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The American Jewish Archives Journal

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On the cover:

Identification card belonging to Jacob Rader Marcus when he attended
Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin, 1923–1925
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

To Our Readers

Gary P. Zola *vii–xiii*

ARTICLES

Jacob Rader Marcus's and Salo W. Barons's Prognostications about the Fate of European Jewry, 1933–1939

Jeffrey S. Gurock *1*

Jacob Rader Marcus and Salo W. Baron, two of the most renowned and influential scholars of the last century, possessed an uncommon understanding of the Jewish past. But when it came to prognosticating the future of European Jewry under Nazism, their predictions were faulty. In the years immediately prior to World War II, they asserted that German Jewry would survive Hitler's persecutions. Even as the Holocaust raged, Baron was somewhat sanguine about Jewish endurance and found it especially difficult to reconcile what was happening to his people with his anti-lachrymose theory of Jewish history. Both scholars' lack of prescience was derived from a degree of naïveté or optimistic hopefulness about what the future might bring. Wrong-headed diplomatic and political viewpoints in European and American capitals also influenced their prewar pronouncements.

Hawaiian Jewry in the Aftermath of World War II: The Transformative Years

Peter J. Levinson *21*

The story of organized Jewish life's acquiring a permanent foothold in Hawaii is an important and unique chapter in the American Jewish experience. Hawaiian Jewry, heavily dependent for many years on the Jewish Welfare Board, transformed itself in the immediate post-World War II period into

a self-reliant religious community. With the end of the war in the Pacific and the resulting demobilization, the Jews of Honolulu, living thousands of miles from other Jewish communities, showed the foresight to devote sustained commitment to the local community's own religious life, initially by reorganizing as the Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community. The inspirational effort to reinvigorate Jewish life culminated in 1951 with the acquisition of a synagogue and the extraordinary recruitment of a renowned European rabbi. The following year the fledgling congregation completed its embrace of the Reform movement in Judaism when it affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, an embrace that UAHC fully reciprocated several years later by endorsing statehood for Hawaii—a social justice cause of great importance to the Honolulu congregation.

DOCUMENTARY ANALYSES

Postscript on the Charleston *Shtar Halitzah**Benjamin Steiner*

66

Jacob Rader Marcus in Berlin, 1936*Introduced and Annotated by Dana Herman and Jason Kalman*

78

BOOK REVIEWS

Lila Corwin Berman, *The American Jewish Philanthropic Complex: The History of a Multibillion-Dollar Institution**Reviewed by Michael Skaggs*

96

Natan Efrati, *Ideology and Reality: American Jewry and the Yishuv in the Late Ottoman Period* [Hebrew]*Reviewed by M. M. Silver*

99

Zev Eleff, *Authentically Orthodox: A Tradition-Bound Faith in American Life**Reviewed by Asher C. Oser*

102

Nathan Kurz, <i>Jewish Internationalism and Human Rights after the Holocaust</i>	
Reviewed by Judah Bernstein	106
Laurel Leff, <i>Well Worth Saving: American Universities' Life-and-Death Decisions on Refugees from Nazi Europe</i>	
Reviewed by Michael A. Meyer	110
Laura Arnold Leibman, <i>The Art of the Jewish Family: A History of Women in Early New York in Five Objects</i>	
Reviewed by Lauren B. Strauss	114
Rafael Medoff, <i>The Jews Should Keep Quiet: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and the Holocaust</i>	
Reviewed by Edward S. Shapiro	118
Nancy Sinkoff, <i>From Left to Right: Lucy S. Dawidowicz, the New York Intellectuals, and the Politics of Jewish History</i>	
Reviewed by Matthew Berkman	121
Marcia Jo Zerivitz, <i>Jews of Florida: Centuries of Stories</i>	
Reviewed by Miriam Sanua Dalin	124
Marc Saperstein, ed., <i>Agony in the Pulpit: Jewish Preaching in Response to Nazi Persecution and Mass Murder, 1933–1945</i>	
Review essay by Mark A. Raider	128
<hr/>	
2020 SELECT ACQUISITIONS LIST	138
BOARD & COUNCILS LIST	143
INDEX	149

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A Collage of Customs

By Mark Podwal



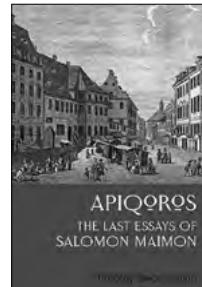
In *A Collage of Customs*, Mark Podwal's imaginative and inventive interpretations of woodcuts from a 16th-century Sefer Minhatim (Book of Customs) allow readers of this volume to see these historic images in a new light. Podwal brings humor and whimsy to religious objects and practices, while at the same time delivering profound and nuanced commentary on Jewish customs and history, both through his art, and through his insightful accompanying text.

Paperback (May 2020) \$17.95 ISBN 9780878205097

Apiqoros: The Last Essays of Solomon Maimon

by Timothy Sean Quinn

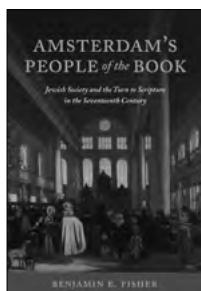
Although Kant considered him the greatest critic of his work, and Fichte thought him the most impressive mind of the generation, Salomon Maimon (1753–1800) has fallen into relative obscurity. *Apiqoros: The Last Essays of Salomon Maimon* draws attention to works written during the final years of Maimon's life. These essays show that even though Maimon was a self-proclaimed apiqoros grappling with the implications of Kantian philosophy, his thinking remained deeply influenced by his Jewish intellectual inheritance, especially by Maimonides. The volume is divided into two parts. The first is a general account of Maimon's intellectual biography, along with commentary on his final essays. The second part provides translations of those essays, the principal themes of which concern moral psychology. The book concludes with a translation of an account of Maimon's final hours, penned by one of his friends.



Hardback (April 2021) \$35.95 ISBN 9780878203017

Amsterdam's People of the Book

by Benjamin E. Fisher



The Spanish and Portuguese Jews of seventeenth-century Amsterdam cultivated a remarkable culture centered on the Bible. The community's rabbis produced creative, and often unprecedented scholarship on the Jewish Bible. *Amsterdam's People of the Book* shows that this unique, Bible-centered culture resulted from the confluence of the Jewish community's Catholic and converso past with the Protestant world in which they came to live. Studying Amsterdam's Jews offers an early window into the prioritization of the Bible over rabbinic literature -- a trend that continues through modernity in western Europe. It allows us to see how Amsterdam's rabbis experimented with new historical methods for understanding the Bible, and how they grappled with doubts about the authority and truth of the Bible that were growing in the world around them.

Hardback (March 2020) \$55.95 ISBN 9780878201884

To OUR READERS . . .

In her highly regarded history of medieval life in fourteenth-century Europe, *A Distant Mirror*, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Barbara W. Tuchman (1912–1989) described how roaming hordes of flagellants—religious pietists who practiced self-mortification—promoted the already widespread belief that medieval Jewry wanted to kill all Christians by poisoning their wells. Tuchman recounts how these “self-torturers” would burst into the Jewish ghettos, “trailed by citizens howling for revenge [upon the Jews].” Across Central Europe thousands of Jews were murdered in the wake of these religious riots that, as Tuchman concluded, “seemed to seek the final solution.” According to some contemporary sources, entire Jewish communities were annihilated in these holy rampages. Tuchman concludes her discussion of this lachrymose history by reminding her readers her descriptions may not tell the entire story. “Completeness,” she wisely reminded readers, “is rare in history.”¹

Historians will be the first to admit that there is always more to say about the past. One important reason that it is difficult to have the final word in the historical enterprise is due to the ongoing discovery of previously unknown or unused sources. Uncovering new documents frequently enriches our understanding of history and, in some instances, causes us to revise previous accounts of what took place. Hardly a week goes by when such an occurrence does not take place at the American Jewish Archives (AJA), and the fine essays in this issue of our journal illustrate this as they shed new light on noteworthy facets of our American Jewish heritage.

Jeffrey Gurock’s opening essay examines how two of the most distinguished Jewish historians of the twentieth century, Salo Wittmayer Baron (1895–1989) and Jacob Rader Marcus (1896–1995), processed the steady deterioration of Jewish communal life under the Hitler regime that was unfolding before their eyes. By analyzing the contemporaneous

1 Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 115–116.

writings of these two historians, Gurock provides new information as to how two scholars of the Jewish past misinterpreted the unprecedentedly tragic political events of the 1930s. Gurock's study underscores the wisdom of George Santayana's second most oft-quoted apothegm: "The wisest mind has something yet to learn."² Although these two were virtuosos in the science of historical reconstruction, their scholarly knowledge of the Jewish past did not endow them with an ability to anticipate that the Nazi regime would succeed in destroying Jewish life in Germany.

Gurock reminds readers that both Baron and Marcus were American pioneers of the critical study of Jewish history. They were also products of their own time, and their reverence for the dignity of Jewish history, conjoined with their personal connection to their subject matter, blinkered their ability even to imagine the impending disaster. Gurock does not judge or condemn Baron and Marcus because, as he correctly stresses, "Many diplomats and politicians—who had more information at hand than scholars, whose sources were the media and word of mouth—believed that, with proper maneuvering all would be well."

As a historian, Baron rejected the doleful characterization of Jewish life in Diaspora. He believed that the unremitting focus on Jewish suffering obscured the creative and dynamic aspects that typified Jewish history. Gurock demonstrates that Baron's historical ideology, his steadfast commitment to an "anti-lachrymose" analysis of the Jewish past, prevented him from abandoning a persistently optimistic stance in the face of the deterioration of Jewish life under Hitler. Baron continued to believe that German Jewry would overcome persecution, even after the final and horrific cataclysm in Europe had begun.

As for Marcus, he was initially convinced that "the Jewish genius for survival" would safeguard the ultimate survival of German Jewry. Shortly after Hitler rose to power in 1933, Marcus published his first full-length book, *The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew*. Although most of its history had been written before Hitler's ascension, Marcus

2 This quotation, correctly attributed to philosopher George Santayana, appeared in one of his earliest publications, a collection of original poems titled *Sonnets and Other Verses* (New York: Stone & Kimball, 1896). This line appears on page 117, in his epic poem "Lucifer: A Prelude." The famous saying reads: "The wisest mind hath something still to learn."

elected to conclude the book by opining that German Jewry would endure despite the difficulties posed by the Nazis. Yet as conditions worsened, and especially after Marcus's visit to Germany in 1936, his analysis concerning the future of German Jewry slowly transitioned from "optimism to reality." Marcus's confidence in Jewish survival slowly eroded as the political circumstances worsened in the late 1930s. Even after the shock of *Kristallnacht* in November 1938, Marcus still hoped that "some change for the better will occur in the Reich." Yet once the war began in 1939, his public statements on the situation in Germany became "brief and devoid of optimism."

Later in life, Marcus harbored a bitter and unforgiving disdain for Germany. He refused to participate in postwar efforts of rapprochement between Jews and Germany. He had no intention of muting his grievances, as a published interview in *Moment* magazine emphatically demonstrated: "I refuse to go to Germany, I was invited to go to Germany, by a semi-official agency under the patronage of the State Department to talk to the German people, and I told the people who contacted me I wouldn't touch them with a ten-foot pole.³

What was it that caused Marcus's complete reversal from confidence to aggrievance? There may be no one definitive answer to this question, but his recently discovered travel diary from an eight-week fact-finding mission to Europe and the Soviet Union in late August and early September 1936 provides us with valuable information. Journal readers will be fascinated when they peruse this document, which has been trenchantly annotated by Jason Kalman and Dana Herman. Marcus's recorded impressions of Berlin Jewry expose us to the breadth and depth of the scholar's personal associations with Germany's Jewish leaders as well as his keen observations about the state of German Jewry under the Nazis. Marcus's reflections strongly suggest that his stay in Berlin provoked an inflection point in his thinking and, from that point forward, he began to comprehend what had been previously unimaginable. "Everyone I saw," Marcus noted in his diary, "wanted to get out; no one

3 Gary Phillip Zola, ed., *The Dynamics of American Jewish History: Jacob Rader Marcus's Essays on American Jewry* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2004), 29.

wanted to stay." By the end of the week Marcus had seen and heard enough to sum up his own state of mind with an unequivocal conclusion: "My impression of Germany is that there is no hope."

The history of Jewish life in America is a field of study that has a great deal of untilled soil. Students must repeatedly be reminded that the history of Jewish life in America is *not* the history of Jewish life in New York writ large! The history of Jewish life in Hawaii, the only U.S. state outside of North America, is one of many understudied twentieth-century Jewish communities.

Today, approximately 10,000 Jews are permanent residents of one of the Hawaiian Islands, with approximately half of them living on Oahu.⁴ More Jews live in Hawaii today than in Arkansas, Mississippi, and West Virginia collectively. Although there are book-length studies on the history of Jewish life in Arkansas, Mississippi, and West Virginia, Hawaii Jewry still awaits its first narrative history.⁵

Rabbi Rudolph I. Coffee (1878–1955) was arguably the first historian of Jewish Hawaii. Coffee, a 1904 graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary (who later became a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis), traveled to Hawaii in 1902 to officiate at the wedding of his aunt. During his sojourn, he had an opportunity to meet some of Hawaii's pioneering Jewish settlers. Following his travels, he published in the *American Israelite* some of the data he acquired about the first Jews to settle in Hawaii permanently. Although Jewish communal life and worship in Hawaii began during the first decade of the twentieth century, Jewish demographics remained small. It was the pronounced growth of America's military presence

4 I. Robert Nehmad, *Hawaii Jewish Community—A Community Mapping Report* (November 2020). See https://cdn.fedweb.org/fed-134/2/JCS%2520Hawaii%2520Community%2520Mapping%2520Report_WEB.pdf (accessed 25 October 2021).

5 Carolyn Gray LeMaster, *A Corner of the Tapestry: A History of the Jewish Experience in Arkansas, 1820s–1990s* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1994); Leo Turitz and Evelyn Turitz, *Jews in Early Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983); Abraham I. Shinedling, *West Virginia Jewry: Origins and History, 1850–1958*. 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Press of M. Jacobs, 1963); and Deborah R. Weiner, *Coalfield Jews: An Appalachian History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

in Hawaii in the post-World War I era that grew the Jewish population such that an organized community began to take root. The Jewish Welfare Board established a small center for Jewish military personnel and, in 1930, a B'nai B'rith lodge was organized in Honolulu. Shortly thereafter the community began celebrating High Holy Day services led by Rabbi Kenneth C. Zwerin (1911–1991), and a synagogue was organized.

The steady growth of the Hawaiian Jewish community in the post-World War II era provoked a new round of essays on the history of Jewish life in the “Aloha State.” In the early 1970s, the journal of the Western States Jewish History Association, the *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly*, published several essays on the Jews of Hawaii and the Pacific Rim. In its third issue, Jacob O. Adler (1913–1999), who served as a professor of economics and business at the University of Hawaii, documented the interesting details of how Hawaiian King Kalakaua (1836–1891) acquired a Torah scroll and pointer that is currently on display at Temple Emanu-El of Honolulu.⁶ In 1973, this same journal published one of Rudolf Glanz’s (1892–1978) lesser-known essays on Hawaiian Jewish history.⁷ Even Zwerin, who by then was one of the editors of the *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly*, published his memoirs of Hawaiian Jewry from this earlier period in his career.⁸ In recent years, efforts to reconstruct the history of Hawaiian Jewry have begun anew. Readers interested in this topic will want to read Mathew Sgan’s history of Honolulu’s Congregation Sof Ma’arav, a lay-led Conservative congregation founded in 1971.⁹

6 See Jacob Adler, “Hawaiian King Kalakaua’s Scroll and Pointer,” *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 3 (1970–1971) 149–155. On King Kalakaua (a.k.a. David La’amea Kamananakapu Mahinulani Naloiaehuokalani Lumialani *Kalākaua*, the “The Merrie Monarch”), see Tiffany Lani Ing, *Reclaiming Kalākaua: Nineteenth-Century Perspectives on a Hawaiian Sovereign* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019).

7 See Rudolf Glanz, “The Jews in the Sandwich Islands,” *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 6 (1974): 177–187. Glanz, a largely unheralded scholar of the twentieth century, deserves much more recognition for his noteworthy contributions to the history of Jewish life in America.

8 See Kenneth C. Zwerin, “Jewry and Judaism in the Hawaiian Islands in 1935,” *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (1980): 206–208.

9 See Mathew Sgan, *Honey and Poi* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2018). Sgan’s congregational

Aside from these sporadic and fragmentary sketches, the whole story of Hawaiian Jewry still awaits historical reconstruction. Yet future researchers will unquestionably refer to Peter J. Levinson's valuable essay in this issue on Jewish life in post-World War II Hawaii, which he characterizes as "the transformative years." Levinson's interest in this topic is personal: He was raised in Hawaii and his father, Bernard H. Levinson, served as president of Temple Emanu-El from 1950 to 1960. This important article contains a great deal of new information that sheds light on how the Jewish community of Honolulu seized the opportunity to fortify its future immediately after the end of the War in the Pacific, when thousands of Jews leaving the military considered settling permanently in Hawaii. One of the most significant sections of Levinson's history is his reconstruction of the contributions made by Rabbi Dr. Francis (Ferenc) Hevesi (1899–1952) during his brief tenure as the spiritual leader of Hawaii's Jewish community. Hevesi, formerly the chief rabbi of Budapest and one of Hungary's most distinguished rabbinic figures, energized the congregation. His untimely death contributed to the congregation's decision to join the Reform movement.¹⁰

Finally, this issue also contains an interesting postscript on a rare *halitzah* document written in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1807. This document releases Rebecca Phillips Moses (1792–1872) from having to marry her brother-in-law, Levy Moses (1773–1869). In 2011, this journal published an article by Jonathan D. Sarna and Dvora E. Weisberg on the history and significance of this same *halitzah* document.¹¹ Recently, Benjamin Steiner discovered several documents that shed new light on why Rebecca Moses's new husband, Isaiah Moses (1772–1857), insisted that this unusual contract be written and given to his wife upon their marriage. With the help of previously unused newspaper articles and

history contains information on the pre-World War II era. In the preface to this volume, much credit is given to a local historian named Kirk Cashmere (1955–2002), whose unpublished history of Jewish life in Hawaii provided Sgan with a great deal of information.

10 On Hevesi, see *New York Times*, 2 April 1952.

11 Jonathan D. Sarna and Dvora E. Weisberg, "A Writ of Release from Levirate Marriage (*Shtar Halitzah*) in 1807 Charleston," *The American Jewish Archives Journal* 63 (2011): 38–55.

a fascinating court case preserved in the Charleston County Probate Cases, this postscript provides us with a new explanation for the creation of this rare contract. Steiner wisely concludes by reminding us that “historians depend upon the extant sources,” and he then expresses his gratitude to those who preserved these records “across the generations.”

This expression of appreciation and respect for those who conserved primary source materials brings us back to the core theme of our journal: History is continuously revised and enriched by new analyses and interpretations spawned by the documentary patrimony we faithfully preserve.

The well-known American litterateur Will Durant (1885–1981) insisted that “our knowledge of any past event is always incomplete.”¹² The ever-growing holdings of the AJA—the world’s largest catalogued collection of documentary evidence on the history of Jewish life in America—aspire to be an institutional response to the Sisyphean effort of the historical enterprise. This is why the founder of the AJA, Jacob Rader Marcus, insisted that it would “seek to ascertain the facts as they actually are; and … promote the study of those materials which will further a knowledge of the American Jew.”¹³

G.P.Z.
Cincinnati, Ohio

12 Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 5.

13 Jacob Rader Marcus, “The Program of the American Jewish Archives,” *American Jewish Archives* 1, no. 1 (June 1948): 5.



Jacob Rader Marcus
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Salo W. Baron
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

Jacob Rader Marcus's and Salo W. Barons's Prognostications, 1933–1939

Jacob Rader Marcus's and Salo W. Baron's Prognostications about the Fate of European Jewry, 1933–1939

JEFFREY S. GUROCK

At their best, historians, through training and academic expertise, possess an uncommon ability to evaluate, with the benefit of hindsight, the flow of past events and to properly contextualize what has transpired. But when they prognosticate about the future, they run the risk of being decidedly wrong. Such was clearly the case with two of the most iconic scholars whose work long informed their fields. For more than half a century, eminent Jewish historians Jacob Rader Marcus (1896–1995) and Salo Wittmayer Baron (1895–1989) influenced scholars, rabbis, organizational leaders, and Jews worldwide.

But notwithstanding their sterling credentials as interpreters of the past, when it came to the unfolding of events leading to the destruction of European Jewry—most notably the years 1933 to 1939—neither Marcus nor Baron demonstrated any prescience about what eventually took place. Their faulty prognostications were derived, in both cases, from a degree of naiveté or optimism about what the future might bring. Moreover, hovering over these scholars and, arguably, influencing them and almost everyone else around them were the wrong-headed diplomatic, political, and social atmospherics of their day. Those in power in Europe and America did not recognize the Nazi threat to world peace, and their citizens held out hope that the traumas of World War I that killed millions would not occur again. Governmental misperceptions and popular reticence contributed much to the crises in a world that would be engulfed in war from 1939 to 1945 and, collaterally, to the destruction of European Jewry. For all of their profound understanding

of the past, Marcus and Baron, much like world leaders and the general public, incorrectly predicted the future.

Marcus's Evolution: Optimism to Reality

Among his legions of students and many scores of colleagues, Marcus was renowned as the “dean of American Jewish historians.” He earned that distinction first through the more than three hundred books and articles he authored that showed how to apply what he called “the scientific approach” to a field that previously had been benighted by filiopietism and apologetics. Almost as important, even as his work covered all periods and aspects of the American Jewish experience, he trained many men—and eventually women—who were his students at the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) to follow in his footsteps. He called upon them to tease out, with objectivity and rigor, the details of this community’s saga, whose sweep of close to 350 years he had broadly and cogently outlined. Some of his disciples would become among the most outstanding practitioners of the discipline’s next generation of academics as the writing of American Jewish history continued to mature. Critically, too, he created an institution (the American Jewish Archives) and an organ (*The American Jewish Archives*, now called *The American Jewish Archives Journal*)—a periodical that he humbly referred to as his “magazine”—for research and dissemination of scholarly findings. For generations, he fielded questions from all over the world about the past and even the future of American Jewry and responded with both care and an infectious optimism.¹

In 1934, as a young historian specializing in the saga of German Jewry, Marcus concluded his first full-length book, titled *The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew*, with the following prognostication about the future of those under Hitler’s increasingly malevolent control:

1 For a succinct discussion of Marcus’s career, see Gary Phillip Zola, “Introduction: Jacob Rader Marcus and the Dynamics of American Jewish History” in *The Dynamics of American Jewish History: Jacob Rader Marcus’s Essays on American Jewry*, ed. Gary Phillip Zola (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 2004), xiii–xviii. Zola, one of Marcus’ prominent students, notes that Marcus used the words “scientific approach” as his term for “modern critical methodology.”



Jacob Rader Marcus
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

German Jewry has the will to survive. It is exerting every effort possible to human beings to maintain its vitality in the face of overwhelming odds. World Jewry is united as never before if not as to the methods, certainly to the urgent necessity of bringing every resource, financial, political and moral to the aid of its stricken brethren. The lesson of Jewish history lends us further assurance that, barring wholesale expulsion or massacre, which seem rather remote even under the implacable hatred of the National Socialists, what has been called “the Jewish genius for survival” will manifest itself in Germany. To be sure, there are problems and difficulties which, taken separately, seem well nigh insurmountable. But taken in the aggregate, and balanced against the elements of strength, it does not seem that their weight can be sufficient to turn the scales against survival.²

In the years that led up to the start of World War II, even as Nazi anti-Jewish policies and then pogroms intensified, Marcus would continue to speak calmly, holding out hope for German Jewry’s future. As chair of the Central Conference of American Rabbis’ (CCAR) Committee on Contemporaneous History and Literature, he presented an annual report on the state of world Jewry to his Reform colleagues at their conventions. Year by year he described the troubling goings-on in the Third Reich and argued the need for refuges for the oppressed. But he also noted survivalist tendencies among those who were forced to weather the storm, saw a future where totalitarianism would be defeated, and even offered some advice to German Jews on how to stick it out, presuming continuity. At the 1934 convention, for example—the same year that his book appeared—he answered his own rhetorical question about “the status of the Jew in Germany today and what does the future hold for him?” Marcus replied sadly that there will be no need for “further anti-Jewish legislation of any importance” because “the Jew has been disabled practically in every field of activity.” For the “Jews in Germany [who] will have to remain in Germany” Marcus advised “to make the occupational shift from commerce and the professions to industry, the

2 Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew* (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1934).

crafts and agriculture; they will have to make the social shift from the class of the employer to the class of the employee.” Significantly, he held out some hope that “they may succeed in this shift if the *German government* [emphasis added] will accord them some degree of sympathy.” He seemed to draw a remarkable distinction between “the government” and the National Socialist Party, suggesting that in his mind, the party and the Hitler government were not the same.³

In 1935, reporting on the months before the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws that made the situation exponentially worse, Marcus wrote that “no student of present-day German life will deny that the situation has, in the last twelve months, turned decisively for the worse even though this change is not reflected openly in any new federal legislation.” Still, he had faith that “liberalism is still alive even in lands of fascist and national socialist control.” Looking at the international problems of the recent past and projecting optimistically about the future, he contended “despotic rule, whether benevolent or malevolent, is the direct result of the post-war dislocation which has been exacerbated by grave economic distress.” He opined “once this distress has been ameliorated, the dictatorships”—speaking not only of Germany, but of Italy and Japan too, countries that were destined to form the Axis alliance in World War II—“will begin to totter, and all citizens, including the Jews, will again enjoy the benefits of representative democracy.” While Marcus believed that “it will probably take some time before the autocratic regimes reach the end of their tether; it may even involve another devastating world war to hasten the downfall of the men on horseback, but we believe that the decline of autocracy is inevitable.”⁴

In 1937, Marcus sadly determined that “now more than ever, what a significant part the German National Socialists play in threatening the security of Jews in all lands.” This jeremiad was articulated months before the *Anschluss* that would bring Austria and its Jews under

3 Marcus, “Report of Committee on Contemporaneous History,” *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* 44 (1934): 282–284.

4 Marcus, “Report of Committee on Contemporaneous History,” *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* 45 (1935): 452–457.

the control of the Reich—again, deepening the gloom for Central European Jews. As before, Marcus said that the only chance for immediate relief for Germany—which he said was “a dreadful one to contemplate—is that Hitler will ultimately *override* [emphasis added] his advisors”—here again Marcus seemed to be suggesting that there were moderate voices in the Nazi inner circle—and “plunge into war and be engulfed in the ensuing avalanche of destruction.” In his darkest moment, Marcus feared that the dream of modernism and the hope of a “modern democratic world of liberty and equity” would be killed off as Europe would be pushed back into a new dark age. Still, remarkably, he held out the following optimistic vision: “Can we not … interpret Nazism not as the forerunner of a new medievalism” but “as the last dying throes of German medievalism. And when this fury shall have expended itself, can we not hope that the catharsis is complete, that all the hate will be gone and that a new age will dawn for Central Europe where the Jew will be accepted as an equal, as a simple human being among his fellowmen?”⁵

In his last report before the start of World War II—covering April 1938 to 1 June 1939, a period that included *Kristallnacht*—Marcus mournfully described how the Nazis had “confiscated practically the entire substance of its Jewish citizens” with laws “restricting every phase of their economic life,” leaving “one privilege alone” … to the Jews of Germany the “privilege of starving to death.” He pointed out international negotiations with the Nazis over refugees were going nowhere. Yet Marcus was sure—even proud—to note the continuation of German Jewish intellectual life. “In spite of all limitations,” he predicted, “it is safe to assume that the Jews in Germany will persevere and maintain something of their cultural life so long as they are not physically destroyed.” Extermination was a circumstance that he did not anticipate. “It is true,” he continued, “that the exclusion of Jews from the centers of secular culture and the emigration of the intelligentsia”—those fortunate enough to get out—“will sap the cultural strength of German Jews, but

5 Marcus, “Report of Committee on Contemporary History and Literature,” *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* 47 (1937): 399–401.

it is hoped that some material change for the better will occur in the Reich”—a remarkable hope as of 1939—“before the academic life of German Jewry has been completely undermined.”⁶

With the start of World War II, Marcus’s voice changed; his reports were brief and devoid of any optimism. In his 1940 report, covering the first year of the war, he spoke of the desperate situation threatening world Jewry, where “probably a million men, women and children have already died.... The tales of horror, terror and brutality that reach us from Poland make the age-old story of medieval Jewish suffering seem petty.” For him, the only answer to this calamity was for “a truly united, efficient, centralized Jewish organization to speak for American Jews as advocates for their doomed brethren.” But despite his positive claim of 1934 that a unified world Jewry was ready and equipped to fight, now he said sadly that a defense umbrella did not exist. He also was not sanguine that anyone within the Allied establishment or the American public was listening. Similar expressions of grief, pessimism, and helplessness were apparent in his follow-up dispatches in the later war years, as he noted that the fate of the Jews under Hitler’s heels had become exponentially worse.⁷

Twice during his long and remarkable career, Marcus reflected publicly on the conclusion of his 1934 book—a position, as we have seen, that informed his reading of history up to the start of World War II. In 1973, when a second edition of the book was published, he offered the following so-called “Postmortem:”

In writing my book, then (1934) I had to make up my mind as to whether this Jewish community was likely to survive under the Nazis. I weighed all the evidence and cautiously ventured “that expulsion or massacre seemed rather remote even under the implacable hatred of the Nazis and that the Jewish genius for survival will manifest itself in Germany.”

6 Marcus, “Report of Committee on Contemporary History and Literature,” *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* 49 (1939): 67, 369.

7 Marcus, “Report of Committee on Contemporaneous History and Literature,” *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* 50 (1940): 67–68.

Marcus went on to reminisce that in 1936, when he “slipped” into Germany as an unwanted visitor in an effort to personally determine what was going on, he noted that his book had been removed from the Prussian National Library. He then asked *New York Times* correspondent Otto D. Tolischus what “he thought would happen,” to which Tolischus replied: “they are going to kill all the Jews.” At that moment, the historian would confide to his travel diary, based on his visit to the capital of the Reich, that while “my impression of Germany is that there is no hope. No thought or possibility of revolt within” and “there is an obvious terrorism; no one will say anything;” still, there are “no signs of poverty—everything is in good order...Every one courteous...No hate towards Jews on the streets.”⁸ However, he did note that he was told by an unnamed source that life in Berlin where he was observing Jewish problems and attempts to cope was different than the villages where antagonism [was] more pronounced.⁹ Marcus would aver: “It was all so clear to me: no country-wide Jewry had ever been annihilated before, ergo, it would never happen.” After reminding himself of the chronicles of violent attacks against Jews from Bar Kokhba through the Crusades and other medieval atrocities, he decided with “history on my side” that “the Jewish masses had somehow always been able to survive. There would be no total destruction. Unfortunately, Hitler was no student of history. He did not know what I knew,” and for him “the past was only prologue.”¹⁰

In a provocative interview published in 1981 in *Moment Magazine*, Marcus was asked, “How did you have the spirit to keep going on in your career after your book on German Jewry proved wrong?” He responded with some annoyance: “All that was proved wrong was one paragraph. Three lines. All the rest was correct. I was only extrapolating, and I extrapolated wrong. But the facts were right.” And in response to the follow-up question—“You didn’t in any way try to recall the book?”—Marcus answered: “Why should I recall it? I simply said I can’t

8 Jacob Rader Marcus diary, Summer 1936, MS-210, Box 70, folder 6, p. 36, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA), Cincinnati, OH.

9 Ibid.

10 Marcus, *The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew*, 2nd ed. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1973), xviii–xix.

imagine he'll kill the Jews. He did.”¹¹ Remarkably, neither Marcus nor his interviewer paused to question another assertion Marcus had made in *The Rise*: that “World Jewry is united as never before.” Clearly from his reports to the CCAR, Marcus lamented during the 1930s and 1940s that all was not well with the structure of free Jews, which limited the effectiveness of their advocacy for their oppressed and doomed brethren.

The Enduring Anti-Lachrymosity of Salo Baron

Like Marcus, Columbia University eminence Salo W. Baron also raised a generation of students who would advance, in their own careers, the critical study of all periods of Jewish history, including the American experience. At one crucial moment, he also would be a consummate resource for the Jewish community and the entire world to understand the tribulations of the twentieth-century Jewish experience. In 1961 he was called to testify at the trial of Adolf Eichmann to what he described as “the historical situation of the Jewish people before and during the Nazi onslaught—the greatest catastrophe in Jewish history which has known many catastrophes.”¹² It was important, at that moment, for Baron to document the persecution his people had endured in his day.

Baron’s testimony was especially significant because much of his academic career had been spent trying to move Jewish historical research away from its emphases on the centuries of suffering Jews had to endure. He did this by challenging the conception of Jewish history that had been forwarded by nineteenth-century German Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz. Graetz had argued that, although the Jewish Diaspora was marked by “mental activity, unremitting intellectual efforts, and indefatigable research,” this period of dispersion, “lasting seventeen centuries, is characterized by unprecedented sufferings, an uninterrupted martyrdom, and a constantly aggravated degradation and humiliation, unparalleled in history.”¹³ Baron, on the other hand, posited that while persecutions

11 Elinor Grumet, “A Moment Interview with Jacob Rader Marcus (1981),” in *The Dynamics*, ed. Gary Phillip Zola, 29.

12 Salo W. Baron, “European Jewry Before and After Hitler,” *American Jewish Year Book* 63 (1962): 3–53.

13 Heinrich Graetz, *The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Ismar

were often the lot of Jews in the Diaspora, it was essential to emphasize how, in the different places where they lived, they created communities that interacted well with the non-Jews among whom they resided.¹⁴

Baron's optimism about the survival of Jews under Nazism was almost certainly colored by this pathbreaking, anti-lachrymose theory of Jewish history, in which Jews did well in multinational states. He never explicitly defended his own lack of prescience about the Holocaust, nor did he back off, as Marcus did, from his optimism. Indeed, he maintained his position well into the years of cataclysmic destruction. Baron's first provocative statement came at the conclusion of the first edition of his *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, published in 1937. There he opined "notwithstanding [Nazism's] great temporary successes, it will sooner or later go down in the insoluble contradictions of its capitalist and nationalist doctrines." Looking ahead at what the Reich's destiny might be, Baron predicted that "Germany's nationalist spirit (could) draw the country into military adventures"—to that point all of Hitler's land grabs had been bloodless. But if new military conflagrations would take place, Baron offered two alternative scenarios: If the Nazis won "and conquer[ed] large territories in Lithuania, the Baltic states and the Ukraine, it would lose its national homogeneity and become a state of multiple nationalities," which, he said, might cool "its anti-Semitic zest." It apparently did not occur to him that the multiple nationalities with their long history of Jew-hatred might be complicit in Nazi mass murder. In the other scenario, if the Reich's aggression failed, "another

Schorsch (New York: Ktav, 1975), 125. Since American Jewry, as of Graetz's time (1817–1891), was in its infancy, it hardly earned a mention in his monumental eleven-volume *History of the Jews*. See Ira Robinson, "The Invention of American Jewish History," *American Jewish History* 81 nos. 3 /4 (Spring/Summer 1994): 310.

14 Ever the social historian, Baron wrote about American Jewry as an entity worthy of serious consideration as it found its place and survived under the challenges presented within a free and open society. For an early summation by Baron of his approach to understanding Jewish history, see Salo W. Baron, "Emphases in Jewish History," *Jewish Social Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 1939): 15–38. For a compendium of Baron's essential works on American Jewish History, see Salo Wittmayer Baron, *Steeled by Adversity: Essays and Addresses on American Jewish Life*, ed. Jeanette Meisel Baron (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1971).

internal upheaval” might take place, with the country becoming part of the “phalanxes of the communist world revolution.” In either case, Baron projected “there is no reason to despair of the survival of German Jewry … as it stands the strain.” And while the community awaited different, if not better, times, Jewish leaders must not allow the growth of antisemitism to place them wholly on the defensive. The greatest danger, he allowed, is that “defense against anti-Semitism [will] increasingly absorb the … people, and may foster negative rather than creative forces.”¹⁵

For Baron, the fight against Nazism in the mid-1930s had to be led by gentiles, and he was sanguine that such would happen. He wrote: “One must bear in mind that anti-Semitism is essentially a disease of gentile people and only the non-Jew acting on their own unsolicited initiative may effectively eradicate it.” Hitler’s end would take place when “a sufficiently large non-Jewish group of upright and intelligent citizens seeing anti-Semitism as a threat to their own interests and ideals may muster sufficient strength and persistence to cut off the hydra-like heads of the anti-Semitic monster.”¹⁶

Baron’s predictions and hopes about the ultimate fall of Nazism and his advice to Jewish leadership seemingly sat well with Marcus; in his review of Baron’s book in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Marcus noted his colleague’s “inherent optimism [that] is finally triumphant” (1939). But by that time, Baron was confronted with a troubling criticism from another source. In the summer of 1939, his editors at Columbia University Press were contemplating a second edition of *A Social and Religious History*, which was doing quite well; however, they spoke among themselves and to Baron about the need for extensive revisions of the epilogue. One editor wrote in an office memo—clearly but not explicitly referencing Nazi persecution—that “the chapters were presumably written in 1936 and the book published in the Spring of 1937. A year ago, the material was still quite up to date but so much has happened in the past year that several passages I looked up now sound almost pathetic.” Baron did not riposte directly but let the editors know that his game plan

15 Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Columbia University Press, 1937), 428–431.

16 Ibid.

was “the possibility of writing a new book on the framework of the old Epilogue.” But he did not make clear to the publisher “just what kind of new book it would be.” In the meantime, the original text would stand.¹⁷

Baron maintained his optimism about European Jewish survival through the dark days of the Holocaust. In several public and private statements that historian Robert Liberles uncovered, Baron predicted throughout World War II that, among other unrealized possibilities, “the Third Reich as a result of its various conquests should lead to increased toleration of minority groups, including the Jews.” One possible scenario would be for Germany to make itself *Judenrein* but to be more tolerant of Jews in the newly acquired territories. In other words, he held strongly to his 1937 prognostication. On other fronts, he looked to the development of Palestine as a haven that might be amenable to the Nazis, even suggesting that complicated negotiations with the Arabs might turn out fruitful. He spoke of the need to “help reconstruct the shattered life of European Jewry along permanent lines.” And through it all, he was sure to emphasize the need for American Jewry to take a leadership role on the world scene.¹⁸

In addition to Baron’s academic stake in the Jewish community’s ability to sustain itself, there was likely a personal factor that led him to maintain this optimistic point of view beyond what Liberles said was his “usual total self-confidence”: a hope—perhaps it was just a heartfelt prayer—that his parents and sister back in Europe would not perish among what turned out to be the six million. That hope turned out to be in vain.

Individual and Systemic Miscalculations

Marcus and Baron were far from alone in not recognizing how existential was Nazism’s threat. Many diplomats and politicians—who

17 Marcus, review of *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, *Jewish Quarterly Review* (1939): 50. Although the review is dated 1939, as with most scholarly journals the date publication may have been later. On Columbia University Press’s May 1939 criticism of Baron’s prediction and the author’s reaction to his editors see Robert Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron: Architect of Jewish History* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1995), 173–175.

