, and drafts from 1881 through 1927. A 1963 letter from Hildegard Lewy to Jacob Rader Marcus, founder of the AJA, accounts for why there is so little and how the AJA came to have some of it in the collection. She describes how family correspondence was destroyed in 1933 by her father-in-law, when she arrived just in time to save a bundle of letters from Julius Lewy to Haupt that Benno Lewy was about to throw into the fire:

Dear Dr. Marcus:

Your good letter of July 3 reached me this morning, and I hasten to tell you that I will be only too glad to give you for the Archives whatever among the papers left by Julius you find of interest. He was Friedrich Delitzsch's last student, and he did correspond with him after Delitzsch retired and left Berlin.¹⁹ However, I am not sure how much of this correspondence survived the year 1933 in the course of which we as well as my parents-in-law left Germany.²⁰ Whereas we took everything along that was in our house, my parents-in-law, who went to Palestine, took hardly anything along from Berlin. They burnt all old papers and correspondences that was in the house, and I remember very distinctly that I grabbed a pack of letters to Julius from Paul Haupt who was professor in Baltimore until 192[6] when my father-in-law was just about to throw them in the fire.²¹

Even though only a small part of the presumably extensive correspondence written between 1912 and 1926 could be rescued, Julius Lewy and Haupt were—only interrupted by the Great War—in regular contact by letter for decades. The extant letters shed light on how Julius Lewy was influenced by Haupt, his first mentor, in the process of becoming an Assyriologist. Among the Lewy papers is also a short

19 MS-278, box 1, folder 14, AJA.

20 MS-278, box 48, folder 1, AJA.

21 Hildegard Lewy to Jacob R. Marcus, Cincinnati, 5 July 1963, MS-278, box 4, folder 21, AJA.

exchange of letters between Julius Lewy and Haupt's widow, Minnie.²²

The correspondence in the AJA can be divided into three phases. During the first phase, which extends from 1912 to 1914, Haupt guided and advised the young Julius on how to best decide where to study Assyriology—at which university to enroll before, during and after his one-year military service, as well as which lectures and seminars to attend, and by which professors. In 1912, Haupt counseled the Lewys that Julius should begin his studies with him in Baltimore in the fall of 1913 if he could defer his military service. If, on the other hand, he would do his military service immediately after graduating from the Mommsen-Gymnasium, he should attend lectures during his free time until his release around Easter 1914, at which point he should enroll in Berlin—Haupt refers to it as a *Reiseseimester* (“travel semester”)—and start his studies in Baltimore in the fall of 1914. There he would most likely be able to get financial support in the form of grants.²³

A third alternative was discussed for the summer of 1913. If Lewy were to begin his military service on 1 October, then he should go to Berlin at the end of the summer semester and copy cuneiform texts in the Near Eastern Department of the Royal Museums. The former

22 On 9 June 1884, Haupt married Margaret Giede of Albany, New York, who died of a heart attack just a few weeks later on 19 August. Paul Haupt to Daniel Coit Gilman, 25 August 1884, folder 1.2133, Daniel Coit Gilman Papers, 1841–1907, Series 1: Correspondence, Johns Hopkins University Special Collections, Baltimore, MD. On 8 March 1886, Haupt led her sister, Minnie Giede, to the altar. The couple had a son and two daughters. The last piece of correspondence in the Lewy collection is a draft letter to Minnie Haupt from September 1927, in which Julius Lewy kindly asks the widow and her children to accept a dedication “to the memory of Paul Haupt” in his study on the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah.

23 Paul Haupt to Benno Lewy, 28 May 1912, MS-278, box 45, folder 1, AJA. On the *Reiseseimester*, see, e.g., August Friedrich Fetz, “Ein Blick in die Zukunft 2407 (1907),” in *Die Schule der Zukunft vor 100 Jahren. 7 vergessene klassische deutsche Science Fiction Erzählungen aus den Jahren 1877–1911*, ed. Detlef Münch, Beiträge zur Bibliographie und Rezension der deutschen Science Fiction 15 (Dortmund: Synergen, 2007), 41–58, here 48: “However, I forgot to tell you that our school year is divided into the—‘*Schulsemester*’ (school semester) and the—‘*Reiseseimester*’ (travel semester). The school semester begins on October 1. The travel semester runs from April 1 to September 30. Let’s not argue about whether this travel semester should be considered a vacation semester.”

Haupt student, George Victor Schick, the Semitist and Lutheran biblical scholar, would be able to help with the project.²⁴ For the time between April and September 1913, Haupt compiled a detailed program of studies for the summer semester and the winter semester of 1913–1914, drawing on the information in the German University Calendar with the goal for Julius to enroll at a university of his choice.²⁵ In addition, Lewy was instructed not to neglect his English.²⁶ With the exception of a postcard from August 1916, there is no correspondence between Haupt and the Lewys during the war.

The second phase covers the period from 1919 to 1921, during which Julius Lewy resumed his studies and earned his PhD in Berlin. At the beginning of the second phase, Haupt was still available to provide advice and support to his ‘long-distance student,’ but it soon became apparent that Lewy went his own way in Berlin and only partially adopted Haupt’s advice, as he tried to explain in a detailed letter to Haupt in August 1920.²⁷ Nevertheless, after his doctorate and *Habilitation*, Julius Lewy was recognized by Haupt as a ‘junior partner,’ so to speak, in ancient oriental philology and history. Lewy’s *Habilitation* (1922) in Gießen and his appointment as associate professor there until Haupt’s death in 1926 can be seen as the third phase.²⁸

24 Paul Haupt to Benno Lewy, 16 June 1913, MS-278, box 45, folder 1, AJA.

25 Paul Haupt to Benno Lewy, 10 April, 12 April, 16 June, 29 August, 17 September, and 30 September 1913, MS-278, box 45, folder 1, AJA. For the German University Calendar, see *Die Universitäten im Deutschen Reich. Part 1 of Deutscher Universitätskalender* (Leipzig: Barth, 1913).

26 Paul Haupt to Benno Lewy, 10 April 1914, MS-278, box 45, folder 1, AJA.

27 Handwritten draft of a letter from Julius Lewy to Paul Haupt, 14 September 1920, MS-278, box 45, folder 2, 5 pages, AJA.

28 Haupt’s life-long relationship with the Lewy family complicates the question of Haupt’s often latent antisemitism, which is documented as early as the late 1870s and early 1880s, especially in connection with his relationship with the theologian and orientalist Paul de Lagarde and the publicist and translator Ludwig Schemann, a central representative of the *Völkisch* movement who had contributed significantly to the popularization of the French racial theorist Arthur de Gobineau since the late nineteenth century. On Haupt’s antisemitism, see Felix Wiedemann, “Draht nach Baltimore. Paul de Lagarde und Paul Haupt—Antisemitismus und Kolonialismus,” in *Der Nachlass Paul de Lagarde. Orientalistische Netzwerke und antisemitische Verflechtungen*, ed. Heike Behlmer, Thomas L.

Julius Lewy's Studies in Leipzig and Military Service, 1913–1918

In the summer semester of 1913, Julius Lewy began his formal university studies in Leipzig under distinguished professors such as Heinrich Zimmern and August Fischer, two of the most renowned scholars of their time; and Franz Heinrich Weißbach, an Assyriologist, librarian, and scholar of Old Persian. Lewy settled into Leipzig without any issues, but he was surprisingly somewhat disappointed regarding the teaching methods and content of the classes he attended. He mentioned multiple times in letters to his parents that some of the lectures and classes did not contain anything that he had not learned at the Mommsen-Gymnasium or knowledge he gained during his extracurricular activities:

[1] I owe most of my knowledge to my previous reading, and what do Weissbach and Zimmer offer me? It's a waste of money for the lectures!

Gertzen, and Orell Witthuhn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 45–67, here 53 = Paul Haupt to Ludwig Schemann, 28 December 1886, “Nachlass Schemann NL 12/1999,” University Library Freiburg: “Here [in the United States], antisemitism can only be addressed in private, and that is happening to the best of our abilities. It is virtually impossible to obtain material contributions for this. We first have to prepare the ground through Wagner. In general, however, people here are much more anti-Semitic than in Germany.” On Paul de Lagarde (born Paul Anton Bötticher, 1827–1891; since 1854 de Largarde), see Ulrich Sieg, *Germany's Prophet: Paul de Lagarde and the Origins of Modern Antisemitism* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2013); Thomas Gertzen, “Orientalismus und Antisemitismus. Vergleichende Betrachtungen zu Ernest Renan, Paul de Lagarde, Eduard Meyer und Friedrich Delitzsch,” in *Der Nachlass Paul de Lagarde. Orientalistische Netzwerke und antisemitische Verflechtungen*, ed. Heike Behlmer, Thomas L. Gertzen, and Orell Witthuhn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 167–190. On Lagarde as an orientalist, see Suzanne L. Marchand, “Paul de Lagarde: The Orientalism of the Future and the Positivism of the Present,” in *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship*, ed. Suzanne L. Marchand (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 168–174. On Ludwig Schemann (1852–1938), see Julian Köck, “Schemann, Ludwig” in *NDB (Neue Deutsche Biographie)*, 1 July 2023, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/117213012.html#dbcontent> and bibliography cited there. On the *Völkisch* movement, see Ina Ulrike Paul, “Paul Anton de Lagarde,” in *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung' 1871–1918*, ed. Uwe Puschner, Walter Schmitz, and Justus H. Ulbricht (Munich: Saur, 1996), 45–93. Finally, on Arthur Count de Gobineau (1816–1882), see Julian Köck, “Joseph Arthur de Gobineau. Rezeption in Deutschland und Umdeutung zum Propheten der völkischen Bewegung,” *Jahrbuch der Hambach-Gesellschaft* 19 (2011–2012): 117–135.



Postcard of Julius Lewy's unit in Hammelburg, Bavaria sent 10 March 1914 (Lewy is shown as the third from the left in the top row). (Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Julius Lewy serving in World War I, undated.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

If I bought the books in question for the money, it would be more correct, especially since there is no question of lecture notes. Of course, Mr. Weissbach gave a very nice lecture the day before yesterday about the scientific conditions of the birth of Babylon, but is that different in Ed. Meyer's studies?

[2] There is nothing going on in class. Weissbach lectured today

that was almost identical to a paper I once presented at school on the Achaemenids. [Eduard] Sievers' class is full of bad jokes.

[3] Otherwise, there is nothing new, except what I once learned with Hunger in Quinta: *qui non proficit, deficit* ["He who does not go forward, loses ground"], since the last few days have allowed me so little time, I am writing this.²⁹

Clearly frustrated about his experience in Leipzig, Lewy decided to interrupt his studies at Leipzig after the 1913 summer semester in order to enter military service as an *Einjährig-Freiwilliger* ("one-year volunteer").³⁰

29 [1] Julius Lewy to Benno and Carola Lewy, 5/6 May 1913, MS-278, box 45, folder 5, AJA; [2] Julius Lewy to Benno and Carola Lewy, 24 May 1913, MS-278, box 45, folder 5, AJA; [3] Julius Lewy to Benno and Carola Lewy, 2 June 1913, MS-278, box 45, folder 5, AJA. "Ed. Meyer's studies" is a reference to Eduard Meyer, *Die ältesten geschichtlichen Völker und Kulturen bis zum sechzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 1 (Second Half) of *Geschichte des Altertums*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1909). "Hunger in Quinta" refers to a teacher during his time at the Mommsen-Gymnasium.

30 Hartmut John, *Das Reserveoffizierkorps im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1890–1914. Ein sozialgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Untersuchung der gesellschaftlichen Militarisierung im Wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1981), 54–237 ("Der Einjährig-Freiwillige – 'Fahnenjunker' des Reserveoffizierkorps"); Lothar Mertens, "Das Einjährig-Freiwilligen Privileg. Der Militärdienst im Zeitgeist des deutschen Kaiserreiches," *Zeitschrift für*

After a disappointing summer semester in Leipzig, Lewy's goal at that point was to complete his military service so that he could use that time to reorient himself and decide where and with whom he would continue his Assyriological studies. During the German Empire (1871–1918), reserve officers formed an important link between society and the military. Sons from the educated middle classes with sufficient financial support had the privilege of serving only one year instead of the required three (or, from 1893 on, two) years of military service. They also had the opportunity to obtain a reserve officer's commission (*Reserveoffizierspatent*), which provided high social prestige.³¹ *Einjährig-Freiwillige* also had higher school qualifications, and the position came with certain privileges, including "free choice of military unit and location, living outside the barracks, and continuing their studies in accordance with their duties," as well as exemption from certain duties such as washing dishes.³² Many one-year volunteers chose a university town as the location for their military service and were able to continue their studies or doctoral preparations there as regularly enrolled students, which was a critical advantage for their future careers.³³

The right to serve as a one-year volunteer was granted under the German Military Service Act of 22 July 1901, which issued a *Berechtigungsschein* ("certificate of eligibility"). Proof of academic ability had to be provided in the form of school reports or examinations.³⁴ The so-called *Zeugnis der Unbescholtenheit* ("certificate of good conduct") was signed for Julius Lewy by Przygode, the aforementioned director of

Religions- und Geistesgeschichte 42 (1990): 316–329; Mertens, "Bildungsprivileg und Militärdienst im Kaiserreich. Die gesellschaftliche Bedeutung des Einjährig-Freiwilligen Militärdienstes für das deutsche Bildungsbürgertum," *Bildung und Erziehung* 43 (1990): 217–228; Hugo Wernigk, *Wernigks Handbuch für den Einjährig-Freiwilligen, Offizier-Aspiranten und die Offiziere des Beurlobenstandes der Feldartillerie*, 16th ed. (Berlin: Mittler, 1915). Julius Lewy might have used the 1912 edition.

31 Esther Schwarz, "Militarismus im Kaiserreich," in "Wir hatten ein herrliches Leben...". *Jüdische Kindheit und Jugend im Kaiserreich 1871–1918*, ed. Ursula Blömer and Detlef Garz (Oldenburg: BIS-Verlag, 2000), 53–65, here 62 and bibliography cited there.

32 John, *Das Reserveoffizierkorps*, 60, 100; Mertens, "Das Einjährig-Freiwilligen Privileg," 327.

33 Konrad H. Jarausch, *Students, Society and Politics in Imperial Germany. The Rise of Academic Illiberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 88.

34 Mertens, "Das Einjährig-Freiwilligen Privileg," 323–325.

the Mommsen-Gymnasium on 23 March 1913. Benno Lewy already gave his consent on 2 March, and, one day later, the “Vorstand des 1. Polizeireviers” (“executive board of the first police precinct”) confirmed Julius Lewy’s *Unbescholtenheit* in an official document.³⁵ Contemporary professors criticized this arrangement of university town and military base as a problem for the one-year volunteer students, arguing that the combination of military service and study would have a negative impact on the intensity of the latter.³⁶ In fact, the legally prescribed *Triennium* [“three-year study”] was increasingly extended to seven or eight semesters.³⁷ Haupt predicted that this very thing would happen to Lewy in Würzburg, where he attended classes in Assyriology taught by Maximilian Streck in the winter of 1913/14, and the correspondence with his parents confirms that it did.³⁸

Replying to a letter from Julius dated 25 March 1914, Haupt points out that “it was foreseeable that you would not do much scholarly work (studying) during your year of [military] service,” but he emphasizes the obligation of military service and its advantages for life: “But above all, try to be a good soldier [*ein strammer Soldat*]. That is the most important thing for now.”³⁹ In a letter from 10 April 1914, he added:

That it is only natural that your parents, to whom I send my warmest regards, would like to have you in Berlin next winter (1914/15); however, it would be decidedly better for your future career if you come to Baltimore at the beginning of October [1914] and only spent the summer semester of 1915 in Berlin. The prospects for a capable young Assyriologist are particularly favorable here at the moment.⁴⁰

35 MS-278, box 7, folder 3, AJA.

36 Jaraus, *Students, Society and Politics*, 344 n. 17 and bibliography cited there, esp. Martin Kähler, “Das akademische Triennium und das Freiwilligenjahr,” in *Die Universitäten und das öffentliche Leben. Über die Aufgabe des akademischen Unterrichtes und seine zweckmäßigere Gestaltung*, ed. Martin Kähler (Erlangen: Deichert, 1891), 31–45.

37 Kähler, “Das akademische Triennium,” 40n.* with statistical information.

38 MS-278, box 45, folder 5, AJA.

39 Paul Haupt to Julius Lewy, 10 April 1914 and 30 September 1913, MS-278, box 45, folder 2, AJA.

40 Paul Haupt to Julius Lewy, 10 April 1914, MS-278, box 45, folder 2, AJA.

In hindsight, Julius Lewy's decision to interrupt his studies at Leipzig University after the 1913 summer semester turned out to be rather unfortunate, since he served in the military from the fall of 1913 until the end of 1918. He spent his first ten months in Würzburg and other garrisons and then, with the outbreak of World War I, over four years on various fronts, partly in active combat in France, the Carpathian Mountains, Serbia, and the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹

Upon a petition by his father Benno in early 1917, he was accepted and trained as a Turkish interpreter by the Imperial German Army.⁴² In the end, he was honorably discharged with the rank of vice-constable (*Vizewachtmeister*) and officer candidate, decorated with the Iron Cross, second class, but the true cost of his military service would be measured in years lost to scholarship rather than honors gained in battle.⁴³ As he wrote later in a letter to his former fellow student in Berlin (since 1919) and close friend and confidant after World War II, Erich Pritsch, he lost "5 years, 2 months and 24 days."⁴⁴

Lewy's Studies in Berlin, 1919–1921

The entry of the United States into World War I in 1917, the slow resumption of relations with the (then) Weimar Republic, and the financial situation in 1919 in the United States prevented Lewy from studying at Johns Hopkins University. In early 1919, he resumed his education, studying Assyriology and Semitic languages in Berlin with some

41 MS-278, box 45, folder 2, AJA. Würzburg: box 45, folder 5 (Lewy, Benno and Carola, 1913), 6 (Lewy, Benno and Carola, 1914 January–September), 7, AJA. Upon request, Lewy lists his units, periods of service, and participation in combat operations during World War I in a letter to the rectorate of the University of Gießen dated 2 May 1933. See Paul Haupt to Benno Lewy, 10 April 1914, MS-278, box 44, folder 6, AJA.

42 Draft by Benno Lewy of a request to the relevant staff in the German army for his son to be retrained as an interpreter of Turkish. MS-278, box 44, folder 5, AJA (emphasis original).

43 MS-278, box 4, folder 6, AJA.

44 Letter from Julius Lewy to Erich Pritsch, 26 March 1950, MS-278, box 48, folder 7, p. IV, AJA. Pritsch was a scholar of Islamic studies and jurist; see Julius Lewy's *Wiedergutmachungsklage* (restitution lawsuit against Germany in the 1950s), for which he was represented *pro bono* by Pritsch, MS-278, box 48, folders 7 and 8, AJA. This material, with over 550 typewritten pages of correspondence, is worth publishing separately.

of the most distinguished scholars in the field, including Delitzsch, who, together with the Protestant theologian and Semitist Eberhard Schrader, can be regarded as the founder of Assyriology as an academic discipline in Germany.⁴⁵ The Berlin faculty also included other luminaries such as the Arabist Eduard Sachau; Carl Heinrich Becker, one of the founders of modern Islamic studies in Germany; Eugen Mittwoch, whose focus was Ethiopian; one of the leading Semitists, Gotthelf Bergsträßer; and the archaeologist, architect and epigrapher Ernst Emil Herzfeld. As Lewy later noted, his “teachers in the realm of Ancient Oriental History” were the eminent ancient historians Eduard Meyer and Eugen Täubler.⁴⁶

In private letters to Haupt and later to his widow, Lewy referred to himself as a student of Haupt as he wrote to him in 1926:

I have not written to you for a long time, but at least through postcards from Constantinople and occasionally through a separate letter, I have tried to show you that I often and always think back with gratitude to my teacher of Assyriology, who was so important to me. I hope, highly esteemed Professor, that you do not shy away from the thought that you are ‘responsible’ for my Assyriology!⁴⁷

To Haupt’s widow Minnie, he wrote:

As you know, I greatly admire your late husband, who passed away far too soon. It was not so much his works, which I found difficult to understand at the time, but rather the impression he made on me that had a decisive and, I believe, positive influence on my career choice at an early stage.⁴⁸

Yet, in official documents such as his curriculum vitae and formal correspondence, he described himself as a student of Delitzsch, while the

45 Johannes Renger, “Zur Geschichte der Assyriologie in Deutschland,” in *100 Jahre Altorientalistik in Würzburg 1916–2016*, ed. Nils P. Heeßel and Daniel Schwemer (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019), 45–86, here 54–59; Renger, “Die Geschichte,” 151–157.