18 Liberles, 276–282. On Baron’s charge to American Jewry see below n. 31.

had more information at hand than scholars, whose sources were the media and word of mouth—believed that, with proper maneuvering, all would be well. This misguided belief stymied any vital response as Germany re-armed and re-emerged as a European power. Later on, appeasement—most notably the turning over of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia to the Third Reich after the Munich Conference of 1938—represented wishful thinking at its worst. But most Europeans favored that approach, and the viewpoints of outliers such as Winston Churchill were dismissed as alarmist. Meanwhile, in the United States, isolationists argued successfully that America could stay apart from any overseas conflagration. To be sure, the fate of Jews was not part of most calculations either in or out of government.¹⁹

Even Jews concerned with their European brethren in the mid- to late 1930s did not see the progress of Nazi persecution as leading to the destruction of European Jewry. Take, for example, the “Review of the Year, 5697,” corresponding to the period 1 July 1936 to 30 June 1937, which Harry Schneiderman presented in the *American Jewish Year Book*. Though not a scholar, Schneiderman—longtime assistant secretary of the American Jewish Committee and editor of the *American Jewish Year Book* from 1920 to 1948—had his finger on the pulse of American Jewish communal affairs. In those capacities, he wrote in 1937 that for the first time since the Nazi regime began in the spring of 1933, American Jews who had been “following with lively interest events of Jewish interest abroad … were beginning to give the major part of its thought to domestic interest.” This was because “the feeling that the Jewish situation in foreign lands has become more or less stabilized, albeit on a low plane.” In other words, Schneiderman sensed from people around him that oppressed European Jewry had passed its darkest hour.²⁰

19 Interestingly, in October 1936, after Marcus’s return from his European trip, he told the *American Israelite* that he did not foresee in the near future a new great war in Europe. In that interview, he did note Hitler’s “irrational attitude on Jews,” but did not address the question of the Jewish community’s ultimate survival in the Third Reich. See “No War in Europe Soon, is View of Dr. Jacob Marcus,” *American Israelite* (22 October 1936).

20 Harry Schneiderman, “Review of the Year 5697,” *American Jewish Year Book* 39 (1937–1938): 205.

Meanwhile, between 1933 and 1939, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, through their actions within a unique arrangement with the Reich's Economics Ministry, seemed to agree with Marcus that there were pragmatic Nazi elements with whom they might negotiate. In Marcus's reports to the CCAR in 1934 and 1937, he had intuited a distinction between hard-line antisemitic ideologues and moderate voices within the Nazi inner circle. Very likely Marcus was aware of the so-called Transfer Agreement that permitted German Jewish refugees to Palestine to use a portion of their funds to purchase German goods, which would be transferred to Palestine for use in the Jewish settlement, with the immigrant receiving some compensation. This deal, which lasted until the start of World War II, offered hope that comparable economic self-interest and a degree of rationality among some Nazis would sustain German Jews until Hitler's inevitable downfall—an eventuality that Marcus predicted.²¹

Schneiderman, the Jewish Agency, and many eminent scholars were influenced by the inconsistencies of Nazi polices between 1933 and 1939, which made it possible to believe that Jews in the Reich could survive. As historian Karl Schleunes pointed out two generations ago, during the "first five years of Hitler's rule the Nazis stumbled" toward a coherent program for eliminating Jews from their society through forced emigration. Boycott, legislation, and Aryanization all proved to be weaknesses in the Reich's attempt to synthesize ideology with reality. The Transfer Agreement fit into that calculus. Yet through it all, the Nazis remained "certain that a solution was necessary." The Reich's chaotic policies led to confusion among Jews in Germany, which is reflected in emigration statistics. Before the Nazi takeover, the Jewish population was approximately 523,000. The initial response to the takeover led some 38,000 Jews to leave the country. Over the next two years, after the boycott and the first legislation were imposed, there was a decline in the number of those leaving, as seemingly Jews made peace with the situation. Significantly and similarly, the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws and further denial of civil rights did not appreciably increase the

21 For a comprehensive treatment of this arrangement, see Edwin Black, *The Transfer Agreement: The Dramatic Story of the Pact Between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine* (New York: Dialog Press, 1984).

number of emigrants. It was only after *Kristallnacht* that so many Jews left: 36,000 from Germany and Austria in 1938 and 77,000 in 1939. Needless to emphasize, with every passing year refuge proved more and more difficult to find. Still, an inability to recognize the threat was an international Jewish myopia—starting with those attacked in Germany and including American Jews who needed to provide succor.²²

Importantly, for Marcus, there was a tendency to conflate the crises of German Jewry—and later, Austrian and Czechoslovakian Jewry—with the problems of world Jewry, which were under attack on numerous fronts throughout the 1930s. A second look at his annual reports pre-1939 shows that Marcus in some cases even suggested that Jews in other hot spots were in more danger than those under the Reich. Take, for example, how he dealt with the events between June 1933 and June 1934, which he characterized as the “most momentous months in the history of the modern Jew.” Before turning to Germany, he recounted the “wave of fascism sweeping Europe,” starting in Poland, where “poverty, economic suffering and squalor in that land have reached new low levels,” as “student riots and attacks had been prone to the use of violence.” Of Romania, where students had been looting, rioting, and flocking to the Iron Guard, Marcus predicted that anti-Jewish “legislation may be accompanied by a brutality and a violence that, unfortunately, have been most characteristic of past Romanian history.” Moving back west, to Austria, Marcus expressed fears that “if the National Socialists overthrow the existing government—and this is by no means improbable—then we may expect a repetition of the German tragedy.” Finally, he spoke of the doleful future of German Jews.²³

Not incidentally, it was in this report that Marcus first wrote of the role American Jews might take on behalf of German Jewry. And while in his book he averred that Jews across the globe agreed with the need for intervention—“World Jewry is united as never before if not as to the methods, certainly to the urgent necessity of bringing every resource,

22 Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews, 1933–1939* (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1972): introduction, 259. On German Jewish emigration statistics, see <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-jewish-refugees-1933-1939> (accessed 13 April 2021).

23 Marcus, “Report of the Committee” (1934): 283.

financial, political and moral to the aid of its stricken brethren”—he, and the committee of Reform rabbis for whom he spoke, concurred that American Jewry's response had to be subtle and careful. Accordingly, he argued while “many liberals, trade unions and Jews throughout the world believe that a most effective means of combatting the menace of German fascism” is a boycott, Marcus declared: “Your committee does not think it is necessary to call upon the Conference [CCAR] to pledge itself to a public boycott of the offending Hitlerite state.” Rather, “self-respecting American Jews” would simply not buy German goods—or would face public remonstration.²⁴

In 1935, Marcus added to his continuing accounts of distress in Romania and Poland the sad fact that there had been a “brutal expulsion of Jews from Turkish Thrace and the massacre of helpless Jews in Algerian ghettos.” As far as Germany was concerned, he noted, “the situation has turned decisively for the worse, even though this change is not reflected in any new federal legislation.”²⁵

For Marcus, the only reassuring news was that the “grosser anti-Semitic movements” in the U.S. have collapsed “because of the lack of sympathy of the American press, the refusal of responsible parties to support them, and the work of the McCormack-Dickstein Congressional Committee in investigating un-American activities.” He even held out hope that Father Charles Coughlin, whom he said “is not an anti-Semite,” would be held in check. Marcus naively believed that other forces of “reaction and hate” had moved Coughlin to articulate anti-Jewish statements about “sinister … Jewish financiers.”²⁶

24 Marcus, “Report of Committee” (1934): 284; Marcus's and his committee's position on the boycott movement closely resembled that of the American Jewish Committee (AJC)—the American Jewish defense organization that was dominated by Reform Jewish lay leaders—which opposed the economic attack against the Nazis. Implicit in Marcus's statement and explicit within the AJC's approach was the idea that the boycott would further endanger German Jewry and increase antisemitism in America. On the AJC's position, see Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906–1966* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1972), 163.

25 Marcus, “Report of Committee” (1935): 452–453.

26 Ibid. It should be noted that neither Marcus nor his interviewer commented upon or criticized his contemporaneous, off-the-mark attitude about Coughlin's not being an antisemite.



Jacob Rader Marcus and Salo W. Baron at the CCAR convention, June 1985.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

In 1936, Marcus tendered a short report on the Nuremberg laws—a development that was surely on the mind of his colleagues—and then described in detail that in “Poland, across the border from Germany, Jews are continually being killed and brutally done to death.” Indeed, he admonished his listeners that “in our anxiety for the German Jew, we have failed to rise in protest against the growing oppression of the Polish Jew.” In fact, he was unsparing in his criticism of “the increased acerbity in the relations between the [Zionist] United Palestine Appeal and the American Joint Distribution Committee,” many of whose leaders were anti-Zionist. As he noted “with regret … in times such as these when co-operation and mutual understanding are indispensable if our people are to be helped, bickering and jockeying for position are to be deplored.”²⁷

27 Marcus, “Report of Committee on Contemporary History,” *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* 46 (1936): 320–321. Here, too, Marcus did not reflect on his early view about Jewish unity in response to Nazism.

And then in his 1939 report, covering the period of *Kristallnacht*, Marcus opened his dismal survey with descriptions of “Arab gangs in Palestine encouraged by Italy and Germany terrorizing the Jewish settlements.” He went on to note that the “distress that pervaded Palestine found a sorry parallel in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe,” where problems were perpetrated due to Nazi expansionism.²⁸

It is fair to say that before 1 September 1939, Marcus thought that German Jews were no worse off than Jews elsewhere in this dystopian world. Of course, with Nazi victories in these “other places,” Jews all over Europe—but thankfully not in Palestine—were murdered en masse. As previously noted, from 1939 to 1945, Marcus’s belief that German Jews were no worse off than Jews in other countries had given way to the unique jeopardy faced by Jews in the Third Reich. His reports during this time offered not a bit of optimism; indeed, they acknowledged the destruction of European Jewry as German Jews were largely deported to death factories in the east.²⁹

Finally, it is essential to note that Marcus’s recognition of what was happening during the war played a major role in turning him to study American Jewish history. In his 1981 interview he said: “I realized in the 1940s that Europe was dead as a great center. And I didn’t want to concern myself with a dead Jewry.... I wanted to work for the live community. Germany had been a live community when I determined to devote myself to it. The important event was in the summer of 1942. Then I gave the first required graduate course in an academic institution in American Jewish history.”³⁰

Unlike Marcus, Baron never offered a course in American Jewish history. But clearly, after the war, he added that community to his international scholarly agenda as one worthy of study. This turn was demonstrated through his leadership of the American Jewish Historical Society

28 Marcus, “Report of Committee” (1939): 65–66.

29 “Report of Committee on Contemporaneous History,” *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* 52 (1942): 60–63, 354–356; 53 (1943): 52–55, 258–261; 55 (1946): 59–61, 212–214.

30 Grumet, 24–25.

(AJHS)—as he said, “turning it away” from its amateurish roots, much like his colleague Marcus did within the AJHS, the AJA and HUC-JIR. This was directly connected to what Baron saw as the inevitable transfer of leadership to the shores of the United States. In 1942, he stood before a group of Jewish social and communal workers and stated, “the Second World War has placed in American Jewry’s hands undisputed leadership of world Jewry with all the challenges and responsibilities which it entails.” He called for raising a new generation of “leaders equipped with the knowledge furnished them by the methods of modern social and historical sciences who will undertake to look courageously into the realities as they are and to adopt measures which they will consider best regardless of whether they meet with the instant approval of the less informed.” He prayed that “these people may yet be destined to render a historic service lesser to none performed by their predecessors in other ages of great transformation.” For Baron, too, American Jews had better learn their history.³¹

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31 On Baron’s 1942 statement see Baron, “The Second World War and Jewish Community Life,” Harry L. Glucksman Memorial Lecture for 1942 republished in Baron, *Steeled by Adversity*, 455, 460, 471–472. For a discussion of Marcus’s and Baron’s turns to the study of American Jewish history as important to American Jewish leadership and communal survival, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, “Jacob Rader Marcus, Salo W. Baron, and the Public’s Need to Know American Jewish History,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 50, nos. 1 & 2 (1998): 23–27. Baron served as president of the AJHS from 1952 to 1954. Marcus held that post from 1955 to 1958. For a more comprehensive study of Baron’s vision of American Jewry, see Eric L. Goldstein, “The Reluctant Evaluator: Salo W. Baron as a Historian of American Jews,” in *The Enduring Legacy of Salo W. Baron*, ed. Hava Tirosh Samuelson and Edward Dabrowa (Krakow: Jagiellonian Press, 2017), 273–300.



Sisterhood President Bess Marshack welcoming Rabbi Hevesi to the Honolulu congregation.
(Courtesy Bernard H. Levinson Hawaii Jewish Archives)

Hawaiian Jewry in the Aftermath of World War II: The Transformative Years

PETER J. LEVINSON

Hawaii, among all the states in the American union, has a unique geography and history. An island chain in the Pacific over 2,000 miles from the continental United States, Hawaii had been a kingdom for many years and a republic for a short while before U.S. acquisition in 1898. Territorial status followed in 1900 and lasted until Hawaii became the 50th state in 1959. Although a challenging place for Jewish life to take root so far removed from other Jewish communities, Judaism did begin to flourish there from the end of World War II to the eve of statehood. The details of how this happened—how organized Jewish life acquired a permanent foothold in Hawaii—provide an important and unique chapter in the American Jewish experience, and one that has received little attention from historians.

The immediate post-World War II years were transformative in the history of Hawaiian Jewry. The small Jewish community of Honolulu in the then-Territory of Hawaii had a history of being dependent on the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB), but during this period it would become self-reliant for the first time, purchasing its own synagogue and hiring a full-time rabbi. Hawaiian Jewish history focuses on the City and County of Honolulu, as virtually all Hawaiian Jews lived on Oahu. Although today one can find small congregations on several of the other major islands in the Hawaiian chain, Jewish life remains concentrated on Oahu, where the vast majority of Hawaii's approximately seven thousand Jews reside.¹

1 Jewish congregational life on Oahu began with what became Reform Temple Emanu-El, discussed in detail in this article. Conservative congregation Sof Ma'arav was established several decades later (See *Honey and Poi: The Origins and Development of Congregation Sof Ma'Arav in Honolulu, Hawaii*), followed by Chabad of Hawaii in 1987.

Jews in Hawaii, unlike their mainland counterparts, spent much of World War II under martial law because of the threat of a Japanese invasion. There were up to ten thousand Jews in the American armed forces on the islands, greatly outnumbering the local Jewish population of approximately one hundred. While a small group, Hawaii's resident Jews had had a taste of what it meant to be a community. Jewish civilians who remained in Hawaii during the war rather than evacuating to the mainland came in contact with rabbis serving as chaplains, and they had experienced communal residual benefits from the presence of Jewish professionals from the JWB. The small community also had a history of working together on various efforts: assisting Jews in the military stationed there, raising funds to help world Jewry, and offering hospitality and aid to Holocaust survivors passing through Hawaii. These endeavors promoted a sense of cohesion that would be needed to establish a permanent, temple-centered community.

The history of Hawaiian Jewry makes a fascinating story on its own, but its greatest value lies in its ability to add to a broader understanding of American Jewish history. Accounts of how American Judaism overcame challenges and survived in communities removed from large urban centers on the East Coast should not overlook the Jewish experience of those who lived in a noncontiguous American territory particularly distant from all other Jewish communities. The intertwined religious experience of Jewish civilians and military personnel in Hawaii between the world wars and during World War II is unique and merits historical scrutiny. A comprehensive examination of the American Jewish response to Holocaust survivors who spent the war years in China cannot overlook the reception these refugees received when they first stepped on American soil in Hawaii.

The individuals who shaped the Jewish community in Honolulu during the early postwar years merit recognition in the annals of American Jewish history as well. Bernard Levinson, the longtime president of the Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community—legally renamed Temple Emanu-El in 1954—went on to become a distinguished justice of the Hawaii Supreme Court known for his contributions to

constitutional law² and the development of the new state's common law. James Zukerkorn, who chaired Temple Emanu-El's Finance Committee throughout Levinson's congregational presidency, would achieve prominence in the Reform movement in the 1960s by serving as a vice-chair of the Board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC),³ the congregational arm of Reform Judaism in the United States. Levinson and Zukerkorn together persuaded the Union in 1955 to endorse statehood for Hawaii in spite of a negative recommendation from the Union's Resolutions Committee.⁴ Rabbi Francis Hevesi, the first full-time rabbi of Temple Emanu-El, was one of the great Jewish scholars and spiritual leaders of his generation in Europe. Chief Rabbi of Budapest, Hevesi's ministry was cut short first by the Holocaust and then by the rise of communism in his native Hungary. His remarkable contributions, which continued during his short remaining life in the United States, have not heretofore received the attention they deserve.

This article aims to begin to fill the missing chapter on Hawaii in American Jewish history. Its focus is on the immediate post-World War II period, which was a pivotal moment for the tiny Jewish community. To place it in proper historical context, we will first look at Jewish life in Hawaii prior to the active involvement of the JWB. The article then discusses the role of the JWB over several decades and describes Jewish life in Hawaii during World War II. It is then that we turn our focus to Hawaiian Jewry's transformative era: the seminal early postwar years.

2 After his retirement from the Supreme Court, Levinson taught the constitutional law course as a visiting professor at the University of Hawaii School of Law. 1975/1976 School of Law catalog, 9, 22, available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10524/47888>.

The Jewish Federation of Hawaii, after Levinson's death, began underwriting an annual award in his memory to the law student at the University of Hawaii who wrote the best paper on a constitutional law topic. Today the Bernard Levinson Award is supported by an endowment within the University of Hawaii Foundation.

3 List of UAHC Board of Trustees Officers program, 48th General Assembly, 1965, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Union of Reform Judaism collection, MS-72, box C-3, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter AJA).

4 See discussion of the Hawaii statehood resolution toward the end of this article.

Jewish Life in Hawaii Before the JWB

Jews began settling in Honolulu in the mid-nineteenth century, attracted by business opportunities in the aftermath of the California Gold Rush.⁵ Although there was no organized Jewish life in Hawaii during the last decades of the Hawaiian Kingdom, several weddings and funerals were conducted in accordance with Jewish tradition.⁶ U.S. annexation of Hawaii in 1898 and Hawaii's status as a U.S. Territory in 1900 led in the short run to increased Jewish settlement. In September 1901, according to local newspaper reports, Rosh Hashanah services were conducted by an ordained rabbi "for the first time."⁷ The following month approximately thirty local Jews met in Honolulu and took the first step to organize the community by adopting a constitution and bylaws for The First Hebrew Congregation of Honolulu. They elected four businessmen to serve as officers.⁸

The new organization moved quickly: acquiring plots for a Jewish cemetery, changing its name to The Hebrew Cemetery Association,⁹ and purchasing land.¹⁰ Rudolph Coffee, a Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) rabbinical student who was visiting Honolulu in 1902 to officiate at a relative's wedding, performed a Jewish cemetery consecration ceremony. Although some Jews would use the plots for burial purposes, there was no indication that further steps were taken to give the small area a separate identity as a Jewish cemetery. The congregation turned

5 Rudolf Glanz, "The Jews of the Sandwich Islands," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (April 1974): 177–187.

6 Ibid., 183–184, and Rudolph Coffee, "The Beginning of the Organized Jewish Community of Honolulu," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 14 (1982): 347.

7 *The Honolulu Advertiser* (14 Sept. 1901): 2.

8 *The Hawaiian Gazette* (29 October 1901): 2. Although the newspaper reported that "the new association will probably apply for corporation papers sometime this week," the Hawaii State office that retains an index of historical business records covering the relevant period could not find anything relating to either The First Hebrew Congregation of Honolulu or The Hebrew Cemetery Association. (See discussion of name change in text.) Email correspondence between the author and Joy M. Tanaka, 8 and 9 April 2014, in the author's possession.

9 *Evening Bulletin* [Honolulu] (27 June 1902): 2.

10 "Real Estate Transactions," *Evening Bulletin* (5 August 1902): 7.

out to be very short-lived, as some members of the Jewish community left Hawaii because of deteriorating economic conditions in the early twentieth century. A lasting congregation would require a less transient population.

In 1913 the newly formed sixty-member Hebrew Military Association of the Hawaiian Territory represented another ambitious but also short-lived Jewish organizational effort. Its president, Sgt. I.I. Gershberg, had noted, “Our plans include the erection of a synagogue, where our people may worship and where Jewish holidays and ceremonies may be observed as on the mainland.”¹¹ Both service members stationed in Hawaii and local Jewish residents seem to have been involved in the organization. Gershberg invited military personnel and civilians to attend High Holy Day services sponsored by the Hebrew Military Association that year.¹² Greater success in addressing the needs of Jews serving in the Army and Navy while substantially facilitating civilian opportunities for Jewish engagement, however, would have to await the involvement of the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB), an organization not yet in existence.

Early Dependence on the JWB

The JWB represented the joint effort of diverse national Jewish organizations early in World War I to establish an entity that could address the welfare and religious needs of Jews serving in the armed forces.¹³ Its success derived in part from securing federal recognition as the singular official representative of the American Jewish community on military matters. A description of JWB activities, an important chapter in American Jewish history, would be incomplete without a discussion of its extensive involvement in the religious life of Hawaii’s civilian Jews.

11 “Honolulu Will Have Jewish Synagogue,” *The Honolulu Advertiser* (4 May 1913): 7.

12 “Rosh Hashano to be Observed Here Ordained Jewish Rabbi to Preside,” *The Honolulu Advertiser* (27 September 1913): 4.

13 For a scholarly historical analysis of the JWB’s establishment and impact on Judaism’s acceptance as one of the country’s three major religions see Jessica Cooperman, *Making Judaism Safe for America: World War I and the Origins of Religious Pluralism* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

JWB personnel were first assigned to Hawaii in 1919; they provided important social and religious services to members of the armed forces stationed in Hawaii as well as many opportunities for Jewish residents to participate in Jewish observances.

For many years, Jewish civilians in Honolulu depended primarily on the JWB and its resident representatives to meet community needs. Although the formal mission of the organization was to serve Jewish military personnel, the small Jewish population of Honolulu also relied heavily on the only Jewish professionals in the Territory of Hawaii. These professionals came to Hawaii with diverse backgrounds, but they all shared a knowledge of Judaism and empathy for their fellow Jews.

Victor Harris, the longtime former editor of the *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, a leading Jewish newspaper published in Los Angeles, began serving as JWB's Honolulu representative in 1919. He had been active in the California Jewish community and a writer on subjects of Jewish interest. After spending seven months in Mexico learning about Mexican Jewry, Harris wrote a book on the Jews of Mexico and advocated providing a haven in Mexico for the persecuted Jews of Russia. A native of Lithuania, Harris was a man of Jewish learning who recalled being a dinner guest of a professor in Mexico City: "Our conversation was carried on mostly in Hebrew and my imagination carried me back to the old days at home—engaged in dissertation with some savant of the old school on Rabbinical homiletics."¹⁴

Upon arriving in Hawaii, Harris wrote an article in which he relates that Jews there numbered "sixty or seventy individuals" with "no sign of a congregation."¹⁵ Citing the absence of a "separate assembly place" for Jews in the military, Harris asks in his article, "Will those in authority across the sea ever wake up to the fact that Hawaii is a part of the United States, and the soldier of our faith is entitled to the same consideration as his brother on the mainland?"¹⁶

14 Victor Harris, *The Jews in Modern Mexico* (Los Angeles: Press of Howe & Campbell, 1907), 15.

15 Victor Harris, "Honolulu Jewry in 1919," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 40 (April 1979): 279. Reprinted from *Emanu-El*, San Francisco, 25 July 1919.

16 Ibid., 282.

Perhaps in response to Harris's question, there was some progress made by the High Holy Days of 1919, at which time the Honolulu press reported that Jewish religious services would be conducted in borrowed facilities. That year, Harris was "given authority to act as rabbi during these services by high officials east."¹⁷ Harris explained in a subsequent letter to the editor: "Under the auspices of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations ... the first modern, or Reformed Jewish Divine Services will be held" on these holidays, with UAHC furnishing "all the necessary paraphernalia and all the personal service required."¹⁸ The following year the JWB arranged to send a JTS rabbinical student to participate in High Holy Day services, and Harris emphasized that Jewish and non-Jewish resident civilians were welcome to attend, in addition to army personnel. For the Yom Kippur Kol Nidre service in 1921, Harris would "be in charge and ... chant the traditional prayers according to the reformed ritual."¹⁹ Interestingly, the local press devoted much coverage to Jewish practices—even reporting the subject of Harris's anticipated sermon for the Yom Kippur memorial service.²⁰

Harris facilitated the observance of Jewish holidays during his years with the JWB in Honolulu. He also sought to inform the Honolulu public about matters of Jewish interest—explaining the holidays and responding to antisemitic assertions.²¹ Although Harris was not an ordained rabbi and the JWB's primary focus was on serving Jews in the military, the small Honolulu Jewish civilian community benefited from the presence of an accomplished Jewish professional who could perform rabbinical functions.

In 1923 Alexander Linczer succeeded Harris as JWB representative in Honolulu. Linczer and his wife, Jennie, were natives of Budapest who

17 *Honolulu Advertiser* (14 September 1919): 17.

18 *Honolulu Advertiser* (19 September 1919): 5.

19 *Honolulu Advertiser* (11 October 1921): 5.

20 Ibid. Harris's topic would be "The Belief in Immortality From the Standpoint of the Jewish Religion."

21 See Harris's column, "YOM KIPPUR—Day of Atonement; Its Origin and Purpose," *Honolulu Advertiser* (9 October 1921): 4; and letter to the editor, "DISPUTES MR. SMITH," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (13 August 1921): 6.

married there before emigrating to the United States early in the twentieth century. For many years, the Linczer family lived in the Panama Canal Zone, then under U.S. sovereignty, where Linczer worked for the U.S. Customs Service. He reportedly also acted as volunteer representative for the JWB in the Canal Zone.²²

Early during Linczer's Honolulu assignment, the JWB rented a home that served as a residence for the Linczer family as well as a gathering place for Jews in the military. There Linczer not only held religious services but also—with Jennie Linczer's active involvement—provided warm home hospitality. Although Linczer retired in 1928 because of illness, he and Jennie soon returned to Honolulu from a mainland sojourn and remained involved in the local Jewish community for many years—with Jennie, affectionately known as Mama Linczer, taking leadership roles to help Jews stationed in Hawaii during World War II.²³

Linczer's successor, Israel Weinstein, arrived in Honolulu in early 1930 and began a tenure as Hawaii JWB director that extended until late 1942. An engineer and army officer wounded in World War I,²⁴ Weinstein during the 1920s had become professionally active in veterans affairs in California, where he undertook various federal assignments at the Veterans Bureau, a forerunner to the Veterans Administration created in 1930 and today's Department of Veterans Affairs.²⁵ Weinstein also led fundraising campaigns for the National Jewish Welfare Fund and the Palestine Relief Fund in San Francisco before coming to Hawaii.²⁶ The beginning of Weinstein's Hawaii JWB

22 "Linczer To Succeed Victor Harris Here," *The Honolulu Advertiser* (1 February 1923): 3.

23 She chaired the Women's Committee of the local JWB committee, directed the Service Men's Club, and later served as a congregation trustee. See, respectively, "Island Jews Pay Tribute to Weinstein," *Honolulu Advertiser* (19 December 1942): 5; announcement of club opening in *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (27 August 1943): 7; and "Honolulu Jewish Group Announces Synagogue Plans," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Main Edition (26 May 1950): 12.

24 "Jewish Welfare Board Looking Over This Field," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (8 January 1930): 10.

25 Israel Weinstein personnel record form dated 21 October 1935, I-337, box 725, folder #3, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York (hereafter AJHS).

26 *Ibid.*

assignment coincided with the organization of a local B'nai B'rith chapter, and his involvement with the Jews of Honolulu would become intertwined with B'nai B'rith's activities.

Honolulu's B'nai B'rith Lodge, founded in March 1930, seemed to have been viewed as a step toward establishing a synagogue. "It is the hope of members of the race here," a local newspaper reported, "that through the B'nai B'rith a house of worship may be built where they may congregate."²⁷ The new lodge quickly became involved in facilitating religious observances and worked with Weinstein to arrange services.²⁸ On various occasions Weinstein and an officer of B'nai B'rith officiated jointly.²⁹ Additionally, the lodge took up charitable causes: In May 1930 the group expressed support for the Chinese Famine Relief Drive,³⁰ and in 1933 it supported German Jewry through an international fundraising effort, with Weinstein's office serving as the space for local activities.³¹ As the 1930s advanced, Weinstein assumed a progressively greater leadership role in local Jewish community activities.

In 1938 JWB field investigator Shea Schwartz wrote that "Mr. Weinstein concerns himself with every phase of community activity whether related to the program of the Jewish Welfare Board or not."³² Schwartz further noted in his report that "[a]side from the Jewish Welfare Board, the only functioning organization in Honolulu is the B'nai B'rith Lodge, of which Mr. Weinstein is president."³³

27 "May Organize B'nai B'rith Branch Here," *Honolulu Advertiser*, Other Editions (2 March 1930): 3.

28 "Holy Days Services to Be Sponsored by B'nai B'rith Lodge," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Main Edition (15 August 1931): 23.

29 "Jewish New Year Services Planned," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (8 September 1934): 5; and "Jewish Rites," *Honolulu Advertiser* (25 September 1936): 2.

30 "B'nai B'rith Aids China Relief Drive," *Honolulu Advertiser*, Main Edition (11 May 1930): 3.

31 "Drive to Aid German Jews Is Under Way," *Honolulu Advertiser* (23 August 1933): 2; and "Lodge Raises Funds to Aid German Jews," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (23 August 1933): 3.

32 Shea Schwartz to Louis Kraft, Report of Honolulu Investigation 27 July–5 August 1938, dated 20 September 1938, I-180, box 145, folder Geographic Regions—Hawaii, AJHS.

33 *Ibid.*

In 1939, to the great consternation of Honolulu Jewry, Weinstein withdrew from Jewish leadership positions, citing “the new policy set forth by the National Office of the Jewish Welfare Board, that the official activities of its Representative be devoted to Army and Navy work only.”³⁴ Thirty-four members and officers of Honolulu’s B’nai B’rith Lodge observed that Weinstein “has been the local leader of Jewish activities in this territory since 1930 or since his arrival in Honolulu” and appealed to the secretary of the Supreme Lodge in Washington, DC, to use his influence “not to deprive us of this splendid work that Mr. Weinstein has accomplished,” pointing out that “there is no one we can look up to to carry on the work so faithfully and splendidly done” by Weinstein.³⁵ When Joseph Silverstein, the new Honolulu B’nai B’rith Lodge president, “wished to know why Mr. Weinstein was not permitted by the Jewish Welfare Board to consummate marriages and other religious acts,”³⁶ a JWB official “explained to him that Mr. Weinstein was not ordained, and that it was therefore unfair and unwise for him to jeopardize the reputation of the Jewish Welfare Board by serving in that capacity, and at the same time act as our representative.”³⁷

Judaism in Hawaii During World War II

The JWB faced unique challenges in Hawaii during World War II because the 7 December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and the fear of an invasion from Japan transformed life for both residents and military personnel. Martial law replaced civilian authority, strict curfews took effect, blackout conditions prevailed, newspapers and mail underwent censorship, barbed wire lined the beach, strategically placed sandbags appeared, and military priorities restricted civilian travel between Hawaii and the mainland. The United States stationed many soldiers and sailors

34 Israel Weinstein to Joseph Silverstein, 1 February 1939, I-180, box 145, folder Geographic Regions—Hawaii, AJHS.

35 Letter to Maurice Bisgyer, 13 March 1939, I-180, box 145, folder Geographic Regions—Hawaii, AJHS.

36 Joseph Bower to Louis Kraft, 2 June 1939, Report of Office Conference with Joseph Silverstein on 31 May 1939, I-180, box 145, folder Geographic Regions—Hawaii, AJHS.

37 Ibid.

in Hawaii during the war without allowing family members to accompany them; dependents already on the islands were sent back, and those who had traveled to the mainland were blocked from returning. The peaceful Hawaiian Islands suddenly became a war zone under continuing threat and a critically important base for U.S. military operations in the Pacific theater.³⁸ Any comprehensive study of American Jewish life during World War II would be incomplete without including Hawaii's involvement, because its experience was unlike that of any other U.S. state or territory.

The same disruptions that touched everyday activities in Hawaii following Pearl Harbor affected Jewish life as well. The December 1941 Hanukkah service, held shortly after the attack, took place during the day rather than at night as originally planned because of "war conditions."³⁹ The Jewish community provided a meal—as it would for other Jewish holidays in the months ahead—and invited military personnel to visit the homes of residents after the luncheon.⁴⁰ Purim services at the Jewish Community Center included both civilians and military personnel, although those in the Army faced "especially severe" restrictions on passes and had to leave the service for their posts in response to an alert—with some unable to return.⁴¹ Jewish chaplains held Shavuot services at military locations in addition to the Jewish Community Center service, which was open to both civilian and military personnel and was led by a Navy chaplain, with Weinstein assisting.⁴² Family evacuations from Honolulu adversely affected the local Jewish community, including its finances; however, it continued to extend hospitality to Jewish service members, including providing lunch for military

38 See Harry N. Scheiber and Jane L. Scheiber, *Bayonets in Paradise: Martial Law in Hawai'i during World War II* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), ch. 4, "Life Under General Orders," 55–79.

39 Weinstein to Benjamin Rabinowitz, 24 December 1941, I-180 box 194, folder Overseas—Hawaii, 9th Corps Area, 1942, AJHS.

40 Ibid.

41 I. Weinstein, Report of Purim – 1942, 3 March 1942, I-180, box 194, folder Overseas—Hawaii, 9th Corps Area, 1942, AJHS.

42 I. Weinstein, Report on Shovouth – 1942, 26 May 1942, I-180, box 194, folder Overseas—Hawaii, 9th Corps Area, 1942, AJHS.

personnel following Shabbat services while requesting that the JWB share in the costs—a request Weinstein supported in correspondence with JWB headquarters.⁴³ David de Sola Pool, a rabbi of great renown who chaired JWB's Committee on Army and Navy Religious Activities, emphasized in correspondence JWB's commitment to facilitate the work of Jewish chaplains.⁴⁴

Weinstein's work on behalf of JWB during the first year of U.S. participation in the war generated some controversy. When Benjamin Rabinowitz, national director of JWB's Army & Navy Division, visited Hawaii in 1942, he found the chaplains divided in their attitudes toward Weinstein and noted opposition to Weinstein among much of the civilian Jewish community, which viewed him as "trying to run its affairs."⁴⁵ Relations with him were also soured by long delays in meeting financial obligations to the community, although Weinstein attributed the problem—corrected with Rabinowitz's visit—to JWB itself. While he was "well thought of by other agency workers" and was viewed as a "hard worker in general," key individuals within the recently created United Service Organizations (USO) were unhappy with him, which made his wartime service in Hawaii problematic.⁴⁶ Although JWB was an important agency within the USO, Weinstein faced the challenge of balancing his efforts on behalf of USO's nonsectarian objectives with JWB's role in meeting the religious needs of Jewish service members. Six months after the Rabinowitz's visit, Weinstein left Hawaii, ending his thirteen-year tenure as a central figure in Jewish life for both civilians and military personnel.

Maurice Schneirov, who succeeded Weinstein as the Hawaii JWB director, had an unusual background in both law and social work. A Pittsburgh lawyer and active socialist early in his career, Schneirov

43 Weinstein to Benjamin Rabinowitz, 20 March 1942, I-180, box 194, folder Overseas—Hawaii, 9th Corps Area, 1942, AJHS.

44 David de Sola Pool to Chaplain Herbert Cerf Straus, 4 June 1942, I-337 box 106, folder NJWB Veterans' Affairs/CJC/Chaplains/Straus, H. Cerf, folder 4, AJHS.

45 Benjamin Rabinowitz, Report of Visit to Hawaii, 2 October 1942, I-180, box 194, folder Overseas—Hawaii Reports, 1943, AJHS.

46 Ibid.

provided legal services to the Socialist Party⁴⁷ and ran on the party's ticket for a Superior Court judgeship.⁴⁸ Later, Schneirov attended the New York School of Social Work and pursued his new career with the Young Men's Hebrew Association in New York and then the JWB's New England Section before accepting the JWB assignment in Hawaii.⁴⁹

Schneirov's first challenge upon arriving in Hawaii was an unfortunate hostility between chaplains⁵⁰ and its resulting division in the local Jewish community, which he bemoaned threatened the essential nature of the Jewish community's support for Jews stationed there.⁵¹ Schneirov addressed this initially by arranging "a sort of truce,"⁵² which did not last long.⁵³ Although Schneirov sought to protect the chaplains, he could not restore harmony and noted that "JWB suffers because it is said we are either afraid to exercise authority or have no authority."⁵⁴ Schneirov, with the concurrence of Hawaii JWB committee chair Gaskel Jacobs, expressed concern that service members' "loyalties to Judaism should not be divided by personal attachment to one Chaplain against another Chaplain."⁵⁵

Despite the conflict among Jewish chaplains during the midwar period, Schneirov's tenure in Hawaii was a period of accomplishment.

47 "Socialists Get Aid in Fight," *The Pittsburgh Press* (30 October 1930): 2.

48 List of candidates, *Altoona Tribune* (5 April 1932): 16.

49 Maurice Schneirov, "Personal and Professional History" form, 10 August 1947, I-337, box 720, folder 17; and Schneirov to John Sills, 12 October 1942, I-337, box 720, folder 18, AJHS.

50 As Schneirov described it, the "unfortunately bitter remarks from the pulpit" of one of the chaplains invited to a Jewish Community Center service angered another chaplain, "who sharply answered him from the pulpit." Maurice Schneirov April 1943 letter, section on chaplains attached to 25 May 1943 memo from Shea Schwartz to Benjamin Rabinowitz, I-337, box 91, folder NJWB/Veterans' Affairs/CJC/Chaplains/Richmond, Harry/1924-1977, #2 of 4 folders, AJHS.

51 Maurice Schneirov to Benjamin Rabinowitz, 4 June 1943, I-180, box 194, folder Overseas—Hawaii Reports, 1943, AJHS.

52 Schneirov, April 1943 letter, AJHS.

53 The choice of a Honolulu chaplain to serve on a neighbor island became contentious because of resistance to accepting such a reassignment. Schneirov, April 1943, letter.

54 Schneirov, April 1943 letter, AJHS.

55 Schneirov to Rabinowitz, 4 June 1943, AJHS.

A club for service members opened in part of the Jewish Community Center, with the local Jewish community paying for related renovations.⁵⁶ Religious activities throughout the year—Passover seders, Shavuot observances, and High Holy Day services—benefited Jews stationed in the territory not only on Oahu but also on the neighbor islands.⁵⁷ The Honolulu Jewish Community Center, which served as the local synagogue, welcomed military personnel who preferred to worship at a civilian service—albeit conducted by military chaplains—rather than on a base. An increase in chaplain productivity,⁵⁸ the assignment of a newly arrived chaplain to a neighbor island,⁵⁹ and an expanded USO/JWB staff⁶⁰ helped address the religious and social needs of Jews in the military; and the local JWB committee, chaired by Jacobs, focused specifically on the needs of Jewish military personnel in Hawaii. Additionally, the small Jewish community in Honolulu, through its recently formed Hawaii Jewish Community Council, conducted a significant fundraising campaign to help Jewish refugees,⁶¹ which Schneirov noted “has gone a long way toward uniting [the civilian] community.”⁶²

When Schneirov left Hawaii for another JWB assignment in mid-1944, Seymour Fishman, who had begun working in Hawaii early in the year on the USO payroll, became the new Hawaii JWB director. Fishman had studied psychology and sociology as an undergraduate and psychology and vocational guidance as a graduate student—earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees from City College of New York—before

56 “New Club To Open For Service Men,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (26 August 1943): 5.