46 Julius Lewy, curriculum vitae, typewritten, undated (ca. 1935), MS-278, box 20, folder 4, AJA.

47 Julius Lewy to Paul Haupt, 31 July 1926, MS-278, box 45, folder 2, AJA.

48 Letter from Julius Lewy to Minnie Haupt, 15 September 1927, MS-278, box 45, folder 2, AJA.

influence and guidance of Paul Haupt in Lewy's early years in Assyriology and Semitic languages seems only to be documented in the private correspondence with Haupt and his widow. In 1919–1920 Lewy studied under Friedrich Delitzsch in Berlin, and it was most probably Delitzsch who suggested the topic of his dissertation, which he arrived at after attending Delitzsch's class on the Laws of Hammurabi and an Assyrian Law Code, for which the students had to consult Otto Schroeder's *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts* (*Cuneiform Texts from Assur with Various Contents*, 1920).⁴⁹ These texts, which we know as the Middle Assyrian Laws, were found during the excavations at Assur (modern Qal'at Sherqat, in northern Iraq) prior to World War I.⁵⁰

In a footnote in his PhD thesis, Lewy mentions the help he received by attending a class taught by the Berlin Assyriologist Erich Ebeling during the winter semester of 1920–1921:

Shortly after beginning my work, Dr. Ebeling encouraged me to consult the Cappadocian tablets at least occasionally in my study of Old Assyrian. I am also indebted to him for his lectures in the winter of 1920/21, without them I would not have been able to familiarize myself with the laws in such a short time. His lectures also helped me to understand business letters [*Geschäftsbriefe*], particularly in terms of vocabulary. It hardly needs mentioning that I often deviate from his views, but I have generally refrained from pointing this out, as the edition of the texts promised in KAV p. VII is not yet available.⁵¹

49 Julius Lewy's college book from Berlin University, MS-278, box 7, folder 3, AJA. See also Otto Schroeder, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts*, Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 35, no.1 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1920), pls. 1–14 (left) ("1. Altassyrische Gesetze") = VAT 10000, pls. 14 (right)–18 (top and left) ("2. Altassyrische Gesetze"); further fragments on pls. 18–21, and, for an English translation, Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, Writings from the Ancient World 6 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 154–176 s.v. "MAL A."

50 See Eckart Otto, "Rechtsgeschichte der Mittelassyrischen Gesetze," in *Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte. Gesammelte Studien*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte 8 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 192–310, here 192 n. 3 and bibliography cited there.

51 Julius Lewy, *Untersuchungen zur akkadischen Grammatik. I. Das Verbum in den*

Delitzsch decided to retire early, so on 13 August 1921 Lewy completed his doctorate under Bruno Meißner, one of the most productive Assyriologists and ancient Near Eastern archaeologists in the early twentieth century. The second supervisor was Mittwoch. Lewy graduated *magna cum laude* in “Semitic Philology (with Turkish and Philosophy as subsidiary subjects)” with a dissertation examining the use of verbs in the “Old Assyrian Laws” from legal texts discovered at Assur.⁵² Only sixteen months later, on 13 December 1922, he completed his *Habilitation* (postdoctoral qualification) in Semitic philology at Gießen University, an achievement that testified to both his scholarly ability and his determination to make up for the years lost to military service.⁵³ His trial lecture (*Probevorlesung*) on 2 December addressed “Grundlagen der Entwicklung Assyriens zur Hauptmacht Mesopotamiens” (“Foundations of the Development of Assyria into the Main Power of Mesopotamia”), a topic that would remain central to his research interests throughout his career.

Julius Lewy’s early personal life during this period would remain largely unknown to his later colleagues, including his marriage to Ada Slataper (1891–1971) from Trieste on 9 March 1923. Lewy once described her as his “childhood playmate” (*Kindheitsgespielin*) from their vacation in the Alps in 1908.⁵⁴ The couple had a daughter, Julia Irene Margarete Lewy, born on 6 March 1924.⁵⁵ This first marriage and the

“altassyrischen Gesetzen” mit Berücksichtigung von Schrift-, Lautlehre und Syntax, Berliner Beiträge zur Keilschriftforschung 1, no. 4 (Berlin: publ. by Erich Ebeling, 1921), 4 n. 1. KAV = Schroeder, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts*, and p. VII states: “Eine Bearbeitung der Gesetze ist in Vorbereitung.” Ebeling’s class is not listed in *Verzeichnis der Vorlesungen, WS 1920/21* or in *Verzeichnis der Vorlesungen und Übungen, WS 1920/21* at Berlin University, while Lewy’s college book does confirm that he attended Ebeling’s classes.

52 Julius Lewy, curriculum vitae, typewritten, undated (ca. 1935), MS-278, box 20, folder 4, AJA. The dissertation was reviewed by Benno Landsberger in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 27 (1924): 719–726.

53 Julius Lewy, *Studien zu den altassyrischen Texten aus Kappadokien* (Berlin: pub. by author, 1922), IV.

54 See the correspondence and documents to and from Ada Slataper. All of box 50, and folders 1 & 2 of box 51 in MS-278, AJA.

55 Birth certificate, MS-278, box 52, folder 2, AJA.



Ada Slataper, Julius' Lewy's first wife.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Julius Lewy's daughter, Julia, born on 6 March 1924 who rendered her name as Giulia growing up and living in Italy. (Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

existence of their daughter are aspects of Lewy's life that were unknown before the Lewy papers became publicly accessible at the AJA but are mentioned in the archive. A draft of a letter from Julius Lewy to Friedrich Delitzsch is revealing:

The last summer semester also contributed little to my further education, but I was unable to attend lectures regularly because I was quietly engaged to Ada Slataper, daughter of the late technical director of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company and American vice-consul in Trieste, Feliciano Slataper, my childhood playmate during a stay in the Alps in 1908, and I had been in Trieste, my bride's beautiful hometown, several times. As soon as my Habilitation has been successfully completed, we hope to be able to marry without being weighed down by such sad times.⁵⁶

56 Draft from Julius Lewy to Friedrich Delitzsch, 27 October 1922, p. 3, MS-278, box 1, folder 14, AJA. See Aurelio Slataper, *Appunti per una storia di famiglia*. Quaderni slataperiani

The marriage surfaces again in a letter from Haupt: “Belated congratulations on your marriage. I assume that your wife is Catholic. You haven’t become Catholic, have you?”⁵⁷ Lewy’s relationship to Ada and his first child remained a secret even to his colleagues at Hebrew Union College, as they divorced, probably only a couple of years later. Current circumstantial information leads to the assumption of a date around 1925–1926, but this must be corroborated by documentation, which the Lewys do not seem to have kept.⁵⁸

Gießen University, 1920s

The 1920s and 1930s proved to be Julius Lewy’s most productive period in terms of scholarly achievement, which also helped him advance professionally at Gießen University. In 1923, he inquired for a position at the newly founded University of Jerusalem.⁵⁹ In 1925, he published *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte Vorderasiens (Research on the Ancient History of the Near East)*, traveled to the excavation at the Old Assyrian site of Kültepe led by the Czech Assyriologist Bedřich Hrozný, who classified



Portrait of Julius Lewy by photo studio H. Noack, Berlin, undated.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

1 (Trieste: Centro studi Scipio Slataper, 2019), 19–20 and the schematic family tree of the Slataper family. According to this study, Feliciano Slataper, born in the United States, was married twice, in the United States as well as in Trieste. His second wife was his niece, Maria Lazzarini, and their only child was Ada.

57 Letter from Paul Haupt to Julius Lewy, 30 March 1923, MS-278, box 45, folder 2. See also Julius Lewy, curriculum vitae, typewritten, undated (ca. 1935), MS-278, box 45, folder 2, AJA.

58 MS-278, box 48, folder 2, AJA.

59 MS-278, box 4, folder 8, AJA.

the Hittite language as Indo-European and laid the foundations for the new discipline of Hittitology. Lewy also visited other archaeological sites in Anatolia, experiences that provided him with context for Kültepe, whose cuneiform tablets he studied. Around the same time, Halil Edhem Eldem Bey, director-general of the museums in Istanbul granted him permission to edit the Kültepe texts preserved in the Istanbul Museum, which he published under the title *Die altassyrischen Texte vom Kültepe bei Kayserije* (*The Old Assyrian Texts from Kültepe Near Kaisariye*) in 1926.⁶⁰ He followed that in 1927 with *Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda* (*Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*).⁶¹ These publications demonstrated Lewy's versatility in handling both cuneiform texts and Old Testament studies.

Lewy's Life-Long "Intimate Foeship" with Benno Landsberger (1890–1968)

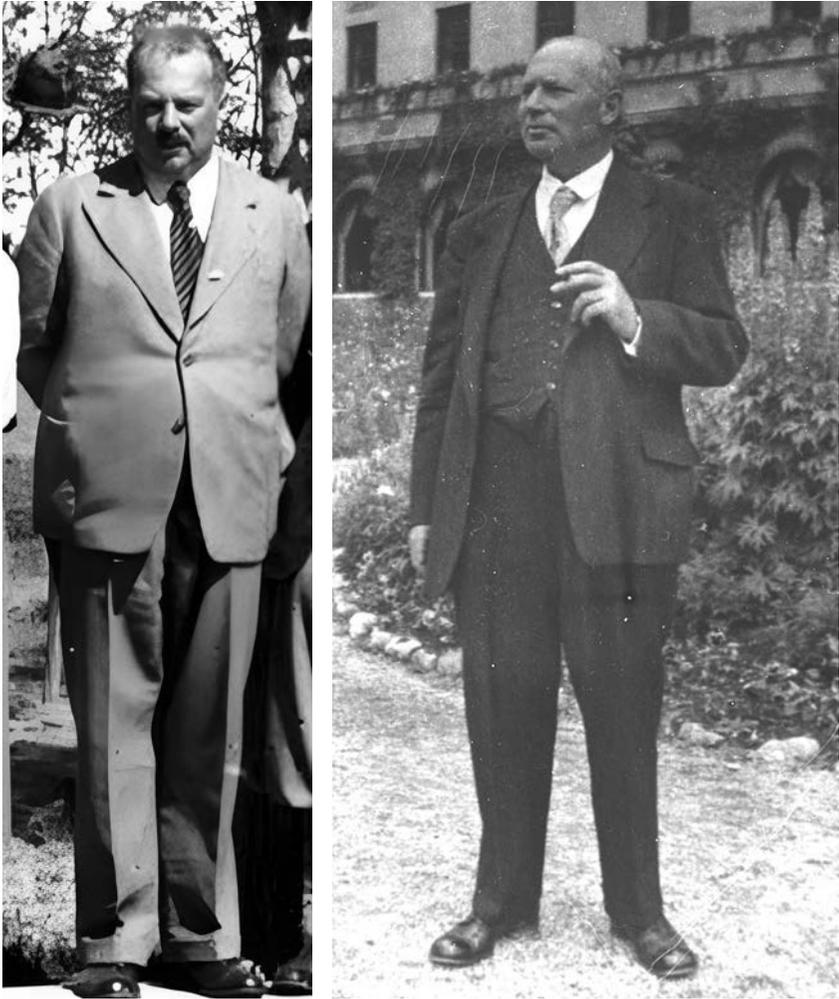
In his PhD thesis, *Das Verbum in den "altassyrischen Gesetzen"* (1921), and his *Habilitationsschrift*, titled *Studien zu den altassyrischen Texten aus Kappadokien* (1922), Lewy specialized in mentioned Middle Assyrian cuneiform texts from Assur and Old Assyrian cuneiform texts from Kültepe in Anatolia; the latter especially proved to be the focus of his career, from editing to studies on terminology. The Old Assyrian settlement of Kanesh, whence the "Cappadocian" cuneiform texts derived (as they were called at the time), was a commercial settlement of merchants and their families, called *kārum*, that flourished in the first 250 years in central Anatolia.⁶² In the early 1920s, Lewy and Benno Landsberger staked their claims as proficient experts in this new field of research.⁶³ Landsberger was five years older, earned his PhD in 1913, and may have been the most promising

60 Julius Lewy, *Qaišarija ġiwārynda "Kültepe" de zuhūr eden gadim ātūrī matuleri = Die altassyrischen Texte vom Kültepe bei Kaisarije*, Keilschrifttexte in den Antiken-Museen zu Sтамbul (Constantinople: Antiken-Museen, 1926).

61 Julius Lewy, *Die Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda* (Gießen: Töpelmann, 1932), dedicated to Paul Haupt.

62 Mogens Trolle Larsen, *Ancient Kanesh. A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 54–57 and bibliography cited there.

63 MS-278, box 4, folder 15, AJA.



“The two great L’s”: Benno Landsberger (1936) and Julius Lewy (undated).
 (Courtesy Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, Kraus Photo albums and American Jewish Archives)

Assyriologist of his generation.⁶⁴ Lewy, on the other hand, emerged in 1921–22 with his overall well-received PhD and *Habilitation* theses, but, as we have seen, had missed valuable time to advance his academic career due his lengthy military service after only studying one semester in Leipzig.

64 Published as *Der kultische Kalender der Babylonier und Assyrer, Erste Hälfte*. Leipziger semitistische Studien 6, nos. 1–2 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915).

Tension between the two was evident from the very beginning. Following the publication of Lewy's *Habilitation*, Landsberger, in his review, writes that "a new controversy has arisen over the character of the settlements." He goes on to assert: "While Lewy (like Contenau before him) asserts the existence of a great Assyrian empire with Assyrian cities in the heart of Asia Minor, I seek to prove Assyrian trading posts or colonies in foreign lands."⁶⁵ The ensuing decades saw a dispute emerge between Lewy and Landsberger regarding their historical conclusions on the political structure of *kārum* Kanesh. Lewy argued it was part of the Old Assyrian Empire.⁶⁶ According to Landsberger the cuneiform sources only support an interpretation of the site as a flourishing trading post by Assyrian merchants.⁶⁷ Lewy's hypothesis did not attract many followers.⁶⁸

65 Benno Landsberger, review of Julius Lewy, *Studien zu den altassyrischen Texten aus Kappadokien*, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 28 (1925): 229–233, here 231. "Contenau" refers to Georges Contenau, an ancient Near Eastern archaeologist and historian of religions.

66 Julius Lewy, "Zur Geschichte Assyriens und Kleinasiens im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 26 (1923): 533–544, here 538; Lewy, "Der altassyrisch-kappadokischen Städte und das altassyrische Großreich," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 36 (1925): 19–28; Lewy, "'Kappadokische' Tontafeln und Frühgeschichte Assyriens und Kleinasiens," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 29 (1926): 379–385, here 757; Lewy, "Kappadokische Tontafeln," in *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte* ed. Max Ebert, 15 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1926), 6:212–219, here 217; Lewy, "*Hatta, Hattu, Hatti, Hattuša* and 'Old Assyrian' *Hattum*," *Archiv Orientalní* 18 (1950): 366–441, here 414–415; Lewy, "On Some Institutions of the Old Assyrian Empire," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 27 (1956): 1–79, here 17 referring to a "Halys Assyria" named after the river in Central Anatolia; Lewy, "Apropos of a Recent Study in Old Assyrian Chronology," *Orientalia* n.s. 26 (1957): 12–36, here 26.

67 Referenced in Benno Landsberger, "Über die Völker Vorderasiens im dritten Jahrtausend" and Landsberger, *Assyrische Handelskolonien in Kleinasien aus dem dritten Jahrtausend*. *Der Alte Orient*, 24 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1925), 5–6.

68 Friedrich Bilabel, *Geschichte Vorderasiens und Ägyptens vom 16.–11. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis auf die Neuzeit*, Bibliothek der klassischen Altertumswissenschaften 3, no. 1 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1927), 139 n. 1; Bedřich Hrozný, "Assyriens et Hittites en Asie Mineure vers 2000 av. J.-C.," *Archiv Orientalní* 4 (1932): 112–117, here 112. However, see also Martin David, review of Georg Eißer and Julius Lewy, *Die altassyrischen Rechtsurkunden vom Kültepe*, vols. 1–2, *Urkunden 1–290*. *Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Ägyptischen Gesellschaft* 33 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1930) and *Die altassyrischen Rechtsurkunden vom Kültepe* Vols. 3–4, *Urkunden 291–341*. *Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Ägyptischen Gesellschaft* 33 (Leipzig: Hinrichs,

Landsberger's interpretation, on the other hand, gained more traction and practically became *communis opinio*.⁶⁹ Mogens Larsen, a specialist in Old Assyrian cuneiform texts from Anatolia, devotes a section of his overview on *Ancient Kanesh* (2015) to Landsberger and Lewy, in which he emphasizes the importance of Lewy's studies on the Old Assyrian cuneiform tablets from Kültepe, particularly his text editions until the mid-1930s.⁷⁰ Larsen also points out that the decades-long rivalry between Lewy and Landsberger had a negative effect on the progress in the study of Old Assyrian cuneiform tablets: "the scholarly conflict which developed between him and Benno Landsberger [...] created a hostile climate which appears to have dissuaded otherwise interested colleagues from pursuing Old Assyrian topics."⁷¹ One of the reasons that scholars like Landsberger and Lewy were able to dominate a whole academic field and establish a quasi-monopoly on specific research topics is that Assyriology is such a small discipline, and scholars, especially younger colleagues, felt they were forced to take sides. The Lewy papers in the AJA contain a few letters and some notes from Landsberger and Lewy—"the two great Ls.," as Meißner called them, according to Lewy.⁷²

1930), in *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Romanistische Abteilung* 52, no. 1 (1932): 496–503; here 497; David, "Beiträge zu den altassyrischen Briefen aus Kappadokien," [review of Julius Lewy, *Die Kültepe-Texte der Sammlung Rudolf Blanckertz* (Berlin: Heintze & Blanckertz, 1929) and *Die Kültepetexte aus der Sammlung Frida Hahn* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1930)] in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 36 (1933): 209–210; here 209n. 3.

69 Emil Forrer, "Assyrien," in *Realexikon der Assyriologie* 1:228–297 (§§1–48), here 232; Albrecht Götze, "Kleinasien," in *Kulturgeschichte des alten Orients*, 3. Abschnitt, Lieferung 1, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, Abteilung 3, Teil 1, Band 3 (Munich: Beck, 1933), 1–200, here 67 (67–81, here 72 in 2nd edition [1957]); Ignace J. Gelb, *Inscriptions from Alisbar and Vicinity*, *Researches in Anatolia* 6, Oriental Institute Publications 27 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 11; H. S. Langdon, "The Sumerian Revival: The Empire of Ur," in *Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. John B. Burry, S. A. Cook, and F. E. Adcock, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), 1:453–454 (chapter IV. "The Northern and Western Extension"); Louis Lawrence Orlin, *Assyrian Colonies in Cappadocia*, *Studies in Ancient History* 1 (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), 26 n. 11, 88–97 ("The Kingdom of Kaniš: Background Controversy").

70 Larsen, *Ancient Kanesh*, 59–64.

71 Larsen, *Ancient Kanesh*, 60.

72 "[Die] beiden grossen Ls." Letter from Julius Lewy to Erich Pritsch, 26 November 1950, MS-278, box 48, folder 7, AJA.

Advancing His Academic Career, Late 1920s and Early 1930s

Professional recognition followed scholarly achievement during the productive years of the late 1920s and 1930s. On 1 April 1927, Julius Lewy's numerous publications earned him promotion to *außerplanmäßiger Professor* (adjunct professor).⁷³ The following year brought probably the most significant personal event of his life, as he married Hildegard Schlesinger on 28 March 1928.⁷⁴ Thus began a partnership that would prove both intellectually and personally fulfilling throughout their lifetime, as both of them devoted their lives to Assyriology.

In 1929, Lewy achieved the rank of *Planmäßiger Extraordinarius* (associate professor) at Gießen with an extended *venia legendi* (teaching license) for *Geschichte des Alten Orients* (history of the ancient Near East).⁷⁵ That same year, he published *Die Kültepe-Texte der Sammlung Rudolf Blanckertz* (The Kültepe Texts in the Rudolf Blanckertz Collection) and founded the series *Arbeiten aus dem Orientalischen Seminar der Universität Gießen* (Papers from the Oriental Institute of the University of Gießen), further establishing himself as a respected Assyriologist in the scientific community.⁷⁶ International recognition of his expertise led to overtures from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, which pursued him for a position as a lecturer in Assyriology in 1929. Lewy declined the offer, feeling that the opportunities for professional growth were limited at that time.⁷⁷

The Hilprecht Collection in Jena

From 1929 to 1933, Lewy expanded his scholarly influence through his role as curator of the cuneiform text collection of the Frau Professor

73 Adjunct professorship does not automatically result in a budgeted position. In many cases, the main criterion for an appointment is outstanding academic achievement, demonstrated by publications in relevant journals or the existence of a postdoctoral qualification such as the *Habilitation*. Lewy published over forty studies between 1921 and 1927.

74 MS-278, box 55, folder 2, AJA.

75 Julius Lewy, curriculum vitae, typewritten, undated (ca. 1935); MS-278, box 20, folder 4, AJA.

76 Julius Lewy, *Die Kültepe-Texte der Sammlung Rudolf Blanckertz* (Berlin: Heintze & Blanckertz, 1929).

77 MS-278, box 4, folder 8, AJA.

Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities at the University of Jena and editor of the series *Texte und Materialien der Frau Prof. Hilprecht-Collection*.⁷⁸ This collection of mainly cuneiform texts and archaeological artefacts is named after the first wife of the German Assyriologist and excavator Hermann Volrath Hilprecht, who bequeathed it to the university. In 1926, representatives of the university reached out to Lewy to catalogue the collection.⁷⁹ Lewy's role regarding this collection and his dismissal in 1934 has not yet been published in the context of the available archival material in the AJA and the archive of Jena University and studies on this collection.⁸⁰

78 The collection was later named Frau Professor Hilprecht Sammlung Babylonischer Altertümer.

79 Letter from the professor of Old Testament studies at Jena University, Willy Staerk (1866–1946), to the philosophical faculty of Gießen University, 13 May 1926, MS-278, box 4, folder 10, AJA.

80 Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities, Die Hilprecht-Sammlung, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Altorientalistik, <https://www.gw.uni-jena.de/2465/hilprecht-sammlung>. For his research, Joachim Oelsner, former curator of the Hilprecht Collection, used the following files in the archive of Jena University: UAJ BA1679, BA1709, C 791, C 792, C 793, C 814, D 322, D 556, D 1771, M 633, M 704, M 888, D 476. Of these, I have so far evaluated BA 1679, 1709, M 704. On the history of the Hilprecht collection, see Joachim Oelsner, "Der schriftliche Nachlaß H.V. HILPRECHTS in der Hilprecht-Sammlung Vorderasiatischer Altertümer der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena," *Beiträge zur Ethnolinguistik*, ed. Franz Bolck (Jena: Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, 1980), 112–123; Oelsner, "Zur Geschichte der Frau Professor Hilprecht-Sammlung Vorderasiatischer Altertümer im Eigentum der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena," in *Zur Geschichte der Klassischen Archäologie Jena-Kraków*, ed. Bernd Wilhelm (Jena: Abteilung Wissenschaftliche Publikationen der Friedrich Schiller Universität, 1985), 46–53; Oelsner, "Die Hilprecht-Sammlung Vorderasiatischer Altertümer," in *Reichtümer + Raritäten. Denkmale, Sammlungen, Akten und Handschriften*, ed. Michael Platen, Jenaer Reden und Schriften 2. (Jena: Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, 1990), 144–149; Oelsner, "Die Hilprecht-Sammlung Jena—Geschichte und Aufgaben der Publikation," in *Ägypten, Vorderasien, Turfan. Probleme der Edition und Bearbeitung altorientalistischer Handschriften*, ed. Horst Klengel and Werner Sundermann, Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des Alten Orients 23 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 8–65; Oelsner, "Altorientalistik in Jena. Teil 2," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 140 (2008): 75–87. Hilprecht, a student of Friedrich Delitzsch, had already suggested this inheritance in 1907; see Oelsner, "Altorientalistik in Jena. Teil 1," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 139 (2007): 71–81, here 76

In 1930, Lewy was appointed as *Persönlicher Ordinarius* (personal full professor) and director of the Orientalisches Seminar at Gießen University. He combined these responsibilities with travels to Palestine and Syria. His collaboration with the jurist Georg Eißer (1898–1964), a specialist in Roman, civil, and commercial law, on legal cuneiform texts during this period resulted in the publication of *Die altassyrischen Rechtsurkunden vom Kültepe* (1930–1935). With participation of the Hittitologist and Assyriologist, Albrecht Goetze, Lewy published the first volume of *Die Keilschrifttexte aus Kleinasien* (The Cuneiform Texts from Asia Minor) for the new series of the Hilprecht Collection in 1932.⁸¹

Dismissal from Gießen and Immediate Emigration Plans

Lewy's career in Germany ended, as did that of so many others, with brutal suddenness on 1 July 1933, when the Nazi government expelled him from Gießen University under the racial laws and part of the *Gleichschaltung* (synchronization as enforced political conformity).⁸²

notes 22–23. On various aspects of the Hilprecht collection, see Jan Gerrit Dercksen, “The Kültepe Tablets in the Hilprecht-Sammlung: A Contribution to the Chronology of their Trade and Collecting,” in *The Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities: Essays Dedicated to Manfred Krebernik during the Colloquium Held on March 17–18, 2022 at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena*, ed. Jacob de Ridder and Peter Stein, *Texte und Materialien der Frau Prof. Hilprecht-Collection 14* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2023), 37–67; Enrique Jiménez, “The Prehistory and Early History of the Hilprecht Collection,” in *The Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities: Essays Dedicated to Manfred Krebernik during the Colloquium Held on March 17–18, 2022 at Friedrich Schiller University Jena*, ed. Jacob Jan de Ridder and Peter Stein (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2023), 117–140; Johannes Hackl, “Eine Nachlese zu Oluf Krückmann, Neubabylonische Rechts- und Verwaltungstexte (TMH 2/3), Teil 1. Sammlungsgeschichte und Museumsarchäologie der Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities,” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 51 (2024): 64–83; Part 2 is published in *Altorientalische Forschungen* 51 (2024): 149–169. See also MS-278, box 4, folder 4; box 4, folder 5; box 4, folder 10; box 4, folder 14; box 4, folder 15; box 5, folder 1; box 5, folder 8; box 5, folder 26; box 52, folder 6, all AJA.

81 Julius Lewy, *Die Keilschrifttexte aus Kleinasien, autographiert und mit Inventarverzeichnis und Namenlisten versehen*. Mit einem Beitrag von Albrecht Götze. *Texte und Materialien der Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities im Eigentum der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena 1* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1932).

82 Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007),

His successor was Karl Friedrich Euler (1909–1986), professor of Old Testament studies and biblical history, and, starting in 1933, a member of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) and later a member of a number of other National Socialist organizations.⁸³ After receiving his salary for three final months, Julius Lewy left Germany in August 1933, never to return.⁸⁴ His parents also emigrated during this period, settling in Haifa, where they helped found the Carmel Sanatorium, demonstrating the family's characteristic resilience in rebuilding their lives in new circumstances.⁸⁵

The next couple of years brought a series of temporary positions and relocations that tested the Lewys' adaptability and professional networks. Julius Lewy immediately started looking for a new teaching and research position abroad, while Hildegard Lewy managed all aspects of the complex and bureaucratic logistics, including the preparation to store their belongings in a warehouse in Belgium.⁸⁶ She also handled

277–280; Kurt Pätzold, “Gleichschaltung,” in *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Wolfgang Benz, Hermann Graml, and Hermann Weiß (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997), 490–491; Bruno W. Reimann, “Die ‘Selbst-Gleichschaltung’ der Universitäten 1933,” in *Hochschule und Wissenschaft im Dritten Reich*, ed. Jörg Tröger (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1984), 38–52; Reimann, “The Defeat of the German Universities 1933,” *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 39 (1986): 101–105.

83 Euler's vitae provides a glimpse into the type of scholars the National Socialists chose and supported: teaching assistant for Hebrew (1934–1938); second theological exam and Licentiate in Theology with *Habilitation* (1935); lecturer in Old Testament and Oriental studies at Gießen (1936–46); member of the *Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Dozentenbund* (National Socialist German Lecturers' Association, 1937); director of the *Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben* (Institute for the Research and Elimination of Jewish Influence on German Ecclesiastical Life, together with the Protestant theologian Walter Grundmann); worked for the *Auslandsbriefprüfstelle*, a National Socialist censorship authority in Berlin, because of his knowledge of Hebrew (1940–1942); military service; returned to Gießen University (1943); dismissal (1946); pastor at the University Hospital of Gießen (1949–1967).

84 On the topic of emigration, which has been studied in great detail, see, e.g., David Jünger, *Jahre der Ungewissheit. Emigrationspläne deutscher Juden 1933–1938*, Schriften des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts 24 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

85 MS-278, box 48, folder 1, AJA.

86 MS-278, box 44, folder 2, AJA, with invoices, insurance policies etc., including a letter from the consulate in Frankfurt confirming the “demande de certification de votre

the intricate financial arrangements required for international relocation, dealing with currency regulations, obtaining the necessary permits, and navigating the extensive paperwork required for their escape from Nazi persecution.⁸⁷ In the summer of 1933, Lewy made a brief lecturing trip to England, where he combined practical necessity with scholarly opportunity as he delivered lectures at Christ Church College, Oxford, based on contacts with established colleagues, including the American-born British Assyriologist Stephen Herbert Langdon and the Semitist Godfrey Rolles (known as G. R.) Driver.⁸⁸

In late summer of 1933, Julius Lewy found temporary refuge in Paris. He had friendly relationships with French colleagues, including the well-respected Assyriologists François Thureau-Dangin, Edouard Dhorme, and Abbé Charles-François Jean. Lewy recounts in a letter how, after World War II, the daughter of Thureau-Dangin helped Abbé Jean, who was a member of the Congregation of the Lazarists, locate Lewy's mother-in-law, who had survived imprisonment by the Nazis.⁸⁹ Thanks to these colleagues, Lewy was able to copy "a great number of unpublished cuneiform texts of the Louvre-Museum" at the Institut d'Études Sémitiques de la Sorbonne in Paris from the summer of 1933 until the fall of 1934.⁹⁰

Lewy had to be careful as he reached out to scholars abroad inquiring for teaching and research positions outside of Germany in the months following his dismissal. In order to circumvent censorship of

déclaration de transport de mobilier" ("request for certification of your declaration for the transport of furniture"), dated 15 November 1933. See also the letter from Julius Lewy to Erich Pritsch, 9 July 1946, p. II, MS-278, box 48, folder 8, AJA: "my wife had personally managed, with great difficulty, to get most of our belongings, especially the books, safely to Paris via Belgium [officially to Palestine (de facto later to the United States)] by returning to Giessen at the end of August of 1933."

87 MS-278, box 44, folder 2, AJA.

88 Julius Lewy, curriculum vitae, typewritten, undated (ca. 1935), MS-278, box 20, folder 4, AJA.

89 Letter from Julius Lewy to Erich Pritsch, 9 July 1946, MS-278, box 48, folder 7, p. II, AJA.

90 Julius Lewy, curriculum vitae, typewritten, undated (ca. 1935), MS-278, box 20, folder 4, AJA. The texts were published as Julius Lewy, *Tablettes cappadociennes*, vols. 1–3 (Paris: Geuthner, 1935, 1936, 1937); see pls. LXXXI–CLV in vol. 2 and pls. CLVI–CCXXXVIII in vol. 3.

his correspondence by Nazi authorities and be able to exchange personal information freely, he developed code keys, which he made available to his colleagues, so they knew which parts to use in their answers. The following translation is part of a code key used by Lewy, originally written in German. The left column contains the undecoded information about Lewy's current situation, and the right column contains the code to be used by Lewy's correspondence partner.

<i>I am dismissed.</i>	<i>You can find the basics about the costume of the kings of Boghazköj, which you were looking for more detailed evidence on, in Ed. Meyer, Geschichte des Altertums, p. 708.</i>
<i>I would like an appointment that allows me to cross the border.</i>	<i>For Urartu, the monuments of which I have now studied in somewhat greater detail, there is a recent and very fine work by Friedrich, MaeG, 37,3.</i>
<i>I wrote to my colleague Langdon and received a favorable reply from him.</i>	<i>Langdon is preparing a new edition of his Sumerian grammar.</i>

This code key was kept by Julius Lewy in his hand copy of his *Die Keilschrifttexte aus Kleinasien*. The grid has been added for clarity.⁹¹

Refuge in the United States

More significantly for his immediate future was an invitation to teach at Johns Hopkins University, marking the beginning of his American academic career. From the fall of 1934 until January 1936, he served as visiting professor in Semitics and ancient oriental history at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, substituting for William F. Albright, who was abroad. During that same year, Cyrus Adler and HUC president Julian Morgenstern, who was instrumental in the HUC refugee program, collaborated to secure a permanent academic appointment for Lewy, who was, according to Morgenstern “unquestionably [...] one of the three foremost Jewish Assyriologists in the world today.”⁹² Lewy's appointment

91 MS-278, box 77, folder 6, AJA.

92 David G. Dalin, “Cyrus Adler and the Rescue of Jewish Refugee Scholars,” *American Jewish History* 78 no. 3 (1989): 351–362. See also David Martin, review of Georg Eißer

in Baltimore proved crucial not only for the couple's financial survival but also for his introduction to American academic culture and scholarly networks. He expanded his American connections further in 1935, when he also lectured at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) in New York, demonstrating the kind of geographical flexibility that characterized academic life for refugee scholars. Benjamin R. Foster recently presented a comprehensive volume on the three centuries of Near Eastern studies at Yale, which also covers the planning as well as internal and external responses to the appointment of Goetze to the chair of Assyriology in 1934; Albright and Lewy were among the scholars on the short list.⁹³ The chapters on Albrecht Goetze provide fascinating insights into Lewy's life at the time, not having a tenured position. The AJA also contains letters from the correspondence between Lewy and Goetze going back to their collaborations on a 1932 joint publication of cuneiform texts from Asia Minor in the Hilprecht Collection at Jena.⁹⁴

Despite the uncertainty of his position, Lewy's scholarly productivity continued unabated during these transitional years. He published the three volumes of *Tablettes Cappadociennes* between 1935 and 1937, work that had begun during his productive months in Paris and represented some of his most important contributions to Old Assyrian studies.⁹⁵

and Julius Lewy, *Die altassyrischen Rechtsurkunden vom Kültepe*, vols. 1–2, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Romanistische Abteilung* 52 (1932): 496–503, who wrote that “at present, no one other than Lewy himself would be able to maintain a complete overview of the material, which has become so extensive and is scattered across a wide range of publications and is characterized by very particular difficulties,” 497.

93 Benjamin R. Foster, *From New Haven to Nineveh and Beyond: Three Centuries of Near Eastern Learning at Yale* (Columbus, GA: Sidestone, 2023), 373–374, 381–389. Selected parts of the correspondence between Goetze and Lewy preserved at the archive at Yale University are published in Harald Maier-Metz, *Entlassungsgrund. Pazifismus. Albrecht Götze, der Fall Gumbel und die Marburger Universität 1930–1946*. *Academia Marburgensis* 13 (Münster: Waxmann, 2015), 168–178 (“Dialog der Exilanten”), here 169–171 regarding Lewy's dismissal from Gießen.

94 Lewy, *Die Keilschrifttexte aus Kleinasien*. On the correspondence, see MS-278, box 3, folder 6, AJA.

95 Lewy, *Tablettes cappadociennes*, vols. 1–3. See also, e.g., Julius Lewy, “Old Assyrian Documents from Asia Minor (about 2000 B.C.), 1. The Texts TC III 252–254 and WAG No 48/1464,” *Archives d'histoire du Droit Oriental* 1 (1937): 91–108.

Julius Lewy's many primary editions of Old Assyrian cuneiform texts are listed in the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI).⁹⁶

Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati

The invitation to serve as visiting professor at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati in 1936 marked the beginning of what would become the final and most stable phase of Lewy's career. The appointment represented more than just another temporary position; it offered the possibility of genuine belonging within an institution that valued both his scholarly expertise and his experience as a refugee from Nazi persecution. In 1940, his status was formalized when he became a full professor at HUC in Semitic languages and biblical history, a position that provided not only financial security but also the intellectual freedom to pursue his research interests without the constraints that had characterized his earlier years of displacement.⁹⁷

In March 1947, the aforementioned Eugen Täubler, ancient historian and former teacher of Lewy's who was also a fellow refugee scholar at HUC, accused Lewy of slander. The latter was heard stating in class around 1942: "Take for example Dr. T[äubler]. A few years ago he was still an ardent worshipper of Hitler, today he probably adores Roosevelt."⁹⁸ Although this controversy has been mentioned briefly in various studies over the last four decades, an annotated edition of the correspondence including Täubler's "Memorandum" remains to be published.⁹⁹ The letters exchanged between Täubler and Lewy in the AJA

96 Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI): <https://cdli.earth/>.

97 The *Catalogue of the Hebrew Union College*, published annually, contains information on faculty members and the classes they taught; "Julius Lewy, PhD (Berlin), Lecturer in History of the Ancient Near East" is listed starting with *Catalogue of the Hebrew Union College* 28 (1935–1936): 9. For a full teaching schedule, see *Catalogue of the Hebrew Union College* 29 (1936–37): 44–46.

98 "Memorandum" by Eugen Täubler to the board of governors of the HUC c/o, President Dr. Morgenstern, 31 March 1947, MS-30, box 11, folder 7, AJA.

99 Floyd S. Fierman, "The Effort to Rescue Jewish Scholars from Nazi Germany," *El Paso Jewish Historical Review* 4, no. 1 (February 1987): 1–30, here 4–13; David N. Myers, "Eugen Täubler: The Personification of 'Judaism as Tragic Existence,'" *Leo Back Year Book* 39 (1994): 131–150; Heike Scharbaum, *Zwischen zwei Welten, Wissenschaft und Lebenswelt*



Julius Lewy teaching at HUC, undated.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

represent a research problem in their own right, as they need to be evaluated and edited particularly regarding the long-standing relationship between the two men, which goes back to 1919.

Lewy's later scholarly works, produced from the security of his Cincinnati position, include "The Late Assyro-Babylonian Cult of the Moon and its Culmination at the Time of Nabonidus" (1946), "Naram-Sin's Campaign to Anatolia in the Light of the Geographical Data of the Kültepe Texts" (1947), and "On some Institutions of the Old Assyrian Empire" (1956).¹⁰⁰ Lewy's studies of Old Assyrian cuneiform tablets

am Beispiel des deutsch-jüdischen Historikers Eugen Täubler (1879–1953), Münsteraner judaistische Studien 8 (Münster: Lit, 2000), 44–50; Irene Aue-Ben-David, *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichtsschreibung im 20. Jahrhundert. Zu Werk und Rezeption von Selma Stern* 28 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 188–200, esp. 190–191 on the controversy, with n312 referring to Myers, "Eugen Täubler"; Wilhelm, *Last Generation*, 116–117, which evaluates the papers of Julian Morgenstern (MS-30).