57 “Hundreds at Jewish Rites,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (24 April 1943): 4; “Jewish Holiday Rites Planned for Men Here,” *Honolulu Advertiser* (9 June 1943): 2; “Jewish Groups Here Mark High Holidays,” *Honolulu Advertiser* (12 September 1943): 10; Maurice Schneirov Narrative Report for October 1943, I-180, box 194, folder Overseas—Hawaii Reports, 1943, AJHS.

58 Maurice Schneirov Narrative Report for January 1944, I-180, box 194, folder Overseas—Hawaii Reports, 1944, AJHS.

59 Maurice Schneirov Narrative Report for February 1944, I-180, box 194, folder Overseas—Hawaii Reports, 1944, AJHS.

60 Schneirov Report for January 1944, AJHS.

61 “Jewish Welfare Drive Opens Here,” *Honolulu Advertiser* (9 April 1943): 3.

62 Schneirov, April 1943 letter, AJHS.

enrolling in a doctoral program at NYU in 1937.⁶³ His employment background included refugee-related rehabilitation and stints as a psychologist in the public sector.⁶⁴ When his Hawaii service began, Fishman already had several years of USO/JWB work experience.⁶⁵

Under Fishman's leadership JWB conducted expansive Hawaii operations during the last year of World War II, as the United States fought intensive battles against Japan in the Pacific. In addition to the services at the Jewish Community Center under the purview of JWB, the chaplains carried out religious responsibilities at various military bases in the Territory. Fishman noted "the inseparable union between the rabbis and ourselves,"⁶⁶ and advocated creating separate Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform services to accommodate all Jewish military personnel. Three chaplains agreed to conduct such services on different days of the week at the Honolulu Jewish Community Center.⁶⁷

In his report for March and April 1945, Hawaii JWB Director Fishman listed nine Jewish chaplains "on duty," plus another seven he described as "casuals" with assignments that would take them away from Hawaii in the future.⁶⁸ Supporting the work of Jewish chaplains throughout the Pacific theatre of war was one of Hawaii JWB's biggest challenges. This included sending supplies for Jewish observances at various Pacific locations including aboard ships.⁶⁹

The small Jewish community that remained in Hawaii during the war appropriately focused on helping the many thousands of Jewish

63 Seymour Fishman "Personal and Professional History" form, 24 March 1948, I-337 box 712, folder 2, AJHS.

64 "Fishman Named Jewish Welfare Board Director," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (26 June 1944): 5.

65 Harry Minkoff to John Doyle, 11 June 1947, I-337, box 712, folder 2, AJHS.

66 Seymour Fishman, "The National Jewish Welfare Board in Hawaii," attachment to 7 January 1945 letter from Fishman to George Perry, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii Reports, 1945, AJHS.

67 Seymour Fishman, Narrative Report from 1 March–30 April 1945, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii Reports, 1945, AJHS.

68 *Ibid.*

69 Seymour Fishman to Benjamin Rabinowitz, 21 March 1945, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Various Correspondence, 1945, AJHS.

personnel stationed there. Except for acquiring a Jewish cemetery in 1942, they gave little attention to their own religious institutional needs. The community's contribution to the work of the JWB in Hawaii was not limited to expressions of hospitality toward troops stationed there but also included significant financial support. For the 1944–1945 fiscal year, the community contributed \$8,000 toward the \$12,000 budget of the Honolulu Jewish Community Center Service Men's Club, in addition to giving \$3,000 to the national JWB organization.⁷⁰

Transition from War to Peace

During World War II, when U.S. military operations for the Pacific region were headquartered in Hawaii, the Jewish chaplains and JWB directors there—Weinstein, Schneirov, and Fishman—focused on addressing the needs of the Jewish military contingent on the islands. With the end of the war, however, the focus changed. According to Fishman, “The pressure of the servicemen decreased tremendously, but we have a new pressure which relates itself to the Joint Distribution Committee.”⁷¹ The Honolulu Jewish community began providing hospitality to European Jewish refugees traveling from their temporary refuge in Shanghai, China, through Honolulu en route to the continental United States. Such hospitality typically included a luncheon, an island bus tour, and a dance in the evening. The formation of a local JDC Committee—renamed the Assistance Committee of Hawaii—was a response to this humanitarian situation.

Although almost all of the refugees possessed proper travel documents, a small number of stowaways presented the challenge of reconciling humanitarian needs with legal requirements. Fishman recounted a successful effort to secure the release of four stowaways—three Jews and one Catholic—on the SS *General Gordon*. “They [immigration officials] have a very important responsibility in enforcing the law,” Fishman

70 Gaskell Jacobs to Benjamin Rabinowitz, 22 September 1944, I-180, box 194, folder Overseas—Hawaii Reports, 1944, AJHS.

71 Seymour Fishman to Louis H. Sobel, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), 21 May 1947, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Various Correspondence, 1947(1), AJHS.

reported, “but they have demonstrated their understanding and interest and have worked very closely with us within the limits of the law.”⁷² Subsequently, however, immigration authorities would adopt a less flexible approach. In a case involving a stowaway who arrived on the SS *General Meigs*, Fishman’s successor, Emanuel Kumin, recounted that “[Bernard] Levinson, chairman of our JDC committee, and myself were successful in having him released into my personal custody with the understanding that I would arrange for his going to a South American country with a visa within six weeks”⁷³—but the arrangement turned out to be short-lived when U.S. immigration, ostensibly in response to pressure from the shipping company, reneged on what Kumin described as “their verbal agreement.”⁷⁴ Despite the occasional stowaway, the refugee program in Honolulu, which ran from 1947 to 1950, proved to be highly successful and reflected a community that would mobilize to aid fellow Jews. “There is no way to express the appreciation of these people who find their first contact with American Jews here,” Kumin wrote. “In actuality,” he continued, “Honolulu represents the Pacific Statue of Liberty to them.”⁷⁵

With the end of war and the departure from Hawaii of many Jews in the military, the local Jewish community began to assert some independence from JWB—a trend Fishman supported. He anticipated the community’s postwar religious needs by suggesting that JWB staffing in Hawaii include a rabbi who could render part-time service to local Jewish civilians.⁷⁶ He also noted favorably on community plans to sponsor its own High Holy Day services, with military personnel invited.⁷⁷

72 Seymour Fishman’s “REPORT ON ‘VISITORS’ FROM SHANGHAI,” 21 May 1947, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Various Correspondence, 1947(1), AJHS.

73 Emanuel Kumin to Charles Jordan, 10 July 1947, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Various Correspondence, 1947(2), AJHS.

74 Emanuel Kumin to John Sills, 1 August 1947, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Various Correspondence, 1947(2), AJHS.

75 Emanuel Kumin to JDC re Hawaii, 30 June 1947, collection 45/54, file 411, Joint Distribution Committee Archives, New York, New York.

76 Seymour Fishman, Narrative Report through 15 August 1945, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii Reports, 1945, AJHS.

77 Seymour Fishman to John Sills, 23 August 1946, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Various Correspondence, 1946, AJHS.

Fishman expressed to JWB headquarters that “JWB has been a crutch to the Jewish Community” and pointed out that “we are making an effort to have the Community organization assume more responsibilities.”⁷⁸ Some community trustees supported building a temple, and Fishman believed the JWB would benefit from leasing some of its land to the community for such a purpose.⁷⁹

The Honolulu JWB facility moved several times in the immediate postwar years, with the main location for Jewish community activities moving with it. A chapel at 1541 Young Street, leased from Kawaiahao Church in 1939 by the Honolulu Jewish Community (HJC)⁸⁰ and subleased to the JWB,⁸¹ remained the center for Jewish life in Honolulu for a number of years. In 1946 JWB purchased a building on Beretania Street and operated it under USO auspices before USO ended its Honolulu operations the following year. When JWB decided in 1948 to sell the facility, Kumin noted: “With the reduction in force within the military, the location of this building for club activities was now found to be at too great a distance from the center of town where the military assembled.”⁸² JWB then signed a five-year lease for space in Honolulu’s Galen Building beginning in January 1949 with an option for five additional years.⁸³ Although initially planning to manage its own club there, JWB acted as USO’s agent in managing the facility when a reactivated USO resumed activities in Honolulu.⁸⁴ That arrangement, however, did

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Israel Weinstein to Joseph Bower, 6 November 1939, I-180, box 145, folder Geographic Regions—Hawaii, AJHS.

81 Seymour Fishman to John Sills, 25 April 1947, I-180, box 194, folder Overseas—Hawaii JWB Bldg. 41–47; and Final Report of Seymour Fishman, 17 June 1947, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii Reports, 1947, AJHS.

82 Annual Report, Hawaii Operation USO-JWB Club, 1949, I-180, box 238, folder Hawaii, AJHS.

83 Abraham Feitelberg to S.D. Gershovitz, 13 December 1949, I-180, box 196, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Galen Building, 1948–49, AJHS.

84 Abraham Feitelberg to Emanuel Kumin, 30 November 1949, I-180, box 196, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Correspondence between Kumin and Feitelberg, 1949, AJHS.

not last long. In early 1950 the USO terminated operation of the club,⁸⁵ and JWB negotiated an early end to its lease.⁸⁶ The recently reorganized Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community then held services at Fort De Russy's army chapel until the following year, when it acquired its own synagogue.

When Kumin came to Hawaii in mid-1947, he took on two jobs: he succeeded Fishman as JWB director, and he also became the first—albeit part-time—rabbi of the HJC, in return for its \$1,000 annual contribution to his salary. Fishman had noted in his final report that “the HJC definitely shows signs of assuming more and more responsibilities”—pointing out that “the supplementation of Rabbi Kumin’s salary for his rabbinical services to them is the first time in their history that they have hired a professional leader.”⁸⁷ Kumin, who had served as the rabbi of small congregations in Utica and Herkimer, New York, before beginning to work for the JWB in 1942,⁸⁸ arrived in Honolulu as the movement to establish an independent synagogue community gained momentum.

Although JWB’s presence in Hawaii had facilitated the small Jewish population’s participation in Jewish activities for many years, its dependence on JWB became debilitating because JWB could not meet the needs of a newly energized community. Similarly, the military chaplain in Hawaii after Kumin’s work there ended struggled to meet both military and civilian needs. Chaplain Norman Feldheym, who arrived in late January 1951, inquired in early March, “How much of a commitment was made to the local Jewish community?”⁸⁹ He wrote: “I am visiting

85 Emanuel Kumin to Jack Schneider, 25 February 1950, I-180, box 245, folder Hawaii—Club Reports, AJHS.

86 Emanuel Kumin, Narrative Report, March 1950, I-180, box 245, folder Hawaii—Club Reports, AJHS.

87 Final Report [of Seymour Fishman], 17 June 1947, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii Reports 1947, AJHS.

88 Emanuel M. Kumin’s Application for Ecclesiastical Endorsement in Connection with Application for Appointment as Chaplain at Military or VA. Installations, 26 November 1946, I-337, box 73, folder Kumin, Emanuel M. 1942–59 (1 of 3), AJHS.

89 Norman Feldheym to Aryeh Lev, Director, Division of Religious Activities, National Jewish Welfare Board, 5 March 1951, I-337, box 56, folder Feldheym, Norman (1 of 2 folders), AJHS.

their sick, burying their dead, consoling their bereaved, rushing away from my own service at Hickam to get to the one they attend and conduct at De Russy, and in all other ways providing them with the services of a rabbi.”⁹⁰ Rabbi Aryeh Lev, director of the Jewish Welfare Board’s Division of Religious Activities that provided support services to Jewish chaplains, responded, “We have no commitment to them. They are supposed to obtain their own rabbi and take care of his requirements.”⁹¹

In 1949 the Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community had to compete for limited space in the Galen Building that JWB managed for USO. “Upon moving to our new quarters,” Kumin advised JWB headquarters, “the congregation was promised complete freedom of activity upon payment of a rental of \$100.00 per month.”⁹² However, “Time and experience has proven that there is constant conflict,” Kumin recounted, “not only on Friday evenings but at other times as well.”⁹³ Abraham Feitelberg at JWB headquarters reiterated to Kumin that “we have no alternative but to discharge USO responsibilities as the agency of that organization.”⁹⁴ Answering Kumin’s correspondence, Feitelberg wrote: “As you correctly state, your first and paramount duty is to do a job for USO-JWB, and when a conflict confronts you between your duties to USO and to the Jewish community, that conflict must always be resolved in favor of your USO responsibility.”⁹⁵

As part-time rabbi of Honolulu’s congregation, Kumin sought in the late 1940s to address religious needs by conducting services, providing religious instruction, and officiating at life cycle events. However, he found himself in an untenable situation between his responsibilities to the congregation and the demands of JWB, his primary employer.

90 Ibid.

91 Aryeh Lev to Norman Feldheym, 12 March 1951, I-337, box 56, folder Feldheym, Norman (1 of 2 folders), AJHS.

92 Emanuel Kumin to Abraham Feitelberg, 7 November 1949, I-180, box 196, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Correspondence between Kumin and Feitelberg, AJHS.

93 Ibid.

94 Abraham Feitelberg to Emanuel Kumin, 30 November 1949, I-180, box 196, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Correspondence between Kumin and Feitelberg, AJHS.

95 Ibid.

The rapidly maturing congregation would recognize that it needed not only its own physical space but also its own full-time religious leader. By the late 1940s, the Jewish community in Honolulu was determined to have its own synagogue rather than continue to rely on the JWB. The movement, spearheaded by the Jewish civilian population, for a self-supporting synagogue preceded the JWB's decision to close its local facility in early 1950 and withdraw its professional staff.

Yet the movement to establish a synagogue completely separate from the JWB was not without its opponents. Hawaii's Jews in the late 1940s struggled with the issue of whether their small community should acquire their own synagogue on their own land or pursue a venture together with JWB. When JWB owned the Beretania Street facility, departing local JWB Director Fishman reported in June 1947 that the "local community organization" was "in the throes of making plans for a construction of their own Temple on the JWB property."⁹⁶ The following year JWB decided to sell the property and proposed a joint undertaking with the Honolulu congregation. The congregation, as Kumin later described it, would "purchase a site agreeable to JWB and erect a Synagogue Center thereon," with JWB contributing \$25,000 in matching funds "in return for permanent quarters for its operation within the building."⁹⁷ Kumin recounted that "the idea of a new building ... brought an old community problem to a head and resulted in a split in the community."⁹⁸ The result was that "the Board of Trustees accepted the proposal but the implementation by the Congregation was never carried out. Opposition arose to having the JWB as a partner in any community Synagogue building."⁹⁹ A year later, when the congregation was in the process of purchasing property for a new synagogue and rumors surfaced that the congregational president "was to negotiate with JWB on possible partnership in the new

96 Seymour Fishman Final Report, 17 June 1947, I-180, box 195, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Reports, 1947, AJHS.

97 1949 Annual Report, Hawaii Operation, USO—JWB Club, I-180, box 238, folder Hawaii, AJHS.

98 Emanuel Kumin to Jack Schneider, 30 August 1948, I-180, box 196, folder Overseas – Hawaii Various Correspondence 1948, AJHS.

99 1949 Annual Report, Hawaii Operation, AJHS.

building,” Kumin “stated that there were no grounds to the rumors, that the partnership idea was dead and buried.”¹⁰⁰

In 1948 the HJC hit an important milestone by making significant revisions to its original 1938 charter. First, the revised charter changed the corporate name of the “Honolulu Jewish Community” to “Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community.”¹⁰¹ Although the original charter language conveyed that the entity would function as a Jewish congregation—which it did—the name change clearly specified that the entity was a religious community, not simply a Jewish organization.¹⁰² The revision also specified that membership in the congregation would be limited to Jews, which was consistent with widely accepted practice of Jewish congregations at the time; the original charter had permitted non-Jewish spouses of Jews to become members—a response to the high rate of interfaith marriage in Hawaii.

The 1948 revision also addressed congregational leadership by facilitating a more democratic and participatory Jewish community. Unlike the HJC—which had no president or vice president but rather a chair, vice chair, and other officers all designated by a board of trustees from among its own members¹⁰³—the revised charter provided for direct election of a president, vice president, and other officers.¹⁰⁴ Prior to

100 S.D. Gershovitz to Frank L. Weil (quoting from the minutes of a special meeting of the Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community held on December 14th), 1948–1949, I-180, box 196, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Galen Building, AJHS.

101 Amended Charter of the Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community, 12 May 1948 effective date, Business Registration Division, file 2840 D2, Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Honolulu (hereafter DCCA).

102 Charter of Incorporation of Honolulu Jewish Community, 31 May 1938, Article III, Business Registration Division, file 2840 D2, DCCA. Article III provided in part: “The objects and purposes of the corporation are the organization, operation and maintenance of a Jewish congregation for the worship of God in accordance with the forms and tenets of the Jewish religion.”

103 Charter of Incorporation of Honolulu Jewish Community, 31 May 1938, Article VI, and Bylaws of Honolulu Jewish Community, 21 June 1938, Article II, Business Registration Division, file 2840 D2, DCCA.

104 Amended Charter of the Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community, 12 May 1948 effective date, Article VI, Business Registration Division, file 2840 D2, DCCA.



Bernard H. Levinson on the pulpit of the original Temple Emanu-El at 2207 Oahu Avenue.
(Courtesy Peter J. Levinson)

Peter J. Levinson

the reorganization, Bernard Levinson recounted, “the Honolulu Jewish community was generally held in the palm” of Gaskell Jacobs, “a very highly respected individual” who “ran everything.”¹⁰⁵ Jacobs, among his other positions, chaired the Honolulu JWB committee, which Kumin described in his November 1948 report as “still an inactive group” where “Gaskell Jacobs does a yeoman’s job of being the entire committee.”¹⁰⁶ Although Jacobs’s impressive activities filled a void until the mid-1940s, an expanding postwar Jewish population embraced institutional change.

Changes to the bylaws included an article providing for election of a rabbi and an article delineating the duties of various standing committees.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the most significant change was in charging the Building Committee with the responsibility “to recommend a site for a new Temple and to recommend plans and specifications for a new Temple.”¹⁰⁸ Bernard H. Levinson, a relative newcomer to Hawaii, played an instrumental role in energizing the Jews of Honolulu to acquire their own synagogue. Shortly after Levinson’s death in 1979, the *Hawaii Jewish News* recounted that “almost immediately after his arrival in Hawaii in 1945, he [Levinson] immersed himself in the affairs of the then small and disorganized Jewish community”—describing Levinson as “the main force behind the formation of Temple Emanu-El [formerly the Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community].”¹⁰⁹

105 Bernard H. Levinson 1978 interview by Kirk Cashmere, copy of audiotape in the author’s possession. A transcript of selected portions of the interview is printed in “Justice Bernard Levinson (1907–1979),” *Hawaii Jewish News* (April 1979). Quotations from the interview that appear in this article are based on the author’s review of a copy of the audiotape rather than the printed excerpts.

106 Emanuel Kumin, Narrative Report, November 1948, I-180, box 196, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Various Correspondence, 1948, AJHS.

107 Bylaws of Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community, 12 May 1948 and Bylaws of Honolulu Jewish Community, 21 June 1938, Business Registration Division, file 2840 D2, DCCA.

108 Bylaws of Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community, Art. VII, Sect. 4, 12 May 1948, Business Registration Division, file 2840 D2, DCCA.

109 “Justice Bernard Levinson (1907–1979),” *Hawaii Jewish News* (April 1979): 3.

Levinson had grown up in Cincinnati, then the focal point of American Reform Judaism, where his father had identified with the Reform movement at an early age. In deference to his Orthodox grandfather, Bernard went through bar mitzvah at an Orthodox synagogue before being confirmed at a Reform temple. Prior to coming to Hawaii, Levinson held various offices in the Men's Club of Seattle's Temple de Hirsch,¹¹⁰ became a member of the executive board of the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods,¹¹¹ and later served on the board of the Brotherhood of Washington Hebrew Congregation¹¹² in the nation's capital. In a letter to family written from Honolulu in 1945 shortly after his arrival there, Levinson recounted that he "visited the Jewish Welfare Board house and was rather disappointed to learn that there is very little organized Jewish life in the city."¹¹³ With a background of deep immersion in synagogue activities, he sought to galvanize the local Jewish community in support of the kind of organized, synagogue-centric Jewish life that mainland communities enjoyed.

Although Kumin and Levinson both favored an active Jewish congregation, they differed on whether there should be a complete separation of any new temple from JWB. Kumin, as he expressed it in March 1948, sought "to integrate the military and civilian program into one all-inclusive Jewish Center Program."¹¹⁴ He viewed the reorganization of the local community as a positive step in that direction, whereas Levinson focused on a reorganized congregation independent from the JWB. Kumin, as JWB's representative, had supported JWB's 1948 joint

110 Resolution of the Board of the Men's Club of Temple de Hirsch, 9 August 1939, in the author's possession.

111 Levinson, Bernard Hirsh in *Who's Who In American Jewry: A Biographical Dictionary of Living Jews of the United States and Canada*, vol. 3, ed. John Simons (New York: National News Association, Inc., 1938–1939), 628.

112 *Brotherhood News of the Washington Hebrew Congregation* 4 no. 4 (January 1940): 2, box BR0-3 Brotherhood Newsletters 1929–1958, file Newsletters 1929–1950, Archives of Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington, DC.

113 Bernard Levinson 1945 letter, family correspondence in the author's possession.

114 Emanuel Kumin memorandum to Abraham Feitelberg, 4 March 1948, Narrative Report, February 1948, I-180, box 196, folder Overseas—Hawaii, Various Correspondence, 1948, AJHS.

venture offer; Levinson strongly opposed it.¹¹⁵ A divided local Jewish community ultimately embraced Levinson's position.

Two Firsts: A House of Worship and a Full-Time Rabbi

The community effectively decided that acquiring its own temple and hiring a dedicated rabbi were what was necessary for Judaism to thrive in Honolulu. In the absence of other Jewish organizational facilities, a synagogue could become the center for Jewish life. Its physical space could provide a sanctuary for religious observances, a social hall for Sisterhood meetings and other Jewish gatherings, and classrooms for a Sunday school. A rabbi, with training and expertise in Jewish studies, could enrich the congregation's understanding of Judaism and serve as a teacher to both adults and children. A talented and compassionate rabbi could inspire the Jewish community with his sermons, render Jewish observances more meaningful, and comfort congregants facing adversity and loss. Particularly without other civilian Jewish professionals—and in a city with few Jews and a non-Jewish population that had little knowledge of Judaism—a congregational rabbi could be expected to provide critical leadership for the Jewish community extending beyond his ministerial duties. He could foster interreligious understanding by representing and explaining Judaism to the larger community and interacting with clergy of other faiths on an equal basis.¹¹⁶

In December 1949 the Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community purchased for approximately \$14,000 a 70-by-200-foot lot for a synagogue at 1414 Heulu Street in the residential area of Makiki. Getting to that point had not been easy. James Zukerkorn, Finance Committee chair of the congregation during the 1950s, recounted:

Ever since the first attempt at the reorganization of the congregation in 1949, we have had people in our midst, who at every turn predicted failure of the undertaking. We often heard it said and repeated over and

115 Ibid.

116 For a discussion of different rabbinic roles see Daniel J. Elazar and Rela Geffen Monson, "The Evolving Roles of American Congregational Rabbis," *Modern Judaism* (February 1982): 73–89.

over again, that Honolulu is different from other mainland cities, that we cannot do things here which are or have been accomplished in other Jewish communities throughout our country.¹¹⁷

Barnett Sapiro, the first president of the congregation, wrote in early 1950 that “the whole process to advance Judaism in our community has been full of pain and travail.”¹¹⁸ He continued: “Perhaps too many of us failed primarily to understand and appreciate the historic role of the Temple. Perhaps we overlooked the fact that Jewish life has flourished only when the Synagogue was in a position of prominence.”¹¹⁹ As he was about to leave Honolulu, Kumin saw dissension in the congregation and wrote that “Sapiro and Levinson are determined to erect a synagogue building by Rosh Hashonah if they have to do it alone.”¹²⁰

In May 1950, when Levinson succeeded Sapiro as president, Alfred Preis was drafting the final architectural plans for a \$50,000 temple on the Heulu Street property. Levinson noted that “the temple will be the first stage of a building which will eventually include a lanai, Sunday school classrooms, and a social hall”—all of which would cost an estimated \$100,000.¹²¹ But it soon became apparent that the property was unsuitable—that “a long narrow lot in the middle of a block was not appropriate.”¹²² Levinson remembered: “We thought we ought to do something that would be better than that. And therefore, originally it was thought that we would buy a corner lot with an old home on it and convert it and then eventually perhaps tear down the old house and build a new temple.”¹²³

117 James Zukerkorn 1955 remarks to Temple Emanu-El’s Sisterhood, Bernard H. Levinson Hawaii Jewish Archives of Temple Emanu-El (hereafter Temple Emanu-El Archives), Honolulu.

118 “Dear Friend” letter from Barnett Sapiro, 6 February 1950, I-180, box 245, folder Hawaii, Club Reports, AJHS.

119 Ibid.

120 Emanuel Kumin to A.J. Feldman, 21 March 1950, MS-38, box 21, folder 2, file Kumin, Emanuel M., 1949–1953, AJA.

121 “Construction Starts Soon on Synagogue,” *Honolulu Advertiser* (26 May 1950): 14.

122 Bernard H. Levinson 1978 interview by Kirk Cashmere, copy of audiotape in the author’s possession.

123 Ibid.

The congregation proceeded to purchase in 1951 a large home for \$55,000 at 2207 Oahu Avenue near the University of Hawaii, which became the first synagogue owned by Hawaii's Jewish community. The property was approximately twice the size of the Heulu Street lot and already included a structure that could accommodate the congregation. Levinson and Sapiro noted that "this home, which is located on 27,750 square feet of land, beautifully landscaped, has the charm and dignity befitting a temple for this community."¹²⁴ They then observed that "it has ample room for a chapel, social hall and Sunday school, which will well take care of our community needs for many years to come. In addition, it has room on which a new temple can be built in the future."¹²⁵

In 1951 the community not only acquired a synagogue, which it called Temple Emanu-El, but also engaged its first full-time rabbi. On a trip to New York most likely in September 1950, Levinson had visited the offices of the Reform movement's UAHC and the Conservative movement's United Synagogue of America in an unsuccessful effort to find a rabbi for Temple Emanu-El.¹²⁶ Neither Rabbi Jay Kaufman, assistant to UAHC President Maurice Eisendrath, nor Rabbi Max Routtenberg, executive vice president of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly, had any suggestions.¹²⁷ "As a matter of fact," Levinson recalled, Routtenberg "indicated that they are having difficulty getting

124 Undated supplemental fundraising statement signed by Bernard H. Levinson and James Zukerkorn, with a cover sheet titled "Temple Emanu-El Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community" and displaying a picture of the Oahu Avenue property under the heading, "The First Temple in Hawaii," copy in the author's possession.

125 Ibid.

126 Levinson interview by Cashmere. The sequence of other related events suggests the timing of the New York trip. Although the move of UAHC headquarters from Cincinnati to New York was not completed until 1951, UAHC had maintained a presence in New York for many years.

127 Ibid. Although Levinson said in the interview that he "saw a Rabbi Routtenberg as I recall it who was the placement officer of the conservative group," the only Conservative organizational rabbi with that last name almost certainly was Max Routtenberg. At that time, both the United Synagogue of America and the Rabbinical Assembly shared an address in New York with the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Conservative rabbis who were willing to travel west of the Hudson River and that trying to find a rabbi for Hawaii would be an impossibility.”¹²⁸

Levinson traveled on to Washington, DC, where he spoke with Rabbi Hugo Schiff, then the assistant rabbi at Washington Hebrew Congregation and formerly the rabbi of Temple Beth El in Alexandria, Virginia. Schiff had apparently been rabbi during the two-year period when Levinson lived in Alexandria, and Levinson most likely had been a member of his congregation.¹²⁹ Levinson recalled that Schiff “recommended that I first look up Rabbi [Francis] Hevesi in the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* and then that I talk to him.”¹³⁰ The personal contact with Schiff, whom Levinson had “known for many years,” paid off.¹³¹ After meeting with Hevesi and learning that he was interested, Levinson would recommend him to the Honolulu congregation, which in turn offered him the position—eventually.¹³² Some eight months would elapse between Levinson’s meeting with Hevesi and Hevesi’s eventual election as congregational rabbi. One main reason for the delay was the priority the congregation gave to acquiring a synagogue. The other was to make sure that it would have the resources to pay for rabbinical services.

Levinson kept Hevesi informed of the congregation’s progress. In a 30 November 1950 letter he wrote, “Before committing itself to engage the services of a rabbi, the congregation feels that it should have signed pledges of financial support in an amount which would assure the fulfillment of our obligation to the rabbi without embarrassment at a later date.”¹³³ In January 1951 he wrote to Hevesi of the shift in congregational thinking from building a Temple “in these days when costs are so high” to buying “a large estate with a big old house on it and

128 Ibid.

129 Carlyn Levinson, Bernard Levinson’s wife, remembered that they belonged to an Alexandria temple after moving from Washington, DC, to suburban Virginia. Tape recording of the author’s interview of Carlyn Levinson circa 1986.

130 Levinson interview by Cashmere.

131 Bernard Levinson to Rabbi Alexander Segel, 31 March 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions #2, Temple Emanu-El Archives.

132 Levinson interview by Cashmere.

133 Letter in file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of two files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

use that for the next five or ten years as our Temple, Religious School Building, Center, etc.”¹³⁴ Anticipating the completion of “our proposed action on that within the next two or three weeks,” Levinson wrote, “Then we shall be able to concentrate on the matter of securing funds for an annual budget including a Rabbi’s salary.”¹³⁵ Hevesi, still interested in the Honolulu pulpit, considered it “most reasonable to buy a home, instead of building one.” He expressed the thought that “the site may be chosen so as to have space enough to build there a synagogue later, when the congregation will have enough strength to do so.”¹³⁶

The congregation waited until its annual meeting on 23 May to elect Hevesi. In the meantime, David Shepard, the congregational secretary, met with Hevesi while visiting Washington, DC, on government business and gave “a very enthusiastic report” to the board of the congregation.¹³⁷ In an 11 May letter to Hevesi, Levinson expressed the hope for “final action” at the upcoming congregational meeting, noting that “during Mr. Zukerkorn’s absence from the Territory, no progress was made with respect to raising funds, but now that he is back in Honolulu I feel confident that we shall be able to raise the necessary money.”¹³⁸ Although the process of formally selecting Hevesi to serve as the congregation’s first full-time rabbi was protracted, the delay was “merely a matter of finances,” as Levinson explained.¹³⁹

Francis Hevesi’s Extraordinary Leadership

Hevesi was a man of great learning and distinction who had succeeded his father in 1943 as chief rabbi of Budapest. He was known in Hungary for various literary pursuits that included “a volume of selected essays on

¹³⁴ Bernard Levinson to Francis Hevesi, 13 January 1951, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of two files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Rabbi Francis Hevesi to Bernard Levinson, 17 January 1951, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of two files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

¹³⁷ Bernard Levinson to Francis Hevesi, 4 April 1951, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of two files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

¹³⁸ Bernard Levinson to Francis Hevesi, 11 May 1951, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of two files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

religious and philosophical topics” and “a study in the religious implications of Sigmund Freud’s theories.”¹⁴⁰ Although his academic distinctions had included a doctoral degree from the University of Budapest and a faculty appointment at the National Rabbinical Seminary of Hungary,¹⁴¹ in Honolulu Hevesi took up the study of sociology at the University of Hawaii; there he drafted a student paper on religion, published posthumously as “Kahuna and Kohen: A Study in Comparative Religion,” which included an insightful discussion of priesthood in old Hawaii and in biblical Israel.¹⁴² Scholarship, however, was far from Hevesi’s only distinction. Years later, Levinson described Hevesi as a “very gifted person and a genius in many different capacities.... He was a linguist, a musician, an orator, a hypnotist, and I mean it literally.”¹⁴³ Levinson may have had in mind an incident in which the rabbi successfully used a post-hypnotic suggestion to help a congregant who suffered from allergies.

Two years after putting Levinson in touch with Hevesi, Schiff recounted some of the extraordinary events in Hevesi’s life in Hungary:

In 1931, under the political pressure of the anti-semitic movement, he organized the Free University of Budapest, of which he was appointed President.... During the Nazi occupation of Hungary he endured two arrests and in 1944 was sentenced to death *in absentia* while, however, Christian friends gave him a secret shelter.¹⁴⁴

In an elegant article on Hungarian Jewish literature, Hevesi later wrote: “Many of the products of Hungarian Jewish scholars are perennial monuments of talent and industry.... This creative spirit did not succumb to the persecutions of Jews following World War I or

140 “Simon Hevesi” (subheading “Ferenc Hevesi”), *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* vol. 5 (New York: The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Inc., 1941), 351.

141 Ibid.

142 “Kahuna and Kohen: A Study in Comparative Religion,” *Social Process in Hawaii* 16 (1952): 30–33.

143 Levinson interview by Cashmere.

144 Hugo Schiff, “Francis Hevesi,” *Central Conference of American Rabbis Year Book* 63 (1952): 320–322.

even in the darker days of the second, most terrible war.”¹⁴⁵ During the years before the German occupation Hevesi himself wrote extensively on Jewish subjects. He noted that “in 1943, my own *History of Ancient Jewish Philosophy* was published notwithstanding the serious wartime difficulties.”¹⁴⁶

Although Hungary enacted a series of antisemitic laws over a generation that greatly diminished the rights of its Jewish population, the Jews of Hungary generally had managed to survive until Germany occupied the country in March 1944. Shortly thereafter, however, a majority of them would lose their lives. Holocaust historian Randolph Braham recounted: “With the [German] occupation, the Jews were trapped; they were abandoned by the Hungarians upon whom they had counted for their survival.”¹⁴⁷ When required to wear the Star of David, Hevesi “consoled his people: ‘The yellow star will be removed from us, but a mark of humiliation will always show on the breasts of those who forced us to wear this star and those who by their indifference allowed this to happen.’”¹⁴⁸ After the Soviet army liberated Hungary, Hevesi commented, “We have the feeling of living among murderers, and I never know whether the man opposite me in the tram is not my father’s or my brother’s murderer.”¹⁴⁹

Hevesi quickly returned to a leadership role in Hungarian Jewish affairs. Dr. Zoltan Klar, a Jewish organizational lay leader in postwar Hungary, testified at a 1954 U. S. congressional hearing that “there were

145 Francis Hevesi, “Recent Jewish Literature in Hungary,” *Jewish Book Annual* 6 (5708 1947–48): 71.

146 Ibid., 72.

147 Randolph L. Braham, “A Post-Mortem of the Holocaust in Hungary,” Monna and Otto Weinmann Lecture Series (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, 2012).

148 Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: Random House, 1968), 350.

149 Alice Freifeld, “Identity on the Move: Hungarian Jewry between Budapest and the DP Camps, 1945–1948,” in *The Holocaust in Hungary: Sixty Years Later*, ed. Randolph L. Braham and Brewster S. Chamberlin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 185, citing Orszagos Leveltar (Hungarian National Archives), Jewish Archive, Budapest, XXXIII, 31 Dec. 1945, 199 fn. 27.

about 120,000 Jewish survivors in Hungary after the Nazi terror. The spiritual leader of these people, who survived, was Dr. Francis Hevesi, the chief rabbi of Budapest, who for a while was allowed to be the spiritual leader.”¹⁵⁰ In the aftermath of the war, Hevesi’s wide range of activities included service as chief of Jewish chaplains in the Hungarian Army, a position that carried the high rank of major general. He also was instrumental in establishing a B’nai B’rith Lodge in Hungary.¹⁵¹ Additionally, Klar described an important postwar initiative Hevesi was involved in: “When I came home to Budapest in May, 1945 … we formed, together with Grand Rabbi, Francis Hevesi, the Social Federation of Hungarian Jews which had as its first object the repatriation of Hungarian Jews [from Russia].”¹⁵² Although this initial objective could not be realized, the Federation did achieve some successes on behalf of Jewish survivors. Under the leadership of Hevesi and a few others, “the Federation sought to unite Hungarian Jewry on the basis not of a religious but a civil rights program. It organized assistance for the needy and aged, established contact with international Jewish organizations, and fought anti-Semitism in collaboration with church leaders.”¹⁵³

Having survived the Holocaust, Hevesi became a forceful and courageous opponent of ongoing antisemitism in postwar Hungary. He was actively involved in organizing a mass demonstration against the persecution of Jews in 1946 and “announced from the pulpit for the first time that the perpetrators of these crimes were Communists and the people will have to look for them in the ranks of the Communist Party.”¹⁵⁴ When Communists falsely accused Catholic Cardinal Mindszenty of blaming Jews for provoking a pogrom, Hevesi “proposed that the Council of Social Interfaith Reconciliation meet and issue a pronouncement defending the

150 House of Representatives Select Committee on Communist Aggression, *Seventh Interim Report of Hearings*, 83rd Congress, Second Session, 1954, 71.

151 Peter Meyer, Bernard D. Weinryb, Eugene Duschinsky, and Nicolas Sylvain, *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1971), 413.

152 Ibid., 395, quoting from Zoltan Klar interview published in the *National Jewish Monthly* (February 1953).

153 Ibid., 406.

154 House Select Committee on Communist Aggression, 75 (Klar testimony).

cardinal against this lie.”¹⁵⁵ Hevesi did not shy away from taking public stances in confronting anti-Jewish hatred and violence, as in this editorial:

Was it not enough that over 600,000 innocent brothers of ours were delivered to the German hooligans?... How do these gangsters dare, whence do they take the courage to attack with organized brutality those who had suffered beyond endurance, and who returned to their homes to start life anew, and to help rebuild this country with their honest labor?¹⁵⁶

Hevesi then insisted on governmental response and accountability, writing, “We demand an answer to this question from the Hungarian government.... The government will perhaps be in the position to explain why these riots could not be prevented, and if they could not be prevented in time, why they could not be punished without delay.”¹⁵⁷

Hevesi’s life in Hungary, including his activism there, ended in 1946. After traveling to the United States that year “to negotiate in matters of relief for Hungarian Jewry,”¹⁵⁸ he realized the situation in Hungary had become untenable for him, and he heeded warnings from friends not to return.¹⁵⁹ Although Hevesi had traveled to the United States while living in Hungary, addressed Jewish American audiences in English at least as early as 1936,¹⁶⁰ and gave major speeches on behalf of United Jewish Appeal at fundraising events around the country in 1947,¹⁶¹ his renown in Europe did not lead to major pulpit opportunities as a new immigrant

155 Ibid., 80.

156 Meyer et al., *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*, 420, quoting from an editorial in *Uj Elet*.

157 Ibid.

158 Schiff, “Francis Hevesi.”

159 Abstract of Francis Hevesi’s daughter Eva Hevesi Ehrlich videotape recorded 12 July 1992, “[DOC] Eva Haver—United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,” available online.

160 *The Bulletin* (Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York), 20 March 1936, Temple Emanu-El Archives, New York, New York.

161 “Succor Is Responsibility of American Jews, Says Hungary’s Chief Rabbi,” *The American Israelite* (13 March 1947): 8; “United Jewish Appeal Launched As Chaplain Recounts Trials,” *The News* (Paterson, New Jersey) (12 May 1947): 54; “Appeal Meeting In Manchester,” *Nashua Telegraph* (27 March 1947): 28; “S.F. Throngs Hear Pleas For Jewish War Victims,” *The San Francisco Examiner* (2 May 1947): 7.

to the United States. Instead, he served as rabbi of small congregations in Monroe, New York,¹⁶² and Dalton, Georgia,¹⁶³ before becoming rabbi of the Bethesda Chevy Chase Jewish Community Group¹⁶⁴ in the Washington, DC, area, and finally serving as director of the College of Jewish Studies in the nation's capital before coming to Hawaii.¹⁶⁵ He lived in the Levinson home when he first arrived in Honolulu, before finding an apartment to rent.