100 Julius Lewy, "The Late Assyro-Babylonian Cult of the Moon and its Culmination at

were influential, but not all proposed results were universally accepted by the academic community, as his life-long “intimate foeship” with Landsberger demonstrates. Nevertheless, his contributions to HUC were recognized in various forms, such as the honorary Doctorate of Hebrew Letters he was awarded on 8 June 1963, a reflection of his scholarly achievements and teaching in Cincinnati and a fitting capstone to a career that had bridged European and American scholarship. Lewy’s health deteriorated slowly but steadily in his final years, and this honor was bestowed shortly before his death, in Cincinnati on 19 June of cancer.

As one of the last contemporary witnesses, Elizabeth Petuchowski (née Elisabeth Mayer from Bochum), wife of Jacob Petuchowski, has described her memories of Julius and Hildegard Lewy.¹⁰¹ The Petuchowskis, both refugees, lived in Cincinnati from 1948 to 1952, from 1956 to 1963 and from 1965 until Jakob’s death in 1991. In her memoir, *Where From and Where To* (2021),¹⁰² Elizabeth describes some memories that provide a glimpse of the scholarly life at HUC in Cincinnati and of the Lewys in their private lives:

A faculty member like no other was Julius Lewy [...], an authority on ancient Semitic languages and civilizations. Julius Lewy was among the refugee scholars whom Julian Morgenstern was able to rescue. When, as Jakob reported, Lewy in class referred to a date “as recent as 3000 BCE,” he limned the sphere of Lewy’s research. Students referred to his courses in Akkadian and Syriac as “Moon River,” the name of a late-night radio program in Cincinnati (and more famous as the name of a song by Henry Mancini...).¹⁰³ Lewy, late of the university of Gießen,

the Time of Nabonidus,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 19 (1946): 405–489; Julius Lewy, “Naram-Sin’s Campaign to Anatolia in the Light of the Geographical Data of the Kültepe Texts,” in *Halil Edhem hâtıra kitabı. Metin dışında 17 levha vardır = In memoriam Halil Edhem*, ed. Uluğ İğdemir, Türk Tarih Kurumu yayınları Dizi 7 no. 5 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1947), 11–18; Lewy, “On some Institutions.”

101 Samuel Greengus also remembers Julius and Hildegard Lewy from their time at HUC.

102 Elizabeth Petuchowski, *Where From and Where To: One of the Last Self-Told German Jewish Life Stories* (Bloomington, IN: Archway, 2021).

103 They referred to Lewy’s classes this way because he talked about the Akkadian moon god Sin and his cult, which emerged around the Euphrates River. See Lewy, “Late Assyro-Babylonian Cult.”

was active in initiating the graduate studies program at HUC, a dynamic department not only for Semitists, but for prospective Christian scholars of Judaism. [...] It was well endowed, and after a while, Jewish upper-classmen were pushing for scholarships also for Jewish graduate students. Lewy was, for all his erudition, a self-deprecating man. Years earlier, he had had to undergo brain surgery and had asked the surgeon: “Be sure to put everything back where it belongs.”¹⁰⁴



Hildegard Schlesinger at school, 1919.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

Hildegard Lewy: Early Life

Born on 17 October 1903, in Cluj-Napoca (then Klausenburg), Transylvania, Hildegard Lewy was the eldest child in a family that exemplified the complex ethnic and intellectual landscape of Central Europe. Her parents were the Slovak-Hungarian-German mathematician Ludwig (Lajos) Schlesinger (1864–1933), who came from a Jewish merchant family and was baptized a Protestant, and Clara Fuchs.¹⁰⁵ Her father had been appointed to Gießen University in 1911 and had served as Ludwig Schlesinger’s mentor.¹⁰⁶ Ludwig and Clara married in 1897, and Hildegard grew up alongside her siblings, Gertrud Schlesinger and Eilhard Schlesinger.¹⁰⁷

104 Petuchowski, *Where From*, 347–350.

105 Kálmán Benda, “Schlesinger Ludwig (Lajos),” in *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815–1950*, 16 vols. (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994), 10:196–197.

106 Lazarus Fuchs was a German mathematician, who in 1854 studied in Berlin. See Gabriele Dörflinger, ed., *Der Mathematiker Lazarus Fuchs eine biographische Anthologie aus Nachrufen und biographischen Artikeln von Meyer Hamburger, Carl von Voit, Georg Wallenberg u.a.* (Heidelberg: Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, 2012) and Dörflinger, *Fuchs, Lazarus (5.5.1833–16.4.1902)* (Heidelberg: Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, 2016), <https://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/20792/1/fuchs.pdf>.

107 Gertrud Schlesinger was, for a while, *Studienrätin* (tenured high school teacher) in Essen. Letter from Julius Lewy to Erich Pritsch, 20 January 1947, MS-278, box 48, folder 7,

From 1910 to 1911, Hildegard attended a private school in Frankfurt am Main before moving with her family to Gießen when her father took up his university appointment. There she continued her education at the *Höhere Mädchenschule* until 1919, an institution that provided young women with educational opportunities that were still relatively rare in early twentieth-century. She completed her secondary education at the *Oberrealschule* in Gießen, a type of secondary school in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland founded in the last third of the nineteenth century as an alternative to the *humanistische altsprachliche Gymnasien* that emphasized modern languages and sciences rather than classical studies. She received her diploma (*Reifezeugnis*) on 24 February 1922. This educational path prepared her well for the scientific career she would initially pursue.

Hildegard Lewy's Scientific Trajectory

From the summer of 1922 through the summer of 1925, Hildegard Schlesinger pursued her university studies in natural sciences at Gießen University, demonstrating the kind of intellectual curiosity and academic ability that characterized her entire life. She successfully passed both parts of the challenging Chemisches Verbandsexamen (chemistry examination) in February 1923. (This exam was adopted in 1898 by the Verband der Laboratoriums-Vorstände an deutschen Hochschulen [Association of Laboratory Directors at German Universities], and passing it was a requirement for being admitted to a PhD or diploma

p. III, AJA. She also taught in Turkey in the 1930s. In 1938 or 1939, she moved to London, where she lived until her death. She never married. I was not able to determine the exact date of her death, which was probably caused by lung cancer, as the correspondence between Gertrud Schlesinger and her sister Hildegard reveals. MS-278, box 49, folders 5 and 6, AJA. Eilhard Schlesinger was a high school teacher of Greek and Latin and later professor of classics at the National University of Tucumán and the National University of La Plata, and later in Münster and in Mainz. Schlesinger, his second wife, Martha, and their two children died on 13 August 1968 in a car accident in Germany. Walter Marg and Andreas Thierfelder, "Eilhard Schlesinger †," *Gnomon* 41 (1969): 430–432 and "Eilhard Schlesinger," Verzeichnis der Professorinnen und Professoren der Universität Mainz, 1477–1973, <http://gutenberg-biographics.ub.uni-mainz.de/id/c00d79d0-2ed7-424f-9c49-41faba6e3a44>. See also MS-278, box 49, folder 4, AJA.

examination.)¹⁰⁸ This achievement qualified her for advanced study and research in chemistry. She then worked on her dissertation on the disintegration of metal halides in light in the Physikalisch-Chemisches Institut under the supervision of Karl Schaum, a chemist who specialized in photochemistry and was full professor of physical chemistry at Gießen University from 1914 to 1935. She submitted her dissertation in 1926¹⁰⁹ and subsequently served as an assistant at the Physikalisches Institut in Gießen from 1926 to 1928, gaining valuable research experience and analytical thinking skills, and contributing to the institute's ongoing projects.

Hildegard Schlesinger's marriage to Julius Lewy on 28 March 1928 marked not only a personal milestone but also the beginning of a profound transformation in her intellectual focus and career trajectory. Under her husband's training and guidance, she began—probably not long after their marriage—privately studying cuneiform languages, particularly Assyrian, and embarked on what would become her own distinguished scholarly career in a field entirely different from her original training in science.¹¹⁰ The transition from chemistry to Assyriology might seem unusual, but it reflected both Hildegard Lewy's intellectual adaptability and the interdisciplinary skills that her scientific training had developed. Her background in chemistry had taught her precision in observation, systematic methodology, and attention to detail—qualities that proved invaluable in deciphering ancient texts and analyzing complex problems. Moreover, her mathematical training, inherited perhaps from her family's scholarly traditions, would prove particularly useful as she came to specialize in ancient mathematical texts and metrology. The shift also reflected the kind of intellectual partnership that she and her husband developed, one in which shared scholarly interests strengthened their personal relationship while allowing each to make distinctive contributions to their common field.

108 Jeffrey A. Johnson, "Academic Self-Regulation and the Chemical Profession in Imperial Germany," *Minerva* 23 no. 2 (1985): 241–271 has background information on the origin and purpose of examinations in chemistry

109 Schlesinger, *Über den Zerfall einiger Metallhalogenide*.

110 It is not clear when exactly Hildegard started, but it can be assumed that it was sooner after her marriage than later.

From 1933 to 1935, as the couple prepared for their involuntary emigration from Nazi Germany, Hildegard Lewy demonstrated the same organizational skills and attention to detail that had characterized her scientific work. As mentioned, this period revealed not only her practical competence but also her emotional strength in managing the logistics of their departure from Germany while supporting her husband's efforts to maintain his scholarly career and cultivate options for securing future positions. Her ability to handle these mundane but crucial details allowed her husband to focus on the intellectual and professional networking that would ultimately help during their formative years in Paris and, finally, in the United States.

Becoming an Assyriologist

When the Lewys moved first to Baltimore (1934–1936)—they also temporarily lived in New York while Julius taught at JTS—and then permanently to Cincinnati (1936), Hildegard Lewy continued to demonstrate the remarkable versatility that characterized her entire life. She not only continued to provide ongoing support for her husband's research and managed their household and finances with characteristic efficiency, but she also continued her own studies of cuneiform texts.¹¹¹ The depth of her commitment to scholarship became evident in 1938, when she published her first academic article: a brief paper on the Old Assyrian unit of area.¹¹² This publication marked her emergence as an independent scholar rather than merely an assistant to her husband's research, although their collaboration remained an important aspect of both their careers. Her interests would ultimately extend beyond purely mathematical concerns to include legal and economic texts, chronological problems, and related topics documented in materials from important excavation sites including Nuzi (in modern Iraq) and Kültepe in Central Anatolia. Hildegard Lewy, like her husband, was not known for mincing words when criticizing colleagues, as she did, for example, with William F. Albright, an early ally of the Lewy's.¹¹³

111 MS-278, box 53, folder 1, AJA.

112 Lewy, "La mesure."

113 One example might suffice here by quoting from two letters exchanged between

In 1963, Hebrew Union College recognized Hildegard Lewy's scholarly achievements and her potential for continued contributions by inviting her to succeed her husband as visiting professor of Assyriology after his death. This appointment represented more than merely institutional courtesy toward a faculty widow; it constituted genuine recognition of her qualifications and expertise in her own right. In a few letters from this time, Lewy described this situation to her siblings.¹¹⁴ Yet one

Hildegard Lewy and William F. Albright in 1945; Albright was, for many years, the editor of the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. The reason for this correspondence was that Hildegard Lewy felt a manuscript submitted for publication had been "censored": "Dear Dr. Albright, Since I am not accustomed to having publications of mine censored by incompetent and biased hands, I hereby withdraw the article 'A propos of Babylonian Metrology' of which I sent you the manuscript on February 16. I reserve myself the right to publish it elsewhere." Draft of a letter from Hildegard Lewy to William F. Albright, 9 April 1945, MS-278, box 1, folder 1.—Albright replied just three days later making his editorial opinion heard as well, while trying to maintain their friendship: "Dear Mrs Lewy, Your registered letter of the 9th has just reached me. In America every editor of a learned publication has the admitted right to temper or tone down the content of a polemic contribution. Since you have asked to have it withdrawn I shall be glad to do so on condition that you pay for the cost of composition. (...) If you object, I shall be still happier to print an additional paragraph (not over 200 words) in which you can say what you please; I will attach a note of my own in case the content of this additional paragraph seems unnötigerweise herausfordernd [unnecessarily challenging], but I promise not to alter the contents of the said paragraph. It is very silly of you to call me 'incompetent and biased,' but I promise you that I will not allow an obvious outburst of temper to interfere with our friendly relationship, so far as I am concerned. As usual, the rest is up to you; I am not going to start a feud. It just happens that I have this very morning finished a lengthy review of recent HUCA monographs by Dr. Julius Lewy and yourself, but the only effect your letter will have on it, will be to make me check carefully to make sure that I have not allowed any word or expression which might prove objectionable to stand. If there is no reply I shall print your statement as I have it (after reading proof carefully), with an explanatory note stating that you had asked that it be withdrawn, but that I had refused (with grounds for my refusal). But I earnestly hope that you accept one of the two alternatives, preferably the second. Cordially W.F. Albright." See Hildegard Lewy, "A Propos of Babylonian Metrology," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 98 (April 1945): 25–26, Abraham J. Sachs, "[A Propos of Babylonian Metrology]: Rejoinder," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 98 (April 1945): 26–27 and Albright's editorial note (*) following Lewy's article on p. 27.

114 On 11 September 1963, Hildegard Lewy wrote to her sister Gertrud Schlesinger in London: "I have been in quite a rush to prepare classes [and] to finish two articles which



Hildegard Lewy, 1964.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

article on Old Assyrians in Anatolia and their political structures drew criticism. Following her husband's death in 1963, she assumed the task of completing his work, which resulted in the chapters "Anatolia in the Old Assyrian Period" and "Assyria c. 2600–1816 B.C." for the prestigious *Cambridge Ancient History* volume.¹¹⁵ While it was imperative for Hildegard Lewy at the time to preserve her husband's legacy regarding his reconstruction of the historical and economic situation in ancient Anatolia, his interpretations had been—as mentioned above—rejected by the majority of scholars since the 1920s. Criticism of her decision to promote it anyway is particularly evident in a review of a study on the Old Assyrian trading colonies in Central Anatolia from 1970 published after her death, in which J. David Hawkins praises the PhD thesis by Louis Lawrence Orlin as "the latest of several essays in de-Lewy-ization of the subject."¹¹⁶

are long overdue (Julius had promised them for this past spring), help one student who had started his thesis under Julius and was at a loss what to do." On 29 October, Hildegard Lewy mentioned her increased workload to her brother Eilhard Schlesinger in Mainz: "I also need a lot of time to prepare my courses: even though I teach only six hours a week, almost all my time is taken by preparing courses and do in between some work in the house." A day later she again informed her sister: "Considering the circumstances, the president of our college happened to give a reception on that day for the new members of the faculty among whom they counted me. No one knew that it was my birthday, only my closest friends." Letters from Hildegard Lewy to Gertrud Schlesinger, 11 September and 29 October 1963, MS-278, box 49, folder 5, AJA; letter from Hildegard Lewy to Eilhard Schlesinger, 28 October 1963, MS-278, box 49, folder 4, AJA.

115 The fascicles were originally published as Hildegard Lewy, "Anatolia in the Old Assyrian Period," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. I. E. S. Edwards, C. J. Gadd, and N. G. L. Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), vol. 1, ch. XXIV, §VII–X, fasc. 40. pp. 11–12; Lewy, "Assyria c. 2600–1816 B.C.," *The Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. I. E. S. Edwards, C. J. Gadd, and N. G. L. Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), vol. 1, ch. XXV, §§I–VI, fasc. 53, pp. 38–39. The individual fascicles of the *Cambridge Ancient History* volumes published until then were consolidated in the 3rd edition (1971). See s.v. "Anatolia," 715.

116 J. D. Hawkins, review of Louis Lawrence Orlin, *Assyrian Colonies in Cappadocia*, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 34, no. 2 (1971): 391: "However, among the very large number of [Old Assyrian] letters [from Anatolia] and contracts which give us such a remarkable insight into the workings of Assyrian-Anatolian trade at this period, no examples of such treaty-documents have survived. In the absence of these, Assyriologists

Nevertheless, in her last years she continued her scholarly work with characteristic dedication and precision until her death in Cincinnati on 8 October 1967. She left behind a body of research that complemented and extended her husband's contributions while establishing her own distinctive place within Assyriological studies. Her career path from chemistry to Assyriology and from refugee to respected scholar exemplified both the intellectual versatility and personal resilience that characterized the refugee scholars of her generation.

Conclusion

Julius and Hildegard Lewy envisioned their correspondence, drafts, and notes as part of their life's journey—not abandoned but preserved. Thanks to the American Jewish Archives, these materials are now accessible through a comprehensive finding aid, which can provide the basis for future research on a variety of issues: Julius Lewy's path to Assyriology, the influence on Lewy of Paul Haupt (from 1910 to 1914) and Friedrich Delitzsch (from 1919 to 1920); the controversy between Julius Lewy and Eugen Täubler (1942–1947), emigration from Nazi Germany (1933–1936), the Hilprecht Collection, and Lewy's complex relationship with Benno Landsberger. This depth of insight is possible only because their estate, safeguarded at the AJA, fills gaps where no other records exist. It has enabled me to trace Julius Lewy's early fascination with ancient Semitic languages, sparked by Haupt as early as 1910, through interrupted studies during World War I, his doctorate

have speculated freely on what sort of relationship they might have embodied. Among them, the late Julius Lewy devoted a lifetime's prolific scholarship to the pertinacious but wrong-headed propagation of the idea of an Old Assyrian Empire in Anatolia, complete with Assyrian provincial governors, military occupation, and oaths of vassalage from the client Anatolian princes. This grandiose theory was built on the most insubstantial of foundations, but Professor Lewy argued with such persistence and at such length as to submerge the subject in mounds of academic detritus, from which it stood in urgent need of re-excitation. It is particularly to be regretted that this completely unacceptable view of the period has been permitted to find its way into a general reference work, the latest edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History*, in the contribution of Lewy's widow, the late Dr. Hildegard Lewy. The work under review is the latest of several essays in *de-Lewy-ization* of the subject, and represents the author's doctoral thesis, submitted in 1960" (my emphasis).

and *Habilitation*, and—despite his shortcomings—his rise as one of the leading Assyriologists of his time.¹¹⁷ It has shed new light on a personal life intertwined with scholarship by revealing how, after a failed first marriage, Julius Lewy's union with Hildegard Schlesinger forged a partnership that advanced cuneiform studies.

The Lewys' story reflects resilience. Stripped of positions under Hitler in 1933, they navigated exile—Paris, Baltimore, New York, then Cincinnati, where Hebrew Union College offered refuge. There, Julius Lewy shaped the curriculum while Hildegard emerged as a scholar in her own right. Together they earned international recognition, even amid academic rivalries. Retirement never came. Julius Lewy died in 1963 and Hildegard Lewy in 1967 after years of teaching, reviewing dissertations, and mentoring future Assyriologists. Their legacy endures not only in their own publications but in the preserved papers that illuminate a life of scholarship, exile, and intellectual courage.

Peter Raulwing studied Historical-Comparative Linguistics, Indo-Iranian Languages, and Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology at the universities of Bonn and Saarbrücken. One of his areas of expertise is the history of scholarship of the Ancient Near East, Egypt, and adjacent areas. In addition to Julius and Hildegard Lewy, he is currently researching other refugee scholars such as the Assyriologist Benno Landsberger (1890–1968) and the Hittitologist Hans Gustav Güterbock (1908–2000). He has been awarded The Bernard and Audre Rapoport Fellowship and The Lois & Willard Cohodas Fellowship at the American Jewish Archives.

117 Based on the insights gained in the previous chapters, the “Academic Genealogies of Near Eastern Scholars (AGNES) Project” initiated by Rachel Hallote, Diane Harris Cline, and Eric H. Cline can be expanded to include important aspects of Haupt's influence on the young Lewy becoming an Assyriologist; see Rachel Hallote, Diane Harris Cline, and Eric H. Cline, “Who Are You? Preliminary Results of the Academic Genealogies of Near Eastern Scholars (AGNES),” *Ancient Near East Today* 10, no. 11 (November 2022), <https://anetoday.org/hallote-cline-academic-genealogies/>; Cline, Cline, and Hallote, “Dawn and Descent: Social Network Analysis and the ASOR Family Trees,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 87, no. 2 (2024): 122–131. The influence of Delitzsch on Lewy and Lewy's influence on his former student, the archaeologist, historian and excavator Benjamin Mazar (Maisler) (1906–1995) also deserves further scrutiny.

THE LAST GENERATION OF THE GERMAN RABBINATE

by Cornelia Wilhelm

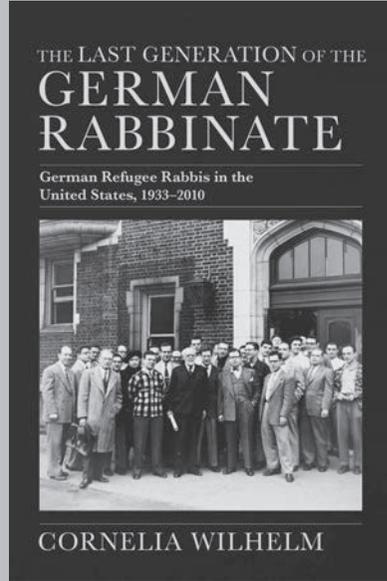
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Book Reviews

Mirrors of Identity: The Shared Mythologies and Entangled Alliance of America and Israel

MARK A. RAIDER

“Every chance to return to this great country where the ancient roots of the Jewish people date back to biblical times is a blessing,” declared President Joe Biden in July 2022, standing on the tarmac at Tel Aviv’s Ben-Gurion International Airport, “because the connection between the Israeli people and the American people is bone-deep, bone-deep.”¹ This reflexive invocation of a bond that transcends mere strategic calculation exemplifies what diplomats and politicians have long termed the “special relationship” between the United States and Israel. For over a century, this bond has been a central, and often contentious, feature of American foreign policy and a cornerstone of Israeli national identity. Yet the nature of this specialness remains a subject of intense debate, a Gordian knot of sentiment and strategy that scholars have long struggled to untangle. Is it a pragmatic alliance rooted in the cold calculus of geo-strategic interests, a moral compact born of shared democratic values, or a theological imperative driven by religious conviction? The historiography has often been split between two camps: the “realists,” who emphasize national interests, and the “idealists,” who point to values, beliefs, and domestic politics.

Together, five recently published groundbreaking studies—Oz Frankel’s *Coca-Cola, Black Panthers, and Phantom Jets: Israel in the American Orbit, 1967–1973* (2024), Jaclyn Granick’s *International Jewish Humanitarianism in the Age of the Great War* (2021), Shaul Mitelpunkt’s *Israel in the American Mind: The Cultural Politics of US-Israel Relations, 1958–1988* (2019), Matthew M. Silver’s *Zionism and the Melting Pot:*

1 Peter Baker, Patrick Kingsley, and Isabel Kershner, “Biden, Battered at Home, Basks in Unvarnished Praise in Israel,” *New York Times*, 14 July 2022, A10.

Preachers, Pioneers, and Modern Jewish Politics (2020), and David Tal's *The Making of an Alliance: The Origins and Development of the US-Israel Relationship* (2022)—shatter the tired binary of realism versus idealism, revealing instead a relationship woven from threads of mutual mythology, pragmatic statecraft, and cultural exchange. What emerges is not simply an alliance but an ideological entanglement of remarkable complexity and durability. Unlike the “special relationship” between the United States and Britain, which grew from shared language and imperial succession, or the transactional alliances America formed during the Cold War, the bond between the United States and Israel represents a unique form of national interconnection, one in which each nation's self-conception became partially dependent on its relationship with the other. The story they collectively tell is one of organic evolution from shared dreams of national rebirth, to concrete humanitarian partnerships, to formal diplomatic bonds, and finally to a profound cultural dialogue marked as much by tension as by harmony. The alliance flourished not because idealism triumphed over realism, or vice versa, but because the soil of shared values nourished the roots of strategic cooperation.

Building on this idea of a relationship woven from diverse threads, the present essay traces the tapestry of ideological entanglement as it appears in scholarly works exploring the development of American, Zionist, and Israeli narratives, affinities, and structures from the late nineteenth to late twentieth centuries. It focuses on specific strands that reveal how mythologies are woven across borders. A fuller treatment, one that incorporates the question of Palestinian and Arab perspectives, remains an urgent project for future scholarship. For the limited purposes of this examination, the US-Israel relationship will be explored as it unfolds across the aforementioned five works. Each thread represents a distinct mode of engagement—intellectual, organizational, diplomatic, and cultural—and together they form the intricate pattern of US-Israel entanglement.

Silver's *Zionism and the Melting Pot* uncovers the shared intellectual DNA of American and Zionist thought, revealing how both movements emerged from the same crucible of Jewish modernity. Granick's *International Jewish Humanitarianism* shows how abstract ideological kinship crystallized into organizational power during World War I,

as American Jews pioneered new forms of transnational agency. Tal's *The Making of an Alliance* charts the diplomatic dance from tentative friendship to strategic partnership. Finally, the cultural dimension is analyzed in Mitelpunkt's *Israel in the American Mind*, which deconstructs America's mythic projections onto Israel, and Frankel's *Coca-Cola, Black Panthers, and Phantom Jets*, which captures the profound Americanization of Israeli society. Together they reveal not merely an alliance but a continuous conversation between two nations constantly reimagining themselves through the mirror of the other.

Twin Ideologies: The Shared Roots of Zionism and Americanism

Before the "special relationship" became a matter of statecraft, its foundations were laid by a powerful confluence of religious belief, shared political values, and a new form of international agency forged by American Jews. The intellectual and ideological groundwork for this future affinity is the subject of Silver's penetrating study, *Zionism and the Melting Pot*. He argues that the two great "mega-ideologies" of modern Jewish life—Zionism and American integration—were not opposing forces but were in fact twins, born in response to the crisis of "Jewish modernization in the Russian empire" in the late nineteenth century.² Faced with the "indeterminacy" of gentile attitudes, which ranged from "new forms of antisemitism" to the equally confusing "public promise and inner tension of philosemitism," Jews were forced to develop their own ideologies of self-transformation.³

Silver traces how itinerant preachers, *matifim* in Hebrew, like Zvi Hirsch Masliansky, traveled between the shtetls of Eastern Europe and the tenements of New York's Lower East Side, adapting traditional Jewish discourse for modern nationalist ends. They preached a gospel of self-reliance and national rebirth that resonated on both sides of the Atlantic, blending American ideals of progress with Zionist aspirations. The most powerful example of this ideological entanglement is Silver's deconstruction of Emma Lazarus's famous 1883 sonnet, "The

2 Matthew M. Silver, *Zionism and the Melting Pot: Preachers, Pioneers, and Modern Jewish Politics* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press 2020), 1.

3 Silver, *Zionism*, 14.

New Colossus.” Lazarus, a passionate advocate for a Jewish national revival, consciously transposed the philosemitic novelist George Eliot’s “‘torch’ image in tribute to the future of Jewish national settlement in Eretz Israel” to a “pathway for Jewish assimilation in America.”⁴ As Silver meticulously demonstrates, Lazarus’s vision of America’s “golden door” was directly inspired by the Zionist idea of a national home that would serve as a beacon to the oppressed. In this act of literary alchemy, she transformed the Statue of Liberty into a symbol of immigrant assimilation and created a shared symbolic language that linked the American and Zionist projects long before a political alliance existed.

What Silver’s analysis reveals—and what conventional diplomatic histories often miss—is that Zionism and Americanism were not separate ideologies that later found common cause but interconnected responses to the same historical pressures. This insight challenges the standard narrative that sees American support for Israel as either a later strategic calculation or the result of effective lobbying. Instead, it suggests a deeper cultural affinity and ideological symmetry that predates the State of Israel itself, a compatibility that would later make the diplomatic alliance seem natural and inevitable to many Americans.

While Silver’s analysis of ideological convergence illuminates the intellectual foundations of the relationship, his focus on the *matifim* and other elites sometimes leaves the reader wondering how these lofty ideas resonated among ordinary Jews. The tenement dwellers of the Lower East Side lived far from the rarefied air of Lazarus’s literary circles—so too did the varied Jewish immigrant communities that dotted the American landscape. How did Yiddish-speaking garment workers in New York City and Ladino-speaking peddlers in Los Angeles reconcile Zionist longings with American realities? Surely, the tensions between universalist American ideals and particularist Jewish nationalism played out differently across the braided social, economic, and cultural landscape of the country’s Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jewish immigrant subcommunities, including variables of class, religious practice, and cultural sensibilities rooted in divergent Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian,

4 Silver, *Zionism*, 25.

and Ottoman imperial origins. These dimensions percolate beneath the surface of Silver's compelling and pathfinding intellectual history but remain somewhat underexplored.

This ideological ferment was translated into organizational power during the "calamity of stupendous proportions" that was World War I.⁵ As Granick's *International Jewish Humanitarianism in the Age of the Great War* details, the crisis on the eastern front, which left millions of Jews displaced and starving in the "shatterzone of empires," forced a fragmented American Jewish community to unite.⁶ In 1914, establishment American Jewish leaders of Central European ancestry like Jacob Schiff and Louis Marshall joined forces with Eastern European immigrant organizations to create the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). This "fortuitous organization" became the vehicle for a massive aid effort that was more than charity; it was a form of diaspora building that ran parallel to the Zionist project of state-building.⁷

Granick argues that the JDC pioneered a new form of "socioeconomic welfare diplomacy," effectively creating a "private, non-territorial, diaspora social welfare state."⁸ This was not an abstract concept. It involved concrete and unprecedented engagement with American state power. The JDC, with the assistance of elite figures like Marshall, Schiff, Felix Warburg, and Ambassador Henry Morgenthau Sr., successfully negotiated directly with the Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels and State Department officials to move aid into war zones. This unprecedented intervention included "shipping space" on naval vessels like the USS *Vulcan* to transport supplies, including "900 tons of food and medicine," to the impoverished Jewish community of Palestine.⁹ The sheer scale of the operation, which raised and distributed tens of millions of dollars (billions in today's currency), gave American Jews their first taste of large-scale engagement with American foreign policy.

5 Jaclyn Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism in the Age of the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 2.

6 Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism*, 3.

7 Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism*, 26.

8 Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism*, 22, 74.

9 Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism*, 52.

Granick's work is particularly valuable for recovering the agency of diaspora Jews in this story. Where traditional Zionist historiography often portrays American Jews as mere financial supporters of the state-building project in Palestine, Granick shows them as active creators of a new form of transnational power, one that would later serve as an organizational foundation for the political alliance between the United States and Israel. A 1919 letter written to the Chicago Rabbinical Association by Warburg, uncovered in Granick's archival research, captures the emerging sense of American Jewish diplomatic agency. "I could write and speak about the duties and opportunities of American Jewry in Israel's present crisis without end," Warburg states. "The amazing thing is how people can find the self-complacency to enjoy a life of ease and extravagance and not be haunted."¹⁰ The "plight of Jews outside America," Granick observes, weighed heavily on Warburg and others, who championed American Jewish political involvement in world affairs and believed "international Jewish humanitarianism" to be a duty.¹¹

Granick's recovery of diaspora agency represents a significant historiographical intervention, although her narrative of organizational effectiveness occasionally smooths over the fractious reality of American Jewish politics. The JDC's impressive achievements sometimes obscure the persistent tensions between the so-called "German Jews" and "Russian Jews," between Zionists and non-Zionists, between religious and secular factions. These internal conflicts were not merely organizational squabbles but fundamental disagreements about Jewish identity and purpose that shaped how American Jews engaged with both Palestine and American foreign policy. The aforementioned "fortuitous organization" was also perhaps less cohesive than Granick's account suggests, raising questions about how these internal divisions influenced the emerging relationship with Palestine and later Israel.

By 1948, the groundwork for the "special relationship" was firmly laid: a deep ideological affinity, as described by Silver, was now supported by a newly powerful and internationally experienced American

10 Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism*, 287.

11 Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism*, 287.

Jewish community, as shown by Granick. This foundation would prove crucial when the abstract question of Jewish statehood became the concrete reality of Israeli independence.

Diplomatic Evolution: From “Friendly Impartiality” to Strategic Alliance

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 thrust the theoretical kinship into the rough and tumble of geopolitics and hard diplomacy, where lofty ideals frequently collided with the gritty realities of the Cold War era. Tal’s *The Making of an Alliance* charts this delicate dance between sentiment and strategy, revealing how the relationship evolved from what he aptly terms “friendly impartiality” to full strategic partnership.¹²

Harry S. Truman, a man whose political instincts were shaped by “intimate knowledge of the Bible” and genuine sympathy for Jewish aspirations, recognized the newborn state just eleven minutes after its declaration, a decision made against the fierce objections of his own State Department.¹³ Yet this dramatic gesture belied a more cautious approach. Truman’s administration provided crucial economic lifelines but steadfastly refused to become Israel’s arms supplier, wary of alienating oil-rich Arab states. This strategic ambivalence hardened under Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was determined to prove to the Arab world that “we shall not be prisoners of Israel any longer.”¹⁴

The 1958 Middle East crisis marked the first significant pivot. As pro-Nasserite forces toppled Iraq’s monarchy and threatened Lebanon and Jordan, the Eisenhower administration began to see Israel through a different lens, not as a liability but as a “stalwart ally in a volatile region.”¹⁵ This perceptual shift cracked open the door to military cooperation, leading to the first direct sale of American “firing weapon[s]” to Israel.¹⁶

12 David Tal, *The Making of an Alliance: The Origins and Development of the US-Israel Relationship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 57.

13 Tal, *Making*, 44.

14 Tal, *Making*, 57.

15 Tal, *Making*, 1.

16 Tal, *Making*, 99.

Under John F. Kennedy, this crack widened into a genuine opening. The 1962 Hawk missile deal represented more than a weapons transfer; it was a symbolic crossing of the Rubicon. “This is the first time,” declared Golda Meir in an Israeli government cabinet meeting, “America is ready to sell us something like this... [t]he Arabs should know that Israel has a great friend in the White House, and his policy is to help Israel in any possible way.”¹⁷ In due course, the United States supplied Israel with 215 Hawk missiles, sustained by a ten-year credit arrangement for \$25 million and \$2 million for early warning and communications technology.

The relationship again transformed dramatically after Israel’s lightning victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, which convinced Richard M. Nixon’s strategists that Israel could serve as a valuable Cold War asset. This strategic calculus culminated in the massive American airlift during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, a logistical marvel that not only saved Israel from potential defeat but also sent an unmistakable message to Moscow about American resolve to “maintain Israel’s military superiority.”¹⁸

Tal’s diplomatic history is remarkable for its archival depth and analytic precision. His narrative underscores how the ideological foundations documented by Silver and the organizational networks described by Granick created the conditions for diplomatic cooperation. When, for example, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, hardly a sentimentalist, authorized the 1973 airlift, he was operating within a political context in which support for Israel had already been normalized through decades of cultural and ideological entanglement. Interestingly, Tal notes, Nixon, who had “no illusions” about winning Jewish votes and had a “complex relationship with American Jews,” declared the relations between the United States and Israel to “go far beyond any written piece of paper” and “accepted Israel’s terms for peace [between Israel and its Arab neighbors] almost in full.”¹⁹ Thereafter, born-again Christians Gerald R. Ford, who “conflated values and religion in his attitude to Israel,” and Jimmy Carter, who viewed Israel as “a strategic asset” and

17 Tal, *Making*, 110.

18 Tal, *Making*, 169–170, 190.

19 Tal, *Making*, 170, 172, 178.

initially confessed no “strong feelings” about the Arab nations, displayed “more continuity than change” in presidential leadership.²⁰

For all its archival richness, Tal’s diplomatic history sometimes underplays the messy intrusion of domestic politics into foreign policy calculations. Presidential decisions regarding Israel were almost never made in the rarefied air of grand strategy alone. Lyndon B. Johnson’s intensified support for Israel, for example, unfolded against the backdrop of his 1964 election campaign and his need to shore up Jewish support for his Great Society programs. Similarly, the decisions of Nixon, Ford, and Carter were colored by complex relationships with the American Jewish community and its leadership. The interplay between electoral politics and diplomatic strategy, particularly the growing importance of the “Jewish vote” in key swing states, deserves more attention than Tal’s otherwise masterful analysis concedes. This is not merely a question of lobbying power but of how democratic politics shapes foreign policy in ways that purely diplomatic histories sometimes obscure.

What Tal’s work makes clear is that American foreign policy and diplomatic ties did not develop in isolation from the ideological and cultural dimensions of the US-Israel relationship but were constantly shaped by them. The “special relationship” was not imposed by a powerful lobby or dictated solely by strategic imperatives; rather, it evolved organically as elected officials and diplomats worked within the parameters demarcated by deeper cultural and ideological affinities.

Cultural Reflections: Projections and Absorptions

While presidents, prime ministers, diplomats, and generals were forging formal ties, an equally complex and intimate relationship was unfolding in the realm of culture. Here, the alliance took on dimensions that transcended strategic calculations, as each nation became a canvas for the other’s dreams and anxieties.

Mitelpunkt’s *Israel in the American Mind* probes and dissects America’s mythic constructions of Israel. The process began in earnest, Mitelpunkt asserts, with Leon Uris’s 1958 novel *Exodus* and the blockbuster film it

20 Tal, *Making*, 198, 215–216, 222.

spawned. These cultural artifacts, he argues, reimagined Israel's founding as an American-style revolution; they "fictionalized and popularized Israel's independence narrative in ways that directly appealed to American sensitivities."²¹ By casting the British as oppressors, *Exodus* transformed Israel's birth into "a familiar American tale of fighting for freedom against a tyrannical old-world empire."²²

This cultural alignment reached its zenith after the 1967 Six-Day War, which cemented in American consciousness the intoxicating image of Israel as a "citizen-soldier" utopia. As America sank deeper into the quagmire of Vietnam, Israel's swift victory offered a seductive alternative: a society that seemed to have perfected the balance between military necessity and democratic values. The embodiment of this fantasy was "Yossi Israeli," a young tank commander profiled in a 1973 *Life* magazine special. "Glowing from the bowels of his Patton tank," the article marveled, "Yossi Israeli (his actual name) is at 21 the picture of the raffish, resourceful soldier of Israel."²³ Here was the ideal that eluded America: a warrior who could seamlessly transition from battlefield to university seminar, from military duty to personal fulfillment.

The Yom Kippur War of October 1973 shattered this comforting mirage. The surprise attack by Egypt and Syria, and Israel's initial struggles, transformed American perceptions. The citizen-soldier paradise gave way to the image of a "Spartan" society—traumatized, dependent, and in need of American guidance. This shift mirrored America's own post-Vietnam desire to rebrand itself as a diplomatic rather than a singularly military superpower, a process with respect to Israel and Egypt that culminated in the 1978 Camp David Accords and the ensuing landmark Israel-Egypt peace treaty. By the 1980s, however, the American consensus on Israel had fractured along partisan lines, with the 1982 Lebanon War and the 1987 Palestinian Intifada creating a chasm between liberals mourning Israel's lost "unique splendor" and neoconservatives

21 Shaul Mitelpunkt, *Israel in the American Mind: The Cultural Politics of US-Israel Relations, 1958–1988* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 33–34.

22 Mitelpunkt, *Israel*, 35.

23 Mitelpunkt, *Israel*, 119.

embracing “Israel’s military robustness and Americans’ willingness to maintain it” as proof of Western resolve.²⁴

Mitelpunkt’s cultural analysis insightfully captures mainstream American projections onto Israel, although his focus on dominant media narratives sometimes leaves alternative perspectives in the shadows. The America that engaged with Israel was never monolithic, and different communities viewed the Jewish state through distinct lenses. African Americans, for instance, developed a complex relationship with Israel that defies easy categorization. While many Black leaders initially embraced Israel as a fellow underdog fighting against oppression, this solidarity became increasingly strained as Israel developed closer ties with apartheid South Africa and as the Palestinian struggle gained visibility. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee’s controversial 1967 newsletter criticizing Israel marked an early rupture that would grow more pronounced in subsequent decades.²⁵ These countercurrents in American culture—the perspectives that challenged dominant narratives about Israel—remain somewhat peripheral in Mitelpunkt’s account, raising questions about how different American communities constructed their own relationships with Israel outside the mainstream consensus.