At Hevesi's installation at Temple Emanu-El in the summer of 1951, "the place was so crowded that there was standing room only."¹⁶⁶ Levinson noted that "everyone seems well pleased with the new Rabbi."¹⁶⁷ In a letter to Levinson, who was spending part of the summer on the mainland, Hevesi thanked him for visiting the Hevesi family in Washington and recounted his early rabbinical activities in Hawaii:

Editing a monthly bulletin, giving two summer courses in Hebrew, one lecture series about the Fall Holidays, interfaith-work in different interfaith groups, visiting the sick, contacting members and prospective members, studying the literature for the Sunday-school, preparing the Sunday school, beside the religious services and preaching.¹⁶⁸

162 "Monroe Council Installs Former Rabbi of Budapest," *Middletown Times Herald Record* (14 June 1947): 11.

163 "Temple Beth El Book of Remembrance On the Occasion of our Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration October 19, 20, 21, 1990, Dalton Georgia," self-published, copy available at History Department, Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, Jackson, Mississippi.

164 "Dr. Hevesi Appointed to Jewish College Post," *The Washington Post* (13 January 1951): B6.

165 Ibid. *The Washington Post* article described Hevesi as the college's "spiritual and administrative head"; the letterhead listed him as "Director." The impetus for the college's 1946 incorporation had been "to fill the need for an institution of higher Jewish learning to which Jewish adults may turn for instruction." Announcement 5710 1949—1950 College of Jewish Studies—Internal Material 1950s, Rabbi Solomon Metz's papers, Adas Israel Congregation, Washington, DC.

166 Bernard Levinson 1951 letter, family correspondence in the author's possession.

167 Ibid.

168 Francis Hevesi to Bernard Levinson, undated, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of two files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

The September 1951 issue of the bulletin urged congregants to attend services with family members: “Your children are not only welcome here, but it is indeed your religious duty to bring them to services.”¹⁶⁹

Harvey Meyerson, the son of devoted temple members Ida and Sol Meyerson and a student in the religious school’s advanced Hebrew class, “developed an interest in Rabbi Hevesi’s sermons, to my parents’ great surprise.”¹⁷⁰ Years later he wrote that “by the sheer strength and intensity of his example, he awakened my intellect and made it want to grow.”¹⁷¹ He described how he experienced as a young teenager one of Hevesi’s sermons:

[Rabbi Hevesi] would begin his sermon in a low, barely audible voice, from his position on the pulpit beneath the eternal flame.... Gradually, the intensity of his expression mounted, and with it my expectancy. Then it would happen. The eternal flame flared up within him and glowed out upon the congregation from his shining eyes. He had awakened the prophets and they were speaking through him.¹⁷²

During Hevesi’s time studying sociology at the University of Hawaii, he prepared a handwritten student essay about Honolulu’s Jewish community.¹⁷³ In this paper he noted a membership of fifty-two following the temple’s dedication, pointed to a steady increase in membership since his July 1951 installation, and described “well attended” services with the chapel “always filled with worshippers.” He referenced the establishment of a “Sunday School ... attended by 30 children, also Hebrew classes for children and adults” and “classes given about the meaning and forms of the Jewish ceremonies and about the doctrines of Judaism.” He viewed the congregation’s future optimistically, predicting that “if the rate of the growth of membership will not lessen too

169 *Temple Emanu-El News* 1, no. 2 (September 1951), Temple Emanu-El Archives.

170 Harvey Meyerson’s unpublished recollections of Hevesi, copy in the author’s possession.

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid.

173 Frances Hevesi, “The Jewish Congregation,” Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Student Papers Inventory, box A-2, University Archives, Hamilton Library, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, Hawaii.

much, very soon the organization shall absorb almost all Jewish residents in Honolulu and the island of Oahu and shall be able to build a new synagogue.”

At a meeting in January 1952—six months after Hevesi’s arrival—the congregation decided “by an almost unanimous vote” to extend the rabbi’s initial one-year contract for an additional year.¹⁷⁴ In a letter to Hevesi a few days later, Levinson acknowledged the rabbi’s significant contributions:

During the relatively short period of time that you have served as our spiritual leader, there has been a large increase in our membership, our religious services have been very well attended, your scholarly and intellectual attainments have become known not only to the Jewish people of Hawaii but also to the entire community, and you have established a religious school for our children, who, in addition to making progress in their studies, have great affection for you.¹⁷⁵

The congregation’s offer, however, fell short of Hevesi’s request for a three-year contract extension. Because his wife had remained in Washington, “the Congregation seemed to feel that it did not wish to commit itself for such a long period of time without knowing the Rabbi’s wife and without knowing that she would live in Hawaii with her husband.”¹⁷⁶

Six weeks after the congregational meeting, Hevesi notified Levinson that he was not accepting the one-year renewal. He explained that he had been offered a chair at the Georgetown School of Languages, which he would lose if he did not accept by the summer term’s beginning, and that “a year’s contract is no inducement for my wife and for me to establish our home here.”¹⁷⁷ He also anticipated

174 Bernard Levinson to Francis Hevesi, 10 January 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

175 Bernard Levinson to Francis Hevesi, 12 January 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

176 Bernard Levinson to Nelson Glueck, 25 February 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

177 Francis Hevesi to Bernard Levinson, 21 February 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—

better opportunities for rabbinical placement that year compared with the following year. “Not having been granted security for the coming years, here in Honolulu,” he wrote, “I must try to use the given opportunities and try to find it in another location.”¹⁷⁸ He went on to commend Levinson’s Jewish community involvement in what amounted to a farewell statement:

Your enthusiasm for the Jewish cause, your sagacity as a leader, your wisdom and your benevolence toward me have made my work smooth and my efforts successful.... I regret very much that I have to leave these kindly shores, my friendly and loving flock, whose love I reciprocated wholeheartedly, yet I regret most that I have to take leave from you. You are a great leader in Israel, chosen for great tasks, great efforts and great achievements.¹⁷⁹

In the end, Hevesi was unable to serve out even his short contract. His untimely death at age fifty-three, less than nine months after his arrival in Honolulu, cut short his dynamic leadership three months before his term expired. Rabbi Samuel Sobel, a Navy chaplain who had just begun a second tour of duty in Hawaii, described his Temple Emanu-El visit during his first Friday night in town and the sad events that followed:

Observing that the rabbi [Hevesi] did not feel too well I preached the sermon, after which [Hevesi] extolled the work of the Chaplaincy, having been Senior Chaplain of Hungary, and blessed me publicly. The following Sunday he passed away. The sad duty of arranging for the preparation of the body, which was shipped to Washington, DC, and the memorial service, thereby became my first rabbinical ministry in Hawaii.¹⁸⁰

Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

178 Ibid.

179 Ibid.

180 National Jewish Welfare Board Division of Religious Activities Monthly Report of Army or Navy Chaplain for Month of April 1952, I-337, box 104, folder NJWB Veterans’ Affairs Chaplains Files—Sobel, Samuel 45–63 in #3 of 5 files, AJHS.

Levinson recounted that “Rabbi Hevesi had not been very well for some time. He had been complaining about his heart” but refused to see a cardiologist, “saying merely that Dr. Hartwell [a prominent Honolulu cardiologist] would insist on his resting and staying in bed for two or three weeks.”¹⁸¹ Hevesi suffered a heart attack on a Saturday and died in a Honolulu hospital in the early hours of the next morning. “On the day that Rabbi Hevesi was stricken,” Levinson recalled, “he had been on the beach. He was returning to his room when he collapsed on the stairs, where he was later found unconscious.”¹⁸² Levinson did have the opportunity to spend time with Hevesi in the hospital during a period of consciousness. “Rabbi Hevesi’s sudden death was a shock to all of us, and we mourn with you his loss,” Levinson wrote to his wife, Magda Hevesi.¹⁸³ The temple board adopted a resolution noting that “the memory of Rabbi Hevesi will be a continuing influence for good in our Congregation” and that he “will be missed by all of us and by our children who loved him.”¹⁸⁴

In Hungary Hevesi had served for many years as rabbi—and later chief rabbi—of the magnificent Dohany Street Synagogue, one of the largest Jewish houses of worship in the world. It was the preeminent synagogue of Neolog Judaism that flourished in Hungary, a liberal Jewish movement somewhat analogous to U.S. Conservative Judaism. The Dohany temple’s rabbi, “though not always officially, was the ‘leading’ or ‘national’ chief rabbi of Hungary.”¹⁸⁵ Hevesi distinguished himself not only by the imposing European pulpit he occupied, but also by the force of his intellect, the eloquence of his message, and the steadfastness he demonstrated in response to the twentieth century’s most virulent

¹⁸¹ Bernard Levinson to Mrs. Francis Hevesi, 7 April 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Kinga Frojimovics, Geza Komoroczy, Viktoria Puszta, and Andrea Strbik, *Jewish Budapest: Monuments, Rites, History*, English translation by Vera Szabo and Center of Jewish Studies at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), 112.

expressions of hatred. Rabbi Louis I. Egelson, administrative secretary of the UAHC, wrote shortly after Hevesi's death: "I knew him as a splendid type of rabbi, one of the great men of our generation. He did not receive sufficient recognition in America."¹⁸⁶

In retrospect, Hevesi clearly left American Jewry with a remarkable legacy. His historical work in the English language alone was enough to distinguish him. In a 1936 address on "Accusations Against the Jews—Past and Present," he tracked antisemitic utterances from biblical times to the 1930s and documented their falsity.¹⁸⁷ In a 1947 article titled "Spiritual Survival in Budapest," Hevesi wrote about the Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest, a citadel of progressive Judaism committed to combining secular and religious learning.¹⁸⁸ He recounted the contributions of various luminaries who had taught there, described the Nazis' destruction to the institution and most of its students, and sought "to focus the attention of American Jewish public opinion upon our struggles."¹⁸⁹ Although most of Hevesi's scholarship remains available only in the Hungarian language, American Jews have much to learn from his prolific contributions in English—to say nothing of the remarkable example of his life itself. That Hevesi did not receive the recognition he deserved in the United States, however unjust, nonetheless proved extremely fortunate for Honolulu's Temple Emanu-El, which became the beneficiary of an extraordinary religious leader in its first year as a fully functioning congregation.

Joining the Reform Movement and Ensuring Rabbinic Continuity

The congregation during Hevesi's short tenure had not affiliated with any movement. Hevesi, although a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the national rabbinic organization identified

¹⁸⁶ Louis I. Egelson to Bernard Levinson, 7 April 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

¹⁸⁷ *Judaean Addresses: Selected, 1933–1940*, vol. 5 (New York: The International Press, 1947), 58–76.

¹⁸⁸ Francis Hevesi, "Spiritual Survival in Budapest," *Liberal Judaism* (March, 1947): 31–38.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

with the Reform movement, conducted services that leaned toward Conservative. The congregation used a Conservative prayer book on Friday nights but relied on the Reform movement's Union Prayer Book for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.¹⁹⁰ "At heart [Hevesi] was more of a traditionalist," Levinson recounted, "and he believed in observing more of the traditions than most Reform Jews or Reform rabbis observed."¹⁹¹

"When Rabbi Hevesi died," Levinson recalled, "I put it up to the congregation very squarely ... that I didn't think we had the right to ask anyone who was a Conservative rabbi and who wanted to observe certain traditional things that the members of our congregation would not under any circumstances observe to come out here and be the rabbi of this congregation."¹⁹² On 15 April 1952 the congregation followed Levinson's recommendation and decided "without a dissenting vote" to become a Reform congregation.¹⁹³ Early the following year it joined the UAHC.

Within a couple of days of Hevesi's decision to decline a second one-year contract, the congregation, numbering about one hundred families in March 1952,¹⁹⁴ initiated a rabbinical search to find a successor to begin in July, when Hevesi was expected to return to the mainland. After writing to Dr. Nelson Glueck, president of the Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), and Rabbi Jay Kaufman of the UAHC, Levinson received assurances of assistance.¹⁹⁵ Hevesi's death on 30 March added greater urgency to the recruitment effort. One month later the Provisional Rabbinical Placement Committee, with representatives of the UAHC, HUC-JIR, and the CCAR, recommended four

190 Bernard Levinson to Richard L. Bluestein, 14 March 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

191 Levinson interview by Cashmere.

192 Ibid.

193 Bernard Levinson to Samuel Sobel, 22 April 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

194 Levinson to Bluestein, 14 March 1952.

195 Bernard Levinson to Nelson Glueck, 25 February 1952; Bernard Levinson to Jay Kaufman, 1 March 1952; Richard Bluestein to Bernard Levinson, 29 February 1952; and Jay Kaufman to Bernard Levinson, 6 March 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

rabbis for consideration. The congregation conducted its search for a new rabbi by “correspondence embodying many questions that were put to the prospects” and requests for “a tape recording of a short sermon.”¹⁹⁶ At that time the congregation “didn’t have the facilities for sending out a scouting team to interview rabbis on the mainland and we didn’t feel that we had the money to invite rabbis to come here.”¹⁹⁷

One of the rabbis the Provisional Rabbinical Placement Committee recommended was Rabbi Alexander Segel, of Temple Sinai in Glendale, California.¹⁹⁸ In a letter to Segel, typical of initial correspondence sent to each candidate, Levinson wrote that “we have many problems, some of which are related to our distance from centers of Jewish life, which should offer a challenge to an energetic Rabbi of integrity who has chosen his profession because of a sincere desire to serve.”¹⁹⁹ After describing Hawaii as “a delightful place in which to live,” Levinson continued, “I think it has a bright future and that in the future we shall have a Jewish community of which our Rabbi will be proud. Much will depend, however, on the Rabbi who serves our Congregation.”²⁰⁰

At a special meeting on 25 June the congregation listened to taped messages from the three pulpit finalists. In his sermonette, Segel commented on the name of the Honolulu synagogue: “‘Emanu-El’ means ‘God is with us!’ May God be with you all, individually, as a Congregation in Israel. May you grow in numbers, in spiritual values, and in prestige.”²⁰¹ Segel then picked up on the issue Levinson had raised about problems stemming from geographical distance. “You must not forget,” Segel told the congregation, “that throughout our history there have been important Jewish Communities far away from the

196 Levinson interview by Cashmere.

197 Ibid.

198 Louis I. Egelson, Richard Bluestein, and Jacob P. Rudin to Bernard Levinson, 30 April 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

199 Bernard Levinson to Alexander Segel, 10 May 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [1st of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

200 Ibid.

201 Alexander Segel, “A Message to the Congregation,” file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [2nd of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

heart of Jewish life.”²⁰² Segel went on to speak about a rabbi who had told his students long ago to return to its rightful non-Jewish owner jewels found on a donkey they had purchased. “In the same way,” Segel preached, “every Jew is not only an exponent of his faith, but also a potential creator of new and higher levels of living. And Jews, who live at a distance from the great centers of Jewish Life are even more under the observation and appraisal of their neighbors.”²⁰³ Segel had fashioned a religious message clearly tailored for the congregation he sought to lead.

The recruitment effort was successful. Segel, a 1918 graduate of the Hebrew Union College who had served congregations in California, Pennsylvania, and New York,²⁰⁴ accepted an initial two-year term and opted to take a reduced salary in return for living in a house the congregation would purchase as a parsonage.²⁰⁵ He arrived in Honolulu with his wife, Frances, in August 1952. Describing their reception at the airport with “leis, accompanied by the customary kisses,” she wrote, “Rarely has a rabbi been given such a jubilant ovation by his new flock.”²⁰⁶ With Segel’s arrival, Temple Emanu-El demonstrated its determination to remain a vibrant congregation in spite of Hevesi’s recent death; and its formal embrace of the Reform movement set a clear path for its religious practice.

In 1955, the congregation’s affiliation with UAHC would have an impact on a cause that was important to the Territory of Hawaii and the Honolulu congregation: the union’s decision to support Hawaiian statehood. Emanu-El’s two delegates to the UAHC, Bernard Levinson and James Zukerkorn, had submitted and championed a resolution

202 Ibid.

203 Ibid.

204 Central Conference of American Rabbis form for Alexander Segel in Segal [sic], Alexander, MS-34, box 60, folder 4, Central Conference of American Rabbis Records, 1889–1995, AJA.

205 Bernard Levinson to Alexander Segel, 26 June 1952 and Alexander Segel to Bernard Levinson, 29 June 1952, file Levinson, Bernard—Correspondence re Rabbinical Positions [2nd of 2 files], Temple Emanu-El Archives.

206 Frances M. Segel, “Reform Judaism Comes to Hawaii,” *American Judaism* (January 1953): 13.



Alex and Jennie Linczer being blessed by Rabbi Segel, 1950s.
(Courtesy Peter J. Levinson)

to the union advocating statehood, which the Resolutions Committee rejected.²⁰⁷ However, Levinson brought the matter before the General Assembly, which, after extensive debate, took the very unusual action of rejecting the Resolutions Committee's recommendation. In advocating for statehood, Levinson countered the committee's argument that "we are very likely to be charged with partisanship" by pointing out that there was broad bipartisan support.²⁰⁸ Zukerkorn pointed to the deprivations Hawaii's population endured as a territory and argued—borrowing the words of the resolution—that "taxation without representation ... is repugnant to all Americans."²⁰⁹ After the UAHC adopted the resolution, other major national religious organizations would follow its example.

²⁰⁷ Transcript of proceedings of the 43rd Biennial Convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 349–366 (pages numbered 17–34 on upper left corner), URJ offices, NY.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 354, remarks of Judge Baar.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 353.

This victory amplified not only the small community's self-sufficiency but its ability to influence American Jewish policy as well. Within the first postwar decade, it had moved from almost total dependence on the JWB to an era when it not only had its own synagogue and employed a full-time rabbi, but could sway the national Reform organization to support Hawaii's aspiration for statehood. Over thirty-plus years, the JWB had deserved much credit for facilitating local Jewish engagement at the same time it fulfilled its primary mission of addressing the needs of Jewish service members. In return, Hawaiian Jewry often assisted JWB's work on behalf of the military and by welcoming European Jews in transit to the mainland from their refuge in Shanghai. The postwar demobilization of the military in Hawaii gave local Jewry the opportunity to focus on its own organizational needs at the same time that it continued to support broader Jewish charitable efforts. Despite its remoteness from larger Jewish communities, the fledgling congregation was determined to join the mainstream of American Jewish life.

After a short period of consolidation in the mid-1950s, Temple Emanu-El would undertake to build a new synagogue that could meet the needs of the community for generations to come. The dedication of the new Temple Emanu-El in 1960 would represent the culmination of the extraordinary early post–World War II period in the history of Hawaiian Jewry and solidify its position in the annals of American Judaism.

Peter J. Levinson came to Honolulu as a young child and grew up in Honolulu's Temple Emanu-El. His varied legal career, after receiving an undergraduate degree with honors in history from Brandeis and J.D. from Harvard, included teaching law at York University in Canada and serving as a deputy attorney general of the State of Hawaii and as a counsel to the United States House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary. He is the author of law review articles and other legal publications. In retirement, he is pursuing his lifelong interest in history. His father, Bernard H. Levinson, served as president of the Honolulu congregation from 1950 to 1960.

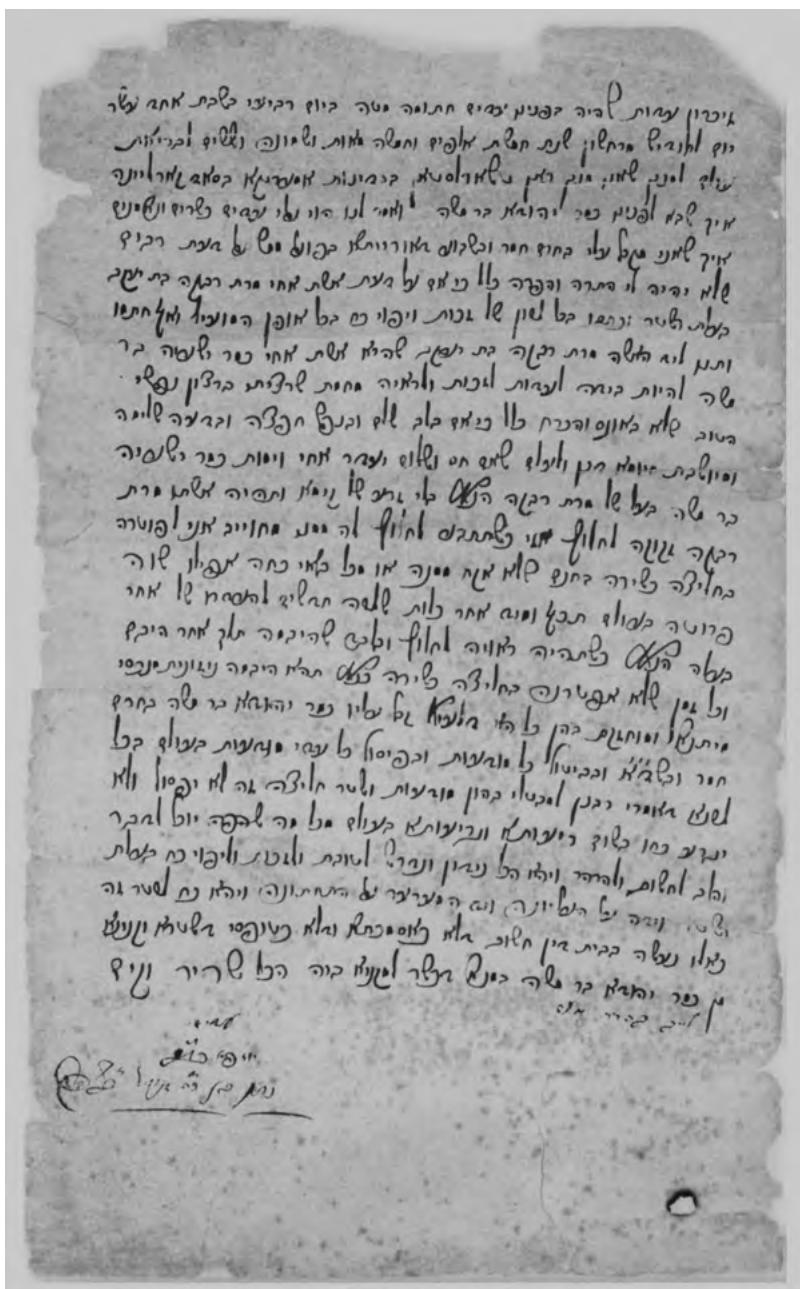


Image of *shtar halitzah* document.
(Courtesy Judith Shanks)

Postscript on the Charleston Shtar Halitzah

BENJAMIN STEINER

On 12 November 1807, a day after her marriage to Isaiah Moses, Rebecca Phillips Moses received a contract rendered in rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic from Levy Moses, her brother-in-law. Today it endures as an intriguing artifact of antebellum Southern Jewry: the Charleston *shtar halitzah*. About a decade ago, Jonathan D. Sarna and Dvorah Weisberg analyzed the document—a type of religious prenuptial agreement—for the *AJAJ*.¹ Readers are encouraged to read their meticulous documentary analysis alongside this current postscript, which reflects and builds upon their findings in light of newly surfaced records.

Background

As Sarna and Weisberg elaborate in greater detail, the development of the *shtar halitzah* phenomenon reflects the particularities of Jewish marriage law. Under biblical law, a woman is obligated to marry her brother-in-law should her husband die childless, a practice known as levirate marriage. Following the abolishment of polygamy in the tenth century, Jews in medieval Franco-Germany generally mandated the biblically sanctioned ritual of *halitzah* instead, which releases the man from the levirate marriage obligation.² While removing a shoe and spitting—as the *halitzah* ceremony requires—are atypical of solemn rituals, the Bible in Deuteronomy frames the requirement as it pertains to the kin of the deceased husband: “His brother’s widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, pull the sandal off his foot, spit in his face, and make this declaration: Thus shall be done to the man who will not

1 Jonathan D. Sarna and Dvora E. Weisberg, “A Writ of Release from Levirate Marriage (*Shtar Halitzah*) in 1807 Charleston,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 63 (2011): 38–55.

2 Louis Finkelstein and Alexander Marx, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1924), 27.

build up his brother's house!" (25:9)³ Intended originally to shame the levir (brother-in-law), *halitzah* has been the preferred practice in Jewish communities for well over a millennium.

A more intractable problem arose when the levir refused to partake in the ceremony, thereby barring his brother's widow from remarrying under Jewish law.⁴ Sometimes involving unscrupulous behavior, including extortion, a levir's resistance to the ceremony was common enough that remedies were adopted both at the communal level and on a case-by-case basis. Representing the latter approach, the *shtar halitzah* worked as a type of insurance policy—a binding pledge on the part of a brother-in-law to conduct *halitzah* should the need later arise. Use of the document and the ceremony more broadly in North America was rare.⁵ Still, there is no denying its general significance for many Diaspora Jews elsewhere, especially in Europe. As Sarna and Weisberg put it:

The genesis ... [of] the document that Rebecca Phillips Moses received on the day following her wedding, should be viewed against the backdrop of earlier efforts to resolve the status of the levirate widow and to protect her from "remaining chained forever." The introduction of a contract between a woman and her brother-in-law in which he promises that he will perform *halitzah* and, according to later versions of the document, that he will do so without financial inducements, reflects the unwillingness (or inability) of Jewish communities and communal leaders to compel men to perform *halitzah*. The *shtar halitzah* represents a departure from previous attempts in that it is enacted on a case-by-case basis rather than relying on a communal decree, which would govern the behavior of all members of the community.⁶

Thus, Levy Moses did not invent the *shtar halitzah* he presented to Rebecca Moses in Charleston; it mirrored efforts in many Jewish

3 Translation from JPS.

4 Finkelstein and Marx, 57–58.

5 Sarna and Weisberg, 50. Jacob Rader Marcus briefly notes the practice was observed in "some congregations." Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985*, vol. I (Wayne State University Press, 2018), 258.

6 Sarna and Weisberg, 46.

communities to combat the systemic problem of recalcitrant brothers-in-law. Still, his use of a *shtar halitzah* raises more intriguing historical questions that Sarna and Weisberg address. “How did such a document come to be written in the early nineteenth century in Charleston, South Carolina, a community with no rabbis or scholars? What might this *shtar halitzah* tell us about the individuals whose names are mentioned in it and about Jewish religious life and sensibilities in early-nineteenth-century North America?”⁷ Further complicating matters, Isaiah, Rebecca’s husband, already had four children—Phineas, Morris, Solomon, and Simeon—from a prior marriage, rendering the *shtar halitzah* seemingly unnecessary. Had Isaiah died, those children would have carried forward their father’s name, and Rebecca would have been free to remarry without a *halitzah* ceremony under Jewish law. Why, then, does the *shtar halitzah* exist at all? Sarna and Weisberg aimed to answer each of these questions contextually. Isaiah Moses, a traditional Jew and Hanover-born Charlestonian, made use of the document in America, where knowledge of Jewish marriage law had waned:

[Isaiah Moses] was a longtime trustee of Congregation Beth Elohim, a consistent opponent of religious reforms, and in later years a founder and active member of Shearith Israel in Charleston, the breakaway Orthodox synagogue formed by those opposed to Beth Elohim’s organ. In Germany, he knew, the *shtar halitzah* was commonly signed at the time of marriage. He was apparently determined to have the same document signed in Charleston. His insistence upon upholding tradition, one suspects, was more powerful than his understanding of that tradition.⁸

For Sarna and Weisberg, Isaiah Moses’s nostalgia outlasted his Jewish legal knowledge in a lay-led environment with few learned Jews. He insisted upon the signing of a *shtar halitzah* as a matter of traditionalist principle, just as he would stand on principle decades later in opposing reforms to synagogue ritual.⁹ Yet, why would Isaiah choose a *shtar*

7 Ibid., 40.

8 Ibid., 49–50.

9 Ibid., 48.

halitzah, a very private contract, as his means of making a public statement? What statement was he making? The delivery of the document to Rebecca remains puzzling. In this light, the record of an 1805 trial in the Charleston Court of Ordinary—the forum in which wills were proved and adjudicated—suggests a more specific motive.

New Evidence

This brings us to the contested will of a Jewish man named Solomon Hart. The Ordinary Court proceedings pitted a close associate of Hart's, Solomon Levy, against Israel Davis and Andrew Harris, one a representative from synagogue Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (K.K.B.E.) and the other from the Hebrew Benevolent Society. Each side claimed the right to administer Hart's estate. This is relevant to the study of Rebecca Moses's *shtar halitzah* because a marriage Hart had previously conducted between a woman and her brother-in-law informed the court controversy. The case helps to contextualize the document Rebecca Moses received two years later.

Hart and Levy became associated around 27 May 1804, when Hart officiated at the marriage of Levy to Levy's widowed sister-in-law without the synagogue's permission. Officiating at any marriage without such approval invited censure. More problematically, because Hannah Levy, the bride, had living children from her prior marriage, the mandate of levirate marriage did not apply. Rather, the marriage violated the Jewish laws of incest found in Leviticus.¹⁰ K.K.B.E. records from this early period are not extant, but the court record a year later specifies the infraction that divided Hart from its institutional leadership:

Mr. Hart, tho' not a Reader, nor authorized among the Jewish Congregation to do so, performed the marriage ceremony of Levy, with his Brother's Widow, and he received \$40 for it. Since which, the Friendship between Hart & Levy commenced.¹¹

10 See Leviticus 18:16 and 20:21.

11 Charleston County Miscellaneous Probate Cases, 1783–1812, p. 297.

Further indication of Hart's estrangement from K.K.B.E. emerges from the case record. This includes a letter Hart sent to Solomon Levy in the months after the controversial nuptial, "calling him his dear friend, and saying that the Synagogue were his Enemies, because of having married Levy against the laws of their religion."¹² Soon, the dispute reached the broader public. Nobody could stop Hart from performing the marriage in a land of religious liberty, but the K.K.B.E. vestry impugned his actions and his character in Charleston's *City Gazette*, responding to the marriage notice printed in its pages two days prior: "Married, on Sunday last, 27th inst., by the Rev. Solomon Hart, Mr. Solomon Levy, merchant, to Mrs. Hannah Levy, relict [widow] of the late Samuel Levy, both of this city."¹³ The "vestry of the Hebrew Congregation" unloaded their disgust with Hart's actions in the form of a public service announcement:

Seeing a marriage announced to the public of a Mr. SOLOMON LEVY on Sunday last, through the medium of your very useful paper, we beg leave through the same means to make known to the public that the said marriage is incestuous, illegal, unconstitutional, unprecedented, improper, inconsistent, absurd, nugatory and contrary to all the Jewish laws, rules, regulations, rites and ceremonies whatever, being positively disavowed and forbidden by the sacred author of our ancient and divine religion.¹⁴

The vestry also criticized the married couple. While they could not stop the Levys' marriage any more than they could bar Hart from officiating, they could inform readers, Jew and gentile alike, how grave a violation of Jewish law it was. Their analysis moved from the Ten Commandments to the Bible to the ancient rabbis and biblical commentators, all of which, they asserted, spoke univocally. Solomon Levy's and Hannah Levy's actions warranted severe punishment:

12 Ibid., 298.

13 Barnett A. Elzas, *Jewish Marriage Notices: From the Newspaper Press of Charleston, S.C. (1775–1906)* (New York: Bloch Pub. Co., 1917), 8.

14 "For the City Gazette: Published by Request of the Vestry of the Hebrew Congregation," *City Gazette*, 31 May 1804.

The Ten Commandments have in the most solemn manner declared, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” and the same sacred volume has declared, “Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother’s wife.” In consequence of these passages, our holy commentators and Sanhedrin¹⁵ have declared and made it binding on the professors of Judaism, “that any man laying with his brother’s wife, or marrying her after his death, she having issue by her deceased husband, committeth adultery, and they both ought to be stoned to death.”¹⁶

Solomon’s motive in marrying Hannah further galvanized the vestry, who viewed it as a ploy to acquire his deceased brother’s assets. Hannah had reason to welcome him into her household given her desperation: Her first husband had drowned in a boating accident, leaving her to care for her children alone, and she lost a daughter in another accident a year later.¹⁷ Still, the vestry focused on the violations of Jewish law and Solomon’s lust for wealth:

Mr. Solomon Levy did live with his brother’s wife near a twelve month, and some few weeks ago did apply to our minister respecting the marriage with his brother’s wife, who very properly declared to him the impossibility of such a connection for the reasons above stated; he not being sufficiently satisfied, then applied to the President [of the congregation] for leave of marriage agreeably to custom, who endeavored to persuade him from such improper sentiments, declaring to him the fatal consequences that would arise from such a connection, and in the most peremptory manner refusing his assent or giving the least sanction to such an illicit transaction. Mr. Levy has, nevertheless, contrary to every admonition, and counsel given him against such an undertaking, led only by motives the most infamous, avaricious, grasping and

15 An assembly of elders tasked to legislate important aspects of Jewish religious and political life when the Temple stood in Jerusalem.

16 “For the City Gazette: Published by Request of the Vestry of the Hebrew Congregation.” Here, the vestry’s understanding of rabbinic interpretation of the Bible regarding the laws of levirate marriage is less clear than its overall antagonism toward the actions of the married couple.

17 “Drowned,” *City Gazette*, 9 August, 1802; *City Gazette*, 1 November 1803.

wanton—for it be known, that his brother has left a very considerable fortune, which in justice, law and equity, solely belonged to his widow and children; but which, without any administration or any legal claim whatever, has, by Mr. Levy's taking possession of the widow and children, taken fully into safe keeping the whole of the property, real and personal, into his own care, and to prevent any person from getting a share of these fat loaves and fishes, married his brother's wife agreeably to his own form and ceremony.¹⁸

In the vestry's view, Solomon had gone rogue, wedding his sister-in-law for his own economic benefit, and contravening traditional Jewish law. He was a Jew, certainly, but in marrying Hannah Levy he was, in their view, not acting like one.

Thus, when Solomon Levy sought a portion of Solomon Hart's estate a year later, Levy's critics saw a pattern of behavior. Israel Davis and Andrew Harris (as noted above, the representatives of K.K.B.E. and the Benevolent Society) pushed back in court, depicting Levy as a swindler of Hart's assets. They also claimed that Hart made amends for the marriage ceremony he previously conducted in violation of synagogue policy, and that he came to resent Levy's presence in his life:

Hart said, [that] he had been led in the Dark by Levy, who had used him ill.... Hart said he had married Levy against the Laws, & he hoped God would forgive him. He did not like Mr. Levy at all, and when he would be coming there, he said—"there comes that Fool!"¹⁹

Hart had purportedly repented, but what of the legacy of his transgressions? Discussion of Hart's actions did not conclude with the printed statement of K.K.B.E.'s vestry. Rather, it elicited a response in the Charleston *Courier* two days later, this time from a religious outsider using the pen name Clovis, who laid bare the stakes of the debate. In America, Clovis reasoned, coercion was the purview of civil law alone, so Jewish institutions had no business policing the religious infractions of their members:

18 "For the City Gazette: Published by Request of the Vestry of the Hebrew Congregation."

19 Charleston County Miscellaneous Probate Cases, 1783–1812, p. 298.

Laws are daily made, and daily broken; if Mr. LEVY has committed an act contrary to divine law, he will be punished by that divine law:—Shall mortals take cognizance of the breach of divine law, unless that divine law has been adopted as the municipal law of a country?—and even then, he will be punished as the transgressor of a civil law only; but the All-wise Searcher of hearts will determine that point hereafter. I will ask you, gentlemen, whether avarice, penury, parsimony, and illiberality, are confined to a single individual? Why impeach a single limb of your class with a foible incident to others? ... [I] beg to recommend to you a maxim of my religion, that “to err is human—to forgive, divine.”²⁰

Interestingly, Solomon Levy’s actions *did* explicitly violate South Carolina’s marriage statute, which was rooted in religious law. Just as the Anglican Church in England banned marriage between a man and his deceased brother’s widow (see Figure 1, the Table of Kindred and Affinity, for the full list of these forbidden relationships), so, too, did South Carolina.²¹ As the state law stipulated:

to prevent all illegal and unlawful marriages, not allowed by the church of England, but forbidden by the table of marriage; *Be it enacted*, That no minister of this province, knowing the same, shall presume to join together in marriage, any persons whatsoever, contrary to the table of marriages, by this act appointed to be set up in every parish church within this province, under the penalty of one hundred pounds, nor shall any person forbidden to marry by such table of marriage, presume to be joined in marriage, under the penalty of fifty pounds, or twelve months imprisonment.²²

However, the law was not readily enforced as it pertained to marriages between in-laws. As quoted above, Solomon and Hannah Levy’s

20 “For the Courier: To the Gentlemen of the Vestry of the Hebrew Congregation,” *Charleston Courier*, 2 June 1804.

21 In England, marriage between a man and his sister-in-law remained forbidden until 1921, when the Deceased Brother’s Widow’s Marriage Act was passed.

22 Joseph Brevard, *An Alphabetical Digest of the Public Statute Law of South-Carolina*, vol. 2 (Charleston, SC: J. Hoff, 1814), 41–42.

A TABLE OF KINDRED AND AFFINITY,

Wherein whosoever are related are forbidden in Scripture and our Laws to marry together.

<i>A Man may not marry his</i>	<i>A Woman may not marry with her</i>
1 G RANDMOTHER,	1 G RANDFATHER,
2 Grandfather's Wife,	2 Grandmother's Husband,
3 Wife's Grandmother.	3 Husband's Grandfather.
4 Father's Sister,	4 Father's Brother,
5 Mother's Sister,	5 Mother's Brother,
6 Father's Brother's Wife.	6 Father's Sister's Husband.
7 Mother's Brother's Wife,	7 Mother's Sister's Husband,
8 Wife's Father's Sister,	8 Husband's Father's Brother,
9 Wife's Mother's Sister.	9 Husband's Mother's Brother.
10 Mother,	10 Father,
11 Step-Mother,	11 Step-Father,
12 Wife's Mother.	12 Husband's Father.
13 Daughter,	13 Son,
14 Wife's Daughter,	14 Husband's Son,
15 Son's Wife.	15 Daughter's Husband.
16 Sister,	16 Brother,
17 Wife's Sister,	17 Husband's Brother,
18 Brother's Wife.	18 Sister's Husband.
19 Son's Daughter,	19 Son's Son,
20 Daughter's Daughter,	20 Daughter's Son,
21 Son's Son's Wife.	21 Son's Daughter's Husband.
22 Daughter's Son's Wife,	22 Daughter's Daughter's Husband,
23 Wife's Son's Daughter,	23 Husband's Son's Son,
24 Wife's Daughter's Daughter.	24 Husband's Daughter's Son.
25 Brother's Daughter,	25 Brother's Son,
26 Sister's Daughter,	26 Sister's Son,
27 Brother's Son's Wife.	27 Brother's Daughter's Husband.
28 Sister's Son's Wife,	28 Sister's Daughter's Husband,
29 Wife's Brother's Daughter,	29 Husband's Brother's Son,
30 Wife's Sister's Daughter.	30 Husband's Sister's Son.

A Table, &c.] This table, which is according to several previous statutes, was set forth in the year 1563. The degrees specified in the said statutes are particularly set

forth in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus, whereby not only degrees of kindred and consanguinity, but degrees of affinity and alliance, do hinder matrimony.

Table of Forbidden Marriages, as printed in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

published marriage notice shows no concern for discretion: "Married, on Sunday last, 27th inst., by the Rev. Solomon Hart, Mr. Solomon Levy, merchant, to Mrs. Hannah Levy, relict of the late Samuel Levy, both of this city." And neither the synagogue vestry nor Clovis specifically reference this law in their letters to the press. One digest of South

Carolina statutes comments that the law was simply ignored as the religious makeup of South Carolina grew more diverse:

Marriage is a civil contract, as well as a religious ceremony. The law of marriage is a positive institution of society, founded principally on the Mosaic code. The validity of marriages in England depends on various statutes, not in force here, and the rites and ceremonies of the established church. In the early stages of our juridical and civil history, the laws of the province on this subject were in conformity to the English; but as the population of the country increased [sic] by emigrants from all countries, and of different religious denominations, this adherence to Episcopal regulations and forms, was gradually relaxed, and at length generally disregarded.²³

Yet, K.K.B.E.'s vestry would have welcomed an enforceable civil statute opposing marriage to a sister-in-law to help stop Hart's actions in 1804. The growing recognition of religious freedom in South Carolina compromised the quest of Jewish communal leaders to maintain religious standards. This helps to contextualize Rebecca Moses's *shtar halitzah*. As noted above, it is a rare document for the post-Revolutionary War period; and from a Jewish legal perspective it had no value, because Isaiah Moses already had children from a previous marriage. Perhaps the *shtar halitzah* had become a general opportunity for Isaiah Moses (as an outspoken member of the K.K.B.E. establishment) to champion the enduring relevance of Jewish religious authority as a principle in light of episodes such as the marriage between Solomon and Hannah Levy. More specifically, it would have furthered the notion that even in South Carolina, religious standards of marriage should still apply. What was generally a private contract passed between in-laws now channeled a message for all of Charleston Jewry to see.

In America, with its growing emphasis on religious freedom, Jewish history is replete with evidence of the declining weight of religious authority—leading, by the 1820s, to the fracture of religious life, as

23 Ibid., 41.

“synagogue communities” became “communities of synagogues.”²⁴ A lesson of the Charleston *shtar halitzah* is one of early, concerted resistance to that larger pattern. Although Charleston, South Carolina, had no rabbis in the early nineteenth century, it had at least one Jewish resident knowledgeable enough and proud enough to execute the ritual. Prior analysis of the Charleston *shtar halitzah* discloses much information about the likely motives of its commissioner, its development and significance over time, and the rarity of its use in America. It also invites broader study about the maintenance of rabbinic standards in the absence of rabbis. However, the new evidence presented above helps to further illuminate its genesis. As for their concluding appreciation that the document has withstood the test of time, Sarna and Weisberg have it exactly right²⁵: Historians depend upon the extant sources, and we thus owe thanks to Rebecca Phillips Moses and her descendants, who cared for it across the generations. Still, previously untapped sources warrant a fresh look at that most intriguing artifact of antebellum Southern Jewish life, the 1807 Charleston *shtar halitzah*.

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24 See Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Democratization of American Judaism,” in *New Essays in American Jewish History: Commemorating the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Jewish Archives*, ed. Pamela S. Nadell, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Lance J. Sussman (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 2010), 95–108; *American Judaism: A History*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), xxvii–xxviii.

25 Sarna and Weisberg, 51.

Jacob Rader Marcus in Berlin, 1936

INTRODUCED AND ANNOTATED
BY DANA HERMAN AND JASON KALMAN

In the late summer of 1936, Jacob Rader Marcus, a professor of history at Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, boarded a ship for an eight-week mission to explore Jewish communities in Europe and Russia. In May 1937 he offered a brief report on his travels to the Central Conference of American Rabbis; however, a recently discovered travel diary provides the first detailed account of the trip.¹ This excerpt from the diary, from August and September of 1936, presents a valuable companion piece to Jeffrey S. Gurock's article in this issue of the journal, given the topic of the article and the prominence of Marcus's life and work in the establishment of the American Jewish Archives in 1947.

Marcus's trip began with an invitation to join forty-nine other American Jewish leaders to travel to the Russian territory of Birobidzhan, which Stalin had established as an autonomous Jewish region.² In June 1936 the People's Delegation of the Biro-Bidjan [*sic*] Conference met at the Bureau of Jewish Education in Cincinnati and designated Marcus

1 "Report of the Committee on Contemporaneous History and Literature," *CCAR Yearbook* 48 (1937): 394–402. Intermittently, throughout his life, Marcus kept diaries that mostly, though not exclusively, covered his travels and extended periods of time abroad. Marcus's collection contains at least seven diaries. The earliest dates from 1912 and the last is from 1968. All are found in MS-210, box 70, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH (hereafter AJA).

2 "Personal," *The American Israelite* (13 August 1936): 2. In 1928 Soviet leadership established the territory the size of Belgium at the far eastern edge of Russian-held territory for the settlement of Jews. In May 1934, the Central Committee formally established the territory as the Jewish Autonomous Region. For an overview of the development of the territory see Robert Weinberg, *Stalin's Forgotten Zion, Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland: An Illustrated History, 1928–1996* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

to travel with the group.³ “The people’s delegation” was the brainchild of ICOR (Association for Jewish Colonization in the Soviet Union [in Yiddish, *Yidishe Kolonizatsye Organizatsye in Rusland*]), a communist organization founded in 1924 in large part to aid in the settlement of Jews in Birobidzhan, to defend the policies and ideologies of the Soviet Union, and to fight against fascism (particularly after the rise of Hitler in 1933). It found its adherents largely among the Jewish Yiddish-speaking working class, with branches throughout the United States. It dissolved in 1951.⁴

According to historian Henry Srebrnik, fifteen of the fifty invitees were to be ICOR representatives, with the remainder coming from *landsmanshaftn*, unions, fraternal organizations, and a small number of artists, writers, and professionals.⁵ Marcus may well have been invited in his role as chair of the Committee on Contemporaneous History and Literature of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), a position he had held since 1932. Although in his 1937 report to the conference Marcus devoted considerable attention to the situation of Jews in Russia and plans for a Jewish autonomous region near the China-Russia border, the irony is he never got as far as Birobidzhan.⁶ According to an interview he gave many years later, Marcus did set out to make the trip, but the distance became too long and the cost prohibitive: “After traveling in Germany and in Russia for about ten days or two weeks, I was exhausted. It was fifteen or twenty days by slow train to Siberia, making a hundred miles a day. It is thousands of miles away. So I did not go to Birobidzhan on the edge of the Amur River to the north of China.”⁷ However, what is clear from his newly discovered travel diary is that Marcus used his time in Europe to learn about the situation of the Jews in every country he visited, including his almost two-week

3 “To Go to Biro-Bidjan,” *The American Israelite* (18 June 1936): 1.

4 For more on its history, see Henry Felix Srebrnik, *Dreams of Nationhood: American Jewish Communists and the Soviet Birobidzhan Project, 1924–1951* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010).

5 *Ibid.*, 55.

6 “Report,” 396–397.

7 Samuel Proctor interview with Jacob Rader Marcus, 14 September 1985, p. 23, <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00008285/00001> (accessed 29 June 2021).

foray in Ukraine, Crimea, and the USSR.⁸ Of all the cities he visited, his week in Berlin was an opportunity to renew old friendships, meet new acquaintances, and investigate Jewish life in Germany under Hitler and his national socialist regime.

For Marcus, this part of the trip was quite personal. He began his career at HUC as a rabbinical student and, following his ordination in 1920, continued as an instructor of Bible and rabbinics. It was standard practice at that time for HUC faculty to travel to Germany for an advance degree, so in 1922 he took a leave of absence to study at the *Lehranstalt* (formerly *Hochschule*) für die *Wissenschaft des Judentums*⁹ under the directorship of Ismar Elbogen (1874–1943) and earned his doctorate (magna cum laude) from the University of Berlin in 1925.¹⁰ In his years in Berlin, he had learned the language and embedded himself in the university and Jewish communal life. Although today

8 Marcus's itinerary, according to his diary entries: He arrived in Paris on Monday, 17 August 1936, after nine days of travel by train and ship; Friday, 21 August in Berlin; Thursday, 27 August in Warsaw; Monday, 31 August, Widze, Poland; Tuesday, 1 September in Vilna; Wednesday, 2 September back in Warsaw; Thursday, 2 September in Krakow; Friday, 4 September in Vienna; Monday, 7 September in Budapest; Thursday, 10 September in Bucharest; Sunday, 13 September, Kishinev to Odessa; Monday, 14 September in Odessa; Tuesday, 15 September on SS Armenian to Sebastopol; Wednesday, 16 September from Sebastopol to Yalta; Thursday, 17 September from Yalta to Naiman, Crimea; Friday, 18 September: Crimean colonies, Maifelb [sp?], Molotow[sk], Swerdlow[sk]; Saturday, 19 September in Ekaterinoslav; Sunday, 20 September, Moscow; Thursday, 24 September, rode from Moscow back to Warsaw; Saturday, 26 September in Vienna. Diary ends.

9 The *Hochschule* was a nondenominational rabbinical seminary established in Berlin in 1872. During periods of heightened antisemitism its scholarly rank was reduced to *Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (1883–1923 and 1933–1942). The Nazi government closed it in 1942. See David Sorkin, "What Was the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*," <https://www.lbi.org/de/news/what-was-wissenschaft-des-judentums/> (accessed 30 June 2021).

10 Proctor interview, 11. His dissertation was titled, "*Die Handelspolitischen Beziehungen zwischen England und Deutschland in den Jahren 1576–1585*." The University of Berlin was formally named Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität from 1828 to 1949. It is now known as Humboldt University of Berlin. For a biography of Marcus's life, see Jonathan D. Sarna, "Jacob Rader Marcus (1896–1995)," in *The Dynamics of American Jewish History*, ed. Gary Phillip Zola (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2004), 3–12. For more on Elbogen see fn. 22 of the excerpted diary below.

he is best known as a historian of American Jewry and founder of the American Jewish Archives, upon his return to HUC Marcus became firmly entrenched in his professorial duties: teaching survey and seminar courses in Jewish history as well as medieval biblical commentaries.¹¹ Most of his publications in the 1930s focused on European Jewish history; his two major books were his 1934 *The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew* and his 1938 *The Jew in the Medieval World, A Source Book: 315–1791*. In the former, he tried to set the rise of Hitler and the harm to German-Jewish life in the trajectory of history from as far back as the Middle Ages. Although an academic tome, his accounts of important figures in the contemporary community testify to his personal knowledge of them.

Marcus concluded his 1937 report to the CCAR with an emphatic charge: “Take every opportunity to expose publicly every instrument and force for reaction here and abroad. In this world of rapid communication and transportation liberty and freedom can only be universal and indivisible.”¹² His detailed diary and the report that grew from it were his attempt to model such action: providing a truthful account of what he had heard and witnessed in Berlin by speaking to old acquaintances, his former teachers, Jewish leaders, artists, and politicians. By 1936 much was being written about Hitler and the turbulence and terror faced by Jews in Germany and throughout Europe.¹³ The diary of a noted American Jewish historian who had close ties to the German-Jewish intellectual world and who had himself published a major work

11 For example, see *Hebrew Union College Catalogue, 1934–1935* and *1935–1936*, box C-8, HUC-JIR nearprint, AJA.

12 “Report,” 401–402.

13 In the 1936–1937 edition of the *American Jewish Year Book*, Joshua Bloch, chief of the Jewish Division of the New York public Library, published an annotated bibliography of English-language works on Nazi Germany and the Jewish question to show that “the activities of the Nazi regime, in its many ramifications and manifestations, have been the subject of a considerably large literature in many languages,” 135–174. In his review for 1935 and 1936, Harry Schneiderman reported on the Berlin riots, the SS *Bremen* affair, the Olympic Games, the 550th anniversary celebration of Heidelberg University, and the trade boycott movement, as well as other protests against Nazi policies. See Harry Schneiderman, “Review of the Year 5696,” *American Jewish Year Book* 38 (1936–1937): 175–195.

on the history of the Jews in Germany just two years prior reveals the professional and personal networks he cultivated and maintained for more than a decade. (An amazing sidenote is that, in examining the individual biographies of the people with whom Marcus interacted on the trip, almost all of them escaped Nazi Germany.) Marcus was an informed and keen observer who offered his educated opinion both strongly and unreservedly. He was the quintessential social historian; he was as interested in the life of the worker as he was of the cultural and financial elite. He was class conscious but only insomuch as it was an analytical tool in which to understand the world around him. In sum, the first-person account that Marcus provides is, at its most basic, a snapshot during his long and productive life in a city and a community that was living in turbulent and violent times.

Friday, August 21, 1936. Berlin, Germany¹

The following German materials were written weeks later on the basis of notes. I did not write anything in Germany for fear of compromising the men with whom I spoke. The first thing that impressed me when I got to the border—it was Aachen, I believe—was the clean toilets. Germany is a clean country, a beautiful country, and apparently in the best condition. The officials were mostly young men, courtesy was characteristic. Everywhere I saw garden cities and subsistence plots, autos in large numbers were running about the highways, and the highways were in good shape. There was a child on our train—parents or relatives apparently Jewish though the child seems Aryan. I could not fathom it. Child instantly asked for German border—evidently trained in school to be a super patriot. When it saw airplanes it cried gleefully: Look at the beautiful German planes. Everything was quiet—as if nothing ever happened. No signs of “terrorism.” Of course this was right after the Olympiad when all the obnoxious signs had been removed. I started with the Frankensteins. The old lady Czempy believes that there are many radicals in the country—Communists awaiting their opportunity.² The conservatives—Junkers—are also angry. Professors resent going to training camps and being hustled about by “sergeant.”

Saturday, August 22, 1936. Berlin.

I stopped in for a few minutes at a painting exhibition sponsored by the state on Unter den Linden. War and heroic pictures. Everything done to glorify war and strengthen heroism. There were a number of pieces

1 Jacob Rader Marcus diary, summer 1936, MS-210, box 70, folder 6, AJA.

2 The “old lady Czempy” likely referred to Rosa Czempin (1879–1971). Czempin married Emil Frankenstein (1868–1917) and immigrated to Palestine in late 1936. Her three children included Hilde Baruch (1902–1949), Rechuma Druckmann (1908–?), and Carl Frankenstein (1905–1990), who preceded his mother to Palestine in 1935 and went on to win the Israel Prize in education as a faculty member of the Hebrew University. See Uwe Wolfradt, Elfriede Billmann-Mahecha, and Armin Stock, eds., *Deutschsprachige Psychologinnen und Psychologen 1933–1945* (New York: Springer, 2015), 121, and Herbert A. Strauss and Werner Röder, eds., *International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Emigrés 1933–1945, Volume II / Part 1: A-K, The Arts, Sciences, and Literature* (Munich: K G Saur, 1983), 321.

of sculpture: mostly of Nazi leaders: Hitler, Goebbels, Streicher, etc. Neitzsche [*sic*] too. I also saw Mittwoch, the Orientalist, who represents the American Joint Distribution Committee.³ He said he was not afraid, and after he repeated it several times[,] I knew he was. He said I would have to get permission of the Gestapo before I could see anyone. Kahn in Paris had said the same thing.⁴ Evidently the Gestapo intended to hold the Jewish organization responsible if anything happened. I later had the American Consul call up and found out that there was no need to report to the Gestapo. Mittwoch was reserved and had little to say. Saw no change at present, but did not think that the “Spuk” [spectre] would last. Cannot recall the details of the conversation. Also [saw] Mrs. A. Marcus, daughter of E. Eschellbach[er].⁵ She was happy to see me.

3 Eugen Mittwoch (1876–1942) was a specialist in Semitics and the premier scholar of Ethiopic at the time. From 1906 until the war, he lectured at the University of Berlin. Because of his unique skills he was reappointed to his chair of Oriental and Semitic studies in August 1933. Mittwoch became involved with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)—the Jewish relief agency established in 1914—after the outbreak of World War I, and he maintained the JDC offices in Berlin until late 1938, when he fled Germany for London via Paris. See Ismar Elbogen, “Eugen Mittwoch (1876–1942),” *Jewish Social Studies* 5, no. 2 (1943): 206–07 and Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother’s Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929–1939* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1974).

4 Bernhard Kahn (1876–1955), the European director of the JDC in Paris. According to an earlier diary entry, Marcus visited Kahn in Paris on Monday, 17 August, reporting: “A heavy set man, soft manners, evidently a man of affairs. Polite but didn’t fall over me and didn’t patronize me. I was through in fifteen minutes.... Said I could go to Germany with impunity, but must report to the Gestapo if I went to German societies, not individuals.” He met with Kahn again briefly at an evening event at the Café de la Paix to support potential immigration of Jews to Birobidzhan. Within a few months of their meeting, Kahn was warning that a million Jews in Poland would starve to death, that in Germany Jews had no opportunities for employment and had used up all their available savings, and that 15,000 Jews emigrated from Germany during the previous year. “Poland Not to Press Emigration Plan, Dr. Kahn Declares,” *JTA* II, no. 100 (2 Dec. 1936): 5–6.

5 Bertha Marcus (1882–1976) was married to Alfred Akiva Marcus (1874–1956) and was the daughter of Ernestine Eschelbacher (1858–1931) and Rabbi Josef Eschelbacher (1848–1916). According to an earlier diary Marcus met them through Ismar Elbogen when he was a student in Germany in the 1920s. See his diary entry for 22 August 1922, MS-201, box 70, folder 3, AJA. Bertha’s brother, Max, succeeded Leo Baeck as the rabbi in Düsseldorf in 1912. As a member of the American Oriental Society in 1923, Marcus gave

It was a treat to see her. One son is in Palestine and is about to become a chauffeur. Another is on a farm[;] the daughter married an instructor somewhere. The family had fallen on hard time, but will come back. Good stock there. I also saw Jacobson the archivist and had a long talk with him.⁶ He cannot study—so they will apprentice him to a business.⁷ Good mind, too. Cannot recall rest of conversation.

Sunday, August 23, 1936.

Visited Erich Marcks, the historian, my old teacher.⁸ He was sick and

his mailing address as Ernestine Eschelbacher's home (See "List of Members," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 43 [1923]: 450). He described her a few years earlier in her capacity of leader in the women's division of B'nai B'rith as "a charming, quaint, old-world figure, recognized even by those who had never seen her before by her ruddy cheeks and her little black bonnet, perched on the back of her silvery hair. She was an able and brilliant woman with an unfailing sense of humor and a most unscientific propensity for coddling schnorrers. Her patience was proverbial." (Marcus, *The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew* [Cincinnati: UAHC, 1934], 243). See also Gudrun Maierhof and Cornelia Wenzel, "Protagonistinnen des 'alten' Jüdischen Frauenbundes: Eine Auswahl," in *Ariadne: Forum für Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte* 45–46 (2004): 91.

6 Jacob Jacobson (1888–1968), head archivist at the *Gesamtarchiv der Deutschen Juden* from 1920 until 1939. See Michael Simonson, "Research, Exploitation, and Survival: The Story of Jacob Jacobson, a Jewish Archivist in Nazi Germany," *LBI News*, 3 March 2017, <https://www.lbi.org/news/research-exploitation-and-survival-story-jacob-jacobson-jewish-archivist-nazi-germany/> (accessed 29 June 2021).

7 This must refer to Jacobson's son, Marcus Amram Israel Jacobson (1921–2004). In 1938 he fled to London. His mother escaped to London as well. Jacob Jacobson was deported to Theresienstadt in 1943 but was liberated in 1945 and reunited with his wife and son in London on VJ Day. Marcus Jacobson went on to be the chief engineer of the British Automobile Association. See "Marcus Jacobson," *The Times* (London), 12 Aug 2004, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/marcus-jacobson-ts8pcmrh5kz> (accessed 29 June 2021).

8 Erich Marcks (1861–1938), a non-Jew, was appointed full professor at the University of Freiburg in 1892. He also served as professor at Leipzig in 1894, Heidelberg in 1901, Hamburg in 1907, Munich from 1913, and then in Berlin from 1922–1938. Marcus completed his dissertation with Marcks in Berlin in 1925. Marcks retired in 1928, avoiding the necessity of joining the Nazi party to maintain his position, but his anti-parliamentarianism and a sympathy for an authoritarian state brought him into alignment with National Socialism. He had, however, endorsed Hindenburg's candidacy against Hitler in 1932. Peter Lambert, "German Historians and Nazi Ideology: The Parameters of the Volksgemeinschaft

frail and evidently had gotten up from a sick bed. I speedily brought the talk to politics. He said a great revolution had taken place. Much good has been accomplished but individuals—as in all revolutions—had suffered. He quoted the fact that his friend Holtzscher,⁹ the authority on Russia, had been removed, and his own son-in-law Welli [Willy] Andreas, too.¹⁰ Though both were good Nationalists. He spoke of his neighbor, a Hungarian Jew and former army officer who suffered “moralisch” [pangs of moral conscience].¹¹ When the death of Schleicher

and the Problem of Historical Legitimation, 1930–1945,” *European History Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1995): 575.

9 Otto Hötzsch/Hoetzsch was a member of the Reichstag from 1920–1930. He was ousted from his university position at the University of Berlin by the Nazis in 1935. See “DR. OTTO HOETZSCH: German Historian a Long-Time Professor at U. of Berlin,” *New York Times* (31 Aug 1946): 10 and A. Meyendorff, “Otto Hoetzsch, 1876–1946,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 25 (1947): 496–507.

10 Willy Andreas (1884–1967) was both Marcks’s student—completing his doctorate with him in Heidelberg in 1907—and his son-in-law, having married his daughter, Gerta. Andreas was rector of Heidelberg University in 1933, a position from which he resigned due to the restructuring imposed by the new German government, but the faculty quickly re-elected him to the position. In 1946 the American military government sought to replace him as part of de-Nazification but he appealed, showing that he had, in fact, tried to resist the impositions of the Nazis on the university and maintain self-governance. Research shows that initially he did resist, even making an effort to defend Jews in the medical faculty; however, his claim was somewhat overblown, as his actions were rather timid and his writings show some Nazi sympathies. See the seminar paper of Elisa Trummer, “Prof. Dr. Willy Andreas—Rektor der Universität Heidelberg im Jahr 1933. Analyse ausgewählter Quellen hinsichtlich dessen Haltung und Reaktionen gegenüber dem Nationalsozialismus im Jahr 1933,” 14 August 2016, <http://ns-ministerien-bw.de/2016/08/prof-dr-willy-andreas-rektor-der-universitaet-heidelberg-im-jahr-1933-analyse-ausgewaehlter-quellen-hinsichtlich-dessen-haltung-und-reaktionen-gegenueber-dem-nationalsozialismus-im-jahr-1933/> (accessed 29 June 2021).

11 The precise intention of Marcks’s description is unclear. It may suggest the former soldier suffered moral misgivings about remaining in a position while other Jews were pushed out. Those Jewish soldiers who had served on the front lines in World War I were not immediately subject to the 1933 laws that Aryanized the German civil service. On the experience of German-Jewish soldiers and their interpretations of the rise of Nazism and World War II see Derek J. Penslar, “The German-Jewish Soldier: From Participant to Victim,” *German History* 29, no. 3 (Sept. 2011): 423–444.

came up, he referred to it sharply—and to his wife's death—as “mord,” murder.¹² He wanted to know what the world thought of Germany and I told him—rather delicately—that the new government and Russia were both looked upon as barbarians, particularly in view of the Roehm affair¹³ and the Zenoviev trial.¹⁴ Later I walked through the new *Kraft durch Freude* village. A huge wooden village for feeding those of Germany who came to the Olympic games, I believe. Huge flags everywhere with socialistic slogans painted on the walls—unattractive murals—glorifying workers.¹⁵

In the afternoon I went to Unter den Linden—everything decorated with flags for the Olympics which had just closed.¹⁶ I went into the room where the Unknown Soldier lay—thousands passing through—passed a toy

12 Kurt von Schleicher was the last chancellor of Weimar Germany. He and his wife Elizabeth were killed by the SS on 30 June 1934, the “Night of the Long Knives.” The classic account of these events is Max Gallo, *The Night of Long Knives*, trans. Lily Emmet (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

13 On the same night that Schleicher and his wife were killed—30 June 1934, the “Night of the Long Knives”—Hitler also ordered the killing of the SA (*Sturmabteilungen* or brown shirts) chief of staff, Ernst Röhm, and his top commanders.

14 Grigory Zenoviev (1883–1936) was among sixteen defendants tried in a show trial 16–19 August 1936 at the behest of Stalin. Zenoviev was of Jewish-Ukrainian descent and had been a prominent figure in communist politics, having served as chair of Communist International. He broke with Stalin in the 1920s, and the show trial created a new confrontation where he, along with the other defendants, were charged with creating a terrorist organization intending to assassinate him. In exchange for guilty pleas, the defendants were promised that they would avoid execution. However, Stalin had them shot by firing squad on the morning of 25 August 1936. See Jacob Heilbrunn, “The New York Times and the Moscow Show Trials,” *World Affairs* 153, no. 3 (1991): 87–101.

15 Constructed east of the Heerstraße railway station and adjacent to the Reich’s sport field, the dormitories and banquet halls of the *Kraft durch Freude* city were expected to house between ten thousand and thirty thousand German tourists to Berlin during the Olympic Games. See *The XIth Olympic Games, Berlin 1936, Official Report Volume 1* (Berlin: Wilhelm Limpert, 1937), 434. See also Albion Ross, “Berlin’s Unter den Linden Jammed as Olympic Mania Grips the City: Famous Avenue Filled to Overflowing by Greatest Crowd in Its History—‘Strength Through Joy Village’ to Have Restaurant and Drinking Accommodations for 24,000,” *New York Times* (27 July 1936): 11.

16 Ibid. Unter den Linden was at the heart of the Olympic show; it was a perfect location for political propaganda, as it was the main artery connecting venues and housing.

shop with its toy lead soldiers and naval boats—went through the ghetto streets which didn't seem changed. Jews were apparently doing business as usual.

At night Meta Cohen, the artist, came in.¹⁷ Told me many interesting tales, most of which I have forgotten. Only a few do I recall. One is that she knows a young German, an Aryan, of good family, who is a Communist and a Nazi leader in a small way, and who uses his position to fight the regime. She also knows a college professor who was married to a Jewess. He divorced her under compulsion of the regime—but in reality still visits her abroad and lives with her—has children with her. He is waiting for a call to a foreign university and will then leave and remarry. Pokes fun at the regime in his classes among his disciples but has a motorcycle ready to fly across the border if anything serious turns up. She is leaving—Meta Cohen—not because she cannot make a good living—she is in great demand as a teacher—but because she cannot produce under the Nazi regime. Feels she is not free.

Monday, August 24, 1936. Berlin.

Saw the vice-consul—Volmer¹⁸—who thinks there will be a let-down with respect to the Jews. Thinks Russia is in a terrible shape and people

17 Meta Cohen [Cohn] Hendel (1883–1970) was a painter and printmaker who had studied at the Académie Moderne in Paris. She left Berlin in 1936 and resided in Florence, Italy, and Surrey, England, before eventually settling in California. See the biography in *A Selection of Prints—A Selection of Biographies of Forty Women Artists Working Between 1904–1979* (Santa Rosa: The Galleries, 1987), 7.

18 An error in spelling on Marcus's part. The reference is to Cyrus B. Follmer, vice-consul from Pennsylvania under Ambassador Dodd. See *Photographic Register: The American Foreign Service* 13, no. 2 (November, 1936): 68, https://www.afsa.org/sites/default/files/fsj-1936-11-november-photo-supplement_0.pdf (accessed 28 June 2021).

are starving. Later saw Enderis¹⁹ and Tolischus²⁰ of the New York Times. Enderis said that there had been no change in the Jews' situation. He meant: no improvement. Tolischus—who seemed more intelligent—said that there is a possibility of liquidation of all Jewish wealth in the larger businesses. I dropped in to see Plaut, the director of the Auerbach Waisenhaus,²¹ and he showed me around in a finely equipped orphan asylum, beautifully maintained. I also saw Elbogen: several times. He wants to come to America.²² That is obvious. His son is in Oporto,

19 The Berlin bureau chief, Guido Enderis, was Swiss born and had joined *The New York Times* in 1928. He was about sixty when the Nazis rose to power and had been in Germany as a correspondent since before World War I. His sympathies were with the Germans, but his knowledge of the language and the country made him a substantial asset for the newspaper—although it led to his downplaying a number of threats, particularly those to the European Jewish community. See Laurel Leff, *Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 55.

20 To balance Enderis's views, the *Times* hired Otto Tolischus in early 1933. Born in 1890 in Prussia, Tolischus had been raised in the United States and fought in the American military forces during World War I. See Leff, *Buried by the Times*, 55–56.

21 Jonas Plaut (1880–1948), director of the Baruch-Auerbachsche orphan asylum from 1922 until 1939. He left for England with his wife, Selma, in 1939 and then for the United States in 1945. His sons, Walter and Gunther, both became well-established Reform rabbis. On Jonas Plaut see Jonathan Plaut's introduction to *One Voice: The Selected Sermons of W. Gunther Plaut* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007), 12–13. See also Michael A. Meyer, "Gemeinschaft Within Gemeinde: Religious Ferment in Weimar Liberal Judaism," in *In Search of Jewish Community: Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria, 1918–1933*, ed. Michael Brenner and Derek J. Penslar (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 15–35.

22 Ismar Elbogen (1874–1943) was a German rabbi, scholar, and historian. A professor at the *Hochschule*—which is how Marcus first met him—in 1938 he escaped Germany for the United States, where he held appointments as research professor at Dropsie College, the Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, and the Jewish Institute of Religion. Collectively, these institutions paid his salary. See Salo W. Baron, "Ismar Elbogen," *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (1944): 92; Michael A. Meyer, "Without Wissenschaft There Is no Judaism"—*The Life and Thought of the Jewish Historian Ismar Elbogen*, Braun Lectures in the History of the Jews of Prussia, no. 11 (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2004). Elbogen had several invitations to join American academic institutions in the 1920s but had chosen to remain in Germany (Meyer, "Without Wissenschaft," 8–9). On the effort to help Jewish scholars flee Nazi persecution see Michael A. Meyer, "The Refugee Scholars Project of the Hebrew Union College," in *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn (Waltham and New York: AJHS and Ktav, 1976), 359–375.

Herman.²³ Susie is the wife of the rabbi of Worms and would like to come to America.²⁴ In short everyone I saw wanted to get out; no one wanted to stay. Fritz Bamberger was good enough to steer me about and to help me with all introductions, etc., although Mittwoch also helped me when necessary.²⁵ I went to a Jewish employment bureau.²⁶ A man asked for a chauffeur and insisted that he look neutral—one or two rejected for looking Yiddish. Men who refuse to take the job offered them are locked out of the employment bureau for two weeks. In the official büros, Jews are taken care of when the non-Jews are first provided for. In actual practice this probably means that they are not given jobs, except metal workers who are in demand. The bureau also placed an Aryan porter with a Jewish wife among Jews. What worried them then—that is the bureau—was that the Jewish employment bureau had been or was to be closed by the government.

I was also in the division to help with passes. This is most important, for so many former East European Jews who were citizens lost their German citizenship. One man wants to go to Brazil. Another

23 After escaping to the United States, Herman (Elbogen) Elbin, enlisted as a private in the army. “Dr. Ismar Elbogen, A Jewish Historian: Seminary Research Professor, An Authority on Liturgy,” *New York Times* (2 August 1943): 15.

24 Susie (Shoshanah) Elbogen was married to Rabbi Manfred Rosenberg. They escaped to Palestine in 1937. See Uta Schäfer-Richter and Jörg Klein, *Die jüdischen Bürger im Kreis Göttingen, 1933–1945: ein Gedenkbuch* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1992), 227.

25 Fritz Bamberger (1902–1984) was research fellow of the *Akademie für Die Wissenschaft des Judentums* from 1928 until 1933. In Berlin in 1934 he was appointed director of the Bureau of Education for Jews in Berlin and president of the Jewish Teachers College. He escaped to the United States in 1939 to teach at the College of Jewish Studies [now known as Spertus] in Chicago. He then went on to become editor-in-chief of *Coronet Magazine*, and from 1962-on he was professor and assistant to the president at the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. See Michael A. Meyer, “Scholarship and Worldliness: The Life and Work of Fritz Bamberger,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 58 (2013): 143–158. Bamberger and Marcus were completing their doctorates at the University of Berlin at the same time. Bamberger finished in 1923, Marcus in 1925. Both men were also studying at the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

26 On the employment of Jews in 1930s Berlin see Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, “Fear and Misery in the Third Reich: From the Files of the Collective Guardianship Office of the Berlin Jewish Community,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 27 (1999): 61–103.

cannot work in Germany and wants to go to London, but they first want to investigate if he is a “Jew.” If he dropped out of the Gemeinde [community] as a “Jew”—then the Jewish Gemeinde will not help him. An old Polish Jewess, age seventy-seven, wanted money to renew her Polish pass[port]. A letter was sent on her behalf to the Polish consul. Another man wants to marry a German Jewess. Saw, also, a whole group of schools for girls: to prepare them to do house work, sewing, etc. Seemed—with exceptions—to be in fine shape—but the numbers seemed so small. They deal with dozens and their problem is with thousands!

Tuesday, August 25, 1936. Berlin.

Lilienthal at the Reichsvertretung in Kantstrasse thinks that Schacht is pro-Jewish.²⁷ In the lineup of the Nazi leaders most are leftists except Goering. I heard that the Nazis might stop all emigration out of Germany. He said: No! He also said that the Nazis would confiscate Jewish property, thought it a possibility. The army, he said, was more conservative in many things and resented the propaganda of the Nazis among the soldiers and did not welcome it. Sooner or later the Nazis and army would come into conflict over the first loyalty of the soldier: to National Socialism or the army, that is, the state. We spoke of the Church—Protestant—fighting the government. He was pessimistic as to the future. No future for German Jewry. All agreed everywhere—in

27 Born in 1899, Arthur Lilienthal was a lawyer, judge, and county magistrate in Berlin. He served as secretary general of the *Reichsvertretung der Juden* in Deutschland. In 1942 he was deported to Minsk. See Avraham Barkai and Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times: Renewal and Destruction, 1918–1945*, vol. 4 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 264. Hjalmar Schacht (1877–1970) served as the currency commissioner and president of the Reichsbank under the Weimar Republic. He served as president of the Central Bank (*Reichsbank*) 1933–1939 and became minister of economics (August 1934–November 1937). He opposed German re-armament and anti-Jewish and racial policies, and he was dismissed as president of the Reichsbank in 1939. In 1944 he was arrested by the Gestapo because of an alleged association with a group who plotted Hitler’s assassination. He was interned at Ravensbrück and Flossenbürg and subsequently acquitted in the trials at Nuremberg. He returned to banking in Düsseldorf. See John Weitz, *Hitler’s Banker: Hjalmar Horace Greeley Schacht* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 1997).

Germany—that Jews have no future. The party is all powerful in the state. The Party itself is divided and has no uniform policy. Hitler is a Leftist, but oscillates as policy dictates.

I saw Dodd, the Ambassador. He thinks the Jews are dead here, and there is no future for them.²⁸

Hitler is pathological with reference to Jews and goes berserk when the subject is brought up. Mussolini—a man of no ability—is anxious to get Spain and to dominate the Mediterranean. British influence has not only fallen through Mussolini but the Empire is crumbling. Russia, he hears, is hungering.

The Jews of Germany, I found, have no kosher meat. Some eat meat that is first stunned and then ritually slaughtered. For this reason—because there is no real kosher meat—the cooking school which I attended teaches cooking only with fish and vegetables.²⁹ I

28 William Edward Dodd (1869–1940) was ambassador to Germany from 1934 until 1937. He resigned this position because of his antagonism to the Nazis—and in turn the German government—and distress at being unable to encourage the U.S. government (especially the State Department) to more strongly oppose the Nazis and their policies. Robert Dallek, *Democrat and Diplomat: The Life of William E. Dodd* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

29 Precisely which school he visited is unclear. Vocational education, cooking, sewing, tailoring, and the like became an important part of the education of Jewish men and, especially, women after 1933. In Berlin in 1937 there were thirteen educational institutions preparing students in these skills. See Rudolph Stahl, “Vocational Retraining of Jews in Nazi Germany 1933–1938,” *Jewish Social Studies* 1, no. 2 (1939): 182. In addition, note Marion Kaplan’s assessment of the concerns of German Jews in this period:

Cooking played a prominent role among issues causing stress because of tight budgets, limited household help, and the difficulties for religious Jews in acquiring kosher meat. Jewish newspapers advised housewives to consider vegetarian menus because they were cheaper and healthier, and avoided the kosher meat problem. Although preparing meat might be easier and far less time-consuming, women were told that their “good will [was] an important assistant in a vegetarian kitchen,” and newspapers printed vegetarian menus and recipes for their readers. After the Nuremberg Laws, the *Central Verein Zeitung* ran articles entitled “Everyone Learns to Cook” and “Even Peter Cooks.”

From *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 54–55.

also visited a Jewish public school for girls.³⁰ It was in magnificent condition, and could stand up with anything in our country. But this was the best. How long can the Germans support these institutions with declining fortunes, emigration, etc.? But at present Jews are pouring into Berlin and their wealth with them. Someone pointed out that Germany will some day be a land of Jewish foreigners—the only Jews with rights.

Wednesday, August 26, 1936.

I spoke to Lubinski, one of the leaders at the Reichsvertretung.³¹ Like all others he said there is no hope for German Jewry. Looks for a continuous limitation of acquisition of property. The thing to do is for the Jews to get out. He does not fear a stoppage of emigration, but does fear a confiscation of property—of some sort. Fears the government might paralyze Jewish life by refusing to collect or allow or enforce collection of Gemeinde monies. This might be calamitous for all Jewish institutions. He also pointed out the dilemma of the Nazis in re Jewish education. If they do drive Jewish children out of school they must give them buildings or money, and this they haven't got.³² So they are not actually driving children out of schools. Even the Central Verein or "German" crowd among the Jews in Germany want to get out!

30 Likely the *Jüdische Mädchenschule* at Auguststraße, 11–13, which was the oldest Jewish community school for girls in Berlin.

31 The *Reichsvertretung*'s department for vocational training was headed by Georg Lubinski (Giora Lotan, 1902–1974). A lawyer and specialist in social welfare, in 1938 he immigrated to Palestine and eventually became the director of Israel's National Insurance Institute. On Lubinski/Lotan's contributions to German-Jewish life in the 1930s see Leonard Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain: Leo Baeck and the Berlin Jews* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 189.

32 In April 1933 the Nazis had limited Jews to a quota of 1.5% of the population in German public schools, creating significant demand for places in Jewish schools. These numbers increased when Jews were banned outright from German public schools in November 1938. Jewish schools closed in July 1942 when all schooling was forbidden to Jewish children. See Ernst Christian Helmreich, "Jewish Education in the Third Reich," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 15, no. 2 (1955): 134–147 and Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 94–118.

Miss Rosenheim³³ took me to Neuendorff, a Hachsharah [training] farm, led by a Mr. Moch, a farmer.³⁴ After a tour of duty in this farm the workers can do all kinds of farm work. These, most of them, are Germans. They go to Palestine. Only a small percentage go to Brazil, etc. The farm was in fine shape and is evidently an expense. But even at best it has about a hundred or more boys and girls. There are two or three more in all Germany: but smaller. Discipline is good—no one seems depressed. Hogs are raised! Moch is of the opinion that the I.C.A. should throw in its vast resources to do something in a big way.³⁵ I guess he has some large agricultural scheme in mind, probably in Brazil. On my way back, I passed through a town with a sign and Jewish caricature: *Juden sind nicht erwünscht* [Jews are not wanted]. Kids in uniform marching. The general feeling is that the *Parteitag* [party convention] coming in Nuremberg will do something drastic.

I saw Tolischus of the New York Times again, and he was of the opinion that big things are brewing in Russia, that Stalin is going over to State capitalism.