What Mitelpunkt’s analysis reveals is how American perceptions of Israel often had more to do with America’s own identity crises than with Israeli realities. This projection helps explain why the relationship has been so emotionally charged and why criticism of Israeli policies often triggers such visceral reactions in American political discourse. When Americans debate Israel, they are often really debating America itself.

Even as Americans projected their fantasies onto Israel, Israeli society itself, as Frankel’s *Coca-Cola, Black Panthers, and Phantom Jets* demonstrates, was deeply influenced and reshaped in the image of American culture. The post-1967 period witnessed an unprecedented influx of American products, ideas, and technologies that challenged Israel’s austere socialist pioneering ethos. The arrival of Coca-Cola in 1968, after

24 Mitelpunkt, *Israel*, 281, 284.

25 “Third World Round Up—The Palestine Problem: Test Your Knowledge,” *SNCC Newsletter* I:4, June–July 1967, 4–5, https://www.crmvet.org/docs/sv/6707_sncc_news-r.pdf.

years of the company honoring the Arab boycott of Israel, symbolized Israel's entry into global consumer culture. The ensuing "cold war" between Coke and its local competitor, Tempo, was not merely commercial but profoundly cultural, a battle between cosmopolitan modernity and nationalist authenticity.²⁶ The iconic red-and-white logo became a visible marker of Israel's orbit around American consumer culture, celebrated by some as progress and mourned by others as cultural capitulation.

Even social protest in Israel acquired an American accent. The Israeli Black Panthers, a movement of Mizrahi Jews challenging Ashkenazi dominance, deliberately borrowed the name, rhetoric, and imagery of their American counterparts, including "the clenched fist and the image of the panther."²⁷ This transnational borrowing reveals how even uniquely Israeli social conflicts were articulated through American cultural frameworks, complicating the narrative of harmonious alliance by showing how American social fractures were being mirrored and reinterpreted in Israeli society.

Perhaps the most profound Americanization occurred within Israel's military, the very institution that embodied national identity. The arrival of American Phantom jets, whose acquisition Tal details diplomatically, triggered what Frankel describes as a cultural revolution. These aircraft were not merely weapons but complex technological systems that induced the Israeli Air Force's "American turn."²⁸ Pilots and ground crews had to master English, adopt American operational procedures, and embrace a technocratic mindset that valued systems analysis over improvisation. The jets embedded American methods at the heart of Israel's most sacred military institution. "With the new hardware and exposure to American managerial culture," argues Frankel, "new types of authority, knowledge, and ethos infiltrated" the Israeli Air Force, stoking "the IAF's Americanization" and creating a deep organizational alignment that transcended political calculations.²⁹ Frankel's work thus

26 Oz Frankel, *Coca-Cola, Black Panthers, and Phantom Jets: Israel in the American Orbit, 1967–1973* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2024), 45.

27 Frankel, *Coca-Cola*, 141.

28 Frankel, *Coca-Cola*, 113.

29 Frankel, *Coca-Cola*, 113.

reveals a striking irony: while Americans were romanticizing the Israeli soldier, the actual Israeli military was increasingly speaking American English, following American protocols, and drinking American soda.

Beyond the emblematic cases of Coca-Cola, the Black Panthers, and Phantom jets, Frankel's study illuminates the broader tapestry of American influence across Israeli society. Chapter 3 ("Electioneering and the Feedback Loop") documents how American campaign methods—opinion polling, image crafting, and the 1973 Tel Aviv mayoral victory of General Shlomo Lahat—transformed Israeli electoral politics and imported a technocratic, data-driven approach to governance that marked a profound shift from earlier Zionist idealism. Chapter 4 ("Keeping Up with the Cohens") explores how consumerism reshaped middle-class aspirations through American patterns of consumption and suburban living. Chapter 6 ("American Gangster in the Promised Land") extends Frankel's investigation in the country to the darker side of American influence, illustrating how Meyer Lansky's attempted immigration and Rabbi Meir Kahane's later *aliyah* ("ascent") to Israel laid bare Israeli anxieties about American Jewish criminality and the importation of American-style racial politics to the Arab-Jewish divide.

The cultural dimension receives sophisticated treatment in chapters exploring identity construction and artistic expression. Chapter 7 ("Emissaries of Liberalism in Crisis") traces how American social sciences, feminism, therapeutic approaches, and even recreational developments—from basketball teams recruiting American players to Black Hebrew Israelites settling in Dimona—contributed to a complex process of negotiation, adaptation, and resistance that defined Israel's multifaceted entry into the American orbit. Chapter 8 ("Back to Anatevka") analyzes how Broadway's *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), "the first staging" of which "outside of the United States took place in Jaffa in late spring 1965" triggered an Ashkenazi folk revival that ironically helped Israelis reconnect with their roots while challenging the traditional Zionist doctrine of *shlilat hagolus* ("negation of the diaspora").³⁰ Finally, chapters 9 ("America on Stage") and 10 ("The American Figure in the Israeli Mind")

30 Frankel, *Coca-Cola*, 224.

examine how Israeli theater and popular culture adapted American forms and constructed archetypal American figures as mirrors for self-reflection.

In sum, Frankel's examination of Americanization provides crucial insights into the phenomenon of cultural transfer. Yet his tight chronological focus (1967–1973) raises questions about the longer arc of this transformation. The seeds of American cultural influence were planted earlier, in the experiences of Holocaust survivors who encountered American occupation forces in Europe before immigrating to Israel, in the Hollywood films that played in Tel Aviv theaters in the 1950s, and in the educational exchanges that brought Israeli students to American universities. Similarly, the cultural processes Frankel documents continued to unfold long after 1973, as Israel's economy liberalized in the 1980s and embraced American-style capitalism in the 1990s. The brief but intense period Frankel examines represents the acceleration of a longer process whose full contours remain to be mapped. How did these cultural transfers reshape Israeli identity over the longer term, and how did they influence Israel's regional relationships? These questions suggest fruitful directions for future research.

Together, *Mitelpunkt* and Frankel expose the cultural paradoxes at the heart of the US-Israel relationship. The very myths that made Israel "special" in American eyes eventually became sources of disillusionment when they collided with reality. Similarly, the Americanization that modernized Israeli society also provoked profound anxieties about cultural authenticity and national identity. These cultural tensions also underscore a blind spot in the five books under review, namely, the relative absence of Palestinian and Arab perspectives on this entanglement. How did this deepening US-Israel bond appear from Gaza, the West Bank, or Cairo? This omission points to a broader limitation in the historiography, one that future scholars will need to address in order to fully understand the regional consequences of this bilateral relationship.

Enduring Entanglement

The five works under consideration here collectively reframe our understanding of the US-Israel relationship, moving beyond simplistic narratives of lobbying power or strategic interest to reveal a bond forged through layers of shared mythology, pragmatic cooperation, and cultural

exchange. The relationship's evolution follows a clear progression from shared ideas (Silver), to joint action (Granick), to formal policy (Tal), and finally to a complex cultural dialogue of projection (Mitelpunkt) and absorption (Frankel).

The early ideological kinship of Zionism and Americanism—the shared sense of providential purpose and national rebirth that Silver uncovers—provided the emotional and intellectual foundation for the concrete actions that followed. This bedrock of shared values made the later strategic alliance seem not merely expedient but natural and necessary. Yet the cultural dimension, as Mitelpunkt and Frankel demonstrate, reveals the paradoxes inherent in this entanglement. The myths that elevated Israel's status in American eyes eventually invited scrutiny and prompted disappointment when they collided with reality. Similarly, the Americanization that modernized Israeli society also provoked profound anxieties about cultural authenticity and national identity.

The framework of ideological entanglement offers a powerful analytical tool for understanding other international relationships as well. It suggests that the most durable alliances are not merely those based on shared interests or values in the abstract, but those in which each nation's self-conception becomes partially dependent on its relationship with the other. The US-Israel bond has proven remarkably resilient precisely because it operates at multiple levels simultaneously—strategic, cultural, and ideological—creating a web of connections that no single crisis can sever.

As a scholarly contribution, these works represent a significant historiographical intervention. They shift the study of US-Israel relations away from narrow diplomatic history and toward a richer transnational perspective that connects political developments to deeper currents of ideological formation, diaspora politics, and cultural exchange. The methodological diversity on display—from Tal's meticulous archival research to Silver's intellectual history, Granick's organizational analysis, and the cultural studies of Mitelpunkt and Frankel—offers a model for approaching diplomatic history in a more holistic way, attentive to the interplay between ideas, institutions, and identities.

Each author makes a distinctive and generative contribution to this new synthesis. Silver demolishes the long-standing assumption that Zionism and Americanism were competing ideologies, revealing instead

their common intellectual heritage. Granick recovers the agency of the diaspora, showing how American Jews were not passive supporters of Zionism but active creators of a new form of transnational power. Tal provides the essential diplomatic narrative, with penetrating archival depth and analytical clarity. *Mitelpunkt* and Frankel complete the picture by exploring the cultural dimensions of the relationship, *Mitelpunkt* dissecting America's mythic constructions of Israel and Frankel documenting how American culture transformed Israeli society from within.

Despite their collective strengths, these five works reveal certain lacunae that future scholars might productively address. The absence of other "mirrors" in the present essay does not diminish their importance but clarifies the contours of the reflection under consideration. Most glaring, as noted previously, is the relative absence of Palestinian and Arab perspectives, a silence that speaks volumes about the historiographical challenges of writing about the US-Israel relationship. How did Palestinians interpret the deepening American embrace of Israel? How did they develop their own transnational networks in response? Starting in the early 1970s, the Palestinian Liberation Organization's diplomatic efforts at the United Nations and its complex relationships with various American constituencies, from Black Power activists to church groups, represent a parallel story of transnational engagement that deserves integration into this narrative. Similarly, the gendered dimensions of the US-Israel relationship remain underexplored. The citizen-soldier ideal that so captivated American imaginations was profoundly masculine, as was the diplomatic world in which the alliance was formalized. How did conceptions of masculinity shape military cooperation? How did American and Israeli feminists engage with each other across national boundaries? The religious dimension—particularly the evolving relationship between American evangelicals and Israel—also warrants deeper investigation. The rise of the Christian right as a pro-Israel force in American politics represents a significant shift, the origins of which lie partly in the period these books examine. Finally, the economic foundations of the relationship, from trade agreements to private sector investments, deserve more systematic analysis. These gaps suggest rich possibilities for future scholarship that might complement the diplomatic, cultural, and ideological dimensions so thoroughly documented in these works.

What does this complex history suggest about the future of this “special relationship” in our current moment of geopolitical flux? These works indicate that, while political circumstances may shift, the foundations of the alliance run deeper than strategic calculations. The relationship has weathered the end of the Cold War, dramatic regional transformations, and changing domestic politics precisely because it was never merely a product of geopolitical convenience. Yet the current moment, with its growing partisan divisions over Israel in American politics and increasing challenges to liberal democracy in both societies, may test the relationship’s resilience in unprecedented ways.

The October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel and the subsequent Israel-Hamas war have exposed both the durability and the strains of this ideological entanglement. President Biden’s immediate and forceful support for Israel echoed Truman’s swift recognition seventy-five years earlier, yet the widespread protests on American college campuses suggest a generational shift in how younger Americans perceive the relationship. This tension between official policy and changing public sentiment mirrors the cultural fractures that *Mitelpunkt* documents in the 1980s but with potentially greater consequences in our more polarized era.

What remains constant, arguably, is the way the relationship continues to function as a mirror for both societies’ self-conceptions. When Americans debate Israel today, they are still, in many ways, debating America itself—its values, its role in the world, its relationship to power and vulnerability. And when Israelis negotiate their relationship with America, they are still wrestling with fundamental questions of national identity that have shaped their society since its inception. The bond between the United States and Israel is, in the final analysis, a relationship between two nations that have, for nearly a century, defined themselves partly through their reflection in each other’s eyes, an entanglement so profound that it has become an indelible feature of both their national stories. Understanding this reality and the cultural-political narrative which animates it in all its complexity is not merely an academic exercise but an essential prerequisite for navigating the relationship’s future in an increasingly turbulent world.

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Lawrence Grossman, *Living in Both Worlds: Modern Orthodox Judaism in the United States, 1945–2025* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2025), vii + 405 pp.

The United States is by far the most religious country of the major modern industrial nations. The two most important characteristics of American religion have been its diversity and its newness. This diversity began with the founding of the British and Dutch colonies in North America during the seventeenth century and has continued to the present day with the recent arrival of large numbers of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists from the Middle East and Asia. There are over four thousand distinctive American religions, and they range from the serious to the frivolous. A good example of the latter is the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, which was founded in 2005. This diversity is one factor in the shrinkage of Americans who identify themselves as Christians to under two-thirds of the population.

America has also been the birthplace of more new religions than any other nation. The sense of American newness, reflected in the names of American regions, states, and cities—New England, New York, New Jersey, New Rochelle, New Bern, New Haven, Newport—has also extended to its religions. Americans took to heart Ralph Waldo Emerson’s advice to free themselves from “the courtly muses of Europe” and to leave behind “ancient prejudices and manners” and establish new religions.¹ Thousands have been founded in this “novus ordo seclorum,” including Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Shakers, Unitarianism, Universalism, Christian Science, Seventh-Day Adventist Church,

1 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The American Scholar, Self-Reliance, Compensation* (New York: American Book Co., 1911), 42–46.

Scientology, Jehovah's Witnesses, Ethical Culture, Nation of Islam, Ghost Dance, Black Hebrew Israelites, Jews for Jesus, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. And when traditional religions relocated to the new world, they frequently underwent drastic changes. In 1899, Pope Leo XIII wrote a letter, *Testem benevolentiae nostrae* ("Witness to Our Benevolence"), to Archbishop Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, which claimed that American Catholicism was threatened by an infection of various heretical "Americanist" liberal ideas, particularly the separation of church and state, participation of the laity in ecclesiastical decision-making, cooperation with Protestants, and an emphasis on individual autonomy within the laity.

It is thus to be expected that more new forms of Judaism would appear in America than anywhere else. At the conclusion of the American Revolution, Mordecai Sheftall of Georgia wrote to his son predicting that the future of America's Jews was bright since "we have the whole world to begin again."² While his words referred to America's Jews, they are equally applicable to the many efforts to remake American Judaism over the past two centuries with new forms of Jewish worship and doctrine. These have included Jewish Science, Reconstructionism, the Havurah movement, the Society for Humanistic Judaism, Jewish Renewal, Conservative Judaism, Black Judaism, Open Orthodoxy, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, Chabad, Edah, Young Israel, and Modern Orthodoxy. If America was the land of the self-made man, it was also the land of the self-made Jew. In America, the historian Jenna Weissman Joselit wrote, Jewishness and Judaism became "a malleable and protean social construct," stemming "as much from American notions of consumerism, gender, privacy, and personal happiness as from Jewish notions of tradition, ritual, memory and continuity." This combining of "the immediate and transcendent, the quirky and the hallowed" was "virtually without parallel in modern Jewish history."³

Lawrence Grossman's deeply researched, engrossing, and intellectually exciting *Living in Both Worlds* is an exceedingly important addition

2 Sheftall quoted in Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 36.

3 Joselit quoted in Edward S. Shapiro, *A Unique People in a Unique Land: Essays on American Jewish History* (Brookline, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2022), 125.

to the literature of American Judaism's diversity and newness. It claims to be "the first book-length attempt to trace the course of Modern Orthodoxy since the mid-twentieth century" (3). There is a plethora of books by sociologists on American Orthodoxy that deal with birth rates, occupational and residential patterns, education, marriage, and other such subjects. Grossman's focus is elsewhere. He is an historian and his book is history from the top down, in which prominence is accorded to the pronouncements of those involved in the debate over Modern Orthodoxy. He takes seriously the issues debated in the major magazines of American Orthodoxy during this era, including *Tradition* of the Rabbinical Council of America, *Jewish Life* and *Jewish Action* of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, and the *Jewish Observer* of Agudath Israel of America, Modern Orthodoxy's most prominent opponent. Grossman is also familiar with the lives and major books of Modern Orthodoxy's defenders and opponents, and his book is replete with short and interesting biographies of many of them.

Grossman defines Modern Orthodoxy as "a stance or orientation that entails living simultaneously in two worlds of meaning, that of the present and that of Jewish tradition.... Each new issue that arose evoked debate over whether to affirm Orthodox openness by accommodating change, or to signal Orthodox steadfastness by resisting it" (9). The movement emerged in America shortly after World War II as a defense of Orthodoxy against its detractors, particularly within the Conservative movement on its left, and of modernity against more stringent and insular forms of Orthodoxy on its right.

Grossman is well-equipped to write such a book, having personally experienced the tensions of living within the world of Orthodoxy as well as within the world of modernity. His father was a traditional Orthodox rabbi and mohel, while his mother was a college professor, and he himself graduated from Yeshiva College and then went on to receive a PhD in history from the City University of New York. For nearly forty years, he worked at the American Jewish Committee as director of publications and editor of its *American Jewish Year Book*.

Calls for the modernization of Orthodoxy had emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries during the massive immigration to America of Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. A majority

of these immigrants equated Judaism with Orthodoxy, and this resulted in a host of assumptions regarding Orthodoxy's future in the United States. The most important of these was that an Orthodoxy closely identified with the narrow world of European Orthodoxy would have scant appeal to the children and grandchildren of the immigrants, and that an entire generation would be lost to Orthodoxy in particular and to Judaism in general unless changes were made. The earliest Orthodox reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries believed that Orthodoxy must be purged of its archaic practices and beliefs and become more attuned to middle-class religious norms if it was to have any future in America. These reforms included sermons in English rather than Yiddish, decorous behavior within the synagogue, a greater role for women both within and outside the synagogue, and a rejection of practices that hindered upward social and economic mobility.

By the mid-twentieth century, most scholarly observers believed the future of American Orthodoxy to be bleak. The sociologist Marshall Sklare wrote in his 1955 volume, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement*, that "Orthodox adherents have succeeded in achieving the goal of institutional perpetuation to only a limited extent; the history of their movement in this country can be written in terms of a case study in institutional decay."⁴ Nathan Glazer, another sociologist, agreed. "Traditional Jewish piety as expressed in the observance of ritual is dead or close to dead in America," he said in 1956.⁵ The future of traditional Judaism in America, it was widely assumed by most observers, rested in the hands of the Conservative movement and its Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City.

Orthodox leaders in America tended to agree. In 1943, the Orthodox Union, the voice of Orthodoxy in America, stated that, while "many have been the written and oral suggestions which would inject new blood into the lifestream of Orthodoxy," the crisis of Orthodoxy "is mute evidence of either the ineffectiveness of all suggestions or the inability to carry them

4 Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (New York: Free Press, 1955), 43.

5 Nathan Glazer, "The Jewish Revival in America II," *Commentary* 21 (January 1956): 18.

out.” The next year, Leo Jung, the rabbi of the Jewish Center synagogue in Manhattan, noted that “the conscious, loyal Jews, those who sincerely endeavor to follow the laws of the Torah, are a minority in American Israel, and that our numbers are decreasing from day to day” (17–18).

In his 1957 book, *American Judaism*, Glazer asserted that Orthodoxy’s future lay with those whom he described as a “particularly backward and archaic group of Jews.” For Glazer, Orthodoxy was restricted to declining neighborhoods in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and the Lower East Side in Manhattan, and he completely ignored the possibility that acculturated and prosperous Orthodox communities could be established elsewhere. This was true even when a second edition of *American Judaism* appeared in 1972.⁶ But, by 1972, a Modern Orthodox resurgence could be found in Brookline and Newton in Massachusetts, Teaneck and West Orange in New Jersey, Scarsdale and New Rochelle in New York, Woodmere and Lawrence on Long Island, Silver Spring outside of Washington, DC, Skokie near Chicago, and elsewhere. These demonstrated that there was no inherent incompatibility between Orthodox Judaism and upward social and economic mobility and between living in encapsulated religious communities and being successful in the non-Jewish world.