I also went to a show given by the Kulturbund. It was a rather

33 Käte Rosenheim (1892–1979) was a social worker who became personal secretary to the Prussian Reich Minister of the Interior (1919–1930). She then served as head of the welfare department of the Berlin police until she was dismissed in 1933, after which she joined the *Reichsvertretung der Juden* and was responsible for the emigration of Jewish children from Germany. She fled to the United States in 1940. Gudrun Maierhof, “Käte Rosenheim,” *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. 31 December 1999. Jewish Women’s Archive, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/rosenheim-kaete> (accessed 29 June 2021).

34 From at least as early as 1933 Alexander Moch ran the farm intended to prepare Jews for agricultural work in Palestine. His nephew, Manfred Gans, describes his summers at the farm and his uncle’s various escapades in *Life Gave Me A Chance* (Self-Published, 2009). On the farms and their sites see Tal Alon-Mozes, Irene Aue-Ben-David, and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, eds., *Jewish horticultural schools and training centers in Germany and their impact on horticulture and landscape architecture in Palestine / Israel* (Munich: Akademische Verlagsgemeinschaft, 2020).

35 The Jewish Colonization Association (JCA/ICA) was created in 1891 by Baron Maurice de Hirsch to aid the resettling of Russian and Eastern European Jews on agricultural lands purchased in North and South America and in Palestine. See Theodore Norman, *An Outstretched Arm: A History of the Jewish Colonization Organization* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).

light thing—very light—a Viennese caprice of some sort—with some Freud stuck in—but well done—no Jewish content, of course.³⁶ Crowd loved it. I sized up the crowd—very middle class—the intellectuals and aristocrats were not here. I understand that many Jews still go to the opera and to the regular theatre. Most German Jews resent this. Outside I found a half dozen autos, private ones.

My impression of Germany is that there is no hope. No thought or possibility of revolt within. Army is the only power, and apparently will do nothing now. Blomberg seems very Nazi.³⁷ There is an obvious terrorism: no one will say anything. No sign of poverty—everything is in good order. Not too many uniforms, although more than in my day. Everyone courteous. Went through the state library again. I noticed they had my book on Germany listed, but no accession mark.³⁸ No evidence of hate towards Jews in the streets. Everyone, talking to Czempyn, the old lady, was courteous.³⁹ I am told Berlin is different than the villages where antagonism is more pronounced.

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36 Founded in 1933, *Kulturbund Deutscher Juden* (after 1935, *Jüdischer Kulturbund*) performed music, theater, and lectures all over Germany. Because of Nazi policy these were Jewish cultural performance by Jewish actors, artists, and musicians for Jewish audiences. B. Mordechai Ansbacher and Michael Berenbaum, “Juedischer Kulturbund,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, second ed. vol. 11 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 570 and Lily E. Hirsch, “‘Ein Tanz auf dem Vulkan’: The Legacy of the Jewish Culture League,” *Music & Politics* 5, no. 2 (2011): 1–9.

37 Werner von Blomberg (1878–1946) was given the title of commander-in-chief of the Wehrmacht with the rise of Hitler. He was essential in the military buildup of Germany in preparation for World War II but was forced to resign after Goering and Himmler used a scandal to push him out. Harold C. Deutsch, *Hitler and His Generals: The Hidden Crisis, January–June 1938* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974).

38 Likely a reference to his 1934 book, *The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew*.

39 See fn. 2 of the diary.

Book Reviews

Lila Corwin Berman, *The American Jewish Philanthropic Complex: The History of a Multibillion-Dollar Institution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 280 pp.

Lila Corwin Berman's latest book argues that what she calls the "American Jewish philanthropic complex"—defined below—"emerged at the intersection of the American state ... and Jewish communal aspirations in the United States" (2). As such, the history of American Jewish philanthropy offers significant lessons both in how the U.S. government has viewed the use of private property for public good and how American Jews have utilized material resources to build and reinforce Jewish identity.

First, a definition. Berman describes the American Jewish philanthropic complex as having

brought together the shifting terrain of American political economy and statecraft with the technical and psychological task of provisioning for American Jewish life. The parts—policies, political and economic ideologies, and cataclysmic events that reshaped global Jewish life—resolved into a complex, made to appear timeless and whole as much by the efforts of its institutions, leaders, and supports as by its validation of late-twentieth-century American statecraft (2–3).

While the emergence of this complex has not raised hackles as did the military-industrial complex about which President Dwight Eisenhower warned the nation, Berman does acknowledge Ike's speech and uses his description to analogize her subject.

Key to Berman's analysis is a concerted effort on the part of prominent Jewish philanthropists to uplift "a disavowal of being political ... core to their brand of consensus-based political influence—what I characterize as depoliticized politics" (90). As Berman explicates, such a disavowal helped shield Jewish philanthropic institutions from certain angles of partisan criticism while also shepherding revisions to the

U.S. tax code that helped not only Jewish philanthropy but nonprofit fundraising across the board. Late in the book she throws into relief the significance of “depoliticized politics” with a discussion of Sheldon Adelson’s contributions to Birthright and the attendant conflict over the billionaire’s influence. Those wishing to understand better the relationship between non-Jewish charitable organizations, such as churches and other faith-based organizations, will benefit from Berman’s narrative of efforts to keep major Jewish giving from becoming politicized.

Another landmark evolution in Jewish philanthropy unfolded in the middle of the twentieth century, with Jewish organizations shifting from revolving fund federations helping individuals and groups in immediate need to endowments focused on long-term projects requiring vastly greater sums of money—in other words, from direct community crisis assistance to noncrisis projects with a greater impact on larger communities (77–78). The timing of this evolution was no coincidence. While direct need-based giving reached a high watermark just after World War II—when the horror of the Holocaust and the successful establishment of Israel was still fresh in the community’s mind—leading philanthropists by the late 1950s and early 1960s began to think “no future crisis would parallel the Holocaust and no achievement the establishment of Israel” (78). Thus, the way was paved for focused growth of massive endowments that could fund larger projects over time.

One of the book’s most fascinating chapters details the complicated relationship between Jewish philanthropy and a perceived strengthening of Jewish identity. Berman uses Birthright as a vivid case in point, writing that “no product of American Jewish philanthropy so perfectly represented the power of the American Jewish philanthropic complex by the end of the twentieth century as did Birthright” (178). She cites one data point—intermarriage with non-Jews and its relatively low prevalence among those who took Birthright trips—as an indicator that “investments in Birthright yielded the return of Jewish continuity” (180). Yet as Berman’s discussion of Adelson and his vast giving to Birthright attests, such investments risked running afoul of the general commitment to keep politics out of Jewish philanthropy: Given Adelson’s massive investments also in Republican candidates, many Jews questioned

whether organizations could legitimately accept his money without become bogged down in his politics.

The book's single drawback worth noting is not a failing on Berman's part, but rather comes with the territory, so to speak: The intricate details of philanthropic financial structures or the detailed evolution of tax law may not be the most scintillating topics for some readers. Even bearing this in mind, Berman has masterfully woven the countless details gleaned from mundane archival sources into a convincing and important narrative. Her work is a sterling example of in-the-trenches historical research that yields field-advancing results after hundreds or thousands of hours immersed in meeting minutes, tax legislation, nonprofit bylaws, and more.

A concluding note on Berman's title, which made even this non-Jew uneasy: She notes that "Letting fears about antisemitism guide them away from the topic, many historians have believed that to write about Jews' economic lives was to play into antisemites' hands" (12). Yet Berman tackles the matter head-on, acknowledging her "limited control over how others perceive or use [her] words" (13). Her comprehensive treatment of an enormously complex topic allows Berman to succeed in her goal to "make it impossible—or, at least, an act of willed blindness—to confuse a diffuse category of people with a turgid and fraught abstraction about the totality of their power" (13).

Sheldon Adelson was still alive when this book was published; he died on 11 January 2021 at age 87. Writing for *Commentary* on the businessman's life, Jonathan Toobin noted that "Modern Jewish history is in no small measure a tale of philanthropy." That much is clear from the tumultuous, decades-long public conversation on Adelson; Lila Corwin Berman has unfurled the enormously complex nature of that very philanthropy.

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Natan Efrati, *Ideology and Reality: American Jewry and the Yishuv in the Late Ottoman Period* [Heb.] (Raanana: Open University of Israel Press, 2020), 416 pp.

Natan Efrati is one of the premier scholars of Jewish history in the World War I period, and probably no researcher has more thoroughly studied issues regarding developments and transitions during the late Ottoman period in the Yishuv, the pre-1948 Jewish community in Palestine. His research methodology features meticulous study of primary sources relevant to the issues of his concern (while holding in abeyance interpretive commentary offered by other historians). This bottom-up, rigorously empirical approach worked extremely well in his 1991 volume, *The Jewish Community in Eretz Israel (1914–1918)*.

This new volume is essentially a “prequel” to his 1991 study, necessitated by Efrati’s recognition that American Jewry’s involvement with the Yishuv during this period—on philanthropic-humanitarian, medical, and political levels—is an unexpectedly capacious topic that he was unable to treat sufficiently in the 1991 book. Efrati deploys the same research methodology he used for the earlier book; however, it is a little less successful in this volume. While his laborious empirical effort is to be commended, the new work is under-contextualized and insufficiently engaged with arguments developed by scholars about American Jewish identity in this pre-Israeli statehood period.

The book’s introduction is perhaps needlessly argumentative. Dismissing a rather large corpus of work on American Jewish engagements in the Ottoman and early British Mandate periods, Efrati notes how these earlier researchers were oblivious to various Yishuv circumstances. But he misses an opportunity to reflect upon how his own findings challenge how these earlier historians rated the status of Zionism among American Jews in this pre-state period.

This volume *does* make an important contribution to the discussion, however. Following the work of Evyatar Friesel, *Ideology and Reality* significantly revises stereotypical perceptions of American Zionism prior to the World War I-Brandeis era. The book energetically follows American Zionist leaders and patrons (Harry Friedenwald, Stephen Wise, Judah Magnes, Nathan Straus) on pre-World War I visits to Ottoman Palestine,

and it carefully reconstructs their concerns about issues such as the Yishuv's dependence on overseas charity funds (called *halukah*), and its educational and medical structures. In so doing, Efrati paints a possibly indisputable picture of extensive American Jewish involvement in the late Ottoman era Yishuv, which disputes a perception (evoked by Melvin Urofsky, among others) of pre-World War I American Zionist lassitude that Louis Brandeis and his cohorts heroically transformed during the Great War. Friesel was quite explicit about his revisionary intent in this area, publishing an article (among other things) accusing Brandeis of being a disruptive force on the Zionist scene—very different from the way American Jews think about him. Until the end of his book and its misnamed “epilogue,” Efrati offers no interpretation of his own findings; but I think they are quite germane, not just with regard to characterizations of American Zionism before 1918 or before 1948. They also constitute documentation relevant to a larger and politically charged debate concerning whether American Jewry’s post-1948 involvement in Israel can be fairly portrayed as an artificially constructed lobbying campaign (as scholars such as Amy Kaplan and Shaul Mitelpunkt have recently suggested) which has no deep roots in American Jewish History, or whether, conversely, American Jewry’s pro-Israel commitments in past decades organically reflects long-standing (i.e. pre-1948) trends in American Jewish culture, and has meaningful precedents in on-the-ground activities in late Ottoman and British Palestine.

Moreover, the wealth of American Jewish/Zionist engagement in Ottoman period Palestine can, and ought to be, contextualized in a broader American historical framework. In this frame, scholars such as Lester Vogel and (more recently) Hillary Kaell have discussed how American Jews and Christians connected with the Holy Land from the late nineteenth century through the present, rethinking the meaning of concepts such as “pilgrimage.” It is in this context that the electrifying effect of Yishuv representatives such as Aaron Aaronsohn is most richly grasped. American Christians viewed him as an extension of Holy Land memorabilia and merchandise—travel books, “stereoscopes,” and miniature Jerusalem replicas (at Lake Chautauqua, among other places); and then (as Efrati details) Aaronsohn craftily exploited this enthusiasm in his fundraising approaches to non-Zionist American Jews.

Scholars such as Michael Berkowitz and Yael Zerubavel have conducted interesting research—with different emphases and conclusions—on how the Zionist movement generated celebrity icons. Efrati taps into this research by conscientiously resurrecting the star power of not just Aaronsohn but also Yishuv visitors such as educator Benzion Mossinson or Boris Schatz, director of Jerusalem's Bezalel School of Art. Aaronsohn and these other figures also essentially functioned in the United States as *shlichim* (emissaries), and Efrati's findings thus supplement insufficiently developed but existing research on this essential topic in Jewish history. (Michael Brown's 1996 volume, *The Israeli-American Connection*, made a promising start in this direction.)

There are a number of technical challenges or problems to mention regarding the book's editing and production, including oddly or inconsistently translated names (e.g. the name of Arthur Goren's volume on Judah Magnes's writings, or of the Jewish Theological Seminary), and incorrectly or inconsistently presented information, starting with the anachronistic cover photo featuring an American Jewish organizational effort that operated outside of the book's time frame, and including American history tidbits (concerning, for instance, the Chautauqua movement, or Booker T. Washington). Such missteps, while relatively minor, tend to undermine the author's overall fine attention to detail.

Moreover, Efrati's writing in this volume, which simultaneously undervalues its findings' contributions to an ongoing discussion about American Jewish-Israel interactions and also overplays its explicit criticism of extant works in this field, provocatively demonstrates how academic inquiry in this crucial subfield of modern Jewish history has become overly insulated and internally segmented. Notwithstanding obvious ideological and technical-linguistic issues that separate scholars in this field, there has been insufficient attention to the development of scholarly colloquia between researchers so that they can trade ideas and become more appreciative of one another's research interests and claims. That a review of this sort needs to connect the dots between a new research volume and long-standing orientations in extant research is more of a comment upon the state of resource investment in, and the academic culture of, this particular field than it is a reflection of the pros and cons of one new publication.

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Editors' note: A revised English translation of Efrati's book is forthcoming from Gefen Press.

Zev Eleff, *Authentically Orthodox: A Tradition-Bound Faith in American Life* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2019), xiii + 311 pp.

If in 1955 Marshall Sklare described Orthodox Judaism as “a case study in institutional decay,” by 2009 it had reversed its fortunes and now exhibited, as Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein would lament, a streak of “congratulatory triumphalism.”¹ To explain this unexpected trajectory, historians and pundits recite a well-rehearsed repertoire. It includes economic advancement, a climate of robust multiculturalism, a shortened workweek, a coarsening of American culture, gap years spent studying in an Israeli yeshiva, the disappearance of mimetic traditions coupled with the rise of text-based religiosity, the Israeli victory in the Six-Day War, and the panoply of European rabbis who settled in America. Together, these elements led American Orthodoxy to iterate a left-right zigzag that has culminated in a general “slide to the right.” Setting out to eclipse this narrative, Zev Eleff’s, *Authentically Orthodox: A Tradition-Bound Faith in American Life* argues that while not wrong per se, this story “needs to be widened to fit other scholarly perspectives,” (22) particularly the role of the “indigenous religious culture” (20).

Eleff argues that a quest for authenticity propelled American Orthodoxy through the second half of the twentieth century. Not only did elites insist

1 Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (New York: Schocken Press, 1955), 43 and Aharon Lichtenstein, “Beyond the Pale? Reflections Regarding Contemporary Relations with Non-Orthodox Jews,” in *The Relationship of Orthodox Jews with Jews of Other Religious Ideologies and Non-Believing Jews*, ed. Adam Mintz (Jersey City: Ktav, 2010), 196.

on authenticity, but demand for it came also from below. Authenticity does not mean that something is unchanging; on the contrary, it is precisely “because religion is never static” (1) that appeals to authenticity arise repeatedly. Although a programmatic introduction offers a range of definitions, it acknowledges that authenticity is an “attribute hard to pin down” (1). A less adroit writer would struggle to center a book around so slippery a theme, yet this difficulty is leveraged to shepherd diverse episodes into a single volume. Eleff’s literary output has been impressive, but while his *Modern Orthodox Judaism: A Documentary History* (2016) focused on the written word, his *Authentically Orthodox* plumbs his rich knowledge of American Judaism to write about “lived religion:” that is, how faith is manifested and practiced beyond the doctrines pronounced in synagogues by clergymen and other religious ‘elites.’” (4) While the focus is not exclusively on Modern Orthodoxy, the bulk of the work is taken up by what challenged—and sometimes overwhelmed—it.

The work is divided into three roughly equal parts, each consisting of three chapters. The first is devoted to “Halakha and Change,” and the opening chapter charts the rise and fall of peanut oil on Passover. Never forbidden as a matter of halakhah, *kitniyot* is a ban on foods that could inadvertently cause one to consume forbidden leaven during Passover. While the ban originated in the medieval period, in America a battle erupted over whether a particular new world item, the peanut, and perhaps more incredulously, the oil extracted from it, should be considered *kitniyot*. To no avail did America’s most eminent Lithuanian rabbis permit peanut oil, for it still suffered years of decline. Finally, in 2001 the Orthodox Union completely omitted peanut oil from its Passover guides.

Eleff is a master storyteller. From Yiddish recipe books to corporate advertising, he expertly guides readers on a trail that criss-crosses through immigration history and the history of halakhah. A similar controversy erupted in Palestine over sesame seed oil, and almost a century later that dispute rebounded in America. While Eleff is aware of the many factors that allowed the stringent position to dominate, he portrays this episode as “a protracted bout for the claim of authenticity,” (31) the main contenders being Lithuanian and Hungarian folkways. The Hungarians had a predilection toward stringency that they brought with them to America,

and ultimately, they routed the existing lenient position. Timing worked in their favor when “in the 1970s American Protestantism underwent a conservative upsurge” and at the same time “Americans were expanding their definitions of pluralism” (43). These factors advantaged the Hungarian Jews, who reveled in isolationism, preferred to start their own institutions, and maintained a uniquely incongruent dress code. To many, they became purveyors of authenticity, and other communities came to seek out “this community’s guidance and, ultimately, its approval” (43). The other chapters in this section, on the emergence of bat mitzvah and a high school’s basketball team’s demand to keep their yarmulkes *in situ* while competing, are equally captivating.

The second part of the book is “Youth, Education, and Preservation,” and here Eleff demonstrates that the enormous “attention paid to young people,” which Orthodox insiders sometimes termed its “secret weapon” (105), contributed to the growth of Orthodoxy. The opening chapter is devoted to a Yeshiva University gameshow team that gained national prominence, and the closing chapter chronicles the beginning and end of Yeshivat Rambam, a Baltimore school that was termed a “Modern Orthodox idea.”

The middle chapter focuses on the creation of Orthodox children’s culture. Always sensitive to the American context, Eleff points out that in the 1970s children’s toys changed. They no longer referenced a grown-up world or allowed children to imagine the prosaic roles they would eventually inhabit. Instead, companies presented “America’s youth with toys and films that evoked fantasy, worlds detached from their parents and adult role models” (106). As a result, “tradition-bound” groups uncoupled from mainstream American children’s culture. Eleff gives three examples of this phenomenon. The first is the “brochos bee” that emerged in 1971. A Judaized offspring of the much older spelling bee, its goal was to inculcate intricate knowledge, in boys and girls, of the blessings recited over even the most obscure foods. The second is Arthur Shugarman’s “Gedolim Cards” (1988), felicitously described as the “commodification of rabbi-saints.” Modeled off of baseball trading cards, they promoted photos and key facts of prominent rabbis. The final example is “Binyan Blocks” (2014), building blocks that offer Orthodox children the opportunity to recreate the neighborhoods they knew best.

Perceptively, in these three examples, Eleff sees a progression from, in the case of the brochos bee, a coalescence with an American pastime to a much more aggressive attempt, in the case of Binyan Blocks, to “replicate and replace American culture” (120).

To write such a book, one must write about gender issues, and here, too, Eleff delivers. This is the theme of the last part of the book, and two of its three chapter are on women’s Talmud study and women’s prayer groups. In calling this final part “Protecting Male Space,” Eleff attributes pedestrian pettiness to what many prefer to see as a religious debate. Anyone who believes that halakhic concerns alone drove opposition to “women’s issues” will be provoked by this title, but they will also betray a poor understanding of the book’s overall argument. What hampered women’s Talmud study, besides anything else, was its “unorthodox optics.” Similarly, the synagogue was a male space and any threat to it, even one that assembled away from the sanctuary, felt “inauthentic.” To be authentic does not mean that something conforms to a written edict or was put in motion by a rabbi’s word; it also needed to have a certain abstract and idealized quality, to appear a certain way. This was equally true for peanut oil on Passover as it was for women’s prayer groups.

Eleff successfully shows how every episode fits within—is an incident of—a broader American religious culture. For example, just as in the “post-Vatican II era, Catholic leaders worked hard to separate a desire to support women’s leadership from other feminist initiatives” (167), so too Rabbi Soloveitchik struggled to prove that “women’s Talmud study and feminism had nothing in common” (168). While every chapter is a riveting read, it can be difficult to uncover a consistent argument that threads the discrete chapters into a coherent whole. For example, the word “authentic” only appears twice in Chapter 5: once to describe *ba’alei teshuva*, or returnees who longed for a more authentic Jewish life (105), and one other time in an assertive manner in that chapter’s concluding sentence: “This top-down strategy betokens the creative way the Orthodox Right enclave has preserved their traditions, leveraging American popular culture to construct authentic expressions of their Orthodox faith.” (123). And although most of the time it appears with sufficient frequency, as Eleff recognizes, the term itself is diffuse, rendering it difficult to find evenness throughout the book.

While all the chapters draw on recent history, some border on the contemporary, and looking up the sources one learns that Eleff's parents were Yeshivat Rambam parents and hosted events on behalf of the school (Chapter 6, n. 64). Even so, Eleff writes with appropriate distance; he offers learned interpretations and studiously steers clear of salty polemic. As some of these episodes remain fresh and are even ongoing, his restraint is praiseworthy. Easy to read and organized, this is a handsome volume that includes many photos and illustrations. Drawing on archives, primary sources, and forgotten periodicals, it is a well-researched tome whose notes occupy almost one-third of the work. While histories of American Orthodoxy tend to limit their canvas to New York, *Authentically Orthodox* ably looks beyond the Jewish metropolis to describe a tradition-bound faith in American life. Professionals and casual readers will find it accessible and informative.

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Nathan Kurz, *Jewish Internationalism and Human Rights after the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 297 pp.

It is a cliché to argue that the 1940s marked a massive rupture in modern Jewish history. The near-erasure of Jewish life and culture in Europe due to the Holocaust, the founding of Israel, and the emergence of American Jewry as the largest and most powerful community in the Diaspora distinguish the postwar era from everything that had come before. And yet, as Nathan Kurz's brilliant new book reveals, for a small group of plutocrats, politicians, and attorneys who operated in the rarefied spaces of legal internationalism, it was far from apparent at the time that the disorienting events of the 1940s would signal any change in their professional work. By unearthing fresh archival material, subjecting old and new sources to a critical eye, and applying a transnational scope to a

topic that by its very nature transcends the nation-state, Kurz offers us a fascinating chronicle of this bewildering dissonance.

The subject of *Jewish Internationalism and Human Rights after the Holocaust* is what Kurz calls “the most bitter of divorces” (7). This is the metaphor he deploys repeatedly to describe how Jewish international rights advocates after the war found it impossible to advance the cause of Jewish rights in the language of human rights in the various committees and agencies of the United Nations and in wider forums. Prior to World War II, these activists in major European and American Jewish agencies—nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the American Jewish Committee, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and the World Jewish Congress, among others—had relied on the rhetoric of “civilization,” the benevolent protection of various empires, and the mechanisms of the League of Nations to defend the rights of Jews in precarious places. These commitments, which stretched back to the mid-nineteenth century, culminated after World War I with the Minorities Treaty and the British Mandate over Palestine, which Jewish internationalists hoped would protect individual and collective rights for Jews in the new states of East-Central Europe and in post-Ottoman Palestine.

At the conclusion of World War II, veteran Jewish internationalists pursued the same agenda of advancing their commitment to Jewish group rights via international law. They hoped that a new United Nations’ human rights regime would affirm the importance of not just individual but also collective rights for minorities. Other countries, however, had come to conclude that the Minorities Treaty was a failure that contributed to the war by encouraging irredentism. Ultimately, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) promised only individual and not group rights to minorities, signifying for Jewish rights activists an ignominious retreat from prewar international law. Even more dispiriting, the drafters of the UDHR were uninterested in legitimizing the inviolability of human rights by making explicit reference to the Holocaust. They were also unmoved by the claim of Jewish agencies that the Holocaust justified another long-standing goal of Jewish advocates: to secure the right of minorities to petition an authoritative international body in the event that they faced persecution at the hands of a sovereign state.

Kurz thus locates the break between Jewish rights activism and international institutions well before Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip following the war in 1967. This alone is a key contribution to the burgeoning scholarship on twentieth-century Jewish internationalism. But Kurz offers even more once he arrives at the topic of Israel's founding, demonstrating how the very creation of a state for Jews made the work of Jewish rights activists more difficult. A large Palestinian refugee population, whose claims for the right of return and compensation were rebuffed by Israel, made it impossible for Jewish agencies to argue for restitution on behalf of Middle East and North African Jews who had fled their homes after Israel's founding. A large Arab minority population living under a repressive military governing regime within Israel discouraged Jewish agencies from pushing for a mechanism that would allow Jewish minorities anywhere to petition the United Nations for human rights enforcement. And an Israel desperate for an influx of immigrants that could bolster Jewish numbers dissuaded Jewish agencies from insisting upon minority rights for Jews who might remain domiciled in newly decolonized Arab states. These Jewish NGOs settled instead for the novelty that North African Jews be assured only the right to leave, a major change in Jewish internationalist activism that reflected a departure from prewar commitments.

The later chapters in the book break new ground in narrating the marginalization of these Jewish rights activists in the United Nations, the Soviet Jewry movement, and other human rights spaces beyond the 1960s. All along the way, Kurz points to the contrast between the agencies' delicately worded public statements and their indiscreet internal communications to reveal the vexing relationship between the agencies and Israeli officials. The wrenching sacrifices these activists made in their efforts not to worsen Israel's position in an international arena where recently decolonized, Arab-sympathetic, Soviet-aligned states outnumbered Israel and its few Western allies constitutes one of the book's salient themes.

Why, then, were these activists initially so wedded to an unworkable internationalist agenda, so unprepared for the political realities of the postwar era, and by the late 1940s willing to abandon their time-honored objectives in order to further Israel's diplomatic interests? This

is a question Kurz touches on but could have done more to clarify. In the book's introduction he refers to "many years of happy union" between the goals of Jewish internationalism and commitments to human rights, but at the end of the book he calls the same union "brief" (189). If the tradition is indeed a long one, we can understand why Jewish internationalist habits died hard after the war, but if the union were in fact newfangled, it only begs the questions. I suspect that a prosopography of the men (they are all men but for Rita Hauser, whom Kurz mentions in passing only in the book's conclusion) who helped lead these NGOs, and not just the NGOs' deep institutional history that Kurz primarily offers, could help answer this question.

Kurz also could have profited from situating the work of the Jewish rights groups he studied in a wider NGO context. How did Jews—who on the face of it boasted a remarkable network of deeply funded, well-staffed internationalist organizations by the end of the war, with access to the most influential political leaders and diplomats of the era—compare to other vulnerable minority groups when it came to internationalist activism? How did Jews' impressive internationalist activities affect antisemitic accusations about undue Jewish global influence? Did they try to make alliances with other minority NGOs? We learn at one point that in 1948 the NAACP made a brief foray into international advocacy on the matter of petitioning the United Nations for minority redress but then quickly retreated in the face of a U.S. backlash. Americanists will no doubt want to know how agencies such as the American Jewish Committee, a leading protagonist in Kurz's story, responded to this incident.

These critiques, however, pale in comparison to the bevy of historiographical insights and surprising details the book presents. That it enriches our understanding of multiple areas of twentieth-century Jewish history, as well as broader histories of human rights, the United Nations, and the Cold War, is a testament to the book's impressive range and incisive research. For students of modern European, North African, Israel-Palestine, and American Jewish history who have an abiding interest in politics, Nathan Kurz's *Jewish Internationalism and Human Rights after the Holocaust* is an obligatory read.

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Laurel Leff, *Well Worth Saving: American Universities' Life-and-Death Decisions on Refugees from Nazi Europe* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2019), 357 pp.

There were two ways that persecuted Jews and non-Jews could escape Nazi Europe and enter the United States. The first, by obtaining a regular visa, involved a long, arduous, and frequently unsuccessful process. The immigration quotas for countries outside the Nazi orbit were pitifully small, and American State Department policy was devoted to not fully utilizing them. Applicants were required to obtain affidavits of support in the United States, fill out extensive forms, and even when their number came up, could be refused a visa at the discretion of obstinate American consuls. However, a relative few individuals were eligible for a second possibility: a non-quota visa that, according to the 1924 immigration statute, could be rendered to clergy and academics. For university scholars in the 1930s, this provision became more than a matter of academic advancement; it became rather dominantly one of rescue. The scholars who requested the academic visa—their sometimes successful and sometimes failed efforts, as well as the institutions that sought to assist them and the universities and their officers who were required to invite them—form the subject of this thoroughly researched, well-written, at times suspenseful and at times disheartening volume.

Laurel Leff has combed various archives to stitch together the mostly limited information on nearly two hundred academics who sought a non-quota visa, some with varying degrees of success and others with failure and its deadly consequences. Of these she chose to focus on eight, five women and three men, for whom sufficient knowledge was available to present a fuller picture of their struggles. All of them were Jewish by Nazi racial standards, though some were Christian by religion and hence excluded from assistance by specifically Jewish organizations. To receive a non-quota visa, applicants had to successfully surmount a

series of shifting hurdles that could be raised or lowered without advance warning. To begin, they needed to obtain an invitation for a regular, ongoing appointment from a recognized American academic institution and provide evidence that they had held regular academic positions in a university or college of similar stature abroad. Being a librarian or an independent researcher was judged insufficient.

The initial stage—the invitation—involved numerous considerations on the part of university presidents and subordinate academic administrators. Those in authority asked themselves: Do we need a scholar in the applicant's field? Are there outside funds available to support the appointment? Is the prospective candidate too old to make the investment worthwhile or too young to be certain of prospective eminence? Was the candidate, in appearance or manner, "too Jewish"? How can the university allocate funds for new positions to be held by foreign scholars when the Depression has led to layoffs and salary reductions? And finally, should we not save all openings for our own graduate students, especially at a time of continuing economic straits? The answer to the last question was sometimes, not surprisingly, "America first." In fact, a negative conclusion on any of these questions could put an end to the effort.

An opening chapter describes the character of the university in Nazi Germany, where, by government decree, some two thousand academics were dismissed from their posts in 1933 or shortly thereafter on account of their "race" or politics. Of these, about twelve hundred were of Jewish origin. The dismissed scholars found themselves without income. Some turned to Jewish institutions, teaching either at a seminary or in the expanding Jewish school system. Some applied for regular quota visas and began the long process of waiting for their number to come up, not certain that, when it did, the local consul would grant the visa. In retrospect, their loss represented a stark diminution of academic excellence that stretched well beyond the Holocaust.

Those who chose the non-quota route wrote letters to acquaintances in the United States, often colleagues in their field, asking for help. Fortunately, they could also turn for assistance to two institutions, both for obtaining an academic position and for financial help. The first, the Rockefeller Foundation, had a mixed record. On the one hand, it

supported eugenic research in Nazi Germany; on the other, it devoted staff and resources to the project of finding and funding positions for refugee scholars. The other institution was the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German (later: Foreign) Scholars. This institution, which existed from 1933 to 1945, managed to assist some three hundred threatened individuals. It was led for a time by Alvin Johnson, who founded the University in Exile at the New School for Social Research in New York, which itself absorbed some 180 scholars in need. In addition, there were individual Jewish donors who not only supported the Emergency Committee but sometimes made direct contributions to support particular scholars, at least temporarily, within a university setting.

Leff rightly notes the extent to which decisions that university presidents and administrators made were influenced by a genteel antisemitism. Neither Nicholas Butler of Columbia nor James Conant of Harvard were eager to increase the number of Jews on their faculties, any more than they wished a student body populated largely by Jews. Some universities, Leff notes, would consider only "Aryan" refugees, who made up about 15 percent of the total. The candidate's eminence and the university's need for the discipline had to trump that individual's origins. The chief consideration, especially in the early years, was the advantage to be gained by the university, not the deteriorating situation of the applicant. Women scholars were at a double disadvantage: first as women, and second as having emerged as scholars only recently, with little opportunity to obtain a world-class reputation.

The antisemitism in the American academic world was duplicated to an even higher degree within the government's administration of non-quota visas. Officials high in the State Department, in its Visa Division, and in the consular corps were intent on keeping the number of academic refugees as low as possible. Repeatedly, they found one excuse or another for refusing to issue the visa. They interpreted the provision in the 1924 statute as strictly and as narrowly as possible. Leff cites one absurd example: Because the law specified a "wife" could be included, State Department officials decided that the husband of a female scholar was therefore excluded.

In the latter part of her book, Leff concentrates on the personal experiences of the eight individuals she has chosen for special attention.

Drawing on an abundance of correspondence, she brings their struggles to life. Over time the situation of those scholars still in Germany or Nazi-occupied areas became more desperate, as American universities reached the point of saturation and claimed that they had done their share and felt no further responsibility. Rescue now became more a humanitarian issue than an academic one, gaining in urgency even as the opportunities diminished. Still, reluctance to act favorably continued, and the academic criterion prevailed over the human one. As one college president put it, the prevailing sentiment was “sympathetic but not sacrificial.” Even Horace Kallen, himself Jewish, could render the strictly academic judgment in regard to one applicant that he was “well worth saving.” As one official put the question cruelly in November 1940: “Are the men of real distinction so that their extinction would be a genuine loss to the academic world?” By June 1941 there was a new excuse for rejection: The applicants might not be trustworthy; perhaps they had relatives in Axis-controlled countries. Like other refugees, those academics fortunate enough to reach the United States were classified as “enemy aliens.”

Although there has been some earlier scholarship on this subject, especially that which Leff cites by Karen J. Greenberg, this story has not been previously told in such breadth and depth. The author has successfully combined the bureaucratic with the personal, the policies with the people, the academic and governmental institutions with the experiences of the needy refugees. The structure of the volume is essentially chronological, but individual stories sometimes transgress boundaries to provide more coherent accounts for each of the eight featured biographies. The back matter of the volume contains a helpful list of all the refugees mentioned in the text, including their academic area and the success or failure of their efforts. It is perhaps too much to ask, but I did wish I had learned more about the experiences of the scholars who reached the United States. How did they adjust? Were they successful as teachers? Were they able to continue work in their area of specialization? And, in particular, what were their experiences in the Black colleges, where some of them found positions? But perhaps that is a subject for another volume. What we have in Leff’s study is a competent, fascinating, and—alas—all-too-often tragic story.

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Laura Arnold Leibman, *The Art of the Jewish Family: A History of Women in Early New York in Five Objects* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2020), 289 pp.

In 1978, writer Tillie Olsen shattered the illusion that literature represents all human experience, that writers could find an outlet for their thoughts if only they had the creative urge and the discipline to sit long enough at a typewriter. *Silences*, Olsen's tour de force study of the psychological, economic, social, and gender-related causes that have kept many would-be writers' words from reaching the light of day, tore away the web of excuses that had ensnared the literary output of women, poor people, those facing mental health challenges, and others. On her book's dedication page, Olsen honored the incremental and overlooked work of her subjects: "For our silenced people," she wrote, "century after century their beings consumed in the hard, everyday essential work of maintaining human life."¹

Laura Arnold Leibman's exquisitely meticulous work, *The Art of the Jewish Family: A History of Women in Early New York in Five Objects*, picks up the gauntlet that Olsen flung down and relocates it to Jewish history and women's history. Her central aim is the reconstruction of Jewish women's lives from early America to the mid-nineteenth century, using "everyday objects" to "provide windows into those women's daily lives" (6). She reassembles the stories of five women who lived in New York between 1750 and 1850, with close readings of unusual or previously overlooked materials that coax these women back to life. Throughout, Leibman directs her focus toward people who do not figure prominently—or at all—in most historical writing. In doing so, she challenges the research methods and priorities of many scholars who built the specialty of American Jewish history.

1 Tillie Olsen, *Silences* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1978), dedication page.

The range of fields that the book covers is astounding. In addition to the disciplines of American Jewish history and women's history, subfields within those areas receive rare notice: the colonial and early federal eras garner unaccustomed attention, and consequently, the narrative's "main characters" are almost all descended from Sephardic Jews. Leibman's rendering of economic history includes Jews at the pinnacle of early American and Caribbean society and those who hover in Dickensian proximity to the poorhouse. And, in her most provocative discovery, the author interrogates the complexity of Jewish "racial identity" by telling the story of Sarah Brandon Moses. Born in Barbados in 1798 as a biracial Christian girl (with a Jewish father) and enslaved to a Jewish family, Brandon Moses is freed, converts, marries, and is transformed into a "white" Jewish society matron in New York.

Leibman broaches issues of diversity—in gender, financial status, religious practice, and race—by making these differences central to her project. This is evident from the book's outset: Appealing to a New York synagogue in 1761 for emergency funds, the story of destitute widow Hannah Louzada illuminates a host of social inequities and cultural signposts. Her poverty is a direct result of inheritance laws that discriminated against women after their husband's death, while her appeal for relief (preserved on a quixotically rescued scrap of paper) rests in part on other family connections that Louzada hopes will benefit, not punish, her. Leibman suggests, through meticulous analyses of handwriting and linguistics, that the letter's Spanish greeting and even the curlicue (or *rúbrica*) under Louzada's signature are conventions the widow utilizes to highlight the Sephardic heritage that she shares with the synagogue's grandees (40–41).

Throughout the book, readers are treated to substantive (sometimes exhaustive) discourses on the intricacies of miniature painting and silhouette cutting, on fashion trends, silver smithing, and the best ways to illustrate overlapping genealogies. These forays into the transmission, preservation, and very construction of objects are essential to Leibman's goal of using quotidian pieces to prompt questions about women's lives. In this method, no stone is left unturned in describing each item: we learn that, in cutting silhouettes of Jane Symons Isaacs' family in 1845, the artist invested the tilt of a head and the presence or absence of a hat

with social significance. We are even advised that one holds a hanky in such sittings “for show, not blow” (187)!

Meanwhile, the thickness of a piece of ivory for a miniature portrait of Sarah Brandon Moses determines the sitter’s apparent skin tone, and thus the perception of her racial identity. The nuanced discussion that follows here explores “racecraft” (96–97), or the ways in which notions of race are constructed and used. Leibman suggests that Moses sits at a “tipping point” of Jews and race, wherein Jews—without changing their physical appearance—were increasingly perceived during the nineteenth century as nonwhite. Grotesque or erotic depictions of Jewish hair, skin tone, and noses (which the author illustrates with a gallery of images) justified their exclusion from high society, even as their racial ambiguity sometimes afforded them other opportunities. Indeed, this section evokes the most pressing social debates of the twenty-first century as well, by highlighting the malleability of racial designations. In tracing how dramatically Moses’ racial identity shifted in the eyes of each new community she encountered, Leibman illustrates Ta-Nehisi Coates’ poignant remark that “race is the child of racism, not the father.”²

The book’s focus on nondominant narratives is useful in addressing other sweeping problems of human society, and even for reshaping the contours of historical writing. Tales of down-and-out characters, Leibman argues, challenge the traditional historian’s emphasis on “model minority myths” (54). Early American Jewish history has long valorized stalwart refugees from the Inquisition who built cross-Atlantic trading networks and prospered in the New World. But Leibman’s biographical sketches of the same era highlight the disadvantages women endured in inheritance law, the evils of racial hierarchies, and the practice of casting aspersions on the moral fiber of poor and mentally ill individuals. If their societies mistreated members of such groups, however, this book emphasizes the degree to which conventional histories compounded the wrong by leaving these people out of the narrative entirely.

2 Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 7.

Reconstructing lives from archival scraps, broken teacups, and “commonplace books” (a type of scrapbook) is only part of the toolkit that Leibman offers; her sensitive rhetoric also teases historical figures out of the fog of passing years and emphasizes their humanity. For instance, I have read many times that the renowned Rebecca Gratz provided a home for her younger sister’s bereaved children, but I had only given passing thought to the person of Rachel Gratz Moses, who died after giving birth to her eighth child. Now, however, reading about the silver beakers bequeathed by Reyna Levy Moses to her son Solomon Moses, Rachel’s husband, I was struck by the lively description of Solomon and Rachel’s love match. It adds depth to the life of Rebecca Gratz’s younger sister and brings home the tragedy of her early demise.

Besides using a first-person voice to describe her research journeys and the lacunae that continue to frustrate her, Leibman waxes reflective about the lives of her human subjects and how she chose the featured objects. “They are objects that surprised me, challenging what I thought I knew. They are far from perfect.... [They] seem to deliberately thwart easy answers and instead shift and shimmer in different ways each time I look at or listen to them.... They are as complex as the women who owned them” (208). The author returns at the book’s end to the agenda she outlined at its beginning, even reusing the same quote: “The very call to ‘find more sources’ about people who left few if any of their own reproduces the same erasures and silences they experienced ... by demanding the impossible” (12, 206). Her own work pushes back against these erasures. She exposes biases and structural inequities, asks new questions, and searches for clues in everyday objects that help illuminate unrecorded lives. In doing so, she speaks for the “silenced people” Tillie Olsen wrote about, and honors their “hard, everyday” human lives.

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Rafael Medoff, *The Jews Should Keep Quiet: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2019), xvii + 387 pp.

Rafael Medoff is founding codirector of the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies in Washington, DC. The institute is named for the author of *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (1984), the most important of the revisionist studies that have censured the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration for its supposed indifference to the fate of Europe's Jews during the 1930s and through World War II. Medoff, a trained historian, has been Wyman's most prolific and dedicated acolyte and has carried on his legacy in a gusher of publications. He has written multiple previous books on America and the Holocaust, including, among others, *The Deafening Silence: American Jewish Leaders and the Holocaust* (1986); *Blowing the Whistle on Genocide: Josiah E. DuBois, Jr. and the Struggle for a U.S. Response to the Holocaust* (2008); *The Student Struggle Against the Holocaust* (2010, with David Golinkin); *FDR and the Holocaust: A Breach of Faith* (2013) and *Too Little, and Almost Too Late: The War Refugee Board and America's Response to the Holocaust* (2017).

The Jews Should Keep Quiet is the latest chapter in Medoff's critique of the Roosevelt administration and of those American Jewish leaders who quietly acquiesced in the administration's policies that, he believes, facilitated the Holocaust. The most prominent of these leaders was undoubtedly Stephen S. Wise, the most influential and well-known American rabbi of the era and a longtime conferee of Roosevelt. Wise led the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress and was America's leading Zionist. He was a man of the Left, enthusiastically supported the New Deal, worshipped FDR—whom he called “Chief,” “Boss,” “the Great Man,” and “the All Highest”—and saw himself as part of FDR's inner circle. The president, in Medoff's telling, “took advantage of Wise's adoration of his policies and leadership to manipulate Wise through flattery and intermittent access to the White House.”

Medoff's portrait of FDR will surprise the vast majority of American Jews for whom FDR was a demigod, but it will not startle readers of Medoff's earlier *FDR and the Holocaust*. Medoff's Roosevelt was a closet

nativist and an antisemite to boot. He was a racist and did not like immigrants in general and Japanese and Jews in particular. He believed Jews had undesirable social characteristics, wished that they could be dispersed throughout the country in order to dissipate their unfortunate traits, said they were disproportionately represented in certain professions, feared an influx of Jewish immigrants flooding into the United States, and hoped the Jews would keep quiet and stop complaining about their fate. The admiration of America's Jews for Roosevelt, Medoff believes, has been a supreme example of foolish, unrequited love.

Medoff's evidence of FDR's antisemitism is quite slim and consists mainly of brief and scattered comments uttered behind closed doors. These have to be balanced against Roosevelt's early recognition of the threat posed by Nazi Germany; his absence of antisemitism exhibited while serving in the New York legislature, the Department of the Navy during the Wilson administration, and as governor of New York; and his many Jewish friends and advisors, including Felix Frankfurter (whom he appointed to the Supreme Court), Bernard Baruch, Herbert Lehman, Charles Wyzanski, his neighbor Henry Morgenthau Jr. (whom he appointed Secretary of the Treasury, the first Jewish member of the cabinet in over three decades), and Samuel I. Rosenman, his major speechwriter and chief counsel. Indeed, there were so many Jews in prominent positions within the New Deal that antisemites routinely called it the "Jew Deal," and German propaganda even accused Roosevelt of being a Jew himself.

The book's major problem involves "context," that most important of all words in historical writing. The duty of historians is to put themselves into the shoes of their subjects, to see the world the way they saw it, and to explain the milieu within which they operated. Medoff's Roosevelt and Wise, by contrast, exist in virtual isolation from the political, economic, social, military, cultural, diplomatic, and intellectual elements impinging upon them. There is little discussion of the political realities confronting Roosevelt, the advice he was receiving from his military advisors, the pressures our British allies were exerting, his need to prioritize objectives according to the nation's interests, and the fact that there was little the United States could have done in any case for European Jews in the clutches of the Germans. This lack of contextual

thinking is particularly noticeable in Chapter 7 of *The Jews Should Keep Quiet*, titled “The Failure to Bomb Auschwitz,” in which Medoff accuses Roosevelt and his political advisors of “abandoning the Jews.” The use of the word “failure” assumes that Auschwitz should have been bombed when in fact there were good arguments both for bombing and not bombing the camp. In any case, there is no evidence that Roosevelt involved himself in any way in the debate or the decision, which primarily involved the military.¹

Despite Wise’s naiveté in his dealings with the president, he had little leverage to move FDR one way or the other, even if he had the will. Wise was a bit player without an important constituency, and his influence meant little when compared to that of the politicos on Capitol Hill and the military in the Pentagon and London. Wise also feared that any attempt on his part to pressure Roosevelt could end his relationship with the president, which he highly prized.

The historical revisionism of *The Jews Should Keep Quiet* prompts one to ask: How much could realistically be expected from the Roosevelt administration, and how effective would Wise’s even strongest entreaties have been? The issue was not what *should* have been done, but what *could* have been done. The examples of the Armenians in Turkey, the Tutsis in Rwanda, the mass murders in Cambodia in the 1970s, the slaughter of Muslims in Bosnia, and the recent wars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan show that outsiders are extremely reluctant to intervene in the affairs of other nations for humanitarian reasons and when their national interests are not directly threatened. Had Medoff recognized this political fact of life, as unwelcome and unfortunate as that might be, he would have written a very different book.

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1 Edward S. Shapiro, “America and the Bombing of Auschwitz: The Importance of Asking the Right Questions,” *Society* 56 (November–December, 2019): 625–633.

Nancy Sinkoff, *From Left to Right: Lucy S. Dawidowicz, the New York Intellectuals, and the Politics of Jewish History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2020), 538 pp.

The intellectual world of Lucy S. Dawidowicz, a pioneering scholar of the Holocaust and combatant in the American Jewish culture wars of the second half of the twentieth century, is the subject of Nancy Sinkoff's insightful new biography, *From Left to Right*. Born Lucy Schildkret in the Bronx in 1915, Dawidowicz died in 1990, leaving behind a record of scholarly and political engagement with almost every item on the American Jewish agenda during that eventful period. As a teenager, she flirted with communism before disavowing radical politics in favor of Jewish cultural nationalism. She emerged from the 1960s as a neoconservative Cold Warrior, a vocal critic of the New Left, and an instinctual defender of the State of Israel. Sinkoff traces Dawidowicz's journey "from left to right" through the lens of her scholarly endeavors and personal relationships, demonstrating how her early interactions with, and later nostalgia for, the vanished world of prewar Eastern European *Yiddishkeit* framed and shaped her subsequent interpretations of the American political scene—for better or worse.

The book is divided into four sections that proceed chronologically through Dawidowicz's life and work, beginning with her childhood in the Bronx, where she was first exposed to secular Yiddish culture at the Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute. Sinkoff's treatment of her upbringing, by far the shortest section of the book, represents the author's general approach, which involves supplementing material from Dawidowicz's correspondences, memoirs, and (eventually) scholarship with detailed portraits of her intellectual influences and the broader cultural or political milieux in which she operated. Thus, in the book's early chapters, we learn a great deal about the lives of major Yiddishist figures such as Leibush Lehrer, Max Weinreich, and Zelig Kalmanovitch—Dawidowicz's teachers and colleagues—and about the intellectual climate of the YIVO Institute in New York and especially Vilna, where she spent a formative year just before the outbreak of World War II.

During her brief sojourn in prewar Poland (of which Vilna was then a part), Dawidowicz personally encountered the threat of anti-Jewish

street violence—an experience that, according to Sinkoff, formed the lens through which she would eventually perceive attacks on Jewish individuals and property during the (U.S.) urban riots of the 1960s and 1970s. When the war broke out, Dawidowicz returned to New York, where, through her work for YIVO's American division, she kept in touch with distressed Polish colleagues and began to undertake in real time what would later be called *khurbn forshung* (destruction research), “the process of documenting, analyzing, and publicizing the destruction of the European Jews” (71). After the war, she traveled to Europe yet again—this time, Germany—to catalog recovered Yiddish manuscripts and tend to Jewish displaced persons for the Joint Distribution Committee. These episodes, described in the second section of the book, were the traumatic prelude to Dawidowicz’s long career as a historian and public intellectual.

That career is the subject of the final two sections of the book, which comprise roughly two-thirds of its length. The dominant theme throughout is Dawidowicz’s commitment to Jewish particularism in the face of assimilation pressures as the driving force behind her scholarly choices and her increasingly right-leaning politics. On the political front, while working for the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in the 1950s, Dawidowicz affirmed the popular Cold War linkage of communism and Nazism as two equally pernicious forms of “totalitarianism,” but she added her own idiosyncratic rationale: Maintaining that “atheistic authoritarianism could not tolerate any kind of ethnic or religious distinctiveness,” Dawidowicz’s intensifying hostility to the Left was rooted in her belief that “communist universalism was inimical to Jewish particularism” (119).

Similar concerns put her at odds with postwar Jewish liberalism on questions of church-state separation. After the destruction of Yiddish-speaking civilization in the Holocaust, Dawidowicz soured on secular Yiddishism as a viable means of sustaining Jewish communal identification. Influenced by the Cold War political climate, she turned to religious Judaism as the surest bulwark against assimilation. This led her, as early as the 1960s, to break with the AJC’s historic commitment to strict separationism, prefiguring more recent splits between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews. Though not initially a Zionist, toward the end

of her life Dawidowicz came to see the State of Israel as “the embodiment of the Jewish people and concentration of a Jewish cultural and political center” (282). Understanding the defense of Israel as an “act of diaspora nationalist honor” (*ibid.*), she aligned herself unapologetically with neoconservative boosters of Israel’s disastrous 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

In the realm of scholarship, Sinkoff identifies a number of ways in which Dawidowicz’s research program and historical interpretations were influenced by her concern with the preservation of Jewish identity and community. When it came to her work on the Holocaust, she sought to defend the *Judenräte* (Jewish councils) against charges—pressed by Hannah Arendt, among others—of complicity with the Nazi genocide. For Dawidowicz, the behavior of the *Judenräte* represented the age-old strategies of negotiation practiced by Jewish leaders since the Middle Ages, and her defense of their good name “underscored her identification with normative institutions of Jewish communal life” (181). Similarly, Sinkoff relates Dawidowicz’s aversion to foregrounding armed Jewish resistance to Nazi rule to her concern that doing so might “justify the radicalization of political culture in the United States” (186). In other words, because New Left activists “looked to Jewish ghetto fighters as models of a usable past” (187), and because Dawidowicz saw New Left universalism as inimical to Jewish survival, she categorically refused to valorize armed resistance in her scholarship. In fact, she took a hard line against all attempts to “universalize” the Holocaust and thus diminish its status as a uniquely antisemitic event.

Sinkoff has written a comprehensive intellectual biography of Dawidowicz that is accessible to nonexperts due to its extensive provision of historical context. At certain points, however, that strength becomes a weakness, as the details of Dawidowicz’s life and work occasionally feel less significant than the contextual events Sinkoff narrates using secondary literature. Likewise, Sinkoff’s empathetic reconstructions of Dawidowicz’s rationales—most of the time a strength—occasionally feel insufficiently critical, particularly when it comes to Dawidowicz’s views about African Americans. Nonetheless, Sinkoff’s book offers an interesting twist on the story of Jewish neoconservatism and the “survivalist” turn in American Jewish life. By connecting Dawidowicz’s right-wing

trajectory with her lifelong Diaspora nationalism and devotion to *Yiddishkeit*—commitments we often imagine as left-wing—Sinkoff dramatizes the tensions between the particular and the universal that persistently haunt American Jewish politics.

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**Marcia Jo Zerivitz, *Jews of Florida: Centuries of Stories*
(Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2020), 412 pp., 715 illustrations.**

In 2004 the eminent American Jewish historian Stephen Whitfield, himself a product of the port city of Jacksonville in Northeast Florida, observed in what was then one of only two book-length works that had ever appeared covering the history of Jewish life in any part of that state, that Florida's Jews “have far more commonly been the butt of Jewish jokes than the subject of Jewish scholarship.”¹ There were no book-length works at all and few articles in 1984, when author Marcia Jo Zerivitz first set out on her quest to collect photographs, artifacts, and stories that eventually evolved into the MOSAIC: Jewish Life In Florida traveling exhibit and then today's Jewish Museum of Florida in Miami Beach (now affiliated with Florida International University), which opened in 1995 and for which she served as founding executive director until 2011. “The men in the field of American Jewish history

1 The quote is from a collection of sixteen essays edited by Andrea Greenbaum, *The Jews of South Florida* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 39. The other book-length work available at the time was Deborah Dash Moore's superbly researched *To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

had not taken Florida seriously, assuming we had no history,” she declares in her introduction, “so I set out to change that” (xix).

Zerivitz has accomplished that goal with this large, lavishly illustrated, and beautifully printed volume that puts the best of the museum’s images and oral histories into the hands of readers. Not a conventional academic history aimed at the scholarly reader, it is more like an extended museum exhibition catalog or directory written for a broad audience. Most of the text consists of brief introductory overviews and then evocative photos or artifact images with engaging captions and stories taken from hundreds of oral histories, as the title of the book indicates. There is also superb index. The main goal is to document and celebrate the presence, accomplishments, achievements, and contributions that Jews have made in Florida—a U.S. territory since 1821 and a state since 1845—from the first recorded presence of three Jewish men in Pensacola in 1763 to the present, where today fully ten percent of the American Jewish population lives. Indeed, the South Florida region consisting of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties has the third-largest Jewish community in America after New York and Los Angeles; Boca Raton, Delray Beach, and increasingly Boynton Beach have what is among the most densely populated Jewish areas in the world, with a strong Orthodox presence.

The mushrooming growth of this Jewish community was part of the post-World War II trend of people and businesses moving to the Sunbelt, as Florida rose from being “still very largely an empty state,” according to a 1939 federal guide, to the third-most-populous state in the nation after California and Texas, with a population of well over 20 million people and a corresponding number of votes in the Electoral College. The individuals and families featured in this book played a key role in the development of Florida as a whole, while at the same time they laid the basis for an extensive Jewish communal infrastructure.

The book is divided into eight parts, with chapter subheadings. The first two parts summarize the early history and waves of immigration, and the last five cover the themes of “Life Cycles and Jewish Rituals,” “Building Community,” “Antisemitism,” “Acculturation,” and “Identity.” Part 3, “Land of Opportunity”—by far the largest part—documents the myriad ways immigrant and migrant Jews have “made it big” through

diverse pursuits. These include agriculture, citrus production (citrus magnate Albert Morrell received an award from the Israeli government for the consulting he did for Israel's citrus industry in the early 1950s), cattle ranching (the branding iron of Russian immigrant Saul Snyder dating from the 1910s was in the shape of a *magen David*), commerce, real estate, tourism, restaurant ownership, entertainment, politics, and law. Individuals chronicled here include founders of hospitals and medical schools, educators, university presidents, patrons of the arts, NASA space scientists, retail magnates (one section is titled "From Peddler to Shopping Malls"), CEOs, entrepreneurs, and heads of businesses of all kinds.

It is the individual stories and the images that evoke them that comprise the most engaging part of the book. From pioneer days, we read how immigrants from Central Europe to Jacksonville (which until World War II remained the Florida city with the largest Jewish population) felt nostalgic for the Rhine when they beheld the city's St. John's River. We are introduced to Henry and Henrietta Brash, who came from Germany in the 1870s, raising eleven children in an observant home; they *kasheder* their dishes in the Gulf of Mexico and often had Shabbat dinners and seders on the beach. We read of five brothers who set up stores in five separate towns so that they would not compete with one another. There is a beautifully engraved silver *kiddush* cup, presented at a *brit milah* in Pensacola in a Jewish family that settled there in the 1850s. There are images of small, personal-sized Torah scrolls that were carried up and down the coasts from town to town so that the bearer could always hope to gather a proper minyan. Rabbi Benjamin Safer, who arrived from Lithuania in 1902 to serve a Jacksonville congregation, became a "circuit rider" rabbi, performing *britot* and weddings throughout north Florida—from Pensacola to Orlando to Jacksonville and tiny places in between.

We read stories of Jews who learned how to *shecht* chickens so that their families would always have kosher meat and of Russian-born dairy farmer Israel Shader who arrived in Florida near Orlando from Pittsburgh in 1912 and who had gentile neighbors milk his eighty cows on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. There are the front pages of faded local newspapers recounting the first circumcision ever performed in a Florida town or the first Jewish weddings; one 1917 wedding took place under

a *chuppah* in an orange grove near Orlando. We learn that elaborate Purim costume balls were the social events of the season in the 1880s in the pioneer Jewish communities of Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Pensacola, and Key West. (The city of Miami was not even founded until 1896 and Miami Beach in 1913.) Key West itself, the last in a chain of islands off the southern tip of Florida and a deep-water port, was one of the largest and richest cities in Florida when the first congregation was established in 1887, and Russian and Romanian Jewish immigrants were drawn there; an anti-immigrant, antipeddler prohibitive tax passed in 1891 caused most of the Jews to depart to other parts of the state. Later we read of early real estate developers who, like the *halutzim* in Israel, literally reclaimed swamps or otherwise unusable land by filling it with earth and building canals to channel the water away and other methods, beyond the existing municipal boundaries whose practices excluded Jews, and then marketed their products directly to other Jews migrating from the north. We learn of the Grossinger family of Catskills fame, who purchased a formerly restricted hotel in Miami Beach in 1945 and promptly installed a kosher kitchen and began advertising Passover holiday packages.

By far the most interesting sections are “Boarding Houses and Hotels” and “Real Estate, Development, Builders, and Their Support System” in Part 3, and in Part 6, “Hatred Against Jews = Antisemitism,” where we see the images of myriad colorful brochures for hotels, resorts, and housing developments with the deadly words “Gentiles Only” or “Restricted Clientele” and learn how hard Jews had to fight to eliminate these words and practices. One of the most chilling photos is of a group of children playing on a Miami Beach elementary school playground in 1935 with an apartment building overlooking them sporting a large sign advertising rental rates that concludes with the words, “GENTILES ONLY” (335).

Jews of Florida: Centuries of Stories can be savored on its own terms and serves notice that the Jews of Florida and the communities they have created deserve to receive much more serious historical and scholarly attention than they have in the past.

Miriam Sanua Dalin is a professor in the history department and the Jewish studies program at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. She is working on a history of the Jews of Boca Raton.

Marc Saperstein, ed. *Agony in the Pulpit: Jewish Preaching in Response to Nazi Persecution and Mass Murder, 1933–1945* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2018), 1,120 pp.

Marc Saperstein's *Agony in the Pulpit: Jewish Preaching in Response to Nazi Persecution and Mass Murder, 1933–1945* is a signal contribution to the field of modern Jewish history. To appreciate Saperstein's innovative undertaking and the extent to which this breathtaking collection compels a reconsideration of the Jewish world's response to the rise of the Nazi regime, particularly the subgenre of American Jewry's reaction to the Holocaust, a few words of historical and historiographic context are in order.

The impact on the West of the Hitler regime's "sick blood-lust" and Nazi Germany's catastrophic destruction of European Jewry is a topic that has long bedeviled the field of American Jewish history.¹ Yehuda Bauer, Richard Breitman, Henry Feingold, Alan M. Kraut, and Allan J. Lichtman—scholars whose pioneering work represents the scholarly consensus of American Jewish historians—demonstrate that American Jews were keenly alert to the growing threat of anti-Jewish hostility and the persecution of Europe's Jews that became known as the Holocaust. Between 1932 and 1945, American Jewish leaders and groups such as the Joint Distribution Committee and the World Jewish Congress took concerted action to fight the Nazi regime, staging what amounted to a developing and ongoing multifaceted campaign to lobby and pressure American society and the governments of the Allied nations. Indeed, despite vexing and ultimately insurmountable geopolitical obstacles, American Jews from all walks of life persisted in various efforts to save European Jewry from, in the words of Jewish intellectual Hayim Greenberg (1885–1953), "the claws of the Nazi devourer" and "prevent the fulfillment of this horror which broods over the blood-engulfed continent of Europe."² That American Jewry's *cri de cœur* fell short of

1 "Under the Axis," *Jewish Frontier* 9, no. 10 (November 1942): 3.

2 Quoted from: Hayim Greenberg, "Bankrupt!" in *The Essential Hayim Greenberg: Essays and Addresses on Jewish Culture, Socialism, and Zionism*, ed. Mark A. Raider (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2016), 216; "Under the Axis," 3.

inducing President Franklin D. Roosevelt and other Allied leaders to make the rescue of European Jewry a paramount wartime objective is by now an established albeit deeply troubling verity.³ The predicament of American Jews was, as the historical record shows, buffeted by the unprecedented nature of the unfolding European tragedy and circumscribed by the Realpolitik of American wartime policy-in-the-making.

American Jews generally “revered” FDR, as Breitman and Lichtman explain, but they were “not blind to [the president’s] limitations or the constraints under which he operated.”⁴ Against the backdrop of “world crises of unparalleled scope and gravity,” the community was painfully aware that without FDR’s pragmatic leadership the free world’s “resistance to Nazi aggression would have been much weaker than it was, perhaps even fatally so.”⁵ Powerless to stem the tide of the Nazis’ murderous obsession or alter the war’s trajectory, American Jewish leaders deployed their limited leverage and engaged in unrelenting and even heroic efforts to mobilize anti-Nazi boycott activity, prevail upon U.S. government representatives at the highest levels, fund and support rescue operations (including efforts to bribe Nazi officials and pay ransoms to save Jewish victims), and sustain channels of communication with European resistance groups that assisted in the conveyance of sensitive intelligence information to the West. Such activity, both public and behind the scenes, was an

3 See, e.g., Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother’s Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1929–1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1974); Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration, 1938–1945*, revised (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980); Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981); Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987); Henry L. Feingold, *Bearing Witness: How America and Its Jews Responded to the Holocaust* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995); Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013). See also vol. 7 in the series *American Jewish History*, titled *America, American Jews, and the Holocaust*, ed. Jeffrey S. Gurock (London: Routledge, 2013).

4 Breitman and Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews*, 329.

5 Ibid.

extension of a pattern established by American Jewish leaders and groups during World War I in response to the desperate plight of Jews trapped in the eastern war zone. By the New Deal era (dubbed the “Jew Deal” by antisemites and Roosevelt’s adversaries), the firm foothold of “American Israel” in the New World was visibly manifest by a galaxy of well-known national figures and organizations.⁶ In actuality, however, American Jews were no less dependent on presidential goodwill with regard to U.S. government intervention on behalf of distressed Jewish communities overseas than they had been when Woodrow Wilson occupied the White House.

Though, as Bauer demonstrates, “Jewish influence in the United States counted for little” in shaping America’s wartime strategy, a group of revisionist scholars, following in the footsteps of journalist Arthur D. Morse, insist that FDR and American Jewish leaders “ducked chance after chance to save the Jews”—and that they consequently bear special responsibility for the Holocaust.⁷ With the same broad brush, David S. Wyman, Monty Noam Penkower, and Haskell Lookstein portray Jewish communal leaders as having failed in their duty to marshal the forces of *klal yisroel politik* (Jewish political solidarity) and by leading American Jewry astray.⁸ Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (1874–1949), the country’s out-

6 Abram S. Isaacs, “The Jews of the United States,” *American Jewish Year Book* 1 (1899): 14.

7 Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, 456; cover of Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: Random House, 1968).

8 See, e.g., Monty Noam Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983); David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Haskell Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers’ Keepers? The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust, 1938–1944* (New York: Hartmore House, 1985). Wyman summarizes his argument as follows: “The best hope for rescuing European Jews during World War II lay in a strong and concerted effort to convince the United States government to undertake a comprehensive rescue program. For American Jews, the obvious approaches were two: contacts by Jewish leaders with high government officials; and a national campaign to publicize the mass killings, with a view to building public pressure for rescue and directing it toward the Roosevelt Administration and Congress. American Jewish leaders, once aware of the Nazi extermination plan, moved in both those directions. But lack of united action severely diminished their impact. Furthermore, the Zionist organizations, the most politically effective of the American Jewish groups, continued

standing religious and Zionist leader, is singled out in this alternative historical universe for special opprobrium and (according to Wyman) for allegedly prioritizing the Zionist campaign for Jewish statehood over the rescue of European Jewry.⁹

A proper review of the Wyman thesis and the notion of “abandonment”—including a substantive discussion of the successes, errors, and missteps of American Jewish leaders and organizations within the context of FDR’s shrewd, pragmatic, and Sphinx-like wartime leadership—and the prosecution of the American war effort goes beyond the scope of this essay. Henry L. Feingold’s essay, “Who Shall Bear the Guilt for the Holocaust: The Human Dilemma,” first published in 1979, remains an especially useful starting point in this regard.¹⁰ More recently, Breitman

through the crisis to place first priority on their long-term goal of achieving a Jewish state in Palestine.” Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, 723. No less a figure than Elie Wiesel, the widely revered Nobel laureate, amplified this view in a preface to the republication of Wyman’s bestselling study: “Within the context of the war, the destiny of persecuted Jews carried too little weight to tip the scales in their favor.... The Jews were abandoned. And once they were delivered to their butchers, they could no longer count on anybody. Not even on those of their people who were living free in America. Sad and revolting as it might sound, both the major Jewish organizations and the most powerful figures of the Jewish community could not or did not want to form a unified rescue commission.... Proud as we are of the generosity that America showed in fighting against Nazi Germany, we are embarrassed and dismayed by its behavior toward Hitler’s Jewish victims.” Elie Wiesel, “Introduction” in David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945*, reprint (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), viii–ix.

9 Wyman’s student Rafael Medoff, who has devoted an entire book to vilifying Wise, argues that FDR “took advantage of Wise’s adoration” of the president and his New Deal policies to “manipulate Wise through flattery and intermittent access to the White House.” The net result, Medoff contends, is that Wise helped “to facilitate policies that neither he himself, nor most American Jews supported, from Roosevelt’s pursuit of cordial—sometimes even friendly—diplomatic and economic relations with Nazi Germany in the 1930s, to his closing of America’s doors to refugees despite unfilled quotas, to his refusal to take even minimal steps to interrupt the mass murder process.” Rafael Medoff, *The Jews Should Keep Quiet: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Stephen W. Wise, and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2019), 301.

10 Henry L. Feingold, “Who Shall Bear the Guilt for the Holocaust: The Human Dilemma,” *American Jewish History* 48, no. 3 (March 1979): 261–282. The essay was republished in Feingold, *Bearing Witness*, 255–276.

and Lichtman's *FDR and the Jews* (2014), a towering scholarly achievement, offers a comprehensive treatment of the full extent and limitations of Roosevelt's efforts on behalf the Jews. Yet the Wyman camp's allegation of culpability—namely, "deceit and indifference" on the part of FDR and American Jewish leaders—displays remarkable tenacity.¹¹ A reductionist argument that continues to satisfy the yen of those seeking simple answers to highly complex and emotionally charged questions, it is nonetheless of strikingly limited value to the field of history.¹² The Achilles heel of the Wyman thesis, as Michael Marrus observes in *The Holocaust in History* (1987), is that it centers "explicitly on what did not happen."¹³ "It should be obvious," Marrus writes, "that there is a pitfall here: in any such assessment, there is great danger that the historian will apply to subjects the standards, value systems, and vantage point of the present, rather than those of the period being discussed."¹⁴ Wyman, Elie Wiesel—who wrote an introduction to Wyman's book—and others, armed with the lens of moral clarity, "believe that people should have acted otherwise"; they sidestep empiricism and "condemn, rather than [seek] to explain," American responses to the Nazi onslaught.¹⁵ This temptation," as Marrus notes, "is the historian's form of hubris."¹⁶

Against this backdrop, Marc Saperstein's *Agony in the Pulpit* is a veritable thunderclap whose reverberations will impact every strata of Holocaust history. Simply put, this monumental 1,120-page scholarly volume recalibrates our understanding of Jewish communal responses to the Holocaust. Saperstein's magisterial study includes a sizable quotient of material focused on the United States and Canada, and it makes accessible hitherto unpublished, out-of-print, and uncollected

11 This phrase is quoted from the title of the Public Broadcasting Service documentary *America and the Holocaust: Deceit and Indifference* (1984). Based on David S. Wyman's work, the film was widely distributed and viewed in the United States.

12 See Henry Feingold, "PBS's Roosevelt: Deceit and Indifference or Politics and Powerlessness?" in Feingold, *Bearing Witness*, 183–201.

13 Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1987), 157.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

data documenting the lived experience of Jewish communities in North America, Europe, and Palestine. “Virtually ignored in the academic literature,” Saperstein argues, the sermons and addresses testify to the critical role and influence of rabbis in the free world before and during World War II (18). The data also serve as an antidote to the claims of revisionist historians who wrongly argue that American Jewish leaders were detached from and inattentive to the plight of their kith and kin in Europe. Saperstein, who has explored all the major archives relevant to his subject, casts a wide net and brings together hundreds of important rabbinic utterances, each of which is thoughtfully and judiciously annotated. Viewed as an aggregate, the sermons highlight a broad spectrum of Jewish theological perspectives, disparate conditions that characterized diverse regions, and dynamic social and political concerns that transcended national boundaries.

Divided into three parts, the volume opens with an illuminating and pathfinding introduction in which Saperstein situates the utility and value of rabbinic sermons and addresses as central texts of Holocaust history. To this end, he surveys a range of published collections of primary data concerning reports of and responses to the Nazi genocide, the significance and challenges of the sermon as a form of historical evidence (including its elusive nature—that is, its performative aspect and impact on listeners), the “natural tendency” of rabbis to emphasize biblical themes and assert “continuity between the startling events of the present and the familiar events of the past,” and the various ways in which the texts accentuate theological questions about “the role of God in the events being discussed” and reflect the attitudes of the congregants and listeners to whom they were delivered (59, 75). Saperstein’s detailed analysis of sermons and addresses as a body of evidence breaks new methodological ground. He introduces important considerations concerning each text’s provenance; the specifics and functions of its occasion and setting; inclusion as part of a worship service or a nonreligious event; liturgical, literary, philosophical, and other distinguishing attributes; and the question of the preacher’s unique oratorical style. Saperstein also pays close attention to the differential between sermons and addresses for which there are partial and/or complete transcripts, newspaper reportage, and audio recordings.

Part 2 of the volume, “Chronological Selections,” meticulously excavates an array of representative sermons and addresses delivered between 1932 and 1945 that span the globe and explicitly address the Nazi terror. This body of “evidence for what was known and how this knowledge was communicated,” as Saperstein states, has hitherto eluded scholarly attention and “deserves to be carefully studied” (18). Stephen S. Wise, for example, who “regularly delivered sermons in New York to members of the Free Synagogue, and to the broader community (Jewish and non-Jewish) gathered at Carnegie Hall on Sunday mornings and on Jewish holidays”—and who, as noted above, stands out as a polemical target of the Wyman camp—is in many ways exemplary, but also hardly unique (19). “The texts of [Wise’s] sermons,” Saperstein points out, “along with addresses at public meetings held at venues such as Madison Square Garden, are readily available in the archival collections used by [Rafael] Medoff” in *The Jews Should Keep Quiet: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Stephen W. Wise, and the Holocaust* (2019)¹⁷—yet they are “totally missing” from Medoff’s revisionist work as well as other studies “focusing on religious leadership” (19). Readers will no doubt appreciate that Wise’s fifty-five sermons and addresses are but part of a vast data set highlighted in the volume, including excerpts from seventy-six sermons by Ferdinand M. Isserman, thirty-five sermons by Louis I. Newman, thirty-one sermons by Maurice N. Eisendrath, twenty-eight sermons by Israel H. Levinthal, twenty-one sermons by Abba Hillel Silver, and dozens of other courageous voices. The diverse landscape of the United States and Canada in the 1930s and 1940s is illustrated by an array of oratorical texts representing the three major synagogue movements spread across twenty-five states and territories:

Reform—Solomon N. Bazell (Louisville, KY), Barnett Brickner (Cleveland, OH), Edward N. Calisch (Richmond, VA), Jacob X. Cohen (New York, NY), Beryl D. Cohon (Brookline, MA), Samuel S. Cohon (Cincinnati, OH), Max C. Currick (Erie, PA), Maurice N. Eisendrath (Toronto, Canada), Ira Eisenstein (New York, NY), Julius B. Feibelman (New Orleans, LA), Abraham H. Feinberg (Rockford, IL), Abraham L.

17 See Edward Shapiro’s review of Medoff’s book in this issue.

Feinberg (Denver, CO), Abraham J. Feldman (Hartford, CT), Solomon Foster (Newark, NJ), Ephraim Frisch (San Antonio, TX), Leo M. Franklin (Detroit, MI), Solomon B. Freehof (Pittsburgh, PA), Roland B. Gittelsohn (Rockville Center, NY), Samuel H. Goldenson (New York, NY), Julius Gordon (St. Louis, MO), Milton L. Grafman (Lexington, KY), James G. Heller (Cincinnati, OH), Ferdinand M. Isserman (St. Louis, MO), Ernest J. Jacob (Springfield, MO), Edward Klein (New York, NY), Bertram Korn (Mobile, AL), Morris S. Lazaron (Baltimore, MD), Felix A. Levy (Chicago, IL), Joshua Loth Liebman (Boston, MA), Alexander Lyons (Brooklyn, NY), Louis L. Mann (Chicago, IL), Julian Miller (St. Louis, MO), Morris Newfield (Birmingham, AL), Louis I. Newman (New York, NY), Max Nussbaum (Muskogee, OK; Hollywood, CA), David Philipson (Cincinnati, OH), David Polish (Waterbury, CT), Joachim Prinz (Livingston, NJ), Irving F. Reichert (San Francisco, CA), Jacob P. Rudin (Great Neck, NY), Harold I. Saperstein (Lynbrook, NY), Charles E. Shulman (Glencoe, IL), Abba Hillel Silver (Cleveland, OH), Phineas Smoller (Joplin, MO), Harry Joshua Stern (Montreal, Canada), Sidney S. Tedesche (Brooklyn, NY), Samuel Teitelbaum (Fort Smith, AR), James Waterman Wise (New York, NY), Jonah B. Wise (New York, NY), Stephen S. Wise (New York, NY), and Louis Wolsey (Philadelphia, PA).

Conservative—Charles J. Abeles (New York, NY), Max Arzt (Scranton, PA), Jacob Bosniak (Brooklyn, NY), Harry H. Epstein (Atlanta, GA), Solomon Goldman (Chicago, IL), Israel Goldstein (New York, NY), Simon Greenberg (Philadelphia, PA), Abraham E. Halpern (St. Louis, MO), Louis Hammer (Brooklyn, NY), Abraham Mayer Heller (Brooklyn, NY), Abraham M. Hershman (Detroit, MI), Jacob Kraft (Wilmington, DE), Leon S. Lang (Newark, NJ), Israel H. Levinthal (Brooklyn, NY), Louis M. Levitsky (Newark, NJ), Elias Margolis (Mount Vernon, NY), and Milton Steinberg (New York, NY).

Orthodox—Aaron David Burak (Brooklyn, NY), Tobias Geffen (Atlanta, GA), Israel Gerstein (Chattanooga, TN), Jacob Hoffman (New York, NY), David B. Hollander (Bronx, NY), Leo Jung (New York, NY), Abraham A. Kellner (Miami, FL), Mendel Lewittes (Dorchester, MA), Joseph H. Lookstein (New York, NY), David de Sola Pool (New York,

NY), Akiba Predmesky (Bronx, NY), Menachem Risikoff (Brooklyn, NY), Samuel Rosenblatt (Baltimore, MD), and Walter Wuerzburger (Brighton, MA).

Part 3 of the volume, “Complete Sermons,” features twenty-one unexpurgated items, including thirteen representative American and Canadian texts and eight texts from Europe and Palestine. The poignant titles of the sermons illustrate the sense of anguish, isolation, and despair that permeated the organized American Jewish scene in the 1930s and 1940s: Jacob X. Cohen’s “The Menace of Hitlerism to American Jewry” (1932), Harry Joshua Stern’s “Hitlerism, Germany, and Civilization” (1933), Israel Levinthal’s “Old Pharoah in Modern Garb” (1933), Jacob P. Rudin’s “Dark Horizons—1933” (1933), Harold L. Saperstein’s “The Call to Battle” (1934), Ferdinand Isserman’s “My Second Visit to Nazi Germany” (1935), Abba Hillel Silver’s “But Mordecai Bowed Not Down” (1936), Abraham Mayer Heller’s “A People’s Voice is Silenced” (1938), Tobias Geffen’s “Sermon on *Hayyei Sarah* 5699, at the Time of the Great Destruction of the Jews in Germany at the Hands of the Evil Oppressor, Hitler, May his name and his Memory be Blotted Out” (1938), Leo Franklin’s “Is This the End?” (1940), Bertram Korn’s “The Prayer for Life” (1943), Akiba Predmesky’s “The Ark of God Has Been Taken” (1943), and Louis I. Newman’s “The Cup of Fury” (1944). Not unlike the excerpts reprinted in Part 2 of the volume, these items illustrate the explosion and vigor of anti-Nazi sentiment and activity that characterized the American Jewish landscape before and during the war. Delving into the complete versions of the texts opens up new and generative possibilities for exploring and unpacking the full range of ideas, reactions, arguments, and strategies embedded in the sermons. Viewed in relationship to each other, it is evident that rabbinic leaders in each synagogue movement, acting as a loose coalition of authoritative communal advocates, raised their voices not only to defy the Hitler regime and prod the conscience of American society but in an effort to redefine the social and political objectives of organized American Jewry, linking antisemitism, prejudice, persecution, and violence against European Jewry to the fate of the Jewish people writ large.