American Orthodoxy refused to roll over and die and instead was experiencing an amazing rebirth beginning in the 1950s. When a second edition of his book on Conservative Judaism appeared in 1972, Sklare was pessimistic about the future not of Orthodoxy but of Conservative Judaism. “Unaccountably, Orthodoxy has refused to assume the role of invalid,” he said. “Rather, it has transformed itself into a growing force in American Jewish life. It has reasserted its claim of being the authentic interpretation of Judaism.” Other observers, including Jack Wertheimer, Samuel C. Heilman, Steven M. Cohen, Chaim I. Waxman, and Herbert Danziger also drew attention to this Orthodox renaissance. The historian Jonathan D. Sarna noted that the revival of Orthodox Judaism in America has been “one of the great stories of postwar Judaism.”⁷

6 Edward S. Shapiro, “The Missing Element: Nathan Glazer and Modern Orthodoxy,” *American Jewish History* 77 (December 1987): 152–165.

7 Sarna quoted in Shapiro, *Unique People in a Unique Land*, 104.

The most important task Grossman faced was delineating the principles and values that have animated Modern Orthodoxy and separated it from the right-wing Orthodoxy of the yeshiva world. Just as Leo XIII condemned various “modernist” errors, so Modern Orthodoxy has earned the ire of right-wing Orthodox spokesmen (and they have been virtually all men) who have claimed that being both modern and Orthodox was oxymoronic. This conflict has been central to the history of post-1945 American Orthodoxy. The Eastern European Orthodox heartland was destroyed during World War II, and the Orthodox population of Palestine was relatively small during the 1940s and 1950s. This meant that, for a brief period, American Orthodoxy assumed a heightened importance, and it explains why Grossman’s book begins in 1945 and not in 1912 when the Young Israel movement was founded, or 1928 when Yeshiva University established its undergraduate college for men, or 1932 when Joseph B. Soloveitchik settled in Boston.

The most important point of contention between the Modern Orthodox and their right-wing rivals, Grossman notes, has not concerned Zionism, the higher criticism of the Bible, divorce, kashrut, social dancing, or women’s place in the synagogue. Rather, it has been how far traditional Jews should be involved in modernity. This has been most clearly indicated by their differing stances regarding higher education. The right wing views higher education as solely a vocational activity that prepares one for economic mobility and rejects the idea that familiarity with Aristotle, Shakespeare, and Lincoln has any intrinsic value. In fact, studying Western culture is undesirable since it takes time away from studying the Talmud.

By contrast, some of the leaders of Modern Orthodoxy have argued that it was beneficial for the Orthodox to be familiar with the literature, fine arts, history, and political thought of western culture, and Modern Orthodox figures such as Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Jonathan Sacks, and Meir Soloveitchik have been extremely well read and intellectually articulate. It is not surprising that one of the major controversies at Yeshiva University, the flagship institution of Modern Orthodoxy in America, has been the extent to which its undergraduate colleges should debase their academic character by offering more vocationally focused courses. Nor is it surprising that the traditionalists on the right do not fret over

whether their children will be accepted by Yale or Princeton, whereas Modern Orthodox day schools enthusiastically advertise the fact that their graduates have been accepted by the most elite American colleges since their students' parents deem this to be important.

Grossman is optimistic regarding the future of American Orthodoxy because of its high birth rate, a low intermarriage rate, and the tendency of those raised Orthodox to remain within the fold. He suggests there is a chance that, by the end of the twenty-first century, over half of America's Jews could be Orthodox. The future of Modern Orthodoxy, however, is not so bright. "Modern Orthodoxy's fragmentation and increasingly vague ideology," he argues, "raises doubts about its continuing relevance, indeed, about the very meaning of such concepts as modernity and Orthodoxy" (361).

Grossman dates these doubts to the 1970s, when there commenced a major turn toward the right within Modern Orthodoxy accompanied by a growing pessimism regarding its future. Supplementing this was a dispute over the movement's name. Some within Modern Orthodoxy objected to "modern" and preferred "centrist," "traditional," "classical," or "Torah-true." The growing dispute involving the use of "Modern" was symptomatic of the debate within Modern Orthodoxy as to how far it could go in modernizing Judaism before it would no longer be considered Orthodox. Symptomatic of this move to the right was the refusal of Yeshiva University's board to appoint Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, an eloquent proponent of Modern Orthodoxy and the university's provost for half a decade, as its president following the resignation of Samuel Belkin for health reasons in 1975. Instead, the board selected Norman Lamm. Lamm, Grossman notes, "had steered clear of religious controversy and any taint of heterodoxy" (164). His silence on matters animating the proponents of Modern Orthodoxy earned him the sobriquet "silence of the Lamm." This controversy, however, did not prevent Bar Ilan University, Israel's counterpart to Yeshiva University, from selecting Rackman as its president. But Bar Ilan, in contrast to Yeshiva, did not have a rabbinical seminary pushing it toward the religious right.

The stretching of "Modern Orthodoxy" was accelerated after the 1993 death of Joseph B. Soloveitchik, its unquestioned intellectual voice, and as it responded in various ways to the challenges of feminism,

homosexuality, cooperation with non-Orthodox organizations, and secular learning. Some observers even proposed dropping the term “Modern Orthodoxy” because it no longer supposedly encompassed a community of the like-minded. A 2017 report by the Orthodox think tank Nishma Research titled *The Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews* concluded there was such a wide diversity of beliefs and practices within Modern Orthodoxy that one could no longer assume “the viability of there being a single camp known as Modern Orthodoxy” (320). A headline in August 2015 in the Israel newspaper *Ha’aretz* put it succinctly: “Has Modern Orthodoxy in America Reached Its Breaking Point?”

The major problem that Modern Orthodoxy sought to resolve remains how to live within two worlds with conflicting values. The unpredictable history of post-1945 Orthodoxy should make us cautious regarding prognostications of its future, including those by Grossman. As the great philosopher Yogi Berra said, making predictions is tough, particularly about the future.

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Richard Kreitner, *Fear No Pharoah: American Jews, the Civil War, and the Fight to End Slavery* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2025), 416pp.

In 1951, Rabbi Bertram W. Korn published *American Jewry and the Civil War*, which was an extraordinary book, especially because Korn did not have a Ph.D. in history and was also the senior rabbi at a huge congregation. The book lacked any serious discussion of Jewish slave owning, which Korn partially remedied in a subsequent edition, adding his presidential address for the American Jewish Historical Society, “Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865.” Korn’s book does not reflect modern understandings of the Civil War, especially the fact that slavery was a central cause of secession and the war. But

Korn's pioneering research was carefully footnoted and documented. Remarkably, it was reprinted as recently as 2009.

Korn's staying power is illustrated by the fact that Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn reprinted two of Korn's pieces in *Jews and the Civil War*.¹ This anthology is one of several recent and important books that deal with slavery and Jews in the Civil War era.² All of these new books reposition slavery as part of the American Jewish experience. They support Shari Rabin's conclusion that Southern "Jews did not originate, innovate, or dominate chattel slavery in the Americas, but neither did they avoid it or contest it."³ Richard Kreitner's elegantly written, although also problematic, *Fear No Pharaoh*, adds to this list.

Kreitner, like Korn, has no graduate training in history. His book is ambitious and useful. It is important and will be illuminating to many people. But it is also frustrating, idiosyncratic, and often wrong or inaccurate. Kreitner sometimes throws out facts without any regard for their accuracy. He asserts that, during the Civil War, 6,000 Jews served in the United States army and half that number in the Confederate army (193). However, the Shapell Manuscript Foundation, which is the gold standard for data on Jews in the Civil War, and is enormously helpful to scholars, has documented fewer than 1,800 Jews in the United States army and navy and fewer than 1,550 in the Confederate army.⁴

1 Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

2 These include Adam D. Mendelsohn, *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War: The Union Army* (New York: New York University Press, 2022); Laura Arnold Leibman, *Once We Were Slaves: The Extraordinary Journey of a Multi-Racial Jewish Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021); Jonathan D. Sarna, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews* (New York: Schocken, 2012); Jason K. Friedman, *Liberty Street: A Savannah Family, Its Golden Boy, and the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2024); Dianne Ashton and Melissa R. Klapper, *The Civil War Diary of Emma Mordecai* (New York: New York University Press, 2024).

3 Shari Rabin, *The Jewish South: An American History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2025), xiv–xv.

4 The Shapell Roster of Jewish Service in the American Civil War, <https://www.shapell.org/roster/>, 9 January 2026. I thank Adrienne DeArmas, Caitlin Winkler, and the staff at the Shapell Manuscript Foundation for their assistance in putting these numbers together. See also, Mendelsohn, *Jewish Soldiers*, 240–241.

Similarly, he tells us that “between three and six thousand Jews” lived in Charleston, South Carolina, “by the Revolution,” (53) but at the time there were only about 12,000 people in the whole city, and half were slaves. Kreitner is thus claiming either all or half of the non-slave population was Jewish. This is simply absurd. Indeed, in 1775, the accepted estimates of Jews for *all* the colonies is between 1,000 and 2,500 people.⁵ There are many similar errors in the book that undermine its utility and even its credibility.⁶

Kreitner focuses on six mid-century Jews—three antislavery and three proslavery—to tell his story about Jews and slavery and Jews and the Civil War. All were immigrants, even though, in 1861, Jews had been in what was the United States for more than two centuries. Two are Northerners who opposed slavery, and a third is a rabbi who left Baltimore as the Civil War began and vigorously denounced slavery. Two are proslavery Northern rabbis who supported slavery. The sixth is Judah P. Benjamin, a slave owner raised in the United States and a successful politician who eventually served as Secretary of State for the Confederacy. There were many American-born Southern Jewish slave owners (and some in the North in the Founding period). Inexplicably,

5 Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 391. Some historians argue that there were 3,000 Jews across the thirteen colonies.

6 These include his statement that President Lincoln drank a beer with a prominent Jew, when it is well known that Lincoln never drank, and his claim that “most American Jews had tried their best to stay aloof from politics” before the 1850s (18) when in fact Jews held political office at the national, state, and local levels from the beginning of the Revolution, including Jews serving in Congress before 1850. He asserts that Thomas R. R. Cobb, the Georgia lawyer who co-founded the University of Georgia law school and authored the only southern treatise on slave law (*An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery*) was “a leading Georgia politician” and the cousin of the state’s former governor, Howell Cobb (233). Howell was actually his brother, and, except for serving for a few months as a member of the Confederate provisional congress, where he was the main drafter of the Confederate Constitution, Thomas R.R. never held any elected office. He calls Baltimore, Maryland, a “northern” city and Lexington, Kentucky, a “southern” city (170). Both cities were in “loyal” slave states, so both were either southern, northern, or something in between. Individually, these and many other errors might seem like small points, but, cumulatively, they leave us with the sense that Kreitner does not fully understand the politics, geography, or history of the United States from the Revolution to the Civil War.

Kreitner mostly ignores them; and he discusses only one major figure, Judah Benjamin, who actually owned slaves.

We first meet Vienna-born August Bondi, who arrived in the United States along with tens of thousands of other Jews in the wake of the failed European revolutions of 1848. By 1856, he was riding with John Brown in Kansas, fighting to prevent the Kansas Territory from becoming a slave state. He joined the 5th Kansas Cavalry, was promoted to the rank of sergeant, severely wounded, and later became a politician.⁷ His career is fascinating. Many readers will be surprised (and impressed) that a young Jewish immigrant rode with Brown. His life shows how some new immigrants quickly understood the utter evil of slavery and fought against it. He was also a leader within his own Jewish community.

Kreitner's second opponent of slavery, Ernestine Rose, left Poland to avoid her arranged marriage, became a leading feminist, flitted around the antislavery movement, experimented in utopian socialism with Robert Dale Owen, renounced Judaism and all religion, and left the United States before the Civil War began. She is not much of an example of a Northern opponent of slavery. When spending time in the American South, she "found herself growing accustomed to being waited on" by slaves (104), which suggests that her commitment to antislavery was somewhat ambivalent. Exotic and interesting, she was not actively abolitionist for much of the antebellum period, often isolated from the movement and absent during the war. It is hard to understand why Kreitner focused on her to explain Jewish opposition to slavery, since she was as much opposed to Judaism as slavery.

His third Northerner, Rabbi David Einhorn, a major figure in the Reform movement, moved from Europe in 1855 to officiate at Har Sinai in Baltimore. He had no interaction with the antislavery movement until the spring of 1861, when he gave a powerful sermon condemning Morris J. Raphall, a proslavery Orthodox rabbi in New York. After his antislavery sermon was published in English, Einhorn left

7 See <https://www.shapell.org/civil-war-soldier-database/soldier/8690> (last visited 2 December 2025).

Baltimore, where slavery was legal. He spent the war at Keneseth Israel in Philadelphia (where Rabbi Korn would later serve), which became known as the abolition temple. He later moved to New York. Einhorn's sermon was passionate, intellectual, and powerful in its use of Jewish sources to condemn slavery. He is the best example of Jewish theological opposition to slavery.

On the proslavery side, Kreitner discusses Rabbi Morris J. Raphall, who came from Sweden in 1849. He was an ardent opponent of Lincoln and emancipation and argued that Jewish law supported slavery. He was the first rabbi to give the opening prayer in Congress, when it was controlled by proslavery representatives. Kreitner's second proslavery American Jew is Reform rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, who emigrated from Bohemia in 1846 to take the pulpit at Congregation Beth-El in Albany. He was an outspoken critic of Lincoln, a leading opponent of the anti-slavery movement, and openly racist. He called Africans "savages" and wanted American Blacks (almost all of whom were born in the United States) deported to Africa. He wanted Jews to ignore slavery in order to focus on faith, family, and community.

His third supporter of slavery, the Caribbean-born Benjamin, is the only one of the six raised in the United States and the only slave owner. Benjamin embraced slavery, bought and sold human beings, and was a United States senator and then a member of the Confederate cabinet. Benjamin was a voice for slavery. But, oddly for this book, he was not a voice for Judaism and, after his bar mitzvah, never did anything Jewish in his political or his private life. He never joined a synagogue, married a Catholic woman, never associated with Jews, and, when the Senate discussed European persecution of Jews, he said nothing. He silently supported a treaty with Switzerland that blatantly discriminated against Jews. He never renounced his Judaism; he just abandoned it.

Kreitner's most significant contribution is his discussion of how Southern Jews (and some in the North) accepted and embraced slavery. Importantly, he recognizes that "the story of slavery and white supremacy in America and the story of the Jews in America—have in fact, from the beginning, been thoroughly intertwined" (9). Kreitner demonstrates that most Southern Jews were comfortable as slaveowners and secessionists, while many Northern Jews, like Rabbis Wise and

Raphall, were unconcerned about slavery or defended it. Southern Jews (and some in the North) embraced the world they lived in, as they bought and sold human beings to increase their comfort and prosperity. His conclusion is clearly correct: “While Jews did not contribute much to American slavery, American slavery contributed greatly to the success of early American Jews. Slavery, and the bigotry it supported deflected much of the hostility that Jews had faced in the old world” (67).

Kreitner has also rescued from obscurity some Jews who opposed slavery. Moses E. Levy, an early settler in Florida, published an abolitionist tract (while his son became a proslavery United States senator). Twenty-four Philadelphia Jews petitioned Congress in 1838 to end slavery in the District of Columbia, while Rebecca Hart was an officer of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society in the 1840s. Mordechai Myers, “an active member of both Congregation Shearith Israel and the [New York] Manumission Society,” was the first Jew elected to the New York legislature (63). He retells the story, unknown to most Jews, of Joseph and Isaac Friedman, peddlers from Cincinnati, who operated a store in Alabama and bought a slave named Peter in order to take him to Cincinnati, where he was instantly free. They then helped Peter get to Philadelphia, where he was miraculously reconnected to his brother, William Still, the most important Black abolitionist in the city. Kreitner’s conclusion from this story is important; namely, that for some antebellum Jews like the Friedman brothers, “there was nothing inevitable about... unquestioning complicity with bondage” (137).

On the flip side, Kreitner offers many examples of Jewish slave owners, who, like their Christian neighbors, were not concerned with the justice or morality of buying, owning, or selling human beings. I suspect many readers will cringe when they learn that Haym Salomon, an icon of American Jewish history, was not in fact the “financier of the Revolution” but a merchant who sold slaves (52). Similarly, Hyman Gratz, a leader of the Philadelphia Jewish community, the brother of the more famous Rebecca Gratz, and the philanthropist who endowed Gratz College (the oldest independent Jewish college in the nation), also acquired seventy slaves in Kentucky to mine guano in Mammoth Cave, while his younger brother, Benjamin, moved to Kentucky, married into

the family of Senator Henry Clay, and owned seventy-five slaves (52). Many readers will doubtless be disturbed by the sheer number of Jews who owned slaves in the South. Most books on Jews and the South ignore or downplay Jewish participation in slavery. Despite his many errors and his odd choice of his six major figures, Kreitner's book is important because he exposes that some important Northern Jews were indifferent, at best, to slavery—the greatest moral issue in the United States before 1865—and that many Southern Jews embraced slavery, profited from it, and were willing to die (or at least see their sons die) to preserve it. For example, about 83 percent of all Jewish families in Charleston owned slaves in 1830.⁸ Mordecai Cohen, a South Carolina planter and businessman, bought and sold more than fifty slaves. Other Southern Jews owned as many or more.

Despite his understanding that Jews, especially in the South, were generally enthusiastic slaveowners (and later enthusiastic Confederates), Kreitner sometimes seems to bend over backward to explain away or excuse Jewish support for slavery. He correctly notes that, in the South, “outright criticism of the slave system would have been dangerous” (10–11), but he frames the point as though he assumes that Southern Jews did not like slavery. He never asks the more significant question: if Jews were uncomfortable with slavery, why did they remain in the South, embrace slavery, and actively profit from the labor (and the births) of the people they owned? He seems to imply that Southern Jews were somehow secretly opposed to slavery, as though they were the abolitionist version of Marranos during the Inquisition. Yet Kreitner's own evidence shows that this was not true.

On the other hand, except for the Friedman brothers, Kreitner fails to explore Jews living in the South who left the region or resisted personal involvement in slavery. For example, Francis Lieber never criticized slavery while a professor at what is now the University of South Carolina because he would have been fired, but, in the 1850s, he moved to New York, where he became a professor at Columbia University. During the Civil War, he worked for Lincoln's War Department and wrote the field

8 Rabin, *Jewish South*, 44.

manual for the United States army, known as the Lieber Code, which explicitly declared: “if a person held in bondage by that belligerent [the Confederacy] be captured by or come as a fugitive under the protection of the military forces of the United States, such person is immediately entitled to the rights and privileges of a freeman.” Had Kreitner been looking for Jews in the South who helped abolish slavery, he would have written about Lieber.

Other Jews, however, made a conscious and personal decision to engage in slaveholding or support it. Rabbis Raphall and Wise, both of whom lived in the North, were proslavery and anti-Black. But they certainly did not support slavery and embrace racism merely because of fears of retaliation from their neighbors. Rather, they believed in both. Benjamin went to college at Yale and might have stayed in the North, abandoning the South and slavery.⁹ Instead, like many other Jews who went North for college, he returned to the slaveholding South, settling in New Orleans, where he became a wealthy lawyer, successful politician, and slave owner.

Kreitner suggests that Benjamin did not really support slavery because, in one legal case, he argued that slaves were people (20). But lawyers make arguments to win cases, not necessarily because they believe them. After becoming a rich and successful lawyer with many slaves in his household, Benjamin purchased a plantation with more than 140 slaves as an investment and in order to confirm his status as a rich White Southerner. Kreitner explains away this purchase, claiming that Benjamin bought the plantation “because as a Jew...he would be deemed a potential threat to the slave system unless he presented himself as both its direct beneficiary and stalwart defender” (20). But Benjamin already owned slaves and was a wealthy successful lawyer and defender of slavery. His mansion in the French Quarter of New Orleans (which still stands) had an entire wing where his household slaves lived. He hardly needed 140 more slaves to prove his Southern bona fides. He vigorously supported slavery in the Senate, leading one abolitionist senator to call him an “Israelite with Egyptian principles.”