In sum, Saperstein's *Agony in the Pulpit* is a unique and important contribution to the field of modern Jewish history. It is the first volume of its kind to provide a comparative documentary framework that investigates the generation of rabbinic leaders who navigated the tragedy of World War II and the Holocaust. Even as these historical actors recognized the overwhelming magnitude of the Nazi terror and the war's herculean challenges, they hoped their words might be instrumental and transformative. Deploying their sermons and addresses as a basic tool of communal expression and organization, they helped their congregations and listeners to synthesize and digest the cognitive dissonance of their wartime reality and their spiritual and cultural identities as Jews facing modernity. Saperstein is to be commended for undertaking the formidable task of unearthing, assembling, and editing this impressive anthology of material and for distilling it into an accessible and user-friendly format. The volume underscores the centrality and importance of rabbinic oratory in the 1930s and 1940s. It also categorically demonstrates how rabbinic leaders navigated the chaos, uncertainty, and danger of the darkest period of modern Jewish history and played pivotal roles in creating a discourse of resistance to the Nazi threat against the Jewish people and the free world.

Mark A. Raider is professor of modern Jewish history in the Department of History at the University of Cincinnati and director of the university's Center for Studies in Jewish Education and Culture. He is also a visiting professor of American Jewish history at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. His most recent books are The Essential Hayim Greenberg: Essays and Addresses on Jewish Culture, Socialism, and Zionism (2016) and New Perspectives in American Jewish History: A Documentary Tribute to Jonathan D. Sarna, with Gary Phillip Zola (2021).

— SELECT ACQUISITIONS 2020 —**Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR)**

Records concerning the CCAR “Carmi Project” to collect modern Hebrew poetry for use in Reform liturgy, including correspondence, selected poems, and editorial material, 1988–1989.

Received from Janet and Sheldon Marder, Palo Alto, CA

Congregation Emanuel (Statesville, NC)

Records of Congregation Emanuel, including historical and legal records, administration records and reports, membership records, publications, programs, and photographs, 1902–2001.

Received from Congregation Emanuel, Statesville, NC

Democratic Rabbinic Network

Material related to the Georgia Senatorial campaign of Raphael Warnock, along with Democratic Rabbinic Network Zoom presentation slides, and article by Mark L. Winer, 2020.

Received from Mark L. Winer, Boca Raton, FL

Eisendrath, Maurice

Papers pertaining to Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, including news clippings, writings, correspondence, diplomas, and photographs; along with student theses about Eisendrath, 1957–1984.

Received from Steven B. Jacobs, Sacramento, CA

Fox, John

Papers and photographs of John Fox pertaining to his mission trips to the USSR to work with refuseniks, 1980–1996.

Received from Lisa Fox, Cincinnati, OH

Heller, Maximilian and James G.

Papers of Rabbi Maximilian Heller (1860–1929) and Rabbi James G. Heller (1892–1971), 1885–1949.

Received from Milly Heller, New Orleans, LA

Horwich, Roslyn Lieberman

Bat mitzvah speech given by Roslyn Lieberman Horwich, the first bat mitzvah at Washington Boulevard Synagogue (Oak Park Temple), 1941.

Received from Bruce Horwich, Oak Park, IL

The Jewish Federation

Collection of newsletters of the Jewish Federation and multiple local Federation chapters, including Cincinnati, OH, Toledo, OH, and Kansas City, MO, 1980–2020.

Received from Judah Segal, Raleigh, NC

Kaplan, Louis

Collection of letters and postcards between Rabbi Louis Kaplan and Horace M. Kallen (1882–1974), along with articles and notes about Kallen written by Kaplan, 1968–1982.

Received from Louis Kaplan, Wallingford, PA

Krasner, Jonathan

Papers of Jonathan Krasner, including interviews and research notes, correspondence, and records documenting his founding of and involvement in Keshet, 1996–2002.

Received from Jonathan Krasner, Waltham, MA

Krass, R. Nathan

Papers of Rabbi R. Nathan Krass (1880–1949), including sermons, addresses, correspondence, and news clippings, 1920–1930.

Received from Lucy Cohen Loewenheim, Rockville, MD

Levi, Harry

Papers of Rabbi Harry Levi (1875–1944), including calendars, writings, and sermons while serving the pulpits at LeShem Shomayim (Wheeling, WV) and Temple Israel (Boston, MA), 1908–1938.

Received from Charles S. Levi, Deerfield, IN

Liebman, Ethel

Video interviews conducted by Ethel Liebman with Jewish veterans living at Lakeside Village Retirement Community (Lantana, FL), 2019.

Received from Ethel Liebman, Lantana, FL

Lovenstein, William

Original Civil War diaries of William Lovenstein (1840–1896), along with biographical material and funeral notices, 1859–1896.

Received from Thomas A. Louchheim, Tucson, AZ

Lowengard, Sarah

Papers of the Hatman, Title, and Lowengard families, including diaries, travel journals, correspondence, scrapbooks, obituaries, and additional material, 1912–2003.

Received from Sarah Lowengard, New York, NY

Lurie, Jesse Zel

Papers documenting the life and career of journalist and *Jewish Journal* columnist Jesse Zel Lurie (1913–2017), including writings, journals, and diaries, c. 1920–2017.

Received from Ellen Belson and Susan Lurie Zaslavsky, Armonk, NY

Mecklenburger, Ralph

Papers of Rabbi Ralph Mecklenburger, including sermons, writings, and correspondence, 1973–2016.

Received from Ralph Mecklenburger, Fort Worth, TX

Mortman, Howard

Collection of C-SPAN videos of rabbi guest chaplains in Congress and remarks by congresspeople; along with a drawing of Gary P. Zola conducting prayers before Congress, used on the cover of Mortman's book *When Rabbis Bless Congress: The Great American Story of Jewish Prayers on Capitol Hill*, 1985–2020.

Received from Howard Mortman, McLean, VA

Rapp, Michael

Papers of Michael Rapp, including correspondence, speeches, and executive board material pertaining to the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) and Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA), 1962–2007.

Received from Michael Rapp, Cincinnati, OH

Roos (Rose) and Sussell families

Family history of the Roos (Rose) and Sussel families of Speyer, Germany, and biography Bernhard Roos, including images of Leon Fischel, a Confederate soldier, and the Rose Brothers Fur Co. storefront in St. Paul, MN, 1889–2000.

Received from Jonathan Rose, Tempe, AZ

Smoller, Phineas

Papers of Rabbi Phineas Smoller (1903–1952), including correspondence, writings, and news clippings, 1930–1952.

Received from Rachel Yoskowitz, West Bloomfield, MI

Stahl, Howard M.

Papers of Cantor Howard Stahl, including personal correspondence, writing, and material relating to his leadership roles in the American Conference of Cantors, 1970–2000.

Received from Howard Stahl, Short Hills, NJ

Stedman, Jon

Papers of Jon Stedman, including writings, genealogical research, and material related to Stedman's work preparing *First American Jewish Families* with Dr. Malcolm Stern, 1970–2005.

Received from Karen S. Franklin, Yonkers, NY

Tanenbaum, Marc H.

Collection of interviews, with transcriptions, about the life of Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, 2010–2014.

Received from Georgette Bennett, New York, NY

Venezky, Julian

Papers of United Jewish Appeal (UJA) chair Julian Venezky, including correspondence, writings, and records pertaining to the UJA and State of Israel Bonds, 1930–2008.

Received from Robert and Gail Wertheimer, Palm Beach Gardens, FL

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INDEX

A

- Aaronsohn, Aaron, 100–101
 Adler, Jacob O., xi, xin6
 Advertising, 103, 127
 Alexandria, VA, 49, 49n129
 Alliance Israelite Universelle, 107
Altoona Tribune, 33n48
 “America First” (slogan), 111
American Israelite, x, 13n19, 54n161, 78n2, 79n3
 American Jewish Archives (AJA), vii, xiiin13, 2
American Jewish Archives, xiiin13, 2
American Jewish Archives Journal, xiiin11, 19n31
 American Jewish Committee (AJC), 13, 16n24, 107, 109, 122
 American Jewish Congress, 118
 American Jewish Historical Society, 18, 28n25
 American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC or JDC), 36, 36n71, 84, 84n3, 122, 128, 129n3
American Jewish Yearbook, 13, 81n13
 American Oriental Society, 84n5, 85n5
 Amur River, 79,
 Andreas, Gerta, 86n10
 Andreas, Willy, 86, 86n10
 Anglican Church, 74
Anschluss, 5
 Antisemitism, 11, 14, 16, 16n24, 16n26, 27, 52–53, 60, 80n9, 98, 109, 112, 119, 123–125, 127, 130, 136
 Anti-Zionist, 17
 Arabs, 18, 108
 Armenians, 120
 Army, 25, 27–28, 30–32, 39
 Art, American, womens’, 114–117
Art of the Jewish Family: A History of Women in Early New York in Five Objects, 114–117
 Aryanization, 14, 86
 Assistance Committee of Hawaii, 36
 Association for Jewish Colonization in the Soviet Union, 79

Auschwitz, 15n22, 120, 120n4

- Austria, 5, 15,
Authentically Orthodox: A Tradition-Bound Faith in American Life, 102–106
 Axis alliance, Axis [controlled] countries, 5, 113

B

- B’nai B’rith, 29, 85n6
 B’nai B’rith Lodge, xi, 29–30, 52
B’nai B’rith Messenger, 26
ba’alei teshuva, 105
 Baeck, Leo, 84n5, 114
 Baltic states, 10
 Baltimore, 104, 135–136, 144
 Barbados, 115
 Bar Kokhba, 8
 Bar Mitzvah, 45
 Baron, Jeanette Maisel, 10n14
 Baron, Salo Wittmayer, vii–viii, xiv, 1, 9–12, 17–19, 89n22
 Baruch, Bernard, 119
 Baruch, Hilde, 83n2
 Basketball, 104
 Bat Mitzvah, 104, 139,
 Bauer, Yehuda, 84n3, 128, 129n3, 130
 Bees, *brochos*, spelling, 104–105
 Berkman, Matthew (reviewer), 124
 Berkowitz, Michael, 101
 Berlin, ix, 8, 78–82
 Berman, Lila Corwin, *The American Jewish Philanthropic Complex: The History of a Multi-Billion Dollar Institution*, 96
 Bernstein, Judah (reviewer), 110
 Bethesda Chevy Chase Jewish Community Group, 55
 Bezalel School of Art (Jerusalem), 101
 Billmann-Mahecha, Elfriede, 83n2
 Birobidzhan, 78–79, 84n4
 Bisgyer, Maurice, 30n35
 Black, Edwin, 14n21
 Bloch, Joshua, 81n13
Blowing the Whistle on Genocide: Josiah E. DuBois, Jr. and the Struggle for a U.S.

- Response to the Holocaust*, 118
 Bluestein, Richard, 61n190, 61n194–195, 62n198
 Boca Raton, Florida, 125, 138
 Bosnia, 120
 Boynton Beach, Florida, 125
 Braham, Randolph L., 52
 Brandeis, Louis D., 100
 Brash, Henrietta, 126
 Brash, Henry, 126
 Breitman, Richard, 128–129, 131
 Brevard, Joseph, 74n22
 British Automobile Association, 85n7
Brit Milah (ritual circumcision), 126
 Broward County, Florida, 125
 Brown, Michael, 101
 Bucharest, 80n8
 Budapest, xii, 23, 27, 50–55, 59–60, 80n8
 Bureau of Jewish Education, 78
 Butler, Nicholas, 112
- C**
 California, 24, 26, 28, 62–63, 88n17, 125
 Caribbean, 115
 Carnegie Hall, 134
 Cashmere, Kirk, xiin9, 44n105, 47n122, 48n126, 49n130, 49n132, 51n143, 61n191, 62n196
 Catholics, American, 105
 Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), x, 4, 9, 14, 16–17, 60–61, 63n204, 78–79, 81, 138
Central Conference of American Rabbis Year Book, 5n3–4, 6n5, 7n6–7, 17n27, 18n29, 51n144, 78n1, 79
 Chabad of Hawaii, 21n1
 Chamberlin, Brewster S., 52n149
 Chaplains, 22, 31–36, 39–40, 53, 58, 98, 140
 Charleston, SC, xii–xiii, 67–71, 76–77
 Charleston Court of Ordinary, 70
 Chautauqua movement, 100–101
 Chinese Famine Relief Drive, 29
 Christians, American, vii, 100
 Churchill, Winston, 13
- City College of New York, 34
City Gazette (Charleston, SC), 71, 71n14, 72n16–17, 73n18
 Civil rights, 14, 53
 Coates, Ta-Nehisi, 116
 Cohen, Jacob X., 134, 136
 Cohen, Naomi W., 16n24
 Coffee, Rudolph, x, 24
 Cold War, 109, 121–122
 College of Jewish Studies, 55n165
 Colleges, Black, 113
 Columbia University, 9, 112
 Columbia University Press, 12n17
 Committee on Army and Navy Religious Activities (JWB), 32
 Committee on Contemporaneous History and Literature, 5n3–4, 7n7, 18n29, 78n1, 79
 Communists, 53, 83
 Congregation of the Honolulu Jewish Community, iv, 22, 39–40, 42, 44, 46, 48n124
 Conant, James, 112
 Cooperman, Jessica, 25n13
 Coughlin, Charles, 16, 16n26
 Council of Social Interfaith Reconciliation, 53
Courier (Charleston, SC), 73, 74n20
 Crusades, 8
 Czechoslovakia, 13, 15
 Czempin, Rosa, 83n2
- D**
 Dabrowa, Edward, 19n31
 Dalin, Miriam Sanua (reviewer), 127
 Dalton (GA), 55, 55n63
 Davis, Israel, 70, 73
 Dawidowicz, Lucy S., 121–123
Deafening Silence: American Jewish Leaders and the Holocaust, 118
 Delray Beach, Florida, 125
 Democratic Republic of Congo, 120
 Department of the Navy, United States, 119
 Department of Veterans Affairs, United States, 119
 Depression, The (United States), 111
 Diaspora, viii, 9–10, 68, 106, 123–124

- Dohany Street Synagogue, 59
 Doyle, John, 35n65
 Druckmann, Rechuma, 83n2
 Durant, Ariel, xiin12
 Durant, Will, xiii, xiiin12
 Duschinsky, Eugene, 53n151
 Düsseldorf, Germany, 84n5
- E**
 Efrati, Natan, *Ideology and Reality: American Jewry and the Yishuv in the Late Ottoman Period* (Hebrew), 99
 Egelson, Louis I., 60, 60n186, 62n198
 Eichmann, Adolf, 9
 Eisendrath, Maurice N., 48, 134, 138
 Ekaterinoslav, 80n8
 Elazar, Daniel J., 46n116
 Elbogen, Ismar, 80, 80n10, 84n5, 89, 89n22, 90n23–24
 Electoral College, United States, 125
 Eleff, Zev, *Authentically Orthodox: A Tradition-Bound Faith in American Life*, 102
 Elzas, Barnett A., 71n13
 Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German (later: Foreign) Scholars, 112
 Eschelbacher, Ernestine, 84–85n5
 Eschelbacher, Josef, 84n5
 Eugenics, 112
Evening Bulletin, 24n9–10
- F**
FDR and the Holocaust: A Breach of Faith, 118
 Feingold, Henry L., 129n3, 131, 131n10, 132n12
 Feitelberg, Abraham, 38n83–84, 40, 40n92, 40n94, 45n114
 Feldheyim, Norman, 39, 39n89, 40n91
 Feldman, A.J., 47n120
 Financiers, 16
 First Hebrew Congregation of Honolulu, 24, 24n8
 Fishman, Seymour, 35n63, 35n66–67, 35n69, 36n71, 37n72, 37n76–77, 38n81, 39n87, 41n96
- Florida International University, 124
 Folkways, Jewish, in Lithuania, in Hungary, 103
 Fort de Russy, 39
 Frankenstein, Carl, 83n2
 Frankenstein, Emil, 83n2
 Frankfurter, Felix, 119
 Franklin, Leo, 135–136
 Free Synagogue, New York, 134
 Free University of Budapest, 51
 Freifeld, Alice, 52n149
 Freud, Sigmund, 51, 95
 Friedenwald, Harry, 99
 Friesel, Evyatar, 99, 100
 Frojimovics, Kinga, 59n185
From Left to Right: Lucy S. Dawidowicz, the New York Intellectuals, and the Politics of Jewish History, 121
- G**
 Galen Building, 38, 40
 Gaza Strip, 108
 Geffen, Tobias, 135–136
 Gender, and Judaism, 105, 114–115
 Georgetown School of Languages, 57
 Gershberg, I.I., 25
 Gershovitz, S.D., 38n83, 42n100
 Gesamtarchiv der Deutschen Juden, 85n6
 Gestapo, 84, 84n4, 91n27
 Ghettos, European, Jewish fighters and, vii
 Glanz, Rudolf, xi, xin7, 24n5
 Glueck, Nelson, 61
 Goebbels, Joseph, 84
 Gold Rush, 24
 Goldstein, Eric L., 19n31
 Golinkin, David, 118
 Goren, Arthur, 101
 Graetz, Heinrich, 9, 9n13, 10n13
 Gratz, Rebecca, 117
 Great War. *See* World War I
 Greenbaum, Andrea, 124n1
 Greenberg, Hayim, 128, 128n2
 Greenberg, Karen J., 113
 Grossinger family (Catskills and Florida), 127
 Grumet, Elinor, 9n11, 18n30

- Gulf of Mexico, 126
- Gurock, Jeffrey S., iii, vii–viii, 1, 19, 19n31, 78, 129n3
- H**
- Halitzah, xii, 67–70, 76–77
- Halakha. *See* Law, Jewish
- Halukah* (overseas charity funds), 100
- Hamburg, 85n8
- Hanukkah, 31
- Harris, Andrew, 70, 73
- Harris, Victor, 26, 26n14–15, 27, 27n20–21, 28n22
- Hart, Solomon, 70–71, 73, 75–76
- Harvard University, 65, 112
- Hauser, Rita, 109
- Hawaii, iii–iv, x–xii, 21–49, 51, 55–58, 62–65
- Hawaii Jewish News*, 44, 44n105, 44n109
- Hawaiian Gazette*, 24n8
- Hawaiian Kingdom, 24
- Hebrew Benevolent Society, 70
- Hebrew Cemetery Association, 24
- Hebrew Military Association, 25
- Hebrew Union College, 63, 78, 81n11, 89n22
- Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 61, 90n25, 114, 137
- Hebrew University, 83n2
- Heidelberg University, 81n13, 86n10
- Heller, Abraham Mayer, 135–136
- Herkimer (NY), 39
- Hevesi, Francis, xii, 23, 49–61
- Hevesi, Magda, 59
- Hindenburg, Paul von, 85n8
- Hitler, Adolf, iii, vii–ix, 2, 5–8, 10–11, 13n19, 14, 16, 79–81, 84, 85n8, 87n13, 91n27, 92, 95n37, 128, 131n8, 136
- Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, 80, 80n9, 89n22, 90n25
- Holocaust, 53, 89n19, 97, 106–107, 111, 118, 121–123, 128, 129n3, 130, 130n7–8, 131, 133–134, 137
- Holy Land, 100
- Honey and Poi*, xin9, 21n1
- Honolulu, iv, xi–xii, 21–22, 24, 25n11–12, 26–31, 33n53, 34, 36–47, 49, 50–51, 55, 56–60, 62–63, 65
- Honolulu Advertiser*, 24n7, 25n11, 27n17–19, 27n21, 28n22–23, 29n27, 29n29–31, 34n57, 34n61, 47n121
- Honolulu Jewish Community, 27, 36, 38–40, 44
- Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 27n21, 28n23, 29n28–29, 29n31, 34n56–57, 35n64
- Hötsch, Otto, 86n9
- HUC. *See* Hebrew Union College
- Human rights, 106–109
- Hungarian Army, 53, 86
- Hungary, xii, 23, 50–54, 58–59
- I**
- ICOR. *See* Association for Jewish Colonization in the Soviet Union
- Ideology and Reality: American Jewry and the Yishuv in the Late Ottoman Period* [Heb.], 99
- Illness, mental, 114, 116
- Ing, Tiffany Lani, xin6
- Inquisition, 116
- Iron Guard, 15
- Isaacs, Abram S., 130n6
- Isaacs, Jane Symons, 115
- Israel, State of, 93n44, 94n47, 97, 99–102, 106, 108, 121, 123–124, 125, 127
- Israeli-American Connection, The*, 101
- Isserman, Ferdinand, M., 134–136
- Italy, 5, 18, 88n17
- J**
- Jacksonville, Florida, 124, 127
- Jacobs, Gaskel, 33, 36n70, 44
- Jacobson, Marcus Amram Israel, 85n7
- Japan, 5, 22, 30, 35, 119
- Jerusalem, 72n15, 100–101
- Jew in the Medieval World, A Source Book: 315–1791*, 81
- Jewish Agency, 14
- Jewish Autonomous Region. *See* Birobidzhan
- Jewish Community Center (Honolulu), 34–36, 42n101–104, 44n107–108

- Jewish Community in Eretz Israel (1914–1918)*, 99
- Jewish Federation of Hawaii, 23n2
- Jewish Internationalism and Human Rights after the Holocaust*, 106
- Jewish Museum of Florida, 124
- Jewish Theological Seminary, x, 24, 48n127, 89n22, 101
- Jewish Quarterly Review*, 11, 12n17
- Jewish Welfare Board (JWB), iii, xi, 21, 25, 28n24, 29–30, 35n64, 35n66, 40, 45, 58n180
- Jewish Welfare Fund, 28
- Jews of Florida: Centuries of Stories*, 124
- Jews Should Keep Quiet: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and the Holocaust*, 118, 120, 131n9, 134
- Johnson, Alvin, 112
- Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). *See* American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
- Jordan, Charles, 37n73
- Judaism, Conservative, Neolog, Orthodox, Reform, iv, 21–23, 25n13, 26, 30, 33, 45–47, 46, 59, 60, 65, 77, 89n21–22, 102–103, 122
- Judenrein*, 12
- K**
- Kaell, Hillary, 100
- Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (Charleston, SC), 70
- Kahn, Bernhard, 84, 84n4
- Kalakaua, King, xi, xin6
- Kallen, Horace, 113, 139
- Kalmanovitch, Zelig, 121
- Kaplan, Amy, 100
- Kaufman, Jay, 48, 61, 61n195
- Kawaiahao Church, 38
- Key West, Florida, 125, 127
- khurban forshung* (destruction research), 122
- Kishinev, 80n8
- Klar, Zoltan, 52, 53n152
- Kol Nidre, 27
- Komoroczy, Geza, 59
- Korn, Bertram, 135–136
- Kraft, Louis, 29n32, 30n36
- Krakow, Poland, 80n8
- Kraut, Alan M., 128, 129n3
- Kristallnacht, ix, 6, 15, 18
- Kumin, Emanuel, 37–45, 47
- Kurz, Nathan, *Jewish Internationalism and Human Rights after the Holocaust* (reviewed), 106
- L**
- Lachrymosity, iii, vii–viii, 9–10
- Lake Chautauqua, 100
- Lambert, Peter, 85n8
- Law, biblical, 67
- Law, international, 107
- Law, Jewish, 68–73
- Law, marriage, 67, 69
- League of Nations, 107
- Lebanon, Invasion of by Israel, 123
- Leff, Laurel, *Well Worth Saving: American Universities' Life-and-Death Decisions on Refugees from Nazi Europe* (reviewed), 110
- Lehman, Herbert, 119
- Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, 80, 80n9
- Lehrer, Leibush, 121
- Leibman, Laura Arnold, *The Art of the Jewish Family: A History of Women in Early New York in Five Objects* (reviewed), 114
- Leipzig, 85n8
- LeMaster, Carolyn Gray, xn5
- Lev, Aryeh, 39n89, 40, 40n91
- Leveltar, Orszagos, 52n149
- Levinson, Bernard, 22, 23n2, 44, 44n105, 44n109, 45n113, 49n129, 49n131, 50n134, 50n136–138, 55n166, 55n168, 57n174–177, 59n181, 60n186, 61n190, 61n193, 61n195, 62n198–199, 63, 63n205
- Levinson, Carlyn, 49n129
- Levinson, Peter J., xii, 65
- Levinthal, Israel H., 136
- Levir (brother-in-law), 68
- Levirate marriage, xiin11, 67–68, 70, 72n16

- Levy, Hannah, 70–76
 Liberles, Robert, 12, 12n17
 Lichtenstein, Aharon, 102, 102n1
 Lichtman, Allan J., 128, 129n3
 Linczer, Alexander, 27–28, 28n22
 Linczer, Jennie, 28
 Lithuania, 10, 26, 103, 126
 Lookstein, Haskell, 130, 130n8
 Los Angeles, 26, 125
 Louzada, Hannah, 115
- M**
 Madison Square Garden, 134
 Maierhof, Gudrun, 85n5, 94n33
 Magnes, Judah, 99, 101
 Makiki, 46
 Marcks, Erich, 85, 85n8, 86n10–11
 Marcus, Alfred Akiva, 84n5
 Marcus, Bertha, 84n5
 Marcus, Jacob Rader, iii, viii–x, xiii, 1–12,
 13n19, 14–19, 78–82, 83n1, 84n5,
 85n5, 85n8, 89n22, 90n25
 Marcus, Max, 84n5
 Marrus, Michael, 132, 132n13
 Martial Law, 22, 30, 31n38
 McCormack-Dickstein Congressional
 Committee, 16
 Medoff, Rafael, *The Jews Should Keep
 Quiet: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi
 Stephen S. Wise, and the Holocaust* (re-
 viewed), 118
 Metz, Solomon, 55n165
 Mexico, 26
 Meyendorff, A., 86n9
 Meyer, Michael A., 89n21–22, 90n25,
 114
 Meyer, Peter, 53n151
 Meyerson, Harvey, 56, 56n170
 Meyerson, Ida, 56
 Meyerson, Sol, 56
 Miami, 124n1, 127, 135
 Miami Beach, 124, 127
 Miami-Dade County, Florida, 125
Middletown Times Herald Record, 55n162
 Minkoff, Harry, 35n65
 Minorities Treaty, 107
 Mitelpunkt, Shaul, 100
- Mittwoch, Eugen, 84, 84n3, 90
Moment Magazine, ix, 8, 9n11
 Monroe (NY), 55, 55n162
 Monson, Rela Geffen, 46n116
 Moore, Deborah Dash, 124n1
 Morgenthau, Henry, Jr., 119
 Morrel, Albert, 126
 Morse, Arthur D., 52n148, 130, 130n7
MOSAIC: Jewish Life in Florida, 124
 Moscow, 80n8, 87n14
 Moses, Isaiah, xii, 67, 69, 76
 Moses, Levy, xii, 67–68
 Moses, Morris, 69
 Moses, Phineas, 69
 Moses, Rachel Gratz, 117
 Moses, Rebecca Phillips, 67–70, 76–77
 Moses, Reyna Levy, 117
 Moses, Sarah Brandon, 115–116
 Moses, Simeon, 69
 Moses, Solomon, 117
 Mossinson, Benzion, 101
 Munich, 85n8
 Munich Conference (1938), 13
- N**
 Nadell, Pamela S., 77n24
 National Aeronautics and Space
 Administration (NASA), 126
 National Federation of Temple
 Brotherhood, 45
 National Jewish Welfare Fund, 28
 National Association for the
 Advancement of Colored People
 (NAACP), 109
 National Rabbinical Seminary of
 Hungary, 51
 National Socialist Party (Nazi Party),
 85n8
 Nationalism, Diaspora, 121, 124
 Nazism, racial standards, iii, 6, 10–12,
 17n27, 86n11, 122
 Nehmad, I. Robert, xn4
 Neoconservatism, 123
 New Deal, 117–119, 130
 New England Section (JWB), 33
 New Left, 121, 123
 New School for Social Research, 112

- New York, legislature, 119
 New York School of Social Work, 33
New York Times, xiin10, 8, 87n14–15, 89, 90n23, 94
 New York University, 110
 Newman, Louis I., 134–136
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 84
 Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), 107–109
 Nuremberg Laws, 5, 14, 17, 92n29
- O**
 Oahu, x, 21, 34, 48, 57
 Odessa, 80n8
 Olsen, Tillie, 114, 114n1, 117
 Olympic Games, 81n13, 87, 87n15–16
 Orlando, Florida, 126
 Orthodox Judaism. *See* Judaism, Orthodox.
 Oser, Asher C. (reviewer), 106
- P**
 Pacific, iv, xi–xii, 21, 31, 35–37
 Painting, miniature, 115
 Palestine, British Mandatory, Ottoman, 12, 14, 14n21, 18, 83n2, 85, 90n24, 93n31, 94, 94n34–35, 99, 100, 103, 107, 109, 131n8, 133, 136
 Palestine Relief Fund, 28
 Palm Beach County, Florida, 125
 Panama Canal Zone, 28
 Paris, 80n8, 84, 84n3–4, 88n17
 Pearl Harbor, 30–31
 Penkower, Monty N., 130, 130n8
 Pensacola, Florida, 125, 127
 Penslar, Derek J., 86n11, 89n21
 Pentagon, United States, 120
 People's Delegation of the Biro-Bidjan Conference, 78–79
 Perry, George, 35n66
 Pittsburgh, 32, 126, 135
Pittsburgh Press, 33n47
 Poland, 7, 15–17, 80, 84n4, 121
 Polygamy, 67
 Pool, David de Sola, 32, 32n44, 135
 Prayer, Jewish women and, 105
 Predmesky, Akiba, 136
- Preis, Alfred, 47
 Proctor, Samuel, 79n7, 80n10
 Protestantism, American, 104
 Provisional Rabbinical Placement Committee, 61–62
 Prussian National Library, 8
 Public Broadcasting Service, United States, 132n11
 Purim, costume balls on, 127
 Pusztai, Viktoria, 59n185
- R**
 Rabinowitz, Benjamin, 31n19, 32, 32n43, 32n45, 33n50–51, 33n55, 35n69, 36n70
 Race, hierarchies of, 116
 Raider, Mark A. (reviewer), 128n2, 137
 Ranching, cattle, 125
 Recipes, 92n29
 Reform, iv, xii, 4, 16, 16n24, 23, 27, 35, 45, 48, 60–61, 63, 65, 89n21, 138
 Refugees, Jewish, 6, 14, 15n22, 22, 34, 36, 110, 112–113, 116, 131n9
 Reichstag, 86n22
 Resolutions Committee, 23, 64
Rise and Destiny of the German Jew, viii, 4n2, 8n10, 81, 85n5, 95n38
 Robinson, Ira, 10n13
 Rockefeller Foundation, 111
 Röder, Werner, 83n2
 Romania, 15–16, 127
 Roosevelt, Franklin D., administration of, 118–120, 129, 129n3, 131n9, 132, 132n12, 134
 Rosenman, Samuel I., 119
 Rosh Hashanah, 24, 25n12, 61
 Routtenberg, Max, 48, 48n127
 Rudin, Jacob P., 62n198, 135–136
 Russia, 26, 53, 78, 78n2, 79, 86–88, 92, 94, 94n35, 125–127
 Rwanda, 120
- S**
 Safer, Benjamin, 126
 Samuelson, Hava Tirosh, 19n31
 Santayana, George, viii, viiin2
 Saperstein, Harold L., 135–136

- Saperstein, Marc, *Agony in the Pulpit: Jewish Preaching in Response to Nazi Persecution and Mass Murder, 1933–1945* (reviewed), 128–137
- Sapiro, Barnett, 47, 47n118, 48
- Sarna, Jonathan D., xii, xiin11, 67, 67n1, 68, 68n5–6, 69, 77, 77n24–25, 80n10, 137
- Schatz, Boris, 101
- Scheiber, Harry N., 31n38
- Scheiber, Jane L., 31n38
- Schiff, Hugo, 47, 47n118, 48–49, 51, 51n144, 54n158
- Schleunes, Karl, 14, 15n22
- Schneider, Jack, 39n85, 41n98
- Schneiderman, Harry, 13, 13n20, 14, 81n13
- Schneirov, Maurice, 32–33, 33n49–55, 34, 34n57–62, 36
- Schorsch, Ismar, 10n13
- Schwartz, Shea, 29, 29n32, 33n50
- Scrapbooks, 117, 140
- Sebastopol, 80n8
- Secretary of the Treasury, United States, 119
- Segel, Alexander, 49n131, 62, 62n199, 62n201, 63, 63n204–206
- Sermons, rabbinic, 46, 56, 89n21, 133–134, 136–137, 139–140
- Service Men's Club, 36
- Sgan, Mathew, xi, xin9
- Shader, Israel, 126
- Shapiro, Edward S. (reviewer), 120
- shlichim* (emissaries), 101
- Shanghai, 36, 37n72, 65
- Shavuot, 31, 34
- Shearith Israel (Charleston, SC), 69
- Shepard, David, 50
- Shinedling, Abraham I., xn5
- Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, 121
- Shtar halitzah*, xiin11, 67–70, 76–77
- Shugarman, Arthur, and Gedolim cards, 104
- Siberia, 79
- Silhouettes, cutting, 115
- Sills, John, 33n49, 37n74, 37n77, 38n81
- Silver, smithing, 115
- Silver, Abba Hillel, 134, 136
- Silver, M. M. (reviewer), 102
- Silverstein, Joseph, 30, 30n34, 30n36
- Simonson, Michael, 85n6
- Sinkoff, Nancy, *From Left to Right: Lucy S. Dawidowicz, the New York Intellectuals, and the Politics of Jewish History* (reviewed), 121
- Six-Day War, 102
- Skaggs, Michael (reviewer), 98
- Sklare, Marshall, 102, 102n1
- Snyder, Saul, 126
- Sobel, Louis H., 36n71
- Sobel, Samuel, 58n180, 58, 61n193
- Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 10, 11n15, 12n17
- Social Federation of Hungarian Jews, 53
- Socialist Party, 33
- Sof Ma'arav, xi, 21n1
- Soloveitchik, Joseph Dov Baer, 105
- Sorkin, David, 80n9
- South Carolina, xii, 69, 74, 76
- Southern Jewry, 67, 77
- Soviet army, 52
- Soviet Union. *See* USSR
- Srebrnik, Henry Felix, 79, 79n4
- SS Armenian, 80n8
- SS Bremen, 81n13
- SS General Gordon, 36
- SS General Meigs, 37
- Stalin, Joseph, 78, 78n2, 87n14, 94
- State Department, United States, ix, 92, 110, 112
- Statue of Liberty, 37
- Steeded by Adversity: Essays and Addresses on American Jewish Life*, 10n14, 19
- Stern, Harry Joshua, 136
- Stock, Armin, 83n2
- Straus, Herbert Cerf, 32n44
- Straus, Nathan, 99
- Strauss, Herbert A., 83n2
- Strauss, Lauren B. (reviewer), 117
- Strbik, Andrea, 59n185
- Streicher, Julius, 84
- Student Struggle Against the Holocaust*, 118
- Sudetenland, 13
- Supreme Court, United States, 119

Sussman, Lance J., 77n24
 Sylvain, Nicolas, 53n151

T

Tallahassee, Florida, 127
 Talmud study, women and, 105
 Tanaka, Joy M., 24n8
 Temple Beth El (Alexandria, VA), 49
 Temple de Hirsch (Seattle), 45, 45n110
 Temple Emanu-El (Hawaii), xi–xii,
 21–23, 44, 47n117, 48, 48n124, 55,
 58, 60, 62–63, 65
 Temple Sinai (Glendale, CA), 62
 Ten Commandments, 72
 Texas, 125
 Theresienstadt, 85n7
 Third Reich, 12–13, 13n19, 18, 90n26
 Tolischus, Otto D., 8, 89, 89n20, 94
Too Little, and Almost Too Late: The War Refugee Board and America's Response to the Holocaust, 118
 Totalitarianism, 4
 Toys, Binyan Blocks, 104
 Trade Unions, 16
 Transfer Agreement, 14, 14n21
 Trummer, Elisa, 86n10
 Tuchman, Barbara W., vii, viin1
 Turitz, Evelyn, xn5
 Turitz, Leo, xn5
 Turkey (country), 120
 Turkish Thrace, 16
 Tutsis, 120

U

Ukraine, 10, 80
 Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), iv, 23, 23n3,
 27, 48, 48n126, 60–61, 63–64
 United Jewish Appeal, 54, 54n161, 142
 United Nations, 107–109
 United Palestine Appeal, 17
 United Service Organizations (USO), 32
 United Synagogue of America, 48, 48n127
 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 107
Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 51n140
 Universities, presidents, 111–112, 136

University in Exile (New School for Social Research), 112
 University of Berlin, 80, 80n10, 84n3,
 86n9
 University of Budapest, 51
 University of Freiburg, 85n8
 University of Hawaii, 23n2, 48, 56,
 56n173
 University of Hawaii School of Law, 23n2
 U.S. Customs Service, 28
 USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), ix, 79–80, 138
 Unter den Linden, 83, 87, 87n15–16
 Urofsky, Melvin, 100
 Utica (NY), 39

V

Vatican II, 105
 Veterans Administration, 28
 Veterans Bureau, 28
 VJ Day, 85n7
 Vogel, Lester, 100

W

Warsaw, 80n8
 Washington, Booker T., 101
 Washington Hebrew Congregation, 45,
 45n112, 49
Washington Post, 55n164–165
 Weil, Frank L., 42n100
 Weinberg, Robert, 78n2
 Weiner, Deborah R., xn5
 Weinreich, Max, 121
 Weinryb, Bernard D., 53n151
 Weinstein, Israel, 28, 28n25, 30n34,
 38n80
 Weisberg, Dvora, xii, xiin11, 67–68,
 68n5–6, 69, 77, 77n25
Well Worth Saving: American Universities' Life-and-Death Decisions on Refugees from Nazi Europe, 110
 Wenzel, Cornelia, 85n5
 West Bank, 108
 Western States Jewish History Association, xi
Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly, xi, xin6–7

- Whitfield, Stephen, 124
 Widze, Poland, 80n8
 Wiesel, Elie, 131n8, 132
 Wilson, Woodrow, administration of, 130
 Wise, Stephen S., 118, 130, 134–135
 Wolfradt, Uwe, 83n2
 Women's Committee of JWB, 28n23
 World Jewish Congress, 107, 118, 128
 World War I, 1, 25, 25n13, 28, 51,
 86n11, 89n19–20, 99–100, 107, 130
 World War II, iii, xi–xii, xiin9, 4–7, 12,
 14, 19n31, 21–23, 28, 30–31, 35–36,
 65, 86n11, 95n37, 97, 107, 118, 120–
 121, 125–126, 130n8, 133, 137
 Wyman, David S., 118, 130, 130–131n8,
 131, 131n9, 132, 132n11, 134
 Wyzanksi, Charles, 119

Y

- Yalta, 80n8
 Yeshiva University (New York), game
 show team, 104
 Yeshivat Rambam (Baltimore), 104, 106
 Yiddish, 79, 90, 103, 117, 121–122, 124
 Yidishe Kolonizatsye Organizatsye in
 Rusland. *See* Association for Jewish
 Colonization in the Soviet Union
 Yishuv, 99–101
 Yom Kippur, 27, 27n21, 61
 Young Men's Hebrew Association, 33

Z

- Zerivitz, Marcia Jo, *Jews of Florida:
 Centuries of Stories*, 124
 Zerubavel, Yael, 101
 Zionism, American, 99–100, 102, 128n2,
 137
 Zola, Gary Phillip, ixn3, 2n1, 9n11,
 80n10, 137, 140
 Zukerkorn, James, 23, 46, 47n117,
 48n124, 50, 63–64
 Zwerin, Kenneth C., xi, xin8

Illustrations:

- Baron, Salo Wittmayer, xiv, 17
 Hevesi, Frances, 20
 Levinson, Bernard H., 43
 Linczer, Alexander, 64
 Linczer, Jennie, 64
 Marcus, Jacob Rader, xiv, 3, 17
 Marshack, Bess, 20
 Segel, Alexander, 64
Shtar halitzah, 66
 Table of Forbidden Marriages, 75



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