⁹ Rabin, *Jewish South*, 43.

Kreitner suggests that this was an antisemitic slur, but it was in fact an accurate portrayal of Benjamin. On the eve of the Civil War, the vice president of the Confederacy, Alexander Stephens, publicly declared that the “cornerstone” of the Confederacy “rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition.” Benjamin enthusiastically agreed with this analysis of slavery, race, and secession, holding three positions in the Confederate cabinet. Like other Jewish Confederates, he fully supported slavery and White supremacy. After the war, he escaped to England, where he practiced law and defended slavery and the Confederacy for the rest of his life. Benjamin used his intelligence and skills to preserve and protect slavery. This contrasts with Lieber or the six Jewish generals (when there were no Jewish generals in any western European armies) and forty-nine other high officers who served in the United States Army and helped destroy slavery. Kreitner never mentions them.

As I have argued, this book is important and useful but idiosyncratic, sometimes quite wrong, and often frustrating. There are no real footnotes—references are mostly shorthand and situated at the back of the book—and the volume lacks a bibliography, making it cumbersome to find the source of a fact or a quotation. For readers interested only in the narrative, this will not be a problem. For scholars, it raises all sorts of questions about why the publisher chose to undermine the seriousness of the subject and make the book far less useful and reliable.

In the end, this is an important book but one that must be read with care. The subject is important, and the writing is elegant. His theme that Southern Jews embraced slavery is not only convincing but significant. I just wish the history were better and the analysis sharper.

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Pamella S. Nadell, *Antisemitism, An American Tradition* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 2025), 352pp.

For all their differences, historians who have studied antisemitism in recent decades have tended to do so from an objective standpoint. By this I mean that they have sought to uncover a set of properties applicable to all or a subset of all phenomena that Jews in the past and present have described as “antisemitic.” From those properties they have spun an answer to the question “What is antisemitism?” a definition that can guide their examination of thoughts and actions that have victimized Jews. Three historians of antisemitism referenced in Pamela Nadell’s timely new book, *Antisemitism, An American Tradition*, fit this description (47, 237, 248). Leonard Dinnerstein, Robert Wistrich, and Deborah Lipstadt each developed definitions of antisemitism that they believed could sustain wide-ranging historical inquiries of antisemitism in the past and present.

At the same time, recent historians have generally eschewed a subjective approach. Typically evinced by Jewish communal leaders and professionals rather than scholars, this approach does not define antisemitism based on a common set of properties that inheres in the thoughts and actions of “antisemites.” Instead, it assigns as the term’s referent all manner of concepts, habits, attitudes, statements, and actions that Jews have perceived to be threatening. This is to say that how Jews subjectively experience antisemitism, rather than what motivates antisemites or what they seek to target, determines what antisemitism is.

Departing from her scholarly forbearers, Nadell squarely places her study in the subjectivist camp. After briefly acknowledging the term’s history and the scholarly disagreements over its proper definition, Nadell writes, “I bypass those arguments. Instead, as readers will discover, the many episodes of anti-Jewish animus discussed in this book speak for themselves. They may not have been called antisemitism when they occurred. But readers will have no trouble recognizing them as antisemitic.” What is and is not antisemitism, in other words, rests on the instincts of Nadell’s historical actors and her (ostensibly Jewish) readers. And those instincts, per the book’s thesis, attest to a long history of antisemitism in the United States that exposes the post-October 7th troubles as a continuity rather than a departure in American Jewish history (xviii).

Antisemitism demonstrates the virtues of Nadell's framework. For one, it allows her to avoid the tedious disagreements over definitions of antisemitism that have so far failed to establish a consensus as to what constitutes antisemitism. But it also supports her compelling storytelling about how ordinary Jews have experienced animosity and prejudice. *Antisemitism* is chock-full of interesting vignettes such as the Brownsville student who openly challenged her principal's Christian sermonizing at a public school assembly (74), the mother enraged by her son's spurned promotion in the US military who succeeded in getting President Taft to intervene (88), and the aspiring secretary denied admission into a prestigious stenography school on account of her "Jewish nationality" (115). The book's focus on ordinary Jews and their experiences with prejudice, in turn, emphasizes not just those immediate experiences but also their aftereffects, like the raw memories of the Leo Frank assassination for an Atlanta contemporary (97), the "emotional toll" of employment discrimination for the many who endured it (121), and the long-lasting traumas of a blood libel accusation among the local Jews of Messena, New York (136).

The result is a diverse and impressive catalog of moments, some well known but others unearthed in Nadell's research, that American Jews have perceived as threatening. Her overarching claim is that antisemitism ebbs and flows but ultimately has persisted across historical eras, from the colonial period to the present day. This ebb and flow can get lost, however, in a narrative that also depicts the things Jews have found offensive or threatening to be constant and ubiquitous. Nadell acknowledges that antisemitism in colonial America was qualitatively different than what Jews faced in Europe but also claims that it was "deeply entrenched" in the former (15). She explores in great detail the uptick in discrimination and hostility directed at Jews between the Civil War and World War II but then claims that it "continued without pause" into the early Cold War era (180). She asserts that antisemitism "erupt[ed] in America in the new millennium with a force few would have imagined" (228). She then concludes the book with the old saw, "The more things have changed, the more they have stayed the same" (257). Jews' responses to these things—"they stood up for their people and the truth against hate-mongers"—have been consistent over the centuries as well (228).

Even if we accept Nadell's argument that antisemitism has remained constant throughout history, *Antisemitism* misses an opportunity to analyze how Jews' tolerance of those things they have found threatening may actually have changed over time. A book committed to enumerating what Jews have perceived to be antisemitism would be well placed to investigate which threats or behaviors in a specific historical era Jews considered odious but tolerable and which threats or behaviors they saw as true security challenges. A book of this sort may also identify how that threshold of tolerability evolves and why.

Consider the following example. Not unlike other historians who have studied the interwar era, Nadell portrays a particularly grim scene, illustrated by, among other things, the pervasive job discrimination Jews such as the aspiring secretary, Pearl Cohen, faced. When Cohen's father appealed to the American Jewish Committee (AJC) for help, the Committee responded, "Such discrimination...is present in many walks of life and there are thousands, even tens of thousands of Jewish young men and women who suffer in one way or another," and so Jews must get "on our way doing the best we can in spite of such hardships" (116). For the AJC of the time, evidently, widespread discriminatory hiring practices were unfortunate but also predictable and seemingly tolerable. This represents a significant contrast with the way Jews today, as documented in Nadell's final chapter, perceive verbal expressions of anti-Zionist hostility.

For all its strengths, the book's subjective approach is not without downsides. It results, for one, in the mustering of historical cases of questionable relevance. In the chapter on the early decades of the United States, for instance, Nadell mentions the 1791 Rebecca Alexander Samuels correspondence, in which Samuels laments how she and her husband were "completely isolated" in their abode of Petersburg, Virginia (25). Nadell leaves unexplained why Samuels's social frustrations matter at all for understanding antisemitism in the new nation. At other times she passes off as conclusive events whose antisemitic character remain the subject of unresolved scholarly debate due to the mismatch between what we know, or do not know, about the perpetrators' motivations and Jews' reactions to those events. She labels the 1902 riot that marred the funeral procession of Rabbi Jacob Joseph as a "significant antisemitic assault" and "the single largest antisemitic attack in US history" (126, 128), even as

scholarly interpretations of this complicated conflagration of interethnic urban tension continue to run the gamut. Likewise, Nadell construes the 1965 Watts riot as antisemitic while asserting that “it really did not matter if antisemitism motivated the destruction” of Jewish-owned Los Angeles businesses (213). The same goes for cemetery vandalism, which in one case she assumes to be antisemitic despite the fact that “no one knows who did it, how many people were involved, nor their motivations” (257). Nadell includes at least one event that may not have taken place at all. She admits that an alleged blood libel in New York City in 1850 mentioned in a Jewish Leipzig-based newspaper that relied for its reporting on a Bremen-based newspaper, an event that no American organ ever recorded, may have been “exaggerated” or even “pure fiction,” but she still deems it of great significance for early American Jewry (35). In these cases, antisemitic intent may be undetermined or entirely lacking, but Jewish perceptions seem to be all that governs.

But then *Antisemitism* does not consistently adhere to the subjective approach. The problem is evident in the book’s title, for it is unclear how Nadell can prove that an American tradition of antisemitism exists when the antisemitism she aims to study is predicated on the instincts of American Jews rather than the mental worlds and social patterns of those who espouse it. Her avowed approach may indeed reveal that *Jews* have a tradition in America of seeing a certain set of behaviors as antisemitic, but the book is limited in what it says about the history of such a tradition extrinsic to them. At times, Nadell seems to take up the objective rather than the subjective approach, only without defining antisemitism in an objective way. The book surmises that there really is a thing in the world that we may call “antisemitism” that exists apart from Jewish assessments of it. This thing, according to Nadell, manifests in different historical contexts and also lurks throughout the annals of American history. Consider these quotes that reify antisemitism: “[A]ntisemitism has coursed throughout American history...no matter where or when [Jews] lived” (xvii). “This antisemitism places America’s Jews within the long and larger history of anti-Jewish hate...it goes back to the biblical book of Exodus” (4–5). “[T]hose prejudices...were already instilled in the American mind” (45). “Moments of crisis emboldened antisemitism” (47). “A closer look at this ‘golden age’ of American Jewish life

reveals that antisemitism did not decline...it continued without a pause” (180). “[A]ntisemitism burst out in the online sphere” (229). “Durban and 9/11 unleashed an international torrent of the new antisemitism” (237). One wonders what relationship exists between these differing examples of antisemitism that would justify calling them all “antisemitism.” In what way, for example, is the anger Black Los Angelenos felt toward Whites that erupted in rioting in 1965 that happened to injure stores, including but not limited to Jewish-owned ones (213), part of the same phenomenon as the unreasonably high fine Dutch colonial authorities levied against a Jew in New Amsterdam in 1655 for keeping a store open on Sunday (21)? If antisemitism is understood to mean more than just the manifold things that Jews consider threatening, but also a coherent phenomenon independent of Jewish perceptions, then this question calls for an answer.

These issues notwithstanding, *Antisemitism* is a welcome study of a topic that, sadly, retains historical immediacy. It will no doubt provoke renewed scholarly debate and popular interest. Students of American Jewish history, the history of American prejudice, and the history of intergroup relations in the United States will gain much from reading it.

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Haim Sperber, *The Plight of Jewish Deserted Wives, 1851–1900: A Social History of East European Agunah* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic, 2023), 256pp. and *A Social History Database of East European Jewish Deserted Wives, 1851–1900* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2023), 212pp.

Haim Sperber’s *The Plight of Jewish Deserted Wives* maps *agunot*—Orthodox Jewish women who wish to remarry but have no *get* that will permit them to do so according to halakhah—in the latter half of the nineteenth century across “Jewish eastern Europe,” which Sperber understands “as a cultural rather than...[a] geographical term” for a region

that stretches across political boundaries from the Russian Empire to Congress Poland to Bulgaria (*Plight*, 2). Sperber's study and companion database offer an exhaustive and unprecedented survey of *agunot* that draws on hundreds of multilingual sources. He documents the circumstances of over five thousand individual *agunot*, primarily based on Hebrew-language Eastern European press and rabbinical responsa, although he also draws on European and North American newspapers in Yiddish and English, as well as Russian state sources.

Such documentation is Sperber's primary aim, and the thoroughness of his work will prove invaluable to future researchers. His database tabulates *agunah* cases by decade, noting where possible for each case the source, the reason for *agunut*, the names of both husband and wife, the location, and migration destinations. The first two chapters of his study outline the range of reasons why women became *agunot* and why husbands left their wives without a *get*. Sperber's most central and striking argument here is the unexpectedly complex relationship between individual circumstance and Jewish law; he finds that, in nearly a third of cases, *agunot* were not abandoned by untraceable husbands. Instead, they faced more complex halakhic dilemmas. Take, for example, a widow whose husband's remains could not be identified by a rabbi or whose brothers-in-law refused to permit her to marry again. In both chapters, Sperber provides numerous individual examples that underscore the breadth of situations that placed women in the category of *agunot*.

The rest of the study considers the phenomenon of *agunot* as a bellwether and impetus for changes in Eastern European Jewish society, even as these social changes themselves increased the prevalence and visibility of *agunut*. Over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, Sperber argues, the decline of traditional rabbinic authority through both the *Haskalah* and Hasidism; the rise of Jewish cultural forums such as press and literature; and increasing nation-state authority over Jewish communities, such as the Russian Empire's new appointment of "state rabbis," all "turned the *agunah* phenomenon from a legal issue into a sociocultural issue" (*Plight*, 64). Indeed, he asserts that "the *agunah* issue played a major role in undermining the authority the rabbinate had in Jewish life" (*Plight*, 69). Attempts to resolve cases of *agunot* sparked clashes between state-backed and community-backed rabbinic authority,

while *agunot* themselves found new secular forums, such as newspaper advertisements seeking missing husbands, that were more responsive to their needs than rabbis, who tended to adhere to the limited options halakhah provided for women. Sperber closes by suggesting additional explanations for the increase in *aginut*, including the onset of mass migration, straitened economic conditions, and the prevalence of relationships in which older husbands left younger wives to raise their (the men's) children from first marriages.

Although Sperber's attention to detail is remarkable, this slim volume would have benefitted from more context to develop his arguments. For instance, he presents his additional explanations for the growth of *aginut*—mass migration, economic conditions, and, most intriguingly, childcare in second marriages—as brief “speculat[ions]” near the end of the monograph, leaving the reader wishing for more details that might confirm or explain these suggestions (*Plight*, 77). Similarly, I wanted more context about the *Plight* of Sperber's title, particularly since the subtitle is *A Social History*. What economic and social conditions did women face, particularly those left to raise their husbands' children from a first marriage, as he notes? Why, in other words, might they be desperate to remarry? Moreover, how did this “plight” vary by region, empire, or nation-state and time period, as the number of Eastern European *aginot* increased?

I also hoped for more substantial discussion of the insights that result from Sperber's methodical categorization of *agunah* cases. The term *agunot* is usually rendered as “deserted wives” in English, including in Sperber's own title. But he tracks numerous cases of *agunot* seeking to divorce husbands who were physically present yet ruled incapable of offering a *get*, for example, because of mental or physical disability or conversion to Christianity. Other historical scholarship on *agunot*, such as by ChaeRan Freeze and Anna Igra, has complicated the framework of “desertion” by emphasizing women's agency in separating from their husbands, particularly in the period immediately after Sperber's study.¹

1 ChaeRan Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2002); Anna Igra, *Wives without Husbands: Marriage, Desertion, and Welfare in New York, 1900–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

How might cases of *agunut* through disability and conversions further reframe “desertion” beyond migration? Moreover, what might such cases tell us about Jewish gender, labor, and family in Eastern Europe more broadly?

Nonetheless, Sperber’s meticulous presentation of his data makes this a vital study that opens up rich possibilities for further research. For instance, while he notes that most husbands left *agunot* in Eastern Europe for the United States or Palestine, his examples and database document a remarkable breadth of migrations to places including Australia, Iraq, Egypt, Paris, India, and Southeast Asia. Did attempts to trace husbands and resolve *agunut* forge Jewish diasporic ties among these far-flung destinations? Scholars and curious readers will find many such new questions and reference points for further research in Sperber’s comprehensive mapping of *agunot* in nineteenth-century Jewish Eastern Europe.

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IN MEMORIAM

Matthew Mark Silver (1961–2025)



We mourn the loss of Professor Matthew M. Silver (1961–2025), scholar of modern Jewish history at the Max Stern Yezreel Valley College and the University of Haifa, whose sudden and unexpected passing leaves a profound void in the field.

A native of the United States, Silver completed his undergraduate degree at Cornell University and later pursued his graduate studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he earned his doctorate under Eli Lederhendler’s direction. Throughout his career, his scholarly interests bridged American Jewish history and Israeli history, offering rare depth and insight into both communities.

Silver’s pioneering doctoral research culminated in *First Contact: Origins of the American-Israeli Connection* (2006), which examines the first American Jews who relocated to British Mandatory Palestine and explores the tensions between their liberal democratic principles and the Zionist landscape they confronted. Widely appreciated by specialists for its pathfinding archival work and nuanced framing, *First Contact* offers a strikingly original assessment of “attempts by American Jews to introduce American ideas of democracy and know-how to the Yishuv” and remains a touchstone for studies of transnational Zionism.¹

He followed this with *Our Exodus: Leon Uris and the Americanization of Israel’s Founding Story* (2010), an insightful and thought-provoking cultural history that illuminates how a single bestselling novel reshaped mid-twentieth century American perceptions of Israel. Praised for its clear prose and deft synthesis of literary analysis with social history, *Our*

1 Irvine H. Anderson, review of *First Contact: Origins of the American-Israeli Connection; Halutzim from America during the Palestine Mandate* by Matthew Silver, *Journal of American History* 94, no. 1 (2007): 333.

Exodus is frequently cited for showing how narratives migrate from the page to public consciousness.

Silver later garnered widespread recognition for his definitive biography, *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America* (2013), which earned him the National Jewish Book Award. Lauded as magisterial in scope and judicious in interpretation, Silver's "comprehensive and fascinating biography" is celebrated for restoring Marshall to the center of American Jewish political life and for its elegant integration of legal history, communal leadership, and ethnicity studies.²

He also produced *Beshlikhut hamaarav: Mabat akher al habistoryah hayehudit hamodernit* (In Service of the West: A New Look at Modern Jewish History) (2014), an ambitious Hebrew-language reinterpretation of modern Jewish history that centers on Eastern European Jewish migration to America and Palestine. Colleagues praised the work's originality and synthesis, noting how it reframes well-known migratory arcs through a comparative lens that links culture, politics, and geography.

Silver subsequently published *Zionism and the Melting Pot: Preachers, Pioneers, and Modern Jewish Politics* (2020), a "bracing and imaginative study" that offers a "bold, revisionist history of the dynamics of modern Jewry."³ Showcasing his considerable scholarly and intellectual range, the volume incisively connects social, cultural, and political history.

His personal connection to the Galilee region, where he lived and worked for over two decades, inspired two historical volumes: *The History of Galilee, 47 BCE to 1260 CE: From Josephus and Jesus to the Crusades* (2021) and *The History of Galilee, 1538–1949: Mysticism, Modernization, and War* (2022). These companion works have been commended for their narrative sweep, command of sources in multiple languages, and for bringing local history to life with interpretive clarity. Written in an "engaging style," the volumes investigate the

2 Sarah Schmidt, review of *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America, A Biography* by M. M. Silver, *Jewish Political Studies Review* 25, nos. 1&2 (2013): 108.

3 Jonathan D. Sarna, rear cover of M.M. Silver, *Zionism and the Melting Pot: Preachers, Pioneers, and Modern Jewish Politics* (University of Alabama Press, 2020).

Galilee's diverse cultural, religious, and national traditions—offering a rare, continuous portrait of a region central to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim history.⁴

A bilingual scholar working in both Hebrew and English, Silver brought exceptional expertise on American Jewry to Israeli academic life. Beyond Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, he was a founding faculty member of the Ruderman Program at the University of Haifa and a visiting scholar at several American universities. Over the course of his generative and prolific career, he fostered cross-cultural understanding, while earning deep affection as an educator on both sides of the Atlantic. His books—rigorous, readable, and resonant—continue to guide students and scholars in grasping the intertwined histories of American and Israeli Jewry.

Mark A. Raider, University of Cincinnati

⁴ Lawrence Frizzel, review of M.M. Silver, *The History of Galilee, 47 BCE to 1260 CE: From Josephus and Jesus to the Crusades* (2021) and *The History of Galilee, 1538–1949: Mysticism, Modernization, and War* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021, 2022), *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 19, no. 1 (2024): 4.

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